



PM Diwan photo  
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attends the meeting held by KFAS officials and staff.

## PM role in promoting science wins KFAS praise

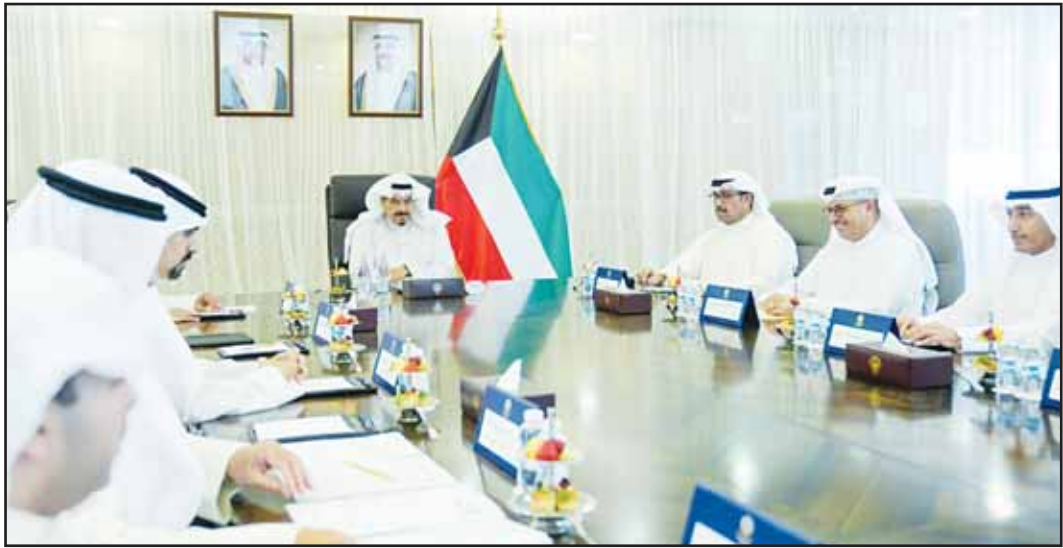
KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah patronized and attended on Wednesday evening a friendly meeting held by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) at the Scientific Center.

The meeting reflected His Highness the Prime Minister's interest in encouraging the KFAS' national staff, reviewing their efforts in developing the foundation's performance and

promoting the culture of innovation as part of its 2025-2029 strategy, KFAS said in a press release.

During the meeting, a KFAS team made a visual presentation about the foundation's initiative aimed at transforming employees' ideas into applicable development projects as part of its strategy, it added.

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PM Diwan photo  
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the 32nd ministerial committee meeting.

## 'Push forward Kuwait, China mega projects'

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Thursday the 32nd meeting of the ministerial committee tasked with following up on the implementation of major development projects in the country.

During the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister underlined Kuwait's commitment to bolstering coopera-

tion with the countries with which it has strategic relations, including the People's Republic of China, to push forward mega development projects by opening wider channels of partnerships purposed to support development plans and strengthen investment, economic, trade and industrial integration efforts.

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## Call for joint GCC action to tackle environment

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Nouf Behbehani stressed the need for stronger cooperation among Gulf states, in light of the difficult environmental challenges that the whole world is facing today, such as climate change, resource scarcity and various forms of pollution.

In her speech at the opening of the 45th meeting of the Committee of Undersecretaries Responsible for Environmental Affairs in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries at the Four Seasons Hotel on Thursday, Behbehani underscored the importance of intensified efforts to find sustainable solutions, tailored to the characteristics of the region, and grounded in scientific knowledge and international best practices.

She affirmed the dedication of Kuwait to support collaborative environmental initiatives and projects, working alongside other GCC nations to achieve common objectives for a clean, safe and sustainable environment.

She pointed out that the security, stability and rapid growth enjoyed by the GCC countries in various fields are the result of the support and interest of the GCC leaders in strengthening joint Gulf action, their constant emphasis on the importance of protecting the environment, preserving natural resources, and making it an integral part of the comprehensive and sustainable development process.

She revealed the meeting is an important step towards realizing the vision of the GCC Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs by following

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## Kuwaitis, expats probed as co-op board dissolved

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Anthal Hadi Al-Huwailah announced the dissolution of the Board of Directors of a cooperative society and the referral of the current board chairman, two former chairpersons and a number of citizens and expatriate employees to the Public Prosecution due to serious administrative and financial violations uncovered by the inspection teams of the ministry.

Al-Huwailah affirmed that the decision is in compliance with the provisions of the relevant law, indicating the ministry is keen on protecting the funds of shareholders and safeguard them from any violation or misuse.

She asserted that the ministry does not hesitate in taking legal action against any board of directors proven to have violated the rules and regulations.

She said the cooperative work in the country enjoys the patronage and attention of the political leadership,

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## 10 years prison upheld for drug peddler

## Jail overruled for gang of human traffickers

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

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: The Court of Appeals, headed by Counselor Nasser Salem Al-Haid, including Counselors Mutab Al-Ardi and Mohammad Al-Sanea, overturned the 10-year prison sentence imposed on a defendant charged with smuggling alcohol from China, while it upheld his 10-year sentence for possession of hashish and trafficking in psychotropic substances, as well as the 10-year prison sentence imposed on another defendant and acquitted the remaining defendants.

The Public Prosecution charged the first, second, third and fourth defendants with trafficking in narcotic substances (hashish and psychotropic substances), while the first, third, fourth, fifth and sixth defendants were charged with bringing in alcohol for the purpose of trafficking. The first and second defendants were also charged with possessing psychotropic substance (Lyrica) for personal consumption, while the fourth and sixth defendants were charged with bringing prohibited substances into the prison.

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# Kuwait, Muslim world rap Israel move on West Bank

'Flagrant violation of international law'

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23, (KUNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly expressed Kuwait's condemnation of the Israeli Knesset's approval of two bills aiming to impose sovereignty over the West Bank and a settlement.

In a statement, the Ministry said the step is a flagrant violation of international law and the UN Security Council's Resolutions, mainly No. 2234. Kuwait renewed its call for the international community and the Security Council to assume their responsibilities to halt these illegitimate practices and deter the expansion policies of the occupation that undermine the opportunities of making peace and the two-state solution, according to the statement.

The Ministry underlined Kuwait's unwavering position to back Palestinian brothers and their legitimate rights to

establish their independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Egypt and a group of Arab and Islamic nations on Thursday condemned the Israeli Knesset's approval of two draft laws seeking to impose "sovereignty" over the entire occupied West Bank and illegal settlements built on its territory.

The condemnation came in a joint statement issued by Egypt's Foreign Ministry, Kuwait, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkiye, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Gambia, Palestine, Qatar, Libya, Malaysia, and Nigeria, along with the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The statement said the move constitutes a blatant violation of international law and UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which denounces Israeli measures aimed at altering the character and legal status of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

It also cited the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which affirmed the illegality of Israel's occupation and settlement construction in the oc-

cupied West Bank.

The statement reaffirmed that Israel has no sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territories and welcomed the ICJ's advisory opinion issued on October 22, 2025, calling on Israel to comply with international humanitarian law and ensure the flow of humanitarian aid, especially through UN agencies including UNRWA.

The ICJ also reiterated the prohibition of starvation as a method of warfare and condemned Israel's obstruction of aid to Gaza, warning against forced displacement and unbearable living conditions for Palestinians.

The joint statement further underscored the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on the June 4, 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, while urging the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities and compel Israel to halt its unlawful actions.

It concluded that a just and comprehensive peace could only be achieved through realizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.



KUNA photo  
The Kuwaiti contingent during the march-past as Asian Youth Games kick off in Bahrain. — See Page 16

## Newswatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** Kuwait Touristic Enterprises Company inaugurated on Thursday the "Luna Park" in South Sabbahiya, a new entertainment hub for people of all ages.

**Abdullah Al-Rafee**, the acting director of marketing and the company's official spokesperson, said in a statement to KUNA that the facility features playgrounds, restaurants and cafes.

It will witness diverse entertainment and recreational activities such shows for kids, fireworks and musical concerts.

**Anwar Al-Hlailah**, the company's CEO, and other executives attended the inauguration. (KUNA)

**TUNIS:** The 39th Arab Conference of Drug Control Agencies called for devising plans, strategie, and legislations in Arab countries to enhance effectiveness of combating drugs and psychotropic substances and to strengthen the immediate exchange of information in this regard.

The conference, chaired by **Kuwait**, was held on Thursday at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers in Tunis.

The participants reviewed experiences and plans of the member states in the field of combating drugs. (KUNA)

## Cars in roads violations face 2 months seizure

By Munif Naif  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: The General Traffic Department (GTD) issued Circular No. 9/2025, stipulating that vehicles will be impounded for two months for violations related to "no parking, improper overtaking, and intentionally obstructing or impeding traffic on public roads."

The circular, which has been distributed to assistant directors, department heads, and employees of the General Traffic Department, emphasizes strict adherence to these instructions and warns that any violation will result in legal accountability.

On Wednesday, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef received the fourth copy of the book "Legal Regulation of Traffic" in both Arabic and English. The book includes the text of Traffic Law No. 67/1976 and its executive regulations, along with supplementary ministerial decisions updated to reflect the latest amendments issued in 2025.

The Ministry of Interior stated that Assistant Director General for Education and Coordination Affairs at the General Traffic Department Brigadier General Khaled Al-Adwani presented the copy to First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef Al-Sabah. This was in recognition of his efforts to support and develop the traffic system and strengthen the legal and regulatory framework in this field.

The ministry explained that the publication, prepared by retired Major General Salem Al-Ajmi and Brigadier General Khaled Al-Adwani, aims to document and update the approved legal reference for the Traffic Law, its executive regulations, and supplementary ministerial decisions.

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## Kuwaiti nationality of four persons revoked

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Two decisions by the Higher Committee for Investigating Kuwaiti Nationality were published on Thursday in the official gazette "Kuwait al-Youm" on the withdrawal of Kuwaiti citizenship for four individuals, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Decision No. 159/20-2/2025 revokes the Kuwaiti citizenship of a woman based on Article 10 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 concerning the Kuwaiti Nationality Law and its amendments.

Decision No. 160/20-2/2025 revoked the citizenship of three individuals based on Article 11 of the same decree.



2 Kuwait cannot afford ministers with the Hubris Syndrome

8 KFH wins MENA Most Innovative Private Bank Award

9 NBK Wealth reaffirms private banking leadership with two prestigious honors from MEED

| Prayer Timings |       |            |       |
|----------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Fajr .....     | 04:35 | Asr .....  | 14:45 |
| Sunrise ..     | 05:54 | Maghrib .. | 17:10 |
| Zohr .....     | 11:32 | Isha ..... | 18:28 |

# Local

**Expected weather for next 24 hrs:**  
**By Day:** Hot with light variable wind to light to moderate south-westerly wind, with speeds of 08-26 km/h.  
**By Night:** Mild to rather cold with light variable wind to light

| Weather                                                    |         |         |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|--|
| to moderate southwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h. |         |         |  |
| Station                                                    | Max Exp | Min Rec |  |
| Kuwait City                                                | 37      | 25      |  |
| Kuwait Airport                                             | 37      | 18      |  |
| Abdaly                                                     | 38      | 19      |  |
| Bubyan                                                     | 35      | 14      |  |
| Jahra                                                      | 38      | 22      |  |
| Failaka Island                                             | 35      | 19      |  |
| Salmiyah                                                   | 35      | 27      |  |
| Ahmadi                                                     | 34      | 21      |  |
| Nuwaisib                                                   | 36      | 19      |  |
| Wafra                                                      | 37      | 18      |  |

Dean of Kuwaiti journalism returns to health, surrounded by gratitude

## Kuwait unites in well-wishes for Ahmed Al-Jarallah’s recovery

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: True healing for physical ailments extends beyond surgical procedures or pain medication, as it stems from an optimistic spirit, deeply rooted in faith and strengthened by the unwavering support of loved ones.

This profound human connection, often yearned for despite the distance, offers solace and mends wounds. In a place like ‘Kuwait of Love’, this sentiment transforms the community into a single family, where every individual feels like a cherished member, cared for by its leadership and people in both joyous and sorrowful times.

Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers, recently underwent a successful surgery in France.

After the procedure, he was showered with congratulatory calls and messages from different individuals, including senior sheikhs, officials, ambassadors, writers, journalists, prominent Arab and foreign figures, as well as his followers and readers.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, in a cable of greetings to the Editor-in-Chief, expressed “sincere congratulations and best wishes on the success of the surgery he underwent in Paris, in the friendly French Republic.”

His Highness added “while we thank Almighty Allah for your safety, we ask Him to grant you health and wellness, and that we may see you soon in our homeland, continuing your good efforts to support its media journey and spread intellectual and cultural awareness among its people.”

He concluded “our sincere greetings and appreciation, along with our earnest wishes for your continuous health and happiness, and for our beloved country, sustained progress and prosperity under the wise leadership and generous patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf extended his sincere congratulations to Al-Jarallah on the success of the surgery, praying to Almighty Allah to grant him full recovery and return to the homeland in good health.

“We express our satisfaction with the success of the operation, imploring Almighty Allah to grant you continuous health and long life, and to bless you with His care and protection. As we congratulate you on your full recovery, we ask Allah to grant you success in continuing your media career in the service of Kuwaiti journalism, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, for the sake of our beloved country.”

Poet and writer Sheikh Dr. Suad Al-Sabah congratulated Al-Jarallah on the success of the surgery, saying, “I thank Allah very much for your safety, and the success of the surgery you underwent. I ask the Almighty to grant you the blessing of a speedy recovery and to return you to your creative media work with more vigor. You always play a prominent media role that illuminated our path for decades. May Allah heal, support and reward you. We are happy over your return to your journalistic kingdom as soon as possible... reward and wellness, and may you always be well.”

Amir Al-Fahad Al-Malik sent a cable to Al-Jarallah, stating “I am pleased to extend to you my sincere and heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on the success of the surgery you recently underwent. I pray to Almighty Allah to grant you good health, well-being, and a speedy and complete recovery.”

Sheikh Khalifa Abdullah Al-Jaber congratulated the Ed-

The Dean receives congratulatory messages on the success of the surgery from senior sheikhs, ambassadors, and dignitaries from Kuwait and abroad  
May you not see any harm, Abu Mishaal ... reward and wellness

■ **Al-Mohammad:** We will see you soon in your homeland, continuing your good efforts to support your media career.  
■ **Al-Nawaf:** We congratulate you on your full recovery ... May Allah grant you health and long life and protect you with His care.  
■ **Suad Al-Sabah:** Your prominent media role has illuminated our path for decades.  
■ **Moroccan Ambassador:** We received with great relief and joy the news of the success of your surgery.  
■ **Amir Al-Fahad:** My sincere congratulations and best wishes on the success of your surgery.  
■ **Khalifa Al-Jaber:** Dean of Kuwaiti journalism, I ask Almighty Allah to heal you and prolong your life.  
■ **Asaad Abdullah:** Dear uncle Ahmed Al-Jarallah, a man of wisdom and insight ... Praise be to Allah for the success of the surgery.



Dean of Kuwaiti journalism and a man of wisdom and insight, praise and thanks to the Almighty for the success of the operation. I ask Almighty Allah to grant you good health and well-being, to protect and preserve you, and for a safe return to your homeland.”

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco Ali bin Issa Al-Amid sent a congratulatory telegram to Ahmed Al-Jarallah. He said “I received with great relief and pleasure the news of the success of your surgery. I am pleased to express my warmest congratulations on this success, praying to the Almighty to grant you speedy recovery, to bestow upon you the garments of health and well-being, and to crown you with His support and care as you continue your distinguished professional career and complete the noble work you are doing in the service of your brotherly country.”

Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Kuwait Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi sent a congratulatory cable to the Editor-in-Chief, saying, “I extend my sincere congratulations on the success of the surgery you underwent in the friendly Republic of France. I sincerely wish for your good health and well-being. I ask Almighty Allah to return you to your home in the brotherly State of Kuwait, safe and sound.”

Meanwhile, Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah sent reply cables to his well-wishers, expressing his deep gratitude and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad for his warm message and phone call to check on him.

Al-Jarallah expressed his appreciation and gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf for his phone call and the message of friendship and love he sent to him.

The Editor-in-Chief also thanked Sheikh Duaij Al-Malik Al-Sabah and Sheikh Faisal Al-Malik Al-Sabah.

He also extended special thanks to Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber for his call to check on him and his message filled with love and friendship.

The Editor-in-Chief extended his sincere thanks to businessman Ahmed Al-Hamad and his wife, Her Royal Highness Princess Hanouf Mamdouh bin Abdulaziz. He also thanked Dr. Suad Al-Sabah, praising her message, which was filled with prayers and sincere words.

He went on to thank the “man of initiatives,” Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamoud, wishing him speedy recovery as well, as he is also undergoing treatment at a hospital in Paris.

He extended his sincere thanks to the “great businessman,” Khalaf Al-Habtoor.

The Editor-in-Chief specifically thanked Ambassador of Kuwait to France Abdullah Sulaiman Al-Shaheen and Head of the Health Office in France Dr. Ali Al-Mousawi for their dedicated and sincere efforts in following up his treatment.

He expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the ambassadors in Kuwait who contacted him and checked on his health.

He thanked everyone who contacted him from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

Finally, Al-Jarallah thanked all those who contacted him or inquired about his health, as well as the followers and readers of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers who contacted him through various means of communication, wishing everyone is protected from all forms of harm and evil.

## Kuwait pushes Gulf transport into digital era

Al-Mashaan highlights smart systems at 27th GCC meeting

By Mohammad Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan affirmed that technological development and digital transformation are now essential elements in the modernization of the transportation system.

Al-Mashaan made the statement when she chaired the 27th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Transportation and Communication in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which was held in Kuwait on Thursday.

GCC Secretary General Jassim Al-Budaiwi, the concerned ministers and undersecretaries, and representatives of the GCC Secretariat General attended the meeting.

According to Al-Mashaan, within the framework of the New Kuwait Vision 2035, the country is working hard to develop smart systems for roads and ports and implement digital solutions in traffic management and logistics services, thereby, enhancing efficiency and safety and improving the quality of services provided to the public.

She explained the meeting is the continuation of joint Gulf cooperation, based

on a unified goal and vision, and aimed at developing the transportation system as one of the most important pillars of economic and social development in GCC countries.

She stated that experience has proven that integration in this vital sector is needed to develop trade exchange, ease the movement of individuals and goods, support investments, and strengthen fraternal ties between the citizens of GCC countries.

She said the Gulf Railway is one of the most significant joint projects, embodying the spirit of cooperation and a unified drive towards Gulf integration.

She disclosed that Kuwait signed the engineering and design services contract for a stretch of 111 kilometers -- from Nuwaiseeb to Shadadiya, indicating this is an important step in implementing the Kuwaiti portion of the Gulf network.

She added “coordination with our GCC partners will ease the movement of people and goods, improve economic and social communication, and achieve an integrated and sustainable infrastructure that connects the Gulf states and serves their shared future.”

She then underscored the importance of promoting environmental sustainability in all transportation projects through the use of clean energy and reducing emissions, in addition to adopting unified traffic safety standards in GCC states to protect lives and properties, as well as to have a safe and sustainable transportation environment.

Moreover, Al-Budaiwi confirmed that the GCC has had numerous accomplish-

ments in various fields. He pointed out that the GCC leaders always stress the need to move forward to have more integration in line with the aspirations of GCC citizens.

In his speech, Al-Budaiwi stated that these aspirations are considered a challenge to the realization of other ambitions, while serving as an impetus to have more gains and enhance integration between the GCC states.

He added the Committee of Ministers of Transportation and Communication plays a significant and decisive role in supporting joint GCC action and bears a major responsibility in advancing Gulf integration to the highest level.

He said the Supreme Council, during its 45th session, stressed the need for member states to complete the regulatory procedures related to the general agreement on connecting GCC states through the Gulf Railway project and providing the Gulf Railway Authority with updated data about the implementation work on a regular basis in order to update the detailed timetable for the project.

He revealed the GCC instructed the committee to submit an annual report to the Supreme Council about the progress of the implementation and operation of the railway project, affirming that GCC countries are focusing on strengthening cooperation in the fields of transportation and communication. He went on to say that GCC countries exceeded the global average in the Logistics Performance Index for 2023, according to World Bank reports, and have issued more than 5,700 Gulf standard specifications and technical regulations to regulate and build interconnecting roads and main roads between the GCC countries until 2024.

## Farwaniya Governor welcomes Kuwait’s Ambassador to Turkey

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received in his office on Thursday morning the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Turkey Ali Al-Adwani as part of his ongoing engagement with government and diplomatic officials.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Governor Sheikh Athbi welcomed Ambassador Al-Adwani and expressed appreciation for his efforts in representing Kuwait and strengthening relations with Turkey. He wished the ambassador continued success in his diplomatic duties.

For his part, Ambassador Al-Adwani expressed his pleasure in meeting the Governor, and commended his tangible efforts in serving the Farwaniya Governorate and



Farwaniya Governorate photo  
Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Turkey Ali Al-Adwani.

strengthening community engagement. He also wished the governor continued success.

### Other Voices

## Kuwait cannot afford ministers with the Hubris Syndrome

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

In many countries across Europe, Asia and the United States, candidates for high office face a test long before they assume power. Campaigns, debates and public questioning reveal who can handle pressure and who cannot. Even in systems without elections, there are often symbolic ways to probe the character of a potential leader before entrusting them with authority.

Kuwait has no such safeguard. Ministers step into office untested, and the seat itself becomes their first examination. That public trial often exposes flaws more than it confirms competence.

The shift is abrupt. One day an official is relatively unknown. The next day cameras follow every move, words carry consequences for citizens and powerful figures suddenly open their doors. Psychologists call the resulting change Hubris Syndrome, when a leader begins to mistake



Al-Anjeri

ego for authority and criticism for hostility. In Kuwait it has appeared in ministers who refuse to apologize, who mistake arrogance for strength and who turn personal insecurity into a national burden.

The damage does not stop with the individual. It extends to the image of the state. A minister who mishandles basic diplomatic protocol, whether seating arrangements, formal greetings or ceremonial order, does not simply stumble. The misstep reflects on the entire country. In other Gulf states, such training is considered essential. In Kuwait, ministers often learn through trial and error, while all of us pay the price.

It takes only one or two such figures to stain an entire cabinet. Their behavior can overshadow colleagues who are capable and composed. A government is often judged by its weakest members. When flaws remain unaddressed, they grow and infect the whole.

Kuwait does not need miracles to avoid this. It needs preparation. Simple programs that screen and train leaders before they assume office can prevent costly mistakes and contain the cycle of inflated egos. Without them, Kuwait risks more ministers who speak loudly yet fail to be believed.

diwaniya

كيوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

‘Learn from others, break stagnation cycle in sports’

“FIRST of all, we must acknowledge that Kuwaiti sports have achieved great success in the past, and no one should be unfair to them simply because of a loss in a match. We must acknowledge that the responsibility does not lie with the players, neither yesterday nor today, but with the authorities and the irresponsible interference that prevailed for a period of time. This led many to view sports as a means for political or financial gain, rather than as a civilized representation of the state,” columnist **Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Adel Al-Kharafi

“This introduction may upset some, but it is a truth we must face, because half the cure for a problem is recognizing it. Based on this, we must also honestly admit that not everyone has worked to develop sports to the level where it can become a sustainable and reliable industry.

“In recent weeks, the World Cup qualifiers offered an opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of various national teams. They also highlighted the level of sporting development in some countries, particularly in the Gulf region, how officials manage their teams, and the progress of professionalism in this field.

“This should be the main consideration for every Kuwaiti official in the sports sector, as national pride should not prevent us from learning from others. Life is built on benefiting from the experiences of others. If we embrace the saying, “The best successes come from learning from others, not repeating their mistakes, but improving oneself,” then the qualification of seven Arab teams for the upcoming World Cup in the United States and Mexico serves as an important lesson we must take to heart.

“Here, I pause to reflect on a recent match between Qatar and the UAE. During the game, an incident occurred when a journalist entered the stadium and got into a fight with a Qatari player. The situation was handled by an organizing committee, not by special military units, as has happened at some of our sporting events.

“This reflects the true spirit of sportsmanship that should prevail, not only among players but also among officials. Such conduct sets an example for the public, who, regardless of their enthusiasm, must never cross the bounds of decency.

“Some may see this as an exaggeration. In reality, social crises often reveal themselves through spontaneous public behavior, and sports serve as a form of relief. However, when sports events escalate into something resembling a battle, it signals a deeper issue that needs to be examined.

“It is true that every match has its downsides and occasional failures. However, some use these challenges as opportunities for success, while others, especially those lacking a vision for the future, treat them as if they were the end of the world.

“What was expected in Kuwait, particularly from those responsible for sports activities, was a vision based on past experiences and historical achievements, rather than further wasting them. Unfortunately, this has caused sports in recent years to head toward decline instead of progress.

“We must work to establish sports as an industry first and foremost, and as a culture that contributes to societal development. We should learn from Saudi Arabia, which has built solid foundations for a sports industry, leading to its successful bid to host the 2034 World Cup. Before that, Qatar was the first in the region to achieve such a milestone. Meanwhile, Kuwait remains, so to speak, stuck in place.

“The question is - When will we break free from this cycle of stagnation, not only in sports but in all areas of soft power, that were once influential, present, and even dominant in the Arab world in past decades?”

Also:

“Amid the world’s rapid digital transformation, digital currencies have emerged as one of the most prominent features of the new economy,” legal advisor **Mohammad Jassim Al-Dhawadi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“They have evolved into a parallel financial system that challenges traditional frameworks and raises important legal and regulatory questions. What began as encrypted technical tools has now become a focus of financial, investment, and commercial policies in many countries around the world.

“In the Arabian Gulf region, some countries have taken promising regulatory steps, most notably the Kingdom of Bahrain, where the Central Bank has issued licenses to digital asset service providers . The United Arab Emirates has also introduced advanced regulatory frameworks, including the Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority and the Abu Dhabi Global Market.

“These initiatives serve as models for balancing the promotion of digital innovation with the protection of investors and users. However, this regulatory progress does not hide the existing challenges. Legislative gaps persist in some countries, and there is still no unified regional vision.

“This comes at a time when the need for clear and precise regulation is growing, particularly in areas such as trading, digital asset custody, user protection, anti-money laundering measures, and the governance of smart contracts.

“It is now evident that digital currencies are no longer just a financial development, but they have become a legal and regulatory concern that demands coordinated efforts from all relevant parties to build a safe, transparent, and stable digital ecosystem.

“The goal is not only to regulate digital currencies, but also to anticipate their future within a flexible legal system that can adapt to change, stimulate innovation, and protect the interests of individuals and institutions.

“This affirms the importance of organizing high-level academic and professional forums that bring together experts in law, technology, and the digital economy to exchange insights, share experiences, and develop practical, actionable recommendations.

“The Kingdom of Bahrain is expected to host a distinguished gathering of leading experts at the end of November 2025 to discuss this important topic, reflecting a strong belief in the need to enhance integration between law and technology in shaping the future of the Gulf economy.

“This event is expected to serve as a strategic platform for dialogue, contributing to the development of future legislative frameworks that keep pace with the region’s rapidly evolving digital movement. The future of digital currencies in the Gulf will depend on our ability to establish smart, balanced legal structures that protect rights, encourage investment, and support the growth of a safe and sustainable digital economy.”

□ □ □

“In the past, weddings were major social events that brought together family, friends, and neighbors in an atmosphere filled with joy and affection. However, over time, these occasions began to lose their luster and became a psychological and financial burden. This has led many to prefer limiting weddings to immediate family only.” Kuwaiti journalist **Hamed Al-Hamli** wrote for **Al Seyassah** daily.

“Such a shift reflects social and cultural changes, along with the accumulation of negatives that often outweigh the positives.

“Many wonder why weddings have become stressful. Large, traditional weddings held in huge halls or crowded tents can be overwhelming and exhausting for several reasons, including the exorbitant costs that require a huge budget. This financial pressure can overshadow the event’s joy, turning what should be a celebration into a source of anxiety rather than happiness.

“One of the most prominent negatives that has caused resentment among attendees is the habit of standing in long lines to congratulate the groom. This leads to physical and psychological exhaustion, particularly for the elderly and those with health issues. As a result, many now prefer smaller weddings, where congratulations feel more spontaneous and less formal.

“Additionally, smoking at weddings has become widespread, disturbing many guests – especially the elderly and those with allergies or respiratory problems – making the occasion less enjoyable for everyone.

“Large wedding parties often feature loud bands and crowded spaces, making communication difficult among guests. This overcrowding limits the opportunity to fully enjoy the occasion, as attendees tend to quickly congratulate the bride and groom before leaving.

“Switching from large wedding parties to more intimate, family-friendly settings offers many advantages, which is why this option is increasingly preferred. One advantage is that these smaller gatherings are less expensive, easing the financial burden on the bride, groom, and their families.

“Small wedding parties offer an intimate celebration that brings together those closest to the bride and groom, enhancing the sense of warmth and affection.

“Furthermore, family weddings allow the couple to focus on the true essence of the occasion, celebrating their love and unity, rather than being overwhelmed by logistical arrangements or the pressure to please a large number of guests.

“This type of wedding celebration also reflects a shift in social values, prioritizing quality over quantity and intimacy over social extravagance. Simple wedding parties are a natural response to the social and economic changes society is experiencing. Family weddings provide a more comfortable and warm environment, with lower costs and a greater focus on the true meaning of the occasion.

“This trend seems poised to continue, reflecting people’s desire to return to simplicity and authenticity in commemorating life’s most beautiful moments. Will we soon witness a widespread return to simpler, abbreviated family celebrations? We certainly hope so.”

— Compiled by Simi K.Kutty



Farwaniya Governorate photo  
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receives the two senior security officers.

Security leaders hailed for maintaining order

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received on Thursday morning the Director-General of the Farwaniya Security Directorate Brigadier General Mohammed Eid Al-Ghasab, and the Director of the Operations and Patrols Department, Colonel Fawaz Al-Nami, to discuss joint cooperation and coordination.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the governor welcomed the security leaders, and expressed appreciation for their effective role in main-

taining security and stability.

He stressed the need for ongoing coordination between various security sectors, stressing that security is a fundamental pillar of societal stability and the well-being of citizens and residents in Farwaniya Governorate.

Brigadier General Al-Ghasab and Colonel Al-Nami expressed their gratitude to the governor for the warm welcome and his continued support for the security sector.

They affirmed their commitment to enhancing security and stability to better serve citizens and residents.

Joint efforts lauded

KFF hits milestone in year 2025: Al-Gharib

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Director of the Public Relations and Media Department at Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Brigadier Mohammed Badr Al-Gharib delivered a visual presentation at the Government Communication Center on Wednesday, reviewing the most notable achievements of KFF in 2025 and its administrative, technical and field developments, which have positioned it among the distinguished government agencies in terms of performance, efficiency and management.

Al-Gharib affirmed that this year is a qualitative phase in the journey of KFF in enhancing operational efficiency and improving the quality of services provided to citizens and expatriates. He said this was achieved through the support of the senior leadership and the integrated efforts of various sectors at KFF.

He explained that the core values upon which KFF is based – efficiency, effectiveness, loyalty, cooperation, creativity and integrity – were the foundations for achieving institutional excellence, culminating in receiving the ISO certification in recognition of the level of administrative and organizational quality of KFF.

He added that the human element is the cornerstone of field work, indicating KFF conducted periodic medical examinations for all its members, activated nomination procedures for supervisory positions to ensure the appointment of qualified personnel, and launched a drug control system among military personnel, with more than 600 military personnel, representing 28 percent of the total force, tested.

In the field of prevention and inspection, KFF conducted 34,650 inspection tours, recorded 2,728 selection approval transactions and 1,058 violation transactions, executed 3,323 administrative closures, issued 15,382 licenses for various activities and facilities, completed 3,047 transactions related to public projects, and 592 transactions related to government projects.

The year also witnessed significant expansion in the field of digital transformation through the launch of the smart license in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, the creation of a special code for railways, the development of electronic licensing systems for contractors and examiners, the electronic linking of sick leave with the Ministry of Health, and the launch of an electronic registration system for treatment abroad and the updating of academic certificates for members.

Al-Gharib revealed that 2025 witnessed an expansion in firefighting centers and equipment, with eight upgraded marine rescue boats being put into service and several centers being opened, such as South Airport Center, Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge Center, Subhan Hazardous Materials Center, and Al-Jun Marine Rescue Center. These contributed to raising readiness and expanding field coverage.

He said KFF signed several cooperation agreements with local entities, including the General Presidency of the Kuwaiti Army and the Kuwait Police Union to conduct joint field training and exercises, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training to launch a Bachelor’s degree program in Fire Engineering Technology, Civil Service Commission to activate electronic connectivity, and Central Agency for Information Technology to develop digital systems and smart services.

He added that KFF dealt with 13,501 reports during the year, which were handled efficiently and with a high response rate. It also carried out 4,054 field inspection campaigns and issued 2,621 administrative closure decisions for violations related to prevention and safety requirements. He stressed KFF is making steady progress toward institutional excellence by developing its human resources, enhancing field readiness, and implementing the latest digital systems, ensuring the highest levels of public safety and protecting lives and property in the country.

Arab expat run over, perishes in accident

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: A 32-year-old Syrian died Thursday morning after being hit by a car on Al-Julaia Road.

A security source told the newspaper that the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior received a report about the fatal accident. Security patrols and a medical emergency team rushed to the accident site, where they found the victim who already succumbed to his injuries.

The source added that the body was transferred to the Forensic Medicine Department.

A case was registered, and an investigation started to determine the circumstances leading to the accident and to take the necessary legal measures.

Ten food trucks seized

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: The Public Relations Department at the Kuwait Municipality announced the continuation of the field campaigns conducted by the Public Sanitation and Road Works Department in the Farwaniya Municipality branch in Firdous, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Director of the Public Sanitation and Road Works Department at the branch Mohammad Al-Jabaa affirmed that the field campaigns are ongoing to uncover violations and take the necessary legal measures against offenders. He said 10 violating mobile food trucks were impounded during the recent campaign.

Deportation for illegals nabbed in Al-Jleeb raid

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: The General Traffic Department (GTD), represented by the Technical Inspection Department and the Security Control Department, in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Kuwait Municipality, conducted a traffic inspection campaign targeting industrial workshops in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh on Tuesday, October 21, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The campaign was part of the ongoing efforts to curb violations and enhance traffic discipline, with the participation of the Assistant Director General for Traffic Regulation Affairs at the General Traffic Department Brigadier Bader Ghazi Al-Qattan.

A total of 55 traffic citations were issued, and 23 individuals found in violation of residency laws were arrested. Legal measures were taken against them pending deportation.

Teams from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued seven violations to workshops that failed to comply with regulations and licensing requirements. Kuwait Municipality teams recorded eight citations for the illegal use of public spaces.

The General Traffic Department affirmed that such campaigns reflect the Ministry of Interior’s commitment to maintaining public order, promoting traffic safety, and confronting legal violations in coordination with relevant authorities.

It also affirmed that similar inspection campaigns will continue to be carried out in various areas to ensure full compliance with laws and regulations.

Duo jailed in arson charge

10 years jail for female drug-runner

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: In the case of setting fire to Judge Sultan Bouresli’s vehicle, the Court of Cassation issued its ruling, sentencing the two main defendants to prison terms of four and eleven years, respectively, on charges of arson, possession of a firearm, and drugs.

The court overturned the four-year prison sentence against the first defendant on drug trafficking charges due to insufficient evidence.

The court also upheld the acquittal of a member of the ruling Sabah family on all charges.

□ □ □

**Female peddler jailed:** The Court of Appeals, headed by Judge Nasr Al-Haid, upheld the 10-year prison sentence with hard labor imposed on a Syrian, while it abstained from punishing an Emirati citizen and suspended the detention of another Syrian who was sentenced in absentia to 10 years in prison with hard labor for smuggling drugs from the United States of America, reports Al-Rai daily.

Case files indicate that detectives tracked a suspicious package received by the Syrian, which she took to her apartment. She then

sought assistance from her Emirati friend, who brought her a large quantity of small bags intended for packaging. The latter denied having any knowledge of the nature of the materials to be packaged, claiming that she only provided the bags at her friend’s request.

□ □ □

**Detention continues:** The detention renewal judge ordered the continued detention of a Kuwaiti citizen and six Egyptian expatriates on charges of forming a gang involved in illegal money transfers.

The arrests followed a well-planned operation by the General Department for Combating Terrorism and Money Laundering, in cooperation with the Criminal Investigation Department.

An intensive investigation, which involved tracking funds flowing both domestically and internationally, revealed the defendants’ involvement in managing an illegal financial network in coordination with several merchants in friendly countries.

□ □ □

**Release request rejected:** The detention renewal judge on Wednesday rejected the request to release the defendants in the case of forgery of residential address change transactions, after they were arrested by the Financial Crimes Combating Department.

The judge decided to continue their pre-trial detention pending investigations, as initial investigations revealed that a public employee exploited his position and received a bribe of KD120 for each transaction processed illegally.

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Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, honors artist Abdulaziz Al-Mufrej.



Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters honors Dr. Hamad Bursali.



Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters honors Dr. Enas Abdel Dayem.

Celebration embodies leadership's deep interest in arts and innovation

# Kuwait celebrates landmark 25th International Music Festival

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23, (KUNA): Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi affirmed on Wednesday the 25th International Music Festival embodies the political leadership's deep interest in supporting arts and innovation.

Al-Mutairi, also Chairman of National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), made the statement during inauguration of the 25th edition of the festival at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

He added the festival shows Kuwait's eagerness to promote dialogue values, diversity and human rapprochement through music, as an international language that unifies peoples.

Held under his patronage, Al-Mutairi said the event coincides with Kuwait's selection as Kuwait is the Capital of Arab Media and Culture for 2025, marking the culmination of the country's long-standing commitment to media, innovation, and cultural development.

This achievement, he stated, has strengthened Kuwait's status at both Arab and international levels, reaffirming its pioneering role in promoting joint cultural action.

The event also honors Kuwaiti artist Abdulaziz Al-Mufrej, who made significant contributions to his country and exemplified loyalty and dedication.

In addition, several Arab and Kuwaiti artists and creators will be honored for their musical contributions, reflecting NCCAL's



Minister Al-Mutairi speaking during inauguration.



A moment of honoring composer Anwar Abdullah.



Part of the 25th edition of the festival opening.



Part of the artist Abdulaziz Al-Mutabab's performance.

belief that honoring creators is an investment in culture and a way to encourage younger generations toward excellence and creativity, Al-Mutairi concluded.



A view of the opening of the 25th International Music Festival.

KUNA photos

## Continued from Page 1

### PM role

The foundation's initiatives are mainly intended to upgrade institutional efficiency, develop infrastructure, and unifying electronic systems, according to the release.

The foundation praised His Highness the Prime Minister's continuous role and support for its efforts and staff in delivering its message and attaining its developmental and scientific goals.

It noted that such efforts came in the context of its endeavor to promote the culture of institutional innovation and turn ideas into projects with tangible impact for upgrading efficiency and governance and bolstering scientific and technological development in Kuwait.

The foundation then held a dinner for His Highness the Prime Minister and the foundation's board of directors and staff in a friendly atmosphere that reflected cooperation and integration among the foundation's various sectors.

### 'Push forward

He also noted the expected official visit by the Vice-President of the People's Republic of China to Kuwait early next month for high-level talks with the Kuwaiti political leadership on historical strategic relations between both friendly countries and means of promoting their coordination, co-operation and consultation at various levels, particularly the implementation of previously signed agreements and memos of understanding.

These agreements aim at carrying out major joint ventures that would lead to promoting distinguished friendly relations based on mutual respect and strong confidence between both countries' leaderships and governments and push forward their economic, trade and investment cooperation to new horizons.

During the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister stressed the significance of continuing to bolster efforts to attain comprehensive development goals under the direction of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah through governmental commitment to carrying out mega development projects as planned.

His Highness also directed the committee to keep stepping up efforts to diversify the economic base and elevate promising sectors through following-up and coordination with relevant government bodies and companies to ensure a smooth implementation of mega development projects.

He pointed out that the ongoing and coming stages of mega development projects require close coordination and concerted efforts on the part of concerned agencies to fulfill goal and output attainment requirements in an effective way and as per a specific timetable.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and committee rapporteur Ambassador Samih Jawhar Hayat expounded on the outcomes of the high-level ministerial committee's meetings regarding the implementation of major development projects.

The meeting was attended by Head of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakhil Al-Dakhil, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs

Abdullatif Hamed Al-Mishari, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Dr. Sabeeh Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Counselor Salah Ateeq Al-Majed and Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs and committee rapporteur Ambassador Samih Jawhar Hayat.

### Call for

up the implementation of the Ministers Action Plan, including the programs, initiatives and discussions on a number of topics considered vital to the Gulf environmental cooperation process.

She confirmed that the GCC countries remain committed to various international agreements related to environmental protection, climate change, biodiversity and combating desertification.

She highlighted a number of important topics and initiatives that will be discussed at the meeting, especially the establishment of the Gulf Center for Environmental Studies and Climate Assessment and development of the Gulf environmental portal.

She added they will also discuss joint efforts to mitigate dust and sandstorms and their impact on the environment and health – issues requiring continuous coordination among GCC states.

On the other hand, representative of the GCC Secretary General Assistant Secretary General for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC Secretariat General Khalid bin Ali Al-Sunaidi praised the meeting.

Meanwhile, Minister of Oil and President of the Supreme Environmental Council Dr. Tareq Al-Roumi on Thursday affirmed the GCC leaders' support for joint action among the member states.

He also asserted their permanent keenness on protecting the environment and render it as an inseparable part of the comprehensive and sustainable development.

Dr. Al-Roumi, speaking during the 27th meeting of the GCC environment officials, stated that leaders of the council member countries are keen on making environment protection a national and regional priority, in the shadow of the global climatic challenges that require cooperation, integration and policies to ensure environment sustainability.

This meeting aims at bolstering the GCC march in the environmental sphere, finding solutions based on science and knowledge that face global challenges namely the climatic change for attaining humankind welfare as well as sustainability of the natural resources, the minister said.

The State of Kuwait is exerting relentless efforts in the environmental sector, in line with its adherence to international treaties, the minister said. Kuwait is also keen on supporting the Gulf environmental initiatives and projects, he added, indicating at pursuing cooperation with the brotherly states, backing up joint Gulf projects for attaining a clean, safe and sustainable environment.

Meanwhile, GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi said in his speech at the session that the GCC countries, in recent years, witnessed qualitative development in environmental action and their obligations were translated into ambitious initiatives and leading ventures.

Cutting emissions and increasing dependence on renewable energy have become basis for the GCC policies aimed at adopting low-carbon economies that balance between economic development and preserving the natural resources, Al-Budaiwi said.

While affirming their unwavering keenness on honoring to global obligations, the GCC states have adopted programs to diversify energy resources, rationalizing consumption, expand usage of treated water, invest in clean energy and hydrogen and recycling, he added.

### Jail overruled

They confiscated their passports through deception and fraud, making them believe that they would work in Kuwait as nurses. They then received money from the workers in exchange for employment contracts, taking advantage of their need for work and money to financially use them and restrict their freedom. The crime was organized and crossed the border between Sudan and Kuwait.

They were also accused of facilitating foreigners' access to work permits in exchange for money, and of forging official electronic documents by entering fake absence reports into the system of the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM).

While the Criminal Court previously sentenced some defendants to three years in prison and fined them KD 3,000, the Court of Appeals overturned the prison sentence and imposed the fine, and upheld the acquittal of the remaining defendants.

### Cars in

This contributes to unifying legal concepts among Ministry personnel and enhancing the efficiency of both field and administrative performance.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef expressed his gratitude and appreciation to those responsible for preparing this distinguished publication. He praised the efforts exerted to develop the legal reference, noting that it reflects the Traffic and Operations Sector's commitment to advancing traffic operations in line with the latest legislation, ensuring traffic safety, and protecting lives and property.

### Kuwaitis, expats

as it is an important pillar in supporting social and economic development.

She added the ministry continues to exert efforts to strengthen governance and oversight of cooperative societies to ensure the sustainability of their performance and the transparency of their management.

## First-aid chatbot introduced

# GCC unity vital to harness AI for humanitarian work: KRCS

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23, (KUNA): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman Ambassador Khaled Al-Miqamis on Thursday underlined the need to bolster cooperation among GCC states to keep pace with fast-evolving technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), in order to enhance the efficiency of humanitarian action and development media across the region.

This came in his address at the closing of the Gulf Red Crescent First Conference on Artificial Intelligence, hosted by Kuwait over two days under the theme, "Toward New Horizons in Humanitarian Action and Development Media: Harnessing the Power of AI," with broad participation from GCC humanitarian entities.

Al-Miqamis thanked the GCC Secretariat-General, heads and representatives of national charitable bodies and attendees for their active participation, praising the organizing committee for the successful proceedings and rich discussions.

He affirmed the conferences final recommendations would provide a practical basis to map out the future and translate ideas and visions into implementable initiatives that strengthen AIs presence in Gulf humanitarian work.

During a conference session titled "Experiences of GCC National Societies in AI," KRCS Senior Civil Engineer Sara Al-Khurji presented the "Musaef Al-Hilal" project, an innovative AI-powered first-aid assistant (chatbot) on the Society's website that provides instant, step-by-step guidance in Arabic and English, drawing on trusted medical sources including the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the American Heart Association (AHA).

She said the project aligns with New Kuwait 2035 in digital transformation, community safety



A representative from the Bahrain Red Crescent Society gives a presentation on the society's experience in investing in artificial intelligence.

and Kuwaits global humanitarian leadership, noting a prototype launch coinciding with the conference and an official launch slated for January 1, 2026, under the slogan "From Kuwait to the World."

The session also reviewed the experiences of GCC Red Crescent and national societies in leveraging AI, as representatives outlined opportunities and challenges of integrating smart technologies into humanitarian and relief work.

Participants highlighted leading Gulf applications of AI in disaster management, field data analysis and prioritizing assistance, noting that modern tools are becoming central to raising response efficiency and expediting aid delivery.

A second closing-day session, "AI and Development Media," discussed how AI can accelerate development messaging, support health, environmental and social awareness campaigns, and analyze audience data to craft more precise and effective content.



Attendees and participants in the sessions of the closing day of the conference.

KUNA photos



Independent candidate former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Republican candidate Curtis Sliwa and Democratic candidate Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani participate in a second New York City mayoral debate at LaGuardia Performing Arts Center at LaGuardia Community College in the Queens borough of New York on Oct 22. (AP)

## Mamdani, Cuomo and Sliwa clash bitterly during final New York City mayoral debate

NEW YORK, Oct 23, (AP): Zohran Mamdani was attacked over his thin resume, Republican Curtis Sliwa strove to prove his seriousness as a candidate and former gov Andrew Cuomo was pressed on the harassment allegations that drove him from office in a contentious final debate in New York City’s mayoral race.

While Mamdani, the frontrunner, began by accusing his rivals of being consumed by fighting - suggesting he would try to focus instead on his vision for New Yorkers - the state assembly-member joined them in mud as he tried to create viral social media moments, included inviting one of Cuomo’s accusers to appear in the audience.

Cuomo, running as an independent after losing the Democratic primary to Mamdani, fared better Wednesday than during their first debate. He used its focus on the day-to-day of running the city to showcase his political experience.

Though he has urged Sliwa to drop his bid to avoid splitting the anti-Mamdani vote, he didn’t bring up his request

during the debate. Instead he worked to cast Mamdani, a 34-year-old democratic socialist, as out of his league, highlighting his pro-Palestinian advocacy and President Donald Trump’s threats to take over the city if he wins.

Here are some key takeaways from the debate:

Mamdani had said he planned to keep his focus on issues, like affordability, that have fueled his momentum and earned him national attention, but he landed plenty of digs against his rivals, whom he accused of spending more time calling on each other to drop out “than actually proposing their own policies.”

Cuomo and Sliwa, he said, “speak only in the past because that is all they know.” He said Cuomo is “a desperate man, lashing out because he knows that the one thing he cares about, power, is slipping away from him.”

Cuomo, meanwhile, touted his experience.

“You have never had a job. You’ve never accomplished anything,” he said, insisting Mamdani lacks the merit and

qualifications to run the nation’s biggest city or handle its emergencies.

Sliwa accused both men of “fighting like kids in a school yard,” but piled on as well.

While the race has often been dominated by questions about the Israel-Hamas war, Trump and other national subjects, the candidates Wednesday were peppered for specifics about crime, the subways and the notorious Rikers Island jail complex.

Mamdani came under fire after he declined to take a position on a set of initiatives that will appear on the November ballot.

Mamdani also said as mayor he would ask New York City’s police Commissioner Jessica Tisch to remain in her post. Mamdani, who was deeply critical of the city’s police in the past, has been trying to moderate his most contentious positions.

The candidates also railed against this week’s immigration enforcement sweep targeting vendors on Manhattan’s famed Canal Street that led to 14 arrests.

### We need a serious negotiation: Schumer

## Health care compromise appears far off as US govt shutdown stalemate persists

WASHINGTON, Oct 23, (AP): The government shutdown has reopened debate on what has been a central issue for both major political parties in the last 15 years: the future of health coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

Tax credits for people who get health insurance through the marketplaces created by the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, expire at the end of the year.

Democrats say they won’t vote to reopen the government until Republicans negotiate an extension of the expanded subsidies. Republicans say they won’t negotiate until Democrats vote to reopen the government. Lawmakers in both parties have been working on potential solutions behind the scenes, hoping that leaders will eventually start to talk, but it’s unclear if the two sides could find compromise.

As Congress circles the issue, a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that about 6 in 10 Americans are “extremely” or “very” concerned about their health costs going up in the next year. Those worries extend across

age groups and include people with and without health insurance, the poll found.

A look at the subsidies that are expiring, the politics of the ACA and what Congress might do:

Passed in 2010, the ACA was meant to decrease the number of uninsured people in the country and make coverage more affordable for those who don’t have private insurance. The law created state by state exchanges, some of which are run by the individual states, to try to increase the pool of the insured and bring down rates.

In 2021, when Democrats controlled Congress and the White House during the COVID-19 pandemic, they expanded premium help that was already in the law. The changes included eliminating premiums for some lower-income enrollees, ensuring that higher earners paid no more than 8.5% of their income and expanding eligibility for middle-class earners.

The expanded subsidies pushed enrollment to new levels and drove the rate of uninsured people to a historic low. This year, a record 24 million



From left: US Rep Katherine Clark, the House minority whip, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, and Rep Pete Aguilar, chair of the Democratic Caucus, speak during a news conference on day 22 of the government shutdown to discuss how the crisis could impact health care, at the Capitol in Washington on Oct 22. (AP)

people have signed up for insurance coverage through the ACA, in large part because billions of dollars in sub-

sidies have made the plans more affordable for many people.

If the tax credits expire, annual out-

of-pocket premiums are estimated to increase by 114% - an average of \$1,016 - next year, according to an analysis from KFF.

Democrats extended those tax credits in 2022 for another three years but were not able to make them permanent. The credits are set to expire Jan. 1, with Republicans now in full control.

Lacking in power and sensing a political opportunity, Democrats used some of their only leverage and forced a government shutdown over the issue when federal funding ran out on Oct. 1. They say they won’t vote for a House-passed bill to reopen the government until Republicans give them some certainty that the subsidies will be extended.

Democrats introduced legislation in September to permanently extend the premium tax credits, but they have suggested that they are open to a shorter period.

“We need a serious negotiation,” Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer has repeatedly said.

The Democratic demands on health

care have reignited longstanding Republican complaints about the ACA, which they have campaigned against for years and tried and failed to repeal in 2017. Many in the party say that if Congress is going to act, they want to scrap the expanded subsidies and overhaul the entire law.

The problem is not the expiring subsidies but “the cost of health care,” Republican Sen. Rick Scott of Florida said Tuesday.

In a virtual briefing Tuesday, the libertarian Cato Institute and the conservative Paragon Health Institute branded the subsidies as President Joe Biden’s “COVID credits” and claimed they’ve enabled fraudsters to sign people up for fully subsidized plans without their knowledge.

Others have pitched more modest proposals that could potentially win over some Democrats. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., has said he is open to extending the subsidies with changes, including lower income limits and a stop to auto-enrollment that may sign up people who don’t need the coverage.

## EU joins US in heaping more sanctions on Russia to push Putin into Ukraine peace talks

BRUSSELS, Oct 23, (AP): The European Union on Thursday heaped more economic sanctions on Russia, adding to U.S. President Donald Trump’s new punitive measures the previous day against the Russian oil industry. Russian officials and state media dismissed the Western measures, claiming they are largely ineffective.

The sanctions are intended as part of a broadened effort to choke off the revenue and supplies that fuel Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine and compel President Vladimir Putin to negotiate an end to the war.

The measures are a triumph for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has long campaigned for the international community to punish Russia more comprehensively for attacking his country.

“We waited for this. God bless, it will work. And this is very important,” the Ukrainian leader said in Brussels, where EU countries attending a summit announced the latest round of Russia sanctions.

Despite U.S.-led peace efforts in recent months, the war shows no sign of ending after more than three years of fighting, and European leaders are increasingly concerned about the threat from Russia.

Ukrainian forces have largely held Russia’s bigger army at bay in a slow and ruinous war of attrition along a roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line that snakes along eastern and southern Ukraine. Almost daily Russian long-range strikes have taken aim at Ukraine’s power grid ahead of the bitter winter, while Ukrainian forces have targeted Russian oil refineries and manufacturing plants.

Energy revenue is the linchpin of Russia’s economy, allowing Putin to pour money into the armed forces without worsening inflation and avoiding a currency collapse.

The EU measures especially target



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, (rear), greets Finland’s Prime Minister Petteri Orpo during a round table meeting at an EU Summit in Brussels on Oct 23. (AP)

Russian oil and gas. They ban imports of Russian liquefied natural gas into the bloc, and add port bans on more than 100 new ships in the Russian shadow fleet of hundreds of aging tankers that are dodging sanctions. The latest sanctions bring the total number of such ships to be banned to 557.

The measures also target transactions with a cryptocurrency increasingly used by Russia to circumvent sanctions; prohibit operations in the bloc using Russian payment cards and systems; restrict the provision of AI services and high-performance computing services to Russian entities; and widen an export ban to include electronic components, chemicals and metals used in military manufacturing.

A new system for limiting the movement of Russian diplomats within the 27-nation EU will also be introduced.

Zelenskyy urged more nations to punish Russia. “This is a good signal to

other countries in the world to join the sanctions,” he told reporters in Brussels.

International crude prices jumped more than \$2 per barrel Thursday on news of the additional sanctions.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova described the new U.S. sanctions as “entirely counterproductive, including in terms of signaling in favor of achieving a meaningful negotiated solution to the Ukrainian conflict.”

“If the current US administration follows the example of its predecessors, who attempted to coerce or force Russia into sacrificing its national interests through unlawful sanctions, the result will be exactly the same - disastrous from a domestic political standpoint and detrimental to the stability of the global economy,” Zakharova said.

State-run and pro-Kremlin Russian media mostly shrugged at the news.

“Pressure or no pressure, it won’t make things any sweeter for Zelenskyy. And what’s more, it won’t bring peace any closer,” Komsomolskaya Pravda, a popular pro-Kremlin tabloid, said.

Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said in a column that the new sanctions were “painful, as usual, but not deadly. Also as usual.”

The effectiveness of economic sanctions in forcing Putin’s hand is questionable, analysts say. Russia’s economy has so far proved resilient, although it is showing signs of strain.

Senior officials in Europe and the United States have debated for months over how best to crank up pressure on the Kremlin.

The new EU measures took almost a month to decide. The 27-nation bloc has already slapped 18 packages of sanctions against Russia over the war, but getting final agreement on whom and what to target can take weeks. Moscow has also proved adept at side-stepping sanctions.



In this picture taken by a drone, participants of the Peace March organized by the pro-government Civil Unity Forum (COF) and its foundation Civil Unity Public Benefit Foundation (COKA) walk on the Margaret Bridge in Budapest, Hungary on Oct 23, 2025, on the 69th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution and war of independence against communist rule and the Soviet Union in 1956. (AP)

### Thousands march in Budapest to support Hungary’s PM

Thousands of Hungarians congregated on the streets of Budapest on Thursday in a show of force on behalf of their leader, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who six months ahead of parliamentary elections looks set to face the most competitive ballot in his 15 years in power.

The gathering, dubbed a “peace

march” by organizers, came on Hungary’s Oct. 23 national holiday, a remembrance of a failed anti-Soviet uprising in 1956 that was crushed by the Red Army. Marchers shouted slogans backing Orbán and his message that Hungary is at risk of becoming directly involved in Russia’s war in Ukraine.

At the front of the march, one large banner read: “We don’t want to die for Ukraine.” Attendees, waving flags bearing the names of the towns and villages across Hungary from which they came, set off along the Margaret Bridge spanning the Danube, backdropped by Hungary’s towering neo-Gothic parliament. (AP)

## UK’s King Charles III, Queen Camilla visit Vatican

VATICAN CITY, Oct 23, (AP): Britain’s King Charles III and Queen Camilla prayed Thursday with Pope Leo XIV in an historic visit to the Vatican to forge closer relations between the Church of England and the Catholic Church, a welcome spiritual respite for the royals from the turmoil at home over the Epstein scandal.

Charles, who is the titular head of the Church of England, arrived with Camilla in a St Peter’s Square that had been nearly emptied by security forces. The king and queen had an audience with Pope Leo XIV, their first since his election in May.

The highlight of the visit was to be a midday prayer service in the Sistine Chapel that marks the first time since the Reformation that the heads of the two Christian churches will pray together.

During the visit to Rome, Charles was also to formally receive a new title and recognition at a pontifical basilica that has strong, traditional ties to the Church of England, St. Paul’s Outside the Walls. The title “Royal Confrater” is a sign of spiritual fellowship and was reciprocated by Charles: Leo was given the title of “Papal Confrater of St George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle.”

The visit comes as the British royal family is once again under intense scrutiny over Prince Andrew’s ties with convicted offender Jeffrey Epstein.



In this picture made available by Vatican Media, Britain’s King Charles III and Queen Camilla pose with Pope Leo XIV as they meet at the Vatican during a state visit on Oct 23. (AP)

The scandal that has long dogged the king’s brother was reignited this week after a memoir by Epstein accuser Virginia Giuffrè was published.

The 65-year-old prince has said he will stop using his titles, including Duke of York, but has “vigorously” denied Giuffrè’s claims. Buckingham Palace and the UK government are under pressure to formally strip Andrew of his dukedom and princely title, and

kick him out of the 30-room mansion near Windsor Castle where he lives.

Charles and Camilla’s visit and exchange of titles had actually been planned for earlier this year but was rescheduled after Pope Francis got sick and then died. Charles had strongly wanted to visit the Vatican during the 2025 Holy Year, a once-every-quarter-century celebration of Christianity.

### Europe

**Serbia shooting, arson attack injures 1:** A fire and shooting at a camp hosting loyalists of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic in central Belgrade on Wednesday injured one person, officials said, while Vucic described the incident as a “terrorist attack.”

The fire erupted Wednesday morning at the tents outside the Serbian parliament building, which were set up in March as an apparent human shield against anti-government protests that have roiled Serbia for months and pose the most serious challenge to Vucic’s rule.

Police said they arrested a 70-year-old man who fired shots toward one of the tents, sparking the fire. The man is facing charges of attempted murder, causing public danger and illegal possession of weapons, police said.

The camp, known colloquially as “Caciland,” encompasses the white-tent settlement in and around the park and the public square near the parliament building and the president’s office.

Footage showed the fire breaking out in a tent after a series of popping sounds that resembled gunfire. Several police officers around the tent camp ducked, pulled out guns and told people to take cover. (AP)

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**Storm disrupts travel in Netherlands:** Storm Benjamin battered the Netherlands on Thursday, triggering widespread travel disruptions.



Police officers stand on a street as a fire is localized in the government supporters’ camp outside the Serbian parliament in Belgrade, Serbia on Oct 22. (AP)

The Dutch national weather institute, KNMI, issued a “Code Orange” alert, its second-highest warning, for the country’s western coastal provinces, forecasting powerful wind gusts of up to 120 km per hour.

The agency warned of potential falling trees, property damage, and disruption to roads and public transport.

On the railways, national operator Dutch Railways said it was implementing a reduced schedule for trains, warning of longer journey times and necessary transfers.(Xinhua)

NZ and UK discuss cooperation, partnership

## Flights canceled and ‘mega strike’ disrupted as dangerous winds hit New Zealand

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Oct 23, (Agencies): Swathes of New Zealand were pummeled by dangerous winds for the second time in a week on Thursday, with howling gales canceling hundreds of flights, causing electricity blackouts and forcing school closures.

The gales were worst in the lower North Island, where the capital Wellington is located, and in parts of the South Island, including the city of Christchurch. The national forecaster MetService issued rare “red” wind warnings, the highest level of alert, for several regions.

No deaths or serious injuries were reported. When a different weather system battered the country on Monday, a Wellington man was struck and killed by a falling tree branch.

The havoc on Thursday also disrupted planned rallies for health and education workers in what was likely the country’s biggest industrial walkout in decades. More than 100,000 workers represented by four unions walked off the job for four hours, after months of talks with the government about pay and conditions broke down.

More than 200 flights across New Zealand were canceled on Thursday as some urban parts of New Zealand experienced wind speeds of 140 to 160 km (87 to 100 miles) per hour, with gusts in one remote, rural part of the South Island registering 230 km (143 miles) per hour.

Tens of thousands of properties were without power in different parts of the country. The winds downed trees, ripped off roofs, and in the city of Dunedin, toppled shipping containers at the port.

Dangerous winds also forced the closure of some highways. The remote West Coast of the South Island was cut off by road after flooding closed the only routes to the area.

Some rallies by teachers, doctors and nurses around the country whose unions had planned a coordinated strike Thursday were canceled due to the weather. Union leaders said workers were still on strike, even where demonstrations were



Cars are damaged by a fallen tree that fell during strong winds in Invercargill, New Zealand on Oct 22. (AP)

canceled.

Thousands still marched in the cities of Auckland and Hamilton, and hundreds of people turned out for demonstrations in small towns unaffected by the bad weather.

Hospitals and emergency rooms remained open to the public, but the government health agency urged people not to seek medical attention unless the matter was urgent. Medical staff at one hospital in the city of Nelson returned to work

during the strike when the facility lost electricity in high winds.

In the days before the strike, ministers in New Zealand’s center-right government - often at odds with workers’ unions - lambasted the action as politically motivated. Union leaders rejected the charge, saying they had also enacted strikes during the previous center-left government.

About half of those who walked off the job were teachers and the rest included doctors, dentists, nurses, social workers and other medical practitioners. Their demands varied between industries, but pay, staffing levels and working conditions were the central complaints prompting the strike.

The action came amid steep government cuts to public spending and record numbers of New Zealanders leaving the country - particularly for neighboring Australia, where medical practitioners are lured by higher salaries and lower living costs. Several major highways remained closed on Thursday night and residents of some South Island regions remained on alert as rivers rose and threatened to breach their banks. Winds were due to ease by Friday, although the authorities urged caution for travelers. Bans on fireworks and fires were enacted for much of the country and would remain in place for the rest of the week, the national fire service said.

Also:

**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters and British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper held a dialogue in London on Tuesday to highlight cooperation and partnership, according to a New Zealand government statement on Wednesday.

The statement quoted Peters as saying on Tuesday that relationship with Britain is “one of New Zealand’s oldest and most important international partnerships.”

“In the current adverse strategic environment, the UK-NZ relationship is only becoming more and more important,” Peters said, adding discussions included bilateral security as well as economic and strategic cooperation.

## Latest missile tests demonstrate new hypersonic system, says North Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, Oct 23, (AP): North Korea said Thursday that its latest missile tests involved a new hypersonic system aimed at strengthening its nuclear war deterrent, as leader Kim Jong Un continues to build up weapons designed to overwhelm South Korea defenses.

The report by North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency came a day after South Korea’s military said it detected the North firing multiple missiles from an area south of the capital, Pyongyang, and said they flew about 350 kilometers (217 miles) northeast before falling on land.

The tests came days before world leaders, including US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, are expected to gather in rival South Korea for the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation meetings.

The US Forces Korea said in a statement that it was “fully aware” of North Korea’s ballistic launches and also its “relentless pursuit of long-range missile capabilities.” It urged the North to refrain from “unlawful and destabilizing actions” in violation of UN Security Council sanctions, adding that the US commitment to its alliance with Seoul



Pyongyang citizens walk on the Mirae Scientists Street in Pyongyang, North Korea on Oct 23. (AP)

remains “ironclad.”

KCNA said the launches involved two hypersonic projectiles that accurately struck a land target in the country’s northern region. It described the system as strategic, implying that the missiles were designed to be armed with nuclear warheads.

KCNA didn’t specify the name

of the missile system it tested. At a military parade earlier this month, Kim unveiled some of his military’s newest weapons, including what appeared to be a short-range ballistic system fitted with hypersonic glide vehicles.

North Korea in recent years has been testing various missile systems tipped with hypersonic weapons, which are designed to fly at more than five times the speed of sound. The speed and maneuverability of such weapons are meant to help them evade regional missile defense systems, but experts have questioned whether they have consistently flown at the speeds the North claimed during tests.

Pak Jong Chon, one of Kim’s top military officials who attended Wednesday’s tests, lauded the performance of the “new cutting-edge weapon system” and said the North would continue efforts to bolster its war deterrent and defense capabilities.

During the Oct. 10 parade, Kim also unveiled a new intercontinental ballistic missile that state media described as the country’s most powerful nuclear asset, adding to his growing collection of weapons with potential range to reach the US mainland.

## Cambodian police arrest 57 South Koreans over alleged ties to online scam organization

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, Oct 23, (AP): Cambodian police said Thursday they arrested 57 South Korean nationals over alleged links to an online scam organization in the Southeast Asian country.

The arrests happened on Wednesday as police raided a building on the outskirts of the capital, Phnom Penh. Police found 86 people working at the complex, including 57 South Koreans and 29 Chinese, according to a statement Thursday by Cambodia’s Secretariat of the Commission for Combating Online Scams.

A visiting group of South Korean lawmakers accompanied the raid. The delegation, led by Kim Seok-ki, arrived in Cambodia on Tuesday as part of an on-site parliamentary inspection into reports of alleged employment scams, illegal confinement and torture of South Korean nationals in Cambodia.

It is the second recent delegation from South Korea to visit Cambodia after a group last week led by Vice Foreign Minister Kim Jina.

On Friday last week, Cambodia repatriated about 50 South Koreans who had been formally arrested on accusations they worked for online scam organizations.

They are among the 64 South Koreans who were detained in Cambodia in



In this photo released by Secretariat of the Commission for Combating Online Scams (CCOS), South Korean lawmaker Kim Seok-Ki, (front) looks on as his delegation members look at some documents with a Cambodian police officer, (right), as they visit a building complex that was allegedly used for online scam work, outside Phnom Penh, Cambodia on Oct 22. (AP)

recent months and were flown to South Korea on a charter flight on Saturday. Upon arrival, they were detained while police investigated whether they voluntarily joined the scam organizations in Cambodia or were forced to work there.

The repatriation follows the death

of a South Korean student who was reportedly forced to work in a scam center in Cambodia.

His death triggered public outrage in South Korea, prompting the government to send a delegation to Phnom Penh for talks on a joint response.

### Court publishes Bolsonaro’s conviction

## Brazil’s Lula announces re-election bid

SAO PAULO, Oct 23, (AP): Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said Thursday he will run for re-election next year, seeking a fourth nonconsecutive term.

“I’m turning 80, but you can be sure I have the same energy I had when I was 30. And I’m going to run for a fourth term in Brazil,” Lula told reporters during his official visit to Indonesia.

The Brazilian leader is traveling across Asia. After his visit to Indonesia, where he met with President Prabowo Subianto, Lula will head to Malaysia to attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit.

Brazilian media reported that he is expected to meet for the first time with US President Donald Trump in Malaysia on Sunday, following a conciliatory phone call earlier this month. The two leaders are expected to discuss the 50% trade tariff Trump imposed on Brazil.

Brazil’s constitution allows presidents to serve only two consecutive terms. Lula returned to office in 2023 after 13 years out of power and remains eligible to run again.

Also:

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Brazil’s Supreme Court on Wednesday published the ruling convicting former president Jair Bolsonaro of attempting a coup, starting the clock for filing any appeals.

Judges in September convicted Bolsonaro of trying to overthrow democracy and sentenced him to 27 years and three months in prison. He has been under house arrest since August.

Bolsonaro’s lawyers have said they will try to appeal the



Brazil’s former president Jair Bolsonaro stands at the entrance of his home while he is under house arrest in Brasilia, Brazil on Sept 2. (AP)

conviction and sentence before the full Supreme Court of 11 justices. Some experts say it’s unlikely to be accepted.

The far-right politician Bolsonaro has always denied wrongdoing. He was convicted of attempting a coup after losing the 2022 race to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in a plot that prosecutors alleged included plans to kill Lula.

He was found guilty on other charges including participating in an armed criminal organization and attempted violent abolition of the democratic rule of law.

### Subcontinent

**Opp’n politician killed in Sri Lanka:** An unidentified gunman fatally shot an opposition Sri Lankan politician at his office on Wednesday, making him the first politician killed in a spate of shootings that have gripped the island nation in recent months.

**Lasantha Wickramasekara**, the head of the council of the coastal town of Weligama, about 150 kilometers (90 miles) south of the capital, Colombo, was attending to his official work when the gunman entered the office building and opened fire using a pistol, police said in a statement.

Police said that the assailant fled the scene after the shooting and that Wickramasekara succumbed to his injuries after being admitted to a hospital.

Police didn’t reveal a motive for the shooting and said that an investigation is underway to identify the suspect.

But Public Security Minister Ananda Wijepala said that the killing is a result of gang rivalry, alleging that Wickramasekara is also linked to gang activities and narcotic drugs.

Making a statement in parliament on Wednesday, Wijepala said that there are six ongoing court cases against Wickramasekara and that he has previously served jail terms. Wijepala didn’t specify for what he was imprisoned or what the court cases are. (AP)

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**India blast disrupts train services:** Train ser-

vices were disrupted for hours after an explosion early Thursday damaged a section of a railway track in India’s northeastern state of Assam, officials said.

The blast, which occurred at around 1:00 a.m. local time, damaged the section of railway track between Kokrajhar and Salakati stations in Kokrajhar district, about 230 km west of Dispur, the capital city of Assam.

There were no reports of any casualties or derailment in the incident.

Train movement resumed at approximately 5:25 a.m. local time. Around eight train services were affected, with delays of about one to two hours.

Local media said the blast was caused by detonating an improvised explosive device on a railway track. The blast ripped apart nearly 3 feet of railway line, with fragments of the damaged track found strewn several meters away from the spot.

Kapinjal Kishore Sharma, chief public relations officer of Northeast Frontier Railway, said patrolling on railway track has been intensified.

“An inquiry is being carried out by police as well as the railway authorities to ascertain the cause of the blast,” he said. (Xinhua)

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**2 policemen killed in Pakistan:** Two policemen were killed when unidentified militants opened fire at them in Pakistan’s southwestern Balochistan province on Wednesday, police said.

The incident occurred in Noshki district, where unidentified gunmen opened fire at police personnel and fled the scene, according to a statement from the district police.

The policemen were killed on the spot due to multiple gunshot wounds.

Security forces cordoned off the area, and a search operation was launched to trace the culprits. (Xinhua)

## US military strikes another alleged drug boat in eastern Pacific, killing at least three people

WASHINGTON, Oct 23, (Agencies): The US military on Wednesday struck one more suspected drug-trafficking vessel in international waters in the eastern Pacific, killing all three people aboard, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Wednesday night.

“Today ... the Department of War carried out yet another lethal kinetic strike on a vessel operated by a Designated Terrorist Organization (DTO). Yet again, the now-deceased terrorists were engaged in narco-trafficking in the Eastern Pacific,” he wrote on social media platform X.

Hegseth again accused the vessel of carrying narcotics, saying it was traveling along a known narco-trafficking transit route.

“These strikes not continue, day after day. These are not simple drug runners -- these are narco-terrorists bringing death and destruction to our cities ... We will find them and kill them, until the threat to the American people is extinguished,” he said.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro slammed the US strike as “murder.”

“The attack on another boat in the Pacific, we don’t know if it’s Ecuadorian or Colombian, left some dead,” Petro wrote on X. “It is still murder. Whether in the Caribbean or Pacific, the US government strategy violates the norms of international law.”



US President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth listen as Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks during a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte in the Oval Office of the White House on Oct 22, in Washington. (AP)

Colombia’s Foreign Ministry said in a separate statement that the United States must halt the attacks.

The US military previously carried out seven such operations in the Caribbean Sea from September, mainly against boats accused of trafficking drugs from Venezuela to the United States.

The total death toll has risen to at

least 37, including the deaths in the latest two strikes in the eastern Pacific, reportedly near Colombia’s Pacific coast.

“Just as Al Qaeda waged war on our homeland, these cartels are waging war on our border and our people,” Hegseth said, adding “there will be no refuge or forgiveness - only justice.”



Soldiers arrive to the Allafah market, in an area recently recaptured by Sudan’s army from the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group, in the Al Kalalah district, south of Khartoum, Sudan on March 27. (AP)

### Sudan’s capital targeted by RSF

A Sudanese paramilitary force targeted the country’s capital and its main airport on Thursday with drones, just a day after the first passenger flight in two years landed in the city, according to military officials and local media. The attack by the Rapid Support Forces came as the group seeks to maintain pressure against Sudan’s military while the deadlocked conflict grinds on.

The Sudanese military intercepted the drones, which caused no damage, said a military official who spoke on condition of anonymity since he was not authorized to speak to journalists. The RSF and the military did not immediately acknowledge the attack.

War broke out in Sudan in 2023, when the Sudanese military and the RSF, once allies, turned on each other, leading to widespread fighting across the country.

The Sudanese military retook the capital, Khartoum, from the paramilitary force in March, but it needed months to repair Khartoum International Airport before the local Badr airlines landed a plane there on Wednesday. (AP)

# Kuwaiti crude rises to \$64.53 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti crude oil price rose USD 1.46 during Wednesday’s trading to reach USD 64.53 per barrel (pb) compared with Tuesday’s USD 63.07 pb, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Thursday. Globally, Brent futures rose by USD 3.03 to reach USD 64.35 pb and West Texas Intermediate climbed up by USD 1.42 to reach USD 59.92 pb.

## Recognizing global energy efforts

# OPEC’s Haitham Al-Ghais wins ‘Lifetime Achievement’ award

DOHA, Oct 23, (KUNA): Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah International Energy Awards has granted OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais the “Lifetime Achievement” award, in recognition of his prominent contributions to developing international energy policies and enhancing dialogue diplomacy among producers and consumers. The gala took place on Wednesday in the Qatari capital, Doha, in the presence of over 300 senior officials, experts, and global energy decision-makers.

In a statement, the Foundation said granting the award to Al-Ghais came as culmination of his distinguished career in backing global oil markets stability and boosting cooperation in energy and sustainable development.

# Kuwait concludes Youth Energy Forum with new global initiative

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23, (KUNA): The Ministry of Oil wrapped up on Thursday the eighth Youth Energy Forum and the Annual Meeting of the International Petroleum Council, adopting the initiative, “Kuwait International Vision for the Youth.”

The initiative aims at shedding light on role of competent juniors as effective contributors to formulating the energy future at the national and international levels.

# KFH wins MENA Most Innovative Private Bank Award

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has been named the MENA’s Most Innovative Private Bank for 2025 at MEED’s MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2025 – Wealth & Private Banking. This award recognizes KFH’s leadership in privatebanking and wealth management and the outstanding customer experience it successfully provides through a business model based on innovation.

While receiving the award at the ceremony held in Dubai, Executive Manager - Private Banking and Wealth Management at KFH, Naser Abdullah Al-Sanousi expressed his pride in the accolade. He emphasized that the award acknowledges the significant achievements of the bank and, specifically, the Private Banking and Wealth Management team, whose dedication and efforts were crucial to this success.

Al-Sanousi explained that KFH is the optimal choice for the private banking and wealth management as the bank offers diverse package of high-quality banking services and products in corporate banking, private banking, housing financing, real estate financing, in addition to investment and treasury solutions, and other various modern solutions in the investment management.

He added that, in providing these unique solutions, KFH relies on its extensive experience managing regional portfolios, international equity and real



Naser Al-Sanousi with the award.

estate funds, leasing, and trade finance. This is complemented by its extensive network, which provides clients with global investment opportunities in local and international markets, all in compliance with Islamic Sharia principles.

**Award Criteria**

MEED selected KFH for its award based on several factors, including the successful introduction of the Wealth App, a key feature for its high-net-worth clients. The app gives clients real-time portfolio access and monitor, and secure advisory interaction that enable them to make the best investment decisions. Clients also can

use the embedded (eKYC) service to update personal details, minimizing branch visits for data updates or new account openings. KFH’s broader commitment to digital solutions is evident in cutting turnaround times by 35 percent, achieved through robotic process automation. With more than 70 percent of private clients now digitally active, KFH has embedded innovation into every layer of its wealth offering.

The judging process for selecting eligible banks also focuses on the bank’s success in adopting digital solutions, developing its operating and investment model, and fostering a culture of

innovation that places customers first.

MEED evaluates award applicants based on their submitted evidence, supporting documents, and public data. The criteria are client-centric: rather than focusing solely on innovation, the assessment measures how much the innovations benefit private banking clients. This includes reviewing measurable results and confirming the innovation supports long-term wealth management goals.

The 2025 MENA Most Innovative Private Bank Awards highlight institutions that understand and meet the complex needs of high-net-worth and ultra-high-net-worth clients, positioning the MENA region as a global leader in wealth management. The rising number of high-net-worth individuals and family offices in the MENA region is driving the demand for tailored services for these clients.

**MEED**

Established in 1957, MEED is a prestigious international magazine specializing in analysis of various economic sectors in the Middle East. In partnership with Retail Banker International and Private Banker International, both published by GlobalData Financial Services, the magazine presents the Middle East and North Africa Banking Excellence Awards to institutions that provide the most innovative banking and financial services and outstanding customer experiences.

# Boursa Kuwait closes higher

## All Share Index up 0.16%

**KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Thursday’s session on a positive note, with the All Share Index climbing 14.69 points, or 0.16 percent, to close at 8,923.02 points. Trading activity was brisk as 677.5 million shares changed hands through 36,005 transactions, generating a total turnover of KD 151.7 million (USD 462.6 million).**

The Main Market Index advanced 26.78 points, or 0.31 percent, to 8,550.03 points. It recorded trading of 421.9 million

shares across 25,605 deals, valued at KD 77.4 million (USD 236 million).

The Premier Market Index also posted gains, up 12.41 points, or 0.13 percent, to close at 9,456.96 points, with 255.5 million shares traded through 10,400 transactions worth KD 74.2 million (USD 226.3 million).

In contrast, the Main 50 Index edged lower by 11.62 points, or 0.13 percent, settling at 8,836.04 points. It saw 287.8 million shares traded across 28,718 transactions valued at KD 52.7 million (around USD 160.7 million).

## Ranked first in Kuwait and among top three employers in the Middle East

# Zain tops regional telecom sector ranked first in Forbes’ World’s Best Employers list

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Zain, a leading provider of innovative ICT technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa was ranked as the number one telecommunications company across the MENA region on Forbes’ annual “World’s Best Employers” list for 2025. Zain was also ranked first in Kuwait and among the top-three employers regionwide.

Forbes’ globally acclaimed ranking evaluates 900 elite organizations from over 50 countries, selected through rigorous analysis of detailed feedback from more than 300,000 employees worldwide. Companies are assessed on employee satisfaction, career advancement opportunities, and overall reputation, with substantial weight given to the opinions of current employees.

Zain’s appearance among global industry giants across the energy, aviation, retail, and construction sectors underscores its commitment to workplace excellence. It also coincides with the recent significant improvement in the company’s upgrade to ‘A’ from the Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) rating in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) as of September 2025.

Zain’s comprehensive talent strategy is anchored in the company’s “4WARD-Progress with Purpose” five-year corporate strategy, which emphasizes that Zain’s actions align with meaningful impact and responsibility. Multiple Human Resources initiatives as well as ESG and Inclusion, Diversity and Equity programs remain strategic focus areas in Zain’s work culture. They are all vital part of the company’s ethical commitment to aligning with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals of leaving no one behind by creating positive ESG impacts in the communities Zain serves and beyond.

A company statement, “Zain is taking responsible business action by building a thriving, diverse and inclusive workplace, creating the world we all want. Beyond providing life-enriching digital services and embedding sustainability and meaningful connectivity in every aspect of our business, Zain is committed to fostering an ecosystem that drives systemic change across our footprint.”

“As a purpose-driven technology leader in the region, this recognition by Forbes highlights Zain’s unwavering focus on digital transformation, talent development, and proac-



Zain headquarters

- “Zain is taking responsible business action by building a thriving, inclusive and diverse workplace, creating the workplace and world we all want.”
- Company’s ‘4WARD-Progress with Purpose’ strategy ensures that Zain’s actions align with meaningful impact and responsibility
- Zain focused on HR, ESG and Inclusion, Diversity & Equity initiatives that empower its people to provide meaningful connectivity and drive systemic change
- Ranking coincides with Zain’s recent MSCI rating upgrade to ‘A’ in ESG
- Strategic partnerships with The Valuable 500 and the International Labor Organization
- Zain’s IDE University upskilled over 2000 employees in digital transformation

tive workplace initiatives that are key to better customer experience and enhancing shareholder value.”

**Recent strategic initiatives**

To cement purpose within the ethos of the organization, Zain integrated purpose within the role of the Chief Human Resources Officer thus formally becoming the Chief Purpose Human Resources Officer (CPHRO). The role of the CPHRO is to integrate the company’s purpose and employee purpose to guide, inspire, and drive human centricity and innovation across the organization.

Furthermore, Zain launched a company-wide culture transformation program entitled ‘UNITY’, which infuses Purpose and Customer Centricity into the company’s DNA, by prioritizing a humancentric approach and enhancing collaboration. The program serves as a

tool designed to encompass Zain’s purpose-driven customer experience strategy.

The company also introduced its Innovation Policy, aimed at cultivating a culture that promotes creativity and innovative problem-solving. This initiative aligns closely with Zain’s vision to become the leading provider of innovation, empowering our customers to embrace a digital lifestyle.

**Empowering Employees, Advancing Communities**

Zain’s pioneering programs set benchmarks for workplace excellence. The innovative “WE SUCCEED” model safeguards organizational agility and leadership succession, while the launch of the regional-first “IDE Score” index solidifies Zain’s leadership in measuring and advancing workplace inclusion.

At the forefront of mental health advocacy, Zain launched the “BE WELL” initiative—the first mental health strategy among regional employers—which provides employees access to self-help resources, educational workshops, and annual leave in recognition of World Mental Health Day.

Women’s empowerment remains central to Zain’s gender diversity agenda, with initiatives like “WE” and “NOVA” closing gender and technical skill gaps through focused development for more than 200 women across the group. Zain further supports female professionals with progressive maternity and flexible work policies, setting a target of raising the proportion of women in leadership positions to 25%.

Reflecting its commitment to inclusion, Zain’s “WE ABLE” program ensures that people with disabilities experience a fully accessible and enabling environment. The group’s international collaborations with organizations such as The Valuable 500 and the International Labor Organization (ILO) reinforce its pledge of equal opportunity and accessibility by 2025.

**A Hub for Innovation and Youth**

To cultivate a future-ready workforce, Zain’s proprietary innovation platform, “ZAINIAC,” motivates thousands of employees to develop and share new ideas, while structured programs in design thinking and business modeling enhance expertise across functions.

The “Generation Z” initiative builds future leaders by equipping graduates with essential leadership, digital, and entrepreneurial skills through a year-long development journey. Zain Youth (ZY) further fosters young talent, ensuring robust pipelines for the region’s evolving digital landscape.

In partnership with Spain’s IE University, Zain established the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity University (IDEU), offering over 2,000 employees to pursue digital competencies and higher academic qualifications in line with the company’s digital transformation roadmap.

These future-shaping efforts are integrated with Zain’s ESG agenda, guaranteeing that business growth is paired with positive impact for people and planet. Zain Group’s consistent distinction as one of the world’s best employers reflects its core belief that purpose-driven business, empowered talent, and an inclusive culture are essential to shaping a sustainable, prosperous, and digitally connected future for all.

## Training covers risk management

# UIC launches ‘Corporate Credit Analysis’ training

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: The Union of Investment Companies (UIC), through its specialized training arm, the Investment Studies Center (ISC), organized a high-level training program under the title “Corporate Credit Analysis”, which is held on 15–16 October 2025 at UIC’s headquarters. This initiative comes as part of UIC’s continuous efforts to develop the professional capabilities of practitioners in Kuwait’s financial and investment sector and to enhance their capacity to address the growing complexity of credit and investment risks in an evolving economic environment.

Credit has long been recognized as the lifeblood of modern economies, playing a critical role in driving growth, stimulating investment, and supporting productive activities. Access to credit facilitates the expansion of gross domestic product (GDP), increases consumption, and channels resources toward high-impact sectors such as infrastructure, industry, and services. In the absence of robust credit structures, businesses face barriers to growth, economies lose momentum, and financial markets become more vulnerable to shocks. Therefore, the quality of credit assessment and the soundness of credit analysis practices are fundamental pillars for ensuring financial stability, market confidence, and sustainable economic development.

Against this backdrop, the “Corporate Credit Analysis” program seeks to equip participants with a deep and practical understanding of how credit decisions are made, evaluated, and managed. It explores the critical role of credit analysis in mitigating default risks, improving capital allocation, and enabling investment companies and financial institutions to operate more effectively in competitive and regulated markets.

The program emphasizes that credit analysis is not merely an operational or technical exercise, but a strategic function that influences the entire investment and financing decision-making process.

The training content is carefully designed to address several interrelated dimensions of credit analysis. It begins with a comprehensive examination of the Five Cs of Credit Analysis—Capacity, Collateral, Covenants and Conditions, Character, and Credit Rating—which collectively provide a structured framework for evaluating the creditworthiness of borrowers. Participants will explore how lenders and investors assess a company’s ability to repay its financial obligations, the strength and liquidity of pledged assets, the integrity and governance standards of its management, the legal and financial conditions attached to loans, and the overall rating assigned to the entity based on global credit standards.

Another important dimension of the course is the introduction of the CAMPARI and ICE templates, which provide practical tools for analyzing both the performance risk and the return structure associated with lending activities. Through these models, participants will understand how factors such as borrower character, repayment ability, financial resources, loan purpose, and collateral interact with pricing mechanisms, commissions, and cost structures to determine the overall risk-return profile of credit transactions.

The program further delves into macro and sectoral analysis, adopting a top-down approach that begins with the examination of the wider economic environment. Participants will analyze how key macroeconomic variables—such as GDP growth, inflation, interest rates, and consumer sentiment—shape

creditworthiness at both the sectoral and corporate levels. This analysis is followed by a detailed exploration of industry fundamentals, competitive structures, and business models, including Porter’s Five Forces framework, to identify the dynamics that influence a company’s market position and capacity to service debt.

A core component of the program focuses on business risk assessment, highlighting the importance of understanding both internal and external factors that can affect a company’s performance. Participants will apply SWOT and PESTEL analyses to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and the impact of political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors. This strategic perspective reinforces the idea that credit risk is not isolated from broader market trends and regulatory shifts, but rather embedded within them.

To complement the strategic layers of analysis, the course also emphasizes financial statement and ratio analysis as essential tools for evaluating liquidity, solvency, profitability, and cash flow generation. Participants will examine balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow statements in detail, using vertical and horizontal analyses as well as financial ratios to extract meaningful insights into a company’s financial health. This practical component is critical in enabling analysts and decision-makers to detect early warning signs of financial distress, assess debt-servicing capacity, and make informed credit and investment decisions.

Moreover, the program explores working capital management and financial forecasting as integral parts of credit analysis. Attendees will learn how the cash conversion cycle affects liquidity and borrowing needs, how financing structures evolve across different stages of the business life cycle, and how future funding requirements can be projected through models such as the Additional Funds Needed (AFN) formula.

This forward-looking perspective equips participants with the ability to anticipate financial pressures before they materialize and to structure credit facilities more prudently.

This training program holds particular significance at a time when Kuwait’s financial sector is undergoing regulatory modernization and increased integration with global markets. Both the Capital Markets Authority and the Central Bank of Kuwait are emphasizing the importance of strong risk management frameworks, enhanced governance, and improved credit assessment capabilities across financial institutions. In this context, the UIC’s initiative responds directly to market needs and regulatory priorities by building the analytical capacity of professionals in investment companies, banks, and related financial entities.

In addition to its technical content, the program is designed to foster a culture of responsible lending and investment. By strengthening credit analysis practices, institutions can reduce the probability of defaults, safeguard investor capital, and enhance their contribution to national economic growth. Well-trained credit analysts are better positioned to identify opportunities for sustainable financing, support ESG-aligned investments, and foster trust between investors, regulators, and the market at large.

UIC strongly recommends that financial institutions in Kuwait and the wider GCC region prioritize the integration of structured credit analysis frameworks into their strategic decision-making.

MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2025

NBK Wealth reaffirms private banking leadership with two prestigious honors from MEED

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: NBK Wealth Group further solidified its leadership in the wealth management arena, receiving two prestigious awards from MEED magazine at the MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2025. NBK Wealth was recognized with two awards in the following categories:

**Best Private Bank in Kuwait**

Outstanding Private Bank for HNW Clients in the MENA Region

This achievement reaffirms NBK Wealth’s position as the trusted first choice for high-net-worth clients and institutions in Kuwait and across the region, underscoring the success of its strategy built on a profound understanding of clients’ needs and the delivery of tailor-made solutions designed to protect and seek to grow their wealth and to build a sustainable legacy for generations to come.

**World-Class Standards**

The MEED Awards are granted based on rigorous criteria, with the magazine recognizing the Best Private Bank for financial institutions that demonstrate outstanding service quality, long-term strategic vision, and the capability to deliver innovative investment solutions. Meanwhile, the Best Bank for High-Net-Worth Customers award highlights the institution’s ability to address the diverse needs of this client segment through premium banking and advisory services, complemented by tailor-made solutions seeking to grow, protect,



Khamis Al Marri, EVP of Private Banking at NBK Wealth, receives the Best Private Bank Award.

and preserve their wealth.

This achievement underscores the strength of NBK Wealth as the largest wealth management group locally and regionally, leveraging the reputation and brand name of NBK Group, a regional and global leader with a distinguished history of accomplishments and international recognition in the banking sector.

NBK Wealth Group has demonstrated its ability to serve the needs of high-net-worth clients, enhancing its wealth management offerings through robust growth



Khamis Al Marri, EVP of Private Banking at NBK Wealth, receives the Outstanding Private Bank for HNW Clients award.

in assets under management and greater diversification across asset classes, while continuing to attract new clients and strengthen its position as a leader in wealth management.

It has also introduced a diverse range of innovative products, including private debt strategies, structured deposits, and specialist portfolio management services, alongside the Group’s comprehensive private banking offerings encompassing wealth management, financial planning, investment management, and advisory ser-

vices.

The Group has forged a strategic partnership with J.P. Morgan Asset Management, offering clients broader access to select investment products and strengthening engagement through innovative initiatives, including the issuance of specialized analytical reports as part of NBK Wealth’s Insights, further consolidating its position as a leading provider of integrated investment solutions.

NBK Wealth stands as a key pillar of NBK Group and one of the leading wealth management firms in the Middle East, with over USD 41 billion in assets under management as of year-end 2024.

With a broad geographic footprint across 9 cities in 5 countries, it offers a comprehensive suite of services, including private banking, financial planning, asset management, and advisory solutions. The Group adopts a client-centric approach, delivering tailored strategies designed to meet the distinct financial objectives of high-net-worth individuals and institutions.

NBK Wealth is a brand registered under the name of National Bank of Kuwait S.A.K.P (“NBK”), for use by the Asset Management business of, among other NBK group entities, Watani Investment Company K.S.C.C. , a leading investment firm and its affiliates worldwide, combined with the Private Banking services of NBK worldwide, which is one of the largest and oldest financial institutions in the region.

US debt exceeds \$38 trillion amid government shutdown

Fastest rise since pandemic

WASHINGTON, Oct 23, (AP): In the midst of a federal government shutdown, the U.S. government’s gross national debt surpassed \$38 trillion Wednesday, a record number that highlights the accelerating accumulation of debt on America’s balance sheet.

It’s also the fastest accumulation of a trillion dollars in debt outside of the COVID-19 pandemic - the U.S. hit \$37 trillion in gross national debt in August this year.

The \$38 trillion update is found in the latest Treasury Department report, which logs the nation’s daily finances.

Kent Smetters of the University of Pennsylvania’s Penn Wharton Budget Model, who served in President George W. Bush’s Treasury Department, told The Associated Press that a growing debt load over time leads ultimately to higher inflation, eroding Americans’ purchasing power.

The Government Accountability Office outlines some of the impacts of rising government debt on Americans - including higher borrowing costs for things like mortgages and cars, lower wages from businesses having less money available to invest, and more expensive goods and services.

“I think a lot of people want to know that their kids and grandkids are going to be in good, decent shape in the future - that they will be able to afford a house,” Smetters said. “That additional inflation compounds” and erodes consumers’ purchasing power, he said, making it less possible for future gen-

erations to achieve home ownership goals.

The Trump administration says its policies are helping to slow government spending and will shrink the nation’s massive deficit. A new analysis by Treasury Department officials states that from April to September, the cumulative deficit totaled \$468 billion. In a post on X Wednesday, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said that’s the lowest reading since 2019.

“During his first eight months in office, President Trump has reduced the deficit by \$350 billion compared to the same period in 2024 by cutting spending and boosting revenue,” White House spokesman Kush Desai said in a statement, adding that the administration would pursue robust economic growth, lower inflation, tariff revenue, lower borrowing costs and cuts to waste, fraud and abuse. The Joint Economic Committee estimates that the total national debt has grown by \$69,713.82 per second for the past year.

Michael Peterson, chair and CEO of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, said in a statement that “reaching \$38 trillion in debt during a government shutdown is the latest troubling sign that lawmakers are not meeting their basic fiscal duties.”

“Along with increasing debt, you get higher interest costs, which are now the fastest growing part of the budget,” Peterson added. “We spent \$4 trillion on interest over the last decade, but will spend \$14 trillion in the next ten years. Interest costs crowd out important public and private investments in our future, harming the economy for every American.” The U.S. hit \$34 trillion in debt in January 2024, \$35 trillion in July 2024 and \$36 trillion in November 2024.

US existing home sales rise 1.5% in September

WASHINGTON, Oct 23, (AP): Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes accelerated in September as declining mortgage rates and a pickup in available properties on the market encouraged home shoppers.

Existing home sales rose 1.5% last month from August to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.06 million units, the National Association of Realtors said Thursday. That’s the fastest sales pace since February.

Sales jumped 4.1% compared with September last year. The latest sales figure came in slightly below the roughly 4.07 million pace economists were expecting, according to FactSet.

The national median sales price climbed 2.1% in September from a year earlier to \$415,200. That’s the 27th consecutive month that home prices have risen on an annual basis and the highest median sales price for any September on data going back to 1999.

The U.S. housing market has been in a sales slump since 2022, when mortgage rates began climbing from historic lows. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes sank last year to their lowest level in nearly 30 years.

Nation must ‘stand on its own’

Carney sets goal to double Canada’s non-US exports

TORONTO, Oct 23, (AP): Prime Minister Mark Carney set a goal for Canada to double its non-U.S. exports in the next decade, saying American tariffs are causing a chill in investment.

Carney, who will release his government’s budget on Nov. 4, said Wednesday many of Canada’s former strengths - based on close ties to America - have become vulnerabilities.

“The jobs of workers in our industries most affected by U.S. tariffs - autos, steel, lumber - are under threat. Our businesses are holding back investments, restrained by the pall of uncertainty that is hanging over all of us,” Carney said.

U.S. President Donald Trump has been threatening Canada’s economy and sovereignty with tariffs, most offensively by claiming Canada could be “the 51st state.”

Carney reiterated in an evening address to Canadians that the decades-long process of an ever-closer economic relationship between the Canadian and U.S. economies is now over.

“The U.S. has fundamentally changed its approach to trade, raising its tariffs to levels last seen during the Great Depression,” Carney said.

“We have to take care of ourselves because we can’t rely on one foreign partner.”

Tensions between the neighbors and longtime allies have eased slightly in recent months as Carney tries to get a trade deal with Trump, but tariffs are taking a toll, particularly in the aluminum, steel, auto and lumber sectors.

More than 75% of Canada’s exports go to the U.S.

“We are re-engaging with the global giants India and China,” he said.

Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian (US\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border daily.

Canada’s free trade deal with the U.S. is up for review in 2026.

Carney called Canada an “energy superpower” and said the country has third largest reserves of oil and the fourth largest reserves of natural gas in the world.

About 60% of U.S. crude oil imports are from Canada, and 85% of U.S. electricity imports are from Canada.

Canada is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the U.S. and has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and investing in for national security.

“I will always be straight about the challenges we have to face and the choices we must make,” Carney said. “To be clear, we won’t transform our economy easily or in a few months - it will take some sacrifices and some time.”

Trade war tensions resurface: Global markets on edge

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global markets were rattled this week as U.S.–China trade tensions flared again, with President Trump announcing tariffs as high as 130% on Chinese goods and threatening an additional 100% levy, while Beijing tightened export controls on rare earth minerals critical to defense and technology supply chains. The escalation, which ends months of relative calm, has heightened fears of supply disruptions ahead of a planned meeting between Trump and President Xi later this month. In Japan, political uncertainty following Komeito’s coalition exit pressured equities, even as the Bank of Japan kept rates at 0.5% and moved cautiously toward policy normalization. Meanwhile, gold surged back toward record highs above \$4,200/oz, fueled by safe-haven demand, central bank buying, and expectations of U.S. rate cuts amid mounting financial and political uncertainty. While U.S. Equities saw a sharp decline earlier in the week following tariff announcements.

**North America**

**Fed Chair Powell Speaks**

At the NABE meeting in Philadelphia, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said U.S. economic activity is slightly stronger than expected but warned that risks to employment are increasing. He noted that while unemployment remains low, job growth has slowed sharply due to weaker labor force expansion from lower immigration and participation rates. Powell described the labor market as “less dynamic and somewhat softer,” signaling greater downside risks to jobs. He also suggested the Fed may end its balance-sheet runoff soon as liquidity tightens, cautioning the delaying policy adjustments could worsen the effects of tariffs and job losses amid growing data uncertainty.

**Trump Escalates Tariff War with China**

President Donald Trump has reignited U.S.–China trade tensions by announcing a sweeping 130% tariff on Chinese imports, a dramatic escalation that threatens to upend months of fragile truce between the two economies. The new measure, revealed in an Oct. 11 statement, adds to the 30% tariffs already in effect and signals Washington’s hardening stance amid Beijing’s tightening export controls on rare earths and critical technology inputs. Markets reacted sharply, with fears of renewed supply chain disruptions and rising consumer costs. While Trump has occasionally softened his approach in the past, this move underscores the ongoing volatility in the global trade landscape and highlights the deep interdependence between the world’s two largest economies.

The Greenback was last seen trading at 98.433

**Europe**

**Lagarde Says ECB Well Positioned for Future Shocks**

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde signaled confidence in the eurozone’s

| Previous Week Levels |        |        |        |        | This Week’s Expected Range |         | 3-Month |
|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Currencies           | Open   | Low    | High   | Close  | Minimum                    | Maximum | Forward |
| EUR                  | 1.1686 | 1.1650 | 1.1728 | 1.1651 | 1.1540                     | 1.1730  | 1.1711  |
| GBP                  | 1.3436 | 1.3388 | 1.3471 | 1.3424 | 1.3250                     | 1.3500  | 1.3423  |
| JPY                  | 150.39 | 149.36 | 150.63 | 150.62 | 150.00                     | 152.60  | 149.26  |
| CHF                  | 0.7924 | 0.7870 | 0.7936 | 0.7929 | 0.7900                     | 0.8080  | 0.7847  |

policy stance, saying borrowing costs are at appropriate levels to withstand global turbulence. Speaking at the IMF’s annual meetings in Washington, Lagarde noted that risks to inflation and growth have become more balanced, with both inflation and interest rates currently at 2%. She emphasized that the ECB is “in a good place” and well prepared to face future shocks, underscoring that policymakers are comfortable with the current economic backdrop even amid heightened trade tensions and global uncertainty.

The EUR/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.1651

**United Kingdom**

**UK GDP Shows Minimal Growth Amid Slow Services Sector**

UK GDP grew by a minimal 0.1% in August, matching low expectations. This sluggish performance was a mix, with growth in production offset by a decline in construction and no growth in the services sector. This continues a trend of slowing growth throughout 2025, following a stronger start to the year. Economists predict this weaker momentum will persist for the rest of the year. A key question is how the Bank of England (BOE) will respond. While there is an argument for cutting interest rates to stimulate the economy, the bank is cautious because inflation remains stubbornly high. Officials are likely to wait for clear signs that inflation, particularly in the services sector, is falling more significantly before cutting rates again. Furthermore, the government’s upcoming Autumn Budget, which may include tax rises and spending cuts, adds another layer of uncertainty that could further dampen economic growth.

The GBP/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.3424

**Asia-Pacific**

**Australia Unemployment Rate Rises in September**

Australia’s unemployment rate rose to 4.5% in September 2025, the highest since November 2021 and above market expectations of 4.3%, as the number of jobseekers climbed by 33,900 to 684,000. Both part-time (+23,500) and full-time (+10,400) unemployment increased. Employment grew modestly by 14,900 to a record 14.64 million, below forecasts of a 17,000 gain, following a revised 11,800 drop in August. Full-time jobs rose by 8,700 and part-time by 6,300,

while the participation rate ticked up to 67.0%, slightly above expectations. The underemployment rate also edged higher to 5.9% from 5.7%, indicating lingering labor market softness despite record employment levels.

The AUD/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 0.6494.

**China Consumer Price Index Falls Below Expectations**

China’s consumer prices fell 0.3% year-on-year in September 2025, marking a deeper decline than expected but a slight improvement from August’s 0.4% drop. The fall was driven mainly by a sharp 4.4% slump in food prices, the largest since January 2024. Non-food inflation accelerated to 0.7%, aided by government trade-in programs and modest gains across housing, clothing, healthcare, and education, while transport costs declined at a slower pace. Core inflation (excluding food and energy) rose to 1.0%, the highest in 19 months, signaling underlying price stability. Month-on-month, CPI edged up 0.1%, below forecasts of a 0.2% increase.

The USD/CNY currency pair was last seen trading at 7.1264.

**Japan Faces Political Uncertainty Amid BoJ Steady Policy**

Japanese markets weakened this week as political instability added pressure on sentiment, with the Nikkei 225 down 1% and the Topix off 0.7% following Komeito’s exit from the ruling coalition. The Bank of Japan recently held rates steady at 0.5%, its highest level since 2008, while signaling gradual policy normalization through asset sales. Despite moderate recovery supported by employment and consumption, exports and industrial output remain subdued, and inflation continues to hover between 2.5% and 3%. Uncertainty around Prime Minister candidate Sanae Takaichi’s agenda, combined with U.S. tariff risks, has tempered optimism, leaving investors cautious over Japan’s growth outlook.

The USD/JPY currency pair was last seen trading at 150.62

**Kuwait**

**Kuwaiti Dinar**

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30525.

UK watchdog targets Apple & Google over market power

LONDON, Oct 23, (AP): Britain’s antitrust watchdog on Wednesday targeted Google and Apple for their “strategic” roles in mobile ecosystems, opening the door for regulators to impose changes to their business practices to improve competition.

The Competition and Markets Authority escalated scrutiny of the two U.S. tech companies by labeling them with “strategic market status.” It follows separate investigations that the CMA opened at the start of the year into Google’s Android and Apple’s iOS using newly acquired digital market regulations designed to protect consumers and businesses from unfair practices by Big Tech companies.

The regulator’s decision was expected. It proposed the classifications in July but sought feedback before releasing its final decision.

Google called the decision “disappointing, disproportionate and unwarranted,” and has contended previously that Android has saved app developers money because they didn’t have to adapt to different operating models for each smartphone.

“Following the CMA’s decision today, our mobile business in the UK faces a set of new - and, as of yet, uncertain - rules,” said Oliver Bethell, senior competition director at Google. “The CMA’s next steps will be crucial if the UK’s digital markets regime is to meet its promise of being pro-growth and pro-innovation.”

Google was already given the “strategic market status” designation earlier this month, when the CMA wielded its new powers for the first time by targeting the company’s role in a separate investigation into the online search advertising market.

The CMA says being labeled with “strategic market status” doesn’t imply any wrongdoing. But it means the watchdog has the power to use targeted measures to open up competition and ensure consumers and businesses are treated fairly.

The watchdog has said Apple and Google hold an “effective duopoly,” with 90-100% of mobile devices in Britain running on either mobile platform. Its investigation found a range of concerns affecting businesses and consumers such as unpredictable app reviews, inconsistent app store search rankings and commissions on in-app purchases of as much as 30%.

The CMA had unveiled separate “road maps” for each company outlining possible measures to improve competition, including “fair and transparent” app reviews and app store rankings to give British app developers “certainty.”

The watchdog had also recommended letting app developers “steer” users to channels outside of app stores where users can make purchases, mirroring similar efforts by the European Union.

Apple has said it was worried the CMA’s moves could pose increase risks for users and jeopardize the U.K.’s “developer economy.”

# What's On

## SPOTLIGHT

**Got a birthday or event?**

Share your story and snapshots with Arab Times!  
Email your write-up and photos to  
[arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com](mailto:arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com)  
We'll feature it on our What's On page!



Panel highlights early detection, risks, and patient support

## Kuwait Airways organizes panel discussion on breast cancer awareness



Part of the discussion panel.



A group photo of the lecturers and recovering patients with Kuwait Airways employees.

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Kuwait Airways organized a panel discussion to mark the Breast Cancer Awareness Month, in collaboration with the Kuwait Cancer Control Center. The company hosted various medical specialists and breast cancer survivors, who shared insights on the risks associated with breast cancer, highlighted the importance and benefits of early detection, and raised awareness on the recovery and coping techniques.

Kuwait Airways places special emphasis on supporting women by raising awareness and educating them through various methods and channels, ensuring the message reaches as many people as possible. This reflects the company's recognition of women's vital role in society and its commitment to implementing its social responsibility programs.

Kuwait Airways emphasizes the importance of raising awareness about breast cancer, one of the most prevalent diseases affecting women. Awareness efforts extend beyond early detection and treatment, encompassing the psychological and social support that patients need throughout their journey. The panel discussion also aimed to highlight the risks associated with breast cancer, an ongoing risk to women's health, and to encourage regular screening as a key measure in reducing the likelihood of developing the disease.

This initiative is part of Kuwait Airways' annual campaign, conducted across all departments, to raise awareness among its female employees and engage the community on the risks of breast cancer, prevention methods, and the importance of early detection.

Kuwait Airways has a long-standing history of pioneering initiatives in support of the healthcare sector. The company is committed to provide various forms of support to the national healthcare system by assisting healthcare institutions and organizations. The company also regularly organizes multi-purpose awareness campaigns and activities aimed at promoting health education and encouraging healthy behaviors and lifestyles within the community.

The discussion panel witnessed active engagement and interaction from all participants, who raised important questions about breast cancer, methods of prevention, and ways to maintain public health. The panelists also expressed their sincere appreciation to the Kuwait Cancer Control Center delegation for their generous participation and valuable contributions to the session.

Marking 25 years of World Goa Day with heritage and culture

## Goan Cultural Centre to organize grand World Goa Day '25 celebration in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: The Goan Cultural Centre (GCC), Kuwait, is all set to host a grand celebration of World Goa Day 2025, marking the 25th glorious anniversary of this global event that unites Goans across continents in a shared love for their heritage, language, and vibrant culture.

World Goa Day is a heartfelt tribute to the historic recognition of Konkani as an official language of India's Constitution – a moment that forever preserved the soul of Goa's identity.

Under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Carmo Santos, President of Goan Cultural Centre – Kuwait, this year's celebration carries special pride, as GCC takes on the honor of hosting World Goa Day in its true global spirit for the very first time.

With a passionate team, dedicated members, and enthusiastic supporters, the event promises to be a memorable and soul-stirring experience for everyone who calls Goa home, near or far.

'Injunktion', Goa's very own power-packed band led by the sensational Genevieve D'Souza, will be jetting in especially to rock the stage with their electrifying performance.

Fueling the festive spirit, Goa's dynamic MC Felly Gomes will bring his trademark energy and wit to keep the crowd on their toes throughout



Carmo Santos, President of Goan Cultural Centre

the celebration.

Adding sparkle to the evening, delegates from Goa and around the world will join the festivities – a heartwarming reunion of Goans bound by nostalgia, pride, and unity.

The event will also feature captivating audio-visual presentations crafted by Kuwait's own talented Goan, T-Bush, adding a creative flair that promises to dazzle audiences and evoke cherished Goan memories.

The day promises non-stop fun – a vibrant blend of indoor and outdoor activities, lively stalls, and entertaining games for all ages.

Kicking off the festivities will be a thrilling 3-a-side football tie-breaker at 10 a.m., setting the tempo for an unforgettable day.



With fabulous gifts and exciting prizes up for grabs, it's a celebration no Goan in Kuwait will want to miss!

Together, this celebration will echo the essence of Goa – its language, music, laughter, and unbreakable bond that transcends borders.

**Multi-medal winner in Kuwait**

## FAIPS-DPS's Kamal to represent India at 3rd Asian Youth Games

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Nihal Kamal, a talented young athlete from Kuwait, has been selected to represent India in the 3rd Asian Youth Games, which will be held in Bahrain from October 22nd to 31st.

Over 12 days, in an Olympic-style sporting extravaganza, 8,000 young athletes from 45 Asian countries will compete in various events. Nihal will represent India in the 100m race and the 1000m medley relay.

Following his participation in the 40th National Junior Athletics Championship in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Nihal is currently training at the National Coaching Camp in Delhi. Earlier this month, he also received specialized training at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Bangalore Campus.

He has been selected by the Athletics Federation of India under the aegis of the Indian Olympic Association. He will depart for Bahrain shortly from Delhi with Indian Athletics team.

At just 16 years old, Nihal achieved an impressive 4th position in the U18 National Championship.

He has competed in numerous national and state-level athletics championships across India, including the Khelo India Youth Games.

Representing Al Sahel Club in Kuwait, Nihal has also earned mul-



Nihal Kamal

iple medals in Kuwait's national-level youth athletics competitions organized by the Kuwait Athletics Federation.

A Class 12 student at FAIPS – DPS Kuwait, Nihal has consistently demonstrated his athletic talent both at school and national levels in India and Kuwait. He holds the meet records for both the 100m and 200m races in the CBSE Kuwait Cluster and has emerged as the individual champion in the Kuwait CBSE Cluster for the last three consecutive years.

Nihal's exceptional talent, dedication, and hard work have earned him this prestigious opportunity to represent India on the international stage. He is the son of Mohammed Kamal and Raheena Kamal.



Group photo during the workshop.

## The Desert Pioneers Toastmasters Club hosts finance and leadership workshops

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: In an effort to promote professional growth and practical learning, Desert Pioneers Toastmasters Club successfully conducted two impactful workshops, "Finance Made Easy – From Numbers to Insight" and "Active Listening for Leaders – The Secret to Building Strong Relationships and Reducing Misunderstandings." The sessions were designed to equip participants with essential business and leadership skills that drive both personal and organizational success.

The first workshop, Finance Made Easy, was led by Mr. Salim Desai, Group CFO of Al Razzi Holding Co., Kuwait. Known for his expertise in strategic finance and M&A, Mr. Desai simplified complex financial concepts and connected them to real-world business decisions. Participants gained a clear understanding of financial statements, ratios, and how day-to-day decisions influence profitability and cash flow.

The second workshop, Active Listening for Leaders, was conducted by DTM Bindu John, Business Transformation Training Manager at Alshaya Group. Through an engaging and interactive session, DTM Bindu highlighted the importance of active listening as a cornerstone of effective leadership. Participants learned practical techniques to enhance

communication, build trust, and foster stronger professional relationships.

Both workshops were met with enthusiastic participation from professionals across various fields including managers, educators, entrepreneurs, and engineers who appreciated the sessions for their relevance, interactivity, and actionable insights. Certificates of participation and appreciation were presented to attendees and speakers in recognition of their contributions to the success of the event.

Desert Pioneers Toastmasters Club, part of Toastmasters International, is a dynamic community dedicated to developing public speaking, communication, and leadership skills. The club provides a supportive platform where members can learn by doing, receive constructive feedback, and grow in confidence. Through meetings, contests, and community workshops, Desert Pioneers continues to inspire individuals to become effective communicators and impactful leaders.

By offering skill-building sessions and practical learning opportunities, the club aims to empower individuals, nurture talent, and contribute positively to both professional and personal development in the wider community.

## KDNA hosts Grand Onam 2025 celebration

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: The Kozhikode District NRI Association (KDNA) celebrated Onam 2025 in grand style on October 17 at the Kabd desert area, creating an unforgettable experience for the Malayali community in Kuwait.

KDNA President Santhosh Punathil presided over the cultural gathering, which was inaugurated by Sharafudheen Kanneth, Chief Executive Officer of Medex Medical Group, Azeem Sait Sulaiman, Head of Operations and Business Development at Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Group, was the chief guest.

Among the distinguished guests were Parash Patidar, Marketing Manager of Al Mulla Exchange; Afsal Khan, Country Head of Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Hamza Payyanur, Chairman of Metro Medical Center; and Moitheenkutty, representative of Lulu Hypermarket.

KDNA Advisory Board Member Basheer Batha delivered the Onam message. Greetings were also extended by Nixon George, Business Coordinator, Asianet News Middle East; Sai Appukuttan, Advisory Board Member Krishnan Kadalundi; Women's Forum President Leena Rahman; Fahaeel Area President Rauf Payyoli; Abbasia Area President Thulaseedharan-Thottakkara; Farwaniya Area President ShajahanThazhathuveetil; and Salmiya Area President Sameer K.T.

Outstanding students among KDNA members' children who achieved top marks in Classes 10 and 12 board examinations – Haya Safana A.K., Syb-ak Jah M.K., and Salfa M.P. – were honored at the event. The mementos and cash awards were presented by SharafudheenKanneth, AzeemSaitSu-



Photos during the event.

laiman and Women's Forum General Secretary Sandhya Shijith.

A highlight of the celebration was the Thiruvathira performance presented by KDNA Women's Forum members on a specially arranged stage in the Kabd desert – a rare and memorable experience for all. Various cultural programs followed, including classical dances, children's traditional fashion show, Malayali Manka competition, and children's singing performances.

Judges Nixon George and Brinda Krishnan were felicitated with mementos by President Santhosh Punathil and Women's Forum President

Leena Rahman. Medals for children who participated in cultural events were distributed under the leadership of Joint Convener Abdurahman M.P. and Women's Forum Treasurer SajithaNaseer, with support from Central Committee and Women's Forum Executive members.

The musical show, organized by Halwas Events lead by Sameer Vellayil, received high praise for its quality and entertainment. The grand Onam Sadya (traditional feast) was coordinated by Ramchandran Peringolam, Ashraf M., Anudeep, VijeshVelayudhan, and RajeesSrankintakam.

## Boone's new film misses the mark with uneven story

# Tragedy and romance with a dose of corn in 'Regretting You'

LOS ANGELES, Oct 23, (AP): They have cup holders at the multiplex. But as yet, they have not installed Kleenex holders.

That might have been a good idea once it was clear that director Josh Boone was going to helm another adaptation of a popular YA novel, this time "Regretting You" by Colleen Hoover. As fans may recall, Boone's "The Fault in Our Stars" sent millions of overactive tear ducts and sniffly noses into overdrive. It would have been good to have a whole box of tissues at hand.

Of course, that story was about not only about teen love but teen cancer. It was hard not to cry just thinking about it, let alone seeing it. "Regretting You," a tragicomic intergenerational romance adapted by Susan McMartin, has its share of grief. But the strange way the tears give way to smiles, quips and then full-on rom-com cominess feels a little awkward - and then just weird and annoying. It's a two-Kleenex ride, at most - definitely not the whole box.

Allison Williams and Dave Franco play Morgan and Jonah, and when we first meet them in high school, they have definite chemistry (they also look like they're around 30, despite some de-aging). But Jonah's dating Morgan's sister Jenny, and Morgan is with Jonah's buddy Chris. This prelude, at a teen gathering on the beach, introduces us to the quartet but also informs us of Morgan's unexpected pregnancy, which she's just discovered in a convenience store restroom.

"How did we end up with our exact opposites?" Jonah asks on the beach, as hunky Chris parties and gets drunk, along with Morgan's fun-loving sister.

And then 17 years later, we meet the foursome again. We're more than a little disappointed to know that the couples remained intact - sort of. Did Morgan really marry the boyfriend who told her on the beach that she was more fun when drunk? Yes, Morgan married Chris. And sister Jenny is with Jonah (bespectacled and dark and twisty, as Meredith Grey might say) - but only because a one-night stand has led to a baby, which they're co-parenting.

Then there's the other baby - Morgan's daughter Clara (Mckenna Grace), about to turn 17, lovely, smart and aiming for drama school. There's some conflict with



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Mason Thames, (right), and McKenna Grace in a scene from 'Regretting You.' (AP)

her mother about this ambition, though like so much here, it really doesn't ring true that Morgan, as portrayed by the always-appealing Williams, would oppose such a thing. But whatever. Who are we to question the stuff between teen daughters and their moms, right?

Then Miller turns up. Known as the coolest guy in school (believable) but also

a slightly sketchy sort (not believable), Miller, played sweetly by Mason Thames, enters Clara's life when he hitches a ride with her. She knows he has a girlfriend, but is smitten. Theirs is a rocky road to love. Kidding! Only a few pesky pebbles stand in the way, seemingly meant to take up pages in a meandering script. (He breaks up with the girlfriend. He reunites with the girlfriend! He breaks up with the girlfriend again. He's a little angry! He's fine again.)

But back to the main event: Everyone is coexisting with a minimum of turbulence ... until tragedy happens, leaving a jagged streak of grief that cuts across the family. Hoover's readers will know what we're talking about. So, partial spoiler alert: An accident cuts down the character list. And throws every single relationship into turmoil.

It's hard to discuss much of this without further spoilers, but let's just say we have the requisite zigs and zags but literally no real suspense. Along the way, the wittiest moment is when Jonah's baby finds himself on a shopping cart in the supermarket wedged between large bottles of white wine, with which Morgan is self-medicating. Speaking of medication, one assumes the cheery line, "Acetaminophen always helps!" was written before it became a political statement.

Last year's adaptation of Hoover's "It Ends With Us," directed by Justin Baldoni as you may have heard, was a big hit, and so expectations have been considerable for "Regretting You." There are some sweet kisses (otherwise, it's very chaste) and some nice declarations of motherly devotion (credit to Williams for doing her best) but the cheese factor is regrettably high. And the whole thing ends with a wrap-it-all-up scene so corny, I literally felt myself blush in the darkness of the multiplex.

If there had been a box of Kleenex beside me rather than a Diet Coke, I would have covered my eyes.

"Regretting You," a Paramount Pictures release, has been rated PG-13 "for sexual content, teen drug and alcohol use, and brief strong language." Running time: 117 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

## Music

### Super Bowl gig

## Bad Bunny show will go on – NFL

NEW YORK, Oct 23, (AP): The NFL is not considering dropping **Bad Bunny** as its Super Bowl halftime headline performer, Commissioner Roger Goodell said Wednesday, reaffirming a decision to put the Grammy-winning Puerto Rican artist on the league's biggest stage that led to criticism from US President Donald Trump and some of his supporters.



Bad Bunny

Goodell addressed the Bad Bunny controversy at his news conference following the annual fall owners meeting. It is the first time he has commented on the move announced in late September that garnered worldwide attention, including an increase in streams of Bad Bunny's music, along with backlash.

"It's carefully thought through," Goodell said. "I'm not sure we've ever selected an artist where we didn't have some blowback or criticism. It's pretty hard to do when you have literally hundreds of millions of people that are watching."

The 31-year-old born Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio has been vocal in his opposition to Trump and his policies. He decided to do a 31-day residency in Puerto Rico, avoiding stops in the mainland US, citing concerns about the mass deportation of Latinos.

He performs in Spanish and is expected to do so at the Super Bowl.

"We're confident it's going to be a great show," Goodell said, acknowledging there could be more talent added to the lineup along with Bad Bunny. "He understands the platform that he's on, and I think it's going to be exciting and a united moment."

The San Francisco 49ers are hosting the Super Bowl on Feb. 8 at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California. It is unclear if Trump plans to be there, though he has made appearing in person at major sporting events a significant part of his second term in the White House.

Trump in an interview on conservative news network Newsmax said he had "never heard of" Bad Bunny.

"I don't know who he is," Trump said. "I don't know why they're doing it. It's, like, crazy. And then they blame it on some promoter they hired to pick up entertainment. I think it's absolutely ridiculous." Goodell defended the decision on Wednesday, explaining it was made because of Bad Bunny's immense popularity.

"He's one of the leading and most popular entertainers in the world," Goodell said. "That's what we try to achieve. It's an important stage for us. It's an important element to the entertainment value."

Echoing what senior VP of football operations Troy Vincent said Tuesday, Goodell said there has not been much discussion about the tush push quarterback sneak since an effort to ban it narrowly failed to pass in the spring.

Vincent said the primary concern is how tough it is to officiate the maneuver that the Philadelphia Eagles have successfully executed so often. It was not on the formal agenda at this meeting, though owners did get an update on penalties and other football matters.

## Film



This image released by Focus Features shows Emma Stone in a scene from 'Bugonia.' (AP)

### Lanthimos at his best in new thriller

# 'Bugonia' is a darkly comic gut punch

By Jake Coyle

The twisted filmography of Yorgos Lanthimos has by now trained us to expect darkly comic visions of contemporary life, both savage and mundane. His movies have perhaps inspired the most "What?!" reactions of the last decade, partly because they've tried so hard to do so.

His movies - farces, fables, experiments - reside in surreal worlds of their own. But his latest, "Bugonia," is thrillingly, if tragically, tied to our reality. It might even be his best film. Though I've been apprehensive about the flamboyant severity of Lanthimos' movies, I found "Bugonia," a chamber-piece gut punch, hard to shake. For starters, it's difficult to resist any movie with a line in it like: "There's Andromedan code all over your Instagram."

That's one of the things that Teddy (Jesse Plemons), an incel eco-terrorist, says to Michelle (Emma Stone) after kidnapping her with his neurodivergent cousin Donny (newcomer Aidan Delbis) and tying her up in their basement. Teddy and Donny live together in fairly remote, rundown old house. There, Teddy tends to both his bees and to unhinged conspiracy theories.

But as Plemons so deftly plays him, Teddy doesn't seem like a lunatic. He might reach wildly insane conclusions, such as that Michelle, a pharmaceutical company chief executive, is an alien. But he's thoughtful in nature and sweetly cares for his cousin. It's a feat of Plemons' innate good nature that we kind of like Teddy, even as he shaves Michelle's head, to prevent "it," as he calls her, from contacting the mothership.

The opening moments of the script by Will Tracy ("The Menu,"

episodes of "Succession") cast these demented shenanigans in an apocalyptic light. The fate of bees is much on Teddy's mind; colony collapse disorder, often caused by pesticides, is one of his talking points.

It's a phenomenon that, in "Bugonia" - a movie reckoning with, or maybe just lamenting, humanity's fate - isn't just for the bees.

While Stone's abilities alone might legitimize extraterrestrial suspicions, there's more to why Teddy has pinpointed Michelle. She's a lauded corporate leader; her office includes a framed Time magazine with her on the cover and a photograph with Michelle Obama. Her company, Auxolith, operates out of a sleek office building where Michelle presides over her workforce like a queen bee. She has the corporate lingo of "transparency" and "diversity" down pat, but whether she actually adheres to any of those ideals is dubious, at best. Before Teddy and Donny jump her, she announces a "new era" at Auxolith where employees leave at 5:30 p.m. But not if they haven't met their quota, she adds. And not if they're, you know, busy.

In that way, Michelle is a camera-ready cover for whatever Auxolith is up to, which, as the movie goes along, teases out a poisonous history, including opioid manufacturing that affected Teddy's mother (Alicia Silverstone).

The bulk of "Bugonia" is the ideological dialogue between her and Teddy back in the basement. It's a conversation, laced with contemporary divides, that is comical for its impossibility. One is addled by paranoia and extremism, the other knows only heartless corporate speak. Understanding each other is futile. Watch-

ing Stone, as Michelle, attempt to reason with Teddy is part of the movie's dark fun, just as is seeing Plemons' Teddy resolutely stick to his certainty that Michelle is part of an alien infiltration of Earth that he wants gone by the next lunar eclipse.

The source of such a wild narrative can only come, of course, from South Korea. "Bugonia" is loosely based on the 2003 Korean film "Save the Green Planet!" All of Lanthimos' most notable films before have been written with either Efthimis Filippou ("Dogtooth," "The Lobster") or Tony McNamara ("Poor Things," "The Favourite"). But, otherwise, "Bugonia" has the feel of a quick follow-up to last year's "Kinds of Kindness," a black-comedy trip-tych also led by Stone and Plemons.

Yet what could easily be mistaken for a tossed-off, in-between movie - there are only a handful of characters and a few scene locations - ends up feeling like a culmination-slash-nadir for Lanthimos. Having made a dozen films darkly satirizing the sad, primal folly of humankind, it's comeuppance time in "Bugonia."

The movie drags in the middle, when it's locked in a prisoner drama that grows a little tiresome and predictable. But the payoff is immense. Teddy calls his torture chamber "the headquarters of the human resistance." By the time "Bugonia" reaches its unforgettable finale, it's made chillingly clear just how feeble any such movement might be, and the movie's apocalyptic air of resignation, of fait accompli, sounds a chastening death knell.

"Bugonia," a Focus Features release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for bloody violent content including a suicide, grisly images and language. Running time: 118 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four. (AP)

## Variety

**SANTA FE, N.M.:** A lawsuit by actor **Alec Baldwin** alleging malicious prosecution in the 2021 fatal shooting of a cinematographer

on the set of the Western movie "Rust" has been reinstated and moved to federal court by the defendants.

Baldwin initially filed the lawsuit in state court in January, claiming civil rights violations and seeking damages after a charge of involuntary manslaughter against the actor was dismissed at trial in 2024 on allegations that police and prosecutors withheld evidence from the defense.

A petition to move the malicious prosecution case to federal court was filed Monday by the defendants - special prosecutor Kari Morrissey and Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altvies, along with three investigators from the Santa Fe County sheriff's office and the county board of commis-



Baldwin

sioners.

The change of court venue raises the stakes in Baldwin's years-long conflict with New Mexico authorities. Here are some things to know.

Baldwin, the lead actor and co-producer for "Rust," was pointing a gun at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during a rehearsal on a movie set outside Santa Fe in October 2021 when the revolver went off, killing Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza.

Baldwin has said he pulled back the hammer - but not the trigger - and the revolver fired. (AP)

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**NEW YORK:** Decades into his career and the unthinkable happened. It was 2022, and Jon Bon Jovi began struggling through his songs. He saw a doctor who said one of his vocal cords was atrophying. He needed major surgery.

Bon Jovi had the procedure, and in the years since, has undergone extensive rehab, leading to the current moment: Next summer his band, Bon Jovi, will embark on their first tour in four years.

The "Forever Tour" kicks off with four nights at New York's Madison Square Garden before the band heads to Edinburgh, Scot-

land; Dublin and London.

"There is a lot of joy in this announcement - joy that we can share these nights together with our amazing fans and joy that the band can be together," Bon Jovi said in a statement. "I've spoken extensively on my gratitude but I will say it again, I'm deeply grateful that the fans and the brotherhood of this band have been patient and allowed me the time needed to get healthy and prepare for touring. I'm ready and excited!" (AP)

□ □ □

**MADRID:** Madrid's mayor on Wednesday rebuked Spanish pop star Rosalia for briefly unleashing pandemonium earlier this week by convening a flash mob that prompted riot police to control the rowdy, impromptu gathering.

The Barcelona-born singer and songwriter gave about an hour's notice to her social media followers that she would be downtown Monday night to promote the launch of her new album, "Lux". Thousands of people flocked there in time to see the Grammy winner make a quick appearance while the album cover was shown on a large screen. Fans chased after Rosalia along a busy main road as she dashed from a car and into a hotel. (AP)

Speculation swirls over \$100m valuables

Louvre’s stolen jewels could end up on the market

NEW YORK, Oct 23, (AP): Just days after a stunning heist at the Louvre Museum in Paris, speculation is growing around where the lavish, stolen jewels that once adorned France’s royals might end up.

A handful of experts warn that the artifacts valued at more than \$100 million (88 million euros) could soon - if not already - be melted or broken into parts. If done successfully, some say those smaller pieces could later go up for sale as part of a new necklace, earrings or other jewelry, without turning too many heads.

“You don’t even have to put them on a black market, you just put them in a jewelry store,” said Erin Thompson, an art crime professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. “It could be sold down the street from the Louvre.”

Thompson and others say that this has become increasingly common with stolen jeweled and metal goods, noting that it’s a way thieves can try to cover their tracks and make money. It’s not like someone could publicly wear one of France’s Crown Jewels stolen on Sunday - and finding a market to sell the full artifacts would be incredibly difficult after “everyone and their sister” has seen photos of them over the last week, said Christopher Marinello, a lawyer and founder of Art Recovery International.

“By breaking them apart, they will hide their theft,” Marinello said, adding that these items could become even more “traceless” if they’re taken out of

France and through jewel cutters and robust supply chains in other countries.

Still, such pieces are often sold for a fraction of the value of what was stolen - due to their smaller size, but also because melting or breaking down high-profile items removes the historical worth.

It isn’t a simple process.

“The real art in an art heist isn’t the stealing, it’s the selling,” explained Robert Wittman, former senior investigator of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s art crime team. Wittman, who has since formed his own private practice, said that the individuals behind such heists are typically “better criminals or thieves than they are businessmen.”

Unlike others, Wittman is skeptical about Sunday’s thieves successfully monetizing the artifacts they stole from the Louvre - which include an emerald necklace and earrings, two crowns, two brooches, a sapphire necklace and a single earring worn by 19th-century royals. He notes the gems may still be identifiable by their clarity, for example, and gold that was refined when the pieces were made hundreds of years ago is not as pure as what’s typically in demand today.

“Because of what they are, there’s really no point destroying them,” Wittman said, while pointing to the risks of selling such high-profile stolen goods.

Scott Guginsky, executive vice president of the

Jewelers’ Security Alliance, a nonprofit trade association focused on preventing jewelry crime, also notes the age and quality of the artifacts’ diamonds. He suspects they’re probably not graded.

“It’s not something that you can move on the open market. It’s nothing that can go through an auction house,” said Guginsky, who used to run the New York Police Department’s organized theft squad.

Given the amount of preparation that the thieves likely put into this, Guginsky believes they have a plan for selling the jewels, even if they might first decide to “sit on” the jewelry and wait out suspicion.

“I can’t see them stealing it without having an idea what they want to do,” he said. “There’s always a person willing to buy stolen jewelry. No matter what it is, somebody will buy it.”

Sara Yood, CEO and general counsel of the Jewelers Vigilance Committee, notes most jewelry businesses implement anti-money laundering programs and look out for red flags like unusual orders, repeated purchases and requests for secrecy.

Still, she and others say the age of some jewels - if broken down effectively - could actually make it harder to track. Newer gemstones, for example, sometimes carry a laser inscription inside that can be evaluated in a lab. But “because these are historical pieces, it’s rather unlikely that it has those identifying features,” noted Yood.



Max Lester, (from left), Arabella Stanton and Frankie Treadaway pose for a portrait to promote the Audible ‘Harry Potter’ series in London on July 20, 2025. (AP)

New audio drama

New Harry Potter trio want to tell you a tale

LONDON, Oct 23, (AP): If you listen carefully, you can hear the noise of chocolate frogs flying through the air on the Hogwarts Express.

Hermione Granger gasps with delight as Ron Weasley catches the sweet treat thrown his way by Harry Potter, as all three travel home after an eventful first year at the wizarding school.

This isn’t the now-vintage, Daniel Radcliffe-era movies, it’s not the “Cursed Child” play and neither is it the forthcoming HBO TV series. What you’re hearing is a brand-new cast in a new Audible recording of J.K. Rowling’s seven books.

The legacy of Harry Potter might have been clouded by headlines surrounding Rowling’s comments on gender and opposition to trans rights, but it hasn’t stopped production on new projects set in the wizarding universe. The Associated Press visited the London recording studio for a “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone” session in the summer, as young actors Frankie Treadaway, Max Lester and Arabella Stanton lay down walla - background noise that’s used to bring the stories to life. The young trio voice Harry, Ron and Hermione in the first three audiobook adaptations, before an older cast takes over.

Instead of listening to someone like Jim Dale or Stephen Fry telling the whole story alone, this new audio production - the first book releases Nov. 4 - has a full, high-wattage cast. While Cush Jumbo narrates, Hugh Laurie is Albus Dumbledore, Riz Ahmed portrays Professor Snape and Michelle Gomez brings Professor McGonagall’s Scottish lilt to life. Matthew Macfadyen voices Voldemort, and Keira Knightley appears later in the series as Dolores Umbridge.

But it’s Stanton who is pulling double duty in the Potterverse: The 11-year-old is also starring as the studious and brave Hermione Granger in the HBO show.

“I can’t say much, because they’ve cast a Mumblewimble tongue-tying spell on me,” Stanton apologizes. “But I’ve just started filming, and it’s great at the moment.”

AP sat down with Treadaway, 14, Lester, 13, and Stanton to find out the snacks required to keep them going, their introductions to the wizarding world and how they feel about acting. The conversation has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**AP:** What were the auditions like?

**Treadaway, (Harry):** You really got like, a taste of what it was going to be like, also in the studio and even the scenes.

**AP:** Had you done anything like this before?

**Lester (Ron):** I did some audio before, yeah, but I mean nothing as professional as this is.

**AP:** How does this compare to your stage work?

**Stanton (Hermione):** It’s just very, very different, but I suppose the similar thing is that, because you want to make your voice come alive, I think you ... sort of act as you’re saying the lines to give the words some color.

**AP:** How’s the recording going so far?

**Lester:** Lovely people, great food and great experience.

**AP:** What’s your favorite food when you’re working?

**Treadaway,:** The snack cupboard and the chocolate fridge.

**Lester:** The chocolate fridge is dedicated to chocolate.

**STANTON:** It’s filled with snacks.

**Treadaway,:** They have to restock every time I go.

**AP:** Can you remember the first time you ever heard about Harry Potter?

**Treadaway,:** I think it might have been when my sister was watching the movies chronologically and then for some reason I only decided to tag along for the last one.

**AP:** Did you go back to the beginning?

**Treadaway,:** I don’t think I did, because I was like, “Oh, I can’t watch this, this is a 12 (rating),” so I had to wait till I was 12 to watch them.

**Stanton:** My friends had started all reading all the books and everything and they were like, “Oh have you heard Harry Potter this, Harry Potter that?” And so I was like,

right I’m going to start reading the books. So I think when I was 8 I started reading the first one. Sort of just worked my way through them and yeah it was great, I’ve loved Harry Potter. I love it.

**Lester:** I saw this book in Waterstones and everyone said that it was quite popular. It was like one of the bestsellers. So my mum bought it for me and I read the book and it was just great.

**AP:** So what do your friends and family think about you voicing these characters? Have you been able to tell them?

**Lester:** I haven’t really told many of them, not really.

**Treadaway,:** I think those who know will never truly know actually what it’s about until they listen to it.

**Stanton:** I think I’ve told quite close family, sort of keeping it in a bubble. But they’ll never really understand because so much effort - I mean, the teams, all the amazing people behind it, they put in so much effort to make the audio series incredible.

**AP:** Have you got a favorite part of the stories?

**Treadaway,:** I can’t wait to hear how the battle scenes work because of all the SFX and all the sounds and all of the grunts and oohs and ahs and all that because I think that will sound really cinematic. ... It was very weird because I would stand there for a minute just grunting and I would feel so stupid.

**Stanton:** I can’t wait to hear all the spells because I think Hermione generally just says so many spells and I can’t wait to hear the sounds of people casting them, I just love spells.

**Lester:** My favorite part that I’m looking forward to is just literally just to hear it all come together and for everyone to talk to each other because I feel like that’s going to be amazing.

**AP:** Are you like your characters in any way?

**Treadaway,:** That’s how I found it quite easy to just step into the character because I think I relate to them and I’m sure you guys do as well. ... I’m not like the biggest ego ever. ... Sometimes you’re the smaller person in the room and you just sometimes just mingle. I feel like I relate to Harry in that way.

**AP:** How about you and Hermione?

**Stanton:** I love books. I love writing, I love reading, I love doing all that kind of stuff. I mean, I like school, but I don’t love school. And I think ... books is the main connection between Hermione and I.

**AP:** How are you like Ron?

**Lester:** I think we both relate to each other because we’re quite cheeky and we love food. We love food! ... In moments, we’re both serious and we’re also not afraid to stand up for the people that we love or stand up for our friends because we always do the thing that’s right, and that’s kind of what I relate to, because I go into the deeper side of Ron, and not just the eating food and being cheeky.

**AP:** What’s your favorite kind of magical element?

**Lester:** My favorite kind of magical element is the spells. I think they’re just really cool. Like “stupefy” (the stunning spell) - I think that’s very, very cool.

**Stanton:** One of the main props that Hermione uses is the Time Turner. I love all the magical objects like the Invisibility Cloak, the Time Turner, all those things because ... (they’re) things you wouldn’t be able to use in real life, but in the magic world, it transports you into a completely different world.

**Treadaway:** The Polyjuice Potion, because when you record that, it’s like, you have to really hone in on the actual sound of turning into someone else, and that was one of my favorite magic parts of it.

**AP:** Are you aware of how much love there is for Harry Potter?

**Treadaway,:** I guess that’s sort of why you have a bit of pride in yourself knowing that such a big name and characters, you get to associate yourself with them. If you know what I mean, it gives you a little feeling inside your heart.

**AP:** What does it mean for you to be representing Ron?

**Lester:** It makes me proud, honestly, to be representing such a great and funny character, but then also, I don’t know, it just makes me ... feel a part of this community.

Fashion



Hailey Wilson of Canada presents a creation during the Miss Earth 2025 Philippine Terno Fashion Show in Quezon City, the Philippines on Oct. 22. Miss Earth 2025 candidates participated in the fashion show featuring gowns made by Filipino designers in celebration of the beauty pageant's 25th anniversary. The coronation night of Miss Earth 2025 will be held on Nov. 5. (Xinhua)

Ballet icon takes final bow to rapturous applause

Misty Copeland hangs up her pointe shoes

NEW YORK, Oct 23, (AP): Misty Copeland took one last spin on her pointe shoes Wednesday, showered with golden glitter and bouquets as she retired from American Ballet Theatre after a trailblazing career in which she became an ambassador for diversity in an overwhelmingly white art form.

Copeland, who a decade ago became the first Black female principal dancer in the company’s 75-year history, was feted at its star-studded fall gala at Manhattan’s Lincoln Center. Oprah Winfrey and Debbie Allen were among those who gave speeches of praise.

Winfrey spoke of the power of young people of color seeing Copeland lead iconic ballets like “Swan Lake.”

“Misty didn’t just perform ballet,” Winfrey said of the ballerina who has achieved a unique crossover fame. “She changed it. She redefined who belongs, who gets to be seen, and who gets to lead.”

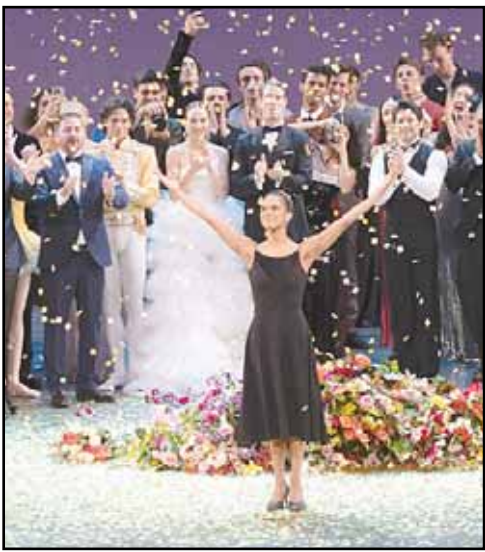
In a way, the gala was both a return and a departure for Copeland, 43. She was dancing with the company for the first time in five years. During that time, Copeland has been raising a son, Jackson, with her husband. The 3-year-old came onstage to hug his mother during curtain calls, wearing a tuxedo.

Copeland has also been continuing her career as an author - the second volume of her “Bunheads” series appeared in September - and working to increase diversity in the dance world with her namesake foundation, including “Be Bold,” an afterschool program designed for young children of color.

But she decided to dust off the pointe shoes so she could have one last spin on the ABT stage - including as Juliet, one of the most passionate roles in ballet and her personal favorite, Copeland’s Romeo in the balcony pas de deux was Calvin Royal III, who in 2020 became ABT’s first Black male principal dancer in two decades.

The duo later reappeared for another duet, this time a modern one, in “Wrecka Stow,” by Kyle Abraham. For Copeland’s final performance of the night, she performed Twyla Tharp’s “Sinatra Suite” with another of her favorite partners, Herman Cornejo.

The night, which also celebrated ABT’s 85th anniversary and was curated in large part by Copeland herself, included speeches and film clips about her career. And her fellow dancers performed excerpts



Dancer Misty Copeland, (center), takes a bow during curtain calls at her retirement performance from American Ballet Theatre at the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center, Wednesday, Oct. 22, in New York. (AP)

of ballets in her honor. At the end, a beaming Copeland was given a quintessential ballet farewell, as colleagues, teachers, friends and family came out to greet her, one by one, with hugs and bouquets while glittery confetti poured from the rafters.

Though Copeland has not closed the door on dancing altogether, it’s clear an era is ending.

“It’s been 25 years at ABT, and I think it’s time,” she told The Associated Press in an interview in June, when she announced her retirement. “It’s time for me to move to the next stage.”

She added: “You know, I’ve become the person that I am today, and have all the opportunities I have today, because of ballet, (and) because of American Ballet Theatre. I feel like this is me saying ‘thank

you’ to the company. So it’s a farewell. (But) it won’t be the end of me dancing. ... Never say never.”

On the carpet Wednesday before her performance, she said: “I feel good. I feel ready to take this next step.” She noted that she would be continuing her work promoting diversity: “There’s so much work and effort that has to be continuous.”

Allen told reporters that Copeland had “helped to redefine the face of ballet. She’s inspired millions of people around the world and hopefully, American Ballet Theatre will not wait another 50 years before they have another beautiful Black principal dancer.”

The evening at Lincoln Center’s David H. Koch Theater was streamed live to nearby Alice Tully Hall across the plaza, with attendance free to the public - another sign of Copeland’s unique brand of fame in the dance world.

Copeland was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and raised in San Pedro, California, where she lived in near poverty and through periods of homelessness as her single mother struggled to support her and five siblings.

For a future professional dancer, she came to ballet relatively late - at 13 - but soon excelled and went on to study at the San Francisco Ballet School and ABT on scholarship opportunities. After a stint in the junior company, Copeland joined ABT as a member of the corps de ballet in April 2001, becoming a soloist six years later.

In June 2015, Copeland was promoted to principal dancer. Unlike other promotions, which are announced quietly, Copeland’s was announced at a news conference - a testament to her celebrity. Only days before, she’d made a triumphant New York debut in “Swan Lake” in the starring role of Odette/Odile, drawing a diverse and enthusiastic crowd to the Metropolitan Opera House.

In the AP interview, Copeland acknowledged that it’s striking that when she leaves ABT, there will no longer be a Black female principal dancer at the company.

“It’s definitely concerning,” Copeland said. “I think I’ve just gotten to a place in my career where there’s only so much I can do on a stage. There’s only so much that visual representation ... can do. I feel like it’s the perfect timing for me to be stepping into a

standing up to those who spread malicious and defamatory falsehoods as they desperately try to get undeserved attention and money from their unlawful conduct.”(AP)



**NEW YORK:** The union representing Broadway’s musicians reached a tentative labor agreement with commercial producers on Thursday, averting a potentially crippling strike that would have silenced nearly two dozen musicals.

The American Federation of Musicians Local 802 - which represents 1,200 musicians - had threatened to strike if they didn’t have a new contract by the morning, after going into mediation Wednesday.

Early Thursday, the union said it had struck a tentative deal that includes wage increases and contribution increases to the health fund.

“This three-year agreement provides meaningful wage and health benefit increases that will preserve crucial access to healthcare for our musicians while maintaining the strong contract protections that em-

power musicians to build a steady career on Broadway.” AFM Local 802 President Bob Suttmann said in a statement. (AP)



**NEW YORK:** Social media platform Reddit sued the artificial intelligence company Perplexity AI and three other entities on Wednesday, alleging their involvement in an “industrial-scale, unlawful” economy to “scrape” the comments of millions of Reddit users for commercial gain.

Reddit’s lawsuit in a New York federal court takes aim at San Francisco-based Perplexity, maker of an AI chatbot and “answer engine” that competes with Google, ChatGPT and others in online search.

Also named in the lawsuit are Lithuanian data-scraping company Oxyllabs UAB, a web domain called AWMProxy that Reddit describes as a “former Russian botnet,” and Texas-based startup SerpApi, which lists Perplexity as a customer on its website. (AP)

Variety

**NEW YORK:** Author Michael Wolff claims in a lawsuit that First Lady **Melania Trump** threatened to sue him for over \$1 billion in damages if he didn’t retract Jeffrey Epstein-related statements he recently made about her.

Wolff sought unspecified damages in the lawsuit filed Tuesday in state Supreme Court in Manhattan.

Nicholas Clemens, a spokesperson for Melania Trump, issued a statement, saying: “First Lady Melania Trump is proud to continue



Trump

Anatomical success, vision still elusive

Full eye transplant a medical breakthrough: Dr. Al-Dhafiri

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

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Ophthalmology consultant Dr. Yousef Al-Dhafiri confirmed that the recent announcement about the successful transplantation of a complete human eye in the United States of America is a significant medical and research achievement worldwide, but it does not mean that sight is restored or blindness is cured.

In a press statement, Al-Dhafiri dis-

closed that the operation, performed by a team of researchers at NYU Langone Health, is the first of its kind globally and falls within the scope of advanced research experiments. He said surgeons were able to keep the transplanted eye anatomically alive by ensuring blood flow to it after the transplant. He was quick to add though that the patient has not yet been able to regain vision, and eye movement remains limited due to the challenges associated with success-

fully reconnecting the optic nerve and fine muscles.

He pointed out that “the goal of these operations at the current stage is primarily research, as medical teams seek to explore future possibilities for developing complex organ transplants and improving patients’ appearance. This step is not yet a practical method for restoring sight. The new technology may open the door for future use in cases of eye loss due to accidents or severe in-

juries. However, it is not an alternative to corneal or retinal transplants, which are currently used to improve vision in some cases.”

He emphasized that this is a major research accomplishment in the field of experimental ophthalmology, but it is still in its early stages. “We are witnessing a scientific step that gives hope for the future, but it has yet to reach the stage of restoring sight to patients,” he reiterated.



Ophthalmology consultant Dr. Yousef Al-Dhafiri



Thai officials show samples of illegally imported electronic waste from the United States which they said they seized at Bangkok Port during a press conference in Bangkok, Thailand, May 14, 2025. (AP)

Nations ill-equipped to handle toxic waste

‘Hidden tsunami’ of US e-waste flooding Southeast Asia: report

HANOI, Vietnam, Oct 23, (AP): Millions of tons of discarded electronics from the United States are being shipped overseas, much of it to developing countries in Southeast Asia unprepared to safely handle hazardous waste, according to a new report released Wednesday by an environmental watchdog.

The Seattle-based Basel Action Network, or BAN, said a two-year investigation found at least 10 US companies exporting used electronics to Asia and the Middle East, in what it says is a “hidden tsunami” of electronic waste.

“This new, almost invisible tsunami of e-waste, is taking place ... padding already lucrative profit margins of the electronics recycling sector while allowing a major portion of the American public’s and corporate IT equipment to be surreptitiously exported to and processed under harmful conditions in Southeast Asia,” the report said.

Electronic waste, or e-waste, includes discarded devices like phones and computers containing both valuable materials and toxic metals like lead, cadmium and mercury. As gadgets are replaced faster, global e-waste is growing five times quicker than it’s formally recycled.

The world produced a record 62 million metric tons in 2022. That’s expected to climb to 82 million by 2030, according to the United Nations’ International Telecommunication Union and its research arm, UNITAR.

That American e-waste adds to the burden for Asia, which already produces nearly half the world’s to-

tal. Much of it is dumped in landfills, leaching toxic chemicals into the environment. Some ends up in informal scrapyards, where workers burn or dismantle devices by hand, often without protection, releasing toxic fumes and scrap.

About 2,000 containers - roughly 33,000 metric tons (36,376 US tons) - of used electronics leave US ports every month, according to the report. It said the companies behind the shipments, described as “e-waste brokers,” typically don’t recycle the waste themselves but send it to companies in developing countries.

The companies identified in the report include Attan Recycling, Corporate eWaste Solutions or CEWS, Creative Metals Group, EDM, First America Metal Corp., GEM Iron and Metal Inc., Greenland Resource, IQA Metals, PPM Recycling and Semsotai.

Six of the companies didn’t immediately respond to emailed requests for comment.

Semsotai told The Associated Press that it doesn’t export scrap, only working components for reuse. It accused BAN of bias.

PPM Recycling told The Associated Press that its warehouses in California and Texas ship only aluminum and other non-iron metals to Malaysia. It said BAN had exaggerated shipment volumes, adding that it used accurate trade codes and followed US and international rules.

Greenland Resource told The Associated Press it took the allegations seriously and was reviewing the matter internally and couldn’t comment further

without seeing the report.

CEWS said it follows strict environmental standards, but some aspects of where and how recycled materials are handled are industrial secrets.

The report estimated that between January 2023 and February 2025, the 10 companies exported more than 10,000 containers of potential e-waste valued at over \$1 billion, the report said. Industrywide, such trade could top \$200 million a month.

Eight of the 10 identified companies hold R2V3 certifications - an industry standard meant to ensure electronics are recycled safely and responsibly, raising questions about the value of such a certification, the report said.

Several companies operate out of California, despite the state’s strict e-waste laws requiring full reporting and proper downstream handling of electronic and universal waste.

Many e-waste containers go to countries that have banned such imports under the Basel Convention, which is an international treaty that bars hazardous waste trade from non-signatories like the US, the only industrialized nation yet to ratify it.

The nonprofit said its review of government and private trade records from ships and customs officials showed shipments were often declared under trade codes that did not match those for electronic waste, such as “commodity materials” like raw metals or other recyclable goods to evade detection. Such classifications were “highly unlikely” given how the companies publicly describe their operations, the report said.

Children can have up to 10 viruses a year

During cold and flu season, the youngest kids are the germiest

NEW YORK, Oct 23, (AP): Forget colorful leaves. Any caregiver knows that the real signs of fall are kids with coughs, sneezes and sniffles.

Autumn marks the start of respiratory virus season, when colds, flu and other bugs start circulating - especially among the very young.

A recent study confirmed what many families intuitively know: The littlest students harbor the most germs.

Children in pre-kindergarten and elementary school showed highest rates of virus detection compared with older students and staff, according to research published in the journal *Pediatrics*.

“Young children can have up to 10 respiratory viruses a year as their immune systems are introduced to different infections for the first time,” said Dr. Jennifer Goldman, a pediatrician at Children’s Mercy hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, who co-led the study.

Goldman and her colleagues analyzed nasal swabs and symptom reports from more than 800 students and staff in a large school district in Kansas City from November 2022 to May 2023.

They found that overall, more than 85% of all participants had at least one respiratory virus detected during that time and more than 80% had an episode of acute respiratory illness - though not necessarily at the same time.

More telling, 92% of pre-K and elementary school kids had a virus detected, compared with about 86% of middle school students, about 77% of high school students and 76% of staff.

The pre-K kids, ages 3 to 5, had the highest rates of actual illness, too, the study found.

Most of the viruses were the kinds that cause the common cold, including rhinovirus, which was found in 65% of participants, and types of seasonal coronavirus detected in about 30%. The virus that causes COVID-19 was found in about 15% of those studied.

The new study provides a baseline



Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford visitor Sheila Garcia, 3, wears before visiting a patient at the hospital in Palo Alto, Calif., Oct. 19, 2009. (AP)

look at the burden of viruses in school settings, Goldman said.

It also confirms the real-world experience of pediatricians who are parents, like Dr. Nicole Torres of the University of Miami Health System.

“I can say this for my own children, who are now in their teens: They were sicker when they were younger,” she said.

The study also squares with older research that found that young kids play a key role in spreading respiratory viruses at home. Dr. Carrie Byington was co-author of a University of Utah study, published in 2015, that recruited 26 households to take nasal samples from everyone living in a home, every week, for a year.

That study found that children younger than 5 had virus detected for half of the weeks of the year, recalled Byington, who is now with the University of California, San Diego.

“And if you live in a household with multiple children, that proportion just

goes higher, so it can appear as if someone is always sick,” she said.

Preventing illness in children at school or at home can be tough, experts acknowledge.

Being up to date on vaccinations for COVID-19 and influenza is important, they said. So is frequent handwashing, learning to cover coughs and keeping hands away from the eyes, nose and mouth. Cleaning and sanitizing frequently touched surfaces and objects and optimizing fresh air are also key.

When little ones do get sick, the best treatment is often supportive care like extra fluids and rest. In serious cases, medical providers may recommend medications to reduce fever or antiviral drugs.

It can take a couple weeks, however, for lingering symptoms like coughs to completely resolve. By then, the child may well have another cold.

“I do tell parents of younger children to expect them to be ill once every month, every month and a half,” Torres said. “It’ll seem that way.”

mRNA shots show benefit in cancer care

COVID-19 vaccines may help some cancer patients fight tumors: study

WASHINGTON, Oct 23, (AP): The most widely used COVID-19 vaccines may offer a surprise benefit for some cancer patients - revving up their immune systems to help fight tumors.

People with advanced lung or skin cancer who were taking certain immunotherapy drugs lived substantially longer if they also got a Pfizer or Moderna shot within 100 days of starting treatment, according to preliminary research being reported Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

And it had nothing to do with virus infections.

Instead, the molecule that powers those specific vaccines, mRNA, appears to help the immune system respond better to the cutting-edge cancer treatment, concluded researchers from MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and the University of Florida.

The vaccine “acts like a siren to activate immune cells throughout the body,” said lead researcher Dr. Adam Grippin of MD Anderson. “We’re sensitizing immune-resistant tumors to immune therapy.”

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has raised skepticism about mRNA vaccines, cutting \$500 million in funding for some uses of the technology.

But this research team found its results so promising that it is preparing a more rigorous study to see if mRNA coronavirus vaccines should be paired with cancer drugs called checkpoint inhibitors - an interim step while it de-



A healthcare worker prepares a shot of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in La Paz, Bolivia, Jan. 7, 2025. (AP)

signs new mRNA vaccines for use in cancer.

A healthy immune system often kills cancer cells before they become a threat. But some tumors evolve to hide from immune attack. Checkpoint inhibitors remove that cloak. It’s a powerful treatment - when it works. Some people’s immune cells still don’t recognize the tumor.

Messenger RNA, or mRNA, is naturally found in every cell and it contains genetic instructions for our bodies to make proteins. While best known as the Nobel Prize-winning technology behind COVID-19 vaccines, scientists have long been trying to create personalized mRNA “treatment vaccines” that train immune cells to spot unique

features of a patient’s tumor.

The new research offers “a very good clue” that maybe an off-the-shelf approach could work, said Dr. Jeff Collier, an mRNA specialist at Johns Hopkins University who wasn’t involved with the work. “What it shows is that mRNA medicines are continuing to surprise us in how beneficial they can be to human health.”

Grippin and his Florida colleagues had been developing personalized mRNA cancer vaccines when they realized that even one created without a specific target appeared to spur similar immune activity against cancer.

Grippin wondered if the already widely available mRNA coronavirus shots might also have some effect, too.

So the team analyzed records of nearly 1,000 advanced cancer patients undergoing checkpoint inhibitor treatment at MD Anderson - comparing those who happened to get a Pfizer or Moderna shot with those who didn’t.

Vaccinated lung cancer patients were nearly twice as likely to be alive three years after beginning cancer treatment as the unvaccinated patients. Among melanoma patients, median survival was significantly longer for vaccinated patients - but exactly how much isn’t clear, as some of that group were still alive when the data was analyzed.

Non-mRNA vaccines such as flu shots didn’t make a difference, he said.

Heat waves’ hidden toll on maternal health

For pregnant women, extreme heat comes with extra risks, experts warn

NEW YORK, Oct 23, (AP): Doctors have long known that heat puts a strain on the heart, kidneys and other organs. Those risks are exacerbated for pregnant people, as the body’s processes for staying cool are altered.

It’s a problem that climate change, caused by the burning of fuels like gasoline and coal, is worsening. Intensifying extreme heat events, high temperatures well into the night and shattering weather records means more exposure for pregnant people, particularly in developing countries.

Here’s what to know about the science of pregnancy and extreme heat:

Pregnancy changes the body in myriad ways, which can make it more difficult and uncomfortable to dissipate heat.

“An obvious thing is, pregnant people have a belly bump, depending how far along they are, and that’s a change in their surface to volume ratio,” said Anna Bershteyn, an associate professor at New York University’s Grossman School of Medicine and director of Project HEATWAVE, an initiative aimed at improving research on preventing extreme heat deaths. Heat leaves your body through your skin, so when the belly gets larger, the heat has farther to travel to escape.

As pregnancy progresses, the body burns more calories, creating internal heat. The heart has to work harder,



A pregnant woman stands for a portrait in Dallas, May 18, 2023. (AP)

which can already be strained by extreme heat. And people who are pregnant also need more liquid to stay hydrated, so they might get dehydrated more easily, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

One way the body cools itself is by shunting blood toward the skin and away from the central organs, which is why a person’s skin may flush and turn red when they get hot. Emerging research indicates that reduced blood flow to the placenta can affect the development of the fetus.

For pregnant people handling potent substances like pesticides, increased blood flow can also increase chemical absorption, said Dr. Chris Holstege, chief of the division of medical toxicology at the University of Virginia School of Medicine.

Research is beginning to show exposure to extreme heat even in the months before getting pregnant may affect a future pregnancy, said Cara Schulte, a researcher with the University of California Berkeley and the nonprofit Climate Rights International studying maternal health and heat.

During pregnancy, even short-term exposure to heat can increase the risk of severe maternal health complications, such as high blood pressure disorders of pregnancy, according to the EPA. That includes preeclampsia, a condition that can be fatal for both mother and child.

Heat can also worsen anxiety, depression and feelings of isolation and once the baby is born, “all of those things are compounded by this difficulty that postpartum women have in caring for their children in the heat,” Schulte said.

As they grow up, children who are exposed to extreme heat in utero may be at increased risk of facing developmental challenges throughout their lives, potentially related to adverse outcomes such as preterm birth or low birth weight, Schulte said.

“This is a hugely understudied thing,” said Bershteyn, adding that a lot of what we know comes from studies recruiting athletes, soldiers or fit young people. “There hasn’t been the same level of commitment to women’s health research.”

Tongue MRI scans can aid detect MND

SYDNEY, Oct 23, (Xinhua): Standard MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scans of a person’s tongue could assist in the early detection and ongoing monitoring of Motor Neurone Disease (MND), new Australian research found.

The study found people living with MND, also known as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, who have difficulty speaking or swallowing, tend to have smaller tongue muscles, said a statement released Thursday by Australia’s University of Queensland (UQ).

This could serve as an early indication of neurodegenerative disease, said Thomas Shaw, a neuroscientist and MRI researcher at UQ, who led the research published in *Computers in Biol-*

*ogy and Medicine*.

“There are eight interconnected muscles in our tongues, each with a different role allowing us to eat, swallow and speak,” Shaw said, adding that for someone with MND, the tongue muscles progressively weaken and waste away.

By examining more than 200 historical MRI scans using artificial intelligence and advanced imaging, the researchers were able to get precise measurements of tongue muscle volume and shape, and found significant differences between people with and without MND.

“People with lower tongue volumes had a worse prognosis,” Shaw said, adding this measurement could indi-

cate life expectancy and enable quicker diagnosis for MND patients, helping with treatment planning and faster clinical trial enrolment.

Study co-author and speech pathologist Brooke-Mai Whelan from UQ’s School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences said, “When tongue function is impaired, swallowing can become dangerous and speech difficult to understand.”

“People with MND report that the loss of speech is more devastating than the loss of the ability to eat, drink or walk,” Whelan said, adding understanding tongue muscle loss could allow earlier, targeted interventions like voice banking to preserve natural speech.

## Pak Kuwait Kabaddi Club wins thrilling friendly match against Baba Fateh Singh Club



Top and above: Photos from the tournament.

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Kabaddi, a traditional and cultural sport of Punjab, continues to bring communities together on both sides of the region. In Kuwait, this heritage was celebrated on recently, with a friendly Kabaddi match between Pak Kuwait Kabaddi Club, consisting of Pakistani players living in Kuwait, and Baba Fateh Singh Kabaddi Club, featuring Indian players residing in Kuwait.

The match was held at Khaitan Stadium and was organized by prominent members of the Pakistani community, including Chaudhry Shamshad Cheema, Tariq Ali Mohsin, Chaudhry Mudassar Gujer, Chaudhry Mohammad Saghir, Shehzad Ahmed (PQNCK), Bashir Ahmed Tarar, Rehan

Zafer, and Jehangir Ali. The stadium was packed with around 10,000 spectators, all passionately supporting their respective teams.

The game was fiercely contested, keeping the audience on the edge of their seats throughout. In the end, Pak Kuwait Kabaddi Club emerged victorious, defeating Baba Fateh Singh Club with a score of 36-27.

The Chief Guest, Mr. Hamza Tauqeer, Community Welfare Attaché at the Embassy of Pakistan, presented the trophy to the winning captain. Speaking at the event, he praised Kabaddi as a traditional and cultural game of Punjab and expressed his delight at seeing the enthusiasm and excitement of the expatriate community for this sport. He congratulated

the organizers for hosting such a large-scale and culturally significant event.

Individual awards were also presented to players in recognition of their outstanding performances. Notable members of the Pakistani community, including Pir Amjad Hussain, Shamshad Khan Tanoli, Dr. Shuja ul Din, Dr. Jehan Zeb, Mian Mohammad Arshad, Mohammad Zubair Sherfi, Shahzad ul Rehman Butt, and others were present to cheer on both teams.

Additionally, the organizers presented a commemorative shield to the Chief Guest, Mr. Hamza Tauqeer, in appreciation of his support for the event.

# South Africa thrashes Pakistan wickets to level two-test series

Harmer plays crucial role with six-wicket haul

**RAWALPINDI, Pakistan, Oct 23, (AP): South Africa thrashed Pakistan by eight wickets Thursday to level the two-test cricket series, with off-spinner Simon Harmer playing a crucial role with a six-wicket haul.**

Pakistan opened the series with a 93-run victory inside four days at Lahore last week, but Harmer flipped the script on another spinning wicket at Rawalpindi. He snared 6-50 to dismiss Pakistan for 138 on Day 4.

That set South Africa a victory target of 68 runs, and the World Test Championship winners eased to 73-2 in 12.3 overs.

Harmer and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, who missed the first test due to injury, scripted South Africa's victory with 17 wickets between them in the second test.

"After the first test we were put under pressure but the guys have put their hands up and excelled," South Africa captain Aiden Markram said. "Great space to be in as a team...the unit out here is one of the best. In South Africa you'd think just seamers, but we are very good with the spinners as well."

Markram, who stood in the series as skipper in place of injured Temba Bavuma, made a brisk 42 off 45 balls with eight fours to power the chase before he was trapped lbw by Noman Ali when his team needed only four runs for victory.

Tristan Stubbs, one of the four half-century makers in South Africa's first innings of 404, was out for a duck when he edged Noman to slip, before Ryan Rickelton (25 not out) smashed Sajid Khan for six to secure the win just before the scheduled lunch interval.

"You have to give credit to the opposition, they have kept fighting," Pakistan captain Shan Masood said.



South Africa's Aiden Markram plays a shot during the fourth day of the second test cricket match between Pakistan and South Africa, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. (AP)

"Unfortunately, we didn't finish well in the first innings and the difference seeped into the third and fourth innings. We will have to look back at those chances that we missed out on. We are measuring against a team that has won this WTC, so we can't give them chances."

Harmer became only the third South African bowler to reach the 1,000-wicket milestone in first-class cricket when he had Noman caught behind, and Pakistan's second innings collapsed in just over an hour.

The home team's hopes hinged on overnight batters Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan to lift them from 94-4, but both fell to Harmer inside off-spinner's first three overs of the morning.

Babar, 49 overnight, completed his first half-century of the series

with a single and it was loudly applauded by his fans at the Pindi Cricket Stadium. However, Harmer pinned Pakistan's premier batter lbw with a delivery that spun back and hit Babar low on the pads.

Babar, who hasn't scored a test century since December 2022, went for a review but the television replays indicated the ball didn't make any contact with the bat before hitting the pads flush in front of the wickets.

Harmer then got an inside edge off Rizwan's bat and the ball popped to Tony de Zorzi close to the wicket as Pakistan lost two key wickets inside the first 20 minutes and led by just 34 runs.

Salman Ali Agha made rearguard 28 off 42 balls but chopped Maharaj back onto his stumps before the left-

armar had Khan stumped to finish off Pakistan's resistance.

Pakistan has won four of its last six home test matches since it reverted to spin pitches last year after losing the first test to England in Multan. But its lower order batters have struggled to cope with quality spinners, which saw them losing to the West Indies and then South Africa on Thursday.

"Four out of six is not bad," Masood said. "There is a lot to work on. The lower batting, finishing innings off, third innings batting. As a side, you are never perfect."

The two teams will now compete in a three-match T20 series, starting in Rawalpindi next Tuesday. That will be followed by a three-match ODI series in Faisalabad from Nov. 4-8.

## Conceição expresses concern over tight schedule ahead of 'El Clásico'

RIYADH, Oct 23: Portuguese coach Vítor Conceição has stressed the readiness of his Al-Ittihad squad ahead of today's El Clásico clash against Al-Hilal at Al-Enma Stadium in Jeddah, part of the sixth round of the Saudi Pro League.

Conceição emphasized that his team includes world-class players, on par with Al-Hilal, which he described as a strong team with a world-class coach. He also noted that for this match, foreign players will be selected purely based on performance, without distinction between local and international players.

The coach confirmed he will field the players who demonstrate maximum effort in training, promising that the team's performance will continue to improve in the coming period.

He added: "We have clear ambitions, and we will fight to achieve them. This is what I expect from my players, and it is exactly what I've seen from them in recent training sessions."

Acknowledging the challenges ahead, Conceição said Al-Ittihad faces two crucial matches in a short period, in both the league and King's Cup, against top title contenders. "Every match has its own circumstances, and we will treat each game according to its importance," he ex-



Al-Ittihad coach Vítor Conceição

plained.

Regarding the tight schedule – just five days between matches against Al-Hilal and Al-Nassr – Conceição stated: "Time is limited. My focus now is entirely on preparing for Al-Hilal before we start planning for Al-Nassr."

The coach also refrained from confirming the availability of Karim Benzema and Bergwijn, noting that their participation will be determined in the final training sessions, while affirming that both players are making good progress in their recovery programs.

Tomorrow, in the same round, Al-Hazm will face Al-Nassr, Al-Shabab will take on Damac, and Al-Qadisia will meet Al-Akhdood.

## Top riders battle at Al-Sakab showjumping champ'ship

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: The Al-Skab Club Show Jumping Championship gets underway at 8:00 AM at the Al-Messilah Equestrian Club arena in Subhan, featuring riders from local clubs across beginner, intermediate, and advanced categories, with jumps ranging from 60 to 130 cm.

Badr Tariq Al-Milaim, President of Messilah Equestrian Club, highlighted that the competition promises to be intense, with riders battling for top positions at every level. He praised the remarkable progress of Kuwaiti equestrian sports in recent years and noted the success of Kuwaiti riders in showcasing the nation's talent on both domestic and international stages, including competitions in Arab and European countries.

Al-Milaim emphasized the club's commitment to developing riders' skills by bringing in experienced coaches from both Arab and European countries, while placing a strong focus on young riders in beginner categories to cultivate a new generation of competitive equestrians.

Similarly, Mohamed Tariq Al-Milaim, President of Al-Skab Club, expressed his excitement over the emergence of new male and female riders who have shown determination and competitive spirit in the beginner events. He added that these young athletes are set to play a key role in the future of Kuwaiti equestrian sports, reinforcing the country's status as a hub for top equestrian talent.



A file photo of Badr and Mohamed Tariq Al-Milaim posing with one of the previous winners.

## Conte seeks turnaround for Napoli against Inter

MILAN, Oct 23, (AP): Antonio Conte is looking to whip his players into shape like a "tiger tamer" for Napoli's Serie A match against his former team Inter Milan on Saturday. Napoli is facing Inter at the worst possible moment for the defending champion, which is reeling from Tuesday's 6-2 defeat at PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League - the first time one of coach Conte's teams has conceded six goals in a single match. Conte appeared unusually calm on the sidelines during the game and was not his usual vociferous, strident self.

"I always try to help my players," Conte said. "Certainly it was my fault that I was less aggressive on the bench and we lost 6-2. Next time I'll bring the whip and a stool like a tiger tamer." It was Napoli's second successive defeat - after last weekend's loss at Torino in Serie A - as it struggles to cope with an injury crisis and incorporating new faces.

"We added nine players in the summer, that has cost us in terms of chemistry," Conte said. "The old guys, including me, need to rediscover their spirit, the new guys need to learn to fit in and be humble and silent."

Napoli welcomed back Scott McTominay against PSV while Rasmus Hojlund could make his return from injury against Inter. But Romelu Lukaku, Stanislav Lo-

botka and Amir Rrahmani are still sidelined.

Napoli, Inter and Roma are level on 15 points, one behind league leader AC Milan. The Rossoneri could be four clear before the match kicks off in Naples as they host promoted Pisa on Friday. Roma visits Sassuolo on Sunday.

Inter and Napoli have shared the title over the past three years - with Inter in 2024 splitting Napoli's two wins. Conte also led Inter to the crown in 2021.

Inter is on a run of seven straight wins in all competitions. It beat another title rival in Roma last weekend and routed Union Saint-Gilloise 4-0 on Tuesday.

Under-pressure Juventus coach Igor Tudor returns to his former club when the Bianconeri visit Lazio. He resigned as Lazio coach in 2024 after three months in charge. Juventus is four points behind Milan but hasn't won since Sept. 13.

Milan is heavily favored to beat bottom club Pisa but its one defeat this season came on the opening day against another promoted club, Cremonese.

Atalanta is the only undefeated team in Serie A. It is only eighth, however, having drawn five of its seven matches - the most in the division. It travels to Cremonese, which has played out four stalemates.

# Liverpool roars back, Jude keeps Real perfect

Chelsea and Bayern run riot

MILAN, Oct 23, (AP): Liverpool emphatically rebounded from a miserable run as it won 5-1 at Eintracht Frankfurt in the Champions League.

There were also comfortable wins for Chelsea and Bayern Munich, while record 15-time champion Real Madrid maintained its perfect start in this season’s tournament with a 1-0 victory at home over struggling Juventus.

“I don’t know if it’s a statement, but it is a win and something to build on,” Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk told TNT Sports. “I’ve been in the football business for a while, so not relief. Obviously, we are disappointed with losing games, so it’s something we have to deal with, stick together, and keep working.

“We don’t get dragged into the negative things that are going around. The only way you can play your game is to focus on the task ahead.”

Liverpool travelled to Germany on a four-game losing streak that included Sunday’s home defeat to Manchester United in the Premier League. Among its recent setbacks was also a loss at Galatasaray in its second league-phase match.

Frankfurt had beaten Galatasaray 5-1 and also lost by that scoreline at Atletico Madrid.

Rasmus Kristensen gave the home side the lead in the 26th minute, but Liverpool leveled nine minutes later through former Frankfurt player Hugo Ekitike, who outprinted three of his former teammates before firing a low effort under Michael Zetterer.

Ekitike didn’t celebrate but raised his hands in an apologetic gesture. Van Dijk and Ibrahima Konaté headed in corners within five minutes of each other to give Liverpool a comfortable halftime lead.

Florian Wirtz provided his first Champions League assist in the 66th, setting up Cody Gakpo for a tap-in, and he did it again four minutes later for a low drive from Dominik Szoboszlai low drive from 30 meters out.

Perfect Madrid  
Jude Bellingham scored his first Champions League goal of the season to break the deadlock in the 57th minute.

Most of the credit was owed to Vinícius Júnior, who twisted and turned on the left before seeing an angled drive come off the inside of the far post. Bellingham was quickest to react and tap it home.

Madrid joined four other clubs – including Bayern – that are level at the top of the league table with a maximum nine points.

Juventus drew its previous two matches in Europe and hasn’t won since Sept. 13.

Three teenagers scored for Chelsea to help the Premier League team overwhelm 10-man Ajax 5-1 at Stamford Bridge.

A chaotic first half saw five goals, a red card, and three penalties all converted. After Ajax midfielder Kenneth Taylor was sent off in the 15th minute for an awful challenge on Facundo Buonanotte, the 19-year-old Marc Guiu and Moises Caicedo put Chelsea two up. Wout Weghorst pulled one back from the spot for Ajax.

But Enzo Fernández and the 18-year-old Estêvão netted spot kicks of their own to put Chelsea firmly in control at the break. Estêvão became Chelsea’s youngest goalscorer in the Champions League shortly after Guiu had broken the record.



Juventus’ Federico Gatti, left, watches as Real Madrid’s Jude Bellingham tries to control the ball during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Real Madrid and Juventus in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

The 19-year-old Tyrique George extended Chelsea’s advantage shortly after replacing Guiu at halftime.

In Munich, 17-year-old Lennart Karl became Bayern’s youngest Champions League goalscorer in style, setting the German team on its way to a 4-0 win over Club Brugge. Harry Kane, Luis Díaz, and Nicolas Jackson also scored for Bayern.

Substitute Roberto Navarro had an immediate – and stunning impact – as he helped Athletic Bilbao to its first points in this season’s Champions League, with a 3-1 comeback victory over Qarabag.

Navarro was brought on in the 65th minute, with the score 1-1, and gave

the hosts the lead five minutes later with a delightful curled finish into the far corner.

Qarabag, which was surprisingly perfect going into the encounter, had taken the lead after just 49 seconds through Leandro Andrade.

But Gorka Guruzeta leveled shortly before halftime and also gave his team a two-goal cushion with full-time looming.

Victor Osimhen scored twice to help Galatasaray to a 3-1 win over Bodø/Glimt, while Sporting Lisbon fought back to beat 10-man Marseille 2-1.

Tottenham was held to a 0-0 draw at Monaco, and Atalanta drew 0-0 with Slavia Prague.

## Al-Ain adds to Al-Qadsia’s troubles in Gulf Champions League

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul attributed Al-Qadsia’s latest setback to the challenging circumstances the team has faced recently, particularly the series of injuries affecting key players.

Al-Qadsia suffered a 0-1 defeat to UAE’s Al-Ain at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium in the second round of Group A of the Gulf Champions League. The match’s only goal came in the 68th minute from Youssef Suleiman.

The loss has significantly reduced Al-Qadsia’s chances of advancing to the semifinals, marking its second defeat in the group stage. The team now sits last in the group with zero points, while Al-Ain leads with 6 points, Iraqi side Zakho is second with 4 points, and Bahrain’s Sitra holds third place with 1 point.

This marks Al-Qadsia’s fourth consecutive defeat in less than a month — two in the Zain Premier League and two in the Gulf Champions League.

Maaloul highlighted that the team struggled with multiple absences due to injuries and other issues, affecting overall performance. He confirmed that six players have been unavailable for the past three months, including Mubarak Al-Funaini, Eid



Bader Al-Mutawa leads Qadsia players on to the field.

Al-Rashidi, Moath Al-Dhafiri, Sofiane Boushar, Jassim Al-Matar, Mohamed Soula, and Abdulaziz Wadi.

He also noted that foreign players face challenges as they joined the squad late and are still regaining full

match fitness, adding that their performance assessment will take place in December.

Maaloul stressed that these factors contributed to Al-Qadsia’s recent defeats at home and abroad, while

expressing confidence in the squad’s ability to bounce back and deliver positive results.

“We have gone through a difficult period, but I trust the players to overcome this phase and return stronger.”

## ATP confirms plans for new Masters tournament in Saudi Arabia by 2028

RIYADH, Oct 23, (AP): Saudi Arabia will host a new ATP Masters tournament, likely starting in 2028, in the first addition to the men’s tennis tour’s premium series since its founding 35 years ago.

The ATP announced the formation of a 10th Masters event on Thursday, but ATP Chairman Andrea Gaudenzi wouldn’t commit to a definitive year for the debut or an exact spot on the calendar. This expansion comes as players renew calls to reconsider a long and crowded schedule for the sport.

“All we can say at this stage,” Gaudenzi said on a video conference with reporters, “is that it’s going to be at the beginning of the season ... first part of the season.”

He said he would like to put the 56-player, one-week tournament in February, after the Australian Open ends - calling that

“the better outcome” - and ideally institute a system with a Middle East swing and South American swing going on during that portion of the year.

This is the latest in a series of moves to bring money from Saudi Arabia into tennis and bring the sport to the kingdom, including the ATP Next Gen Finals for up-and-coming players that is held in Jeddah and the WTA Finals for the best women’s tennis players held in Riyadh. The Public Investment Fund also sponsors both the women’s and men’s rankings.

Gaudenzi said the plan is to launch the Saudi Arabia Masters in 2028, with the dates announced sometime next year.

“The exact position on the calendar is not yet decided,” he said. “Obviously, February is one of the options. ... It is a possibility, but not decided yet.”

### Best of the Rest

**Djokovic withdraws from Paris Masters:** Novak Djokovic is withdrawing from next week’s Paris Masters, he announced on social media on Tuesday, just days after he stopped playing in an exhibition event because of a leg injury.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion has competed infrequently this season, appearing in only eight ATP Tour events outside of the four majors.

Djokovic, who is 38, reached the semifinals at the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and U.S. Open this season. From late May to late September, the only tournaments he entered were those last three Slams. (AP)

□ □ □

**Groin injury sidelines Inaki:** Athletic Club’s 3-1 win over Qarabag in the Champions League has come at a price with the club confirming that Ghana international forward Inaki Williams suffered a groin injury.

Williams was forced off the field in the 38th minute when Athletic trailed 1-0, and was replaced by Alex Berenguer. Goals from Gorka Guruzeta and Robert Navarro, who came on for Williams’ younger brother Nico, secured Athletic’s first Champions League win of the campaign. (Xinhua)

Knicks edge Cavaliers in Brown’s first game

# Wembanyama scores 40, Spurs spoil Flagg debut with rout of Mavericks

DALLAS, Oct 23, (AP): Victor Wembanyama had 40 points and 15 rebounds in a highlight-reel return, helping the San Antonio Spurs spoil No. 1 overall pick Cooper Flagg’s debut in a 125-92 rout of the Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday night.

Flagg, the second-youngest player to start in his NBA debut by two days behind LeBron James, didn’t score until the first possession of the second half, finishing with 10 points and 10 rebounds.

The 18-year-old from Duke had more trouble getting into the flow than the second overall choice. Dylan Harper came off the San Antonio bench midway through the first quarter, started the run that put the Spurs in control and scored 15 points. Reigning Rookie of the Year Stephon Castle scored 22 points for the Spurs.

Anthony Davis had 22 points and 13 rebounds as the Mavericks await the return of star guard Kyrie Irving, who is likely months away from his season debut while recovering from ACL surgery.

Wembanyama dominated the matchup of two of the three most recent top draft picks, with the 2023 No. 1 choice adding three blocks to several spectacular dunks and a couple of buckets with fouls that sent Davis and Dereck Lively II to the bench.

**Knicks 119, Cavaliers**  
In New York, OG Anunoby had 24 points and 14 rebounds, Jalen Brunson scored 23 points and the New York Knicks beat the Cleveland Cavaliers in their first game under coach Mike Brown.

Karl-Anthony Towns added 19 points and 11 rebounds for the Knicks, who had a 17-point lead in the first half, fell behind after Donovan Mitchell led a comeback, then regained the lead for good with a 14-0 run early in the fourth quarter.

**Suns 120, Kings 116**  
In Phoenix, Devin Booker scored 31 points, Jordan Ott was victorious in his head coaching debut and the Phoenix Suns overcame a 20-point deficit to beat the Sacramento Kings.

Veteran guard Dillon Brooks added 22 points in his Suns debut and brought his usual swagger, irritating Kings star DeMar DeRozan with physi-

cal defense in the fourth quarter. Grayson Allen scored 18 points.

**7ers 117, Celtics 116**

In Boston, Tyrese Maxey scored 40 points and VJ Edgecombe added 34 in his NBA debut to help the Philadelphia 76ers rally to beat the Boston Celtics in their season opener.

Edgecombe scored the most points in an NBA debut since Wilt Chamberlain had 43 on Oct. 24, 1959.

Philadelphia led by four with 22 seconds left, but it was down to one when Edgecombe missed a pair of foul shots with 9.1 seconds to play. Payton Pritchard had two shots for the winner and missed both.

**Timberwolves 118, Trail Blazers 114**

In Portland, Anthony Edwards had 41 points and the Minnesota Timberwolves rallied late in the fourth quarter for a 118-114 season-opening win over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Edwards, who set a career high last season with



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama (1) drives against Dallas Mavericks forward Anthony Davis (3) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Dallas. (AP)

an average of 27.6 points, was questionable for the game because of back spasms, but started.

**Jazz 129, Clippers 108**

In Salt Lake City, Walker Kessler had 22 points and nine rebounds, Lauri Markkanen scored 20 and the Utah Jazz beat the Los Angeles Clippers.

Brice Sensabaugh added 20 points off the bench for Utah, which set a team record for points in a season opener.

Kessler, the longest-tenured member of the Jazz, went 7 for 7 from the field. He blocked four shots and finished with four assists.

**Grizzlies 128, Pelicans 122**

In Memphis, Ja Morant scored 35 points, including a key basket with 32.9 seconds to play, and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the New Orleans Pelicans.

Morant’s basket gave the Grizzlies a 122-118 lead. Olivier-Maxence Prosper, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope and Morant hit free throws in the closing seconds to seal the victory.

**Bulls 115, Pistons 111**

In Chicago, Nikola Vucevic had 28 points and 14 rebounds, Matas Buzelis scored 21 points and the Chicago Bulls regrouped after blowing a 23-point lead to beat the Detroit Pistons.

Josh Giddey added 19 points and 11 assists, and the Bulls went from leading by 23 in the second quarter to knotted near the end of the game.

Detroit’s Ron Holland II tied it at 105 when he made a 3 with just under three minutes remaining. Vucevic hit an 8-footer that Detroit’s Cade Cunningham answered with a fadeaway jumper.

**Raptors 138, Hawks 118**

In Atlanta, RJ Barrett scored 25 points and Brandon Ingram added 16 points and nine rebounds in his Toronto debut as the Raptors ran away from the Atlanta Hawks.

Scottie Barnes had 22 points and nine assists and Grady Dick scored 19 off the bench for the Raptors, who set a franchise record for points on opening night and surpassed last season’s high. Toronto shot 57% from the field, including 69% on 2-pointers, as the Raptors repeatedly beat the Hawks in transition for easy buckets.

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Artists perform during the opening ceremony of the 3rd Asian Youth Games at Exhibition World Bahrain in Sakhir, Bahrain. (Xinhua)

# Sports

## Kuwait off the mark with bronze as Bahrain lights up Asian Youth Games

Al-Saqer delivers an impressive performance

MANAMA, Oct 23, (KUNA): Nasser Al-Saqer captured Kuwait's first medal at the Third Asian Youth Games 2025 in Bahrain on Thursday, earning a bronze in the teqball competition.

Al-Saqer delivered an impressive performance, defeating his Malaysian opponent in straight sets 2-0 to secure the podium finish.

Teqball, a fast-growing sport that blends elements of football and table tennis, is played on a curved table, with athletes competing to win matches in a best-of-three set format.

Meanwhile the Third Asian Youth Games officially opened on Wednesday in a spectacular ceremony that brought together thousands of young athletes from 45 Asian countries, including the State of Kuwait.

Held under the patronage of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the opening ceremony reflected Bahrain's growing reputation as a key destination for major continental sporting events. The occasion was attended by Kuwait Olympic Committee President Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah, Vice President Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Sabah, and Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Bashar Abdullah, along with senior Asian sports officials, heads of Olympic committees, and participating delegations.

In his address, His Highness Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs and President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, emphasized that the Games bring together more than 6,000 athletes from across Asia, embodying the values of unity and solidarity that sport represents.



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa welcomes Kuwait Olympic Committee President Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah.

"The Asian Youth Games are more than a sporting event — they are a platform to discover and shape the future Olympic champions of our continent," Sheikh Khalid said. "These young athletes are the seeds of hope and the leaders of tomorrow, carrying the dreams and ambitions of their nations toward a brighter sporting future."

Sheikh Khalid extended a warm welcome to all participants, expressing confidence that this edition of the Games would mark a milestone in the history of Asian sports and demonstrate Bahrain's capability to organize a major continental event in record time through the collective efforts of all national entities. He also expressed gratitude to the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) for entrusting Bahrain with the honor of hosting and to everyone involved in organizing this significant youth sporting event.

Timothy Fok Tsun Ting, First Vice President of the Olympic Council of Asia, commended the Bahraini organizing committee for its exceptional preparations and the impressive execution of the opening ceremony. He praised Bahrain's proven expertise in

hosting major international tournaments, affirming the OCA's confidence in the Kingdom's organizational excellence.

The opening ceremony featured a vibrant artistic showcase celebrating Bahrain's heritage, maritime history, and youth empowerment. The performance combined advanced lighting, drone choreography, and digital visual effects to deliver a captivating display. The Parade of Nations followed, with athletes proudly carrying their national flags, before the lighting of the Asian Games torch officially signaled the start of the competitions.

The Games will continue over the coming days at several state-of-the-art sports venues, featuring a full schedule of individual and team events. High competition levels are anticipated, with strong potential for discovering emerging Asian talents.

The Kuwaiti delegation includes 75 athletes competing in 14 sports, such as swimming, trampolining, athletics, badminton, table tennis, golf, equestrian events (show jumping and endurance), handball, judo, teqball, taekwondo, muay thai, and jiu-jitsu.

Some competitions began ahead of the official opening. The Kuwait youth handball team made an impressive start, defeating Kazakhstan 42-26 and Thailand 43-15 in Group B. The team will next face the United Arab Emirates on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

The Third Asian Youth Games will continue through October 31, with competitions across multiple disciplines showcasing the continent's next generation of athletic talent.



KUNA photos  
Athletes from Kuwait march proudly, holding the national flag at the opening ceremony.



Nasser Al-Saqer congratulated after winning bronze.

## Kuwaiti clubs dominate Arab Judo Championship



Winners celebrate on the podium after the awarding ceremony.

BAGHDAD, Oct 23: The Arab Judo Championship held in Erbil the saw Kuwaiti clubs assert their dominance, sweeping the top positions in the junior club category.

According to the official statement from the Arab Judo Championship media office, the results underscored the excellence of Kuwaiti clubs, earning praise for the high technical level displayed by Arab

junior athletes, highlighting the continued growth of judo across the Arab region.

In the competition, Salmiya Club secured first place, followed by Khaitan Club in second, Qadsia Club in third, and Kuwait Club in fourth.

The championship was attended by Engineer Nouman Shahir, President of the Arab Judo Federation,

his advisor Yassin Al-Ayubi, Dr. Adi Al-Rubaie, President of the Iraqi Judo Federation, and other national federation heads. The matches across all weight categories were highly competitive, showcasing strength, determination, and skill, with enthusiastic support from spectators and active engagement from the participating delegations.

## Kuwait Club, Al-Arabi face Lebanese rivals in Challenge League opener

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 23: Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi are set to begin their campaigns in the Challenge League on Saturday. Al-Arabi will face Lebanon's Al-Safa at 1:00 PM at Dolin Omarzakov Stadium in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in the opening round of Group C, while Kuwait Club will host Al-Ansar of Lebanon at 7:00 PM at Jaber Mubarak Stadium, opening Group B play.

The tournament follows a single round-robin format at centralized venues, with the group winners from the West region advancing to the quarterfinals, along with the best second-placed team.

Al-Arabi returns to the tournament for the second consecutive season, after being eliminated in the semifinals last year. The team is aiming for direct qualification from Kyrgyzstan, but faces a tough challenge in its opener against Al-Safa, the 2024-2025 Lebanese league runners-up, marking their first continental appearance since reaching the Round of 16 in the 2014 AFC Cup.

This will be the second meeting between the two sides, with Al-Arabi having won 2-1 in their previous encounter in 2009 during

the AFC Cup.

Also in Group C, Muras United, founded in 2023, will play its first continental match after a strong season that saw them capture their second Kyrgyzstan Cup title. They face Tajik side Regar-TadAZ, a three-time champion (2005, 2008, 2009) seeking a record fourth title in their fifth appearance, having also won the 2024 Tajikistan Cup.

Kuwait Club aims to build on its excellent form this season, currently leading the Zain Premier League with 13 points from five unbeaten matches.

This is Kuwait Club's debut in the Challenge League, following last season's participation in AFC Champions League 2, where it exited at the group stage. The team seeks a strong start, though it faces a challenging test against Al-Ansar, who recently claimed its 15th Lebanese league title after a four-year gap.

The two sides previously met in 2022, ending in a 1-1 draw in the AFC Cup.

In Group B, Al-Seeb of Oman will take on Bangladesh's Bashundhara Kings at 4:00 PM at Jaber Mubarak Stadium. Bashundhara Kings are the four-time national cup winners (2024-2025) and finished third in the Bangladeshi league.



A file photo of Kuwait Club and Al-Arabi players in action.

### Best of the Rest

**Chepng'etich banned 3 years:** Women's marathon world record-holder Ruth Chepng'etich has been banned for three years after admitting a doping violation, track and field's Athletics Integrity Unit said Thursday.

The AIU said Chepng'etich admitted anti-doping rule violations over the presence and use of the banned diuretic hydrochlorothiazide, or HCTZ, which can be used to disguise the use of performance-enhancing drugs. She had been suspended in July.

The AIU also said Chepng'etich had accepted the charges and sanction following a positive test for the banned diuretic from a March 14 sample.

The 31-year-old Kenyan runner broke the world record by almost two minutes at the Chicago Marathon last year, clocking 2 hours, 9 minutes, 56 seconds.

The AIU said all Chepng'etich's achievements and records before March 14 sample would stand. (AP)

## Madrid aims to halt Barcelona's dominance

## First Clásico of the season promises high drama

MADRID, Oct 23, (AP): Real Madrid and a red-hot Kylian Mbappé host Barcelona on Sunday, aiming to hit back at their rivals after losing all four clásicos last season. Mbappé has scored a La Liga-leading 10 goals in nine rounds - four more than his nearest chaser - and another five goals in the Champions League over the first two months of the campaign.

Barcelona arrives at the Santiago Bernabeu with injury concerns in attack, and coach Hansi Flick is heading for a seat in a stadium box after he saw a red card for protesting in the last round. Lamine Yamal will start for the visitors after having played two games since returning from a nagging groin injury.

But Robert Lewandowski is ruled out for Barcelona with a hamstring injury, and forward Raphinha is doubtful. All eyes will be on the first Clásico of the season to see whether new coach Xabi Alonso can get Madrid out of its rut against Barcelona.

Barcelona swept the quarter of clásicos in all competitions last season by a combined score of 16-7. Barcelona won the Liga fixture in Madrid 4-0 to kick off that run.

It then won 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup, 3-2 in the Copa del Rey final, and again 4-3 in La Liga. "Last year they showed some great finishing, and we have to try to stop that firepower while being crisper



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior, left, challenges Juventus' Kenan Yildiz during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Real Madrid and Juventus in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

up front ourselves," Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said. Madrid beat Juventus 1-0 with a goal by Jude Bellingham on Wednesday, but Alonso's side suffered a 5-0 humiliation at Atletico Madrid in another big La Liga match last month. Barcelona arrives after a 6-1 win against Olympiakos.

Midfielder Fermin Lopez scored a hat trick, and Marcus Rashford added two more goals. Madrid

leads defending champion Barcelona by two points at the top of the Spanish league table.

Third-placed Villarreal and Atletico, in fourth, will look to close the gap at the top. Villarreal is at Valencia on Saturday, while Atletico travels to fifth-placed Real Betis on Monday, with both level on points. Besides Lewandowski, Barcelona is without injured midfielder Dani Olmo and goalkeeper Joan Garcia. Wojciech Szczesny will be in goal.

Flick said last week that he hopes Raphinha will recover from a leg injury in time for the game. Ferran Torres was in Barcelona's squad for the Olympiakos game but never left the bench after having recently been sidelined briefly with a leg issue. Madrid will be without injured defenders Trent Alexander-Arnold and Antonio Rudiger.

Rashford is in a strong position to start up front for Barcelona along with Yamal. The on-loan English forward has scored six times since joining from Manchester United. Pau Cubarsi is a lock to start in Barcelona's defense.

The 18-year-old and either Eric Garcia or Ronald Araujo will have the task of slowing down Mbappé, good headlines "Everyone knows how talented (Mbappé) is, and all their players are world-class," Cubarsi said.