



Page 15 **cycling**



Pages 15 & 16 **soccer**

CAMPAIGN PUSHES NEED TO RATIONALIZE FOOD UTILIZATION, CUT WASTAGE

Kuwait moves to fortify food stocks

Imported food products fit for consumption: PAFN

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: In a government move to fortify the strategic food and commodity stocks from any shortage, and to increase reassurance in the long term, the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Muhammad Al-Aiban issued 3 relevant decisions in this regard, within the framework of working on a comprehensive strategy for stores and warehouses at the level of Kuwait, reports Al-Rai daily.

In this context, Al-Aiban formed a committee to develop mechanisms for preserving food and commodity

stocks, headed by Tariq Al-Sharrah, Saleh Al-Dhafiri as Vice-Chairman, and the membership of Faisal Al-Ansari, Ghazwa Al-Anzi and Ibrahim Al-Sultan, and Saad Al-Adwani as a member and Rapporteur.

The committee, whose work period was set by the decision at 3 months, is concerned with studying the mechanisms in place to preserve food and commodity stocks, and preparing a comprehensive vision for developing mechanisms for preserving and developing stocks in cooperative societies and parallel markets, and preparing a vision for an awareness campaign on the need to rationalize food consumption and reduce waste.

At the same level, the Minister of Commerce formed a committee of 11 members to follow up on what was stated in the report of the government performance follow-up agency regarding the provision of strategic storage areas for the establish-

ment of stores and warehouses. Procedures guide to carry out the tasks of organizing and supervising strategic storage areas and lands available for storage.

According to the decision, the committee will develop a plan and an automated system to follow up on the strategic stock and link it with the Kuwait Flour Mills and Kuwait Catering companies, and coordinate with the Kuwait Municipality and the concerned authorities to allocate lands for the construction of multi-storey buildings for selling and distributing subsidized supplies, in addition to following up and facilitating the procedures for establishing a government company for strategic stocks.

In other news, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition confirmed that all foodstuffs imported into the country, including flour, go through a series of control, scrutiny and examination processes by their specialists, before being released and allowed to be circulated, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The authority stressed that allowing the circulation of foodstuffs is only done after ensuring that they comply with the internationally approved technical regulations, including the Gulf standard specifications.

The Authority has called on the public not to publish clips that contain false allegations about the quality of foodstuffs, with the obligation to refer to documented scientific sources and statements of official authorities. The authority's statement came in response to clips circulated on social media containing false allegations about the quality of flour in Kuwait.

Continued on Page 3

'Seizure'

Ships warned on Iran threat

DUBAI, Aug 13, (AP): Western-backed maritime forces in the Middle East on Saturday warned shippers traveling through the strategic Strait of Hormuz to stay as far away from Iranian territorial waters as possible to avoid being seized, a stark advisory amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S.

A similar warning went out to shippers earlier this year ahead of Iran seizing two tankers traveling near the strait, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf through which 20% of the world's oil passes.

While Iran and the U.S. now near an apparent deal that would see billions of Iranian assets held in South Korea unfrozen in exchange for the release of five Iranian-Americans detained in Tehran, the warning shows that the tensions remain high at sea. Already, the U.S. is exploring plans to put armed troops on commercial ships in the strait to deter Iran amid a buildup of troops, ships and aircraft in the region.

Warning

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins, a spokesman for the Mideast-based 5th Fleet, acknowledged the warning had been given, but declined to discuss specifics about it.

A U.S.-backed maritime group called the International Maritime Security Construct "is notifying regional mariners of appropriate precautions to minimize the risk of seizure based on current regional tensions, which we seek to de-escalate," Hawkins said. "Vessels are being advised to transit as far away from Iranian territorial waters as possible."

Separately, a European Union-led maritime organization watching shipping in the strait has "warned of a possibility of an attack on a merchant vessel of unknown flag in the Strait of Hormuz in the next 12 to 72 hours," said private intelligence firm Ambrey.

"Previously, after a similar warning was issued, a merchant vessel was seized by Iranian authorities under a false pretext," the firm warned.

The EU-led mission, called the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz, did not respond to a request for comment.

Hours later, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which also provides warnings to sailors in the Arabian Gulf, issued its own alert.

Caution

"UKMTO have been made aware of an increased threat within the vicinity of Strait Of Hormuz," the warning said. "All vessels transiting are advised to exercise caution and report suspicious activity to UKMTO."

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency cited this AP report without quoting any Iranian officials about it. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment.

The Strait of Hormuz is in the territorial waters of Iran and Oman, which at its narrowest point is just 33 kilometers (21 miles) wide. The width of the shipping lane in either direction is only 3 kilometers (2 miles). Anything affecting it ripples through global energy markets, potentially raising the price of crude oil. That then trickles down to consumers through what they pay for gasoline and other oil products.

There has been a wave of attacks on ships attributed to Iran since 2019, following the Trump administration unilaterally withdrawing America from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and re-imposing crushing sanctions on Tehran.

Those assaults resumed in late April, when Iran seized a ship carrying oil for Chevron Corp. and another tanker called the Niovi in May.



In this photo released by the U.S. Navy, the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan travels through the Red Sea, Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2023. Western-backed maritime forces in the Middle East on Saturday, Aug. 12, warned shippers traveling through the strategic Strait of Hormuz to stay as far away from Iranian territorial waters as possible to avoid being seized, a stark advisory amid heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. (Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Riley Gasdia/U.S. Navy, via AP)

Death toll in Maui hits 93

LAHAINA, Hawaii, Aug 13, (AP): As the death toll from a wildfire that razed a historic Maui town reached 93, authorities warned Saturday that the effort to find and identify the dead was still in its early stages. It's already the deadliest U.S. wildfire for over a century.

Crews with cadaver dogs have covered just 3% of the search area, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said.

"We've got an area that we have to contain that is at least 5 square miles and it is full of our loved ones," noting that the death toll is likely to grow and "none of us really know the size of it yet."

He spoke as federal emergency workers picked through the ash landscape left by the fire that razed the centuries-old town of Lahaina. Teams marked the ruins of homes with a bright orange X to record an initial search, and HR when they found human remains.

Pelletier said identifying the dead is extremely challenging because "we pick up the remains and they fall apart ... When we find our family and our friends, the remains that we're finding is through a fire that melted metal." Two people have been identified so far, he said.

Dogs worked the rubble, and their occasional bark - used to alert their handlers to a possible corpse - echoed over the hot and colorless landscape.

"It will certainly be the worst natural disaster that Hawaii ever faced," Gov. Josh Green remarked Saturday as he toured the devastation on historic Front Street. "We can only wait and support those who are living. Our focus now is to reunite people when we can and get them housing and get them health care, and then turn to rebuilding."

At least 2,200 buildings were damaged or destroyed in West Maui, Green said, of which 86% were residential. Across the island, he added, damage was estimated at close to \$6 billion. He said it would take "an incredible amount of time" to recover.

The confirmed death toll was later raised to 93 from the total of 89 announced in a press conference with Green and other officials.



Myrna Ah Hee reacts as she waits in front of an evacuation center at the War Memorial Gymnasium, Thursday, Aug. 10, 2023, in Wailuku, Hawaii. (AP)

Kuwait-Iran ties 'strong'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: The new Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait, HE Mohammad Toutounchi, expressed his happiness at representing his country in Kuwait, indicating that he will work to strengthen the close relations between the two countries, reports Al-Qabas daily.

He said this during a meeting with members of the Kuwaiti-Iranian Friendship Association, following the presentation of a copy of his credentials to Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah.

The Iranian envoy said, Kuwait and Iran are two neighbors with historical relations rooted in decades, stressing the need for the two countries to support each other. He expressed his pride and that he began his mission in Kuwait by meeting the head of the association Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled, and a group of intellectuals, writers and businessmen.

He pointed out that he had met before his arrival with Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi, who stressed the importance of strengthening relations with neighboring countries, especially Kuwait, as well as Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Abdollahian, who stressed the development of bilateral relations and communication in all official and popular fields, and his emphasis on the visit of the association delegation to Tehran.

For his part, Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled, shed light of the association on its future projects, stressing the depth of the ties that unite the two neighboring peoples.

New speeds 3 times higher

CITRA to adjust fixed home internet prices

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: The Board of Directors of the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) decided to adjust the prices of fixed home internet (wired and wireless), in addition to adding new speeds that reached 3 times the speed currently applied, which was a maximum of 100 Mbps, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Council decided to amend the tariff of all fixed home internet subscriptions (wired and wireless) with speeds available in the market, so that the maximum annual tariff would be 415 dinars, compared to a speed of 400 Mbps.

The decision prohibits providers of fixed (wired and wireless) home internet services from exceeding the maximum value of the subscription tariff stipulated in the decision, and it is not permissible to impose a fair use policy in providing Internet services; but what has changed in the value of fixed home internet prices (wired and wireless) and the scale of speeds compared to the previous decision?

Digitally, the new price list shows that the value of consumption witnessed a tangible decrease in some speeds, reaching 62.26 percent at a speed of 40 Mbps, while it amounts to about 57 percent for the minimum speed, which is 20 Mbps, as its annual subscription rate was reduced from 139 to 60 dinars, while The new maximum speed subscription, set at 400 Mbps, amounts to 415 dinars.

As for the speed of 100 Mbps, which

was the maximum speed for fixed home internet "wired and wireless" in the past, its subscription was reduced from 322 dinars to 200 dinars annually, noting that the value of the previous subscription to the speed of 100 Mbps is almost equivalent to the value of the subscription to the speed of 300 Mbps according to the new decision (only two dinars more).

In addition, it is noted that the speeds of the new resolution start at 20 Mbps, unlike the old resolution, which starts at 1 Mbps.

Perhaps the reason for not starting with the low speeds that were in force in the old decision is that these speeds are no longer used by Internet consumers at the present time, especially with the increase in demand for the service, and the need for higher speeds than before, even if the need is at the minimum level.

It is also noted that the new decision includes doubling speeds by 20 Mbps, from the ceiling of 20 Mbps to 400 Mbps, unlike the previous decision, which regulated speeds incrementally at a rate of 1 Mbps for speeds up to 8 Mbps, then by 2 Mbps from 10 Mbps to 24 Mbps, at a rate of 10 Mbps and from 30 Mbps to 100 Mbps, while the new decision regulation exceeded two speeds that were offered between the speed of 20 Mbps and 30 Mbps, which are 22/24 Mbps, for the same reason related to the consumer's high need for these limits, as they are no longer required for consumption.

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Amiri Diwan on Saturday dismissed social media claims that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had some health troubles and he was taken to hospital, billing them as fake allegations.

The Diwan confirmed that His Highness the Amir is fine and in good health, emphasizing that it is necessary to ensure news credibility and obtain relevant reports from the Amiri Diwan and official channels.

The Amiri Diwan prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant His Highness the Amir everlasting good health and wellness, and to protect him from any harm. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Saturday welcomed the Australian foreign minister's decision to re-use the term "occupied Palestinian territories", and to consider Israeli occupation settlements "illegitimate" as per international law.

The ministry, in a press release, commended the Australian government's stance that came in line with international law and international legitimacy.

It further, reiterated Kuwait's relentless and principled position on the Palestinian cause, and its support for the Palestinian people and their choices.

The ministry also restated Kuwait's backing for all efforts to achieve comprehensive and just peace based on the bi-state solution, including an independent Palestinian state on the pre-1967 border with East Jerusalem being its capital. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: The sound of repeated explosions could be heard in the area around the Syrian capital before dawn on Sunday, state media and Damascus residents said.

There was no immediate statement from government officials on the source or target of the attack. Similar incidents in the past have usually been attributed to Israeli airstrikes, with Syrian air defenses responding to shoot down the missiles.

Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the explosion came from a warehouse storing rockets for Iran-backed militias, though it could not confirm whether it was an Israeli strike. The Observatory said it was still unclear if anyone was wounded or killed in the explosion.

The most recent reported Israeli strike was on Aug. 7, when Syrian state media reported airstrikes in areas around Damascus, killing at least four Syrian army soldiers. The Observatory has said those strikes targeted weapons and munitions warehouses and positions of Iran-backed militias around Damascus. (AP)

Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian entrenchment in its neighbor, has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years, but it rarely acknowledges them.

Israel has also targeted the international airports in Damascus and the northern Syrian city of Aleppo several times over the past few years, often putting it out of commission. (AP)



In this photo taken with long shutter speed, a shooting star is seen during the Perseids meteor shower above the castle of Holloko, Hungary, early Sunday, Aug. 13, 2023. The Perseid meteor shower occurs every year in August when the Earth passes through debris and dust of the Swift-Tuttle comet. (AP)

Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:49	Asr	15:28
Sunrise ..	05:15	Maghrib ..	18:31
Zohr	11:53	Isha	19:54

Local

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

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Very hot and relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind with speeds of 10-45 km/h causing rising dust

Weather

over open areas.

By Night: Hot to rather hot and humid over coastal areas with light to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind with speeds of 08-35 km/h.

Station
Kuwait City

Max Exp
43

Min Rec
34

Kuwait Airport	46	29
Abdaly	47	30
Jahra	48	31
Salmiyah	38	33
Ahmadi	38	33
Nuwaisib	45	30
Wafra	46	29

Expat doctors exceed Kuwaitis in public, private sectors

Kuwaitization of doctors may face difficulties

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: While the Ministry of Health implements a replacement policy, in accordance with the provisions contained in the Civil Service Bureau Resolution No. 11/2017, at the level of the occupational groups included in it, statistics indicate that the localization of medical jobs, especially doctors, takes years, and that solutions are almost intractable in the foreseeable future, reports Al-Rai daily.

In the context of enhancing reliance on national elements of medical competencies, health sources confirmed "the Ministry of Health has approved a number of measures in an attempt to reduce the recruitment of doctors from abroad, including an increase in doctors accepted in various specialties of the Kuwaiti Board by more than 50 percent, compared to previous years.

These include a substantial expansion of the intake of doctors across diverse specialties, surpassing previous years by more than 50 percent and even reaching up to 200 percent in certain programs. Additionally, recognition is given to holders of the initial portion of the Kuwaiti and Saudi boards, equivalent to those with master's and diploma degrees.

Furthermore, British fellowship certifications are now considered for promotions among Ku-

waiti doctors, including those with Kuwaiti mothers, as well as former bedouin who obtained these certificates prior to Ministerial Decision 306/2018 for direct recruitment of doctors from the offspring of Kuwaiti women and the ongoing enhancement of doctors' rights and work environment are also pursued.

Despite these efforts to harness national resources optimally, statistics suggest that the re-localization of doctors remains a complex challenge with elusive solutions in the short term.

The current landscape entails there are approximately 6,000 non-Kuwaiti doctors in the public sector, compared to about 4,000 Kuwaiti counterparts. The disparity widens significantly in the private health sector, wherein around 500 Kuwaiti doctors serve in contrast to more than 3,500 non-Kuwaitis.

In the same context, the sources saw that "the need for non-Kuwaiti doctors in the government sector may diminish somewhat with the near operation of the Health Insurance Company's hospitals, and the transfer of a segment of residents estimated at two million people, but this does not mean closing the door to contracts with foreign doctors, especially With the aforementioned segment continuing to receive specialized services in

the Ministry's facilities.

The ministry emphasized that "the need for foreign doctors continues for a long time, for reasons most notably the limited numbers of Kuwaiti graduates compared to the expansion of the health service, as well as the successive opening of new health projects and the imminent delivery of others, in addition to the lack of national elements in some medical specialties, especially the rare ones."

The ministry highlighted six measures to enhance dependence on Kuwaiti doctors -- increasing the number of doctors accepted in the specializations of the Kuwaiti Board by an average of more than 50 percent compared to previous years; increasing the percentage of those accepted into some specialized programs of the Kuwaiti Board, by up to 200 percent; equating the first part of the Kuwaiti board with a master's degree.

This is in addition to equality for those who obtained the first part of the Saudi board, similar to the Kuwaiti board, with those who obtained a master's degree and a diploma; direct employment of Kuwaiti doctors and continue to support doctors' rights and improve the work environment.



KUNA photo

Kuwait's Ambassador in Austria submits credentials as non-resident envoy to Slovenian President Nataša Pirc Musar.

Kuwait envoy presents credentials

Kuwait's Ambassador in Austria and its Permanent Representative at International Organizations in Vienna Talal Al-Fassam has presented his credentials as non-resident ambassador to Slovenian President Nataša Pirc Musar.

Speaking to KUNA following a ceremony held in Ljubljana on Friday, the ambassador said he had conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Slovenian president.

He added that Ljubljana had asked him to convey her greetings to His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince.

He said that his country looks forward to promoting and developing relations with Slovenia in various fields, and to keeping sharing views about issues and matters that concern both friendly countries.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received a phone call from his Uzbek counterpart Bakhtromjon Aloyev recently.

During the conversation, they discussed the friendly relations between the two countries and explored ways to promote cooperation in all areas, according to a statement from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (KUNA)

Eris – new variant of COVID

Symptoms differ from person to person: experts



New variant of the COVID-19 Coronavirus 'Eris'.

'Cut unnecessary expenses'

Assembly, gov't collaboration vital to 'strengthen' economy

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Acting Minister of Finance Dr. Saad Al-Barrak says the draft budget has taken into account the global and regional economic developments and their impact on the local economic situation and the events surrounding the country, as well as the challenges facing the state's public finances, in order to move forward in achieving a diversified economy and developed infrastructure, and improving the business environment to provide a better standard of living, reports Al-Qabas daily.



Dr. Al-Barrak

In his speech concerning the economic, global and monetary conditions and the draft general budget for the 2023/2024 fiscal year, Dr. Al-Barrak explained that the strategic directions of the state, its general policy and its future aspirations will not be achieved without the collaboration of the efforts of the legislative and executive authorities in order to strengthen the country's march towards achieving the economic, developmental and social goals on the basis of which the draft general budget of the state was prepared.

The ministries were directed to cancel unnecessary and secondary expenses that do not affect the performance of government agencies.

Kuwait's economy depends on the oil sector, and the budget expenditures are witnessing growth due to the increase in salaries and subsidies. Yet, the non-oil revenues are not witnessing stability, which means the state relies mainly on oil revenues to finance the public expenditures and development projects.

To ensure financial sustainability in Kuwait, the government has prepared an action program with the aim of achieving sustainable economic growth, diversifying the economy, reforming the state budget, and improving financial planning. Projects that support diversification of the economy and financial reforms will be implemented to control spending and plan financial resources in a sustainable manner.

Economic developments

1. Global - The global economy is going through a very uncertain period with the cumulative effects of the past three years of successive crises, particularly the COVID pandemic, the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the continuous disturbances in supply and demand rates and supply chains, and the sharp rise in commodity prices, which led to inflation rates reaching levels not seen in the world since decades, and prompting most central banks to tighten monetary policies and raise interest rates to counter inflation, as well as a decline in

growth rates in most economic regions.

2. Regionalism - While the economy of the Middle East outperformed all other economic regions in 2022 with expectations that it will face slower growth in the coming years due to lower oil prices and with an expected decline to USD 74.2 per barrel in 2023, and USD 70 per barrel in 2024, it is expected that the region will be less affected by inflation due to subsidies, but it will still face higher prices compared to pre-pandemic levels, especially in basic commodities such as food.

3. Local - Kuwait is still very dependent on oil revenues, as economic growth is expected to decline to 0.1 percent in 2023 (real GDP of KD 39.8 billion) despite the high oil prices, and due to the decline in oil production, compared to 8.2 percent in 2022.

Inflation was contained due to the limited transmission of the effects of high food and energy prices globally, thanks to the administratively directed price system and subsidies and to the tightening of monetary policies.

The balance of public finances and the external balance gained strength thanks to the increase in oil revenues, as the fiscal surplus rose to 22.5 percent of GDP in 2022, compared to 6.4 percent of GDP in 2021.

4. Public debt issues - The total outstanding balance of public debt at the end of the year 2022/2023 amounted to approximately KD 1.63 billion. No domestic or international sovereign debt was issued due to the expiry of the law that allows the government to issue public loans.

Budget rules, foundations and directives

● The continuation of the state's policy to rationalize spending, compress expenditures, and address the structural imbalances in the budget.

● Linking the budget and the various projects with the government's action program, which aims to build an advanced and sustainable economy.

● Emphasis on providing funds for the implementation of strategic projects.

● Directing ministries to cancel unnecessary and non-influential secondary expenditures.

New Changes

Salaries - An increase in salary allocations by 14 percent to reach KD 14.98 billion as a result of:-

1. Adding an amount to cover the exchange on the cash alternative for the previous year.

2. Recruitment cost.

3. An increase in the government's contribution to the Public Institution of Social Security.

4. Adding a pledge amount for previous years.

Subsidies - Increased by 35 percent to reach USD 5.98 million and included:-

1. Energy subsidies and an increase in the amount of partial payment of the dues of the Petroleum Corporation.

2. Other subsidies such as the increase in student grants, food supplies, and housing subsidies.

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified the new variant of the COVID-19 Coronavirus as Eris, describing it as a "variant of interest" and a variant of the Omicron mutant, reports Al-Rai daily.

In this regard, the WHO Technical Director Maria Van Kerkhove said, "This strain has increased transmissibility, but is not more severe than other Omicron variants."

According to public health experts, there is no evidence so far that the emerging strain is more powerful than previous strains. Also, the characteristics of the new sub-mutant are not much different from the previous strains.

Meanwhile, health sources affirmed that the emergence of COVID-19 mutants is expected.

They explained that the available evidence, based on reports and preliminary information regarding this mutant, is not a cause for concern, as there is no evidence that it causes a more serious or more severe disease than other Omicron mutants. However, the usual precautionary measures must be taken, the most important of which is to avoid crowded areas.

While the spread of this strain is increasing worldwide, after being discovered in about 51 countries including Britain, the United States, China, South Korea, Japan, Canada, Australia, Singapore, France, Portugal and Spain, some global statistics on the spread of the COVID-19 virus particularly the new strain indicate the following:-

- COVID-19 increased by 80 percent within a month.
- About 1.5 million cases were recorded worldwide during the period from July 10 to August 6 this year.
- About 17.4 percent of the COVID-19 cases are caused by the new variant.
- The new variant is the most common variant in the UK, after Arcturus.

In this regard, international experts in the field of public health explained that, with the seasonal fluctuations and the lack of testing facilities, it may be difficult to differentiate between Eris mutant infection and influenza or the common cold.

The symptoms of Eris strain infection differ from one person to another. Most of those who are infected with this strain suffer from mild symptoms, most notably:-

- fever
- sore throat
- Runny nose and cough
- Body and muscle pain
- Fatigue and diarrhea
- sneezing

In addition, experts said they expect the availability of vaccines to have a high degree of protection against the new sub-variant, adding that they believe the measures to prevent the new variant include the following:-

- Follow a healthy lifestyle
- Take booster doses for those who are eligible to receive them.
- Wear face masks
- Ventilate rooms

Flexible working hours implementation 'soon'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: Meetings of the concerned authorities, led by the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, and the Civil Service Commission, are ongoing in preparation for implementing flexible working hours in state agencies, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to a government source, the final vision of the new working hours mechanism has been completed and is expected to be implemented within a few days.

Flexible working hours will be applied experimentally in the first stage, and then stabilized after being evaluated by the competent authorities.

It was decided to apply the new flexible working hours before the start of the new academic year in order to avoid traffic congestion, at a rate of seven hours for all employees per day after the entry fingerprint. The employees will be allowed to choose to start work from 7:00 am to 8:30 am according to the final formula that was finally approved.

A grace period of 30 minutes has been approved for employees. The public interest of all will be taken into account.

The source highlighted the ongoing meetings between the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education and the Civil Service Commission to approve the working hours mechanism, which will be submitted to the Council of Ministers soon for discussion and decision.

He said, "The Ministry of Education will provide buses for mass transportation of students. The Ministry of Interior will evaluate the experience of "flexible working hours" and the extent of its contribution to easing traffic congestion. Daily reports will be submitted at the beginning of applying flexible working hours to avoid all problems.

Some ministries of a special nature, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health will set working hours according to the nature of work. The nature of work in schools, hospitals and others differs from other agencies. Therefore, they will be able to determine a time that suits them."

The source reaffirmed that an employee can choose their start time from 7:00am to 8:30am.

He highlighted the recommendations from top management to avoid loss of any financial rights or privileges for employees, adding that the Demographics Committee has finished preparing the final concept of the flexible hours, which will contribute to alleviating traffic congestion according to a sophisticated mechanism.

Other Voices

KUNA, Al-Afasy and Oscars

By Ahmad alsarraf

Some tend to withdraw, away from fame and limelight. Others tend to search for fame, at any cost, even if it requires inventing a number of technical, scientific, or academic titles. What is the phenomenon of some people insisting on adding titles to their names, rightly or wrongly, except for a kind of search for fame, and buying respect, a desire that we may find in the overwhelming majority of people!

Al-Qabas published a story a few years ago on its front page regarding the selection of a senior employee of a Kuwaiti investment company, to the membership of the board of directors of 'Emmy Awards', which is famous for its prestigious awards for songs, which are equal in value and importance to the Oscars for films!

The news aroused my doubts, as the author of the news has nothing to do with art, nor with international songs, and there is nothing that distinguishes him from others in order for him to be appointed a member of a party that is the most secretive and closed, and has the most influence on public opinion. It didn't take much for me to discover that the news that was leaked, in some way, to Al-Qabas was completely fabricated!

It seems that the failures of the news agency KUNA will not end. According to the text of a news report issued by it, Mr. Rashid Al-Afasy, who is an imam of a mosque, contacted the agency and said he had won membership in the United Nations (!) and that he had obtained a membership card after joining the Union of Arab Creators. As a consultant, and his selection to the membership of his

Economic and Social Council!!

KUNA added, in its own words and that of Al-Afasy, that he was granted membership in recognition of his "world-leading" career, as he is one of the "most influential figures in the world"!!

Al-Afasy, who won the Academy Award for Arab Creators, also announced his pride in being chosen to work in voluntary organizations, international organizations, etc.

Needless to say, the above is inaccurate. There is no membership for individuals in the United Nations, it is for states only. As for the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in Geneva, is keen to cooperate with non-governmental organizations, the NGO, and grants them a kind of membership through its official website, which is temporary membership, which is currently enjoyed by 5,000 organizations and associations, from different countries of the world, and allows those who represent them have the opportunity to visit the offices of the Council and the international organization, see their references and libraries, and participate in their seminars.

Of course, this requires being present in the cities where their offices are located, with the necessity of proficiency in English or French!

As for the Union of Arab Creators, there are no clear and recognized indications of what its name means, from an official party! Nor is there a recognized body that awards Oscars to Arab creators!

On its modest website, it was stated that those who run it "give Oscar awards" to creators in literary fields, such as poetry and novels, and there is no mention of mosque imams.

Note that whoever performs the function of imam does not even need an Oscar, whether from Egypt or from Omdurman.

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MoE working on project

Curricula digitalization on cards

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: In line with the article titled "A time plan for the application of artificial intelligence in education" published on April 7, the Ministry of Education has taken the first actual steps in implementing the curricula digitalization project. Training courses are currently being held for senior superintendents and technical superintendents on the mechanism for the implementation of digitization of curricula in public schools, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to informed sources, the concerned authorities organized training courses and workshops for technical superintendents and superintendents for academic subjects on digital transformation applications and digitization of curricula.

The courses are being held during the months of July and August.

The ministry has contracted with international companies in the field of digital transformation to provide training courses for technical guidance and teachers. With the start of the next academic year, the training plan for educational bodies in schools will be implemented.

Through this project, the Ministry of Education aims to benefit from applications and artificial intelligence in achieving digital transformation, through which it hopes to improve the level of educational outputs. This comes especially since the world is moving rapidly in this field.

The curricula sector works in coordination with the rest of the concerned sectors

for harmonizing school curricula and making appropriate modifications to them to keep pace with the school digital transformation plan.

The process of training superintendents is in its final stages, as the experiences they gain in courses and workshops will be transferred to schools at the beginning of the new academic year. Many workshops will be organized in schools in coordination with the concerned authorities in technical guidance for academic subjects, and sectors related to digital transformation, information systems management, computer technical guidance, and other related entities.

Meanwhile, the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Osama Al-Sultan met with a delegation from the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries composed of specialists in the field of information security.

The delegation was briefed on the latest programs and technologies used by the Ministry of Education in the field of information security, in addition to the ministry's projects in cybersecurity and future plans, and the public education sector's approach to digital transformation.



Al-Sultan

'Do we understand now causes of the Arab renaissance delay?'

"THE Middle, Far and Near East, with different geography and cultural, religious and social conditions, did not move properly to emulate Europe in its renaissance and keep pace with its sciences and civilization until finally after they discovered the abyss between their past and present," columnist **Dr Abdul Rahman Al-Jeeran** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"The discovery of the cancerous corruption within the frameworks of existing regimes has become apparent. In contrast to the arduous journey toward political reform, we find ourselves still on the periphery of the battle against corruption. In addition, there's a necessity to embrace the right factors for the revival of societies that require comprehensive legislative frameworks and educational and scientific programs.

"These programs are aimed at cultivating a new generation empowered to progress, grounded in their faith and relying on their own efforts to resume their work.



Dr Al-Jeeran

"What is truly perplexing is that the Arabs, prior to this, recognized their backwardness and stagnation. They comprehended the ailments that held them back; much like an unwell person understands the root of their ailment, yet turns to superstitions and unfounded beliefs instead of seeking proper medical treatment. In a similar vein, they seek counsel from the ignorant and superstitious instead of consulting experts and knowledgeable individuals.

"These advisors were not only ignorant of their faith, but also of the world around them. They conflated their customs and beliefs with the myths of stagnation and worship.

"When faced with repeated defeats in conflicts with Europe's aggressions and their own resistance to these aggressions, they were forced to reflect on the causes of their defeats. This led them to embrace sciences, industries, management systems, accounting, and governance. They turned to the natural causes and began to understand the reality before them in a rational manner.

"This marked their initial training in political and administrative reasoning, fostering a grasp of the nature of things. Almost unanimously, opinions converged on one approach to reform: grasping science in its true essence, encompassing all elevated aspirations, while adapting to modern living methods and levels of thinking without losing their identity.

"Islam weathered the initial clash, forging reconciliation between it and scientific civilization. Today's challenge no longer resides in a struggle between Islam and modern science or linear thinking. Instead, it centers on understanding the balance within religion, avoiding extremes and dogmas. "They wish you would disbelieve as they disbelieved, and then you would be the same."

"The bitter truth is that European civilization adorned corruption with a veneer of sophistication, making it more palatable and camouflaging its repugnant aspects that were once shunned by the hypocrites. This allowed those who previously forbade it to now accept it, giving rise to what's known as "corruption of the virtuous."

"Consequently, moral foundations were jolted by these events. As societal customs were scoffed at, people questioned the validity of their old traditions, leading them to adopt new customs aligned with their preferences. This created a clash of norms.

"The second shock stemmed from personal freedom, permitting individuals to express their desires, whims, and opinions without conforming to group morals. Thus, freedom became synonymous with seeking change, daring criticism, and flaunting desires in front of the media.

Despite these challenges, a positive outcome emerges: freeing minds from the shadows of myths and falsehoods that dominated the Middle Ages, while understanding the causes for the Arab renaissance's delay. Parallel progress in both correct thinking and faith does not hinder advancements, but rather facilitates the efforts of reformers, allowing Muslims to reconcile their minds and consciences, bridging the gap between science and religion. Have we now come to comprehend why the Arabs lagged behind?"

Also:

"Following the announcement of the adjournment of the first session of the seventeenth legislative chapter of the National Assembly by Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun, the focus shifts to the government's role," columnist **Muhammad Al-Ruwaihel** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"The parliament has collaborated closely with the government, endorsing four significant laws within a span of under two months.

"Additionally, a coordinating committee has been established to facilitate agreement on laws and proposals. Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf has garnered substantial popular support, alongside a parliamentary majority unlike any enjoyed by a president in political history. This majority is expected to facilitate smoother progress towards desired reforms, economic advancement, and resolution of fundamental and complex issues.

"Primary among these issues are the enhancement of the healthcare system, the refinement of education, housing provisions, addressing demo-

graphic concerns, resolving the Bedoun situation, accelerating infrastructure improvements, economic management, and anti-corruption measures, among other long-standing challenges. It's important to acknowledge that past unresolved matters were not the fault of the prime minister or his government. However, the responsibility to address them now rests squarely with them.

"This is a crucial duty that cannot be delayed, particularly with the backing of both parliamentary and popular support. A conducive atmosphere for cooperation and stability exists, creating an opportune time to bring these matters to a close and usher in development and prosperity.

"As the first session adjourns, the government holds the ball. Making deliberate and sensible decisions that improve citizens' lives, such as adjusting salaries and alleviating burdens, will increase its popularity and safeguard against lurking opponents who have lost influence and decision-making control due to recent anti-corruption measures.

"In Arabic, "Al-Mushramah" signifies that the government now has the ball in its court. Decisions concerning citizens' well-being and the easing of their hardships lie within its jurisdiction.

"By working in tandem with citizens, the government can apply pressure on representatives, foster cooperation, and achieve political stability. Successfully addressing these issues will signify a victory in the battle for reform, in alignment with the goals articulated in the Amir's speech, delivered by the Crown Prince in June of the previous year.

"Should the government proceed in this direction, it will accomplish its initial objective, proving its mettle against opponents' objectives. The question is: Will it rise to the occasion?"



"In previous articles, I talked about the importance of constructive cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities, because it is vital in moving forward with development projects that are supposed to be active even under the worst circumstances," columnist **Mefarah Al-Enzi** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"It is well known that the world today is advancing so rapidly that we can only understand it through our accelerated progress and prosperity and the pace of the civilized world.

"The world today has become dependent on industrial and technological development and progress, making it go a long way in the field of artificial intelligence that is either beneficial to humanity or poses a threat, depending on its use in peace or war.

"As for us, we have to discover and understand it in order to employ it in the service of the country and its citizens in peace or war.

"This gigantic scientific progress that exists in some countries can be understood only by raising the educational level as much as possible, and then we can begin to explore everything going on around us in terms of civilizational progress.

"It is noticeable these days that the rules of the political, military, economic, social and religious games have completely changed and become a hybrid with the technological, industrial, digital and intellectual progress which inundated smart phones and computers.

"This helps in reading the intellectual pattern and exploiting it in terms of 'entering' into the thoughts and convictions of the targeted segments of society, especially children and women, and then achieving all the goals that these international parties want.

"It was clear over the past years that development, progress and prosperity achievements were completely paralyzed due to the absence of positive cooperation between the two authorities. Certainly, cooperation is the appropriate basis for the two authorities and the nation to move forward together."



"It is obvious that the current government is committed to bringing about radical changes in the administrations of government institutions, companies and agencies, in which smart and honest people are appointed to replace those who looted and destroyed the government business sites entrusted to them," columnist **Sami Al-Nisf** wrote for **Annahar** daily.

"Everyone is aware that governments have announced forbidding ministers and officials in gray periods from obtaining even a mattress which costs no more than a few Kuwaiti dinars.

"Therefore, the first and most effective move is to maintain the sanctity of public funds in order to prevent the administrations of these institutions, companies and government agencies from signing long-term contracts at the last minute that will implicate those who come after them and prevent them from achieving goals - foremost of which is the conversion of government institutions into profitable entities. In this manner, they become an added value, rather than a burden on public funds.

"Apparently, one of the reasons behind the desire of some corrupt administrations that lack honesty and competence to conclude million or billion Kuwaiti dinar deals before leaving office is personal gain in a country where many believe there is accountability only for the commissions and bribes they reap, while catastrophic losses continue even after they leave office."

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary



KUNA photo

Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during the security meeting.

Interior minister chairs security meeting

'Apply law to everyone, implement security plans against violators & wanted persons'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13, (KUNA): Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, has instructed the ministry's leaders to maintain the implementation of security strategies aimed at apprehending lawbreakers and individuals with outstanding warrants. He emphasized the need for equal enforcement of the law for all individuals.

This directive was issued through a press release from the General Department of Security Relations and Media. In a security meeting held on Sunday, chaired by Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, several assistant under-

secretaries were in attendance. The meeting also included the participation of Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior. This meeting is part of the routine gatherings with ministry leaders to analyze the most recent security developments within the country.

Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid expressed his appreciation for the security establishment's leaders and discussed the ongoing security situation within the country with the assistant undersecretaries. They also reviewed the devised plans in this regard, and Sheikh Talal offered insights to en-

hance measures addressing any negative occurrences.

Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of physical presence in the field, urging enhanced efforts, increased cooperation, and seamless coordination among all security sectors. He issued specific instructions and guidance to ensure the precision and thoroughness of their efforts.

He conveyed his confidence in the Ministry of Interior staff's capability to fulfill their designated responsibilities and encouraged them to sustain their commitment, efficiency, and preparedness at the same high level.

CID personnel nab 2 expats for running pharmacy sans license

Man cheats woman of KD 8,000

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: Personnel from the Criminal Investigation Department of Criminal Investigation have arrested two Asian expats for running a pharmacy without a license, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Directorate-General of Drugs Control said CID men have seized large quantities of medicines and medical devices from the suspects.

The sources said when the men were confronted they admitted to the charges filed against them. They have been referred to the concerned authority.

Woman cheated: A young woman has filed a complaint at a police station in Jahra Governorate against a young man who allegedly deceived and deluded her into marriage, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to the complainant, the young man turned off his telephone and ignored all her attempts to communicate with him after she gave him KD8,000.

A security source told the daily that the woman, who is in her 30s, provided the Interior Ministry with information about a person of unspecified nationality who promised to marry her and that he did not have the money to propose to her, so he asked for KD8,000 from her.

2,203 complaints: The Ministry of Public Works received a total of 2,203 complaints through hotline number 150 in July 2023, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The daily obtained a copy of the statistics stating that Jahra Governorate registered the highest number of complaints with 502, followed by Farwaniya with 473, the Capital with 386, Ahmadi with 274, Hawally with 182 and Mubarak Al-Kabeer with 85.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transportation handled 125 complaints; while the Sanitary Engineering Sector dealt with 135 complaints.



Al-Rai photo One of the expats arrested for running unlicensed pharmacy.



The ambassador with Minister Almutairi.

Indian envoy calls on Info minister

The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika called on the Information Minister of the State of Kuwait H.E. Abdulrahman B. Almutairi. Focus of the discussions was

on deepening cultural and media cooperation, including participation in cultural events, museum cooperation, media exchanges, tourism potential etc.

News in Brief

Al-Kandari reinstated: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr Jassim Al-Astad has reinstated Eng Muhammad Al-Kandari as Director of the Technical Office, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Dr Al-Astad nullified Article Two of Administrative Resolution number 725 of 2021 and Ministerial Resolution number 5 of 2021.

Request to supply power: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has started receiving requests for the supply of electricity in Suburb N11 in

Mutlaa Residential City as per the schedule, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Appointment okayed: The Cabinet has approved the appointment of Eng Manal Al-Asfour as Deputy Director General of Kuwait Municipality for Urban Planning and Structural Planning Affairs with the rank of Assistant Undersecretary, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Fahd Al-Shula will issue the necessary ministerial decision once the decree on the appointment of Al-Asfour is published in the Official Gazette.

Kuwait moves

Continued from Page 1

In the same context, health sources told the daily that the authority applies strict procedures to ensure health and safety, and internationally approved technical regulations and Gulf standard specifications, revealing a strict mechanism to ensure that no products that may have been damaged during the process of transportation are supplied to outlets for distribution.

The sources indicated that all food products imported to the country are

subject to laboratory examination, to ensure their suitability for human consumption, and their conformity with the approved standard specifications and that they are free of any pollutants or harmful substances before declaring their suitability for sale.

The source added, after the arrival of the shipments, the authority makes a temporary release, according to which the person concerned is allowed to transfer the contents of the shipment from the port of entry to a place under his control, such as warehouses, in exchange for a pledge not to dispose of any part of it, except after the final release of the shipments that is taken

by the Imported Food Administration of the PAFN, after ensuring that the incoming food conforms to the requirements, technical regulations and standard specifications, and after coordinating with the concerned authority, such as customs.

The sources indicated that, according to the recent decisions, PAFN carries out all the necessary activities, which the state undertakes to ensure the safety and quality of food, during production, circulation, storage, processing, distribution, sale with the intention of dealing with it, importing and exporting, and ensuring its suitability for human consumption.



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Social media plays pivotal role in disseminating latest milestones

Cleanliness campaign achieves goal of raising community awareness

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13, (KUNA): Saud Al-Dabbous, the Acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality, expressed his satisfaction on Sunday regarding the successful outcome of the national hygiene campaign titled "Our Home Deserves It" that was initiated by the municipality. This campaign effectively raised awareness within society through both field activities and media coverage, particularly concerning cleanliness and adherence to related regulations.

mental human right. Al-Dabbous underlined the significance of individual contributions toward maintaining public cleanliness, as these contributions are pivotal for societal development. This joint effort ensures the provision of a safe, clean, and sustainable environment. He acknowledged the active engagement of the government, private sector, cooperative entities, and civil society institutions in supporting the "Our Home Deserves It" campaign.

Campaign

This campaign spanned two months and encompassed all six governorates.

He noted that the campaign's launch coincided with a heightened commitment across various sectors and governorate branches to work diligently and earnestly. This commitment translated into swift and effective responses to various complaints, thus leaving a substantial impact and underscoring the campaign's efficacy.

Speaking at the campaign's closing ceremony on behalf of Fahd Al-Shoula, the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Affairs, Al-Dabbous emphasized the crucial role that upholding public cleanliness plays. He highlighted that this responsibility is shared by every citizen and resident, as a clean environment is a funda-



Group photo of all participants.

Furthermore, Al-Dabbous high-

lighted the campaign's role in bolstering community confidence in Kuwait Municipality's personnel and work teams throughout the governorates. He commended the

extensive cooperation extended by the Kuwaiti media, which significantly contributed to broadcasting the campaign's activities and Kuwait Municipality's efforts.

The media's coverage on official social media accounts played a pivotal role in disseminating the latest campaign developments and milestones.



KUNA photos The acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality honors the participants.

Ministry signs several contracts in preparation for new academic year

Private cleaning companies instructed to hire workers

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: In light of the intensification of efforts by the concerned authorities in the Ministry of Education to complete preparations for the new academic year 2023/2024, informed educational sources affirmed the readiness of the ministry in terms of cleaning, guarding, correspondence and transportation contracts, reports

Aljarida daily.

They explained that the ministry worked on preparing cleaning contracts and signing with companies that won tenders a while ago. It also prepared guard contracts and started implementing them. The ministry extended correspondence contracts until the end of April 2024, and measures are currently being taken to create new contracts. The ministry also signed contracts with one of the winning companies for school bus tenders. These contracts will be implemented in three educational zones - Capital, Hawally and Mubarak Al-Kabeer. Work is currently underway to speed up the completion of other contracts with a company to implement bus contracts in three other areas - Ahmadi, Jahra, and Farwaniya.



Ministry of Education cleaning contracts.

The concerned authorities in the ministry are striving to speed up the completion of the remaining contracts for buses, as the delay in signing contracts is due to the objection of some oversight authorities. Coordination is currently underway with these authorities to speed up the completion of contracts and their signing with the winning companies to ensure the continued provision of service to students in the educational stages, which is covered by the provision of bus services, especially for girls' schools in the intermediate and secondary stages.

In addition, the ministry instructed private cleaning companies to hire workers and start cleaning schools from August 15. About eight cleaners will be provided for each school according to the contracts concluded with the companies.

The sources indicated that the public education sector directed school principals to form a team to follow up the maintenance and cleaning work before the start of the school year, adding that coordination with them is carried out by the competent authorities and companies to ensure the completion of work and the start of the school year without any obstacles.

Future leaders

Youth Council supports 'creativity & innovation'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: The official spokesperson for the Kuwaiti Youth Council, Latifa Al-Fraih, affirmed that the state pays great attention to youth as they are the country's wealth and priceless capital, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Al-Fraih explained that the celebration of International Youth Day this year comes in light of the government's interest in youth and empowering them in various fields, so that they are able to assume responsibilities as well as embrace and support creativity and innovation, as youth are the future leaders of countries.

She went on to say, that Kuwaiti youth provide a model for active participation in the development and progress of society through the activities and events they provide, which receive wide attention from the government. This culminated in the State of Kuwait achieving first place in the Arab World and 27th globally in the Youth Development Index, according to the Commonwealth Association.

In this context, she added, the Constituent Youth Council carried out the infrastructure work in its first year for youth work by completing the internal regulations, and completed a number of projects, most notably the youth diplomacy project, which contributed to linking Kuwaiti youth with youth organizations in the Arab region and the world, as well as a project to study the scourge of drugs, which is scheduled to be completed within days, and the report of the Sustainability Committee, which developed youth recommendations to promote environmental sustainability, and the "Manassa" committee, which launched a technical platform to receive youth opinions and proposals.

Al-Fraih concluded her statement by saying, "the Kuwaiti Youth Council received special attention from the political leadership and His Highness the Prime Minister, who expressed his keenness to communicate directly and directed his ministers to receive members and take their suggestions and views, reaffirming more steps to support the nation's human wealth, as well as supporting creativity and innovation and qualifying future leaders.

Initiative aims to combat high prices

Union of Co-op Societies plans to introduce a new online platform

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: Abdel Wahhab Al-Faris, the President of the Federation of Consumer Cooperative Societies, has revealed the federation's plan to introduce a new online platform on its official website. This platform will encompass a comprehensive list of prices for over 139,000 authorized products available within cooperative societies. The objective is to offer transparent access to accurate pricing information for all items within these societies, reports Al-Rai daily.

Al-Faris conveyed to the Kuwait News Agency on this Sunday that this platform's purpose is to provide individuals with the ability to review the officially approved products offered by cooperative societies. Additionally, if anyone comes across an item that is priced differently from what has been sanctioned, they can promptly notify the Consumer Protection Agency.

This initiative is aimed at enhancing transparency and ensuring that consumers have easy access to reliable pricing details for the products they intend to purchase from cooperative societies.

Al-Faris emphasized the Union of Cooperative Societies' commitment to combating high prices and unwarranted price hikes within cooperative society branches. This commitment is driven by a desire to safeguard the interests of the middle and working classes while bolstering their purchasing power.

Al-Faris clarified that the union's efforts are not directed against citizens who operate as merchants. Instead, their primary goal is to stabilize prices, ensuring affordability for all consumers. He underscored the realities of an open economy and suggested that those unable to maintain a consistent supply of goods should exit the market, thereby allowing competent individuals with quality products to take their place.

Al-Faris reiterated that the union will withhold its support for any price increases until official state data indicates a reduction in the inflation rate. He stressed the importance of a comprehensive and equitable approach to managing the effects of inflation on both citizens and merchants.

The Union of Cooperative Societies, according to Al-Faris, conducts regular inspections of member associations to identify any products not sanctioned by the federation. He urged these associations to refrain from endorsing or selling unapproved items until they are officially incorporated into the federation's system.

Al-Faris noted that the federation routinely communicates with associations, urging them to adhere to circulars and ministerial decisions that maintain market stability. Additionally, they encourage alternative markets to align their prices with the federation's standards to counteract exorbitant price increases.

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Education

Chatbots have become go-to source for cheating

AI cheating: Colleges seek to 'ChatGPT-proof' assignments

NEW YORK, Aug 13, (AP) — When philosophy professor Darren Hick came across another case of cheating in his classroom at Furman University last semester, he posted an update to his followers on social media: "Aaaaand, I've caught my second ChatGPT plagiarist."

Friends and colleagues responded, some with wide-eyed emojis. Others expressed surprise.

"Only 2?! I've caught dozens," said Timothy Main, a writing professor at Conestoga College in Canada. "We're in full-on crisis mode."

Practically overnight, ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence chatbots have become the go-to source for cheating in college.

Now, educators are rethinking how they'll teach courses this fall from Writing 101 to computer science. Educators say they want to embrace the technology's potential to teach and learn in new ways, but when it comes to assessing students, they see a need to "ChatGPT-proof" test questions and assignments.

For some instructors that means a return to paper exams, after years of digital-only tests. Some professors will be requiring students to show editing history and drafts to prove their thought process. Other instructors are less concerned. Some students have always found ways to cheat, they say, and this is just the latest option.

An explosion of AI-generated chatbots including ChatGPT, which launched in November, has raised new questions for academics dedicated to making sure that students not only can get the right answer, but also understand how to do the work. Educators say there is agreement at least on some of the most pressing challenges.

■ Are AI detectors reliable? Not yet, says Stephanie Lagini Fiore, associate vice provost at Temple University. This summer, Fiore was part of a team at Temple that tested the detector used by Turnitin, a popular plagiarism detection service, and found it to be "incredibly inaccurate." It worked best at confirming human work, she said, but was spotty in

identifying chatbot-generated text and least reliable with hybrid work.

■ Will students get falsely accused of using artificial intelligence platforms to cheat? Absolutely. In one case last semester, a Texas A&M professor wrongly accused an entire class of using ChatGPT on final assignments. Most of the class was subsequently exonerated.

■ So, how can educators be certain if a student has used an AI-powered chatbot dishonestly? It's nearly impossible unless a student confesses, as both of Hicks' students did. Unlike old-school plagiarism where text matches the source it is lifted from, AI-generated text is unique each time.

In some cases, the cheating is obvious, says Main, the writing professor, who has had students turn in assignments that were clearly cut-and-paste jobs. "I had answers come in that said, 'I am just an AI language model, I don't have an opinion on that,'" he said.

In his first-year required writing class last semester, Main logged 57 academic integrity issues, an explosion of academic dishonesty compared to about eight cases in each of the two prior semesters. AI cheating accounted for about half of them.

Modify

This fall, Main and colleagues are overhauling the school's required freshman writing course. Writing assignments will be more personalized to encourage students to write about their own experiences, opinions and perspectives. All assignments and the course syllabi will have strict rules forbidding the use of artificial intelligence.

College administrators have been encouraging instructors to make the ground rules clear.

Many institutions are leaving the decision to use chatbots or not in the classroom to instructors, said Hiroano Okahana, the head of the Education Futures Lab at the American Council on Education.

At Michigan State University, faculty are being given "a

small library of statements" to choose from and modify as they see fit on syllabi, said Bill Hart-Davidson, associate dean in MSU's College of Arts and Letters who is leading AI workshops for faculty to help shape new assignments and policy.

"Asking students questions like, 'Tell me in three sentences what is the Krebs cycle in chemistry?' That's not going to work anymore, because ChatGPT will spit out a perfectly fine answer to that question," said Hart-Davidson, who suggests asking questions differently. For example, give a description that has errors and ask students to point them out.

Evidence

Evidence is piling up that chatbots have changed study habits and how students seek information.

Chegg Inc., an online company that offers homework help and has been cited in numerous cheating cases, saw its shares tumble nearly 50% in a single day in May after its CEO Dan Rosensweig warned ChatGPT was hurting its growth. He said students who normally pay for Chegg's service were now using ChatGPT's AI platform for free instead.

At Temple this spring, the use of research tools like library databases declined notably following the emergence of chatbots, said Joe Lucia, the university's dean of libraries. "It seemed like students were seeing this as a quick way of finding information that didn't require the effort or time that it takes to go to a dedicated resource and work with it," he said.

Shortcuts like that are a concern partly because chatbots are prone to making things up, a glitch known as "hallucination." Developers say they are working to make their platforms more reliable but it's unclear when or if that will happen. Educators also worry about what students lose by skipping steps.

"There is going to be a big shift back to paper-based tests," said Bonnie MacKellar, a computer science professor at St.

John's University in New York City. The discipline already had a "massive plagiarism problem" with students borrowing computer code from friends or cribbing it from the internet, said MacKellar. She worries intro-level students taking AI shortcuts are cheating themselves out of skills needed for upper-level classes.

"I hear colleagues in humanities courses saying the same thing: It's back to the blue books," MacKellar said. In addition to requiring students in her intro courses to handwrite their code, the paper exams will count for a higher percentage of the grade this fall, she said.

Roman Takizawa, a sophomore at Colorado College, has never heard of a blue book. As a computer science major, that feels to him like going backward, but he agrees it would force students to learn the material. "Most students aren't disciplined enough to not use ChatGPT," he said. Paper exams "would really force you to understand and learn the concepts."

Takizawa said students are at times confused about when it's OK to use AI and when it's cheating. Using ChatGPT to help with certain homework like summarizing reading seems no different from going to YouTube or other sites that students have used for years, he said.

Other students say the arrival of ChatGPT has made them paranoid about being accused of cheating when they haven't. Arizona State University sophomore Nathan LeVang says he doublechecks all assignments now by running them through an AI detector.

For one 2,000-word essay, the detector flagged certain paragraphs as "22% written by a human, with mostly AI voicing."

"I was like, 'That is definitely not true because I just sat here and wrote it word for word,'" LeVang said. But he re-wrote those paragraphs anyway. "If it takes me 10 minutes after I write my essay to make sure everything checks out, that's fine. It's extra work, but I think that's the reality we live in."

Creative shopping helps

Six tips on how to cut back-to-school costs

By Craig Joseph
NerdWallet

When Meghan Lakata's kids return to school from summer break, they'll have new (to them) clothes and supplies. But thanks to some creative shopping habits, the mother of two isn't stressed over back-to-school spending.

Lakata, a pre-K teacher in Maryland, uses tools like state sales tax holidays, cash-back apps and buy-nothing groups to keep back-to-school costs down. Bulk purchases help, too.

"I have the two kids and there's a lot of overlap in what they need," Lakata says. "So if I can get like a big 48-count of pencils, I'm going to do that."

If back-to-school spending forecasts for 2023 are correct, every little bit of savings might help. According to the National Retail Federation, families with children in kindergarten through 12th grade will spend a record \$41.5 billion on back-to-school shopping this year. An additional \$94 billion will be spent on back-to-college shopping. Those figures make the back-to-school season the second-largest spending period of the year, after holiday shopping.

Here's how to keep more money in your pocket this season.

1. Sales tax holidays

Search your state tax administrator's website to see whether your state is one of several with a tax-free holiday. If so, in-person and online shopping for items like clothing, books, school supplies and electronics during the designated time frame could provide a 4%-7% pad to your budget.

"I'm planning on getting the kids a couple of new items they want and school supplies that week," Lakata said, adding that she'll save 6% without sales tax.

These holidays generally run in July or August. Lakata says this is the time to buy supplies, not only for the tax exemption, but because items are cheaper.

"That box of crayons that's 50 cents in August is going to be like \$2.50 in December," she says. "They drop the prices so much for back-to-school, but we feel like we can't get the same deals if we restock midyear. You're going to pay a lot more."

2. Student discounts on electronics

Electronics top the planned back-to-school expenditure list in 2023, with an estimated \$38 billion to be spent for K-12 and college students, according to the NRF survey.

College students can qualify for "education pricing" from companies like Apple, Microsoft, Samsung and Dell. This could lead to savings of 10%-20% or more on that new laptop, tablet, phone or monitor.

Plan to purchase directly through the manufacturer to get the discount; purchases at big box stores like Best Buy or Walmart generally won't count.

3. Buy-nothing groups

An estimated \$25 billion will be spent on back-to-school and back-to-college clothing this season, the NRF says. But that could be an expense to offset with your local buy-nothing group.

Buy-nothing groups offer a way for individuals to rehome and gift goods to one another, with no buying, selling or bartering. You can find your community on the Buy Nothing Project website.

"I try to get as much as I can on the buy-nothing Facebook page," Lakata says. "I got an entire wardrobe of clothes for my kids. I don't buy new clothes often for them, just because you can get them for free."

4. Credit card bonuses

Many new credit cards come with a sign-up offer that can earn you hundreds of dollars worth of cash-back or travel rewards. Since you'll have to spend a certain amount of money in a specific window to earn those rewards, periods of high spending can be the perfect time to get a new card and offset some of your costs.

But aim to pay your statement in full each month. If you carry a balance, the interest can negate any rewards.

5. Buy in bulk

Whether it's lunch food or school supplies, buying in bulk can lead to big savings - but have a plan. Overpurchasing can erode the savings you made elsewhere.

Lakata says she looks at the school supply list and identifies things both her kids, in 4th and 5th grades, will use; then she buys those items in bulk at a discount.

"Composition notebooks can often be cheaper in a multipack, and last year both kids needed them," she said. "Or plastic folders. I can get a six-pack of those instead of buying them individually and save money."

6. Cash-back apps and websites

Whether you shop in store or online, a few extra steps - or clicks - can get you a percentage back on your purchases.

Apps like Receipt Hog and Ibotta provide cash back for in-store purchases if you scan your receipt. Once the purchase is verified, cash back or rewards redeemable for gift cards will be deposited into your account.

"After any shopping trip, I take a quick picture of my receipt using cash-back apps," Lakata said. "Those little points add up."

If you prefer shopping online, visit a cash-back portal like Top Cashback or Rakuten before you pay. Such portals offer percentages back at a multitude of websites, as long as you click through from the portal first. Your bank or credit card may also offer bonus rewards for shopping through their websites. (AP)



A photo from the event.

Kuwait Challengers Toastmasters Club embraces hybrid meetings

Kuwait Challengers Toastmasters club (part of Toastmasters International) is one of the oldest clubs in Kuwait. The club has embraced Hybrid meetings to empower its members to gain critical skills in public speaking and leadership.

Toastmasters International is a non-profit organization with over 280,000 active members in 144 countries. Members meet twice a month to practice

delivering speeches in front of an audience. Every member is assigned a mentor to guide them in their journey. Each speech delivered at the club is evaluated by an experienced Toastmaster and feedback is provided for further improvement.

Kuwait Challengers meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month in Kuwait City (Al-Mulla Exchange Building). Members have the option to

join at the physical location or connect online via ZOOM.

The club held their 480th meeting on 7th August 2023. The meeting was attended by members and guests from around the globe.

To learn more about Toastmasters, visit www.toastmasters.org, or contact Priscilla (99658838) for further details.



Photos from the event.



Association honors advisory committee members

ASSP Kuwait holds annual general body meeting

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: The American Society of Safety Professionals, Kuwait Chapter (ASSP-KC), a non-profit organization certified under ISO 9001, is dedicated to advancing Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) practices in the Industrial sectors and social groups in Kuwait.

The 23rd General Body Meeting took place on July 6th, 2023, at Al Wataniya Club, Fintas, Kuwait. The core committee had a well-executed plan to hold a hybrid meeting, ensuring seamless facilitation for members who were unable to attend due to various reasons, such as being on vacation or on duty. During the meeting, Abul Eftam, the Secretary, presented the annual report for 2022-2023, and Syed Kashif Vali presented the financial report. The event also introduced the newly elected officers, as well as the executive and advisory committee members. Over 100 esteemed members attended the ceremony.

Eng. Fadhel Al-Ali, Chairman of the ASSP Kuwait Chapter, delivered a welcoming speech, praising the

accomplishments of the office bearers in 2022-23. He expressed sincere gratitude to KNPC for providing the venue for the event.

Mazharuddin R Shaikh, the President of ASSP Kuwait Chapter, addressed the Annual General Body Meeting, expressing his honor to lead such a dedicated group of safety (HSE) professionals committed to promoting excellence in occupational safety and health. He proudly stated that the chapter has been actively advocating for improved safety regulations and standards in Kuwait. The chapter has engaged with government bodies, industry stakeholders, and the public to emphasize the importance of occupational safety and health and organized highly professional development conferences, contributing to a positive impact on the HSE landscape of the nation. He extended his thanks to all chapter members for their dedication and support, encouraging everyone to continue working together to create a safer and healthier Kuwait.

The event included a recognition ceremony to appreci-

ate all advisory committee members, Strategy & Implementation Advisory Committee, ASSP Region IX (Global) Leaders, Technical Committee, Mentors, committee heads, deputies, Sub-committee members & Special Contributors. In the closing ceremony, Safdar Ali Khan, the incoming president, emphasized the importance of staying updated with new technologies, emerging risks, and changing regulatory landscapes. He encouraged active participation in events, workshops, and committee activities, fostering a culture of lifelong learning to elevate safety (HSE) standards across Kuwait.

The program was hosted and sponsored by Falcomplus, with prizes distributed to winners of the HSE Champ Quiz and a display of the HSE brochure. The venue was sponsored by KNPC Wataniya Club, and feedback and suggestions were shared by ASSP members and the advisory body.

The meeting concluded with gifts, goodies for children, coupons, certificates, and mementos presented to all members, followed by a dinner.

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
UAE	- DFM	+0.38	4,064.31	PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	-0.68	6,405.91
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+0.84	32,473.65	EGYPT	- EGX 30	-0.30	17,710.20
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+1.26	48,442.58				
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+1.22	11,424.12				

Business

US CPI unchanged at 0.2% on a month-to-month basis

Shocking economic growth in the British economy

By National Bank of Kuwait

United States

FOMC Debate

"The debate is really about: Do we need to do another rate increase? Or not?" That is the question on everyone's mind as markets anticipate the next move by the Federal Reserve, and those are also the exact words to come out of New York Fed President John Williams' mouth in an interview with the New York Times. The debate remains between the Fed's policymakers as to whether to continue increasing interest rates or to pause for the time being. Williams believes that as the US economy "has moved to an environment already where the underlying inflation rate has come down quite a bit," it is arguable that inflation could reach 2.5% at the end of the year, on an annual basis, a fraction short of the Fed's intended 2% inflation target. On the other hand, Fed Governor Michelle Bowman, a supporter of the previous interest rate hike in July, believes that high inflation along with continued economic growth are enough for her to believe that "additional increased will likely be needed to lower inflation to the [Fed's] goal." The debate continues to heat up between Fed officials, with each aiming to get the public to side with their respective reasoning while the market anxiously waits for the next meeting.

CPI and PPI

The latest US consumer price inflation report came in at 0.2% on a month-to-month basis for both the headline and core figures, matching last month's figure. On an annual basis, headline inflation rose 3.0% in June, marking the smallest year-on-year gain since March 2021. This was reciprocated in July's year-on-year CPI figure of 3.2%, indicating that inflation is indeed slowing down. Meanwhile, the producer price index rose 0.3% last month, after economists had predicted a 0.2% increase. This increase was driven by strong services, with portfolio management fee accounting for 40% of the rise in services. Encouraging numbers are the trend with US data at the moment, and that could not have come at a better time

- The debate remains between Fed officials on the necessity of another interest rate increase.
- US CPI is unchanged at 0.2% on a month-to-month basis.
- The US producer price index slightly rose by 0.3% last month.
- The latest number of Americans filing for unemployment claims was at 248K.
- Production continues to decline in Germany.
- The British Economy grew by 0.2% for the second quarter of 2023.
- The Chinese economy enters a state of deflation with both CPI and PPI within negative territory.

for Fed doves whom are looking for an end to the vicious interest rate hike cycle.

Unemployment Claims

The latest number of Americans filing for unemployment claims was at 248K, an increase from the previous reading of 227K, and even greater than the expected number of 231K, marking a four-week high. Moreover, the month of July saw an increase of 187K jobs, allowing the unemployment rate to fall from 3.6% in June to 3.5%.

Prelim UoM Consumer Sentiment

The Michigan Consumer Sentiment Index came in at 71.2, a slight decrease from July's 71.2 figure. Consumers showed belief in the current economic conditions, with the sub-index showing an increase to 77.4 from 76.6 previously. As for consumers' belief in year-ahead inflation expectations, there was a decrease from 3.4% to 3.3%. However, the expectations for long-term inflation remained at 2.9%.

The US dollar index ended the week at 102.842

Europe

German Industrial Production

Over in the Eurozone, the latest German Industrial

Production figure came in at -1.5% on a monthly basis, way below the expected 0.4% drop. This decline was largely facilitated by a drop in both the automotive and construction industries. With the euro zone's largest economy in decline, markets are now expecting the ECB to stop adding more pressure onto the economy, and in fact pause interest rate hikes in their next meeting.

The Euro ended the week around the same level it started, with the EUR/USD currency pair closing at 1.0944.

United Kingdom

Growth Domestic Product

In what is certain to be the week's most surprising news, the British economy grew by 0.2% for the second quarter of 2023, creating a major shock for economists with expectations being at 0.0% growth. This increase was largely aided by the monthly growth of 0.5%, which was noticeably greater than the expected 0.2% increase. These figures will almost certainly give the Band of England something to think about. If members of the BoE had been thinking of pausing interest rate hikes, they will most definitely have a tough time implementing it, especially with the latest data to come

out. The GBP/USD currency pair ended the week at 1.2694

Asia-Pacific

China CPI and PPI

The Chinese economy continues to struggle in its quest for revival, and the latest data to come out adds more pressure on the government to release more direct stimulus. The latest CPI data shows a 0.3% fall on an annual basis, slightly above the expected 0.4% decrease, marking the first annual decline since February 2021. Meanwhile, the Chinese producer price index fell by 4.4% on a year-on-year basis, after it had fallen 5.4% the previous month, marking the tenth consecutive month of decline. As both PPI and CPI are within negative territory and in a state of deflation, it is evident that the pressure continues to mount on the authorities to take more steps in supporting the economy.

The USD/CNY currency pair ended the week higher, last trading at 7.2367

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30740.

Rates - August 13th, 2023

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.1016	1.0927	1.1064	1.0944	1.0700	1.0110	1.0996
GBP	1.2751	1.2664	1.2818	1.2694	1.2400	1.2900	1.2703
JPY	141.79	141.51	145.03	144.96	142.00	147.00	142.901
CHF	0.8717	0.8689	0.8782	0.8767	0.8600	0.9000	0.86861

Yes, inflation is down but the Inflation Reduction Act does not deserve credit

Other factors cited as reasons for the drop

WASHINGTON, Aug 13, (AP) - Even President Joe Biden has some regrets about the name of the Inflation Reduction Act: As the giant law turns 1 on Wednesday, it's increasingly clear that immediately curbing prices wasn't the point.

While price increases have cooled over the past year - the inflation rate has dropped from 9% to 3.2% - most economists say little to none of the drop came from the law.

"I can't think of any mechanism by which it would have brought down inflation to date," said Harvard University economist Jason Furman, who added that the law could eventually help to lower electricity bills.

Alex Arnon, an economic and budget analyst for the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Wharton Budget Model, offers a similar assessment.

"We can say with pretty strong confidence that it was mostly other factors that have brought inflation down," he said. "The IRA has just not been a significant factor."

That shouldn't come as a surprise. When the Inflation Reduction Act was proposed, the Congressional Budget Office said its impact on inflation would be "negligible."

So why the name? It may ultimately help to hold down prices in the future - and it fit the politics of the moment.

The law was proposed shortly after the American public learned that consumer prices were climbing upward at the fastest pace in four decades. Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York had been holding private talks about Biden's agenda and put forth the name Inflation Reduction Act once they had a deal. Biden pledged at the time that it would "reduce inflationary pressures."

The law is now at the core of Biden's pitch to voters going into the 2024 presidential campaign. But with inflation less of a pressing concern, the president is putting more emphasis on its provisions aimed at combating climate change, creating jobs and lowering people's health care bills.

"I wish I hadn't called it that because it has less to do with reducing inflation than it has to do with providing alternatives that generate economic growth," Biden said Thursday at a fundraiser in Utah, adding that he still believes that with the law "we're literally reducing the cost of people being able to meet their basic needs."

While the law may not have crimped inflation over the past year, it could well do more in that regard going forward, since it just now is starting to be implemented. Along with the CHIPS Act, there are also signs that the Inflation Reduction Act helped to stimulate roughly \$500 billion in corporate announcements to invest in new factories. This has potentially helped to strengthen the



In this file photo, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., surrounded by House Democrats, signs the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 during a bill enrollment ceremony on Capitol Hill in Washington, Aug. 12, 2022. The one-year anniversary of the Inflation Reduction Act being signed into law is on Wednesday, Aug. 16, 2023. (AP)

job market despite efforts to bring down the inflation that many economists believed would pull the United States into a recession. That recession - as Biden predicted - has not materialized.

Even though the law did not immediately reduce inflation, it appears to have done little to cause prices to explode upward as Republicans had claimed it would. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said last August that Biden's agenda would push inflation upward, only to have the rate fall over the past year.

"They'll raise inflation higher," McCarthy told Fox News in an interview. "They'll spend more money, which brought us into this problem."

Biden, on his three-state western swing this past week, emphasized to donors and voters how the law addresses climate change and promotes the creation of jobs as the economy moves toward renewable energy.

"It has nothing to do with inflation," Biden said at a New Mexico fundraiser. "It has to do with the \$368 billion, the single-largest investment in climate change anywhere in the world, anywhere. No one has ever spent that. And it's beginning to take hold."

If it wasn't the IRA that deserves the credit, what did cause inflation to tumble?

Economists are listing three big reasons:

-Oil and gasoline prices fell from last year's peak. Gas prices had spiked 60% in June 2022 from a year earlier, caused in large part by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But gas prices steadily fell until this January, when they began to climb without having returned to their earlier peak.

-The Fed aggressively raised its benchmark interest rate, which made

it more expensive to borrow and slowed demand that had been pushing up prices. The Fed's rapid hikes have nearly doubled average mortgage rates, pushing down existing home sales. Home prices have also declined slightly in the past year, which can put downward pressure on rental costs. Other interest-rate sensitive industries, particularly autos, have also seen prices fall after sharp increases during the pandemic.

-The supply chain kinks that caused shortages coming out of the pandemic got unsnarled. A measure of supply chain difficulties constructed by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York has fallen below even pre-pandemic levels as shipping costs have declined.

Republican lawmakers and some economists blamed last year's high inflation on the administration's \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief as being excessive, yet any impact of that on inflation also appears to have now waned.

"The big moves in inflation are primarily global shocks," said Kristin Forbes, an economist at MIT and a former member of the Bank of England's interest-rate setting committee. "Those are the primary drivers, but not the only ones. What the Fed has done has also contributed, without a doubt."

Biden administration officials have said that their actions contributed to lower inflation. By releasing oil from the U.S. strategic reserve, they say, they reduced the financial pain at the gas pump. The administration also created a task force to improve U.S. port activity and supply chains. The White House also stayed quiet on Fed rate hikes, giving the central bank the independence to work without political pressure.

Biden has been careful not to declare an outright victory against

inflation, as it's still higher than the Fed's 2% target. But the White House says the cost savings from the Inflation Reduction Act are coming as the law is getting enacted.

Tax credits will reduce the cost of installing rooftop solar panels by 30%, which will in turn lower monthly electricity bills. Tax credits also make it more affordable to install a heat pump to control a home's central air, possibly trimming energy bills by \$1,000 annually. There are other tax credits for energy efficient doors and windows as well as new insulation.

Electric utilities using the tax credits for renewable energy will pass roughly \$8.2 billion in savings to their customers. People can defray the costs of buying a new electric vehicle with a \$7,500 tax credit.

The law also has measures related to health care. Biden has often said in speeches that Medicare recipients will have the monthly cost of their insulin capped at \$35. Starting in 2025, there will be a \$2,000 limit on out-of-pocket prescription drugs that will save 19 million people on Medicare an average of \$400 annually. The CBO estimated that people enrolled in Medicare Part D, which involves prescription drugs, will have their personal costs lowered by \$25 billion in 2031.

Taken together, the law could help protect the U.S. economy against the rising oil costs and broken supply chains that triggered the most recent bout of high inflation.

"The IRA will be a big plus for the economy in the long-run as it reduces the economy's reliance on fossil fuels," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. "It will make the economy less vulnerable to spiking oil prices, which have contributed to nearly every recession since World War II."

Special counsel appointment cited

Biden's re-election bid faces 'vulnerabilities'

NEW YORK, Aug 13, (AP) - As he gears up for re-election, President Joe Biden is already facing questions about his ability to convince voters that the economy is performing well. There's skepticism about the 80-year-old president's ability to manage a second term. And on Friday, Biden faced a fresh setback when Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed a special counsel to probe his son, Hunter.

Biden's challenges pale in comparison with his predecessor and possible future rival, Donald Trump, who is facing three criminal indictments, with additional charges expected soon. But the appointment of the special counsel was nonetheless a reminder of the vulnerabilities facing Biden as he wages another election campaign in a deeply uncertain political climate.

There was little immediate sign that Garland's decision meaningfully changed Biden's standing within his party. If anything, it underscored the unprecedented nature of the next election. Rather than a battle of ideas waged on the traditional campaign trail, the next push for the presidency may be shaped by sudden legal twists in courtrooms from Washington to Delaware and Miami.

"Prior to Trump, this would be a big deal," New Hampshire Democratic Party Chair Ray Buckley said of Friday's announcement. "Now, I don't think it means anything. Trump has made everyone so numb to this stuff."

Referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan, Buckley added, "Because of how dismissive MAGA America is to the very real crimes of Trump and his family, it has numbed the minds of swing voters and Democratic voters or activists who would normally be fully engaged and outraged."

Polling has consistently shown that Democratic voters were not excited about Biden's reelection even before Garland's announcement.

Just 47% of Democrats wanted Biden to run again in 2024, according to an AP-NORC poll conducted in April. Democrats' enthusiasm for Biden's presidential campaign has consistently trailed behind Republicans' enthusiasm for Trump's: 55% of Republicans said they wanted Trump to run again in the AP-NORC poll. And Biden's approval rating in

polling by Gallup stood at 41% on average over the last three months. Only Jimmy Carter notched a lower average rating in Gallup's polling at this point in his presidency, while ratings for Trump were about the same at 43%.

Garland announced Friday that he was naming David Weiss, the Trump-appointed U.S. attorney in Delaware, as the special counsel in the Hunter Biden investigation. It comes as plea deal talks involving tax and gun charges in the case Weiss had already been probing hit an impasse.

The appointment of a special counsel ensures that Trump will not stand alone as the only presidential candidate grappling with the fallout of a serious criminal investigation in the midst of the 2024 campaign season.

Of course, the cases are hardly equal in the context of the next presidential election.

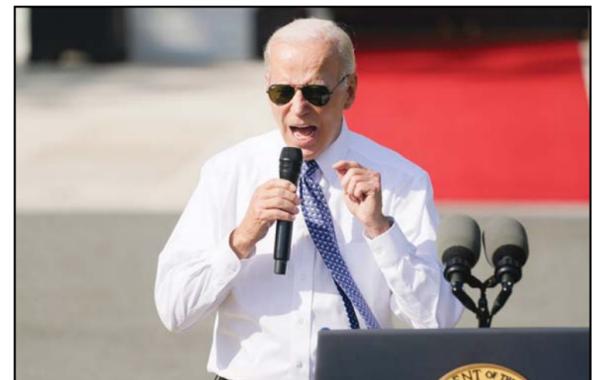
There is no evidence that President Biden himself has committed any wrongdoing. Meanwhile, Trump has been charged in a plot to undermine democracy for his actions leading up to the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol.

He's also facing separate charges for refusing to turn over classified documents after leaving the White House and financial crimes in New York related to a hush money case involving a porn star. And Georgia prosecutors are investigating whether Trump broke state laws by interfering in the 2020 election.

Still, Republicans were hopeful that the new special counsel may ultimately shift attention away from Trump's baggage while bolstering conservative calls to impeach the Democratic president, a proposal that has divided the GOP on Capitol Hill, which has long sought evidence linking Hunter Biden's alleged wrongdoings to his father.

Rep. James Comer of Kentucky, the Republican chair of the House Oversight Committee, has already obtained thousands of pages of financial records from various members of the Biden family through subpoenas to the Treasury Department and various financial institutions as part of a congressional probe. He released a statement Friday accusing Garland of "trying to stonewall congressional oversight."

Comer vowed "to follow the Biden family's money trail."



In this file photo, President Joe Biden speaks about the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 during a ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Sept. 13, 2022. (AP)

First half profits amount to KWD0.1mn

Kamco Invest reports net profit of KWD1.7m for Q2 of '23

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, announced its financial results for the period ended 30 June 2023. The Company returned to profitability during the second quarter reporting a net profit of KWD1.7mn (EPS: 4.87 fils), a 60% increase compared to Q2 2022 profits which stood at KWD1.0mn (EPS: 3.04 fils).

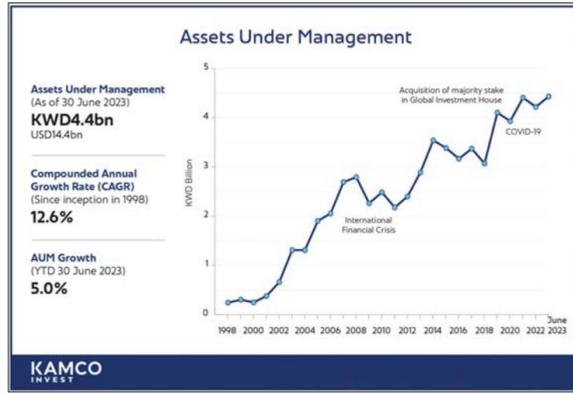
For the six-months period, the Company recorded a net profit of KWD0.1mn (EPS: 0.3 fils) compared to KWD4.6mn during the same period in 2022 (EPS: 13.57 fils). Total revenue dropped to KWD8.5mn (6M 2022: KWD14.0mn), reflecting the impact of reduced business activity stemming from negative market sentiments, elevated interest rates, rising inflation, and concerns about a possible recession, in addition to market performance.

Assets under management grew by 5% to reach USD14.4bn as of 30 June 2023, attributed to new money raised in various products and solutions during the period. Equity funds and managed portfolios continued to outperform their respective benchmarks. Al-Durra Islamic Fund was ranked amongst the top performing Islamic equity funds in Kuwait. Similarly, Kamco Investment Fund and the Kamco Premier Market Index Fund were also ranked amongst

the top performing conventional equity funds in Kuwait. Kamco Investment Fund received three awards from Refinitiv Lipper for 2023 in recognition of the fund's exceptional performance and risk-adjusted returns.

The Private Equity team continued to undergo plans to exit legacy assets held by the private equity funds and work on new initiatives and products. The team is also building transactions pipeline for private equity deals and is evaluating a healthy pipeline of deal flows which resulted in the Company's participation in the Pre-IPO Series C investment round raised by Floward, the go-to online flowers and gifts destination operating in 37 cities in nine countries across MENA and UK.

The Investment Banking team continued to advise their clients with several transactions in the pipeline expected to close during 2023 across Equity Capital Markets, Debt Capital Markets, and Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A). The team successfully managed transactions on behalf of its clients that amounted to over KWD0.8bn during the first half of the year. During the second quarter, the team successfully acted as the issuance advisor and subscription agent to the capital increase for a Kuwaiti bank and Joint Lead Manager on the largest KWD bond issuance in the real estate sector. In recognition of its performance



within Investment Banking, Kamco Invest was awarded the prestigious "Best Debt Bank in the Middle East" by Global Finance.

First Securities Brokerage Company, Kamco Invest's brokerage arm, continued to strengthen its competitive position and attracted new clients through its online trading platforms. The decrease in liquidity on Boursa Kuwait was reflected in the company's trading value and commission income during the period in comparison to last year.

Regional offices continued to expand their presence in their markets by improving their services and contributing more to the company's core businesses, particularly in asset management. The Company made two significant announcements in Saudi Arabia during the first quarter, which included the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer to spearhead the expansion efforts in the Saudi market, as well as plans to relocate its offices to the prestigious King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD) in Riyadh.



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer

Total assets as of 30 June 2023 stood at KWD129.1mn, whereas shareholders' equity stood at KWD59.3mn. The Company also enjoys a strong financial position and a "BBB" long-term credit rating and "A3" short-term rating with stable outlook by Capital Intelligence in their latest review in May 2023.

Commenting on the results, Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer, said, "We continue to navigate through an intricate economic

landscape marked by elevated interest rates, inflation, and potential recession risks. Our growth in assets under management and the performance of our funds and managed portfolios reflect our ongoing pursuit of effective client-centric strategies. As we move forward, our focus remains firmly on leveraging our core strengths and expertise to overcome market challenges and deliver sustainable growth for all our stakeholders."

INVESTMENT STRATEGY & RESEARCH

KAMCO INVEST

Oil Market Monthly Report August 2023

Oil market remains tight as prices march towards 9-month high...

Oil prices roared towards the USD 90/b mark following consistent gains since the fourth week of July-2023. The most recent support to prices came from record demand from Asian refiners for US crude deliveries amid obstacles that included high temperatures impeding pipeline deliveries to ports in the US. Reports of continued buying of Saudi crude oil by China also supported prices. Both WTI and Brent traded in larger backwardation indicating scarce supplies in the near term. Voluntary cuts from OPEC+, Saudi Arabia and Russia have supported oil prices since last month. Nevertheless, an increase in crude stocks in the US as well as revision to Chinese economic data indicating a slower-than-expected recovery in demand in China and globally partially offset the overall rally.

Data on weekly crude oil inventories in the US showed a record drawdown during the week ended 28-July-2023 by 17 million barrels led by higher refinery runs coupled with increase crude oil exports, especially to Asian buyers. However, the report had minimal impact on prices as it coincided with the downgrade of sovereign ratings for the US by Fitch ratings. In addition, the cancellation of US government's plan to buy 6 million barrels of oil for its strategic reserves also affected prices. Meanwhile, the most recent report on crude oil inventories showed an increase of 5.9 million barrels in the US to reach 445.6 million barrels led by a slump in exports that more than offset higher refinery runs. Higher production and imports also supported the inventories.

On the demand front, China falling into deflation for the first time in two years alerted oil watchers on the prospects of future demand emanating from the world's second biggest oil buyer. A recent report from China showed crude oil imports sliding to a six-month low level to the smallest volume since January-2023, according to Bloomberg. Another report from ESAI energy said that the impact of a recent typhoon in China has affected mobility and economic activity and as a result, 2H-2023 demand in China is not expected to beath demand during 1H-2023. On the other hand, a rate pause in India generated hopes of higher demand in the country. The most recent monthly oil demand data from India showed consumption increasing by 1.9% y-o-y to 18.1 million tons but a seasonal pattern during the monsoon resulted in a 6.6% decline as compared to the previous month.

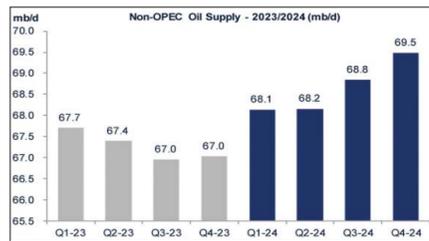
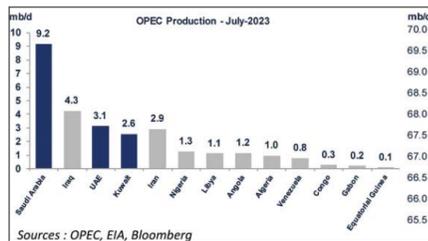
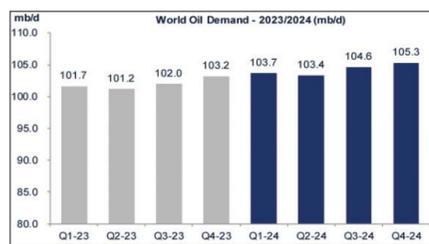
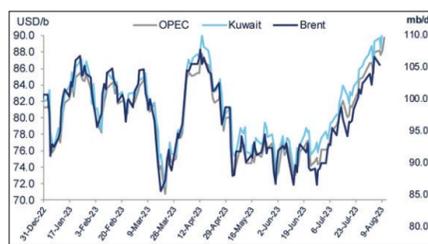
Meanwhile, supplies tightened even further this month when Saudi Arabia announced that it would extend the ongoing additional cuts of 1 mb/d into September-2023 with an option to cut even deeper and prolonged further if needed provided. This was added by Russia that announced that it would extend its exports curb until next month. The cuts are expected to counter the impact of a slowdown in US due to recessionary pressures as well as the lackluster data coming out of China.

Oil prices

Crude oil futures traded around 9-month high levels last week after reports pointed to a tight oil market as supplies remained constrained due to OPEC+ cuts and voluntary curbs announced by Saudi Arabia and Russia, while demand remained strong in Asia for crude oil and in the US for refined products. An IEA report also showed demand remained at a record in June-2023 and is expected to rise further. Brent futures traded around the USD 87/b level after seeing consistent gains since 20-July-2023 resulting in seventh weekly gain last week. The attack on Russian oil tanker during the last weekend also helped. The latest inflation reading in the US also indicated positive tones for the oil market with the smallest m-o-m growth in consumer prices and core consumer prices during July-2023 with an increase of 0.2%. The y-o-y headline inflation increased by 3.2% sending up prices of stock futures while bond yields declined as market now expects another rate pause by the US Fed in its next meeting.

The EIA report showed US crude production reaching the highest since March-2020 with one of the biggest increase of 400 tb/d during the week ended 4-August-2023 to reach 12.6 mb/d. However, rig count data from Baker Hughes continued to show decline for the eighth consecutive week to reach 525 rigs during same week after declining by 5 rigs from the previous week.

Oil price data showed one of the longest running positive streak in prices for OPEC crude basket. As a result, average monthly OPEC crude oil basket prices witnessed the biggest m-o-m growth in July-2023 with an increase of 7.8% to average at USD 81.1/b. The gains in average Brent crude oil was slightly smaller at 7.2% to average at USD 80.1/b while Kuwait crude grade saw a gain of 7.8% to average at USD 82.4/b during July-2023. The trend was also reflected in the consensus estimates for crude oil as well as EIA forecasts. The latest estimates from Bloomberg showed price forecast raised marginally for Q3-2023 and Q1-2024 while slashing it slightly for the last quarter of the year. The EIA, in its monthly short term energy outlook, raised Brent crude oil forecast for 2023 to USD 82.62/b from USD 79.34/b and for



Average Crude Oil Prices, USD/b	Jun-2023	Jul-2023	Change (USD)	YTD Avg. 2022	YTD Avg. 2023
OPEC Reference Basket	75.2	81.1	5.9	105.8	79.6
Arab Light	77.2	83.5	6.3	106.4	81.5
Basrah Light	73.0	78.8	5.8	104.0	76.8
Bonny Light	74.2	79.9	5.7	110.5	79.8
Djeno	67.3	72.6	5.4	101.1	72.2
Es Sider	74.2	79.7	5.5	108.8	78.8
Girassol	76.3	82.1	5.8	111.2	81.1
Iran Heavy	75.3	81.5	6.2	105.5	79.8
Kuwait Export	76.4	82.4	6.0	106.6	80.9
Meray	57.4	63.3	5.9	81.9	59.9
Murban	75.5	80.8	5.3	104.6	80.0
Rabi	74.3	79.6	5.4	108.1	79.2
Saharan Blend	75.2	80.3	5.1	111.7	80.6
Zafiro	75.3	81.5	6.2	110.7	80.1
Other Crudes					
Brent	74.7	80.1	5.4	108.5	79.7
Dubai	74.7	80.3	5.6	102.1	79.1
Isthmus	66.3	72.6	6.3	100.3	68.4
LLS	72.6	78.4	5.8	103.6	77.4
Mars	70.7	77.2	6.5	98.9	74.2
Minas	72.6	77.5	4.9	102.9	77.7
Urals	56.6	65.1	8.5	86.5	55.7
WTI	70.3	75.9	5.5	101.7	74.9
Differentials					
Brent/WTI	4.4	4.2	(0.2)	6.9	4.8
Brent/LLS	2.1	1.7	(0.4)	4.9	2.3
Brent/Dubai	0.0	(0.2)	(0.3)	6.5	0.6

Source: OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report - August-2023

Production ('000 b/d)	Jun-23	Jul-23	Change	Capacity	Spare Capacity
Total OPEC-13	28,690	27,790	-900	34,100	6,310
Saudi Arabia	9,960	9,150	-810	12,000	2,850
Iraq	4,180	4,250	70	4,800	550
UAE	3,100	3,120	20	4,200	1,080
Kuwait	2,570	2,550	-20	2,820	270
Iran	2,950	2,920	-30	3,830	910
Nigeria	1,390	1,260	-130	1,600	340
Libya	1,150	1,100	-50	1,200	100
Angola	1,110	1,150	40	1,200	50
Algeria	960	970	10	1,060	90
Venezuela	780	780	0	750	-30
Congo	260	260	0	300	40
Gabon	210	200	-10	220	20
Equatorial Guinea	70	80	10	120	40
Total OPEC-12	24,510	23,540	-970	29,300	5,760

Source: Bloomberg

2024 the agency raised its forecast to USD 86.48/b from USD 83.51/b.

World oil demand

World oil demand growth forecast for 2023 was kept unchanged from the last month at 2.4 mb/d in OPEC's latest monthly report with demand expected to reach 102.0 mb/d this year. However, there were adjustments to quarterly data for the year. According to the report, demand data for Q1-2023 was revised upwards for the OECD America and OECD Europe regions. This increase was completely offset by downward revisions to data for Europe and Other Asia for Q2-2023. For 2024, world oil demand growth was

also left unchanged at 2.2 mb/d with total demand expected to reach 104.3 mb/d.

Near term forecast for oil demand in the US showed continued decline in inflation which is expected to support consumption. Q3-2023 demand in the US is expected to remain strong mainly led by the increased mobility and air travel during the summer holiday season resulting in higher demand for gasoline and jet kerosene. However, a slide in manufacturing activity is expected to impact demand for industrial fuels, mainly diesel. The trend is expected to continue during Q4-2023 with higher demand for transportation fuels offset by lower demand for industrial fuels. For the OECD Europe region, a similar trend is visible as weak

manufacturing activity is expected to continue led by slow economic activity and supply chain bottlenecks during 2H-2023. In terms of products, demand for jet fuel and gasoline is expected to remain positive while diesel and petrochemical feedstock is expected to remain weak.

In the non-OECD region, the recent data from China painted a subdued picture for demand during the rest of the year. The CPI for July-2023 showed a y-o-y decline in China. Trade data showed a steep decline in imports last month while exporters reduced exports resulting in piling domestic inventory. Moreover, the increase in sale of EVs has pulled peak oil demand in China by two years to 2023 from 2025, according to an official from Sinopec. Industry consultant Mysteel OilChem added that demand for diesel and gasoline are unlikely to reach pre-pandemic levels this year as EVs continue to challenge future demand.

World oil supply

Global liquids production once again recorded a decline in July-2023 after seeing an increase after four months in June-2023. According to preliminary data, global oil supply dropped by 0.2 mb/d m-o-m to reach an average of 100.7 mb/d. The decline was solely led by a decline in production in OPEC while non-OPEC liquids production witnessed an increase. Non-OPEC production increased by 0.7 mb/d during the month to average at 73.4 mb/d while OPEC production declined by more than 800 tb/d resulting in a 80 bps decline in the groups market share that reached 27.1%.

Non-OPEC liquids supply growth forecast for 2023 underwent an upward revision in OPEC's latest monthly report. Supply is now expected to grow by 1.5 mb/d this year to reach 67.3 mb/d as compared to a growth of 1.4 mb/d expected in the previous month's report. The revisions mainly included downward revisions to supply forecast for Canada (-50 tb/d) and Azerbaijan (-11 tb/d) that was partially offset by upward revisions to supply forecast data for Russia (+100 tb/d), the US (+50 tb/d) and Brazil (+15 tb/d).

Supply forecasts for 2024 was kept unchanged with an expected growth of 1.4 mb/d to average at 68.7 mb/d. However, upward revision was made to supply data for Canada by 20 tb/d that was fully offset by an equivalent downward revisions to supply forecast for the US. The data for the US reflects continues decline in oil rig count. A Bloomberg report on 2Q earnings of oil drillers may keep supplies tight by limiting offshore drillings in order to push day rates higher.

OPEC oil production & spare capacity

Oil production by the OPEC witnessed the steepest decline in more than three years during July-2023 that came after the first increase in production in four months during June-2023. Average production during the month reached a 21-month low level of 27.8 mb/d, according to Bloomberg data, resulting in a m-o-m decline of 0.9 mb/d. The production data from OPEC secondary sources showed a similar decline of 836 tb/d with production averaging slightly lower at 27.3 mb/d. Saudi Arabia booked the biggest decline in production by almost a million barrels as it implemented the voluntary output cuts. The Kingdom produced at little over 9 mb/d level, the lowest output rate in 25 months. Further cuts were recorded by Libya and Nigeria that were partially offset by higher production in Iraq, according to Bloomberg. OPEC secondary sources showed Angola, Iran, Iraq and Venezuela also increasing production during the month.

Following Saudi Arabia's announcement to slash production by 1 mb/d until September-2023, a Bloomberg report showed that global oil market could see a supply deficit of 2 mb/d during Q3-2023. However, despite the cuts, China is expected to increase its crude imports from Saudi Arabia by around 40% through term contracts next month as a significant refiner, Rongsheng Petrochemical Co., will start a new supply contract. According to Bloomberg, refiners are expected to receive around 52 million barrels in oil cargoes during September-2023 from around 37 million barrels expected in August-2023.

Oil production in Iraq increased by 40 tb/d during the month to 4.2 mb/d despite the stoppage in northern exports via Turkey. Recent reports have shown that Iraq's Federal government and Kurdistan region are working on drafting an oil and gas law eyeing to resolve the dispute over oil production and revenue sharing between the two regions.

With the ongoing production cuts, the OPEC expects a slight decline in demand during Q4-2023 coupled with an increase in supplies from outside the OPEC would lower the demand for OPEC crude. That said, the IEA said in its monthly report that an average of 29.8 mb/d is need from the OPEC during the last quarter of the year to balance the market as compared to around 27.9 mb/d the group produced during July-2023, resulting in a shortfall of around 2 mb/d during Q4-2023.



Rayan Kazerooni

HSBC appoints head of Global Private Banking in Kuwait

HSBC has launched onshore wealth management advisory services in Kuwait, expanding HSBC's Global Private Bank offering in the country as part of HSBC's commitment to provide investment and wealth management solutions to support clients to achieve their ambitions. Rayan Kazerooni has been appointed Head of Global Private Banking for HSBC Kuwait, joining HSBC from the Dubai branch of Bank of London and the Middle East plc, and he will work closely with HSBC's established Global

Private Banking centres in the UAE, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Singapore to grow the bank's business in Kuwait. This represents another milestone in the growth of HSBC Global Private Banking, which has expanded coverage in key markets – including the launch in the past 12 months of new operations in the UAE, India and Mexico – to enhance the bank's services and support for wealthy individuals, families, and entrepreneurs.

HSBC in the MENAT region: HSBC is the largest and most widely represented international banking organisation in the Middle East, North Africa and Türkiye (MENAT), with a presence in nine countries across the region: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates. In Saudi Arabia, HSBC is a 31% shareholder of Saudi Awwal Bank (SAB), and a 51% shareholder of HSBC Saudi Arabia for investment banking in the Kingdom. Across ME-

NAT, HSBC had assets of US\$71bn as at 31 December 2022. HSBC Global Private Banking provides banking, investment and wealth management solutions for individuals, families, business owners, entrepreneurs and investors. Their ambitions and the decisions they make today can shape the world of tomorrow and we help our clients grow, manage and preserve their wealth, now and across generations.

'Results translate our efforts to enhance our companies' efficiency ...'

KIPCO reports a net profit of KD 10.4m for H1 of 2023

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: KIPCO – Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – announced a net profit of KD 10.4 million (US\$ 33.9 million) for the first six months of 2023, an increase of 89% from the KD 5.5 million (US\$ 17.9 million) reported for the same period of 2022.



Sheikha Dana

Earnings per share for the first half of 2023 came to 1.5 fils (US\$ 0.5 cents), compared to 0.8 fils (US\$ 0.3 cents) for the same period last year.

In the second quarter of 2023 (the three months ended June 30, 2023), the company reported a net profit of KD 5.2 million (US\$ 16.9 million), an increase of 136% from the KD 2.2 million (US\$ 7.2 million) reported for the corresponding

quarter of 2022. Consolidated revenue for the second quarter came to KD 595.5 million (US\$ 1.9 billion), an increase of 81% from KD 329.2 million (US\$ 1.1 billion) reported for the same period in the year 2022.

KIPCO's consolidated assets stood at KD 11.9 billion (US\$ 38.8 billion) at the end of the first six months of 2023, up 4% from KD 11.4 billion (US\$ 37.1 billion) reported at year-end 2022.

Sheikha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, said:

"The results for the first six months of the year have been positive and are driven by the excellent results posted by our foreign banking operations, foodstuff and logistics businesses and oil field services.

This quarter's outcome translates our ongoing efforts to enhance the efficiency and performance of our portfolio companies with the aim of creating greater value for our shareholders."

About KIPCO:

Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – KIPCO – is a holding company that focuses on investments in the Middle East and North Africa. Its strategy of acquiring, building, scaling and selling companies in the MENA region has worked successfully for over 30 years.

KIPCO's main business sectors are financial services, energy, media, real estate, manufacturing and education. KIPCO's financial service interests include holdings in commercial banks, insurance companies, asset management and investment banking.

Beechcraft T-6C Texan II Integrated Training System is revolutionizing Tunisian Air Force pilot production

World's premier military flight trainer

WICHITA, Kan., Aug 13, (Business Wire): Textron Aviation Defense announced the arrival of the eighth Beechcraft T-6C Texan II aircraft in support of Tunisian Air Force pilot production at No. 13 Squadron at Sfax Air Base in Tunisia. Textron Aviation Defense was previously awarded a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) contract for eight T-6C Texan II advanced military training aircraft, in-country field service and logistics support representa-

tives, program management support, interim contractor support for the first year, training for pilots and maintenance professionals, spare engines, spare parts and aircraft support equipment.

Delivery of Cutting-Edge Training Aircraft Expands U.S.-Tunisian Security Cooperation (Credit: Tunisian Ministry of Defence)

The Beechcraft T-6C Texan II is designed and manufactured by Textron Aviation Defense LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Textron Aviation Inc., a Textron Inc. (NYSE:TXT) company.



Zain Kuwait Municipality Recognition 2023

Sustainability at forefront of priorities

Kuwait Municipality recognizes Zain for supporting 'environ' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: Zain was recognized by the Kuwait Municipality for effectively contributing to raising positive environmental awareness in the community. The recognition came during the special ceremony held to honor the support of all parties that contributed to Kuwait Municipality's recent awareness campaign aimed at promoting public sanitation laws and encouraging the community's support to keep Kuwait clean. The event came under the patronage of H.E. Minister of State for Municipality Affairs and Minister of State for Telecommunications Affairs Fahad Al Shula.

During the event, Acting Director General of Kuwait Municipality Soud Al Dabbous recognized Zain, represented by Corporate Affairs Department Manager Hamad Al Musaiibeh, for the company's support to the Municipality's recent nationwide awareness campaign. Zain's support and contribution to the campaign reflected the private sector's active role in partnering with the public sector to achieve the nation's various developmental goals.

Zain contributed to the campaign by promoting awareness messages and introducing its customer base, the biggest in Kuwait, to the campaign's goals. Such goals included familiarizing citizens and residents with public sanitation laws, encouraging the public to support the Municipality's efforts in maintaining the health and hygiene of the nation's areas and governorate, as well as removing construction, agricultural, organic and inorganic waste. The campaign also aimed at in-

forming the public of the Municipality's schedules for collecting waste, how to correctly prepare waste for collection, encouraging general hygiene practices, encouraging the public's support, and shedding light on the continuous efforts exerted by Kuwait Municipality's personnel to serve the community.

Zain puts environmental sustainability at the forefront of its priorities, as its social message seeks to create a culture of sustainability within the community by advocating practices like reducing consumption, recycling, using renewable sources of energy, and more.

The company recently launched a sustainable community initiative to recycle used books and papers by providing containers in 10 different locations at Zain megastores and in Sabah Al Salem University City in Shadadiya. This initiative aimed at raising social awareness about the crucial topic of environmental sustainability, as well as providing real-world solutions to encourage the community to adopt positive practices that contribute to lessening the effects of climate change. The campaign coincided with the end of the academic year, where tons of books and papers are thrown away in waste bins.

In one of its recent sustainable projects, the company also presented its very own recycled shopping tote bags made entirely out of Zain's outdoor billboard ads. The bags were offered to customers for their shopping needs in place of plastic bags to encourage sustainable shopping and raise environmental awareness.

Big fashion getting bigger: Parent of Coach to buy Versace owner Capri in \$8.5b deal

NEW YORK, Aug 13, (AP): Tapestry, the parent company of luxury handbag and accessories retailer Coach, is buying the owner of fashion brands including Michael Kors, Versace and Jimmy Choo, Capri Holdings.

Big fashion has been getting even bigger through a spate of acquisitions as U.S. players seek more sway in Europe. The approximately \$8.5 billion (7.7 billion euro) deal puts Tapestry in a better position to do just that in going-toe with rivals like LVMH and Kering.

Tapestry Inc., whose brands also include Kate Spade and Stuart Weitzman, said Thursday that the combined company had global annual sales of more than \$12 billion (10.9 billion euro) and has a presence in more than 75 countries. Tapestry has a market cap of nearly \$10 billion (9.1 billion euro), while Capri's is around \$4 billion (3.6 billion euro).

Once completed, the new entity will be the fourth largest luxury company in the world, with a combined market share of around 5.1% of the luxury goods market, according to research firm GlobalData PLC. In the Americas, the company will become the second largest luxury player behind LVMH, with a combined share of 6% of the luxury goods market, GlobalData said.

"The combination of Coach, Kate Spade, and Stuart Weitzman together with Versace, Jimmy Choo, and Mi-

chael Kors creates a new powerful global luxury house," Tapestry CEO Joanne Crevoiserat said in a prepared statement.

Capri Holdings Ltd. shareholders will receive \$57.00 (51.9 euro) per share in cash.

"By joining with Tapestry, we will have greater resources and capabilities to accelerate the expansion of our global reach while preserving the unique DNA of our brands," Capri Chairman and CEO John Idol said.

French luxury conglomerate Kering reached a deal in July to buy a 30% stake in Italian fashion house Valentino for 1.7 billion euros from Qatari investment firm Mayhoola. Under the agreement, Kering, which owns Gucci, has the option to buy 100% of Valentino no later than 2028.

Kering had also tried to snap up Tom Ford, but beauty company Estee Lauder wound up reaching a deal with the luxury goods maker.

LVMH, meanwhile, purchased famed jewelry company Tiffany in 2021 after a back-and-forth between the two companies over the agreement.

Buying Capri is a strategic move for Tapestry on many levels.

Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData, said the acquisition will "create an American fashion giant that, while not quite as prestigious or large as its European counterparts, would wield a significant influence in the luxury market."



KIB and Alsawan Group representatives

KIB inks deal with Alsawan to offer financing service to customers seeking 'overseas' medical treatment

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 13: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced signing an agreement with Alsawan Group, a pioneer in the medical tourism field, to offer customers the best financing service for treatment abroad.

The value of this new service can go up to KD 25,000, with flexible, easy and convenient installments for up to a maximum of 36 months.

Commenting on the new service, Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, Head of Central Sales at KIB, said: "KIB is the first bank in Kuwait to offer this type of non-profit financing for people seeking medical treatment overseas.

"Providing this service stems from the Bank's constant keenness to offer flexible banking solutions that comply with Islamic Sharia and meet the medical needs of its customers.

"Indeed, KIB is always committed to being a true partner for customers in all aspects of life, in line with its main 'Bank for Life' slogan."

Al-Shammari added that customers can make use of the financing offer by applying through KIB's innovative digital platform PayTally, visiting Alsawan Group, calling the Bank's call center, or stopping by one of its many branches across the country.

Alsawan Group has an extensive network of collaborations with the finest hospitals and health resorts around the world, notably in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Germany and Turkey.

The company has representatives that are specialized in this field across all these countries,



Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, Head of Central Sales at KIB

when it comes to financing services, by elevating it to a more comprehensive and integrated level, in a manner that suits their modern lifestyle and meets their aspirations.

About KIB Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is a bank that operates according to the Islamic Shari'ah, based in the State of Kuwait. Incorporated in 1973, and originally known as Kuwait Real Estate Bank, KIB made the transition to its current Islamic operating model in 2007. In 2018, KIB embarked on a new phase of its journey full of innovation and development.

As part of its new strategic direction, the Bank focuses on offering a next-level customer experience under the slogan: "Bank for Life".

Through a network of branches spread across the State of Kuwait, KIB offers a broad range of banking products and services, as well as innovative digital banking solutions in line with international best standards. As part of its duty towards the community, the Bank also encompasses a leading social responsibility program that aims at positively impacting all members of the community through a wide range of impactful initiatives and activities.

Today, KIB has taken concrete steps in implementing its new strategic objectives. The Bank has cemented its role as a key player in the local banking industry and has continued to maintain its strong financial performance; enabling it to be globally recognized for its strong credit rating and financial position.

which ensures customers receive the best levels of service and follow up on their treatment plan with ease.

Furthermore, Alsawan Group is considered one of the leading premium service providers within KIB's PayTally Partners Program. It offers medical tourism services, translation, transportation to and from the airport, hospital reservations in accordance with the customer's needs and choices, and medical reports with an approved treatment plan.

It is worth noting that KIB aims to establish long-term strategic relationships and partnerships, in view of its responsibility towards its customers.

It also aims to enhance their banking experience, especially

The Conversation

Air travel is in a rut

Is there any hope of recapturing the romance of flying?

By Christopher Schaberg

Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis

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

Amelia Earhart broke a transcontinental speed record 90 years ago, in July 1933, by flying her signature red Lockheed Vega from Los Angeles to New Jersey in just 17 hours, seven and a half minutes. Earlier that year, Earhart had flown as an observer on a Northwest Airways winter flight across the US, testing the possibilities of a "Northern Transcontinental" route.

Because those early airplanes couldn't reach high altitudes, they weaved through dangerous peaks and the erratic weather patterns that mountain ranges helped create. One co-pilot remembers the journey as "seat-of-the-pants flying across the Dakota and Montana plains and through, over and around the Western mountain ranges."

How does air travel today compare? I've studied airplane technology, airport design and cultural attitudes toward air travel, and I've noticed how aspects of flying seem to have calcified over time.

Long-distance flight advanced rapidly between the 1930s and the early 1960s, shaving off the number of hours in the sky by half. But over the past 60 years, the duration of such flights has remained roughly the same. Meanwhile, the ecosystem of air travel has grown more elaborate, often leaving passengers squirming in their seats on the tarmac before or after flight.

Coast-to-coast air travel is in a rut - but there are still efforts to improve this mode of transit.

Transcontinental air journeys are clearly different 90 years after Earhart's record-breaking exploratory flights: Travelers now take such trips for granted, and often find them to be pure drudgery.

In 2018, travel blogger Ravi Ghelani reviewed in minute detail a United Airlines flight from Newark, New Jersey, to Seattle - roughly the same northern route that Earhart explored in 1933.

But for Ghelani, seated in first class, it wasn't the terrain or frigid temperatures that were the most cumbersome part of his adventure. It was a cheap complimentary blanket, which "barely qualified as one - it was very thin, very scratchy."

The dreaded blanket reappears in Ghelani's summary of his trip: "My main

qualm with this flight was the lack of a decent blanket - the tiny, scratchy blanket that was provided wasn't cutting it for the six-hour flight."

I can imagine Earhart rolling in her watery grave: "You zip across the continent in six hours and you complain about a scratchy blanket?"

Yet Ghelani's account of a mundane cross-country flight reveals a truth: Commercial air travel just isn't the adventure it was back in Earhart's time.

As one captain of a major US airline who regularly flies long routes told me, "Today jetliners fly across the country from Los Angeles to New York, or Boston to Seattle, full of passengers oblivious to the commonplace practice it has become."

This pilot compared coast-to-coast flights to "iPhones, microwaves or automobiles" - just one more ordinary miracle of modern life.

The high-risk adventure of air travel has been subdued, yet long flights today can paradoxically feel torturous.

As philosopher Michael Marder puts it in his 2022 book "Philosophy for Passengers": "When crew members wish passengers a 'pleasant journey,' I hear a dash of cruel irony in their words. How pleasant can the passenger experience be when you are crammed in your seat, with little fresh air, too hot or miserably cold, and sleep deprived?"

Update

I asked my colleague and frequent flier Ian Bogost about his experience of coast-to-coast trips, and his reply was illuminating: "The same trip seems to get longer every year, and less comfortable. There are reasons - consolidation, reduced routes, pilot and air-traffic labor shortages, decaying technical infrastructure - but it still feels like moving backwards." In spite of widespread attempts to update aircraft and modernize terminals, the vast system of air travel can seem cumbersome and outdated.

Recently at The Atlantic, reporter Amanda Mull wrote about the biometric screening company Clear, describing this firm's high-tech service to skip the ubiquitous toil of identity checks before flight, at the cost of surrendering some privacy and personal information. Mull concludes the reason more travelers will likely enroll in this service is that "traversing American airport security is simply that grim."

For Mull, the adventure of contemporary air travel isn't the destination, or even

the journey itself - it's what you must do to get through the airport.

Still, it's worth noting that the majority of the human population has never boarded an airplane; flying cross-country remains a relatively exclusive experience. For most people, the closest they'll get to a coast-to-coast flight is seeing a small white scratch across the sky, as another airliner makes its arc at 35,000 feet.

Coast-to-coast travel is no longer about breakneck speed or defying elemental odds, and Earhart's quests to push the limits of aviation couldn't be further from the bland routines of contemporary air travel. Nor does it involve people dressing to the hilt to step aboard a jetliner for the first time, with passengers stowing their fancy hats in spacious overhead bins.

Where are the new frontiers for transcontinental flight today?

One area of innovation is in a greener form of flight. Solar Impulse, a completely solar-powered plane, took two months to fly coast-to-coast in 2013. It averages a plodding 45 mph at cruising altitude. As The Associated Press reported: "Solar Impulse's creators view themselves as green pioneers - promoting lighter materials, solar-powered batteries, and conservation as sexy and adventurous. Theirs is the high-flying equivalent of the Tesla electric sports car." Solar Impulse was more recently reconfigured as a remotely piloted aircraft, with new experiments in long-distance solar flight underway.

The comparison of Solar Impulse to a Tesla is handy because a different extreme can be found in Elon Musk's company SpaceX. As part of the relentless development of its biggest vehicle, "Starship," SpaceX has advertised the possibility of "point-to-point" travel on Earth: for example, flying on a commercial rocket from Los Angeles to New York in 25 minutes. Never mind the physical tolls of a normal 19-hour flight; it's hard to imagine what such a brief yet fast trip would feel like, not to mention what sort of class divisions and bleak industrial launch sites such jaunts would rely on.

Get there as fast as possible, using as much fuel as necessary; or glide lazily along, powered by the sun, saving the planet. These are two starkly different visions of coast-to-coast flight, one a dystopian nightmare and the other a utopian dream.

In the middle, there's what most flying mortals do: wait in lines, board unceremoniously and be relieved if you get to your destination without too much discomfort or delay. (AP)

Elevates customer experience

Gupshup.io introduces FiLLi Cafe to WhatsApp

DUBAI, UAE, Aug 13: Gupshup.io, the leading global Conversational Engagement Platform has announced its collaboration with FiLLi Cafe, the renowned cafe chain in the UAE, to bring an unparalleled customer experience for its users on WhatsApp. FiLLi Cafe, celebrated for its iconic FiLLi Zafran tea and delectable offerings, will now be accessible through a dedicated WhatsApp bot, allowing tea aficionados across the UAE to explore the enticing menu, discover exclusive offers, and connect with the brand effortlessly.

With a simple click or text, UAE tea enthusiasts can now indulge in the flavorful world of FiLLi Cafe directly through WhatsApp.

By simply visiting <https://wa.me/971521231991?text=FiLLi+Cafe> or sending a message to +971 52 123 1991, UAE's tea lovers can effortlessly access the WhatsApp bot. This platform not only serves as a channel to explore the latest offers but also ensures that patrons are always in the loop with the brand's updates.

"We are incredibly excited to introduce this new chapter in FiLLi Cafe's journey. At FiLLi Cafe, our focus has always been on not just serving tea, but on creating memories and moments for our customers. As we look to the future, we're excited to continue pushing the boundaries of convenience and engagement," said Rafiq FiLLi, CEO and Founder of FiLLi Cafe.

Convenient

Gupshup's WhatsApp bot integration has made ordering from FiLLi Cafe more convenient than ever. Users can easily place online orders by getting redirected to the FiLLi Cafe website, ensuring a hassle-free experience from menu selection to finalizing their cravings. This innovative approach exemplifies FiLLi Cafe's commitment to enhancing customer convenience and satisfaction. Engagement is at the heart of FiLLi

Cafe's customer-centric approach, and the WhatsApp bot takes this engagement to new heights. The integration allows patrons to connect with FiLLi Cafe's vibrant social media presence and become part of a community of tea enthusiasts.

"Gupshup's mission has always been to enable businesses to engage with their customers in innovative and meaningful ways, and this partnership is a testament to that commitment. As technology continues to shape the way businesses interact with their audience, we believe this partnership exemplifies the future of customer engagement. We are excited to work with FiLLi cafe to bring their delightful offerings and immersive experiences on the WhatsApp platform," said Beerud Sheth, CEO and Co-founder of Gupshup.io.

Going ahead, FiLLi cafe plans to bring seamless ordering on WhatsApp for its tea-lovers in UAE, setting the stage for a truly revolutionary tea-ordering experience for its patrons. Gupshup's expertise in building Conversational Commerce journeys for several of its clients in India and abroad will support FiLLi Cafe in this journey.

Gupshup is the leading conversational engagement platform for marketing, commerce, and support automation. Gupshup's automation solutions enable 45,000+ brands across India, Latin America, Europe, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and the United States to deliver better customer experience, and increased revenue while saving costs. Citibank, AkzoNobel, Khan Academy, Unilever, MPL, Netflix, Flipkart, and Ola are a few of its leading clients. With a single messaging API for 30+ channels across voice, text, and chat, the conversational engagement platform powers over 10 billion messages per month. Valued at \$1.4 bn, the company has marquee investors such as Tiger Global, Fidelity Management and Research Co. LLC, and others on its cap table.

Lowering carbon emissions

Schneider expands e-vehicles 'fleet' in southern California

GREEN BAY, Wis., Aug 13: Schneider National Inc. (NYSE: SNDR), a premier multimodal provider of transportation, intermodal and logistics services, has announced the carrier is now running two Lonestar Specialty Vehicles battery electric terminal tractors, further advancing the company's commitment to lowering carbon emissions and expanding its electric fleet, now at a total of 94 vehicles.

The Lonestar S22 terminal electric tractors (also known as yard spotters in the industry) are used to move trailers at Schneider's Rancho Cucamonga, CA cross dock. The tractors replaced two diesel units.

Each tractor can run for an entire 24-hour period before needing to be recharged and a full charge takes an estimated hour and a half.

"Implementing these tractors is a massive achievement as we move toward operating zero emission vehicles at scale," said Schneider Vice President of Equipment Engineering Jake Vandelo. "Adding the units is part of our efforts to reduce the carbon footprint."

The new tractors will save an estimated 35 tons of CO2 per truck each year.

"Scaling an electrified fleet requires intensive preparation," said Lonestar President Jay Simmons. "Terminal tractors ensure the barrier to entry is smooth as they are either restricted to yard operations or very short shuttles. When charging is performed on breaks and shift changes in the yard, "range

anxiety" and other infrastructure complications associated with over the road vehicles are eliminated. Schneider's deployment in CA is nothing short of impressive, we are so excited to be a part of this success story and look forward to helping Schneider accomplish their future sustainability goals."

Schneider's collaboration with Lonestar is another essential investment to support the company's long-term sustainability goals and continuous growth of their electric fleet, now one of the largest in North America, to better the industry and the environment.

Transportation

Schneider is a premier provider of transportation, intermodal and logistics services. Offering one of the broadest portfolios in the industry, Schneider's solutions include Regional and Long-Haul Truckload, Expedited, Dedicated, Bulk, Intermodal, Brokerage, Warehousing, Supply Chain Management, Port Logistics and Logistics Consulting.

With over \$6.6 billion in annual revenue, Schneider has been safely delivering superior customer experiences and investing in innovation for over 85 years. The company's digital marketplace, Schneider FreightPower®, is revolutionizing the industry giving shippers access to an expanded, highly flexible capacity network and provides carriers with unmatched access to quality drop-and-hook freight - Always Delivering. Always Ahead.

To crack down on password sharing

Disney to boost prices for ad-free Disney+, Hulu streaming services

LOS ANGELES, Aug 13, (AP) - Walt Disney Co. CEO Bob Iger vowed to make its streaming services profitable via a planned October price hike on its ad-free Disney+ and Hulu plans and a crackdown on password sharing expected to extend through next year.

The increases will raise the monthly cost of ad-free Disney+ by \$3, or roughly 27%, to almost \$14. The cost of ad-free Hulu will likewise rise \$3 to almost \$18 - a 20% hike that will make it more expensive than the most popular ad-free tier at Netflix.

Iger spoke following Disney's release of mixed earnings for its fiscal third quarter ended July 1. The company reported a substantial net loss while shedding customers in both domestic and international markets. Overall, Disney reported a 4% increase in revenue for the quarter but swung to a net loss of \$460 million from a year-earlier profit of \$1.4 billion. Disney shares, which closed at \$87.49, rose roughly 2.2% to \$89.45 in after-hours trading.

While Disney reported narrower losses on Disney+ in the quarter, the service lost domestic subscribers in the U.S. and Canada for the second straight quarter. Internationally, it racked up its third straight quarter of declines, although issues in the Indian market played a large role there.

The service had 146.1 million international customers in its third quarter, a 7.4% decline from the 157.8 million it reported in the second quarter. That followed a loss of 4 million streaming subscribers in the second quarter. Domestically, it shed 300,000 subscribers in the third quarter, the same number it lost in the second quarter.

The Disney CEO acknowledged that the price hikes are intended to steer consumers toward cheaper ad-supported versions of these services, whose subscription prices are not changing. The advertising market for streaming is "picking up," he said, noting that it's healthier than traditional TV ads. "We're obviously trying with our pricing strategy to migrate more subs to the advertising supported tier."

Benefits

Iger didn't provide details about the password-sharing crackdown beyond saying that Disney could reap some benefits in 2024, although he added that the work "might not be completed" that year and that Disney couldn't predict how many password sharers would switch to paid subscriptions.

Some analysts doubted whether price hikes and getting tough on password sharers can do much to lead Disney back to sustainable growth. Paul Verna, an analyst with Insider Intelligence, said in a note that the company's moves aren't likely to calm investors "anxious for clarity on the company's strategy for its streaming services and TV networks."

While a narrowing in Disney's streaming losses is heartening, he argued, the improvements owed more to dramatic cost-cutting than organic growth, suggesting that Iger still doesn't have a plan for putting Disney



The Walt Disney Co. logo appears on a screen above the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on Aug. 7, 2017. Disney reported narrower losses on its Disney+ streaming platform in the quarter ended July 1, 2023, and boosted revenues, but also shed Disney+ subscribers for the second quarter in a row. (AP)

Usher in new era of large-scale wireline service delivery

Verizon partners with HCLTech for managed network services

NEW YORK, Aug 13: Verizon Business has announced a strategic global partnership making HCLTech its primary Managed Network Services (MNS) collaborator in all networking deployments for global enterprise customers, bringing together two global leaders in enterprise networking. The partnership combines Verizon's networking power, solutioning, and scale with HCLTech's market leading Managed Service capabilities to usher in a new era of large-scale wireline service delivery for enterprise customers.

Verizon Business will continue to lead all customer acquisition, sales, solutioning, and overall planning and development with its customers. HCLTech will lead post-sale implementation and ongoing support. To execute the tightly coordinated balance of responsibilities at enterprise scale, a select group of Verizon Business Global Customer Operations staff will transition to HCLTech.

The partnership will offer customers a best-in-class MNS portfolio, a highly digitized experience with data-driven service models, enhanced efficiency and lifecycle management with frictionless interface, a broad end-to-end partner ecosystem, and joint innovation on an integrated platform.

These improvements will help customers navigate increasingly complex operating environments -- across diverse locations, geographies, and devices -- while incorporating new technologies into their stack, including 5G, SD-WAN and SASE capabilities. HCLTech's digital-native MNS platforms and customer interfaces are designed to help them manage that digitally, quickly, and seamlessly.

Verizon Business's global reach and localized enterprise presence together with HCLTech's digitally optimized platforms for MNS give customers a flexible networking framework to build out with new technology and drive more efficient operations. Customers

can better control and scale their consumption of network services, better incorporate their broader ecosystem of technology partners, converge informational and operational technology (IT/OT) undertakings, and generally become more agile in accommodating ever-changing technology needs.

"HCLTech is a widely recognized industry leader for Managed Network Services, and with their IT service expertise and ongoing support of our enterprise networking deployments, Verizon Business can modernize our service delivery and simultaneously heighten our focus on helping customers incorporate next-generation technology like 5G, SD-WAN and SASE into their operations and their own customer offerings," said Kyle Malady, CEO, Verizon Business. "IT/OT convergence is the future of data-centric business operations, and with the fast-accelerating pace of digitalization, customers need a well-coordinated delivery framework to realize that future."

on a sound footing.

Disney is in the middle of a "strategic reorganization that includes cutting about 7,000 jobs to help save \$5.5 bil-

lion across the company.

Iger, who returned in November to take over the CEO post from Bob Chapek, has worked over the past several

months to turn around Disney's streaming business while making sure that the financial might of its theme parks doesn't waver.

Expected to create over 700 new jobs

First Solar set up fifth manufacturing facility in US

BATON ROUGE, La., Aug 13: First Solar, Inc. (Nasdaq: FSLR) has announced that it has selected the Acadiana Regional Airport in Iberia Parish, Louisiana as the location for its previously announced fifth fully vertically integrated manufacturing facility in the United States. The facility, believed to be the single largest capital investment in the area's history, represents an investment of up to \$1.1 billion in

expanding America's capacity to produce its own photovoltaic (PV) solar modules. Expected to be completed in the first half of 2026, the facility is forecast to grow the company's nameplate manufacturing capacity by 3.5 gigawatts (GW) to reach approximately 14 GW in the US in 2026.

First Solar's investment in Louisiana is expected to create over 700 new direct manufacturing jobs in the state.

The company, already believed to be the largest employer in America's solar manufacturing sector with over 2,500 employees across the country, expects to have over 4,000 direct employees in the country by 2026, including 850 new manufacturing jobs expected to be created in Alabama and Ohio and over 100 new R&D jobs planned in Ohio.

"First Solar's selection of Iberia Parish for its newest solar panel production

facility leaves no doubt that Louisiana is leading the global energy transition, and creating good-paying jobs as a result," said Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards said. "This massive investment and the jobs it will create are a huge win for the people of Acadiana and the entire state. It is proof positive that Louisiana's 'all-of-the-above' approach to energy is growing and diversifying our economy."

The Conversation

It's not a useful developmental milestone: CDC

Babies almost all try crawling to get from Point A to B

By Mark Geil
Kennesaw State University

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

Infant milestones can be a source both of pride and anxiety for a new parent. Baby's firsts - first tooth, first steps, first word - are moments of joy that many parents immediately compare with charts listing "normal" age ranges for each achievement to occur.

For a pediatrician, these milestones are useful indicators of typical or atypical development. When they occur outside that normal range, it might be time to look for some underlying cause, which could enable early detection and intervention if something's amiss.

Since 2004, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published a set of milestone checklists as part of its "Learn the Signs. Act Early" program. Important skills are listed for a series of ages, enabling anxious parents to know whether baby is developing typically.

In early 2022, the CDC published a major update to the milestones. The new version has a much stronger basis in research evidence and has attempted to simplify language and help caregivers know when to contact a health care provider. Among all the changes, a major milestone was removed. Crawling no longer appears in the milestone checklists.

Crawling to get from here to there

As infants develop awareness of the world around them, they naturally start wanting to explore it. Mobility is the gateway to that exploration. Crawling is typically an infant's first efficient strategy to get from Point A to Point B, and it often means that new parents must suddenly baby-proof their home and make sure all the Point Bs are safe.

Crawling is a transitional phase of mobility - children and adults are capable of crawling but choose to walk if they're able to do so - and it often overlaps with precursors to walking such as pulling-to-stand and "cruising" while holding on to furniture.

Studies have indicated that over 80% of infants progress through hands-and-knees crawling during development of locomotion. Others use alternative crawling strategies like scooting along on their bottoms, or rolling.

The World Health Organization studied hundreds of children around the world and found that, on average, children develop hands-and-knees crawling by 8.5 months of age. But that's just an average. Of course babies each develop on their own schedule. The range for starting to crawl (the 1st percentile to the 99th) was 5.2 to 13.5 months. And 4.3% of the babies in the study skipped hands-and-knees crawling altogether.

Clinicians who work with children have long recognized the importance of motor development. Scientists have called motor behaviors the "raw material for perception, cognition, and social interaction." In particular, crawling can be an early window to understanding a child's problem-solving strategies. And researchers have used movement analysis at 4-6 months, when some babies are getting close to hands-and-knees crawling, for early diagnosis of disorders such as autism and cerebral palsy.

Therapists worry that removing crawling from the milestone list means it will be devalued and the important physical, sensory and cognitive benefits it affords for the baby will be missed when evaluating childhood development.

Off the milestone list

Much of the CDC's reasoning for removing crawling from the milestone list is centered on data.

Pediatricians have charts that say how fast children typically walk based

on their age, but no such normative data exists for crawling. There are no clear, laboratory-based descriptions of the various types of crawling. We lack long-term studies that show when babies transition between patterns. And there are very few studies on the implications of skipping crawling and going straight to walking.

Despite these data gaps, crawling has been studied for nearly a century, and researchers have used it to understand the complex development of multiple neuromotor systems. Crawling is also important in understanding developmental continuity, or where new skills grow from.

Nonetheless, the CDC is correct: There are no age-based normative data charts for crawling as there are for walking.

Locomotion in lab

As a biomedical engineer who specializes in pediatric locomotion biomechanics, I have firsthand knowledge of this lack of crawling data.

I've used a technique called 3D motion analysis for decades to gather minute details on the walking of children with limb loss, cerebral palsy and other neuromotor conditions, all in an effort to help improve their mobility. My colleagues and I attach small markers to skeletal landmarks like hips and knees, and special cameras track the markers and reconstruct skeletal movement.

But among all my lab's studies on walking, I've completed only one 3D motion analysis study on crawling. We examined the motion of very young children with limb loss in a new prosthetic treatment protocol developed here at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta - but it was really tricky to do.

We had to create new musculoskeletal models for our analysis system. We had to use tiny reflective markers, because babies make more contact with the ground than older kids, and a big marker might be uncomfortable. We had to position cameras at new angles to track those tiny markers. Diapers created a big challenge, given their movement relative to the baby's skeleton.

And as any parent or caregiver can attest, babies can be a tough population to work with. They don't follow directions well, they're temperamental, and they'll pull a reflective marker off their skin and pop it in their mouth in a second if you let them. We had to watch our study subjects like hawks.

In short, crawling is just more difficult to study than walking.

Collecting crawling data

To address this challenge, my colleagues and I are now embarking on what we believe is the largest lab-based study of infant crawling development. We're studying babies from their first crawling attempts all the way through their transition to walking.

This study relies on a new technique with a pressure-sensing pathway that avoids the complications of 3D motion capture. We'll see 75 typically developing infants, and also study children with limb loss and cerebral palsy.

Our goal is to gain insights into how children transition from crawling to walking, with the hope they will one day help health care providers understand early motor development and spot neuromotor issues earlier.

We're also hopeful that these hundreds of visits to the lab will result in the first normative data set on crawling development, addressing some of the issues that prompted the CDC to remove crawling from the milestone list. So, while our lab stays full of toys, Cheerios and baby wipes for a few years, we're generating data that might improve parents' and clinicians' understanding of early motor development. (AP)

Real, WhizAI to use generative AI for patient journey mapping

'Every patient's story unique'

Cost-effective healthcare

Pacifica partners with GPN to improve its medical travel biz

NEW YORK, Aug 13, (AP) - Real Chemistry, a leading provider of AI-driven insights and marketing and communications for the healthcare industry, has announced a strategic partnership with WhizAI, a leading AI-powered analytics platform purpose-built for life sciences and healthcare. The companies will collaborate on a dynamic patient journey visualization and analytics solution that leverages Real Chemistry's robust AI and analytics engines. The new offering will make it easy for clients to access accurate, contextual insights and visualize the process patients go through from diagnosis to treatment to better understand access, affordability and adherence to treatments.

Patient journey mapping works to identify and understand the details of all patient touchpoints within a specific healthcare experience. It illustrates the process patients go through to receive care, complete a treatment plan, and/or reach a desired outcome. When patient journey maps are done correctly, they efficiently identify pain points, discover opportunities and re-align treatment and care approaches across the healthcare ecosystem. Together, Real Chemistry and WhizAI will build a robust patient journey software solution specific to the demanding needs and complexities of the regulated healthcare environment. This will help clients better understand how best to market to identified audiences in ways that are most authentic to the patient experience.

Personal

"At Real Chemistry, we believe that healthcare is personal and that every patient's story is unique," said Dan Fisher, Practice Leader for IPM.ai, part of Real Chemistry. "We have spent the last five years perfecting the science of finding patients with AI and machine learning. Now we are bringing focus to the detailed and varying patient journeys across therapeutic areas. By coupling Real Chemistry's robust analytics engine with WhizAI's generative AI-powered visualization platform, we are democratizing analytics for life science customers. Patient journey mapping isn't new, but this dynamic platform will allow users to ask questions about specific disease states and, through generative AI and analytics, have their questions answered with best-in-class data and insights, enabling better patient outcomes."

"Real Chemistry is a leader in uncovering insights for complex diseases and mapping treatments by using vast amounts of patient-level data," says Bijal Karande, Vice President, Partnerships, WhizAI. "Together, our newly introduced solution leverages generative AI to streamline the process for clients to access precise, context-based, and real-time insights. This enables more informed decision-making and expedites the determination of optimal next steps for improved patient outcomes."

Real Chemistry's mission is to transform what healthcare is to what it should be by leveraging the industry's most advanced AI-powered insights, diverse expertise and customer-centric

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla., Aug 13: Pacifica Salud Hospital has joined the Global Provider Network (GPN), ushering in a new era of streamlined and easy access for American consumers and self-funded employers to access one of Latin America's top healthcare providers.

The GPN is a network comprising the world's leading hospitals, offering comprehensive and easy access to complex bundled and transparent medical packages for facilitators, insurance companies, self-funded employers, government referrals, and individual healthcare consumers.

Referral organizations can now swiftly tap into a network of global healthcare providers with pre-negotiated discounts and commissions. Simultaneously, healthcare providers can expand their reach and patient base, courtesy of the swift access to a robust global network of referral organizations and consumers through Global Healthcare Resources.

"As one of the top hospitals in Latin America, affiliated with Johns Hopkins we are positioned to provide much more affordable options for Americans while providing high quality healthcare," CEO of Pacifica Salud, Rafael Cohen said. "We are proud to Join the Global Provider Network, and partnering with Global Healthcare Resources, will launch Pacifica Salud to a global level, boosting our brand visibility, expanding our capacity, rapidly increasing our international patient volume," he added.

"The Global Provider Network provides a needed solution in the industry

connecting the best players together. Self-funded employers looking to access the best of healthcare available with huge cost savings and excellent patient outcomes will find it here at Pacifica Salud," Cohen added.

"It's time for a change. The industry needs to adapt and grow, and the Global Provider Network is the solution that will bring the industry together and accelerate the business of medical tourism. In the end everyone will be more successful and achieve better outcomes," said Jonathan Edleheit, CEO & Co-founder of Global Healthcare Resources and the Medical Tourism Association.

Launched

GPN, launched by Global Healthcare Resources, in partnership with the Medical Tourism Association, the leading authority in the business of health and wellness, provides targeted and innovative solutions to challenges that stakeholders face in accessing world-class healthcare and scaling profitability.

GPN solves some of the challenges faced by referral organizations and healthcare providers, including:

- Limited time and resources to establish and expand their networks
- Purchasing power to negotiate the best discounts or commissions
- Long wait times to secure contracts between healthcare providers and buyers
- Lack of knowledge in identifying the right healthcare providers, who provide top-quality services and are committed to excellent patient experience and global best practices.

■ Difficulty in accessing user-friendly technology and payment models that make transactions simple and accessible.

GPN also offers access to a wider pool of patient population, health payers, and referral organizations for healthcare providers, as well as access to world-class healthcare providers for buyers.

Global Healthcare Resources is a marketing consulting firm specializing in business development and marketing strategy and penetration services in the employer health care, benefits, well-being, and medical travel industries. We leverage thought leadership, educational training, and virtual and live events to connect buyers and providers of services together to scale business opportunities.

In the last couple of years, we have focused on utilizing the connection between personal and professional motivation to build a business and launched three moonshots in key areas necessary for industry growth. Cost, Culture, and Care. Through these moonshots, we anticipate building a movement that inspires growth through the shared vision, mission, and values inextricably linked between employer and employees. For us, this means virtual and in-person opportunities for business and personal connection, training and certification programs developed through partnerships with key thought leaders across each moonshot mission and leveraging our publication and podcast to drive thought leadership and demonstrable success with each moonshot.

ideas. We help the healthcare industry better understand, reach and engage patients and professionals - while creating healthcare experiences that span diagnosis to adherence - to ensure therapies meet and exceed their potential to impact lives.

WhizAI is the first generative AI-powered analytics platform purpose-built for life sciences and healthcare. It puts insights directly into the hands of business users, empowering decision-makers to drive more informed and faster business decisions at lower cost. With its deep understanding of the life sciences and healthcare domains and user intent, the platform delivers insights without the delays of traditional business intelligence dashboards. Fast, easy and scalable, WhizAI is transforming analytics with self-service analytics, zero-code dashboarding and automated insights generation, making WhizAI the trusted partner of choice at top global companies.

Vizient, Inc projects a 3.42% increase in hospital pharmaceutical spend in its Summer Pharmacy Market Outlook, released July 31. The overall increase, forecasted for the year beginning January 2024, is being driven by specialty pharmaceuticals and medications in the neurology service line. In addition, the Outlook demonstrates the continued decline in demand for remdesivir, which topped the list of Vizient member spend during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and has since fallen to No. 13. View the 2023 Summer Pharmacy Market Outlook.

Specialty drugs, which treat high-cost, complex or chronic conditions such as cancer, infectious-, autoimmune-, and pulmonary conditions, continues to see an expansion in the number of medications approved as treatment options. Not only are three of the top five medications in Vizient member spend classified as specialty

- including adalimumab (Humira); ustekinumab (Stelara); and denosumab (Prolia, Xgeva) - two specialty oncology medications approved last year are already in the top 100 drugs of Vizient member spend: Teclistimab (Tecvayli) and tebentafusp (Kimmtrak). The former is used in the treatment of adult patients with relapsed or refractory multiple myeloma; the latter is the only FDA-approved treatment for unresectable or metastatic uveal melanoma.

"Specialty medications overall accounted for 51% of spending in 2022," said Carina Dolan, associate vice president, clinical oncology, pharmacoeconomics & market insights. "We're advising health systems to ensure their teams are positioned to manage both medical and pharmacy billing nuances of specialty pharmaceuticals, provide support for prior authorizations and patient financial assistance in multiple settings."

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Fiction writers fear the rise of AI, but also see it as a story to tell

Books

NEW YORK, Aug. 13, (AP) — For a vast number of book writers, artificial intelligence is a threat to their livelihood and the very idea of creativity. More than 10,000 of them endorsed an open letter from the Authors Guild this summer, urging AI companies not to use copyrighted work without permission or compensation.

At the same time, AI is a story to tell, and no longer just in science fiction.

As present in the imagination as politics, the pandemic or climate change, AI has become part of the narrative for a growing number of novelists and short story writers who only need to follow the news to imagine a world upended.

"I'm frightened by artificial intelligence, but also fascinated by it. There's a hope for divine understanding, for the accumulation of all knowledge, but at the same time there's an inherent terror in being replaced by non-human intelligence," said Helen Phillips, whose upcoming novel "Hum" tells of a wife and mother who loses her job to AI.

"We've been seeing more and more about AI in book proposals," said Ryan Doherty, vice president and editorial director at Celadon Books, which recently signed Fred Lunszer's novel "Sike," featuring an AI psychiatrist.

"It's the zeitgeist right now. And whatever is in the cultural zeitgeist seeps into fiction," Doherty said.

Other AI-themed novels expected in the next two years include Sean Michaels' "Do You Remember Being Born?", in which a poet agrees to collaborate with an AI poetry company; Bryan Van Dyke's "In Our

Likeness," about a bureaucrat and a fact-checking program with the power to change facts; and A.E. Osworth's "Awakened," about a gay witch and her titanic clash with AI.

Crime writer Jeffrey Diger, known for his thrillers set in contemporary Greece, is working on a novel touching upon AI and the metaverse, the outgrowth of being "continually on the lookout for what's percolating on the edge of societal change," he said.

Authors are invoking AI to address the most human questions. In Sierra Greer's "Annie Bot," the title name is an AI mate designed for a human male. For Greer, the novel was a way to explore her character's "urgent desire to please," adding that a robot girlfriend enabled her "to explore desire, respect, and longing in ways that felt very new and strange to me."

Amy Shearn's "Animal Instinct" has its origins in the pandemic and in her personal life; she was recently divorced and had begun using dating apps.

Premise

"It's so weird how, with apps, you start to feel as if you're going person-shopping," she said. "And I thought, wouldn't it be great if you could really pick and choose the best parts of all these people you encounter and sort of cobble them together to make your ideal person?"

"Of course," she added. "I don't think anyone actually knows what their ideal person is, because so much of what draws us to mates is the unexpected, the ways in which people surprise us. That said, it seemed

like an interesting premise for a novel." Some authors aren't just writing about AI, but openly working with it.

Earlier this year, journalist Stephen Marche used AI to write the novella "Death of An Author," for which he drew upon everyone from Raymond Chandler to Haruki Murakami. Screenwriter and humorist Simon Rich collaborated with Brent Katz and Josh Morgenstern for "I Am Code," a thriller in verse that came out this month and was generated by the AI program "code-davinci-002." (Filmmaker Werner Herzog reads the audiobook edition).

Osworth, who is trans, wanted to address comments by "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling that have offended many in the trans community, and to wrest from her the power of magic. At the same time, they worried the fictional AI in their book sounded too human, and decided AI should speak for AI.

Osworth devised a crude program, based on the writings of Machiavelli among others, that would turn out a more mechanical kind of voice.

"I like to say that CHATgpt is a Ferrari, while what I came up with is a skateboard with one square wheel. But I was much more interested in the skateboard with one square wheel," they said.

Michaels centers his new novel on a poet named Marian, in homage to poet Marianne Moore, and an AI program called Charlotte. He said the novel is about parenthood, labor, community, and also "this technology's implications for art, language and our sense of identity."

Variety



This image provided by MTV Documentary Films shows Augusto Gongora, (left), and Paulina Urrutia in a scene from 'The Eternal Memory.' (AP)

Film

'Eternal Memory' documents man's decline due to Alz's

'Love is stronger than dementia'

By Mark Kennedy

The 'Eternal Memory' begins with a confused Augusto Góngora waking up one morning as his wife of two decades gently greets him. "Nice to meet you," he tells her.

The loving, lyrical Maite Alberdi-directed documentary is the story of one man's decline due to Alzheimer's disease, but it's so much more. It's a stronger love story and one that tries to say things about a country's collective memory, too.

Góngora, a journalist, author and TV host, documented the crimes in his native Chile by Gen. Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. He and his wife, actress and academic Paulina Urrutia, are the stars of "The Eternal Memory," which documents his growing disorientation and unmooring.

It is a very intimate work, navigating the lost spaces in a ravaged mind, the camera going into their bedroom and even a shower stall. We watch Urrutia shave her husband, dry him with a towel like a child and read to him as they take a walk.

"I'm someone that has come here to help you remember who Augusto Góngora was," she tells him.

Alberdi assembled some 40 hours of footage, augmented by 20 more that Urrutia captured when the couple was alone. The director also switches back in time to capture Góngora as a vibrant TV reporter and in home movies as a doting dad, his white hair turning black and a mustache suddenly sprouting on the younger man.

It is hard to watch the vibrant, articulate man in those old images struggling in his last years. He gets confused by his reflection in a glass door - "We know each other," he tells his wife. Later, he sobs in frustration: "Something very strange is happening here. Help me, please."

Throughout is Urrutia, the very definition of a loving spouse, patient and trying not to take it personally that her husband is drifting away and not always knowing who she is.

"My love, you're never alone. Never. Never," she tells him.

Urrutia brings her husband to rehearsals for her play - they hold hands while going over her lines - exercise together, watch an eclipse, spontaneously

dance in a gym and rewatch their marriage video. She is always trying to pull out memories, sharpen his mind, sooth his outbursts.

The third prong of this film - following the dementia and the love story - is the memory of Chile. This is perhaps the weakest link in Alberdi's movie, but the one most intriguing. The director tries to connect Góngora's evaporating memory to that of his nation's collective forgetting of its 1970s Pinochet trauma. It's a large leap and not always neatly done, but an admirable attempt.

Inscription

What is more devastating is Góngora's own warning about memory loss. In a handwritten inscription to his wife in one of his books he writes: "Without memory, we wander confused, not knowing where to go."

The couple share tears and laughter as he tries to remember what they ate on their first date and if he had any children already. "Since we met, you've given me so many wonderful things," he tells her.

Later, he will cry over the thought of losing his treasured books. "What if somebody takes my books?" he cries out. "What is happening to me?"

The film won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival this past January. Góngora died on May 19 at age 71. But he bravely left behind a moving document about how to live a meaningful life and how to fight for dignity even as the mind crumbles. And, most importantly, he taught us how to love and be loved.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: The strike-delayed 75th Emmy Awards have a new date - one that places them squarely within Hollywood's awards season, for a change.

Fox announced Thursday that the Emmys will air Jan. 15 from the Peacock Theater at LA Live in downtown Los Angeles. The show will air on the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday.

The timing means that the Emmys, which honor the best shows on television, will air weeks before the Screen Actors Guild Awards, which honors film and television actors. Numerous other shows

like the Golden Globe Awards, which haven't been confirmed for a return to network television, and the Critics Choice Awards, also are held in January.

The ceremony will happen roughly four months later than originally planned.

While the move is a bit of a throwback - the first Emmys, where only six awards were handed out, were held in January 1949 - the show traditionally airs in September, a slot that once heralded the upcoming fall television season. But that timing dates back to when broadcast television dominated - both in viewership and Emmys contenders - in a way that has been effaced by cable television and streaming services.

A person with knowledge of the plans but not authorized to speak publicly told The Associated Press last month that the show, originally scheduled for Sept. 17, would be moved because of the ongoing strikes by film and television actors and screenwriters.

HBO is the leading nominee heading into the ceremony, with three of its series - "Succession," "The Last of Us" and "The White Lotus" - racking up 74 nominations. In all, HBO received 127 nominations.

Because of the dual strikes, actors and writers cannot campaign for their shows or do promotional interviews. The writers strike is now in its 101st day, longer than the 2007-2008 stoppage - and no end is in sight.

No host has been announced for the ceremony, which will celebrate the Emmys' diamond anniversary.

The ceremony has grown into a two-weekend affair, with many nominees in craft and guest acting categories receiving their awards during the Creative Arts Emmys, which will be held a week earlier on Jan. 6 and 7. An edited version of that ceremony will air on Fox on Jan. 13.

The Emmys will be executive produced by Jesse Collins, Dionne Harmon and Jeannae Rouzan-Clay of Jesse Collins Entertainment. Collins has become a go-to producer of Hollywood awards shows and other spectacles, producing the Grammys, Oscars as well as the acclaimed 2022 Super Bowl halftime show featuring Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg and Mary J. Blige in a hip-hop celebration. (AP)

Features

ARABO TIMES

MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2023

WORCESTER, Mass: A former curator has sued a Massachusetts art museum for subjecting her to racism, derision and criticism related to her background as a person of South Asian descent, the suit says.

Rachel Parikh, the former associate curator of the arts of Asia and the Islamic world at the Worcester Art Museum, alleges in the suit that she was "mocked and ridiculed because she is a brown-skinned woman of South Asian (Indian) descent and subjected to a hostile and offensive work environment and retaliation" during her employment from February 2020 until last September.

The suit filed last month in Worcester Superior Court also names as defendants museum director Matthias Waschek, director of curatorial affairs Claire Whitner, and four members of the executive committee.

It claims discrimination based on gender and race. It seeks a jury trial and unspecified damages.

The museum's attorney, David Felper, said in a statement that the "complaint is filled with unsupported allegations and statements taken out of context."

"We remain confident that the actual facts and law will clearly show that there is no merit to the claims that were filed," he said.

The suit mentions several allegations of wrongdoing, including at a brunch in November 2021 when the museum director and his husband repeatedly mimicked an Indian accent while talking about a British television show.

"These comments were unwelcome, offensive and the incident was humiliating and deeply disturbing," the suit said.

On another occasion in March 2022, when Parikh attended a dinner party at the director's home, he and his husband asked "very personal and offensive questions" about her family and background that made her feel "extremely uncomfortable, offended and 'othered,'" the suit said.

In a statement, Waschek called the allegations "patently false." "I have worked hard over the last thirty plus years to build a reputation of professionalism and integrity," he said. (AP)

MOGADISHU, Somalia: So-

malia's sports minister publicly apologized and ordered that the chairwoman of the national track and field federation be suspended after a seemingly untrained female sprinter represented the African country at the World University Games in China and took more than 20 seconds to finish a 100-meter race.



Whitner



Waschek

Minister of Youth and Sports Mohamed Barre Mohamud said his ministry did not know how 20-year-old Nasra Abukar Ali was selected to compete in the women's 100 at the student games in Chengdu.

The ministry separately released a statement directing the Somalia Olympic Commit-

tee to suspend national athletics federation chairwoman Khadija Aden Dahir amid allegations that Nasra Abukar was a relative of hers and was given the chance to compete at the games because of that.

A video of the agonizingly slow run by Nasra Abukar was shared across social media and Mohamud said that the

performance was embarrassing for Somalia.

In her qualifying race, Nasra Abukar was immediately left behind by the other runners and finished about 10 seconds after the winner.

Despite being dead last, she did a little skip in the air as she crossed the finish line. (AP)

People & Places

Music

New album different

Cato offers honest Reflections on self

NEW YORK, Aug. 13, (AP) — Musician and producer Jack DeBoe recalls the time many years ago when he fully grasped the sheer musical ability of his new friend, **Louis Cato**.

DeBoe and Cato were playing a gig in Boston when DeBoe got up from his drum kit for a break. Cato, playing bass, soon sat down at the drums, continued to play the bass with his left hand, put a drumstick in his right hand to hit the cymbals and drums and used his feet to play the kick and the high hat. Then he sang a song.

He wasn't showing off. He was just expressing himself.



Cato

"He always puts the music first and not any sort of virtuosic performance or demonstration," says DeBoe. "It's almost like you're not going to look at an octopus and say, 'Hey, you're showing off!' No, that's an octopus. They've got eight arms. You can't be mad at them for that."

Cato's remarkable musical gifts are on show this summer with his second album, "Reflections," which turned into a way to express himself while his regular day gig as bandleader of "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" is quiet because of the Hollywood strike.

As you might expect, the album is a labor of love. All but one song is written by Cato and on one tune alone, he's credited with acoustic guitar, bass, drums, tambourine, seed shaker, concert bass drum, lead vocals and background vocals.

"I'm kind of a bit of a do-it myself kind of personality," Cato says. "I'm a curious person and the puzzle of soundscape just invites all of my curiosity."

The new album is quite different from his 2017 debut, "Starting Now," in which he showcased "everything I could possibly do." With "Reflections," he let go of the bells and whistles. "What is the most laid bare, honest version of this song that I wrote?" was the approach.

Influences

The album veers from folk to funk with soul and Latin influences. "Another Day" features a duet with Elizabeth Ziman of Elizabeth & The Catapult, while "Cutie Baby" is a sweet lullaby. It was out Friday.

"He's grown quite a bit and lived more of his life, gathered more experiences and has more of a story that he wants to share with the world," says DeBoe, who helped produce both albums.

The eight tracks on "Reflections" include one cover, "Miss You" by The Rolling Stones, a nod to the weekly covers Cato releases on his social media. He uses it to keep his musical arranger muscles strong, wondering, for instance, how a Beatles song might sound if recorded in Motown.

"I'm really fascinated by this concept that a really well-written song can live in a lot of genres and styles," he says. "It was important for me to have a cover on the record, just one where I sort of take that approach."

It might seem as if Cato can play anything — a musical octopus — but he's quick to point out there are some instruments that baffle him, like when he tried out his sister's oboe as a kid.

"My attention span doesn't always match my curiosity," he says, laughing. "The gateway to entry just to not sound like a duck is about a year. And I didn't have that kind of attention span to be perfectly honest."

Cato has been part of Colbert's "Late Show" from the start. Original bandleader Jon Batiste called him up to ask if he'd help craft the theme song even before the show went on the air. He was then asked to join the show's band and took over from Batiste last year, having had what he calls a "front-row seat" to how to do it well.

"I take it as my job to maintain engagement with the audience," he says. "We keep the energy in the room up." He's even discussed the role with David Letterman's bandleader, Paul Shaffer.

Respect

It's a job that requires Cato to think fast on his feet. Colbert often asks his band leader questions, like "What do you do to stay healthy, Louis?" or "What are you giving up for Lent?" Their mutual respect is evident: "I started working for a boss and met a friend along the way," says Cato.

One obvious benefit to such a late night perch is the musical guest who sits in with the band, like St. Vincent or Joe Walsh. James Taylor is a frequent visitor, someone Cato calls "a titanic, creative, superpower."

Cato's love of music was shown early, when his mother brought home a drum set when he was 2. He later was given an acoustic guitar and when the strings burst, he learned to play bass on it.

He studied at the Berklee College of Music in Boston but left to become a gigging musician. He worked with John Legend, Talib Kweli, A Tribe Called Quest, Jack White and toured with Bobby McFerrin. He became a musical Swiss Army knife, someone who was hired instead of five or six musicians.

Cato must balance a lot as bandleader, from picking something for the guest horn players to finding a chunk of a well-known funk song because many in the audience are tourists. His go-tos are often Curtis Mayfield, Stevie Wonder, Led Zeppelin and, in a nod to his predecessor, the sounds of New Orleans.

On "The Late Show," the irony is that millions of viewers rarely get to hear the band perform a whole song through. Usually, they take viewers in and out of commercials, often with a big finish before a new guest is unveiled.

"When the cameras are not on, it sort of feels like you've just transitioned from like 'Lights, camera, action!' into a speakeasy," he says. "It's a whole concert in between commercial breaks and it's just for us."



(Pic A) E Street Band member Jake Clemons, (left), and Bruce Springsteen perform on Wednesday, Aug. 9, at Wrigley Field in Chicago. (AP)

Music

'Songwriting is selfish'

Ballerini reveals intimate side on EP

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 13, (AP) — Back in February, recording artist Kelsea Ballerini quietly released an EP of strikingly intimate and vulnerable songs about her recent divorce from Australian musician Morgan Evans, with no expectation of performing or promoting them in the way she would a traditional album. But after receiving an overwhelmingly positive response from fans, the pop country singer-songwriter re-released "Rolling Up the Welcome Mat" on Friday with some updated lyrics and a previously unreleased track.

In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press, Ballerini reflected on what this EP has meant for her, both personally and professionally. The interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: Talk to me about why you decided to re-release this collection of very personal songs.

Ballerini: My journey with this album has been unlike any music I've ever put out. And it's been the most unexpected connection and response. ... The intention was to like put out the six songs and just let them exist and whoever needed them or wanted to dig into them could, but it was never going to be something I played on tour. It was never going to be something that I really ever dove fully into. But we just did not get that luxury. People really connected to it very swiftly.

And so, I had to do some internal recalibration of like, "OK, well then, A, that means that I'm not alone. That's a really nice feeling. And B like, what does that look like if I start singing these songs live? What does that feel like? Am I willing to do that? Am I willing to go there?" And the answer just kept being "Yeah." And then as I did it, I was like, "Whoa, this feels so different."

AP: Did you have reluctance at all initially about putting these deeply personal songs out?

Ballerini: For sure. But, although it was still terrifying, the reason I did

was because I think you hear a lot of narratives in music, especially in country, where it's like, "This didn't work out. I'm going to like, blow up your car and, you know, toilet paper your yard because it's all your fault." And I love those songs. I get down to those songs, but there's not a lot of narratives about like the intricacy of a big breakup and how it takes two and how there's like so much emotional finesse in that. And so I wished I would have had those songs when I was making that decision for my life. And that was why I put it out. And it truly brought me back to why I want to be an artist.

I want to be an artist and songwriter, and a communicator because I want to give people what music has given to me. And that is not feeling alone. That is feeling like you can be having these big happy feelings or these big, really complicated, complex feelings and knowing that someone has given a voice to that takes the scary feeling away from it.

AP: With your music, it's very apparent that you're writing from a place of vulnerability and from the heart. How much of making music is for yourself and how much is for fans?

Ballerini: Songwriting is the most selfish part of what I do. I write songs for me. I do it to process my life - the good, the bad, the complex, the ugly, the pretty, all of it. Everything else I do that comes from the songwriting, I would like to think, if I'm in a healthy place, it's selfless. Songwriting is selfish. So, I think everything I write is just kind of for me.

AP: But as you've gotten bigger and you're reaching more audiences, you don't feel pressure to not make it about you?

Ballerini: It's so interesting. Kind of quite the contrary. I've always wanted to write songs about my life, but I've always been very aware of like if I put in these really, really specific details, what if it's not relatable? So I'll kind of zoom out a bit, you know? And with "Welcome Mat" obviously I didn't do

that down to like very specific details of the truth of my life. And I think because of the response and the connection of that, I'm really challenged now, moving forward, to keep it there.

So even when I'm in a happy season of life, writing about it or whatever, how do I keep that level of transparency and that level of detail and not go back to zooming out? I want to keep that now. So, it's interesting now very slowly starting to write again after this, it's a challenge to myself to keep it honest to that detail.

AP: What is going on with people at concerts lately? What do you make of people throwing things at artists, including yourself?

Ballerini: I know, Kelly Clarkson just started her Las Vegas residency, and I saw a clip of her saying, "If you're going to throw anything on stage, it better be diamonds." I think she says it best. I think there has to just be like a mutual want to keep everyone safe. That's kind of my biggest thing. Live shows are meant to be a place of escapism and connection and safety. And so that's my job. My job is to do a show for sure. But it's also my job to make sure everyone's safe and feels safe in that moment. So, yeah, I think it's important for all of us to kind of have our conversations and figure out how to make that work, being mindful when you go to shows I think is really important. And if you're gonna throw something, throw diamonds.

AP: I guess I just don't really understand it?

Ballerini: I think everything right now just becomes a trend. So like, you see it happen to one of your favorite artists and then it just becomes a trend and people want to get the artist's attention or just get attention. And so, I think that's a very slippery slope.

AP: But it hasn't made you feel like you need to reconsider whether you want to perform in front of people?

Ballerini: No, no, no, no. I just know it's my job to keep everyone safe.



Singer/songwriter Kelsea Ballerini poses for a portrait, Tuesday, Aug. 1, in Los Angeles. (AP)



Chenoweth



Jones

Variety

NEW YORK: Tom Jones, the lyricist, director and writer of "The Fantasticks," the longest-running musical in history, has died. He was 95.

Jones died Friday at his home in Sharon, Connecticut, according to Dan Shaheen, a co-producer of "The Fantasticks," who worked with Jones since the 1980s. The cause was cancer.

Jones, who teamed up with composer Harvey Schmidt on "The Fantasticks" and the Broadway shows "110 in the Shade" and "I Do! I Do!," was inducted into the American Theatre Hall of Fame in 1998.

"The Fantasticks," based on a play by Edmond Rostand, doesn't necessarily have the makings of a hit. The set is just a platform with poles, a curtain and a wooden box.

The tale, a mock version of "Romeo and Juliet," concerns a young girl and boy, secretly brought together by their fathers, and an assortment of odd characters.

Scores of actors have appeared in the show, from the opening cast in 1960 that included Jerry Orbach and Rita Gardner, to stars such as Ricardo Montalban and Kristin Chenoweth, to "Frozen" star Santino Fontana. The show was awarded Tony Honors for Excellence in Theatre in 1991.

"So many people have come, and this thing stays the same — the platform, the wooden box, the cardboard moon," Jones told The Associated Press in 2013. "We just come and do our little thing and then we pass on."

For nearly 42 years the show chugged along at the 153-seat Sullivan Street Playhouse in Greenwich Village, finally closing in 2002 after 17,162 performances — a victim both of a destroyed downtown after 9/11 and a new post-terrorism, edgy mood.

In 2006, "The Fantasticks" found a new home in The Snapple Theater Center — later The Theater Center — an off-Broadway complex in the heart of Times Square. In 2013, the show celebrated reaching 20,000 performances. (AP)

BRUSSELS: If elephants are really known for their sense of direction, what are nine of them doing in the heart of

Brussels, seemingly lost between the gothic and baroque houses lining the UNESCO-protected Grand Place?

As of Friday, nothing is quite what it

seems as the Belgian capital celebrates the nation's love of surrealism.

The nine life-sized wooden elephants were brought in from the Verbeke art



Golden Leopard for the Best Film and Swatch First Feature Award winner film director Nelson Yeo from Singapore poses with his award for the movie "Hao jiu bu jian" (Dreaming and Dying) during a photocall at the 76th Locarno International Film Festival in Locarno, Switzerland, Saturday, Aug. 12. (AP)

center about an hour's drive north of Brussels to be the prime attraction of FlowerTime, a biennial festival highlighting the nation's fling with flowers.

Only this time, surrealism adds a twist. And no symbol more potent than Rene Magritte's pipe, subtitled, "This is not a pipe." It is a painting of a pipe, after all — and it has come to define Belgian surrealism ever since.

Now a similar non-pipe — a sculpture of a pipe — graces the interior yard of City Hall, which for the occasion has been renamed, "This is not a city hall." On the pipe sculpture, flowers hang over the edges of the pipe's bowl, like smoke billowing out.

Back on the adjacent Grand Place, the elephants are to draw the visitors in. Their imaginary footprints on the cobblestones are made of white flowers.

"You don't expect to find elephants here in the city center of Brussels on the Grand Place, it's unbelievable. So that's a bit surrealistic of course," said artist Dennis Van Der Meer, who was busy giving the wooden animals a floral skin.

Flowers also run riot inside City Hall too. Leila Floral, her professional name, is taking care of the stairs and uses the surroundings as much as she can to produce a cascade. "My flowers will fall down like a waterfall," she said. (AP)

Climate

'Fatalities undercounted'

Heat-related deaths preventable: experts

PHOENIX, Aug. 13, (AP) — Postal worker Eugene Gates Jr. was delivering mail in the suffocating Dallas heat this summer when he collapsed in a homeowner's yard and was taken to a hospital, where he died.

Carla Gates said she's sure heat was a factor in her 66-year-old husband's death, even though she's still waiting for the autopsy report. When Eugene Gates died on June 20, the temperature was 98 degrees Fahrenheit (36.6 Celsius) and the heat index, which also considers humidity, had soared over 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius).

"I will believe this until the day I die, that it was heat-related," Carla Gates said.

Even when it seems obvious that extreme heat was a factor, death certificates don't always reflect the role it played. Experts say a mishmash of ways more than 3,000 counties calculate heat deaths means we don't really know how many people die in the US each year because of high temperatures in an ever warming world.

That imprecision harms efforts to better protect people from extreme heat because officials who set policies and fund programs can't get the financial and other support needed to make a difference.

"Essentially, all heat related deaths are preventable. People don't need to die from the heat," said epidemiologist **Kristie L. Ebi**, who focuses on global warming's impact on human health as a professor at the University of Washington.

With a better count, she said, "you can start developing much better heat wave early warning systems and target people who are at higher risk and make sure that they're aware of these risks."

Currently, about the only consistency in counting heat deaths in the US is that officials and climate specialists acknowledge fatalities are grossly undercounted.

"Deaths are investigated in vastly different ways based on where a person died," said Dr. Greg Hess, the medical examiner for Pima County, Arizona's second most populous county and home to Tucson. "It should be no surprise that we don't have good nationwide data on heat-related deaths."

Method

Many experts say a standard decades-old method known as counting excess deaths could better show how extreme heat harms people.

"You want to look at the number of people who would not have died during that time period and get a true sense of the magnitude of the impact," Ebi said, including people who would not have suffered a fatal heart attack or renal failure without the heat.

The excess deaths calculation is often used to estimate the death toll in natural disasters, with researchers tallying fatalities that exceeded those that occurred at the same time the previous year when circumstances were average.

Counting excess deaths was used to calculate the human impact of a heat wave in Chicago that killed more than 700 people in July 1995, many elderly Black people who lived alone. Researchers also counted excess deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide more complete information about deaths directly and indirectly related to the coronavirus.

But as things stand now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports just 600 to 700 heat deaths annually in the United States. A study published last month in the journal *Nature Medicine* estimated more than 61,000 heat-related deaths last summer across Europe, which has roughly double the US population but more than 100 times as many heat deaths.

Dr. Sameed Khatana, a staff cardiologist at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center and assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine, has said deaths in which heat contributed significantly to fatalities from causes like heart failure should also be considered.

Khatana participated in research published last year that counted excess deaths in all US counties. The findings suggested that from 2008 to 2017 between 3,000 to 20,000 adult deaths from all causes listed on death certificates were linked to extreme heat. Heart disease was listed as the cause of about half of the deaths.

After the Pacific Northwest heat wave in summer of 2021, the Canadian province of British Columbia reported more than 600 deaths due to heat exposure while Oregon and Washington each initially reported a little more than 100 such fatalities.

"It's frustrating that for 90 years public health officials in the United States have not had a good picture of heat-related mortality because we have such a bad data system," said Dr. David Jones, a Harvard Medical School professor who also teaches in the epidemiology department at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

There is no uniformity among who does the counting across US jurisdictions. Death investigations in some places might be carried out by a medical examiner, typically a physician trained in forensic pathology. In other locales, the coroner could be an elected sheriff, such as the one in Orange County, California. In some small counties in Texas, a justice of peace might determine cause of death.

Utah and Massachusetts are among states that do not track heat-related deaths where exposure to extreme heat was a secondary factor.

The CDC, which is often several years behind in reporting, draws information on heat deaths from death certificate information included in local, state, tribal and territorial databases.

Causes

The CDC said in a statement that coroners and others who fill out death certificates "are encouraged to report all causes of death," but they may not always associate those contributing causes to an extreme heat exposure death and include the diagnostic codes for heat illnesses.

Hess, the Arizona coroner, said determining environmental heat was a factor in someone's death is difficult and can take weeks or even months of investigation including toxicological tests.

"If someone was shot in the head, it's pretty obvious what happened there," Hess said. "But when you find a body in a hot apartment 48 hours after they died, there is a lot of ambiguity."

Hess noted that Pima County this year began including heat-related deaths in its tally of environmental heat fatalities. Maricopa County, home to Phoenix, America's hottest big city, for years has included heat-related deaths. Clark County, Nevada, home to Las Vegas, now also considers deaths in which heat was a contributing factor.

Maricopa's Public Health Department counted 425 "heat associated" deaths last year, including those where heat was a secondary factor, such as a heart attack provoked by high temperatures.

It reports there were 59 heat-associated deaths confirmed this year through Aug. 5, with another 345 under investigation. The latest count follows the hottest month in Phoenix on record, and a record 31 consecutive days that hit 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43.3 Celsius) or higher.

Dallas, which regularly sees summer highs over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.7 Celsius), sweltered through an excessive heat warning this month and also grapples with oppressive humidity.

Carla Gates, whose mail carrier husband died, noted cities worldwide now must learn to deal with extreme weather. She said her spouse, with 36 years on the job, tried to protect himself by taking a chest filled with ice and several bottles of cold water on his rounds.



Instruments sit on a table in an operating room June 15, 2023, in Jackson, Tenn. Patients who take blockbuster drugs like Wegovy for weight loss may face life-threatening complications if they need surgery or other procedures that require empty stomachs for anesthesia. In June 2023, the American Society of Anesthesiologists issued guidance advising patients to skip daily weight-loss medications on the day of surgery and hold off on weekly injections for a week before any sedation procedures. (AP)



A male grey wolf leads his four pups to explore their habitat at the Oakland Zoo in Oakland, Calif., on July 1, 2019. A new pack of gray wolves has shown up California's Sierra Nevada, several hundred miles away from any other known population of the endangered species, wildlife officials announced Friday, Aug. 11. (AP)



Bragg

Symes

Discovery

New pack of gray wolves ID'd: A new pack of gray wolves has shown up in California's Sierra Nevada, several hundred miles away from any other known population of the endangered species, wildlife officials announced Friday.

It's a discovery to make researchers howl with delight, given that the native species was hunted to extinction in California in the 1920s. Only in the past decade or so have a few gray wolves wandered back into the state from out-of-state packs.

A report of a wolf seen last month in Sequoia National Forest in Tulare County led researchers to spot tracks, and collect DNA samples from fur and droppings, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Researchers concluded that there is a new pack of at least five wolves that weren't previously known to live in California: an adult female and her four offspring.

The pack is at least 200 miles (321.8 kilometers) from the next-nearest pack, which is in Lassen Park in northeastern California, wildlife officials said. A third pack is also based in Northern California.

Gray wolves are protected by both state and federal law under the Endangered Species Act. It is illegal to hurt or kill them.

DNA testing found that the adult female in the new pack is a direct descendant of a wolf known as OR7 that in 2011 crossed the state line from Oregon — the first wolf in nearly a century to make California part of its range, the Department of Fish and Wildlife said.

That wolf later returned to Oregon and is believed to have died there, officials said.

Researchers didn't find any trace of an adult male in the new pack but genetic profiles of the offspring suggest they are descended from the Lassen Pack, wildlife officials said. (AP)

Italy gets back 266 antiquities: Italy celebrated the return Friday of 266 antiquities from the United States, including Etruscan vases and ancient Roman coins and mosaics worth tens of millions of euros (dollars), that were looted and sold to US museums and private collectors.

The returned items include artifacts recently seized in New York from a storage unit belonging to British antiquities dealer **Robin Symes**, officials said. In addition, the haul that arrived in Rome included 65 objects that had been offered by a collector to Houston's Menil Collection, but were declined.

The art unit of Italy's Carabinieri paramilitary police said the owner of the collection "spontaneously" gave back the items after investigators determined they had come from clandestine excavations of

Health

Wegovy or Ozempic may complicate anesthesia

Weight-loss drugs up risk during surgery

NEW YORK, Aug. 13, (AP) — Patients who take blockbuster drugs like Wegovy or Ozempic for weight loss may face life-threatening complications if they need surgery or other procedures that require empty stomachs for anesthesia. This summer's guidance to halt the medication for up to a week may not go far enough, either.

Some anesthesiologists in the US and Canada say they've seen growing numbers of patients on the weight-loss drugs who inhaled food and liquid into their lungs while sedated because their stomachs were still full — even after following standard instructions to stop eating for six to eight hours in advance.

The drugs can slow digestion so much that it puts patients at increased risk for the problem, called pulmonary aspiration, which can cause dangerous lung damage, infections and even death, said Dr. Ion Hobai, an anesthesiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

"This is such a serious sort of potential complication that everybody who takes this drug should know about it," said Hobai, who was among the first to flag the issue.

Nearly 6 million prescriptions for the class of drugs that include Wegovy and Ozempic were written between January and May in the US for people who don't have diabetes, according to Komodo Health, a health care technology company. The drugs induce weight loss by mimicking the actions of hormones, found primarily in the gut, that kick in after people eat. They also target signals between the gut and the brain that control appetite and feelings of fullness, and by slowing how fast the stomach empties.

In June, the American Society of Anesthesiologists issued guidance advising patients to skip daily weight-loss medications on the day of surgery and hold off on weekly injections for a week before any sedation procedures. Dr. Michael Champeau, the group's president, said the action was based on anecdotal reports of problems — including aspiration — from around the country.

It's not clear how many patients taking the anti-obesity drugs may be affected by the issue. But because the consequences can be so dire, Hobai and a group of colleagues decided to speak out. Writing in the *Canadian Journal of Anesthesia*, they called for the drug to be stopped for even longer — about three weeks before sedation.

That accounts for how long semaglutide, the active medication in Wegovy, remains in the body, said Dr. Philip Jones, a Mayo Clinic anesthesiologist who is also deputy editor-in-

Infants should get recently approved drug for RSV: CDC

NEW YORK, Aug. 13, (AP) — Infants should get a recently approved drug to protect them against a respiratory virus that sends tens of thousands of American children to the hospital each year, US health officials said recently.

An infection with RSV is a coldlike nuisance for most healthy people, but it can be life-threatening for the very young and the elderly. There are no vaccines for babies yet so the new drug, a lab-made antibody that helps the immune system fight off the virus, is expected to fill a critical need.

The drug, developed by AstraZeneca and Sanofi, is expected to be ready in the fall before the RSV season, typically November through March. In the US, about 58,000 children younger than 5 are hospitalized for RSV each year and several hundred die.

A panel of outside advisers to the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended the one-time shot for infants born just before or during the RSV season and for those less than 8 months old before the season starts. They also recommended a dose for some 8- to 19-month-olds at higher risk of a serious illness from RSV.

The CDC director signed off on the panel's recommendations later Thursday.

"We had a terribly bad RSV season last year and I'm thrilled that we have a new tool to protect our infants," Dr. Mandy Cohen told The Associated Press earlier this week.

The drug, to be sold under the brand name Beyfortus, is expected to cost \$495 per dose, and to be covered by insurance. Panelists acknowledged that it will be a challenge at first to give the shot and for providers to be reimbursed by insurers.

chief of the journal.

"When 90% of it is gone, which is after three weeks, hopefully everything should go back to normal," Jones said.

Champeau and Jones both acknowledged there's not enough evidence to say for certain how long semaglutide should be held to make anesthesia safe. Many patients won't see providers far enough in advance to stop the drug three weeks before procedures, Champeau noted.

Acknowledged

Aspiration occurs in one of every 2,000 to 3,000 operations that require sedation, and almost half of patients who aspirate during surgery develop a related lung injury. But case reports show recent patients on semaglutide had problems even when they stopped food as long as 20 hours before their procedures.

"There's nothing that says if you fast twice as long, it will be OK," Champeau said.

Among the several reports detailing potentially serious problems was one of Hobai's patients, a 42-year-old man in Boston who recently began taking Wegovy, had to be intubated and suffered respiratory failure that put him in intensive care. He aspirated food that remained in his stomach despite fasting for 18 hours.

archaeological sites, according to a carabinieri statement.

While the carabinieri said the works had been part of the Menil Collection, the museum said they never were. The

museum said a collector approached the museum in 2022 about making a gift of the artifacts, but the museum curator directed the collector to the Italian culture minister, "who alerted the museum that

Italy was claiming the objects."

"The Menil Collection declined these works from the collector and they have never been part of the museum's collection," spokesperson Tommy Napier said in a statement late Friday to The Associated Press.

Italy has been on a decades-long campaign to hunt down antiquities that were looted by "tombaroli," or tomb raiders, and then sold to private collectors and museums in the US and beyond. The looting operations involved art dealers who sold the items directly or via auctions.

Some of the items were handed over to Italian authorities Tuesday at the offices of the Manhattan district attorney, **Alvin Bragg**. Bragg's office said they included an Apulian krater, or vase, dating from 335 BC. that was seized in July from a private collection in New York.

The vase had been photographed and included in the famous Polaroid "archive" of dealer Giacomo Medici, who passed it onto Symes, who then "laundered" the piece through Sotheby's London, "Bragg's office alleged.

Other items included two Etruscan tile paintings from Cerveteri, a frequently-looted necropolis site northwest of Rome, that date back to 440 BC. (AP)



In this screen grab from video, Carla Gates is seen during an interview in Dallas, Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2023. Gates' husband, a postal carrier, was delivering mail in the suffocating Dallas heat this summer when he collapsed in a homeowner's yard and was taken to a hospital, where he died. (AP)



Baltimore Ravens wide receiver Tylan Wallace, foreground, catches a pass in front of Philadelphia Eagles cornerback Greedy Williams during the first half of an NFL preseason football game in Baltimore. (AP)

Richardson shaky for Colts in preseason debut

Rookie Hamlin shines for Bills in return

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y., Aug 13, (AP) — Colts rookie quarterback Anthony Richardson threw an interception and was unable to generate much offense with his legs, either, during Indianapolis' preseason-opening 23-19 loss to the Buffalo Bills in an outing decided by third-stringers Saturday.

The Bills got an emotional boost with safety Damar Hamlin credited with three tackles over two-plus defensive series in his first competitive game since going into cardiac arrest and being resuscitated on the field during a game at Cincinnati on Jan. 2. Hamlin showed no signs of hesita-

tion and made a key impact on his fourth defensive snap by stopping Evan Hull for no gain on fourth-and-1 at the Buffalo 40 to end the Colts' second possession.

Ravens 20, Eagles 19
In Baltimore, Justin Tucker kicked a 60-yard field goal to end the first half, Tyler Huntley threw a touchdown pass early in the third quarter and Baltimore extended its record streak of preseason victories to 24.

The Ravens led Philadelphia 20-13 when Anthony Brown's pass was intercepted by Eli Ricks and returned 31 yards for a touchdown with 7:03 to play. The

Eagles went for 2 and didn't convert.

Chargers 34, Rams 17
In Inglewood, Stetson Bennett passed for 191 yards and a touchdown for the Los Angeles Rams in the stadium where he led Georgia to his second national championship seven months ago, getting his first NFL action in a preseason loss to the Los Angeles Chargers.

end zone against a second-string defense after Tennessee's Malik Willis led the Titans on a 75-yard touchdown drive to start the game.

Jets 27, Panthers 0
In Charlotte, Bryce Young was 4 of 6 passing for 21 yards in his NFL preseason debut as Carolina lost to New York.

The No. 1 overall pick in the draft played three series and the Panthers picked up just one first down with the 2021 Heisman Trophy winner under center against a Jets defense that rested its starters. Young didn't get much help from his offensive line as he was hit on three of his seven drop backs.

Jaguars 28, Cowboys 23
In Arlington, Calvin Ridley had two catches in his first game in nearly two years, and Trevor Lawrence responded to an interception with a touchdown pass in Jacksonville's preseason win over Dallas.

FOOTBALL

Former TCU quarterback Max Duggan passed for 19 yards and rushed for 20 yards for the Chargers as both quarterbacks got their first NFL action at SoFi Stadium, where Bennett's Bulldogs routed Duggan's Horned Frogs 65-7 in the College Football Playoff title game.

Bears 23, Titans 17
In Chicago, Justin Fields threw touchdown passes to prized newcomer DJ Moore and Khalil Herbert on Chicago's first two possessions, then watched as the Bears beat Tennessee in the teams' preseason opener.

Moore and Herbert turned short passes into sprints to the

Atlanta completes 'lopsided' doubleheader sweep of Mets

Diamondbacks end 9-game skid

NEW YORK, Aug 13, (AP) — Spencer Strider pitched seven scoreless innings and Ozzie Albies homered as the Atlanta Braves beat the New York Mets 6-0 in the nightcap to complete a doubleheader sweep on Saturday.

The Braves routed the Mets 21-3 in the opener when Albies homered and drove in six runs and Nicky Lopez added four hits - including his first homer since Sept. 9, 2021 - and five RBIs before tossing a scoreless ninth inning.

Strider (13-4) allowed three hits and struck out six just hours after Allan Winans (1-0) worked seven scoreless innings and struck out nine on the way to his first big league win.

Before Saturday, a starter for the Braves hadn't gone seven innings since Bryce Elder on July 29.

Kevin Pillar had a run-scoring single and Marcell Ozuna hit a two-RBI double in support of Strider before Albies hit a two-run homer in the ninth inning.

José Quintana (0-4) gave up four hits in six innings of one-run ball for the Mets. Quintana, who didn't make his first appearance of the season until July 20 due to a left rib fracture, is winless in five starts despite a 3.03 ERA.

The Mets were shut out for the 13th time this season.

The sweep assured the Braves of their sixth straight season series victory over the Mets. Atlanta has outscored New York 118-54 in the last 16 games, dating to last season.

Albies' shot in the nightcap ran the Braves' major league-leading total to 225 homers. In the opener, Matt Olson had his seventh multi-homer game of the season and the 20th of his career.

Diamondbacks 3, Padres 0
In Phoenix, Paul Sewald earned his first save with the Arizona Diamondbacks and then a few moments later, earned a hearty laugh from manager Torey Lovullo.

A little gallows humor was in order Saturday night after the Diamondbacks finally snapped a nine-game losing streak by beating the San Diego Padres 3-0. Christian Walker hit a two-run homer and Zac Gallen threw six strong innings to lead Arizona to its first victory since July 31.

The D-backs hope the victory can get them trending in the right direction of the playoff hunt after an extended freefall. Arizona is three games back for the final wild-card spot in the National League.

Twins 8, Phillies 1
In Philadelphia, Joey Gallo had two homers among his four hits and drove in four runs. Pablo López struck out seven in six shutout innings and the Minnesota Twins snapped a four-game losing streak with an 8-1 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies.

Trea Turner had three hits for defending NL champion Philadelphia, which entered the night holding the league's top wild-card spot.

Bryce Harper returned to the lineup for Philadelphia after sitting out the Phillies' 13-2 win Friday night with mid-back spasms. The two-time NL MVP doubled.

Brewers 3, White Sox 2
In Chicago, William Contreras capped a three-run seventh with the winning RBI and the Milwaukee Brewers beat the Chicago White Sox 3-2 on Saturday night for their second straight comeback victory.

Yoán Moncada homered for Chicago, which lost a two-run lead in the seventh a night after watching the Brewers erase a three-run deficit.

Brandon Woodruff (2-1) allowed two runs and four hits over the first 6 1/3 innings to help Milwaukee maintain a 2 1/2-game lead in the NL Central. He struck out six and walked just his final batter.

Dodgers 4, Rockies 1
In Los Angeles, Will Smith, James Outman and Amed Rosario homered and Tony Gonsolin worked six solid innings after allowing a home run on his first pitch as the NL West-leading Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Colorado Rockies 4-1.

The Dodgers extended their winning

streak to seven games and won for the 11th time in 12 games.

Colorado's Ezequiel Tovar hit Gonsolin's first pitch of the game 427 feet and over the wall in center for an early lead. The Rockies managed just two hits the rest of the way. Tovar finished with two of the Rockies' three hits.

Nationals 3, Athletics 2

In Washington, Keibert Ruiz hit the first pitch of the ninth inning into the right-field bullpen to give the Washington Nationals a 3-2 victory over the Oakland Athletics.

Ruiz homered for the second consecutive night to help Washington win for the seventh time in its last 10 - and earn its 11th victory in its last 13 home games. It was the Nationals' second walkoff homer of the season, following Alex Call's blast against the Chicago Cubs on May 4.

JJ Bleday and Brent Rooker homered for Oakland, which fell to a majors-worst 33-84. The Athletics are 51 games under .500 for the first time since finishing 54-108 in 1979. They are on pace to go 46-116.

Cardinals 5, Royals 4

In Kansas City, Tommy Edman hit two home runs to lead the St. Louis Cardinals to a 5-4 win over the Kansas City Royals on Saturday night in front of the second-largest crowd of the season at Kauffman Stadium.

BASEBALL

Edman's third career two-homer game came in front of 37,016 fans, the Royals' largest draw since opening day.

Edman had pretty good motivation to produce.

It was Matz' fourth straight quality start and fifth straight solid outing. He's 4-0 with a 1.24 ERA in his last five starts.

Astros 11, Angels 3

In Houston, Kyle Tucker hit a three-run homer and RBI single to lead the Houston Astros to another 11-3 win over the Los Angeles Angels.

It's Houston's fifth win in six games and second straight rout of the Angels after an 11-3 victory in Friday's opener.

The Astros were up by one in the fourth when Tucker connected off Tyler Anderson (5-4) on a three-run shot that made it 4-0. It was his third home run in the last five games, with the first one in that stretch coming on a ninth-inning grand slam in a 7-6 win over Baltimore on Tuesday night.

Tucker, who has 22 home runs, added an RBI single in the fifth to give him 88 RBIs this season, which ranks second in the American League.

Tigers 6, Sox 2

In Boston, Kerry Carpenter hit two solo homers and the Detroit Tigers cleared Fenway Park's Green Monster four times in a 6-2 win over the Boston Red Sox.

Spencer Torkelson and Eric Haase also homered for the Tigers, who snapped a nine-game losing streak against the Red Sox, one day after losing the series opener. Torkelson finished 4 for 4 and Riley Greene added an RBI single.

Justin Turner hit a solo homer for Boston, which had won four of its last five games and closed the gap in the race for the AL's third and final wild-



Baltimore Orioles shortstop Jorge Mateo throws out Seattle Mariners' Julio Rodriguez at first during the sixth inning of a baseball game in Seattle. (AP)

card spot.

Rays 6, Guardians 5

In St. Petersburg, Randy Arozarena lined an RBI single to right center to complete a three-run ninth inning off Cleveland closer Emmanuel Clase as the Tampa Bay Rays rallied to beat the Guardians 6-5.

Clase (1-7) allowed Yandy Díaz's one-out double. Díaz advanced to third on a wild pitch and scored to tie it at 5 on Brandon Lowe's infield single before the All-Star Arozarena won it on an 0-2 pitch.

It was Clase's ninth blown save in 40 chances.

Tampa Bay won Friday night's series opener 9-8 when Wander Franco hit a leadoff homer in the bottom of the ninth after the Rays blew a three-run lead in the top of the inning.

Cleveland wasted an impressive start by rookie Gavin Williams, who struck out 10 over five innings.

Marlins 3, Yankees 1

In Miami, Sandy Alcantara threw a complete-game five-hitter, Luis Arraez homered and the Miami Marlins beat the New York Yankees 3-1.

Alcantara (5-10) struck out 10 in his major league-leading third complete game and first home win since going the distance against Minnesota on April 4. The reigning NL Cy Young Award winner coaxed 11 groundouts before a season-best crowd of 33,980.

In his previous home start against Philadelphia, Alcantara was lifted after eight scoreless innings and 100 pitches. The Phillies rallied in the ninth and won 3-1.

After Alcantara struck out the side in a perfect eighth against New York, Schumaker entrusted him to start the ninth. Alcantara gave up a leadoff single to Gleyber

Torres before retiring the next three batters to complete his 116-pitch outing.

Cubs 5, Blue Jays 4

In Toronto, Christopher Morel hit a tiebreaking double in the ninth inning and the Chicago Cubs beat the Toronto Blue Jays 5-4.

Dansby Swanson added a three-run home run as the Cubs (61-56) improved to 8-3 in August and won for the 18th time in 24 games.

Whit Merrifield hit a two-run home run, but Toronto (65-54) lost for the fourth time in five games after winning its previous four.

Chicago's Cody Bellinger doubled off right-hander Jordan Hicks (1-7) to begin the ninth and came around to score what turned out to be the winning run on Morel's one-out double to left field.

Former Blue Jays right-hander Julian Merryweather (4-0) worked one inning for the win and righty Adbert Alzolay finished for his 16th save in 17 chances.

After Vladimir Guerrero Jr. opened the scoring with an RBI single in the third, Chicago replied with four runs in the fourth off Blue Jays right-hander Chris Bassitt. Nico Hoerner led off with a double and Ian Happ walked before Bellinger tied it with an RBI single.

Swanson followed with a second-deck home run, his 18th. The 429-foot homer was Swanson's longest of the season.

Rangers 9, Giants 3

In San Francisco, a day after his call-up, J.P. Martínez got in on the offensive onslaught with his first major league hit and a sacrifice fly as the Texas Rangers won another game in impressive fashion against manager Bruce Bochy's former club.

Bochy kept the special souvenir baseball safe in his office to present Martínez.

Corey Seager homered and singled in a run, Mitch Garver had three RBIs, and the Rangers pounded the stumbling San Francisco Giants 9-3.

Garver hit a go-ahead single in the Rangers' three-run fourth as Texas began the inning with four straight base hits against Alex Cobb (6-4). That included the first career hit for Martínez. Ezequiel Durán added a sacrifice fly and Leody Taveras an RBI single in the inning.

Orioles 1, Mariners 0

In Seattle, Ryan Mountcastle's one-out single in the top of the 10th inning scored Cedric Mullins, and the Baltimore Orioles snapped Seattle's eight-game win streak with a 1-0 win over the Mariners.

Mountcastle lined a pitch from Andrés Muñoz (2-5) back up the middle and easily scored Mullins, who started the inning as the runner at second base and stole third.

Félix Bautista worked two innings of relief to get the victory. Bautista (7-2) allowed a two-out single in the ninth inning to Cade Marlowe, but he was called out on a replay review after appearing to steal second base. In the 10th, Bautista struck out the side, including Julio Rodríguez and Eugenio Suárez.

Seattle starter George Kirby pitched nine shutout innings allowing three hits, struck out seven and didn't walk a batter, but failed to get any run support.

Kirby's performance came on the night the Mariners honored Félix Hernández by inducting him into the team's Hall of Fame. It was reminiscent of the dominance Hernandez showed at times during his career and the frustration when many of those great outings lacked the needed help from the offense.

Kirby pitched into the ninth inning for the first time in his career. He needed just 38 pitches to get through four innings and 62 to get through the sixth and finished with 103, including 73 strikes.

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MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Aug 13, (AP) — Results and standings from MLB games on Saturday.

Chicago Cubs	5	Toronto	4	St Louis	5	Kansas City	4
Miami	3	NY Yankees	1	Texas	9	San Francisco	3
Tampa Bay	6	Cleveland	5	Baltimore	1	Seattle 10th inn	0
Detroit	6	Boston	2	Atlanta	21	NY Mets 1st game	3
Minnesota	8	Philadelphia	1	Atlanta	6	NY Mets 2nd game	0
Houston	11	LA Angels	3	Arizona	3	San Diego	0
Milwaukee	30	Chicago W. Sox	2	LA Dodgers	4	Colorado	1
Washington	3	Oakland	2				

American League				National League					
East Division				East Division					
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB		
Baltimore	72	45	.615	—	Atlanta	75	41	.647	—
Tampa Bay	71	48	.597	2	Philadelphia	65	53	.551	11
Toronto	65	54	.546	8	Miami	61	57	.517	15
Boston	61	56	.521	11	New York	52	65	.444	23-1/2
New York	60	57	.513	12	Washington	52	66	.441	24
Central Division				Central Division					
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB		
Minnesota	61	58	.513	—	Milwaukee	64	54	.542	—
Cleveland	56	62	.475	4-1/2	Chicago	61	56	.521	2-1/2
Detroit	53	64	.453	7	Cincinnati	61	57	.517	3
Chicago	47	71	.398	13-1/2	Pittsburgh	52	64	.448	11
Kansas City	38	81	.319	23	St Louis	52	66	.441	12
West Division				West Division					
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB		
Texas	70	47	.598	—	Los Angeles	70	46	.603	—
Houston	68	50	.576	2-1/2	San Francisco	62	55	.530	8-1/2
Seattle	63	53	.543	6-1/2	Arizona	58	59	.496	12-1/2
Los Angeles	58	60	.492	12-1/2	San Diego	56	61	.479	14-1/2
Oakland	33	84	.282	37	Colorado	45	72	.385	25-1/2

Swedes yet to live up to billing golden generation

Australia make it through to WCup semis seeking history for Matildas

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, Aug 13, (AP): There will be a first-time winner of the Women's World Cup this year, and maybe, just maybe, it will be host country Australia.

The Matildas, serving as co-hosts of the tournament with New Zealand, became the first home team since the United States in 1999 to win a quarterfinal in nine Women's World Cups. Australia has reached its first semifinal in team history and faces England on Wednesday for a chance to play for the title.

"I genuinely really believe that this team can do great history in so many ways," Australia coach Tony Gustavsson said, "not just winning football games, but the way that they can inspire the next generation, how they can unite the nation, how they can leave a legacy that is much bigger than football."

England, the European champion, advanced with a 2-1 victory over upstart Colombia. England also reached the semifinals in 2015 and 2019, only to finish third and fourth and never reach the Women's World Cup final.

But before the Australia and England showdown, first-time semifinalist Spain takes on powerhouse Sweden on Tuesday in Auckland.

Aside from a 4-0 loss to Japan in group play, Spain has been a force

throughout the tournament. It even tuned out an earthquake roughly an hour before its quarterfinal win over 2019 runner-up Netherlands.

The earthquake Friday in New Zealand's capital of Wellington measured 5.6 on the Richter scale and created minor shaking in and around the stadium.

"We were so concentrated on the game that we didn't feel it, although we felt some shakes at the hotel the day before," Spain coach Jorge Vilda said. "The victory of Spain was the earthquake."

Sweden, meanwhile, is the highest ranked team still in the tournament at second in the world, according to FIFA. The Swedes got into the semifinals by knocking off previously undefeated Japan, the 2011 winners and last remaining champions in the tournament after so many early eliminations of the best teams in women's soccer.

"I think we have the team to go all the way," left back Jonna Andersson said, "and now we are one step closer."

Australia

The Matildas advanced after a tense - and electric - penalty shootout 7-6 over France in front of a sold-out crowd in Brisbane, Australia.

It took 20 penalties to decide the winner in the longest shootout in the history of the tournament. It was the game of a lifetime for goalkeeper Mackenzie Arnold, who stepped up to take a penalty with the score at 3-3 but hit the post.

Arnold then managed to twice save shots from French midfielder Kenza Dali, the first being waved off after Arnold was ruled to have come off her line for the first save. Arnold said she was "incredibly disappointed" to have missed her shot on goal and

SOCCER

thanked her teammates for keeping the Matildas in the game.

Australia, at 12th in the world, is the lowest-ranked team remaining in the tournament.

Sam Kerr, the injured superstar who missed all of group play, came off the bench against France but ended up playing nearly a full game when the match went to extra time. Kerr converted her penalty kick. And the Australians have also been boosted by the play of 20-year-old Mary Fowler, who has stepped in to fill Kerr's void in this tournament.

Arnold said the Matildas need a

day to regroup before focusing on England.

"I don't want to ever get ahead of myself, and we're all the same in that aspect," she said. "We just take one game at a time, one half at a time, whatever that is, and we just keep getting to the next step every time. So now that we've made the semifinal for the first time, we'll take a moment to process what we've actually done."

England

England very much wants to add a World Cup title to last year's European championship, and coach Sarina Wiegman understands the Lionesses will have their hands full in a semifinal that will be a home game for Australia.

Wiegman's only loss as England manager in 37 matches was a 2-0 loss to Australia in a friendly four months ago. Now in the semifinals for a third consecutive World Cup, England must beat the home team to advance to its first final.

"It's going to be really big," Wiegman said of the semifinal. "It's probably going to be bigger than I imagined now. I'll talk to my players and staff and see what that rivalry is. We've had such a warm welcome and we've really enjoyed our time here in

Australia. I really like the people here but that doesn't mean there's no rivalry. So we'll see that Wednesday."

England already has won in front of a hostile crowd - the 75,784 in attendance for its quarterfinal win over Colombia were mostly clad in Colombian colors - and Wiegman said "we expect a similar crowd for Australia."

"We are really looking forward to it. We know that it's an away game," she said. "Let's try to (use it as) an inspiration." England star Lauren James will miss her second consecutive game because of a suspension for receiving a red card in the quarterfinals.

Sweden

Sweden's current team has been labeled the "Golden Generation" of its nation's history of women's soccer, but the Swedes have yet to live up to that billing on an international stage.

Now it has knocked off both the United States and Japan to reach the semifinals and a Tuesday match against Spain in Auckland. Sweden nearly won an Olympic gold medal in Tokyo two years ago but lost to Canada in the final, and in the World Cup, the Swedes were runners-up in 2003 and three-time third-place finishers.

A highlight of each Sweden win has been the playing of Swedish band Abba's songs in the stadiums after the victories, and striker Kosovare Asllani has a request for Tuesday: "I love 'Lay Your Love on Me,'" she said.

"It's so nice when you hear the Abba songs after the game. You can't help but smile," she said. "I'm just very proud of the team performance but we're not satisfied here. Obviously want to go all the way."

Spain

Spain was the first team to secure a spot in the semifinals with a 2-1 win over 2019 runner-up Netherlands in extra time of the quarterfinals.

Just making it to the quarterfinals was a boost for Spain, ranked seventh in the world but had never before advanced to the quarterfinals in its two previous World Cup appearances. But in their third tournament, La Roja have been fantastic.

Spain blew through its first two games of group play before suffering a humiliating 4-0 loss to Japan in the final. Vilda made a batch of lineup changes for the knockout round, which led to a 5-1 win over Switzerland, and then the quarterfinal upset over the Dutch.

It put Spain on course for a rematch with the Japanese, but they were upset in the second semifinal by Sweden and La Roja now faces the third-ranked team in the world on Tuesday at Eden Park in Auckland.

"We've reached somewhere we've never reached before, and done it playing a good game as well, with a team that is convinced that we can go even further," Vilda said.

Tom, Pauline win mountain bike world titles

A massive relief: Pidcock

GLASGOW, Aug 13, (AP): Olympic mountain bike champion Tom Pidcock proved he is still the man to beat at next summer's Paris Games.

Pauline Ferrand-Prevot of France showed she's the woman to beat, too, even if her last Olympics was one to forget.

Pidcock pulled away from a star-studded field on a technical course through Scotland's Glentworth Forest, then held off the fast-finishing Samuel Gaze of New Zealand to win the mountain bike title on the penultimate day of cycling's world championships. His jersey came hours after Ferrand-Prevot dominated the women's field to win the title for the fifth time.

"It's a massive relief," Pidcock said. "As soon as I attacked, my gears were jumping all over the place. I didn't know if I should stop and tighten it up. My race could have been over at any point. I didn't want to go proper and put it under any stress."

"That was a stressful last two laps," he added.

Gaze finished 19 seconds back in failing to add the Olympic-distance cross-country title to the

CYCLING

short-track world title he won earlier in the world championships. Nino Schurter, the 10-time cross-country world champion from Switzerland, was right behind Gaze heading into the final lap but faded and finished 34 seconds back in third.

Dutch star Mathieu van der Poel, who got up from a late crash to secure the road race title last weekend, was trying to join Ferrand-Prevot as the only riders to hold the cyclocross, road race and mountain bike titles in the same year. He crashed on a seemingly benign corner early in the mountain bike race, held his right knee in pain and ultimately did not finish.

The injury did not appear serious, and van der Poel conceded to Dutch media later that "it was my own fault."

Pidcock had been largely focusing on the road before the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021, then he hopped on a mountain bike and showed his strength, endurance and bike-handling ability in winning Britain's first medal of any color.

Pidcock continues to compete on the road for the Ineos Grenadiers team, winning Strade Bianche earlier this year to go with a second-place finish in Liege-Bastogne-Liege and a third-place finish in the Amstel Gold Race. But he also won a pair of cyclocross races this past season, and his mountain bike World Cup win at Nové Mlýns sent him to Scotland with confidence.

"To be honest I haven't got much words at the moment. It's been such a long week, waiting for the start of this race," said Pidcock, who took bronze in the short-track race. "I don't have much left now.



Reims' Yunus Abdelhamid (left), challenges for the ball with Marseille's Vitor Oliveira Vitorinha during the French League One soccer match between Marseille and Reims at the Velodrome stadium in Marseille, France. (AP)



Great Britain's Thomas Pidcock celebrates winning the Men Elite Cross-country Olympic race during day ten of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships at Glentworth Forest, Scotland. (AP)

I need to go lie down. But you know, I pulled my skinsuit on this morning and it says in the collar, 'Inspire the nation,' and I hope I did that today."

Ferrand-Prevot has no shortage of confidence at the world championships.

She won the title for the first time in 2015, when she also won the cyclocross and road race championships, and had added three more titles in the past four years before Saturday. But her off-road dominance took a big hit at the Tokyo Games, where the Swiss team swept the medal stand and she finished more than 4 1/2 minutes back

in 10th place.

"At the moment I'm feeling really happy," Ferrand-Prevot said. "It was a super hard race. I didn't have a good start but I wanted to keep my own pace during the whole race. I did full gas on the uphill and tried to recover on the downhill, and it worked perfectly and I'm really proud, because I kept my plan."

Ferrand-Prevot was waiting at the finish line to hug French teammate Loana Lecomte, who finished 1:14 back to take the silver medal. Puck Pieterse of the Netherlands was another 13 seconds back to take the bronze medal.

Kylian returns to training

PSG draw without Mbappe and other stars, Vitorinha scores Marseille's winner

PARIS, Aug 13, (AP): Star striker Kylian Mbappe watched from the stands as Paris Saint-Germain began its title defense with a draw 0-0 home draw against Lorient in the French league.

Mbappe, Neymar and Marco Verratti were all left out by new PSG coach Luis Enrique at Parc des Princes.

Mbappe topped last season's scoring charts with 29 league goals, but was not on the field against Lorient because he is mired in a contract standoff. He wants to play this season and leave for free when his contract runs out, but PSG wants to sell him to stop this happening. Looking pensive, Mbappe sat alongside his younger brother Ethan as PSG struggled to break down a well-organized Lorient, which hit the post from midfielder Laurent Abergel's shot in the 43rd and went close near the end through midfielder Romain Faivre.

Central defender Milan Skriniar, attacking midfielder Marco Asensio, and forward Goncalo Ramos all had their PSG debuts but made little difference.

Neymar trained alone on Friday, with the club saying it was because he was recovering from a viral infection. But Neymar could leave PSG this summer. Verratti and Neymar have been linked with a move to the lucrative Saudi Arabian league. Earlier, Portugal forward Vitorinha scored a second-half winner as Marseille opened its campaign with a 2-1 home win against Reims.

Marseille's new coach Marcelino kept veteran striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang on the bench with Marseille facing Panathinaikos in the return leg of a Champions League qualifier next Tuesday. Marseille, which finished third in the French league last season, trails 1-0.

Marseille struggled at home last season and the match started badly at Stade Velodrome when Japan forward Junya

Ito put Reims ahead in the 10th minute.

After midfielder Azzedine Ounahi equalized for Marseille midway through the first half, Ito and Vitorinha both had a goal disallowed in quick succession. But club-record signing Vitorinha did celebrate in the 73rd when he ran onto a cross from winger Ismaila Sarr and clipped the ball over goalkeeper Yehvann Diouf.

Saint-Etienne's match at Rodez in the second tier was delayed for one hour after dozens of Saint-Etienne fans appeared to brawl among themselves. Television images showed two rival Ultras groups fighting in the away section.

Saint-Etienne is one of France's most storied clubs and has won 10 league titles, one less than record-holder PSG. But Les Verts were relegated at the end of the 2021-22 season.

Tensions between Mbappe and Paris Saint-Germain eased a little on Sunday after the star striker was allowed to return to training following "constructive and positive talks"

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between the two parties.

Mbappe watched from the stands on Saturday night as defending champion PSG drew 0-0 at home to Lorient because he is mired in a contract standoff. He wants to play this season and leave for free when his contract runs out, but PSG wants to sell him to stop this happening.

"After very constructive and positive discussions between Paris Saint-Germain and Kylian Mbappe before the PSG-Lorient match, the player has returned to training with the first-team group this (Sunday) morning," PSG said in a statement on Sunday. PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi reportedly spoke to players at training on Sunday to tell them that Mbappe was once again part of the squad for the season. However, Mbappe already said he wanted to stay and play before leaving at the end of the campaign when his contract runs out, so in that respect little has changed.



Enrique



Al Nassr's Cristiano Ronaldo, and teammates celebrate with the trophy of the Arab Club Championship Cup at King Fahd Stadium in Taif, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

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Kane 'makes' Bayern debut but misses out on Super Cup trophy

Leipzig rout Bavarians in final

MUNICH, Aug 13, (AP): Harry Kane was denied a long-awaited trophy in his first game with Bayern Munich after his team lost 3-0 to Leipzig in the German Super Cup.

On the same day he signed for Bayern, Kane came on as a substitute in the 64th minute to a roar from the crowd with his team trailing 2-0 but could do little to turn

the game around.

Instead, Leipzig's Dani Olmo put on a display of Kane-style clinical finishing to score a hat trick as Bayern's defensive frailties from last season persisted. The Spain midfielder scored off a loose ball at a third-minute free kick, again with a moment of solo skill just before halftime, and completed his hat trick from the penalty spot shortly after Kane entered the game.

Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel told broadcaster Sky before the game that his new star signing was a "model professional" and "just needs to be Harry Kane" at Bayern.

Kane greeted the crowd during the pre-game warmups to enthusiastic applause. He has the No. 9 shirt at Bayern, the number previously worn by Robert Lewandowski and 1970s great Gerd Müller.

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Instead of a show of Bayern's dominance in Germany, Kane had to watch as Leipzig exposed the shortcomings in his new team. Leipzig needed just three minutes to

take the lead. A free kick from the left flank took a deflection off Leipzig's Benjamin Henrichs, allowing Olmo the space to shoot past goalkeeper Sven Ulreich, who was playing in place of the still-injured Manuel Neuer.

Olmo made a slick turn to squeeze through a gap between Matthijs de Ligt and Konrad Laimer before scoring through Ulreich's legs for his second. The third came from a penalty awarded for handball when Bayern right back Noussair Mazraoui raised his hand in the penalty area and Leipzig's Nicolas Seiwald headed the ball into it.

Mancini announces surprise resignation as coach of Italy

ROME, Aug 13, (AP): Italy coach Roberto Mancini surprisingly resigned on Sunday, ending an up-and-down tenure with the national team that included a European Championship title in 2021 but also a failed qualification for last year's World Cup.

The Italian soccer federation issued a short announcement saying that Mancini communicated his resignation "late last night," adding that a new coach would be named "over the next days."

The federation doesn't have much time with Euro 2024 qualifying matches against North Macedonia and Ukraine scheduled for Sept. 10 and 12, respectively.

Mancini was hired in May 2018 to revive the Azzurri after they also failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup under predecessor Gian Piero Ventura. And he did

by adding flair and youth to a team that won admirers all over the continent during the year-delayed Euro 2020.

Mancini was hailed for his vision when he called up then-Roma forward Nicolò Zaniolo before he had ever played in Serie A, but he also struggled to find top players from the Italian league, which has been hesitant to use young players at times.

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It's unclear what's next for the 58-year-old Mancini, who was a leading club coach before taking over the national team, having won league titles at both Inter Milan and Manchester City.

Mancini was also a standout player for Sampdoria, Lazio and Italy.



Leipzig's players celebrate after winning the German Super Cup final between FC Bayern Munich and RB Leipzig at the Allianz Arena stadium in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Tottenham begin life without Kane with 2-2 draw at Brentford

Chelsea, Liverpool draw, Newcastle make early statement

NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND, Aug 13, (AP): Newcastle showed it is ready to build on last season's top-four finish by dismantling Aston Villa 5-1 on Saturday in their opening Premier League game of the campaign. Chelsea and Liverpool drew 1-1 in a thriller at Stamford Bridge.

Alexander Isak scored twice in a victory that could have been even bigger if not for a number of saves by Villa goalkeeper Emi Martinez as Newcastle dominated a game between two sides that both exceeded expectations last season.

Eddie Howe and Unai Emery were both candidates for manager of the season for leading their teams into Europe, but there was no doubt about whose tactics worked better as Howe's Newcastle tore Villa apart in the second half with three unanswered goals and other chances.

That was after a lively opening to the game that saw three goals in the first 16 minutes at St. James' Park.

Newcomer Sandro Tonali put Newcastle ahead in the sixth minute, before Villa's marquee summer signing Moussa Diaby equalized in the 11th.

Isak then netted his first goal five minutes later by sidefooting home after a well-worked set piece to restore Newcastle's lead for good.

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Villa defender Tyrone Mings had to be carried off on a stretcher in the 31st after sustaining a leg injury, another blow for Emery's team after midfielder Emiliano Buendia suffered a serious knee injury this week.

Martinez then got away with just a booking when he mistimed a run out of his area in first-half injury time and pulled down Miguel Almiron, with referee Andy Madley opting not to show a red card.

It was all Newcastle in the second half, as Isak stretched the lead with a delicate chip in the 58th minute before Callum Wilson and Harvey Barnes

Neymar agrees a 2-year deal with Saudi club Al-Hilal

PARIS, Aug 13, (AP): Paris Saint-Germain soccer superstar Neymar has reportedly agreed a two-year deal to join Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal.

France's leading sports daily L'Equipe said on its website Sunday that the PSG and Brazil forward will receive a total of 160 million euros (\$175 million) over two seasons. No details were given as to how much the transfer fee would be for Neymar, who has also been linked with a return to Barcelona.

The Associated Press has asked defending French champion PSG to confirm the deal. The request was not immediately answered.

Neymar's current contract with PSG runs until 2025. Neymar missed PSG's season-opening 0-0 draw against Lorient in the French league on Saturday after training alone

added late goals.

Tottenham began life without Harry Kane with an entertaining 2-2 draw at Brentford.

All four goals came in an action-filled first half that gave a first indication of what Tottenham will look like without its talismanic striker under new manager Ange Postecoglou.



Chelsea's Conor Gallagher (left) challenges for the ball with Liverpool's Dominik Szoboszlai during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Liverpool at Stamford Bridge Stadium in London. (AP)

A day after Kane sealed his move to Bayern Munich, Spurs dominated possession and scored from its only two efforts on target in the first half, and yet still had to come from 2-1 down after being undone defensively on a couple of occasions.

While both teams settled into a more cautious rhythm after the break, the opening 45 minutes of Posteco-

glou's reign were enough to show that his underlying tactics will be a far cry from his predecessor Antonio Conte's defensive rigidity and focus on counterattacks.

And while Spurs couldn't find a winner, a draw at Brentford could be seen as a positive first step given that Thomas Frank's team beat Manchester United, Manchester City and Liverpool at home last season.

The visitors took the lead when James Maddison delivered a pinpoint free kick that was headed in by Cristian Romero in the 11th minute. The defender then had to be taken off, though, after showing signs of a possible concussion following an earlier clash of heads.

Brentford equalized after the hosts were awarded a penalty when Son Heung-min made light contact with Mathias Jensen in the area, and Bryan Mbeumo converted from the spot. Tottenham were exposed defensively again on a counter in the 36th, when Rico Henry delivered a cross to Yoane Wissa, whose shot took a deflection to sneak past Tottenham's new goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario.

Emerson Royal then leveled for Tottenham in first-half injury time with a one-time shot from outside the area after another assist from Maddison.

Real blank Bilbao, Militão twists knee

Bellingham enjoys dream debut

BARCELONA, Spain, Aug 13, (AP): Jude Bellingham enjoyed a dream debut for Real Madrid after the England midfielder scored his team's second goal in a 2-0 win at Athletic Bilbao in their Spanish league opener.

Wearing the No. 5 of Madrid great Zinedine Zidane, Bellingham started the match while Luka Modric and Toni Kroos, the veterans he is tapped to take over from, watched from the bench at San Mames Stadium.

His goal was not a work of beauty like so many crafted by Zidane, and he perhaps had a bit of good fortune to guide it into the net. A left-side corner kick by David Alaba found Bellingham unmarked in the area, where he knocked the ball with one touch down onto the turf, only for it to bounce high and sail into the net over Spain goalkeeper Unai Simón.

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The 20-year-old Bellingham jogged to the endline and raised his arms to soak up the applause from the section of Madrid fans in the otherwise red-and-white stands.

"First game, first victory, first goal. Hala Madrid!" Bellingham said in Spanish in a message posted on Madrid's Twitter account after the game.

His goal doubled Madrid's lead in the 36th after Rodrygo had put Madrid ahead eight minutes earlier.

Bellingham, who joined Madrid on a 130-million-euro (\$142 million) move from Borussia Dortmund this summer, did show some Zidane-like flair when he made a graceful slalom to elude three defenders as he raced down the field and into Bilbao's area in the second half.

Rodrygo, and fellow Brazilian Vinícius Júnior, will likely need all the extra goals that Bellingham and Madrid's midfield can provide. The 14-time European Cup winners have not signed a world-class striker to replace Karim Benzema since his move to Saudi Arabia, as Madrid appears to be once again



Real Madrid's goalkeeper Andriy Lunin (right) clears the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Athletic Club and Real Madrid at the San Mames stadium in Bilbao, Spain. (AP)

hoping it can lure Kylian Mbappé from Paris Saint-Germain.

Rodrygo got his goal when he rifled a low strike under Simón after he had worked a one-two combination with Dani Carvajal and bounced off defender Íñigo Lekue, who seemed more worried about not committing a penalty than impeding his progress.

Vinícius went close to adding a second after he spun around his marker, slipped past Bilbao's last man, only for Simón to save his effort - before Bellingham did the honors of doubling the advantage.

Andriy Lunin was in goal for Madrid. A rarely used backup for the past three years, the Ukrainian keeper is now Madrid's starter after Thibaut Courtois tore a left-knee ligament this week. Madrid's defense saved Lunin from being seriously tested by Bilbao. Alaba and Aurélien Tchouaméni both got low to block shots by Oihan Sancet and Alex Berenguer when Bilbao mustered its best minutes late in the second half.

Madrid's players wore T-shirts saying "Lots of strength, Tibo" before kickoff to show their support for Courtois.