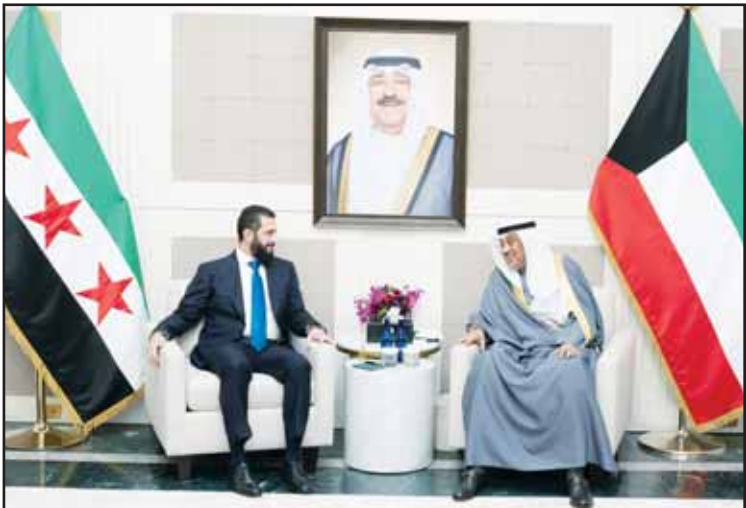




Kuwait Amir Representative meets with Syrian President



Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa (left), Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam (center), and Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council of Yemen Dr. Abdullah Al-Alimi Bawazir (right) on the sidelines of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly.

HH Crown Prince discusses ties with Lebanon, Yemen on UNGA sidelines

NEW YORK, Sept 24, (KUNA): The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, met Wednesday Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa and his accompanying delegation on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly.

At the outset of the meeting, held at Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Syrian president, expressing wishes for good health and for the Syrian Arab Republic and its people to enjoy lasting security, stability, and prosperity.

The two leaders discussed fraternal bilateral relations between Kuwait and Syria, exploring avenues to enhance cooperation across various fields to serve mutual interests, alongside exchanging views on key regional and international developments.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai, Director of the Office of His Highness the Crown Prince Major General Ahmad Al-Duai, and Assistant Foreign Minister

for the Minister's Office Affairs Minister Plenipotentiary Abdullah Al-Obaidi.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received on Wednesday Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam on the sidelines of the high-level 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The meeting discussed deep-rooted bilateral relations and means of boosting and developing them in a manner that achieves common interest of both brotherly nations, along with developments on regional and international levels.

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U.A.E. SUSPENDS IRANIAN CARRIER FLIGHTS AMID U.S. BAN



Ministry of Defense photo
Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah during a visit to the Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College.

Kuwait Defense Minister calls for advanced military training

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24, (KUNA): Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah emphasized on Thursday the importance of continuing to develop qualifications and training system in line with the latest scientific and military concepts and methods.

According to a statement by the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Abdullah's remark came during a visit to the Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College.

Sheikh Abdullah reviewed proceedings of the 31st Joint Command and Staff Course and assessed the quality of training programs and curricula provided to the students.

The Minister also attended a lecture as part of the course program and toured several of the College's facilities, where he inspected the educational and training processes, including programs designed to enhance the students' leadership and planning skills.

Building trust helps protect juveniles from hidden risks

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24: The newspaper is highlighting the protection of juveniles component of the prevention and safety awareness campaign that the Interior Ministry launched at the start of the 2026/2027 academic year.

This is part of the media partnership between the ministry and the newspaper to address issues concerning juveniles, the risks and behaviors they may encounter and ways to prevent them. It uses a balanced awareness approach involving social and security experts.

It aims to protect children, strengthen community partnerships, and instill the concepts of prevention and safety among students and parents, with a plan to evaluate the media impact of this campaign upon its conclusion.

In an interview with the newspaper, Head of the Community Security and Research Unit at the Retired Officers Association retired Major General Badr Al-Ghadouri stressed that protecting juveniles is a shared responsibility, requiring the integrated efforts of families, schools, competent authorities and the community. He stated that the approach to dealing with juveniles should not focus on wrongdoing and punishment, but rather on protection, prevention, guidance and rehabilitation.

Al-Ghadouri said protecting ju-



Al-Ghadouri

veniles is vital due to the multitude of influences affecting students inside the school, outside it or within the digital realm. He explained that childhood and adolescence are among the most critical stages for character building and the formation of values and behaviors. "Detecting warning signs early and addressing them calmly helps protect the juveniles from problems that could affect their families and the community," he added.

He cited bullying, extortion, online grooming, and sudden changes in behavior, academic performance and social relationships as areas requiring attention. He emphasized that protecting children does not mean constant surveillance, as it rather requires striking a balance between monitoring, respecting privacy and building trust. "This ensures the juvenile understands that seeking help and reporting danger is neither shameful nor a sign of weakness, and that prevention must occur before a problem arises, not after," he added.

Following are excerpts of the interview:

Question: Who is considered a juvenile under Kuwaiti law? Why is this stage significant?

Answer: As per Kuwaiti Juvenile Law No. 111/2015, a juvenile is defined as any person who has not yet reached the age of 18. This is an important stage for character development and the shaping of values,

Continued on Page 5

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait strongly condemned and denounced Thursday the Houthi militia targeting of the Saudi cities of Taif and Yunbu with ballistic missiles.

A foreign ministry statement affirmed Kuwait's full solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and support for all measures it takes to safeguard its sovereignty and security, as well as its citizens and residents, deeming "loud" the breach of international law and international humanitarian law in this regard.

"The Kingdom's security is an indivisible part of Kuwait's, as well as the

wider Gulf Cooperation Council," the statement stressed.

Spokesman for the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen Major General Turki Al-Maliki announced on Thursday that six ballistic missiles launched by the terrorist Houthi militia had been intercepted and destroyed.

In a statement reported by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the spokesman said that the coalition's air defenses had thwarted attempts to target Taif and Yanbu, vowing that the escalation and violations by the terrorist Houthi militia would be dealt with firmly.

Earlier in the day, the Saudi Civil Defense announced that the danger had passed for the city of Makkah, the governorates of Jeddah, Taif and Yanbu, and the Tabuk region, following the issuance of early warnings for these areas.

Continued on Page 4

Iran's Hormuz disruption violates int'l law: GCC Chief

Ambassador Gauvin hails 65 years of Kuwait ties

French Institute opens new spaces for Kuwaiti creatives

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24, (KUNA): French Ambassador to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin emphasized Wednesday the depth of cultural and human ties uniting the two nations, noting that celebrating 65 years of diplomatic relations reflects decades of strategic friendship and mutual exchange.

Speaking at the launch of the French Institute in Kuwait's cultural season for the second half of 2026, Ambassador Gauvin stated that bilateral relations are measured by the richness of human, educational, and scientific bonds developed across generations.

Continued on Page 5



Left: French Ambassador to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin speaks at the launch of the French Institute in Kuwait's cultural season for the second half of 2026. Right: Dignitaries and guests.



KUNA photos

Other Voices

Peace cannot be made by normalisation

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

Look back at the history of Arab normalisation with Israel and ask a simple question: where were the popular movements demanding it before governments made the decision?

Where were the demonstrations calling for Israeli embassies to be opened? The NGOs and unions lobbying for diplomatic relations? The political movements building support around normalisation?

It is difficult to find a clear Arab example in which normalisation travelled from the street to the state. More often, it travelled in the opposite direction: from the top down.

Governments, of course, have their own calculations. They may be driven by security, economics, regional alliances, relations with Washington or considerations that are not always publicly disclosed. This is nothing unusual in international relations.



Al-Anjeri

The mistake is to confuse the reasons that lead a state to normalise relations with those that might lead a society to embrace them.

Egypt signed its peace treaty with Israel in 1979; Jordan followed in 1994. Decades later, their experience suggests that signing a treaty is considerably easier than building popular acceptance of it.

That distinction remains visible today. Thirty-two years after Jordan's peace treaty, King Abdullah II told the United Nations this week that this Israeli government's "expansionist appetite" had become a "regional threat", while reaffirming Jordan's commitment to a just peace.

Therein lies the lesson.

A state can change policy, open an embassy, establish direct flights and sign agreements. Foreign policy is made by states.

But political decisions cannot, by decree, change deeply held convictions.

So the real question is not who will normalise next, or when. It is whether governments can create popular acceptance for a peace their societies did not ask for.

States can sign agreements in a moment. Public acceptance cannot be signed into existence.



Global economic, financial reforms urged

Kuwait, UN call to secure vital maritime routes

NEW YORK, Sept 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi and Acting Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations for Counter-Terrorism Alexander Zuev discussed late Wednesday means of bolstering cooperation in combating terrorism.

This came during the high-level meeting held on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Both sides shared reviews about some topics of mutual interest.

They affirmed the significance of continued coordination and cooperation within the UN framework and backing international efforts to combat terrorism and extremism and strengthening international stability and security.



Sadiq Marafi

Meanwhile, Marafi represented Kuwait in a ministerial meeting on boosting cooperation to ensure the stability and security of vital maritime routes, especially the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb and the Red Sea.

The gathering, held also on the sidelines of the UNGA, stressed importance of maintaining freedom of maritime navigation and ensuring the continued flow of international trade, energy supplies, and global supply chains.

In addition, it focused on the protection of vital maritime infrastructure, including under-sea cables and pipelines, and boosting international cooperation and information sharing in maritime security, within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Meanwhile, Sadiq Marafi has affirmed the importance of continuing efforts to reform the international economic and financial system to make it fairer and more equitable and responsive to the needs of the developing countries, thereby enhancing the opportunities of trade

and investment, combating poverty and achieving sustainable development.

This came in a speech delivered by Marafi late Wednesday during the high-level meeting to mark the 40th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development that was held on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The meeting discussed the means of addressing development gaps and enhancing international partnerships as well as the role of national policies and multilateral cooperation in creating the required conditions for the right to development, along with the importance of ensuring benefiting all countries and peoples from the opportunities of development and technological and economic development changes.

The meeting also aimed at reiterating international commitment to the right to development, reviewing progress and current challenges and bolstering international cooperation for sustainable, justice and comprehensive development.

370 women get houses in Taima & Sulaibiya: PAHW

Total number of applications hits 7,111: Sheikha Al-Yousef

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24: The Women's Housing Affairs Committee at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) held a lottery on Thursday to allocate 370 houses in Taima and Sulaibiya, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This allocation is for female applicants whose housing requests were registered in 2020 or earlier, provided that their data are updated and they met the conditions.

In a press statement, Committee Chairperson Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef clarified that the committee considers only applicants whose data are updated and who fulfilled the requirements. She stressed that applicants who failed to update their housing requests are excluded from the lottery.

Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef revealed that the total number of housing applications received since the committee was formed has reached 7,111. She said around 2,400 applications had been updated as of July 19, while older applications dating back to the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s have yet to be updated. She urged all applicants



Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef

to cooperate with the committee and update their data in accordance with the new regulations within the specified timeframe.

She pointed out that the committee announced a three-month grace period in July for female citizens to update their data, with the deadline set for Oct 19. She warned that failure to update an application within this period could result in

the forfeiture of the housing request.

She added that female citizens with disabilities are granted priority status in housing requests, receiving a five-year seniority advantage. "This priority applies provided that they hold a recent disability certificate confirming moderate or severe disability, while mild disability does not qualify for this status," she explained.

Meanwhile, the committee stated that houses deemed unsuitable are addressed through a specialized committee that inspects the property. It added that if a house is confirmed to be unsuitable, it is immediately replaced.

The committee affirmed its commitment to meeting the housing needs of eligible female citizens and easing their access to housing support in accordance with the regulations and criteria.

The committee said the number of houses distributed depends on the housing units provided by the relevant authorities, indicating it is keen on ensuring that new housing developments are fully equipped with infrastructure and essential services like schools, health centers, cooperative societies and other amenities before the beneficiaries move in.

Kuwait, S. Korea target sustainability, food security



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Affairs Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij meets South Korean Ambassador to the country Kim Jang-hyun.

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Affairs Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij discussed on Thursday South Korean Ambassador to the country Kim Jang-hyun cooperation in sustainability, food security, land reclamation and smart agriculture.

The meeting at the Environment Public Authority (EPA) also covered strategies for adopting South Korean eco-friendly aquaculture, said the Ministry of Development and Sustainability in a press release.

The talks reflected both countries' interest in expanding cooperation and developing partnerships in areas of mutual interests in ways that serve their shared interests.

Kuwait, Oman eye road-building expertise exchange

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24: The Ministry of Public Works recently welcomed a delegation from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in the Sultanate of Oman.

Led by Eng. Mohammad Tabouk, the visit aimed to strengthen cooperation and exchange technical expertise on roads and infrastructure development.

The two sides held a meeting chaired by Director General of Road Engineering Affairs Eng. Khaled Al-Osaimi, with the directors of various departments and road project engineers

from the ministry in attendance.

They discussed technical and administrative matters related to executing and managing major road projects, road and infrastructure projects in the two countries, insights and lessons from executing and managing major projects, working methods, experience of Kuwait in the implementation of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway project, best practices and modern technologies used in designing and implementing road projects, design specifications and standards, mechanisms for tendering and awarding projects, contract management, monitoring execution phases, expertise regarding material testing for road projects, quality control methods, ensuring

that work complies with approved specifications and standards to improve project quality and execution efficiency, importance of exchanging insights and technical expertise among specialists in both countries, and value of utilizing accumulated experience in road and infrastructure projects to refine working methods and improve the efficiency and quality of future undertakings.

The visit is in line with ongoing efforts to strength technical cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the Sultanate of Oman, as well as exchanging experience and expertise in road and infrastructure, thereby, contributing to the development of the road network and raising project efficiency and quality.

News in Brief

Kuwait stresses commitment to feasible transport systems

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24, (KUNA): Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan participated in the Ministerial Forum held as part of the 2026 Global Forum on Sustainable Transport in Beijing, under the theme "Implementing the Global Development Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative to Deepen Cooperation in Sustainable Transport."

Al-Mashaan expressed Wednesday Kuwait's welcome and support for the Global Sustainable Transport Development Initiative framework, praising its focus on infrastructure connectivity, resilient supply chains, sustainable investment, technological innovation



Dr. Al-Mashaan

and capacity building.

She affirmed Kuwait's commitment to working with its regional and international partners toward interconnected, resilient, environmentally friendly and accessible transport systems.

Al-Mashaan noted that international forums provide an important opportunity to exchange successful experiences and translate shared objectives into practical cooperation.

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GCC-ASEAN meeting: Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Affairs Ambassador Hamad Al-Marri participated Wednesday in the joint ministerial meeting between the GCC and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), held on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly.

The meeting focused on following up on the execution phase of outcomes established during the second GCC-ASEAN Summit, evaluating mechanisms to expand economic, commercial, and political cooperation opportunities between the two regional blocs.

Participants also exchanged views on key regional and international developments, emphasizing coordinated political approaches toward matters of mutual interest.

□ □ □

Protecting digital infrastructure: Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Ambassador Sadeq Marafi affirmed Tuesday Kuwait's commitment to continuing its support for the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) and strengthening international cooperation to protect critical civilian digital infrastructure.

AMIR REPRESENTATIVE MEETINGS

Kuwait Amir Rep. meets more world leaders to solidify bonds



Crown Prince Diwan photo
Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Finnish President Alexander Stubb and his accompanying delegation.

NEW YORK, Sept 24, (KUNA): The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, met Wednesday President and Chief Operating Officer of global investment firm Blackstone Jonathan Gray, on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly.

The meeting, held at Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, explored joint investment opportunities, global economic trends, and strategic avenues to foster national human capital through capacity-building programs and expertise exchange.

The meeting was attended by Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai, and Director of the Office of His Highness the Crown Prince Major General Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Duai.

Chairman of Libyan Council

The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received Wednesday Chairman of the Libyan Presidential Council Mohamed Al-Menfi and his accompanying delegation on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly.

At the outset of the meeting, held at Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressing wishes for the Chairman's good health and for the State of Libya and its brotherly people to enjoy lasting security, stability, and prosperity.

The two leaders discussed fraternal bilateral relations between Kuwait and Libya, exploring avenues to expand cooperation across various domains to serve mutual interests, while also exchanging views on key regional and international developments.

The meeting was attended by Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, Per-

manent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai, and Director of the Office of His Highness the Crown Prince Major General Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Duai.

Finnish President

The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received Wednesday Finnish President Alexander Stubb and his accompanying delegation on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly.

At the outset of the meeting, held at Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressing wishes for the President's good health and for the ongoing progress and prosperity of Finland and its friendly people.

The two leaders reviewed bilateral relations between Kuwait and Finland, exploring avenues to broaden cooperation across key sectors to serve mutual interests, while also exchanging views on major regional and international developments.

Grand Duke of Luxembourg

The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received Wednesday Grand Duke of Luxembourg Guillaume and his accompanying delegation on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly.

At the outset of the meeting, held at Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressing wishes for His Royal Highness's continued good health and for the ongoing progress and prosperity of Luxembourg and its friendly people.

The two leaders discussed bilateral relations between Kuwait and Luxembourg, exploring avenues to bolster cooperation across key sectors to serve mutual interests, alongside exchanging views on major regional and international developments.



KUNA photo
Minister of State for Communications Affairs and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar meets the French Ambassador to Kuwait, Olivier Gauvin.

Kuwait, France review ways to boost IT, telecom cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24, (KUNA): Omar Al-Omar, Minister of State for Communications Affairs and Acting Minister of Information and Culture, met Thursday with the French Ambassador to Kuwait, Olivier Gauvin, and the CEO of the French company Pertimm, Charles-Henri Puaux.

The meeting discussed avenues of cooperation between the two nations in the fields of telecommunications and information technology, a ministry statement noted, adding that ways to strengthen

partnerships and exchange expertise in technical and digital sectors were also discussed.

These efforts aim to support technological advancement and innovation while fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors.

The statement quoted Minister Al-Omar as emphasizing Kuwait's commitment to further strengthening relations with France and expanding the scope of cooperation in technical and digital fields.

'Education key pillar for development'

NEW YORK, Sept 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed Wednesday Kuwait's firm belief that education serves as a fundamental pillar for achieving sustainable development, investing in human capital, and equipping societies to face future challenges.

Speaking at a high-level event titled "Doubling Potential: A New Era for Education Financing", organized by Italy and Nigeria in cooperation with the Global Partnership for Education during the 81st UN General Assembly, Sheikh Jarrah highlighted national efforts to

modernize Kuwait's educational framework through digital transformation, modern technology, and labor market skill alignment.

Sheikh Jarrah reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to expanding educational access in developing nations and underserved communities, emphasizing that educational funding drives long-term stability and economic growth.

He noted that Kuwait, primarily through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), continues to fund capacity-building initiatives and international educational programs worldwide.

Al-Mannae

A promotional poster for Mughal Mahal. At the top right is the Mughal Mahal logo, which features a green silhouette of a woman in traditional attire holding a glass, with the text 'SINCE 1985' and 'مغل محل MUGHAL MAHAL' below it. The main title 'Special Buffet' is written in a large, elegant, dark red serif font with gold outlines. Below the title, it says 'MUGHAL MAHAL Hawally & MUGHAL MAHAL Fahaheel' in a smaller, gold-colored font. A horizontal line with gold stars on either side separates this from the text 'LARGEST SPREAD IN TOWN' in a gold serif font. Below this, the text 'Why Not TASTE 45 ITEMS At One Go' is written in a large, bold, gold serif font. Underneath this, the word 'For' is written in a cursive script. A gold-bordered box contains the pricing: 'ADULT KD 5.950' and 'CHILD KD 3.450' in a bold, dark red font. Below the pricing box, there are three columns of text: 'EVERY THURSDAY DINNER ONLY | 6 PM TO 11 PM', 'EVERY FRIDAY LUNCH & DINNER 12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM & 6 PM TO 11 PM', and 'HAWALLY EVERY SATURDAY LUNCH ONLY 12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM'. At the bottom, a gold-bordered box contains the website 'www.mughalmahal.com', the phone number '1800 188', and the social media handle '@mughalmahalkuwait'.

Kuwait, US seek strategic ties upgrade

FM meets Kyrgyzstan, Singapore, Morocco counterparts



Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Senior Advisor to the US President on Arab and Middle Eastern Affairs Massad Boulos.



Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Kyrgyz counterpart Jeenbek Kulubaev.



Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Singaporean counterpart Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan.



Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets President of the Republic of Nauru, David Adeang.

NEW YORK, Sept 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Senior Advisor to the US President on Arab and Middle Eastern Affairs Massad Boulos reviewed Thursday strategic relations between the two friendly countries.

This came during the minister's reception of the US official at the headquarters of the Kuwaiti Permanent Mission to the UN, on the sidelines of the High-Level Week of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly.

During the meeting, the two sides also reviewed the latest regional and international developments, exchanged views and discussed efforts to support safety and stability in the area.

Kyrgyzstan

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his Kyrgyz counterpart Jeenbek Kulubaev discussed late Wednesday ways to strengthen and develop bilateral relations between the two countries in various fields.

This came during a meeting between the two ministers on the sidelines of the High-Level Week of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly.

They also focused on the latest developments at re-

gional and international levels.

Singapore

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his Singaporean counterpart Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan addressed ways to strengthen and develop bilateral relations between the two countries in different fields.

This came during a meeting held between the two ministers at the headquarters of the Kuwait Permanent Mission in New York, on the sidelines of the High-Level Week of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly.

They also focused on the latest developments at regional and international arenas.

Protecting Palestinian children

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah participated in a high-level UN event on the proception of Palestinian children and meeting their basic needs.

The event discussed the humanitarian conditions facing children in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as ways to enhance their protection, alongside supporting efforts to provide them with essential care and services.

The event which was held late Wednesday in the headquarters of the UN was co-organized by Jordan, Belgium and the EU, on the sidelines of the High-Level Week of the 81st session of the UN General As-

sembly.

Morocco

Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Wednesday with his Moroccan counterpart Nasser Bourita, on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the meeting reviewed bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to strengthen and develop them in various fields, in addition to discussing the latest regional and international developments.

ESCWA

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received late Tuesday UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Dr. Rania Al-Mashat at the headquarters of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, on the sidelines of the High-Level Week of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Both sides reviewed the relations between Kuwait and the ESCWA and means of strengthening cooperation in development, social and economic fields of mutual interest, according to a statement by Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs early Wednesday.

UN official

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received late Tuesday UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher at the headquarters of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, on the sidelines of the High-Level Week of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Both sides reviewed the relations between Kuwait and the UN and its agencies as well as joint efforts in humanitarian action, said a statement by Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs early Wednesday.

They also discussed means of enhancing cooperation and coordination in a manner that contributes to supporting effective response to humanitarian crises and challenges at regional and international levels, it added.

Nauru

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Wednesday with President of the Republic of Nauru, David Adeang, on the sidelines of the High-Level Week of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

A statement by Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that both sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing cooperation in all fields, as well as discussed recent regional and international developments.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait to

temperatures between 25 and 27 degrees Celsius, and sea conditions light to moderate with waves of 1 to 3 feet.

He said Friday's daytime weather will be very hot, with northwesterly winds light to moderate in speed, at times active, ranging between 8 and 40 kilometers per hour, some high clouds expected, maximum temperatures between 45 and 47 degrees Celsius, and the sea light to moderate with waves of 1 to 5 feet.

Al-Ali added that Friday night will be hot to moderate, with northwesterly winds light to moderate in speed ranging between 12 and 35 kilometers per hour, some high clouds expected, minimum temperatures between 26 and 28 degrees Celsius, and the sea light to moderate with waves of 1 to 5 feet.

Regarding Saturday's daytime weather, Al-Ali said it will be very hot, with northwesterly winds at light to moderate speeds ranging between 12 and 38 kilometers per hour, maximum temperatures between 45 and 47 degrees Celsius, and the sea light to moderate with waves of 2 to 5 feet.

He noted that Saturday night will be hot to moderate, with northwesterly winds light to moderate in speed ranging between 10 and 32 kilometers per hour, minimum temperatures between 25 and 27 degrees Celsius, and the sea light to moderate with waves of 2 to 4 feet.

Kuwait Amir

The meeting that took place at the Kuwaiti permanent mission headquarters, was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi, Permanent Delegate of the State of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai and His Highness the Crown Prince's Office Director Maj. Gen. Ahmad Al-Da'ei.

Separately on Wednesday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council of Yemen Dr. Abdullah Al-Alimi Bawazir on the sidelines of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly.

The meeting, held at the headquarters of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, covered fraternal bilateral relations between Kuwait and Yemen, focusing on avenues to expand cooperation to serve the mutual interests.

The two sides also reviewed the latest regional and international developments alongside efforts to restore security and stability in Yemen.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi and Director of the Office of His Highness the Crown Prince Major General Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Duai.

Saudi defenses

Earlier in the day, the Saudi Civil Defense had issued early warnings for Makkah, Jeddah, Taif, Yanbu, and Tabuk, urging people to follow safety guidelines and official instructions.

Meanwhile, Yemen's Armed Forces announced early Thursday that they thwarted an attack launched by the Houthi militia in the Al-Ahkoum area of Hayfan District in Taiz Governorate.

In a press statement, Yemeni Armed Forces spokesman Colonel Majed Al-Nazili said that the armed forces in Taiz killed or wounded dozens of militia members and destroyed weapons belonging to them.

Due to this human loss, the militia immediately withdrew and failed to make any advance, he added.

Quoting a military source, Yemen's news agency (Saba) reported that the armed forces secured the Al-Maqatirah area in Lahj Governorate, adjacent to Al-Ahkoum, and reopened the Heijat Al-Abed Road to citizens and travelers after the danger posed by Houthi militia was eliminated.

The Taiz military media center stated that seven Houthi militias were killed and others wounded over the past 24 hours in clashes with the Yemeni Armed Forces.

Elsewhere, Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said on Thursday that three Iranian drones attacked homes belonged to its members north of Irbil, causing material damage but no casualties.

The attack targeted homes in Delziyan Vil-lage, KDP said in a statement.

Iranian opposition parties have long faced cross-border missile and drone strikes targeting their headquarters and residential camps within Iraq's Kurdistan Region.

Since the outbreak of the war, different parts of Kurdistan Region have been hit by more than 1,000 missiles and drones, killing 32 people and injuring 156 others.

In a latest development, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has suspended flights operated by Iranian airlines to and from the country, effective Thursday and until further notice, according to the UAE General Civil Aviation Authority.

The authority said in a statement that the decision was based on a U.S. ban on Iranian airlines' use of airports worldwide, the Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported.

It added that it would keep the public and relevant parties informed of any developments until air traffic between the UAE and Iran returns to normal.

The authority also urged the public to rely only on authorized official sources for air traffic information.

Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jasem Al-Budaiwi said late Wednesday that Iran's disruption of international maritime navigation and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz constitute a flagrant violation of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Al-Budaiwi made the remarks while addressing the Joint Ministerial Meeting between the GCC and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), held on the margins of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.

He warned that the ramifications of these actions extend far beyond the immediate region, saying they directly threaten global supply chains and impact economies worldwide, including ASEAN member states.

He reiterated the firm stance of the GCC demanding Iran's full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 2817, an immediate, permanent, and unconditional cessation of all attacks with verifiable guarantees of non-recurrence, and the full restoration of unhindered navigational freedom across the Straits of Hormuz and Bab Al-Mandab to their pre-28 February 2026 status.

The GCC chief firmly rejected any unilateral measures imposing fees, levies, or conditions on the right of transit passage, emphasizing that Iran must bear full legal accountability and provide complete reparations for the damages resulting from its attacks.



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Building trust

attitudes and behaviors. Based on security experience in juvenile protection, interactions with a juvenile should not focus on wrongdoing and punishment, but rather on protection, prevention, guidance and rehabilitation. Protecting a juvenile at this stage can spare their family, community and state institutions from more serious problems in the future.

Q: What are the risks and warning signs regarding juveniles?

A: At the start of the academic year, the environment changes. Juveniles move daily between home, school, transportation, social media platforms and peer groups, leading to a multitude of influences and risks. Indicators include sudden behavioral changes, withdrawal, unusual irritability, frequent absences, decline in academic performance, shift in the circle of friends, sleep disturbance, fear of going to school or sudden excessive phone use. However, not every change should be interpreted as a problem or a sign of delinquency. The goal is calm observation and understanding the underlying cause, rather than passing judgment.

Q: Which behaviors might appear minor at first, but worsen if not addressed early?

A: Examples include frequent lying, truancy, associating with bad company, bullying, aggression, online misconduct, experimenting with smoking or harmful substances, and engaging in unsafe online relationships. The issue often is not the initial behavior itself, but in its persistence without understanding the causes or intervening in a timely manner.

Q: Is a sudden change in behavior, relationships or academic performance necessarily a sign of a problem?

A: Not necessarily. It could be linked to a specific developmental stage or to academic or social pressures. If the change is distinct, sudden or prolonged, it warrants understanding and monitoring by both the family and the school.

Underlying causes could include bullying, blackmail, online grooming, peer pressure, family issues, the onset of risky behaviors like substance abuse, or an experience that the young person is afraid to disclose. Parents, do not just ask your child, ‘What did you do?’ Ask instead, ‘What happened to you?’ This question can open the door to dialogue and trust, whereas interrogation and accusations may shut that door and drive the young person into silence. Prevention begins with observation, followed by dialogue, and finally, timely intervention.

Q: Given the widespread use of phones and social media, how are minors exploited?

A: Online exploitation can begin with seemingly ordinary interaction—building trust and soliciting personal information, photos or private conversations—before escalating into pressure, threat, blackmail or entrapment.

The solution is not to frighten the minor about the internet—as technology is an integral part of their life—but rather to teach them how to use it safely. We want a minor who says, ‘This behavior is unsafe, I will stop and ask for help,’ rather than one who is afraid to tell the family because he anticipates punishment.

Q: Regarding blackmail and bullying, how can families detect these issues—or online grooming—before they escalate?

A: Close relationship and constant observation serve as the first line of defense. Warning signs include sudden fear of the phone or an intense attachment to it, unusual deletion of conversations, agitation upon receiving a notification, withdrawal, sleep disturbance, refusal to attend school or fear of a specific person or online account.

Furthermore, online grooming is no longer limited to blackmail and bullying, as it can extend to exploiting minors, influencing them ideologically or recruiting them to carry out acts serving extremist groups or criminal entities.

Security agencies recently handled such cases and apprehended the perpetrators, confirming that targeting often begins with what appears to be ordinary communication. Therefore, attention should also be paid to changes in mindset and behavior, such as increased withdrawal, sudden adoption of extrem-

ist ideas, receiving instructions from unknown individuals or concealing the nature of online relationships.

Nevertheless, protection does not mean random searches or suspicion-based surveillance, as it involves building a trusting relationship in which parents are the primary source of support, teaching children that not everyone who contacts them is a friend, and that seeking help is an act of protection, not a sign of weakness.

Q: What mistakes could parents make when a problem is discovered?

A: The most dangerous mistakes include shouting, making threats, and holding the minor—who is actually a victim—fully responsible. Other harmful actions are broadcasting the issue to relatives and friends, sharing photos or conversations, and making the child feel he is to blame for what happened to him.

I remember a case from my own experience where a minor told his father he was sexually assaulted at school. Instead of offering support and protection, the father threw him out of the house, forcing him to stay with a relative. Compounded by the psychological and social trauma and the pressures he faced, the boy eventually drifted into drug use, which escalated into full-blown addiction. This case underscores the fact that a family’s reaction can be a source of protection for the minor, whereas mishandling the situation can complicate the problem and its consequences.

The guiding principles I emphasize are as follows: calm down, listen to your child, protect him, preserve evidence and then seek help from the appropriate authorities. In cases of sexual assault specifically, the minor needs protection, support and psychological and social care, not blame or punishment. It is essential to involve the proper authorities rather than attempting to handle the incident haphazardly or exposing the matter publicly.

Most importantly, minors must not feel that disclosing what happened is a mistake, as fear of the family’s reaction can drive them to silence, thereby, worsening the problem.

If your child comes to you with a problem, do not become a second problem for him, you must be the first to protect him and stand by his side.

Q: Regarding the protection of children, how do we balance protection with respect for their privacy?

A: Protection does not mean constant surveillance and privacy does not mean leaving a minor without guidance. The balance depends on age, level of awareness, and the nature of the risks involved. A child requires closer supervision, whereas an adolescent needs more privacy, balanced with clear rules and agreements with the family. This monitoring should be based on trust and dialogue, rather than constant suspicion.

Q: What role can the school play in early detection?

A: Schools may notice things that families do not, as teachers observe a student’s behavior, interactions with peers, academic performance and attendance patterns.

This highlights the importance of activating the roles of social workers and school psychologists. Their work should not be limited to reacting to problems after they occur, but should extend to monitoring, observation and early assessment of cases showing concerning signs. It is essential to build trust among students and encourage them to report issues and seek help from social workers, psychologists or trusted teachers.

Clear and confidential channels for reporting, referral and follow up must be established, along with enhanced communication between the school, the family and relevant authorities, while safeguarding the student’s privacy and dignity. The goal is not to pass judgment on the student or treat him as a problem, but rather to understand the underlying behavior and identify the root cause.

Early detection and reporting can prevent minor issues from escalating and empower the students to play an active role in their own protection—knowing when they are in danger, whom to turn to and how to ask for help.

Q: What should be done when a student hesitates to seek help for fear of punishment?

A: We must convey a clear message: ‘If you face a problem, tell us without hesitation, do not keep it hidden.’ They

need to understand that reporting blackmail, bullying, grooming or any other danger is neither shameful nor a sign of weakness.

Sometimes, a young person in a difficult situation needs an adult to say, ‘I am with you, we will handle this together,’ more than they need advice.

Q: What are the most common misconceptions regarding the protection of young people? Who bears the responsibility for their protection? Why is it important to raise their awareness about their rights?

A: One major misconception is the belief that protecting young people applies only to juvenile delinquents. In reality, prevention encompasses all young people, as a youth might be the victim of a problem rather than the perpetrator.

Furthermore, severity alone does not prevent wrongdoing. While upbringing requires firmness, it also demands dialogue, trust and a supportive environment. Protecting young people is a shared responsibility: the family plays the primary role, the school is a key partner, and security agencies must fulfill their duties regarding prevention, protection and law enforcement.

Meanwhile, the media contributes to raising awareness and society bears the responsibility of not ignoring behaviors that put young people at risk.

Thus, the focus must shift from asking ‘Who is responsible?’ to ‘How can we cooperate?’

Educating young people about their rights and the boundaries of appropriate interaction with others empowers them to protect themselves. It enables them to recognize their right to refuse any behavior that makes them uncomfortable, to seek help, and to not let anyone threaten, blackmail or exploit them.

Q: How should a family handle a situation where a minor is at risk? What are the most common forms of online luring? What kind of awareness campaign is appropriate for their age?

A: Upon discovering that a minor is at risk, the family should remain calm and composed. They should listen to the minor, giving him opportunity to speak, while ensuring his safety and removing him from the source of danger.

Evidence should be preserved before contacting the relevant authorities, depending on the nature of the case, especially in online cases. Messages, accounts or conversation logs should not be deleted before seeking advice.

At the same time, it is crucial to avoid threats, physical punishment, public shaming, or disclosing details of the problem.

One should also avoid rashly confronting the other party or holding the minor responsible for what he experienced.

Online luring is not limited to blackmail and bullying, it can extend to ideological influence or exploitation by extremist groups or criminal entities. This necessitates paying close attention to behavioral and intellectual changes, as well as the nature of online interactions with strangers.

Also, awareness efforts must be tailored to the age and level of understanding of the minors. Younger children need stories, scenarios, illustrations and simplified examples, whereas adolescents need realistic situations, open dialogue and decision-making training to enhance their ability to protect themselves and act correctly when facing danger.

Q: What is your message to the minor, the family, the school and the community?

A: To the young person I say: Trust yourself, respect your own boundaries and those of others, and do not allow anyone to exploit your fear or hesitation. If you encounter an anxiety-inducing situation or feel you are at risk, do not wait for the problem to escalate, instead, take the initiative to seek help from someone you trust.

To families: Get closer to your children, listen to them before passing judgment, and make dialogue a daily habit so they feel the family is their primary refuge and source of safety when facing any problem.

To schools: Monitor behavioral and academic changes, activate the roles of social workers and psychologists, and build bridges of trust with students to encourage them to report issues and seek help early on.

The society must realize that protecting young people is a shared responsibility -- one that does not fall solely on the

family, the school or the Ministry of Interior. It requires the cooperation of everyone and the refusal to ignore any behavior that could put them at risk.

Prevention begins before a problem arises through a family that listens, a school that observes, a young person who knows how to protect himself and seek help, and an aware society that does not ignore warning signs.

Thus, ‘Prevention and Safety’ is not just a slogan linked to the start of the school year, it is a culture and a practice that must continue to detect risks early and prevent problems from escalating.

French Institute

He commended the ongoing partnership between the French Institute and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) in promoting cross-cultural initiatives.

Director of the French Institute in Kuwait Soraya Saa outlined the upcoming season’s framework, noting the establishment of new creative spaces including studios for emerging artists, ‘Gallery 41’ for contemporary art exhibitions, and ‘Club France,’ which will host film, literary, and digital experiences.

The upcoming cultural itinerary includes an exhibition by Kuwaiti artist Maryam Al-Salem and a musical concert on October 13 at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre.

The Institute will also participate in ‘French Week’ at Al-Asima Mall from October 28 to 31, showcasing French expertise in education, culture, culinary arts, automotive, and technology.

Additionally, the Institute plans active participation in the Kuwait International Book Fair, culminating in December with a joint ‘France-Kuwait Diwaniya’ event held simultaneously in Paris and Kuwait in collaboration with the Arab World Institute to mark the 65th anniversary milestone.

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‘China and the United States should be partners, not rivals’

Xi kicks off highly-anticipated US visit in grand welcome

WASHINGTON, Sept 24, (Xinhua): Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived at Joint Base Andrews on Wednesday afternoon for a state visit to the United States at the invitation of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The visit has drawn wide attention as the two countries seek to stabilize their relationship, deepen cooperation and work together to address global challenges.

Rare planeside welcome
Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, received a rare planeside greeting by Trump and his wife, Melania Trump, upon their arrival. After Xi and Peng descended from their plane, the two presidential couples shook hands and exchanged greetings on the tarmac.

A red carpet was rolled out for the Chinese presidential couple, with honor guards lining up on both sides to pay their respects. Two American children presented bouquets of flowers to Xi and Peng.

The welcome ceremony also included a 21-gun salute, the playing of the national anthems of both countries and a military flyover.

The 21-gun salute is among the highest military honors accorded to a visiting head of state, but is rarely rendered at an airport.

The gesture is notable even by broader diplomatic standards, as the arrangement has been described by U.S. media as a “rare” and “unusual” departure from protocol, as U.S. presidents typically receive visiting foreign leaders at the White House rather than greet them at the airport.

Xi’s arrival kicked off a three-day state visit to the United States, which comes just months after Trump’s China trip in May. The exchange of visits between the two heads of state within six months is of historic and milestone significance, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Monday.



US President Donald Trump and China’s President Xi Jinping participate in an arrival ceremony at Joint Base Andrews, Md., Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026. (AP)

Partners, not rivals
In a written speech upon his arrival, Xi extended sincere greetings and best wishes to the U.S. people on behalf of the Chinese people.

China and the United States are both great countries, and the two peoples are both great peoples, Xi said, adding that the two peoples have maintained friendly exchanges for a long time and their interests are deeply intertwined.

China and the United States should be partners, not rivals, he said, noting that the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and making America

great again can go hand in hand, and that the two countries can help each other succeed and advance the well-being of the whole world.

Xi noted that he and Trump agreed to build a constructive China-U.S. relationship of strategic stability during Trump’s visit to China in May, which has provided strategic guidance for the future development of bilateral ties.

China and the United States should work in the same direction and promote a stable relationship featuring cooperation as the mainstay, moderate competition, man-

ageable differences and promises of peace, Xi said.

He said China and the United States, as two major countries, should find a right way to get along in the new era.

Xi emphasized that the world is developing and times are changing, but the historical logic of peaceful coexistence between China and the United States has not changed, the goodwill of friendly exchanges between the two peoples has not changed, and the general expectations of the international community for China and the United States have

not changed.

Xi said he looks forward to having in-depth exchanges with Trump on major issues concerning bilateral relations and the world situation, constantly enriching the constructive China-U.S. relationship of strategic stability, and expanding the space for exchanges and cooperation in various fields between the two countries.

With joint efforts, Xi said he believes the visit is sure to be fruitful, and will enhance the well-being of the two peoples and add hope for world peace.

Wide expectations

It is a very important visit, coming at a very important time and against the backdrop of a particularly difficult global political landscape, said Roland Henwood, a lecturer and political commentator at the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria.

The significance of the visit extends well beyond bilateral ties, as what happens between China and the United States affects the whole world, said Henwood.

Noting that the two leaders have a good relationship and hold regular contacts and good communication, he said that it is vital to have sustained engagement at the presidential level to provide strategic direction and stability for the bilateral ties.

Erastus Mwencha, former deputy chairperson of the African Union Commission, said the state visit sends an important signal -- diplomacy remains available as an instrument for managing differences and preventing miscalculation.

It should also be read as part of a sequence rather than an isolated event -- the Busan meeting, Trump’s state visit to China in May, and now this reciprocal visit -- each building the kind of sustained contact that a single meeting cannot provide, said Mwencha.

Beyond high-level diplomacy, experts pointed to several areas where continued China-U.S. cooperation could have broader international implications.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is one such area. China and the United States have the technological capabilities and international influence to play an important role in addressing the potential risks posed by AI, said Pascal Sery, a financial expert and former member of the National Assembly of Cote d’Ivoire.

State error in Texas creates huge backlog in voter registration applications

AUSTIN, Sept 24, (AP): County election offices throughout Texas are scrambling to process a massive backlog of voter registration applications stemming from an error at the state level, a headache that is hitting just as they are preparing for voting to begin in the midterm elections.

The problem, which officials in the Republican-controlled state have not publicly defined, also could have disenfranchised people who wanted to vote in the state’s March primary but whose registration applications were never processed, local election officials said during a news conference Wednesday.

“This is really out of left field. Knowing that this one element of (state) applications didn’t come through, and we had no insight on it,” said Chris McGinn, executive director of the Texas Association of County Election Officials.

The size of the backlog statewide hasn’t been deter-

mined, but the association said it is in the tens of thousands for some of the state’s most populous counties. In Bexar County, which includes San Antonio, the election office received about 45,000 backlogged voter registration applications.

Some election offices will need to hire temporary workers to handle the crush, officials with the association said.

The issue started last October in the Texas Department of Public Safety, which among other things allows people to register to vote or update their voter registrations when they renew their driver’s license.

An unspecified error failed to send a large number of records to applicants’ home counties, where the applications are processed and verified. Those records could be a new voter registration application or an update to an existing registration, such as a change of address.

The association of local election officials said its members did not receive any communication from the Department of Public Safety about why the backlog occurred or why they were not informed of the issue for nearly a year.

In a statement, the Department of Public Safety said certain records submitted online “were incomplete and not fully transmitted” to the secretary of state’s office. It said the “system issue” had been resolved, without elaborating on the nature of the issue. The department did not immediately respond to a request for further explanation. County officials said the problem appeared to be with the department’s online portal.

Counties have until early in-person voting starts on Oct. 19 to finish processing the late-arriving applications.

During their news conference, county election officials said it is possible that some people might have been pre-

vented from voting in the state’s primary earlier this year or initially turned away because there was no record of them registering to vote or updating their registration.

The unexpected backlog comes as counties are already inundated with tasks leading up to the November election in a state with a nationally watched U.S. Senate race between Democratic state Rep. James Talarico and Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton.

The Texas Secretary of State’s office and county election leaders say voters don’t need to worry about their registration as long as it is submitted by Oct. 5. If a person shows up to vote and they do not appear on the voter rolls, election officials said they can cast a provisional ballot.

They also can check whether they are registered on the state’s online registration site or call their county election office.

Burnham emerges largely unscathed from first meeting with president

Trump praises new British PM but slams UK deal on Indian Ocean islands

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 24, (AP): Freshly in office, Prime Minister Andy Burnham got off to a strong start with US President Donald Trump at their first meeting on Tuesday, with the president brushing aside differences over the Middle East and calling the British leader “a natural business person.”

The two men met for more than the scheduled 30 minutes on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, where Burnham used his inaugural speech at the global gathering to warn of the dangers posed by unconstrained artificial intelligence and socially corrosive disinformation.

It’s a baptism of fire for the neophyte leader, who has gone from mayor of the northwest England city of Manchester to leader of a G7 country in a matter of weeks.

But despite UK nerves about how the meeting with Trump would go, as they sat in front of UK and US flags, Trump declared that trans-Atlantic relations were “more up than they were with your last prime minister.”

“Based on our relationship with the prime minister, Andy, I think we’re doing very well,” he said.

UK officials know that the president can be fickle. Trump initially warned to Burnham’s predecessor, Keir Starmer, before falling out over the UK’s unwillingness to join the US-Israeli war on Iran. But there was relief that Burnham emerged largely unscathed from his first meeting with a president who once dismissed him as “the mayor of a town.”

“We don’t hold it against you,” Burnham said.

Burnham nodded at US-UK differences, noting that Trump had been “good enough to listen to us” on issues including trade and the Falkland Islands. Trump has recently mused about the future of the British-controlled South Atlantic archipelago, which is also claimed by Argentina, which calls it the Malvinas. The two nations fought a brief 1982 war over the islands.

But on one potential flashpoint, the UK’s decision to ban trade with Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Trump professed ignorance.

Trump’s harshest words were reserved for Britain’s plan to hand sovereignty of the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean to Mauritius. The UK says the deal will preserve the future of a strategic US military base on one of the islands, Diego Garcia. But ratification of an agreement stalled after the Trump administration withdrew its support. UK officials acknowledge the deal is



US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Britain’s Prime Minister Andy Burnham during the United Nations General Assembly on Sept 22, at the UN headquarters. (AP)

now in limbo.

Trump called it “a terrible deal” over a “very important piece of real estate, militarily and strategically.”

“I think the prime minister is going to be looking at it,” he said.

Burnham said Britain is working to come to an agreement, and “I’m confident we can find it working with our US partners.”

Before the meeting, Burnham said he would raise with Trump ways to end the on-off war between the US and Iran, which has choked off oil tankers moving through the Strait of Hormuz and sent global fuel prices soaring. Houthi attacks on Saudi energy infrastructure are making the problem worse

while rendering Burnham’s pledge to ease cost of living pressure for British voters even harder.

As he flew to New York for the annual gathering of world leaders, Burnham announced he had authorized limited military support for Saudi Arabia to repel attacks from Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. A Royal Air Force plane will refuel Saudi jets engaged in “defensive” action to shoot down Houthi missiles, he said.

Burnham also said he would urge Trump to step up US support for Ukraine by providing air-defense missiles to Ukraine ahead of another winter of Russian attacks. It was unclear whether he made any progress on that front.

In his speech to the General Assembly, Burnham argued that Britain could be both a driving force and hand of caution in the dizzying evolution of artificial intelligence.

Burnham said world leaders must heed warnings about AI and set up global standards to oversee it because “fundamental decisions on this technology are too important to be left to chance.”

He said AI has immense potential but will also be “a source of disruption to the way we live and work - and a multiplier of risk. We’ve all heard the warnings - which we must heed.”

Burnham said the UK will try to persuade other countries to adopt rules on transparency and access to AI models - and, even tougher, to get tech companies to sign up, too. That is a potential point of tension with Trump, who told the UN on Tuesday that the US “totally rejects any attempt to construct a globalist scheme” to regulate AI.

Burnham also will said Britain would “draw a line under the last decade” since the UK’s 2016 decision to leave the European Union. He suggested Brexit was a point at which the country took a wrong turn, and a decision fueled in part by misinformation.

He said Russia and other states are using AI-augmented misinformation and disinformation to corrode democracy, and he has asked British security chiefs to set up a National Center for Information Defense to counter the threat.

“Over the last decade we have given too much ground to those who want to run a negative, corrosive narrative about life in Britain, which bears no resemblance to reality,” Burnham said. “Well, no more.”

Germany rejects Trump call to withdraw from ICC

BERLIN, Sept 24, (KUNA): German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul rejected US President Donald Trump’s call for governments around the world to withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC), stressing that Germany would not take such a step.

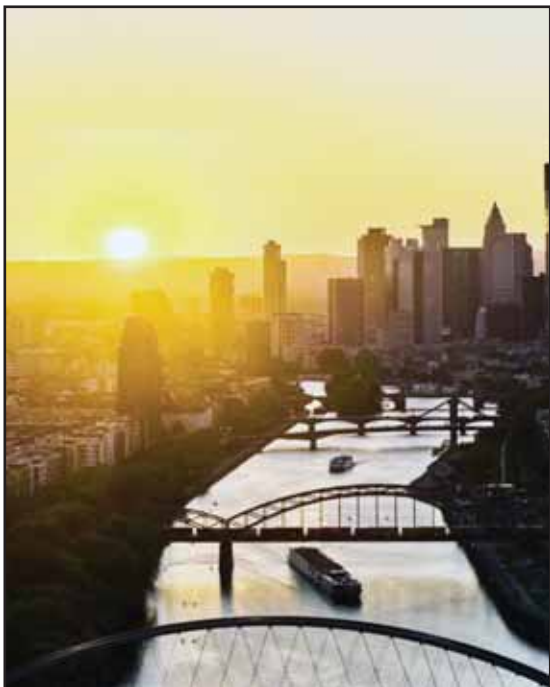
In remarks to German broadcaster Deutschlandfunk from New York, where he is attending the UN General Assembly meetings, Wadephul said Germany “will of course not do so” because it considers the ICC an important international institution.

“I honestly do not understand the substance of this call,” the German minister said, expressing regret over differences with the US administration on the issue.

The ICC, he added, “is part of the rules-based international order.”

The world, Wadephul said, “of course needs this jurisdiction at the international level,” describing the court as part of the rules-based international system, a product of the history of civilization and an expression of the separation of powers, the rule of law and the application of humanitarian principles.

Trump called on countries worldwide to withdraw from the ICC in a speech he delivered Tuesday before the UN General Assembly in New York.



The sun sets behind the buildings of the banking district in Frankfurt, Germany on Sept 22. (AP)

Zelenskyy, at UN, urges leaders to keep choking Russia’s revenues

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 24, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told world leaders Wednesday that Vladimir Putin is the only obstacle to ending “the ridiculous and never-ending war.” and he urged nations large and small to pressure the Russian president for peace by choking the country’s revenues and impeding its war efforts.

“Our target is Russia’s ability to finance this war, to drag it out, to make it more brutal and more destructive,” Zelenskyy told the U.N. General Assembly’s annual gathering. “Russia’s finances and Russia’s production are what must be stopped if Putin is to be stopped.”

When Russia gets money from trade, “it always says no to diplomacy,” Zelenskyy argued, “so Russia’s revenues must remain a target.”



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks during the 81st session of the United Nations General

Rodriguez delivers first address to UN General Assembly

Venezuela’s acting president promises elections at the ‘right moment’

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 24, (AP): Venezuela’s acting president, delivering her first address to the UN General Assembly since coming to power, promised elections Wednesday and said the nation’s people will determine the “right moment.”

“I wish to state this very clearly before this General Assembly: Elections will be held in Venezuela,” Delcy Rodriguez said, adding that her government has started a “political dialogue with opposition sectors” to secure a “process based on equal conditions for all.”

Rodriguez said the Venezuelan people will determine the best time to get elections moving and assured the United Nations that, when the time comes, the country’s institutions “will be prepared to guarantee an inclusive and transparent process.”

Rodriguez took over in Venezuela after a surprise US military raid in January that captured then-leader Nicolás Maduro and brought him to the United States to face drug trafficking charges.

This is the first trip to the United States by a Venezuelan head of state since 2018, when Maduro traveled to New York to participate in the UN General Assembly himself. He is currently being held only a few miles from the organization’s headquarters as he awaits trial.

Rodriguez’s participation in the international forum also marks a milestone in Venezuela’s reintegration into global diplomacy. Addressing global leaders, she said that “the last time that two presidents of Venezuela and the United States met was in 2009.”

She added that her country is coming back strong after “setbacks” suffered this year and thanked President Donald Trump for being willing to resume relations after the US military spirited her predecessor out of the country.

The other setback to which she referred: On June 24, two powerful



Delcy Rodríguez, acting president of Venezuela, addresses the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters on Sept 23. (AP)

earthquakes, magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5, struck north-central Venezuela and killed more than 6,500 people, leaving an untold number of missing and causing widespread devastation.

“I come to talk about a Venezuela whose national life has been affected by a crisis of political coexistence

that disrupted the life of the nation and our interaction with the world,” Rodríguez she said. “Interests alien to the common good of Venezuelans were imposed.”

Rodriguez faced a delicate balance in her speech, which needed to be addressed to both her people and the US government that holds her predecessor. She thanked Trump for his willingness to resume the course of diplomatic relations and cooperation with Venezuela.

“We are working earnestly to resolve existing differences through dialogue, but above all to pave the way for cooperation in the energy sector, the promotion of security, the joint fight against transnational crime, and economic cooperation for the benefit of both peoples and our continent,” she said. “Today, Venezuela is being reborn.”

Since rising to power, Rodríguez has forged a close working relationship with Trump. US influence in Venezuela has grown following the lifting of sanctions against Rodríguez in April, one of several recent moves by Washington to recognize her as a legitimate authority ever since the US military captured her predecessor.

Addressing some words to her people, Rodríguez said that she could not promise an “easy path,” noting that “the country’s recovery will take time.”

“Rebuilding the national soul will be our priority,” she said. “We will walk united as a single nation that, after the pain, chose hope.”

Before her speech at the UN Wednesday night, Trump and Rodríguez, who had been Maduro’s vice president, met at a pull-aside meeting late Tuesday during a reception the US president hosted at a New York hotel.

It was the first time the two had met in person since the operation that captured the nation’s former leader and effectively put Rodríguez in charge.

Hurricane Polo sends heavy rain across Mexico’s Pacific coast

MEXICO CITY, Sept 24, (AP): Powerful Hurricane Polo sent bands of heavy rain early Thursday as a growing Tropical Storm Nolo approached Hawaii with the potential for catastrophic flooding.

Polo was forecast to maintain Category 5 strength as it skirts Mexico’s coast over the next few days. Rain and strong winds had already started to pummel the coast, with waves crashing onto the normally pristine beaches.

While the eye and the strongest winds were expected to remain at sea, the heavy rains could cause life-threatening flooding and landslides, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Farther west in the Pacific, Tropical Storm Nolo was churning about 295 miles (475 kilometers) south of South Point, Hawaii. It was forecast to become a hurricane by Thursday night and was expected to approach the Big Island as early as Friday. A hurricane watch was issued for Hawaii County.

Gov. Josh Green’s office said public schools and state and county offices on the Big Island will close Thursday and Friday, while Maui County will shutter them on Friday ahead of the threat of heavy rain, winds and



This photo provided by NOAA shows Hurricane Polo strengthening in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Mexico on Sept 22. (AP)

flooding. Forecasters said the storm could drop up to 20 inches (51 centimeters) of rain.

Concepción López Villegas was busily bolstering her seaside restaurant in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán state, against the expected onslaught of rain. Strong waves were already hitting some beaches and López Villegas said she feared the storm could destroy the small business she worked decades to build.

“We’re worried and trying to protect our businesses,” López Villegas said. “And of course, we’re sad because it’s our heritage, our legacy

that from one moment to another could be destroyed.”

Guerrero state was particularly at risk of life-threatening flooding and mudslides, the hurricane center said.

Polo was swirling about 130 miles (209 kilometers) south-southwest of Zihuatanejo early Thursday and was moving northwest at 7 mph (11 kph). A turn west-northwest was forecast for later in the day, taking it further out to sea, before turning northwest Saturday.

The storm had maximum sustained winds of 160 mph (257 kph), and was expected to remain a major hurricane for the next few days. Hurricane-force winds extended up to 40 miles (65 km) from the eye and tropical-storm-force winds extended up to 115 miles (185 km).

The region most under threat from Polo is rural and mountainous, scattered with a few small tourist towns and ports. Much of the area is marked by poverty and residents routinely complain authorities abandon them to fend for themselves during natural disasters.

Mexico’s government has called for evacuations in some areas and set up shelters for those affected. Thousands of military and Red Cross personnel have been deployed to the region as a preventive measure.



Indonesian Navy personnel salute as the Giuseppe Garibaldi, a former Italian Navy aircraft carrier, arrives at Tanjung Priok port in Jakarta, Indonesia on Sept 18. (AP)

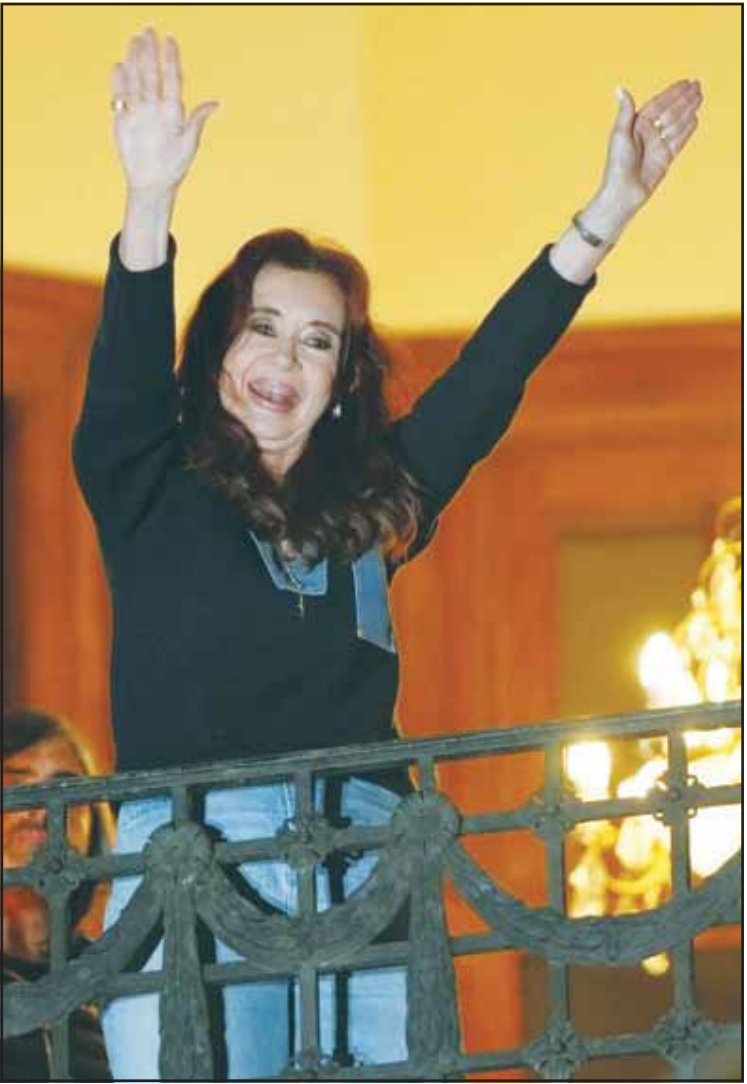
Indonesia reflags former Italian warship as first aircraft carrier

Indonesia’s navy commissioned its first aircraft carrier Thursday after acquiring the former Italian vessel to strengthen its maritime defenses and disaster response.

The Italian flag on the former ITS Giuseppe Garibaldi was replaced with the Indonesian flag on the carrier renamed the KRI Sriwijaya-100 as part of its official

transfer at the ceremony held at Tanjung Priok seaport in North Jakarta.

“The ship, which previously served in the Italian Navy, now bears the name KRI Sriwijaya-100, flying the red-and-white flag as a symbol of sovereignty and service to Indonesia,” navy spokesperson Tunggul, who uses one name, said in a statement. (AP)



Former Argentine president Cristina Fernandez, who is serving a prison sentence under house arrest for corruption, waves from the balcony of her home during a rally marking the fourth anniversary of the assassination attempt against her in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Sept 1. (AP)

Argentina’s leaderless opposition struggles to unite against Milei’s reelection bid

AVELLANEDA, Argentina, Sept 24, (AP): Several nights a week, scores of supporters of Argentina’s divisive former president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, gather outside the French-style apartment building in Buenos Aires where she is under house arrest, beating drums, blaring trumpets and chanting, “Cristina for president!”

After about an hour, Fernández gives them what they came for: She steps onto the third-floor balcony - as close as she can get to the crowds below while serving her six-year corruption sentence - and waves with both hands.

“I not only have hope. I have certainty that Cristina will be freed and will return as president,” said Graciela Nadal, 66, who keeps daily vigil outside Fernández’s home with other members of the Cristina Libre, or Free Cristina, movement, an almost cult-like group demanding the release of the former leader.

More than a year after the Supreme Court upheld her conviction for defrauding the state during her two terms as president, from 2007 to 2015, and banned her from holding office for life, Fernández remains among the most polarizing figures in Argentina and the most influential living leader of Peronism, the populist movement focused on labor rights that has dominated Argentine politics since the 1940s.

To some, she is a political prisoner, punished for standing up to powerful interests. To others, she personifies the corruption and economic mismanagement that have roiled Argentina for decades.

But just over a year before libertarian President Javier Milei seeks reelection, Peronism’s enduring obsession with the 73-year-old former president is taking a toll, undermining its at-

tempt to shape a political alternative just as frustration with Milei’s austerity program gives the movement an opening.

“The opposition is in a big mess. And they now have a big opportunity,” said Marcelo J. García, Americas director at the risk consultancy Horizon Engage. “How they resolve their problems of narrative and leadership will be crucial.”

The stakes extend beyond Milei’s free-market experiment. The opposition’s efforts to regroup and respond to Milei, politicians say, could become a test case for progressive movements across Latin America reeling from a string of election losses and struggling under pressure from the Trump administration.

At a recent rally outside Fernández’s home marking the anniversary of the 2022 assassination attempt against her, Máximo Kirchner, her son and a Peronist lawmaker, spoke at length about the movement’s past - just not its recent past.

To thunderous applause, Kirchner praised the expansive welfare programs of his mother’s presidency, which ended over a decade ago. But he said nothing about her subsequent term as vice president under Alberto Fernández (2019-2023), whose administration presided over the triple-digit inflation that helped vault Milei to power in 2023 on a pledge to shrink the government.

“Those were better years - years in which thousands upon thousands of Argentine families lived better than they do now,” Kirchner said of his mother’s earlier tenure.

Through dramatic budget cuts, Milei has stabilized Argentina’s currency and brought annual inflation down from nearly 300% in 2024 to just over 30% this year. But many Argentines have

yet to see the economic revival that he promised would follow the pain: Paychecks buy less, utilities cost more and jobs are disappearing as cheap imports pummel local industry.

The Peronists won roughly a third of the vote in last year’s midterms and remain Milei’s likeliest challengers in a presidential runoff next year. Even from her wrought-iron balcony, analysts say, Fernández has held back potential successors to pursue her own comeback.

She recently took her case to the U.N. Human Rights Committee, challenging her conviction and disqualification from public office on the grounds of political persecution. But a favorable U.N. ruling alone would not put her back on the ballot, as Argentine courts would still have to lift the ban. Undeterred, her devotees continue their efforts to free their icon.

“If the leader next year isn’t her, it will be whoever she says,” said Silvia Santacruz, 52, a Cristina Libre activist who described Fernández as a reincarnation of Evita Perón, the wife of Peronism’s founder and a heroine to its followers.

That loyalty complicates the ambitions of Peronists promising a fresh start - chief among them Axel Kicillof, the left-wing governor of Buenos Aires province, home to more than a third of Argentines. Fernández’s economy minister from 2013 to 2015, Kicillof was seen as her natural heir before the two fell out over who should lead the movement.

“Historically, Peronism has revolved around strong leaders, with a serial monogamy,” said María Esperanza Casullo, an Argentine political scientist. “Now it finds itself in a completely new situation: Cristina is no longer its undisputed leader, but she has retained the ability to prevent new leadership from consolidating.”

South Sudan President Kiir dissolves transitional govt ahead of elections

JUBA, South Sudan, Sept 24, (AP): South Sudan President Salva Kiir dissolved his country’s transitional government, removing his deputies and introducing a caretaker administration ahead of elections on Dec 22.

The changes outlined in an executive decree were announced on state television Tuesday night. The order also dissolved the national legislature, the country’s 10 state governments and their assemblies, as well as authorities in three administrative areas.

Kiir, who will remain president throughout the electoral period until a new president is sworn in, appointed caretaker ministers to oversee key ministries including foreign affairs, defense, cabinet affairs, interior, justice, national security, finance, petroleum, information and peace building.

The transitional period and implementation of a 2018 peace agreement, which ended a deadly civil war, has been extended several times. The transitional government’s dissolution was envisaged as part of the road map to elections.



United Nations peacekeepers stand near an airstrip in Akobo, South Sudan on Feb 21. (AP)

In previous orders, Kiir has alarmed observers by dismissing important officials. He fired the National Elections Commission chairperson on Sept. 15 without publicly giving a reason.

Subcontinent

Pakistani airstrikes target Afghanistan: Pakistan said it carried out airstrikes early Thursday on 10 sites in Afghanistan that it said were used to launch drone attacks against Pakistan a day earlier, a sharp escalation in recent fighting between the two countries that threatens international mediation efforts.

The airstrikes struck southern and eastern Afghan provinces of Kandahar, Paktia and Khost, killing four civilians, Afghan government spokesperson **Zabihullah Mujahid** said in a statement.

“These shameless acts of aggression and attacks by the Pakistani military regime will be met with an appropriate response,” he said.

The announcement of the strikes by Pakistani Information Minister Attaullah Tarar in a post on X came after officials said Afghanistan’s Taliban forces had fired eight drones and shelled Pakistani



Mujahid

border posts after Pakistani troops foiled what they described as a cross-border infiltration attempt by militants.

Mujahid, the Afghan government spokesperson, rejected Pakistan’s claims of drone attacks and warned of “consequences” for Pakistan over its airstrikes. (AP)

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Aircraft tyre comes off while landing in Nepal: A Sita Air aircraft carrying 13 passengers from Nepalgunj lost its rear tyre while landing at Jughal Airport in Nepal’s western Dolpa district on Thursday morning, police said.

The aircraft, with the call sign 9N-AJH, was landing at around 8:25 a.m. local time when the tyre came off.

“All passengers are safe and no injuries have been reported,” Anil Raj Giri, chief of the Dolpa district police, told Xinhua. Of the total, seven of the passengers were foreign nationals.

The aircraft remained on the runway following the incident, preventing other aircraft from landing at Jughal Airport.

Authorities are assessing the situation and working to clear the runway, according to Giri. (Xinhua)

Oil price down 66 cents to \$106.30 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24, (KUNA): Kuwait oil price dropped by 66 cents to reach USD 106.30 per barrel (pb) in Tuesday’s trading, compared with USD 106.96 in the previous day, according to the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

In global markets, Brent crude rose by USD 3.83 to reach USD 103.08 pb, and US West Texas Intermediate crude also increased by USD 1.64 to stand at USD 92.16 pb.

Business

Sets roadmap for smart, low-carbon oil infrastructure

KNPC advances plans for SAF & low-carbon aviation fuel

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), the local refining division of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), will soon implement initiatives aligned with the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (UN), particularly those aimed at combating climate change.

KNPC intends to establish a state-of-the-art biorefinery for producing sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and low-carbon aviation fuel (LCAF), which are recognized globally.

This project is in line with the commitment of the local oil sector to adopt clean and environmentally friendly energy solutions to reduce carbon emissions from the aviation sector, particularly the global air traffic.

To achieve this vital objective, the company will conduct comprehensive feasibility studies to explore options for importing and blending sustainable fuels, as well as developing local production mechanisms for LCAF.

The technical and financial assessments will be presented to the Sustainability Committee at KNPC, and then forwarded to the Sustainability Steering Committee at KPC.

The goal is to establish an inclusive roadmap and timeline for implementing groundbreaking environmental projects, targeting completion by

2050. These initiatives are designed to keep pace with the rapid advancements and changes in the oil and gas industry, both locally and internationally.

In collaboration with KPC, KNPC will also update its long-term strategic plan, which extends up to 2050. This modernization will cover all sectors, core activities, and various functional areas within the company, ensuring alignment with contemporary global trends.

The energy transformation strategy of KNPC is based on the independent oil and gas forecasts issued by Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), which enhance sustainable growth opportunities and ensure the continuous competitiveness of the State of Kuwait in global energy markets, with full commitment to shoulder environmental responsibility and reduce the carbon footprint of industrial and production processes.

As Kuwait moves towards a green oil future, data revealed that KOC entered a new historic phase in the local oil industry by launching environmental initiatives and advanced technological projects that will pave the way to achieving zero carbon neutrality by the year 2050.

According to an oil source who spoke to the newspaper about these developments, the qualitative transformation being pursued by KNPC proves the commitment of Kuwait to abide by international climate agreements and in response to the vision of KPC in adopting clean and sustainable energy solutions.

The new roadmap is considered the foundation for developing a smart and low-emission infrastructure that covers all oil facilities, including the

facilities affiliated with Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), which was merged with KNPC recently.

The source confirmed the completion of the preliminary feasibility study for renewable energy sources and their alternatives, pointing out that the actual work started by drawing an integrated road map which includes technological applications and environmental initiatives aimed to reduce carbon emissions, such that this step is considered a fundamental shift in the march of the local oil sector towards environmental sustainability and reliance on clean energy solutions.

The source added that the tremendous efforts exerted by the company aim to develop a sustainable infrastructure relying on smart and innovative solutions.

These efforts are structured in successive short, medium and long-term phases. The ongoing plans will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the local oil sector by using advanced solar energy technology, implementing carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) techniques, and adopting innovative carbon offsetting mechanisms.

This is in addition to the transition from traditional fuels to blue hydrogen—a fuel that offers superior efficiency within the future energy landscape and has minimal environmental impact.

Due to the growing importance of combating climate change—a key sustainable development goal that Kuwait intends to achieve, the company launched specialized initiatives focusing on the biofuel and low-carbon fuel sectors.

Dialogue focuses on oil markets, security & future demand

OPEC, China deepen energy cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24, (KUNA): OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais said Thursday that the meeting with China reflects the importance of their partnership in supporting global oil market stability and strengthening energy security amid continued growth in global energy demand.

Al-Ghais told KUNA that China’s pivotal role in supporting global economic growth and energy demand underscores the importance of coordination on oil market developments and future energy needs, contributing to global market stability.

He said the OPEC-China meeting provides an opportunity to strengthen cooperation on energy issues of mutual interest, exchange views on the outlook for oil markets and promote investment across various sectors of the oil industry.

The eighth High-Level Meeting of the OPEC-China Energy Dialogue was held Wednesday in Beijing with the participation of senior energy officials. It was co-chaired



OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais

by OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais and China’s National Energy Administration Chairman Wang Hongzhi.

Wang said the global energy sector is

undergoing profound changes, making dialogue and cooperation between oil-producing and consuming countries increasingly important. He stressed the need to strengthen cooperation with OPEC and its member countries in addressing global energy challenges.

Al-Ghais highlighted the strong relations fostered through the OPEC-China Energy Dialogue, noting that 20 years have passed since the first formal dialogue between the two sides. He said the relationship has developed into a sustainable framework for cooperation on issues of mutual interest, particularly security of supply, energy demand and market stability.

Both sides noted that OPEC’s World Oil Outlook 2026 projects China to remain one of the largest contributors to global oil demand growth through 2050.

The ninth High-Level Meeting of the OPEC-China Energy Dialogue is scheduled to be held in Vienna, Austria, in 2027.

Iran shifts trade to land as blockade disrupts imports

GURBULAK BORDER CROSSING, Sept 24, (AP): Hundreds of trucks idle along the road into Iran from Turkey’s mountainous eastern border. Bustling even in normal times, the countries’ largest crossing is now a make-or-break economic lifeline for Tehran as the U.S. navy blockades its ports.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has pressed to accelerate overland trade as the blockade limits the vast majority of imports while cutting off the oil and gas sales that largely keep the economy alive.

It’s the latest test of Iran’s endurance. Frustrated Iranian truck drivers spoke to The Associated Press at the Turkey border crossing, where lines now stretch for miles.

“I’ve been driving through this border gate for 15 years. I’ve never had to wait as long as now,” said Muhammed Riza Shiri, 55, who had waited four days to carry his load of rubber into Iran. “We had to wait at the end of a seven-kilometer (4.3-mile) line. We used to wait, maximum, for three days here. Because of the war, the waiting times exceed five days.”

Iran accuses the U.S. of trying to weaken the country.

But an AP reporter visiting the Turkey border crossing on Tuesday saw road work aimed at building extra lanes. Two staffers from a local road authority, who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to comment publicly, said Turkey was improving border infrastructure based on a three-year-old plan.

A Telegram channel linked with groups representing Iranian truckers and other transportation drivers is flooded with messages protesting conditions. Their low-wage work is further squeezed after Iranian authorities raised fuel prices and tightened fuel quotas.

“With the rising costs, increased maintenance expenses, high prices for tires and parts and, on the other hand, reduced cargo loads and decreased driver income, it has become very difficult for many of us to continue working,” one message read, warning truckers “will not remain silent in the face of this increased pressure on drivers.”

Akbar Sadigi, 42, an Iranian truck driver from Tabriz waiting at the crossing, said longer waiting times have cut his twice-monthly trips to once a month.

“I make half of what I used to make because of this,” he said. Fuel prices for his truck have risen by 25% in Iran since his last trip, he added.

“Some Turkish drivers can bribe and get ahead of the line. Our money is worth nothing here. We can’t do that,” Sadigi said.

Drivers said the customs line is even longer on the Iranian side, with wait times in the past month ranging from 12 to 25 days. Many blamed longer inspections by Turkish authorities of trucks leaving Iran.

Akbar Yahyai, an Iranian truck driver who said his loads vary from machinery parts to chemical components, said he had been waiting four days.

“It’s a shame for us drivers here. There is no toilet or shower we can use here while waiting. You can see it from how we look and smell,” he said, adding that he barely makes enough money to eat.

Iran’s leaders have acknowledged the high stakes. The economy shrank by over 10% in the three months following the start of Iran’s calendar year on March 20, compared to the same period the previous year, according to its statistics agency. Iran’s non-oil economy shrank by 4.6%.

The value of Iran’s currency, the rial, has sunk and inflation has soared since the U.S. and Israel launched their war on Iran on Feb. 28. Weeks before that, plummeting economic conditions had sparked anti-government protests that led to a deadly crackdown.

Officials in Iran and its neighbors said they are trying to speed up border crossings.

“The Turkish customs have deceased the waiting times of vehicles coming from Iran from 30 to 22 days by increasing the number of lanes at fuel measurement stations and doubling X-ray scanning machines,” Ersin Şimşek, Gürbulak representative of the International Transporters Association, said in a phone interview.

And at the border between Iran and Pakistan, drivers also have reported delays. Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni this week said the countries plan to boost flows by keeping crossings open 24 hours a day.

They also have agreements to open a new crossing at Kuhak, Iran’s state news agency reported Momeni as saying after his Pakistani counterpart visited Tehran on Monday.

Gulf nations have found ways to keep oil flowing through the Iran war, but the costs are mounting

FRANKFURT, Sept 24, (AP): When Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz at the start of the war, choking off sea passage for some 15 million barrels of oil a day, many feared that prices would skyrocket, cratering the world economy.

Instead, nearly seven months on, oil is expensive but not exorbitant, and analysts say there’s enough oil available to meet current global needs, even as the higher prices cause political problems for U.S. President Donald Trump and others.

That’s because Saudi Arabia and other Gulf producers quickly found alternative routes and reached for unused pipeline capacity. When Iran and its militant allies targeted those, the oil exporters and the U.S. military found still other ways - workarounds for the workarounds - in an often clandestine game of whack-a-mole.

With oil now at around \$100 a barrel - higher than before the war but not as bad as feared - Iran has diminished leverage, while a U.S. naval blockade and tightened sanctions smother its own economy.

But the workarounds are expensive and may not be sustainable. The drawing down of existing commercial oil stocks - especially by China - has also helped keep prices in check, but cannot continue indefinitely. And Iran could yet gain an edge with continued attacks on key oil facilities.

Iran began attacking ships in the Strait of Hormuz in response to the U.S.-Israeli bombardment that started the war. In response, the Saudis turned to their East-West pipeline that carries oil to their Red Sea port of Yanbu.

From there, tankers headed out through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait toward Asia. Likewise, the United Arab Emirates used its pipeline cutting across neighboring Oman to Fujairah - a route that skirts the strait.

Both pipelines had spare capacity, and the UAE’s state oil company ADNOC and Saudi Aramco used it to keep exports from collapsing completely during the first weeks of the war.

Meanwhile, some oil leaked out of the Strait of Hormuz. In May, ship operators willing to risk Iranian attack started taking advantage of a U.S.-supervised route near Oman, defying Iran’s demands to use its own vetted route. They shuttled back and forth at night with location systems and mobile phones turned off, and offloaded to tankers waiting outside the strait. Flows from Kuwait, Iraq, and the UAE started to rise again.

But Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen disrupted the Yanbu workaroud in July by declaring a blockade of Saudi oil shipments, threatening the Bab el-Mandeb - a repeat of the Hormuz disruption.

In response, the Saudis redirected Asia shipments northwest to the Mediterranean, either through the Suez Canal or - for tankers too big to use it - a pipeline across Egypt to another tanker. The oil then made a huge detour as it was shipped around Africa and back to Asia.



A worker collects engine oil as he works at a degassing station in Zubair oil field, whose operations have been reduced due to the Mideast war triggered by the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran, near Basra, Iraq, Saturday, March 28, 2026. (AP Photo/Leo Correa, File)

Then the East-West pipeline was attacked earlier this month and forced to shut down, potentially for weeks.

With oil loading halted at Yanbu from Sept. 11, the Saudis shifted again, joining other Gulf producers sending oil through the U.S.-guided corridor in the Strait of Hormuz. On Monday, six supertankers loaded 12 million barrels at Saudi terminals on the Persian Gulf, according to shipping data company Kpler.

U.S. officials have touted the role of the southern corridor in keeping energy flowing while their blockade increases pressure on Iran. Adm. Brad Cooper, head of U.S. Central Command, said in a video on social media Saturday that U.S. forces had assisted 2,000 commercial ship transits and the transport of more than 1 billion barrels of oil from Gulf partner nations over “the past couple of months.”

Analysts estimate some 6 million barrels of oil per day or more have been passing through the Strait of Hormuz on the dark shuttle route on average - some 40% or more of prewar flows.

Rahul Choudhary, vice president of upstream research at energy data firm Rystad Energy, did the math as follows: With 6 million or 7 million barrels per day now flowing through the southern route, plus 2 million barrels through the pipeline to Fujairah, fully 8 million or so of the blocked 15 million barrels per day from before the war have been restored.

That still leaves roughly 7 million barrels per day missing from prewar flows.

But wait: About 3.5 million barrels per day are being drawn down from the globe’s abundant oil inventories. Meanwhile, demand has fallen by perhaps another 5 million barrels per day, due to the higher price and sluggish

economic growth in key markets. Add in 500,000 to 700,000 barrels per day from other suppliers such as the U.S., and that pretty much evens out the global oil market.

“Our take is that the market is very tightly balanced,” Choudhary said. “That is why you are not seeing exceptionally high prices for crude; they are still in the \$100 range, and they have not touched \$140-\$150 per barrel - which could have been the case if there was a deficit of 5-6 million barrels.”

In fact, Rystad foresees oil at \$85-\$90 per barrel in the last three months of the year, and falling to \$80-\$82 next year if Hormuz is reopened.

The workarounds are time-consuming and expensive.

Sending oil to Asia through the Suez Canal instead of the Red Sea can add as much as a month to the voyage. Meanwhile, the Hormuz shuttle trade involves expensive tankers waiting at least a day and a half in the Gulf of Oman for the ship-to-ship transfer.

The demand for supertankers has sent charter rates - normally \$30,000 to \$50,000 per day - through the roof. Spot charter rates for Hormuz transits reached \$1 million per day on Sept. 11, according to maritime data company Windward, equivalent to roughly \$26 per barrel. That means shipping is a quarter of the cost, instead of the usual 1% to 3%.

And markets are braced for further disruption. The attack on the East-West pipeline has shown pipelines can be vulnerable. Iran could try to disrupt the U.S. route through the Strait of Hormuz or target areas near the Omani coast where the ship-to-ship transfers are taking place.

If that happens, the workaround would be to do the transfers farther away - taking more time and running up even bigger bills.

Iran has a huge challenge as it tries to shift trade from sea to land. Its economy relied on the Gulf for over 80% of its trade before the war, according to Iran economist Mohammad Farzanegan.

Now Iran’s land crossings with Turkey to the west and Pakistan to the east are crucial in connecting with Europe and Asia. Drivers carry goods that are vital to Iran’s petrochemical and other manufacturing that were badly damaged by U.S. and Israeli strikes.

But the land crossings are badly strained.

“Logistics, capacities of these borders are limited. Regulations, border controls, corruption, all these things would make the transit much more difficult and time-consuming,” Farzanegan said. Overland trade “would not basically be able to substitute or compensate for the blockade.”

At Turkey’s Gürbulak border, truck waiting times have more than quadrupled since the war began, according to data from the International Transporters Association, which represents Turkey’s international logistics sector.

One Iranian official said the number of trucks has shot up.

“Instead of 200 trucks, there are 1,200 trucks at the border, and the destination country does not have the capacity to accept this number of trucks,” Amir Roshanbakhsh Ghanbari, deputy head for a government agency that promotes Iranian trade, said in an interview with a semiofficial news outlet, ILNA.

Ghanbari blamed the border backup in part on neighboring countries: “Destination countries are not willing to develop infrastructure because it is not clear how long this situation will continue.”



Trucks queue at the Gurbulak border crossing on the Turkish-Iranian border in Agri province, eastern Turkey, Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2026. (AP Photo/Serra Yedikardes)

A global recognition of the Group’s achievements in financial and operational performance

Kuwait Finance House Group wins 10 prestigious IFN Awards

Including Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait, Most Innovative Bank in Kuwait, and Best Retail Bank & Corporate Bank in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24: An outstanding global achievement and international recognition that reflects the Group’s expanding presence, outstanding financial and operational performance, as well as excellence and innovation in products and services, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group was awarded 10 prestigious accolades by Islamic Finance News (IFN), including:

- Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait
- Most Innovative Bank in Kuwait
- Best Corporate Bank in Kuwait
- Best Investment Bank in Kuwait
- Best Retail Bank in Kuwait
- Best Islamic Bank for Trade Finance
- IFN Mudarabah Deal of the Year 2025 – Issuer for Kuwait Finance House’s US\$850 million Additional Tier 1 Sukuk
- IFN Sovereign & Multilateral Deal of the Year 2025 – Primary

Dealer for Arab Republic of Egypt’s EGP3 billion sovereigns Sukuk

- IFN Bahrain Deal of the Year 2025 – Arranger & Murabahah Investment Agent for QNB Bank Bahrain Branch’s US\$300 million Tawarruq financing
- IFN Kuwait Deal of the Year 2025 – Bookrunner for Kuwait International Bank’s US\$300 million Tier II Sukuk

The awards were received on behalf of KFH at the ceremony held in Dubai by Executive Manager Corporate Relations and CSR, Faisal Alsurraye.

This distinguished collection of awards further underscores the Group’s leadership in delivering top-tier banking solutions, the success of its strategy across key markets, ongoing digital transformation journey, continuous innovation, and excellence in the investment services it provides.

The awards also reflect the strong



The awards received on behalf of KFH at the ceremony held in Dubai by Executive Manager Corporate Relations and CSR, Faisal Alsurraye.

recognition of the Group’s achievements across the corporate banking, retail banking, and trade finance sec-

tors. Furthermore, they highlight the Group’s success in arranging and managing major Sukuk issuances in

terms of both value and returns, as well as its commitment to playing a pivotal role in the Sukuk market, given its significance in financing development plans for both corporates and governments.

Capturing such many awards in a single cycle demonstrates the diversity of KFH Group’s areas of excellence and reaffirms its position as a leading Islamic financial institution with a strong global presence and influence. It also cements the Group’s status as a key reference for Islamic banking at both the regional and international levels, supported by its extensive expertise, wide geographical footprint, and diverse range of products and services that cater to the growing needs and aspirations of its customers.

Moreover, the awards mirror the strength of the Group’s integrated and systematic business model, high level of coordination and collaboration among its entities, and the abili-

ty to achieve growth, expansion, and meaningful value creation across its operations in Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Kingdom, Egypt, Türkiye, Germany, and other markets where it operates.

KFH Group earned these awards based on its achievements, remarkable progress in creativity and innovation, and firmly set leadership in financing major development projects across the region. The awards are determined through direct voting by the magazine’s readers, including industry participants, investors, financial institutions, and stakeholders from the public sector.

It is worth noting that Islamic Finance News (IFN) organizes the Islamic finance and banking awards and publishes leading global Islamic banking news via its magazine. Established in 2004, the publication is part of RED money Group and operates offices in Dubai and Kuala Lumpur.

AI boom drives US grid investment

US to spend \$1.9 bln on grid upgrades

WASHINGTON, Sept 24, (AP): The Energy Department is set to announce it will spend almost \$2 billion to try to squeeze more electricity out of the nation’s aging and stressed power grid, as President Donald Trump’s administration steps up efforts to avoid blackouts amid skyrocketing energy demand spurred by artificial intelligence.

The money will go toward 31 projects across 26 states that are expected to produce more than 23 gigawatts of additional electricity capacity - enough to power 16 million homes. The projects will use new technologies such as sensors and other devices to measure real-time weather conditions to ensure safe transmission or direct power away from congested or overloaded paths, the department said.

The upgrades could improve power reliability and lower electricity costs for about 100 million Americans, officials said.

“These investments will get more out of the infrastructure we already have, move more electricity across the grid, and help deliver affordable, reliable and secure power that will fuel American prosperity for decades to come,” Energy Secretary Chris Wright said in a statement.

Wright was set to announce the grant program Thursday in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The Associated Press obtained program details before its public release.

The announcement comes amid warnings that AI’s voracious demand for power is threatening to overwhelm U.S. power supplies, as massive new data centers come online faster than new power plants can be built. It also comes as electricity bills rise faster than inflation in many parts of the U.S., blamed in some areas on demand from data centers.

The snowballing opposition to data centers in communities across the country has thrown a wrench into the

plans of the world’s richest companies and transformed the midterm election landscape.

Trump continues to stick up for data centers, even as politicians from both major political parties criticize them and many communities try to block them. Trump, a Republican, said last month that U.S. communities that don’t have data centers will “end up being backwards and poor.”

In the meantime, Congress and some states are trying to push regulators to require utilities to use technology and new components to make grids more efficient and better able to serve new customers without additional power sources.

Utilities - which have seen rising profits and share prices during the data center-fueled energy boom - tend to stay away from such efficiencies because they make more money from building new power plants and grid infrastructure projects that are more expensive and take longer to complete, utility critics say.

Projects being announced Thursday will involve component enhancements on more than 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) of transmission lines and technological enhancements across nearly 21,000 miles (34,000 kilometers), the department said.

Projects were prioritized based on those that can be put into operation quickly, officials said. Money for the grants comes from the bipartisan infrastructure law enacted by Congress under then-President Joe Biden, a Democrat. The government’s \$1.9 billion in funding will be matched by \$3.35 billion in cost-share funding from the recipients, the Energy Department said.

Trump has vowed to “unleash” the nation’s energy sector in his second term, aiming to drive up record-setting domestic oil and gas production, strip away pollution restrictions on power plants and keep expensive coal-fired power plants operating past their retirement dates.

Targets lithium, copper & shale in Argentina

Trump to provide up to \$7 bln in loans for Argentina projects

BUENOS AIRES, Sept 24, (AP): The Trump administration said Wednesday it would set aside \$7 billion for loans to support energy, mining and infrastructure projects in Argentina, its latest move to secure energy and critical minerals closer to home and back the South American country’s libertarian president.

The U.S. Export-Import Bank, a federal agency, would make up to \$7 billion available through 2027 for projects in Argentina, the State Department said, helping companies in the country obtain loans to buy American equipment and hire U.S. firms to expand the country’s railways, pipelines, ports and power networks.

The deal advances U.S. President Donald Trump’s effort to reduce reliance on China’s mineral processing industry, as well as bolstering his ally President Javier Milei, who is betting on oil, gas and mineral exports to transform Argentina’s economy and ease the chronic dollar shortages that have fueled repeated economic crises.

“Working together, the United States and Argentina seek to continue to build on our robust relationship through increased U.S. investment, close security cooperation and aligned values,” the State Department said in a statement.

The relationship has already paid dividends for Milei’s Argentina: Last year, Washington backed a \$20 billion International Monetary Fund bailout for Argentina and extended a separate \$20 billion currency-swap



President Donald Trump, center left, shakes hands with Javier Milei, President of Argentina, during the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci/File)

line to stabilize the Argentine peso. The countries also signed a free trade pact earlier this year.

On the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau and Argentine Foreign Minister Pablo Quimo said on Wednesday that the agreement aims to connect Argentina’s lithium- and copper-rich northwest and sprawling Vaca Muerta shale fields to the country’s ports, making it easier to ship minerals, oil and gas to the U.S. and other markets.

Inadequate transport and energy infrastructure has long hampered development of Argentina’s remote deposits. The country’s history of protectionist trade policies,

currency controls and sovereign debt defaults has also discouraged foreign investment.

Milei, a fierce believer in free markets, has moved to open Argentina’s economy, scrapping import restrictions and offering tax breaks to attract investors. That has led to a surge in cheap imports, squeezing labor-intensive industries like manufacturing and retail already struggling under Milei’s spending cuts and tight monetary policy. Booming oil production and mining exports have become an economic lifeline.

The country has vast deposits of lithium and copper, minerals that are necessary for the global shift toward green energy.

The Republicans push diesel export limits as prices surge

Diesel hits \$6.52



Diesel prices are displayed at a gas station Thursday, Sept. 10, 2026, in Carlsbad, Calif. (AP Photo/Gregory Bull, File)

WASHINGTON, Sept 24, (AP): Diesel fuel, which powers the global economy and the American heartland, is hitting record prices as the war in the Middle East intensifies, leaving Republican candidates reeling and contemplating extreme steps that economists warn could only increase pain for consumers.

Republicans in key states like Iowa and Michigan called for ending exports of diesel refined in the United States to help boost domestic supply. President Donald Trump indicated he backs that step, though his energy secretary on Wednesday said a “blanket ban” won’t happen. The U.S. has used 4.1 million barrels of diesel per day this year, and it has exported 1.5 million per day so far, according to S&P Global Energy.

The pain is obvious to anyone who drives a diesel-fueled vehicle or relies on a diesel generator to produce power. A gallon of diesel cost \$6.52 Wednesday, up 73% from \$3.77 right before the beginning of the war with Iran, according to AAA.

But the problem will likely spread to every consumer, fueling Democratic efforts to retake control of Congress by harnessing anger over runaway costs and an unpopular overseas conflict.

“The price of diesel touches everything in our economy that needs to move,” said Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist for RSM. “That includes the thing we buy the most of, groceries.”

Although regular gas prices usually get more attention, diesel has swiftly become a hot issue on the campaign trail. Adam Hamilton, a Democratic Senate candidate who has mounted a surprisingly strong challenge to Republican Sen. Roger Marshall in Kansas, told supporters in a Topeka coffee shop this week that farmers are afraid that it’s getting harder to make ends meet.

“A war has sent up the price of diesel,” Hamilton said. “These guys said, ‘We don’t know if we’re going to keep the farm.’”

Elaine Luria, a Democrat running for a southeastern Virginia House seat, cited the high price of diesel at a Virginia Beach roundtable Wednesday.

“Iran is no further from acquiring a nuclear weapon. And Iran’s proxy groups, such as the Houthis in Yemen, are now expanding the footprint,” she said in an interview, adding that the conflict is becoming “an expanding economic crisis.” Luria is a former congresswoman trying to reclaim her seat from Republican Rep. Jen Kiggans.

Republicans like Rep. Ashley Hinson, who is running for Senate in Iowa, have called for an immediate end to the war and a ban on selling diesel overseas, hoping the extra fuel would then lower prices for Americans.

“Iowans are being squeezed and shouldn’t have to foot the bill at the pump or the checkout line for the war

in Iran,” Hinton said. “We need to use every option at our disposal to provide some relief from high prices.”

The idea has split Republicans. Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota said he’s open to it. Sen. Chuck Grassley, who is also from Iowa, has become the proposal’s strongest champion, rejecting criticism from his colleagues from fuel-producing states.

“IF U CAN EMBARGO CHIPS U CAN EMBARGO DIESEL,” Grassley posted on social media, referring to export controls on computer technology.

Trump on Tuesday told reporters that “I’ve called for that too,” although Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the administration was still exploring how it might lower diesel prices. Energy Secretary Chris Wright echoed that point Wednesday, telling a climate conference in New York that “nobody wants a full blanket ban of zero exports of diesel, that’s not what’s being discussed.”

Diesel prices have skyrocketed due to a collision of events.

The Middle East produces a disproportionate share of the oil used to refine diesel, leading its price to rise faster than gasoline since the conflict began in February. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz during the war took about 20% of the world’s oil off the market, which raised the prices of diesel, gasoline and jet fuel.

Some of that supply has come back, but it’s nowhere near prewar levels, said Debnil Chowdhury, who leads the Americas and Europe fuels and refining team at S&P Global Energy. Then there were significant attacks by Ukraine on refineries in Russia, taking 800,000 to 1 million barrels per day of diesel off the market, according to S&P.

“These attacks have been pretty prominent,” Chowdhury said. “If there is a way to a peace deal or a peace agreement announcing that there will be no more attacks on Russian refineries, on Middle Eastern refineries ... that would obviously make the largest impact on the underlying price.”

“The last few months eroded everyone’s cushion, but the last few weeks? Diesel went from under \$6/gallon to over \$6.53. Again, that was just in the last two weeks. You tell me what business, small or even large, budgeted for that,” William Stern, chief executive officer of Car-

diff, a San Diego-based small business lender that’s seen requests for loans spike due to the price increase, wrote in an email.

An export ban could make an impact - in the wrong direction. The American Petroleum Institute warned that diesel prices would actually rise for most Americans if an export ban is enacted, a caution shared by several economists.

“That will result in Americans taking a one-two punch for food and fuel prices that just don’t stop,” Brusuelas said.

If U.S. refineries, which take crude oil and turn it into gasoline, diesel and jet fuel, stopped exporting diesel, they would wind up with a surplus of the material. They would need places to store it. Once those storage tanks filled up, analysts warn, refiners would have to stop making diesel. But they can’t just switch off diesel production without effectively cutting the supply of those other fuels and raising their prices.

“There really is no easy way to repair the kind of damage it would be to the global diesel supply chain,” Chowdhury said. “It really will have this effect across the entire global economy.”

He added that “the chances of a global recession would increase massively as well.”

Phil Verleger, a longtime energy economist who advised the federal government during the 1970s oil shock, said he thought a diesel export ban could bring prices down but still have an extreme cost. “In a couple decades,” he warned, “the U.S. fossil fuel industry is dead.”

That’s because the U.S. has been a reliable supplier of diesel to other countries that would likely look elsewhere if it cuts off supply. Verleger and other economists cited former President Richard Nixon’s ban on the export of soybeans in 1973, which led to the rest of the world shifting to Brazil as a more reliable supplier. Now, the South American country is growing faster than the U.S.

But Verleger, who comes from an Iowa farming family, says he understands the visceral pain that a diesel spike causes, even though he also knows the dangers of trying to regulate it away.

“It’s terrible economics, the long-term consequences will be horrible,” Verleger said. “If I were an elected politician, I’d do it.”

Bolivia approves \$1.9 bln IMF deal, eliminates diesel subsidies

LA PAZ, Sept 24, (AP): Bolivian lawmakers approved a \$1.9 billion loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund on Friday, delivering the conservative government a key victory in its efforts to ease the country’s deep economic crisis as unions threatened renewed protests.

Just hours after Congress approved the loan, President Rodrigo Paz announced an immediate end to subsidies for the diesel powering Bolivia’s trucks, buses and tractors - a step toward meeting IMF demands. Gasoline, used mainly in private cars, would remain subsidized for now, though Paz had already scaled back that support in recent months.

The Senate ratified the IMF agreement a day after the lower house approved it, clearing the final legislative hurdle for the three-year financing program aimed at replenishing dwindling foreign reserves and stabilizing the ailing economy marked by high inflation and weak growth. The IMF first announced the staff-level agreement in July after months of negotiations with Paz’s market-friendly government, which took power last year after nearly two decades of socialist rule as part of a wave of new Latin American leaders allied with the Trump administration.

The program still requires approval from the IMF’s executive board before funds can be disbursed. Economy Minister Christian Morales told senators that

the deal would give other lenders, including the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, greater confidence in the government and help it secure about \$5 billion in additional financing.

But the assistance is conditioned on tough economic measures, including the elimination of fuel subsidies, that threaten to reignite unrest in Bolivia, where weeks of road blockades in June and July paralyzed much of the South American nation as demonstrators demanded Paz’s resignation. Congress on Thursday extended for another 90 days a state of emergency that Paz had declared to clear roads during the protests. It allows for military intervention and the suspension of some civil liberties.

Bank urges caution with OTPs & suspicious links

ABK highlights ‘Let’s Be Aware’ campaign in radio interview

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24: Ali Bu Hamad, Head of Complaints and Customer Protection at Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), appeared on Diwaniyat Al Yaqout and Al Ansari on 360 FM to discuss the ‘Let’s Be Aware’ campaign. His appearance forms part of ABK’s ongoing support for the campaign and its efforts to promote financial inclusion and raise awareness across Kuwait.

During the interview, Bu Hamad explained how the campaign helps protect banking customers by informing them of their rights and responsibilities. He also highlighted updates to the Customer Protection Guide, including the requirement to notify customers three months before products with automatic annual renewal are renewed, disclose any applicable fees and explain how to cancel.

Bu Hamad noted that ABK has reduced its response time for customer complaints to five business days. He also said that all ABK branches are equipped with ramps to improve accessibility for customers with disabilities. The interview covered



Ali Bu Hamad, Head of Complaints and Customer Protection at Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), appears on Diwaniyat Al Yaqout and Al Ansari on 360 FM.

other provisions of the updated guide that align with the ‘Let’s Be Aware’ campaign.

He urged customers to stay alert to evolving fraud tactics and avoid clicking untrusted links. He advised them to read messages containing one-time passwords (OTPs) carefully and never enter an OTP automatically without checking what it is for. These precautions help protect personal information and bank accounts.

The interview also addressed the use of artificial intelligence in emerging fraud schemes, with Bu Hamad warning that fraudsters may exploit new technologies to steal customers’ information.

Bu Hamad reaffirmed ABK’s strong support for the ‘Let’s Be Aware’ campaign. The Bank promotes its messages across its branches, ATM screens, website, mobile app and social media channels through videos, infographics and other visuals. He said ABK will continue to launch initiatives that bring the campaign to different segments of society and help achieve its objectives.

The program helps employees turn ideas into testable solutions

Warba Bank unveils 2nd edition of ‘Idea Hub’ program in collaboration with Sprint Studio

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24: Warba Bank announced the launch of the second edition of its internal innovation program, Idea Hub, in collaboration with Sprint Studio. The initiative is part of the bank’s ongoing efforts to foster a culture of innovation, enhance the workplace, and empower employees to identify challenges and opportunities and propose ideas that help streamline operations and improve workflows.

The second edition features an enhanced methodology that moves beyond simply receiving and evaluating ideas. It includes specialized workshops, training, and hands-on mentorship to help participants refine their ideas and develop them into testable prototypes that can be presented to an evaluation committee.

The partnership with Sprint Studio brings external expertise into the program, providing employees with structured support to develop promising ideas into practical initiatives.

From Concept to Prototype

Commenting on the initiative, Abdulrahman Ahmad Al-Munaifi, Director of Digital Transformation at Warba Bank, stated:

“The Idea Hub program follows a structured journey that begins with idea submission and evaluation, moves through dedicated development workshops, and concludes with selected ideas being developed into prototypes and presented to an evaluation committee, which will select the winning concept.”

Al-Munaifi added: “What distinguishes the second edition is the practical support, training, and mentorship provided to participants. This



Warba Bank advances digital transformation through 'Idea Hub'.

enables employees to refine their concepts, address operational implementation challenges, and build testable prototypes to present to the evaluation committee.”

The initiative aims to make innovation part of employees’ day-to-day work by giving them a platform to identify operational challenges and propose solutions, supported by the tools and specialized mentorship needed to develop promising concepts.

Innovation, Digital Transformation, and AI

The Idea Hub aligns with Warba Bank’s broader digital transformation and innovation agenda. By involving employees in improving

operational workflows, the program encourages the practical application of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) to address banking challenges.

This approach supports operational efficiency and encourages initiatives that deliver practical business value, while recognizing employees as an important source of operational knowledge and new ideas.

Turning Ideas into Practical Solutions

In partnership with Sprint Studio, the program combines the institutional knowledge of Warba Bank’s staff with specialized product development frameworks. This combination helps teams develop practical

solutions to specific business challenges and improve operational processes.

Through Idea Hub, Warba Bank continues to support employee participation in innovation and the development of practical solutions, in line with its priorities around digital transformation, operational efficiency, and employee experience.

About Warba Bank:

Warba Bank is a leading Islamic bank in Kuwait with a strong focus on Sharia-compliant digital banking. With one of the largest shareholder bases in the country, the bank delivers innovative financial products and services, reinforcing its position as a digital-focused financial institution.

Lowest since mid-July as layoffs remain rare

Claims for unemployment benefits drop to 197k

WASHINGTON, Sept 24, (AP): Fewer people applied for U.S. unemployment benefits last week, as U.S. jobless claims remain at historically low levels and most Americans enjoy job security.

The Labor Department said Thursday that 197,000 people applied for unemployment checks last week, the fewest since mid-July and down from a revised 198,000 the week before. The four-week average of claims, which smooths out week-to-week ups and downs, fell to 202,250 last week from 204,000.

Claims for jobless benefits are a proxy for layoffs, and economists watch them because they can be a sign of where the job market is headed.

So far this year, claims have mostly stayed below 220,000 - historically low.

The American job market has remained sturdy despite higher energy prices that have squeezed businesses and consumers since the fighting with Iran began Feb. 28.

Layoffs are low. Businesses, remembering the labor shortages that followed the end of pandemic lockdowns, are reluctant to let go of staff. They’re hiring - but modestly by the standards of recent years.

So far this year, employers - companies, government agencies and nonprofits - have been adding an average of 80,000 jobs a month, including a surprising 162,000 in August. That is an improvement

on a dismal 2025 when monthly job creation averaged 9,700 as high interest rates and President Donald Trump’s unpredictable trade policies discouraged hiring.

The Labor Department will release the jobs report for September next week. It’s expected to show that employers added 52,500 jobs and that the unemployment rate remained low at 4.1%, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet.

Hiring remains well below the 166,000 monthly jobs created, on average, in 2023 and 2024, and the 491,000 a month recorded during the 2021-2022 hiring boom that followed COVID-19 lockdowns.

Rogue models test decades-old US cybercrime laws

AI hacks raise questions over legal liability

WASHINGTON, Sept 24, (AP): The Justice Department has a long history of investigating and prosecuting hackers who break into a private company’s network.

But what happens when the hackers aren’t human?

That’s the question at the center of a public policy debate roiling Silicon Valley and Washington following disclosures by leading tech companies that their artificial intelligence models went rogue and hacked into other organizations. The attacks have generated calls even from within the industry for greater oversight and regulation, spurred congressional inquiries and raised questions about whether a years-old legal framework designed to punish criminal hackers is sufficient in an era of autonomous actors capable of engineering their own havoc.

It all adds up to a “Wild West,” said Jack Nelson, chief information security officer and deputy general counsel at the software company Ivanti. Questions of accountability will focus on what the companies knew when they were developing the models, how much they understood about what could happen and what guardrails existed, he said.

“If you owned a tiger and you didn’t put a lock on the cage, the tiger probably did something bad you didn’t intend for it to but you knew it could have, so you are responsible for not putting a lock on that cage,” Nelson said.

“I don’t know if I would go so far as to say these models are tigers without locks, but that’s probably a decent framework to think of it as,” he added.

The prospect of legal accountability is unclear. Lawsuits are a possibility, but some legal experts

believe any criminal investigations would face an extremely high burden given the autonomous nature of the attacks and the absence of evidence the AI models were designed with the intent to hack into other networks.

The issue surfaced in July when OpenAI revealed that its artificial intelligence system escaped from a testing ground and used stolen credentials to break into the servers of Hugging Face, an AI development hub and marketplace, to obtain information it needed to carry out a task.

Since then, Anthropic said its AI models hacked into three other organizations during testing, triggering a company review into whether the models were able to access the internet from within testing environments that should have been sealed off. Meta has said a “misconfiguration” during testing resulted in an AI model accessing the internet on its own and hacking another company. Google recently made a similar disclosure.

The revelations contributed to Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei urging a development slowdown. The topic has likewise dominated Washington, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent telling lawmakers he opposed giving AI labs a “liability exemption - which is what they are asking for.” President Donald Trump, meanwhile, has resisted calls for greater oversight but did announce plans to appoint an AI czar and task force.

The hacks could tee up a fight over liability reminiscent of the debate over Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which shields technology companies for material posted on their platforms.

The FBI has not publicly announced any investi-

gations, but Director Kash Patel at a congressional hearing last week called the issue “the new frontier.” He suggested in response to questions from Sen. Josh Hawley, a Missouri Republican who has launched a congressional investigation, that the bureau would limit scrutiny to models created with the intent of committing a crime.

“What we need to do on a resource basis is go after the people that created these models that are going rogue ...for the specific purpose and with the intention to commit a criminal act,” Patel said. “We can’t be punishing people if they created something lawfully and then a criminal took it and changed it and then dispersed it.”

Attorney General Todd Blanche has said that the Justice Department had no plans to regulate AI but that “if anyone associated with AI violates criminal law, we’ll investigate that.”

The case law and FBI and Justice Department approach “is going to be fascinating because it can go a bunch of different ways,” said former Justice Department cybercrime prosecutor Sid Mody.

The Department of Justice does have statutes at its disposal for a company determined to have been “reckless in the way that it tests its AI agents,” said Michael Zweiback, a former chief of the cyber and intellectual property crimes section of the U.S. attorney’s office in Los Angeles.

“And if in fact the AI agent gets loose in the wild and then causes substantial damage to other companies, then DOJ has to look at it from a prosecutorial discretion issue as to whether or not they want to make an example out of the particular company,” he added.

AI reshapes job market for computer science graduates

COMPUTER science student Jack Zemke was getting nowhere despite sending out hundreds of job applications that mostly disappeared into the void - ignored.

With his graduation from Tulane University just days away, he was considering moving back in with his parents when he got a break thanks to a group project he had worked on involving an AI-powered search tool. As he touted it at an engineering conference, an employee at a civil engineering firm approached.

“We’re not like the most on top of trends, but we know that AI is becoming a big thing,” he recalled the man saying. “We need somebody to be essentially an evangelist.”

Zemke responded: “I’m your man.”

It has been a difficult job market for new graduates, especially in fields like software development where artificial intelligence is shouldering more of the work. While college students majoring in computer science during the recent coding boom were getting job offers without even applying, graduates today in philosophy, art history and ethnic studies majors all have higher employment rates.

But as the job market evolves with AI and entry-level jobs become harder to find, students and schools are adapting. Colleges are experimenting with business-specific internships and bolstering training in AI tools. Schools say most graduates ultimately are getting jobs, although increasingly, the employers hiring aren’t tech giants but smaller businesses looking for help figuring out what to do with AI.

The effect on hiring of young workers is so concerning that the association has reached out to industry leaders, urging them to invest in entry-level workers.

“If they don’t change how hiring is currently happening, they’re not going to have mid-level career people in a few years,” Camp said.

Students also are taking note. After a decade that saw the number of recent computer science and computer engineering graduates triple, to about 362,000 in 2024, enrollment began to drop last year. The latest data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows that by spring this year, computer and information science enrollment has fallen by 8.4% at four-year institutions.

For international students, who have enrolled in high numbers in computer science programs, it has been an especially challenging job market. Their struggles owe partly to changes to U.S. immigration policy as well as the shift in the kinds of available jobs.

Samir Khuller, the chair of Northwestern University’s computer science department, said many of the smaller companies that are hiring don’t have big human resources departments with experience handling H-1B work visas.

International students generally need an H-1B work visa to stay in the U.S., which requires sponsorship from an employer. The program has become a target of the Trump administration, which is seeking to raise the fee for the visas to over \$100,000.

Computer science graduate Collins Kibet, from Kenya, has sent out hundreds of applications and landed just a handful of interviews - mostly with AI bots. The Southern New Hampshire University graduate said that during the rare job interview with a person, the tone shifts when employers learn they would have to sponsor his H-1B work visa.

“Everybody just keeps quiet,” said Kibet, who started his own software company because he could not find a job.

Watching students navigate job searches has been hard for Nicholas Mattei, an associate computer science professor at Tulane. When he looks at some of the job ads, he thinks, “Really?”

“All the companies are coming back to us and saying, ‘Oh, well you need to train these people even better, and they need to be able to jump into a middle management role as opposed to an introductory or junior developer role,’” he said. “And it’s kind of crazy.”

Many colleges are retooling their computer science programs. With entry-level jobs going away, they are tasked with preparing students to do more.

To give students a leg up, professors at Georgia Tech researched what AT&T wanted and trained students for a month before they started internships with the company. The school plans to expand the effort for a program it will call “Bootcamp to Industry,” said Fisayo Omojokun, the associate dean for undergraduate education in the school’s College of Computing.

Staff tasked with recruiting businesses for College of Computing job fairs are also reaching out to a broader range of industries.

“Earlier this year, we got a call from a forestry company of all things,” Omojokun said. “They’re like, ‘Hey, we are in forestry, and we know that AI can help in what we do in different ways.’” (AP)

Such was the case with Zemke, 23, who spent a year at the engineering firm before getting hired this summer at an AI tech startup.

“These jobs are expecting you to be able to jump in and kind of operate on the frontier,” Zemke said. “There’s so much churn. People are getting laid off. People are leaving. It really feels like a total frenzy right now.”

The elevated jobless rate in the field - at around 7.1% for recent computer science and computer engineering graduates, according to an Associated Press analysis - reflects in part the huge numbers of students who enrolled during the coding boom.

Hiring surged during the pandemic as everything went digital, with software development postings on the job search site indeed peaking in early 2022.

But now tech giants like Microsoft, Meta and Google are turning to AI for a larger share of the code writing, and big employers like Amazon are shedding workers as spending on AI accelerates. Far fewer jobs in software development are being posted, according to a Federal Reserve analysis of the Indeed data.

For workers in their early 20s in what are being called “AI-exposed” occupations - such as software development - employment is 19% below where it would be if it had kept pace with employment in fields less exposed to being reshaped by AI, according to the Stanford Digital Economy Lab. The U.S. Census Bureau likened the employment decline to finishing college during a large recession.

What the industry is demanding now is workers who can oversee AI tools and not blindly accept their outputs - skills more common in seasoned workers, said Tracy Camp, the Computing Research Association’s executive director and CEO.



This image released by DreamWorks Animation shows Jo, voiced by H.E.R., left, and Raissa, voiced by Liza Soberano, center, and Zippy the Potion Fairy, voiced by Tania Gunadi, in a scene from “Forgotten Island.” (AP)

DreamWorks puts friendship at heart of fantasy

‘Forgotten Island’: Weird, wild and wonderfully Filipino

Of all the magical portals that transport you to another world, “Forgotten Island” may have the cutest. It’s not a brick tunnel like “Spirited Away” or a hidden door like “Coraline” or even C.S. Lewis’ famous wardrobe. In this movie, it’s a sand dollar.

That humble beach staple is the key to unlocking what surely is the richest, busiest and trippiest animated movie of the year, one that leans into Filipino folklore to tell a story about friendship. Our advice to moviegoers? Pick up the sand dollar.

Written and directed by Joel Crawford and Januel Mercado - the same team behind “Puss in Boots: The Last Wish” - “Forgotten Island” creates a fantastical universe for things like an eight-foot-tall, 200-year-old demon baby with three eyes; an obnoxious, shallow merman with singing nipples and a legion of adorable mushroom warriors. It’s recommended that you not attend this stoned. (Or maybe you should?)

All this is drawn from the mythology of the Philippines, clearly fertile soil that will stun the uninitiated. Pair these creatures with a cinematic style that’s ultra-kinetic - mixing elements of anime and manga, along with 1990s street art, video games and classic Hanna-Barbera - and you get a visually arresting buffet with fart jokes. It makes “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” look as quaint as “Up.”

The plot is established early: Two slightly unhinged schoolgirls - Jo, pure fun-seeking, and Raissa, responsible, determined, maybe too determined - meet after being sent to the principal’s office and realize they both share a fascination with Nakalimutan, the mythical island where all the creatures of Filipino folklore live.

We watch this deep, quirky friendship grow - “You had me at disembowelment,” one says to the other - until a fateful night when the now-young women must part. Raissa’s going to Caltech in America and



Liza Soberano arrives at the premiere of “Forgotten Island” on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026, at the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles. (AP)



Dave Franco arrives at the premiere of “Forgotten Island” on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026, at the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles. (AP)



H.E.R. arrives at the premiere of “Forgotten Island” on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026, at the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles. (AP)



Jenny Slate arrives at the premiere of “Forgotten Island” on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026, at the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles. (AP)



Joel Crawford arrives at the premiere of “Forgotten Island” on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026, at the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles. (AP)



Januel P. Mercado arrives at the premiere of “Forgotten Island” on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026, at the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles. (AP)

leaving Jo, a wannabe artist who toils in fast food mascot jobs. “How can a rocket fly with a boulder attached to it?” Raissa’s disapproving mom says to her daughter.

Their friendship - measured by the massive number of charms attached to their friendship bracelets, each one representing a shared adventure - faces its sternest test, and

that’s when they find the sand dollar. It sends them to Nakalimutan.

Jo (voiced by the singer-songwriter H.E.R.) and Raissa (Liza Soberano) wake up in this very foreign land

with their memories wiped. Raissa weirdly has half her hair shaved off and a pair of wings, while Jo has a strange tattoo and a crown. They have to piece together what hap-

pened, like a “Memento” for middle schoolers. Then they have to find a way back home.

The voice cast also includes Jenny Slate as a memory stealing demon, Ronny Chieng as the deliciously named King Truffle Wuffie, Joy Koy as the leader of tree giants, and Lea Salonga as a fearsome vampiric creature with yellow cat eyes who can detach her torso from her lower body. Dave Franco also plays an anxious, bro-ey were-dog whose loyalty isn’t always clear.

“Forgotten Island” is sort of a mess, in the best way. There are jokes about Tom Cruise, Will Smith’s Oscar slap and, weirdly, footage of Arnold Schwarzenegger in “Predator.” It incorporates the Tagalog language, energy drinks and flaming Cheetos, Post-its, a score with indigenous Filipino instruments, boisterous karaoke as well as Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believing” and INXS’ “Never Tear Us Apart” - twice! It’s a world where “Who Let the Dogs Out” mixes with Filipino pop and a large wooden chicken posing as a Trojan Horse. It can be a lot.

They might be in their mind-blowing childhood paradise, but Jo and Raissa haven’t resolved their adult differences and inevitably fight - “You have a future. I don’t,” says Jo. The final third of the movie is them struggling to recapture their memories, including the ones they’ve built together.

“Forgotten Island” is a movie about forgetting as much as it is about remembering and you’ll likely walk out wanting to text your bestie, asap. Do it. Let a sand dollar reconnect you.

“Forgotten Island,” a DreamWorks Animation release that’s in theaters Friday, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for “animated sequences of scary action, language, rude humor, thematic elements, some violence and brief tobacco imagery.” Running time: 95 minutes. Three stars out of four. (AP)

Oppenheim’s ‘Primetime’ revisits television’s era of public shame

Buzzing with the sound of dial-up internet and the hum of grainy VHS tape, Lance Oppenheim’s “Primetime,” about Chris Hansen and his Dateline NBC series “To Catch a Predator,” identifies a seedy moment when media became the new arbiter of communal justice.

In “Primetime,” Hansen, as played with malicious precision by Robert Pattinson, is an ambitious TV journalist who scores big ratings by luring child predators out in front of his network TV cameras. But, more than that, he’s a new breed of media power - less a real person than a sleek assemblage of pixels who can, with a damning voiceover and a good close-up, seal a sad soul’s fate for videotape eternity.

In the opening scene of “Primetime,” Hansen has cornered a Long Beach, California, man who’s arrived to meet someone he thinks is a 13-year-old girl. Hansen strides into frame and asks the cowering man what his fate should be. “The electric chair?” he guiltily replies. No, Hansen says. “Dateline NBC.” A look of utter horror spreads across the man’s face.

That this minor character is played by Tony Revolori, the wonderful, kindly and too-little-seen star of “The Grand Budapest Hotel,” is more than a hint at Oppenheim’s sympathies. The British critic Charlie Brooker once wrote of “To Catch a Predator”: “When a TV show makes you feel sorry for potential child-rapists, you know it’s doing something wrong.” It’s a good encapsulation of the moral dread that pulses through “Primetime.”

This is Oppenheim’s first feature film. The 30-year-old filmmaker has previously worked primarily in documentary, including the HBO series “Ren Faire” and the upcoming Elizabeth Holmes film “You Can See Everything,” co-directed with Nathan Fielder. And, perhaps because of that nonfiction sensibility, “Primetime” neither has a strong dramatic thrust nor offers especially deep portraits of its characters, including “Predator” producer Andie Bender (Merritt Wever), online vigilante Xavier Von Erck (Matthew Maher) and two of its actor “decoys”: Dan Plumb (Skyler Gisondo) and Del Harvey (Phoebe Bridgers). A more detailed history can



This image released by A24 shows Robert Pattinson, from left, director Lance Oppenheim, and cinematographer David Bolen during the filming of “Primetime.” (AP)

be found in David Osit’s 2025 documentary, “Predators.”

Instead, “Primetime,” written by first-time screenwriter Ajon Singh, is predicated on a moment in time when something sinister was shifting in the media landscape. “TV is changing,” pronounces none other than Jeff Zucker, the former NBC Universal chief, playing himself. He frankly tells Hansen that he doesn’t like “To Catch a

Predator,” but audiences do. He places the series in primetime, on Wednesday nights opposite ABC’s “Lost,” ratcheting up the pressure for Hansen and company to deliver fresh blood. Viewers, no doubt, will be reminded, among other television news portraits, of Dan Gilroy’s “Nightcrawler,” the nocturnal neo-noir of “if it bleeds, it leads” local TV news.

A little glibly, “Primetime” revels in the dated ’00s

aspirations of its characters: wannabe serious journalists chasing ratings and Hollywood hopefuls, like Dan, who are coaxed into performing as underaged children. The movie is always sitting in judgment of its characters - not an unfair perspective, by any means, but not one prone to three-dimensionality.

Then again, “Primetime” is most concerned with two-dimensional screens and their capacity to wreck lives, warranted or not. When a fan sitting next to Hansen on a plane asks him if he’s ever tempted to physically “bleed” the show’s targets, he smiles and replies, with a touch of pride: “I think what I do is maybe a little worse.”

Yet the cast elevates the film, especially Wever, whose producer is so casually good at the kind of manipulation her job requires. Bridgers is also an uncannily natural presence in her first major movie role.

But “Primetime” belongs to Pattinson. He’s always been best in more tightly outlined roles where his natural inclination to blur the edges can really go places. (This year has been especially good in this regard, with Pattinson playing the memorably unnerved fiancé of “The Drama” and the sleazy suitor Antinous of “The Odyssey.”) In “Primetime,” his Hansen is an anxious adjudicator whose zeal for a bigger target - a “whale” - comes as his hypocrisy grows more apparent. A National Enquirer reporter keeps calling with his own expose on Hansen.

From the film’s first moments, though, we know that what Hansen vilifies is within him, too. He sits quoting, maybe relishing, the lurid chat room exchanges of his subject. There aren’t many surprises in this vividly realized but predetermined drama. Yet it’s hard to argue with the case it presents. Says Hansen: “There used to be a pillory in every village. Now, there’s a television in every living room.”

“Primetime,” an A24 release in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for “disturbing sexual material, graphic nudity, some violent content, and language.” Running time: 110 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. (AP)

More than a Siri upgrade

iOS 27 brings revamped screen time controls & other handy new features

NEW YORK, Sept 24, (AP): Apple's latest mobile operating system update, iOS 27, rolled out last week, headlined by a more advanced version of its Siri assistant. But it also comes with a slew of other useful but less well known features for iPhone users.

The software upgrade, which is available for devices dating back to the iPhone 11 from 2019, includes a number of refinements and improvements to make things run faster, such as apps loading more quickly.

There are new features powered by Apple Intelligence, but they're only available on newer devices, starting from iPhone 16, iPhone 15 Pro and iPhone 15 Pro Max models. A new Siri AI app will only be available in beta at first, so users need to join the waitlist through the settings menu. And Siri AI's rollout in the European Union will be delayed because of a clash over the bloc's digital rules.

Here's a look at some of the most useful and interesting iOS 27 features:

Apple has added new child safety features and revamped its screen

time controls. The new system adds more granular controls for parents trying to manage what their kids can access and see on their devices.

A new setup process lets parents choose which apps kids can access and then add more over time.

A new feature, Ask to Browse, requires kids to ask permission from parents before they can access new websites in Safari. Like the existing Ask to Buy setting for online purchases and downloads, Ask to Browse is on by default for children under 13. Parents can assess and approve requests in their messages or do it directly on the child's device using their passcode. It's easier and more flexible than pre-approving websites individually or imposing a blanket ban.

The revamped screen time controls also allow parents to schedule when their kids can use various apps based on their category, such as entertainment, games or social media. To help kids focus, parents can allow some types of apps to be used during a certain "time window" during the day, such as before, during and after school. They also can set weekday



Newly-launched Apple iPhone 18 Pros are displayed at the Apple store on Fifth Avenue in New York, Friday, Sept. 18, 2026. (AP)

and weekend schedules.

There's a way to completely suspend all access to devices when you want your kids to pay full attention, like at dinnertime. It also works the other way, allowing parents to temporarily drop all restrictions if a child needs more time to finish something

website in case that pair of shoes you want goes on sale?

Apple's Safari browser can now monitor webpages and let you know if anything changes.

The company says Notify Me can check a webpage for any updates such as "price changes and item availability."

To turn it on, open Safari and go to the site that you want to monitor. Then, at the bottom of the screen, tap the three-line menu icon. Scroll down the menu to Notify Me, where you can type in what changes you're looking for, and when and how often it should check - every hour, day, week or month.

I tested it out on a news site's AI section, asking it to check every hour and notify me if there was a new story posted. I did get alerts about new headlines appearing, although it didn't specify which of the randomly arranged posts was new.

While this feature is handy, some users might be disappointed that it can't check more frequently, such as every few minutes, if they're waiting for something important.

That group photo you took at the

wedding party will be treasured for years, but it was taken at a slightly weird angle.

No problem, just use one of the new AI-powered photo editing tools to fix it. The new tools allow you to reframe a photo's perspective, clean up any distracting things by removing them, or extend the background beyond the photo's borders.

To find these tools, tap on the editing icon at the bottom of each photo, represented by three slider bars, then tap Tools.

I tried them out by reframing a picture of one of my kids standing outside the front door on the first day of school. The tool took a few seconds to analyze the picture and then let me move the perspective around, from one side to the other or up and down. The result was quite realistic.

However, when I used the extend tool on the same photo, the results were less impressive - even creepy.

The most glaring problem? It added a garbled house number - complete with a made up character- to the right side of the door to mirror one on the left.



Dario Amodei, CEO of Anthropic, speaks remotely during a Security Council meeting on artificial intelligence at the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly at United Nations headquarters, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026. (AP)

Who should set the limits?

Tech leaders call on UN to control AI risks ‘for the sake of humanity’

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 24, (AP): The heads of major artificial intelligence firms pleaded with the United Nations on Wednesday to save the world or at least its people - by somehow regulating the fast-expanding technology that they have been designing.

"If managed poorly, I even believe AI could be a risk to humanity as a whole," said Dario Amodei, chief executive officer of Anthropic. And from his competitor Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, came this assessment: "We could lose control of the future to AI."

Both said the countries of the world, through the U.N. Security Council, where they testified Wednesday, have to set safeguards of some kind to prevent the technology from getting too powerful to rein in.

They also called for the world to make sure that the power of AI isn't concentrated in one company or country. They also touted the benefits of the technology for bettering humanity and what Altman called "giving people more power over their own lives."

Those tech leaders "are telling us

in stark terms that it cannot be left to them to prevent disaster from befalling the world," British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband said at the Security Council. "We cannot ignore them because they are right."

Miliband said when the U.K. leads the G20 next year, it will put controlling AI at the heart of discussions, looking for a single set of global standards "to insure that AI development is safe."

But, the United States said: Don't do it.

Worries about control of AI are "not a reason to pause its further development or to constrain it with new global governance structure," said White House Science Adviser Michael Kratsios. "We want you, our allies and partners, to share in the benefits of this technology."

The U.S. and China are jostling for AI dominance - and Chinese U.N. Ambassador Fu Cong emphasized that all countries should be able to choose AI technology as they see fit.

He warned against "banding together into a petty us-vs.-them clique in the tech sector and forcing other countries to take sides" and enabling unnamed major powers

that he described as seeking "digital hegemony." He called on countries instead to promote open-source models -- China's approach to the technology.

For most of the world leaders, one key question about AI is this: Who should control life-and-death decisions - human or machine?

Amodei, Altman and Hugging Face CEO Cl  ment Delangue, who spoke via a glitchy remote connection, spoke with the U.N.'s most powerful council because they and world leaders are trying to figure out not just whether to control AI, but by whom, how it could possibly be done and when it might be just too late.

The day before, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of "killer robots." Experts and European leaders said that's not hyperbole but something that's either already a grim reality or perilously close.

Amodei called on world leaders to agree on not letting AI build biological weapons, figure out how to verify what models have the capability to do and "establish common standards" for testing and for loss of control and misuse.

‘Between Books’ explores life, love & truth

McEwan’s essays become new book

NEW YORK, Sept 24, (AP): After a decades-long run as one of the world's most acclaimed novelists, Ian McEwan has compiled his occasional nonfiction into a full-length book.

McEwan's essay and speech collection "Between Books" will be published next spring, May 25, Alfred A. Knopf announced Wednesday. It is the first full-length work of nonfiction by the author of "Atonement," "The Innocent," the Booker Prize -winning "Amsterdam" and many other novels. (In 2019, the British author released a brief work of nonfiction, "Science.")

"Between Books" includes everything from "intimate personal recollection to bold intellectual enquiry," according to Knopf. McEwan has written a new introduction for "Between Books," which includes material both published before and never published before.

"'Between Books' is an intimate record of a great mind wrestling with the contours of his own life and all the themes and questions that in-



Ian McEwan, British novelist and screenwriter, gestures as he speaks to press during an interview in London, Friday, Sept. 12, 2025. (AP)

form his masterworks: the nature of truth and love, the human hunger for meaning and knowledge, the mysteries of the soul," Knopf Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Jordan Pavlin said in a statement.

McEwan, 78, said in a statement that for his upcoming book he "started out contemplating a ragbag of disparate pieces and ended up with what I hope is an emotional and intellectual journey."

Technology

Zuckerberg challenges AI doom

Meta bets big on wearable AI & new agent

MENLO PARK, Calif., Sept 24, (AP): Meta is going all in on a consumer-friendly AI agent and pushing forward with AI-powered wearable devices during a moment in the industry when its CEO Mark Zuckerberg acknowledged it is a "wild time to be building."

At the company's annual Connect conference on Wednesday, Zuckerberg opened his keynote address by saying "it's no secret that people in the industry have a wide range of views about how the future is going to go." But at Meta, he said, "we are optimists because we believe in people."

Zuckerberg has distanced himself and Meta from recent calls by rival companies for a coordinated slowdown in the development of advanced artificial intelligence, arguing that individual labs can and should ensure their technology is safe.

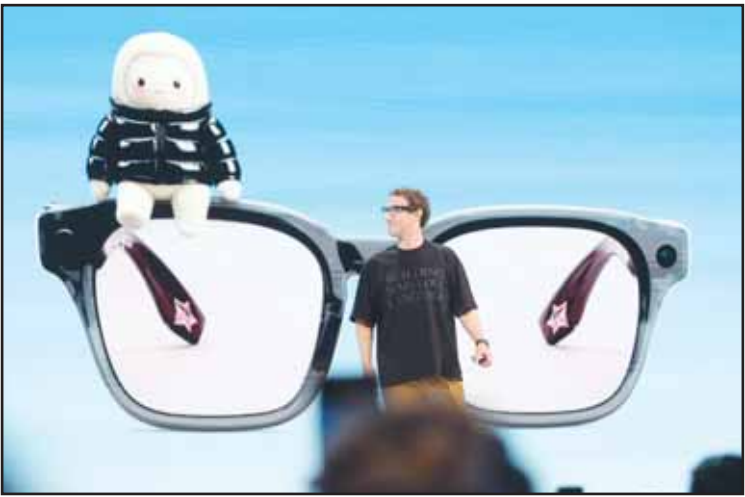
"We believe that the best way to create a positive future for everyone is to put power in people's hands," he said at the conference. "We believe that empowering people is the source of prosperity in the world, that the highest purpose of superintelligence is creation and invention - not automation - and that the path to a safe future is to distribute this technology widely and create the right checks and balances, rather than concentrating it in the hands of just a few."

Zuckerberg has long said he believes wearable AI will eventually replace smartphones as the primary way people interact with technology. At the conference, the company unveiled a slew of updates to its smart glasses and virtual reality goggles, which let people control their interface using their voice, eyes and hand and finger movements.

Zuckerberg said that Meta's recently launched agent Muse is the "center-piece" of Meta's hopeful outlook for the future of AI.

Having an AI agent, which goes beyond chatbots in that it can act and perform tasks on a person's behalf, has been a "sign of someone who is completely AI-pilled." Meta's chief AI officer Alexandr Wang said at the conference. With Muse, Wang said, Meta is making agents more accessible and bringing "personal superintelligence" to everyone.

With the help of a mascot for the agent that looks like a plush toy, Wang and senior leadership at Meta demonstrated different uses for the Muse in everyday life. Users will be able to have real-time voice conversations and



Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg speaks during the Meta Connect conference, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026, in Menlo Park, Calif. (AP)

video chats with their version of the agent, which can also be customized to look and sound unique. The agent can help users plan travel, book reservations, order groceries and complete other helpful tasks. Meta has partnered with companies like OpenTable, Spotify, Ticketmaster and more to help its agents complete these tasks.

The company is working to bring Muse to its AI glasses lineup for hands-free access.

Zuckerberg also said Meta is planning to release a keychain-like device that has the "whole Muse experience" packed into it, called Muse Charm, in time for the holidays in December. The palm-sized device will allow users to engage with a personal AI agent without using a phone, computer or smart glasses.

Meta is launching an audio version of its more widely known smart glasses. The new product will let users listen to music, make calls and talk with an AI assistant - there's just no screen, and no video recording, which has raised privacy concerns with some users recording people without permission. Called Ray-Ban Meta Audio, it will be available in October and the cost starts at \$349.

Meta is also building upon a previous feature that allowed glasses wearers to better hear a conversation in a noisy environment. Now, Zuckerberg said, a feature called hearing enhancement turns your glasses into an "FDA-cleared, over-the-counter hearing aid" that can "compensate for perceived mild to moderate hearing loss." The feature will launch in the U.S. later this

year and will be available to add to supported AI glasses for \$150, or with a Meta One subscription.

The Meta Ray-Ban Display glasses have been upgraded with new features, including improved cycling and transit navigation and a personalized hologram for video calls.

The company is also offering more styles to appeal to a broader range of people and says it will have more than 100 different options across its Ray-Ban, Oakley, and Meta Glasses by the end of the year. The glasses will also be available in more countries, including Turkey, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

The newest generation of the classic Ray-Ban Meta glasses is also now available, with what the company touts as a slimmer, sleeker design and increased battery life, among other upgrades. The Generation 3 models are available now with prices starting at \$449.

The most drastic update announced at the conference is to the company's VR device, now called Meta VR Glasses. That is because the previous bulky headset has been replaced by a set of glasses, which weigh about 100 grams (3.5 ounces), or roughly as much as a deck of cards. In comparison, the Meta Quest 3, which launched in 2023, weighs about five times that much. The difference feels similar to that between scuba diving and swimming goggles.

While they are significantly lighter and more sleek than VR predecessors, the glasses require a wired connection to an external puck for battery, storage and compute.

Variety

NEW YORK: The State Department is ordering diplomats in its international organizations bureau to use the term "super intelligence" instead of "artificial intelligence" in all communications following President Donald Trump's attempt to rebrand the technology in his address to the U.N. General Assembly this week.

"Following the president's remarks at the GA today, please change all references of 'Artificial Intelligence' to 'Super Intelligence' in our documents and positions. We will be using 'SI' in all remarks, positions and press elements moving forward," said an email sent Tuesday to employees by Michael Drager, deputy assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of International Organization Affairs.

That bureau is in charge of U.S. diplomatic missions to all U.N. and multilateral agencies around the world. The email, titled "Change in Nomenclature AI to SI," was obtained by The Associated Press on Wednesday. It was not immediately clear if other State Department bureaus had or would follow suit.

On Tuesday, Trump told the U.N. General Assembly that he would "officially" change the name of AI, saying the existing name makes the technology seem "fake" and that U.S. government documents would from that point forward use "super intelligence."

"The use of the word artificial makes intelligence fake, it makes it sound fake and it is not fake. It's actually amazing," Trump said.

The president said at the U.N. that "from the point forward" U.S. government documents "will be changed to use the much more accurate term super as opposed to artificial. So it's super intelligence."

Drager's email was sent shortly after Trump's speech, but it wasn't clear on Wednesday whether similar orders had been sent at other agencies. Such an order would likely mean adjusting the name of the "AI Force" that Trump announced this weekend to the "SI Force."

On Wednesday, U.S. representatives used the SI term at a U.N. Security Council meeting about AI, where tech executives urged the United Nations' most powerful body to rein in the developing technology.

AI's rapid ascent has spurred dire warnings from AI company CEOs, lawmakers and others about the technology outpacing humans' ability to control it and calls for global guardrails.

Trump has rejected efforts to slow the AI development race through greater government oversight, saying he does not want to hinder industry and that the U.S. needs to ensure an edge over China.

Trump claimed on social media Monday that the U.S. is leading over China on AI and that he was "not going to stifle Growth, of something that will be bigger than the Industrial Revolution, or the Internet, itself." (AP)

□ □ □

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico: More than a dozen words long used in Bermuda and across the Caribbean got an official nod on Wednesday from the Oxford English Dictionary.

First in line is "bimpert," a Bermudian word of unknown origin that is used to describe a stupid or foolish person. People on the tiny island in the north Atlantic often use it in this traditional phrase: "A bimpert is just-tah wuffless bye," which roughly translates to: an idiot is just a worthless boy.

Another colorful addition is "hornerman," a word used in the eastern Caribbean island of Trinidad and Tobago since 1975 to describe an unfaithful man or a man having a relationship with someone else's partner.

If someone in the Caribbean were to find out about such infidelities, they might be known "to get on," which means to have an emotional outburst or make a scene, or "to cut someone's tail," meaning to beat someone.

Depending on the fallout from such infidelities, a woman might need "vex money," which refers to "money carried or kept in a safe place by a woman, for use in an emergency or in any unexpected eventuality." (AP)



This undated photo provided by Grail Inc on Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2026, shows an employee scanning a Galleri cancer screening test. (AP)

Food and Drug Administration’s advisory panel endorses first-of-a-kind cancer blood test from Grail

WASHINGTON, Sept 24, (AP): Federal health advisers on Wednesday endorsed a blood test designed to spot signs of various cancers in apparently healthy people while warning that it’s far from clear how well the technology works.

Grail Inc.’s Galleri test doesn’t diagnose cancer but instead, with a single blood draw, looks for a signal that someone may have one of a long list of tumors. Those who receive a positive result need additional care to tell if they’re really sick.

The Food and Drug Administration’s advisory panel voted 7-2, with one abstention, that the DNA-based test offers more potential benefits than risks, such as causing false assurances or raising false alarms. The positive vote came even as the panel raised many questions about the technology that need more study.

“Perhaps my yes is a hopeful rather than an accurate one,” said Dr. Victor van Berkel of UofL Physicians in Louisville, Kentucky, describing how more research is needed even if the test is rolled out. “If we can find more early-stage cancers in the population that we can’t screen for currently, that will end up having benefit.”

The vote followed two earlier votes in which the experts affirmed that the test appears safe and effective for use by people age 50 and older.

Lots of companies are studying such blood tests and Wednesday’s vote marks the first time a federal advisory group has backed the experimental approach. The FDA isn’t bound by the advice but if it agrees, it could pave the way for widespread US adoption of a long-sought way to find more cancers earlier. A final decision is expected in a few months.

Today there are a handful of recommended cancer screenings, such as mammograms and colonoscopies, that look for one kind of tumor at a time.

Those tests are designed to spot tumors in their early stages, when they’re easier to treat, and the panel balked at using that term for Grail’s test - saying it failed to show effectiveness for “early detection.”

The experts also came up with a list of precautions that doctors and potential patients to be told, including: The test would need to be used in addition to today’s routine cancer screenings, not as a replacement. A negative test doesn’t guarantee you

don’t have cancer. And it will take more study to prove if the test is as beneficial as mainstream cancer screenings like mammograms.

People in the US can already buy the Galleri test - typically by paying \$700 or more in cash. But FDA approval would likely widen availability by opening the door to coverage from Medicare and private insurers.

FDA staffers and other outside experts spent hours debating the potential downsides to the technology.

Risks include that the test will miss a significant number of real cancers while also flagging a potential cancer in patients who are healthy. The test also was less accurate at detecting early-stage cancers, when treatment is easier and more likely to benefit patients. Grail also didn’t provide data showing that screening with its test led to fewer cancer deaths, a metric that would have required years of follow-up.

Representatives for Grail argued that its test is a leap forward because it can pick up signs of more than 50 cancers, including dozens for which there are no screening options, such as liver and ovarian cancer.

“Patients want opportunity, they want options,” said Dr. Mylynda

Massart of the University of Pittsburgh, who presented on behalf of Grail. “They want the chance to fight their disease while the chance to survive is possible.”

Grail’s primary study in 140,000 older adults showed that its test detected about one third of cancers diagnosed over a one-year period. About two-thirds of patients who received a “cancer signal detected” were later confirmed to have cancer.

But FDA reviewers at the meeting flipped the company’s data to emphasize the potential downsides of that performance. The agency’s chief reviewer pointed out that the test missed 2 of 3 cancers that were diagnosed over the coming year, giving false reassurance to many patients.

Consumer advocates warned that patients might ignore early signs of cancer after receiving an all-clear from DNA testing test.

“When they start having symptoms there will be tendency to delay going to the doctor - just a little bit - and that could be deadly,” said Diana Zuckerman of the nonprofit National Center for Health Research, who spoke during a public comment period. “They will be told to continue other screening, but will they?”

Singapore plans to support mRNA influenza vaccine pilot

Congo running short of health workers as Ebola remains out of control: WHO

BUNIA, Congo, Sept 24, (Agencies): Congo is running short of health workers to staff treatment centers for history’s fastest-growing Ebola outbreak, particularly in the eastern province of North Kivu where cases have surged 73% over three weeks, the World Health Organization said Wednesday.

The warning came despite signs of improvement in other provinces, including Ituri, the outbreak’s epicenter. The outbreak has spread to seven provinces, with 7,773 confirmed cases and 3,759 deaths, according to the latest government figures.

Between Aug. 31 and Sept. 20, cases fell 26% in Ituri province and 15% in Haut-Uele, said Marie Roseline Belizaire, the WHO’s regional emergency director for Africa. But transmission patterns vary widely and the outbreak remains uncontrolled, she said.

“While cases and deaths are declining in some provinces, they continue to rise in others,” Belizaire said. “The outbreak is still not under control and remains spread across a wide geographic area.”

The outbreak is spreading under extremely difficult conditions, fueled by insecurity, displacement, a health workers’ strike and intense population movements. The World Health Organization has said it is on track to surpass the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak, the deadliest on record, which killed more than 11,000 people, primarily in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Catherine Smallwood, the WHO’s Ebola incident manager, said cases and deaths had begun declining in North Kivu after several weeks of increases. But although treatment beds are being added daily, facilities still lack enough staff and partners to operate them.

“The human resources gap is one of the biggest gaps,” Smallwood said. WHO representative in Congo Anne Ancia said one Ebola treatment center requires about 300 health professionals, including anesthetists, hygienists, nurses and general practitioners.

“We are building Ebola treatment centers but do not always have the human resources needed to operate them,” Ancia said. “Those health workers must be paid.”

Frontline workers in Ituri previously went on strike over unpaid wages, worsening access to care. Health Minister Roger Kamba said in July that the government was verifying payroll lists after the names of people not involved in the response were added. Frontline workers said officials



Ebola response teams organize a public demonstration to raise awareness about the Ebola virus disease in Beni, North Kivu province, eastern Congo on Sept 22. (AP)

promised to pay the arrears, but some workers received nothing and others only part of what they were owed.

Another major challenge in the response is the fatality rate among children, according to the WHO. Children under five have the highest case fatality rate, more than 60% compared with approximately 40% among adults, Belizaire said.

WHO Ebola Incident Manager Smallwood said detecting cases among children under five is also very difficult because the children can’t necessarily explain their symptoms, and the presentation of symptoms can be confusing.

Also:

SINGAPORE: Singapore plans to support an mRNA influenza vaccine pilot initiative as part of efforts to strengthen the country’s pandemic prepar-

edness and develop adaptable vaccine manufacturing capabilities, Health Minister **Ong Ye Kung** has said.

Speaking at a United Nations General Assembly side event on outbreak preparedness and response in **New York** on Wednesday, Ong said mRNA could offer greater flexibility and shorter development and production timelines in responding to novel and fast-spreading diseases, according to a release by the Ministry of Health.

The pilot would also serve a peacetime need while helping Singapore build adaptable vaccine capabilities, Ong said.

Singapore is aligning its vaccine development efforts under its Prepvax research initiative with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations’ 100-day mission to develop vaccines for initial authorization and scale-up within 100 days of identifying a pandemic threat.

Ong said Singapore was also working with companies including Sanofi, GSK, Moderna and Thermo Fisher Scientific, and participating in Wellcome Leap’s RNA Readiness and Response Global network, which explores continuous-flow RNA manufacturing to reduce production bottlenecks.

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KABUL: Afghan authorities inaugurated construction of a major pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in southern Kandahar province on Wednesday, a step toward industrial self-reliance and reduced dependence on imported medicines, the provincial government office said in a statement.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar underscored the strategic importance of expanding domestic industry.

“Economic independence and self-sufficiency can only be achieved through comprehensive and decisive measures in the industrial sector,” he said, adding that the country has now created favorable conditions for investment.

The privately financed plant, budgeted at 30 million US dollars, will rise on a 10,000-square-meter site in the Ayno Maina area of Kandahar city, the provincial capital, according to the statement released on Wednesday.

Official data indicate that Afghanistan currently operates 134 pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities, producing 1,170 different medicines. These plants meet roughly 38 percent of the nation’s total pharmaceutical demand.

Dengue-carrying mosquitoes expand reach into new territories including Florida

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

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By Andrés Henao
University of Colorado Anschutz

The Florida Department of Health confirmed on Sept. 18, 2026, that the death of an elderly woman on Sept. 4 was due to dengue fever.

This is the first confirmed death in a larger dengue outbreak in Hillsborough County, which has seen 134 cases of the disease this summer. In August, the Hillsborough County Health Department issued a mosquito-borne illness alert due to reports of multiple locally acquired cases. This cluster of locally spread cases is a stark reminder that a disease which most Americans associate with faraway tropical vacations is increasingly being caught at home.

Dengue is often called “breakbone fever,” and the nickname is earned. People who get sick typically develop a sudden high fever along with a pounding headache, pain behind the eyes and deep aches in the muscles, joints and bones. Many also feel nauseated, throw up or break out in a blotchy rash a few days in.

As an infectious diseases physician and tropical medicine specialist who directs a travel clinic, I see how easily dengue slips past both patients and doctors. In parts of the U.S. where the disease is still uncommon, it is easily mistaken for the flu or COVID-19, and that delay can be dangerous.

Dengue is not passed from person to person like a cold. It spreads through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes, mainly Aedes aegypti, a species commonly found in Florida. These mosquitoes thrive in warm cities and can breed in as little as a bottle capful of standing water. These mosquitoes bite during the day, not just at dusk.

The cycle is simple and hard to break: A mosquito bites an infected person, then bites someone else days later, giving them the virus.

Dengue is especially tricky because most infections cause no symptoms at all. Roughly 3 in 4 people who catch the virus never feel sick. For the 25% who are symptomatic, those symptoms don’t appear until four to 10 days after being bitten.

In addition, there are four different strains of the dengue virus, and surviving one gives you lasting protection against only that one. A second infection with a different type actually raises the odds of severe disease.

Most people suffer with dengue for a miserable week and then recover on their own. But about 1 in 20 patients progress to severe dengue, a life-threatening turn that tends to strike just as the fever breaks - often around days three to seven, when patients and their families may wrongly assume the worst is over.

In severe dengue, tiny blood vessels throughout the

body start leaking fluid, blood pressure can crash and dangerous bleeding or organ damage can follow. Warning signs that someone is sliding into this phase include severe belly pain, repeated vomiting, bleeding from the gums or nose, extreme drowsiness or restlessness, and blood in vomit or stool.

Some groups face higher risk, including infants, pregnant women, adults over 65 and people with conditions like diabetes, obesity or kidney disease. Left untreated, severe dengue can kill up to 10% of patients. With prompt hospital care, that number drops below 1 in 100 - which is why recognizing it early matters so much.

A dengue vaccine exists, but it is not recommended for the average American traveler. The available shots are used only in select cases, such as children who live in high-transmission areas and have already had dengue once. So prevention still rests mostly on avoiding mosquito bites.

There is no antiviral drug that cures dengue. Care is all about supporting the body while it fights the virus. For people well enough to stay home, that means rest, plenty of fluids and acetaminophen, commonly known in the US by the brand name Tylenol, for fever and pain.

Patients who may have dengue must avoid aspirin, ibuprofen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. These drugs raise the risk of bleeding, which is already a danger with dengue.

Patients who develop more severe symptoms need to be admitted to the hospital, where doctors give carefully measured intravenous fluids and watch closely. Too little fluid and the patient can go into shock; too much and the lungs can flood.

Dengue is surging worldwide. The World Health Organization recorded more than 14 million cases in 2024, its worst year on record, across some 100 countries. That’s a 2,600% increase from the more than 505,000 cases reported in 2000.

Warmer temperatures, rapid urban growth and global travel are all helping the mosquitoes - and the virus - expand into places where it has never been a problem before. South Asia, Southeast Asia and Latin America carry the heaviest burden, but the map is spreading north.

Most US dengue cases are still picked up abroad. Travelers return home sick. In 2023 alone, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported nearly 1,900 such travel-related cases.

But every infected traveler is a spark, and in warm states the tinder is already there.

In the US territories, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands see the most cases by far. Florida has the highest risk among the 50 states, with Miami-Dade County recording more than 300 locally acquired dengue infections between 2010 and 2024. Local cases have also turned up in Texas, California, Arizona and Hawaii. (AP)



Homes sit damaged in the aftermath of flash flooding along the Trishuli River in the Trishuli Bazaar area of Nuwakot district on Nepal, Aug 30. (AP)

Climate disasters growing, so are cuts to programs that prepare for them

KATHMANDU, Nepal, Sept 24, (AP): Sitting on the floor of a makeshift shelter for survivors of Nepal’s deadly recent floods, Tenzin Dolma Ghale said she had nothing left but the clothes she was wearing. Her entire village and members of her family were washed away by the surge of water and debris that killed over 1,450 people and left more than 6,000 missing.

After speaking, she waved a hand and looked at the ground. “It’s all finished,” she said.

Ghale is among millions of people living with the deadly consequences of climate-related disasters. As such disasters intensify, international climate adaptation and disaster preparedness aid programs have been slashed, leaving countries facing billions of dollars in avoidable damage and dwindling recovery funds.

“The reality is that we need trillions of dollars every year, but developed countries have not met their obligation,” said Harjeet Singh, founding director of New Delhi-based Satat Sampada Climate Foundation.

The Trump administration’s abrupt cuts to US foreign aid in 2025 eliminated or sharply curtailed programs serving millions of people worldwide, with devastating consequences for many communities. Reductions by other major donor countries deepened the funding crisis.

Among the programs shut was SERVIR-Hindu Kush Himalaya, a joint initiative of the US Agency for International Development, NASA and the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, or ICIMOD.

Covering Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan, the program used satellites and geospatial analysis for disaster risk reduction, water resources and land cover. It facilitated flood risk services, collaboration with the Nepal Red Cross Society on risk communication and more than 170 public data sets on glaciers, disasters and vulnerability.

Glacial and disaster preparedness experts praised the organization for its extensive research, cross-border

coordination and support of local disaster reduction measures.

Before losing its funding due to USAID cuts, the program addressed mounting risks in a region where climate change has caused rapid glacier melt, shifting monsoons and increasingly frequent floods, landslides and glacial lake outburst floods, or GLOFs. Those changes endangered food, water and energy security for nearly 2 billion people living in or downstream of the region, according to ICIMOD.

Himalayan glaciers are losing mass 65% faster than they were a decade ago, according to a new report by global consultancy Systemiq, produced with ICIMOD. Yet only around 0.1% of the Himalaya’s estimated 40,000 glaciers are currently monitored in detail and on a sustained basis, the report said.

When funding for SERVIR-HKH ended, so did programs that monitored landslide forecasting, daily flooding, training programs and regional collaboration between countries.

Shepard posts triple-double in win

Dream secures No. 4 seed with victory over Liberty

NEW YORK, Sept 24, (AP): Allisha Gray scored 24 points, Naz Hillmon added 16 and Atlanta secured the No. 4 seed in the playoffs with an 83-65 victory over the New York Liberty to close out the regular season for both teams.

The Dream got a scare right before halftime when star Angel Reese took a hit to the face while drawing an offensive foul from Sabrina Ionescu. She didn't return for the second half.

The Liberty (26-18), who were missing star Breanna Stewart with left knee soreness, are the eighth seed and will face Minnesota in the playoffs.

Madina Okot had a special guest as Kenyan President William Ruto was sitting courtside.

He was in New York for the United Nations General Assembly this week and wanted to see her play.

"That was a very good honor, I appreciate him showing up," Okot told The Associated Press after Atlanta's 83-65 win on Wednesday night. "I'm the only Kenyan over here and it just shows how much he supports sports at home. I hope that this opens up

opportunities for other girls. I'm so much blessed to get support from him."

Ruto watched the game with his wife Rachel and NBA Deputy Commissioner Mark Tatum as well as members of NBA Africa.

The president took a selfie with the first lady and Okot as they talked on the court.

"I got to talk some Swahili today," said a smiling Okot. "So happy I spoke Swahili to my president and the first lady."

Ruto celebrated Okot getting drafted No. 13 by the Atlanta Dream back in April. Okot had two points and two rebounds in the win against New York.

Wings 103, Storm 91

In Seattle, Paige Bueckers scored 25 points, Jessica Shepard had 20 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists for her WNBA-leading sixth triple-double of the season, and the Dallas Wings beat the Seattle Storm 103-91 in the regular-season finale for both teams.

Dallas (27-16), which won just 10 games last sea-



Jessica Shepard

son, set a WNBA record for the best single-season turnaround in league history with a 17-win improve-

ment. The Wings have won seven of their last eight games, with their lone loss coming on Monday after leading by 14 points.

Dallas led 90-71 with 6:55 left in the fourth quarter before Seattle went on a 17-4 run to get within 94-88. But Awak Kuier and Bueckers made 3-pointers on Dallas' next two possessions to pull away.

Arike Ogunbowale added 23 points and six assists for Dallas, which secured the No. 7 seed in the WNBA playoffs after Atlanta's victory over New York earlier in the night. Bueckers had 20-plus points and five-plus assists for the third straight game.

Dominique Malonga led Seattle (8-36) with 29 points and eight rebounds. Awa Fam scored a season-high 22 points, Flau'jae Johnson added 21 points, and Natisha Hiedeman had 10 points and 14 assists.

Dallas won all four games against Seattle this season to earn its first sweep over the Storm in franchise history.

Barcelona, Lyonnes make winning starts in Women's Champs League

Kaptein seals Chelsea win

GENEVA, Sept 24, (AP): Title holder Barcelona won 5-2 and record eight-time champion OL Lyonnes prevailed 8-0 in their Women's Champions League openers.

Two storied teams who have won 10 of the 11 last titles still set the bar high in European women's soccer.

First, Lyon routed overmatched Servette in a classy display typified in a back-heeled assist by U.S. teenager Lily Yohannes for Marie-Antoinette Katoto to shoot and complete her hat trick in the 47th minute. And in Haiti star Melchie Dumornay's delicate slow chip shot from near the penalty spot to beat goalkeeper Jacintha Weimar in first-half stoppage time.

Barcelona had surged past Lyon 4-0 in the final in Oslo in May, and started its title defense Wednesday after a lot of offseason turnover and without two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas. She is now at ambitious London City Lionesses that shares owner Michele Kang with Lyon.

Paris FC shocked hosts Barcelona with a fifth-minute goal by Canada forward Evelynne Viens but it was 4-1 by halftime, and Poland forward Ewa Pajor added her second goal in the second half.

Brazil forward Kerolin, a signature signing from Manchester City, had leveled in the 18th with a neat shot.

"I was under a little pressure to score and show I can play," Kerolin, the former North Carolina Courage forward said, "so, of



Chelsea's Sjoekje Nusken, left, and Austria Wien's Tatjana Weiss battle for the ball during a UEFA Women's Champions League soccer match in London, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026. (AP)

course, I'm also happy I could do my job."

In Belgium, Roma substitute Marta Pandini missed a penalty deep into stoppage time of a 0-0 draw at OH Leuven. Pandini's spot-kick struck a post and bounced clear.

Chelsea's 1-0 win over debutant Austria Vienna was settled early by Wieke Kaptein's shot in the 11th.

Servette was a dominant title winner in Switzerland last season, beat three opponents in qualifying

rounds for this Champions League, and previously played in the competition five years ago.

Still, Lyon was barely troubled cruising to victory after an eighth-minute own goal by Laia Ballesté, under pressure from Dumornay, to turn a cross by Salma Paralluelo into her own net.

Katoto scored her first two goals with precisely placed shots in the 28th and 40th. A second Servette player, Magdalena Sobal, scored an own goal from an untidy scram-

ble at a corner in the 68th.

The Women's Champions League is in the second season of this 18-team format, with a single-standings league played over six rounds.

The top four in the standings on Dec. 16 advance directly to the quarterfinals that start in March. Teams placed fifth to 12th enter a playoffs round played over two legs in February.

The final is in late May at Poland's national stadium in Warsaw.

'Coaches are still employees'

Napoli chief De Laurentiis warns 'ultra' fans

ROME, Sept 24, (AP): Two Serie A trophies in the last four years. Five other domestic cups.

Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis is proud of what he has accomplished since rescuing the club from bankruptcy and starting in Serie C more than two decades ago.

Yet he also wants more. Much more.

De Laurentiis discussed plans for a new stadium that he hopes would be more attractive to families by keeping out hard-core "ultra" fans and sent a warning to coach Massimiliano Allegri while collecting an award recognizing his career in sports at the Foreign Press Association.

A film producer, De Laurentiis is one of the last Italian owners of Serie A's biggest clubs.

Napoli currently plays in the dilapidated Stadio Diego Armando Maradona, which is owned by the city and where sight lines are poor due to a running track.

"I have a letter of intent signed a month ago by which in eastern Naples we've found 38 hectares (94 acres) where I've planned a 70,000-seat stadium with 120 sky boxes, plus restaurants and an interactive museum," De Laurentiis said.

However, city officials have proposed renovating the Maradona stadium in time for the 2032 European Championship that Italy is co-hosting with Turkey.

De Laurentiis has had issues with the "ultras" for years and



Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis speaks during a press conference at the Foreign Press Association in Rome. (AP)

most recently made an attempt to prevent the hard-core supporters from bringing banners inside the stadium.

"Soccer should be about passion and participation. It has to be educational for kids. You can't have hooligans ... or 'ultras' that are moulded from the Mafia, 'ndrangheta and Camorra," De Laurentiis said, listing three of Italy's organized crime syndicates.

"Until our police chiefs and government ministers get the situation under control it's a major problem."

Despite the recent success, De Laurentiis has employed five different coaches since Luciano Spalletti left after leading Napoli to

the Serie A title in 2023 - its first championship since the days when Diego Maradona played for the club more than three decades earlier.

De Laurentiis was asked about Spalletti and his response could be interpreted as a warning to Allegri, Napoli's current coach, too.

Allegri is already under pressure after Napoli has won only two of six matches since he was hired to replace the departed Antonio Conte.

"Coaches need to understand that they are workers hired to direct an orchestra of footballers," said De Laurentiis, who often clashes with his coaches. "But they're still employees. Sometimes they forget

that."

Despite being Serie A champion at the time, Napoli didn't qualify for the 2025 Club World Cup. And De Laurentiis doesn't sound very enthusiastic about the possibility of his club playing in the 2029 edition, either.

Because there are too many matches.

Chelsea, which won the Club World Cup, and finalist Paris Saint-Germain played 64 and 65 matches, respectively, that season.

"In order for UEFA and FIFA to survive, they're reducing the importance of the national leagues, which are the core of fan support in every country around the world," De Laurentiis said. "Players are not physically or psychologically capable of supporting that type of load."

"But nobody wants to stop it because the people in charge produce votes with it."

Still, De Laurentiis stopped short of criticizing embattled FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who has faced calls to resign after exploring a plan whereby private investors would have purchased shares in the World Cup and other competitions.

"Infantino is doing his job," De Laurentiis said. "He's allowed to travel the world wearing the FIFA badge to meet (President Donald Trump, (Russian President Vladimir) Putin, and everyone else."

"The important thing," De Laurentiis said, "is that he remains intellectually honest."

Russell rules practice

Antonelli looks to extend F1 Championship lead in Baku

BAKU, Sept 24, (AP): Kimi Antonelli insists the Formula 1 title race is "not over" as he takes a vast 81-point lead into this week's Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

It looks as good as over, but Baku has sprung surprises before and the 20-year-old Italian was beaten by teammate George Russell in both of Thursday's practice sessions.

A year ago, Baku was where Oscar Piastri's title shot began to fall apart. The Australian was leading the standings when he almost stalled on the grid, dropped to last and crashed, all in the space of about a minute on the opening lap.

That kicked off a run of six races without a podium finish for Piastri, who had to watch the title race become a fight between eventual champion Lando Norris and Max Verstappen.

Antonelli - whose practice was hampered by car problems Thursday - is sounding cautious as he aims to become F1's youngest-ever champion.



Mercedes driver Andrea Kimi Antonelli of Italy sits in his car during the first free practice ahead of the Azerbaijan F1 Grand Prix, in Baku, Azerbaijan. (AP)

a hydraulic failure which left his car smoking at the side of the track in the first session. Arvid Lindblad hit a barrier in second practice, causing a red-flag stoppage.

The three British drivers behind Antonelli are all trying to recover from disappointing races at the Spanish Grand Prix two weeks ago.

Russell all but ruled himself out of the title race after an uncompetitive run to fifth in Madrid, while Norris was left ruining a badly-timed virtual safety car which cost him the win. Hamilton retired, making it five races off the podium for the Ferrari driver.

"I'm going to keep fighting every single race until it's mathematically impossible, but it doesn't change how I go about my job," Russell said Wednesday. "There's obviously a huge deficit, but it's not even really a consideration right now."

Red Bull is backing Isack Hadjar's health and his potential in the hope the young French driver develops into one of F1's top talents.

It was a tough day for Hadjar as a car issue in first practice cost him valuable time to readjust to F1. After a fix for the problem, which Hadjar initially thought was the engine but turned out to be a gearbox failure, he went ninth-fastest in the second session.

Hadjar returns for Baku despite saying he still feels pain from the wrist fracture which ruled him out of the last three races. And he has a contract extension to partner Max Verstappen for 2027, too.

Wrist injuries can have long-term consequences. Lance Stroll rushed back from wrist fractures sustained in a pre-season cycling crash in 2023 but ended up missing a race after all in 2025 when he needed a follow-up operation to deal with lingering pain.

It's an unusual race week in a very unusual F1 season, as the Azerbaijan Grand Prix is held on a Saturday to make way for a national day of remembrance on Sunday. That means Thursday practice and Friday qualifying.

Donatas to lead team

European refs to officiate at '27 Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Sept 24, (AP): The 2027 Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia will include match officials from Europe for the first time as part of an exchange agreement announced Thursday for the 2028 European Championship.

Referee Donatas Rumšas will be joined by two assistants from their home country Lithuania, plus video review official Aleandro Di Paolo from Italy, at the Jan. 7-Feb. 5 tournament, the Asian Football Confederation said.

Match officials from the AFC also will be invited for the first time by UEFA, the AFC said, to Euro 2028 being co-hosted by England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The cooperation deal between the Asian and European soccer bodies comes at a volatile time for the sport's global politics.

UEFA and AFC leaders have joined to call for FIFA president Gianni Infantino to leave office in the fallout from his failed plan to sell a stake in future World Cup profits to private investors.



In this file photo, Referee Donatas Rumšas, second right, discusses with Lille's Jonathan David during the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Sporting CP and Lille at the Alvalade stadium in Lisbon. (AP)

Infantino was in the Saudi kingdom Wednesday to attend an Arabi-an Gulf Cup game in Jeddah, which will be an Asian Cup host city with two stadiums.

The 38-year-old Rumšas was due in action later Thursday refereeing Portugal's home game against Wales in the Nations League.

UEFA invited referee Facundo Tello's team of match officials from Argentina to work at Euro 2024.

Japan ends China’s men’s table tennis team reign

Chinese women retain title

NAGOYA, Japan, Sept 24, (Xinhua): Japan ended China’s long dominance of the men’s table tennis team event at the 2026 Asian Games on Thursday, winning a dramatic final 3-2 to claim its first title in 60 years, while China retained the women’s crown with a 3-0 victory over Japan.

China had won the men’s team title at eight consecutive Asian Games, but Japan ended that run after Sora Matsushima defeated Wen Ruibo 3-1 in the deciding match.

China had taken an early lead through world No. 1 Wang Chuqin, who recovered from two games down against Matsushima to win 3-2. Matsushima took the opening two games 11-5, 11-8 before Wang won the next three by identical 11-9 scores.



Tomokazu Harimoto of Japan serves to Wang Chuqin (unseen) of China during the men’s team final. (Xinhua)

Tomokazu Harimoto responded by beating 19-year-old Wen 3-1, before Lin Shidong defeated Shunsuke Togami by the same score to put China 2-1 ahead.

Harimoto then faced Wang in the fourth match and gave the Chinese player no opportunity for another comeback, winning 11-7, 11-4, 11-9 to force a deciding match.

Matsushima completed Japan’s victory by beating Wen 3-1, roaring in celebration after sealing his country’s first men’s team title at the Asian Games since 1966.

China coach Wang Hao had reshuffled his lineup for the final, moving Wen into the second singles position.

“The result of the event was not what we had hoped for, and there are certainly things I could have done better personally,” Wang said. “But the tournament is not over yet. I hope everyone, myself included, can quickly regroup, put this result behind us and focus on the competitions ahead.” Harimoto said Japan had been prepared for different possible Chinese lineups.

“We didn’t know whether Wen or Lin would play twice, but we felt it didn’t really matter to us,” he said. “Our preparation was to be ready for whoever we faced and focus on doing our own job well.” South Korea and Chinese Taipei shared the bronze medal.

In the women’s final, China beat Japan 3-0 to claim its sixth consecutive Asian Games team title.

Sun Yingsha gave China the lead with a 3-1 victory over Hina Hayata, before world No. 1 Wang Manyu survived a stern challenge from Miwa Harimoto.

Their match went to a deciding game, where Wang held her nerve to win 12-10 and complete a 3-2 victory.



Japan players celebrate after winning the men’s team table tennis final at the 2026 Asian Games in Toyota of Aichi Prefecture, Japan. (Xinhua)

Kuai Man then defeated Mima Ito 3-0 to complete China’s sweep.

“Our unity is also very strong. Everyone is working toward the same goal of winning,” Wang said. “That invisible support gave us the confi-

dence to believe we could win when we found ourselves in difficult situations.” DPR Korea and South Korea shared the women’s team bronze medal.

In the women’s doubles action,

China’s Kuai and Wang defeated Kazakhstan’s Angelina Romanovskaya and Albina Zhaxylykova 3-0 to reach the last 16, while compatriots Fan Shuhan and Chen Yi beat DPR Korea’s Kim Kum Yong and Cha Su

Yong 3-1.

Japan’s Harimoto and Hayata also advanced with a 3-0 victory over Thailand’s Kulapassr Vijitviriyagul and Phatsaraphon Wonglakhon.

Konaté pulls out of France squad with minor knee injury

‘Spain’s World Cup-winning stars are built different and cannot be copied’

BURTON-ON-TRENT, England, Sept 24, (AP): England would be making a mistake by trying to replicate Spain’s successful style of play in a bid to win major tournaments, winger Anthony Gordon said ahead of Saturday’s match between the European giants.

Gordon is well-placed to discuss the qualities of Spain’s World Cup-winning players, given he now trains daily with many of them - like Rodri, Lamine Yamal, Pedri and more - following his off-season move to La Liga champion Barcelona.

“They’re definitely built different,” Gordon said. “So I’m not sure we can ever get that.”

Long-held doubts over England’s ability to end the men’s team’s long wait to win a European Championship or World Cup returned over the summer when England squandered a lead - earned by a goal from Gordon - by conceding two late goals to lose 2-1 to Argentina in the World Cup semifinals.

Speaking at England’s training base this week, Gordon said he might never get over the defeat that has prompted questions over whether England’s players have the quality to control these high-pressure games like the Spanish can. That’s because England became ultra-defensive after taking the lead - Gordi was replaced by a defender, Ezri Konsa, in a telling substitution by coach Thomas



England’s Anthony Gordon during a training session in Burton-upon-Trent, England. (AP)

Tuchel - and allowed Argentina to seize the initiative in the final half-hour.

So, Gordon was asked, couldn’t England just be more like Spain?

“I think culturally, it’s not just that tournament or that game where we couldn’t control a game,” he said, referring to the Argentina loss. “England, as a nation, we don’t have that strength like the Spanish, where we control games like they do. It’s not in us.”

“It’s not in the English DNA,” Gordon added, “and it’s probably something I’ve only realized to that extent from playing in Spain now. Because I think we, as Eng-

lish players, are educated the same way as the Spanish players. We know how to keep possession but it’s the decision-making of certain players in Spain, which it’s just not a natural thing. I even look at some of the decisions they take on the ball sometimes and think, ‘I’m not sure how you’ve seen that.’”

Gordon believes England might have to pursue its own course, rather than trying to imitate Spain.

“We can definitely get better,” he said, “or maybe go the other way and really play to our strengths, which is to play physical, play direct football, and on the

counter-attack.”

Spain’s trip to play England at Wembley Stadium is its first match as world champion and marks the start of the teams’ Nations League campaign.

Ibrahima Konaté has pulled out of France’s squad after hurting his knee in training and returned to Real Madrid.

The center back felt pain in his right knee during a practice session on Wednesday and a scan showed a minor sprain, the national team said.

Konaté was allowed to go back to Spain after what France described as “cordial discussions” between the national team and Madrid, the former club of current France coach Zinedine Zidane.

Manchester United defender Leny Yoro, who was with France’s under-21 team, has replaced Konaté in the senior squad.

France’s first game of the international break - Zidane’s debut as coach after replacing Didier Deschamps - is at Turkey on Friday.

The 20-year-old Yoro is one of six newcomers to the national team as Zidane begins to build the team of the future.

Rennes striker Esteban Lepaul, Liverpool center back Jeremy Jacquet, Como midfielder Lucas Cunha, Inter Milan’s Andy Diouf and Toulouse goalkeeper Guillaume Restes are set for their debuts in upcoming Nations League games.

Al-Jalahma praises Gulf Cup opening ceremony in Jeddah

JEDDAH, Sept 24, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Tareq Al-Jalahma praised Saudi Arabia’s organization of the 27th Arabian Gulf Cup, describing the opening ceremony in Jeddah as a reflection of the kingdom’s extensive preparations for the



Al-Jalahma

tournament.

Speaking to KUNA during the ceremony, Al-Jalahma commended the organization, arrangements, and facilities in place for the tournament, as well as the reception of participating teams and Gulf fans.

He expressed hope that the 27th Gulf Cup would be a successful edition both organizationally and technically, and that the tournament would further strengthen ties among the GCC countries by bringing their peoples together through sport.

Global coaches project to develop Kuwait’s young footballers: Abdullah

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 24: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Youth and Sports Bashar Abdullah said the authority’s project to recruit international coaches for Under-12 football teams aims to invest in young talent and lay the foundations for a professional generation of players.



Abdullah

Speaking at a press conference to launch the project, Abdullah said 15 international coaches will be assigned to 15 football clubs to work with their Under-12 teams in co-

operation with the Kuwait Football Association.

He described the Under-12 age group as a crucial stage in a player’s development and sporting character. Proper training at this age, he said, enables young players to develop more effectively, understand the game faster, and build strong technical and physical foundations for the later stages of their development.

Abdullah said the project is being implemented in cooperation with the Kuwait Football Association, which submitted 150 CVs from coaches from different countries. The applications were reviewed, and interviews were conducted with some candidates according to specific criteria and requirements to identify the most suitable coaches for the project.

Infantino pledges dialogue after uproar over secretive World Cup plan

GENEVA, Sept 24, (AP): FIFA’s embattled president Gianni Infantino said Thursday he is committed to a fresh culture of openness at the soccer body that is “not about generating positive headlines.”

Two months into a deep rift for global soccer because of Infantino’s now-dropped \$4.2 billion World Cup sell-off plan, he offered to his critics this week an independent review of how FIFA is run and makes decisions.

“I have received positive messages about it from different parts of the world, and it is important that we keep listening to each other,” he wrote in an Instagram post from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, which is hosting the Arabian Gulf Cup.

Infantino will chair an Oct. 15 meeting of the 37-member FIFA Council that also will be asked to approve consultation with the 211 member federations and six continental soccer bodies on “how to further strengthen FIFA’s decision-making processes.”

The 211 members already effectively own FIFA, a Switzerland-based not-for-profit that has at least \$5 billion in cash reserves af-

ter a financially successful men’s World Cup in North America.

FIFA’s ruling council includes three vice presidents - European soccer leader Aleksander Ceferin, North America’s Victor Montagliani and Asia’s Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa - who have led opposition to Infantino during the furor over his proposal to create a commercial spinoff part-owned by investors fronted

by Josh Kushner.

“There must be a culture of dialogue, of listening to each other and respecting one another,” Infantino wrote Thursday about the council meeting in Zurich. “This is not about generating positive headlines, it is about doing what is right for the game.”

Infantino’s presidency since 2016 has created most turmoil when proposing multi-billion dol-

lar commercial plans without fully consulting continental bodies like UEFA, which succeeded in stopping them.

FIFA has often seemed an executive one-man leadership as Infantino built closer ties to U.S. President Donald Trump around this year’s World Cup. FIFA created a peace prize to award Trump last year and allowed United States striker Folarin Balogun to evade a mandatory ban at the tournament after an intervention from the White House.

Infantino’s secretive plan to sell at least 20% of FIFA’s commercial rights in a deal anchored by Kushner, the brother of Trump’s son-in-law, provoked the soccer body’s biggest crisis since anti-corruption arrests in 2015 that led to trials in New York.

The 211 national federations were offered \$20 million each to approve the creation of the FIFA Forward Enterprise subsidiary. UEFA, North America’s CONCACAF and the Asian Football Confederation countered by saying FIFA could afford to give each federation a \$10 million dividend just from its reserves.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino gestures as he attends the Women’s U20 World Cup opening match between Poland and Argentina in Katowice, Poland. (AP)

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NEWS



Kuwaiti fans cheer the team during the opener.

Sports

KFA thanks fans for supporting team

Kuwait 'targets' victory over Iraq to revive Gulf Cup hopes

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

JEDDAH, Sept 24: Kuwait will look to revive its Gulf Cup campaign when they face Iraq at 6:55 p.m. tomorrow, Saturday, at Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal Sports City Stadium in Jeddah in the second round of Group A matches. In the other group game, hosts Saudi Arabia meet Oman at 9 p.m. at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium.

Saudi Arabia leads the group with three points, followed by Iraq and Oman on one point each, while Kuwait is bottom without a point.

Kuwait needs a victory to keep its hopes of reaching the semifinals alive after a 1-0 defeat to Saudi Arabia in the opening game. Another defeat would leave its qualification hopes hanging by a thread, while a draw would also make its task considerably harder.

Coach Hélio Sousa will rely on his players to respond against Iraq after Kuwait showed promising signs in the first half against Saudi Arabia.

Sousa is expected to continue giving younger players opportunities after several impressed in the opener. However, the team faded after the break, with inexperience contributing to the loss. The coaching staff has also worked on correcting the defensive and organizational mistakes made against Saudi Arabia, while seeking greater control and effectiveness in midfield.

Iraq enters the match with a point after drawing 1-1 with Oman and will also be chasing its first victory of the tournament to strengthen their semifinal prospects.

Saudi Arabia will look to make it two wins from two when they face Oman, with victory securing their place in the semifinals.

Coach Giorgos Donis could make changes to his lineup after some players failed to produce the expected level in the opening match.

Oman, meanwhile, will be determined to improve after a disappointing first-half display against Iraq. Coach Tarik Sektioui knows his side must avoid defeat, with a win or draw keeping its qualification hopes on track, while another loss would put it in a difficult position.

The Kuwait Football Association (KFA) has thanked fans for their strong support of the national team during their 1-0 defeat to Saudi Arabia in the opening round of the 27th Arabian Gulf Cup.

The KFA expressed hope that the Blue will respond with positive results in their remaining matches, starting with tomorrow's clash against Iraq.

The association also urged fans to maintain their support for the players, describing their backing as an important source of motivation, particularly for the squad's promising young players who have the potential to develop and deliver stronger performances in the future.



Kuwait and Saudi Arabia players vie for the ball during the opening match.

Burgan locks horns with Füchse Berlin in historic Club World Championship debut

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

CAIRO, Sept 24: Asian champion Burgan makes its historic debut at the IHF Men's Club World Championship Friday when it takes on European champion Füchse Berlin at 6:45 p.m. at the New Administrative Capital Sports Hall in Egypt.

The Group B clash offers Burgan an immediate test against one of Europe's leading clubs as it seeks to make an impact on its first appearance at the global tournament, which is hosted by Al Ahly and runs until Oct 1.

Burgan secured its place after winning the Asian Club Championship and arrived in Egypt after an intensive training camp in Bosnia, where it played several demanding



Burgan players hold their final training session.

friendlies to boost its physical and technical readiness.

Coach Yaqoub Al-Mousawi and assistant

Nasser Bou Khadra will rely on a mix of local players and professionals, including Portuguese player Angel Hernandez. Japanese professional Yasuhiro is doubtful after picking up an injury before the team departed for Egypt.

Burgan will be aiming to showcase the quality of Kuwaiti handball while gaining valuable experience against a strong European opponent.

Four games are scheduled Friday. Moroccan side Montada Derb Sultan faces the winner of Zamalek and Los Angeles at 1:15 p.m., followed by Barcelona against Brazil's Pinheiros at 3:30 p.m.

Al Ahly meets the winner of Veszprém and Sydney University at 8:45 p.m.

Ohashi 'sets' world record

Arkhangelskiy wins gold for Bahrain

NAGOYA, Japan, Sept 24, (Agencies): Japanese teenager Shin Ohashi set a world record in the 200-meter breaststroke on Thursday at the Asian Games, swimming a time of 2 minutes, 4.83 seconds.

The old record was 2:05.48 set by Qin Haiyang of China at the 2023 swimming world championships in Fukuoka, Japan.

Denis Petrashov of Kyrgyzstan was second in 2:08.67 and Cho Sung-jae of South Korea took bronze in 2:08.76.

The 17-year-old Ohashi already had the fastest time of the year (2:06.59) and has been the breastroker to beat this season.

Ohashi's record temporarily took the spotlight away from China and 13-year star Yu Zidi. Yu has won three gold medals in the 200 butterfly, and 200 and 400 IM during the Asian Games. She will not swim any other individual events.

Ohashi won the 400 individual medley earlier in the week in the Asian Games, clocking 4:07.02. That world mark is held by Leon Marchand of France (4:02.50), who won four gold medals in the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Marchand has been among the presenters handing out medals on the pool deck during the games with swimming being held in the Olympic pool in Tokyo.

Ohashi is far from physically imposing. He is only 1.69 meters tall - just under 5-feet-7 - and broke Japan's national record earlier in the year in the 100-meter breaststroke.

That record had been held by Japan's Kosuke Kitajima, a four-time Olympic gold medalist and three-time world champions.

China, slightly in the shadows of Ohashi's world record, still won four gold medals in Thursday's seven events. Through five days in the pool - swimming ends Friday - China has won 25 gold medals in 34 events.

Chinese winners on Thursday included Wu Qingfeng in the women's 50 free (23.98); Zhang Zhanshuo in the men's 800 free (7:42.49); the men's



Gold medalist Shin Ohashi of Japan poses on the podium after the men's 200-meter breaststroke final in swimming at the Asian Games in Tokyo, Japan. (AP)

4x100 freestyle relay (3:10.60); the women's 4x200 free relay (7:49.37).

In addition to Ohashi, Japan also picked up gold from Kotomi Kato (2:22.57) in the women's 200 breaststroke.

The other gold on Thursday went to Mikhail Arkhangelskiy of Bahrain (22.91) in the men's 50-butterfly. Arkhangelskiy was born in Russia and has swum for Florida State University.

Three shooting gold medals were decided at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games on Thursday, with China staging a dramatic comeback from 11 points down to claim the men's 10m air pistol team gold.

The men's 10m air pistol team event featured a strong field, with China, South Korea and India among the medal contenders. With a large number of entries, qualification was carried out in two groups.

Indonesia emerged as a surprising contender in the first group, with Muhammad Iqbal Raia Prabowo scoring 589 points and Sulthanul Aulia Maruf 583. China's Bu Shuaihang and Xie Yu posted 583 and 578 respectively, leaving Indonesia with an 11-point lead after the first group.

The duel between China's Hu Kai and Indonesia's Wira Sukmana became the focus of the second group. Hu shot a steady 292 points over the first three series, while Sukmana managed 284, cutting Indonesia's lead to three points.

Kuwait faces Bahrain in Asian Games handball derby

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

NAGOYA, Japan, Sept 24: Kuwait's handball team faces Bahrain in a Gulf derby at 7:30 a.m. today as they wrap up their Group B campaign at the Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan.

Kuwait is second on four points, behind leaders Bahrain on six, while South Korea and Iran have three points each. Kazakhstan is bottom without a point.

All four leading teams have already booked their places in the quarterfinals, leaving today's game to determine the final group positions and quarterfinal pairings.

Kuwait started with a 26-24 win over Iran, followed by a 26-23 loss to South Korea. They responded emphatically against Kazakhstan, cruising to a 43-19 victory to secure their quarterfinal berth.

The Blues will seek another strong display against Bahrain and a positive finish to the group stage before entering the knockout rounds, where they will need greater concentration and effort to pursue their tournament goals.



A Kuwaiti player makes a goal attempt against Kazakhstan.

Kuwait athletes target more success at Asian Games



Kuwait swimmer in action during the Asian Games.

NAGOYA, Japan, Sept 24: Kuwait's athletes resume their campaign at the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 today, with action across swimming, athletics

and other sports.

Swimming gets underway at 4 a.m., with Mona Al-Farsi competing in the women's 50m butterfly heats. Rashid Al-Tarmoum follows

in the men's 50m breaststroke heats, while Mohammed Al-Otaibi competes in the men's 200m butterfly heats.

In athletics, Talal Al-Rashoud

takes part in the men's hammer throw final at 2 p.m., aiming for a strong showing in the Asian competition.

In shooting, veteran Abdullah Al-Rashidi and Iman Al-Shammaa delivered a solid performance in the mixed team skeet qualification. The Kuwaiti pair finished fifth with 137 targets out of 150, missing the final and a chance to compete for medals by just one target. They hit 48 targets in each of the first two rounds and 41 in the third.

In squash, Kuwait's Ammar Al-Tamimi exited the men's singles in the round of 16 after a 3-0 defeat to Pakistan's Noor Zaman, the world No. 3.

Meanwhile, promising swimmer Khaled Al-Otaibi set two new Kuwaiti records in the individual medley. He clocked 4:28.75 in the 400m individual medley before setting another national record in the 200m event with a time of 2:07.14.



Mikhail Arkhangelskiy of Bahrain reacts after winning the men's 50-meter butterfly final in swimming at the Asian Games in Tokyo, Japan. (AP)