



Private universities face penalties as committee exposes violations

MPs advance electoral overhaul with hybrid system proposal

Amir's health stable

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): The health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah remains stable, said the Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sunday.

Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah expressed wishes of good health and rapid recovery for His Highness the Amir.

Opinion

Your Highness the Crown Prince, allow me to say ...

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

THERE should not be a vacuum of power in the government, even when the ruler is on a personal vacation, as his powers should transfer directly to the second-in-command in the state, irrespective of whether he is the crown prince, a member of the monarchies, or the vice president in the republics.

The same applies if the head of state is exposed to health problems that require him to be admitted to the hospital. Someone appointed by the Constitution should then act directly on his behalf to exercise this role, and he thus may exercise all the powers of government.

Any defect in the governance system means chaos and an intensification of the conflict of interests.

That is why the constitutions of the countries are clear in detailing this matter with extreme precision. Accordingly, what is issued by the person entrusted with the affairs cannot be discussed by anyone, according to what he decrees.

Your Highness the Crown Prince, allow me to address you directly. This is coming from a heart that loves Kuwait, and is aware of your concerns and worries. It is also because some stakeholders are preventing the official from telling the truth, or are working to fabricate charges against anyone who dares to try to raise his voice or the voice of the people to him.

This is especially if there is corruption in the security forces or the entourage surrounding it. Article 45 of the Constitution stipulates that "Every individual shall have the right to address the public authorities in writing over his signature..."

Your Highness the Crown Prince, your people rejoiced in your recent decision in which you suspended settlements and deals made at the expense of the public interest in recent months, especially during the period between the announcement of the Prime Minister's grilling and his ascension to the podium. This represented a systematic plunder of positions, when justice and equality were overlooked.

There is no doubt that the country, since liberation until today, has experienced many failures as a result of the councils of ministries, which were either based on quotas in their worst form, or because of the failure of its boss - the prime minister.

Therefore, citizens saw nothing but more hesitation in decisions and deals, and a lack of justice in projects, which turned into something similar to "Ali Baba's cave" for every share. The game of personal interests is being played out due to which the burden is heavy, but the first step, which is the most difficult, came at the right time.

Your Highness the Crown Prince, successive parliaments were supposed to monitor the work of the ministries and correct their course, but unfortunately, the relationship with the executive authority was built on corruption and interests. This is why it lacked prudence and popular trust, especially in the last stage. We all saw during the Prime Minister's grilling session how the settlements were formulated, even though the grilling parliamentarian's statement included many points that should be highlighted.

Your Highness the Crown Prince, Kuwait is do not criticize the National Assembly, but rather the executive authority, which did not provide them with anything, but instead sank in an inch of water by submitting to the parliamentarians, and became an obedient tool in their hand. This undoubtedly represents the height of the departure from the Constitution, which called for cooperation between the two authorities without one giving up to the other.

Your Highness the Crown Prince, allow me to address you without ambiguity unlike some people who address the authorities through pseudonyms.

Even though some of them spoke the truth, Kuwaitis still remember your warm tears at the opening of the last session of the National Assembly, when Your Highness mentioned the noble verse, "Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us" because you realized from the beginning that there was no room for lack of responsibility in the country.

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By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Several parliamentary committees met on Sunday to discuss various items in their agenda.

The Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee deliberated on the proposed reformation of constituencies in preparation for discussion and voting at the National Assembly.

Chairman of the committee MP Muhannad Al-Sayer has confirmed the completion of the panel's report on amending the constituencies in order to combine the individual and list electoral systems, through which a voter casts two votes -- one for the individual candidate and the other for the list. He pointed out that the suggestion is a hybrid election system -- a combination of individual and list candidacy.

The bill consists of the following articles:

1. Kuwait is divided into five constituencies

as per the table adopted in the last elections.

2. The candidacy in each constituency is based on the individual and list systems, where in each constituency has four to six candidates. The list should not be formed according to sectarian or tribal bases. If the required number of candidates for a single list is not reached, the number can be completed by taking from the individual candidates in the same constituency. If the required number is still not reached, the candidates of the list are considered individual candidates.

3. The Higher Elections Commission gives the name for every list and the candidates are listed alphabetically.

4. Every constituency elects 10 MPs and every voter has the right to vote two times -- one for the individual candidate and the other for his chosen list.

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Expat driving license goes digital with 1 year validity

E-renewal

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: After the approval of Ministerial Resolution No. (410) of 2023, which defines the validity criteria for driving licenses for Kuwaitis and expats in different residency categories, specifying a one-year duration for residents with the option of renewal, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, has directed the General Traffic Department at the Ministry of Interior to solely use electronic driving licenses for expats within the country.

This instruction comes into effect today, Sunday, 10/12/2023, and removes the necessity for physical print copies, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry of Interior has provided additional clarification, stating that the electronic renewal of driving licenses is achievable through the Ministry's website and the consolidated government application for electronic services, referred to as "Sahel." Applicants who meet the specified conditions and comply with regulatory requirements will receive electronic approval for their applications. Following this, the license can be activated using the Ministry of Interior's documents within the "Sahel" application, specifically in the section labeled "Kuwait Mobile ID."

The Ministry underscored that individuals residing in the State of Kuwait can check the status of their driving licenses using the "Kuwait Mobile ID" application. It was highlighted that a green mark indicates validity, whereas a red mark indicates expiration, requiring either renewal through the "Sahel" application or withdrawal in compliance with traffic regulations. For Kuwaiti license holders, following these procedures entails contacting the General Traffic Department. Furthermore, Kuwaiti residents traveling abroad are obligated to use driving licenses issued by their respective countries.

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Palestinians mourn relatives killed in the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip outside a morgue in Khan Younis on Dec. 10, 2023. (AP)



Kuwait blanketed in fog on Sunday as the Ministry of Interior urged motorists to navigate cautiously amidst reduced visibility. — See Page 3

Kuwait COP28 pavilion shows climate resolve

DUBAI, Dec 10, (Agencies): Kuwait's pavilion at the Conference of the Parties (COP28), held in Dubai, displayed a rich cultural front that talks about the Kuwaiti efforts in supporting global environmental initiatives and its commitment to Gulf, regional and international resolutions of carbon neutrality in the oil field in 2050 and nationwide in 2060.

The Kuwaiti pavilion also included lectures on Kuwait's role and efforts in environmental preservation and discussed the notions of climate change and ways to limit it in pursuit of achieving sustainable developments in combating global environmental challenges.

The Kuwaiti participants also gave a summary of their projects in improving the efficiency of natural resource use and promoting innovation in renewable energy fields.

It also sheds light on the importance of strengthening international cooperation in the field of environment through partnerships with regional and international organizations that combine economic growth and environmental protection to support climate change mitigation projects.

Meanwhile, negotiators have been urged to narrow down their options so they can agree on how to save Earth from disastrous levels of warming and help vulnerable societies adapt to weather extremes as the clock runs down on United Nations climate talks.

Vote runs for three days

Egyptians set to confirm El-Sisi win

CAIRO, Dec 10, (AP): Egyptians began voting Sunday in a presidential election in which President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi faces no serious challenger and is certain to win another term, keeping him in power until 2030.

The election has been overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Almost all Egyptians' attention has been on the war on their country's eastern borders and the suffering of Palestinian civilians in the coastal enclave.

The three-day vote, beginning Sunday, is also taking place amid a staggering economic crisis in Egypt, a country of 105 million people in which nearly a third live in poverty, according to official figures. The crisis stems from mismanagement of the economy but also from the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, which rattled the global economy.

El-Sissi faces three other candidates: Farid Zahran, head of



In this photo provided by Egypt's presidency media office, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, casts his vote for the presidential elections at a polling station, in Cairo, Egypt, Dec. 10, 2023. (AP)

the opposition Social Democratic Party; Abdel-Sanad Yamama, chairman of Wafd Party; and Hazem Omar, head of the Republican People's Party.

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Sunday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

Further, His Highness received Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday evening received a call from Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani.

The call came to inquire about the health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as Premier Al-Sudani wished His Highness everlasting good health and wellness.

His Highness the Crown Prince voiced much appreciation for the sincere fraternal sentiments; valuing the good gesture.

His Highness Sheikh Mishal, also during the call, wished the Iraqi people all progress and prosperity. (KUNA)

PARIS: France said Sunday that one of its warships in the Red Sea was targeted by two drones coming from Yemen. Both were intercepted and shot down.

A short statement from the Armies Ministry did not say who fired the drones at the French Navy frigate Languedoc on Saturday night.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen have vowed to target ships operating in the Red Sea. (AP)

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Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:07	Asr	14:31
Sunrise ..	06:31	Maghrib ..	16:50
Zohr	11:41	Isha	18:12

Local

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

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Warm and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speed of 06-26 km/h.			
By Night: Rather cold to cold			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	29	17	
Kuwait Airport	29	11	
Abdaly	29	10	
Jahra	29	13	
Salmiyah	21	19	
Nuwaisib	28	12	
Wafra	28	12	

Strong desire to set up shelters, hotline for abused: study

‘Young women face various kinds of violence from first-degree kin’

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: A team of academic researchers from Kuwait University, in cooperation with Asia Research and Statistical Consulting Company, conducted a study on violence against women to measure the extent of the need for a shelter, counseling center and a hotline for abused women in the country, reports Al-Anba daily.

Dr Lubna Al-Qadi, Dr Maha Al-Sajari, Dr Anwar Al-Khreinaj, Dr Ahmad Al-Sabr, Dr Dalal Al-Baloul and Dr Hamad Al-Aslawi participated in the study.

The daily obtained a copy of the study, in which around 10,000 women in Kuwait participated -- most of whom belong to the age group from 18 to 25 years or 47 percent of the total number of participants, followed by those aged 26 to 33 years old (17 percent) and then those whose ages range from 34 to 41 years (13 percent).



Dr. Al-Qadi

On the marital status of participants, the majority are single (53 percent), 50 percent are married and six percent are divorced. On their education, nearly two-thirds of the participants hold a bachelor's degree (67 percent), while those holding a diploma accounted for 14 percent, and those with less than high school qualification accounted for 12 percent.

On their employment, almost half of the participants (49 percent) work in the government sector, and about one third (30 percent) work in the private sector.

The participants are from the six different governorates, and their distribution according to governorate is almost the same.

Regarding the extent of violence against women in Kuwait, participants were asked whether they know women currently subjected to violence and 2,772 participants or 35.5 percent responded in the affirmative.

Asked if they are currently exposed to violence, eight percent of the total sample confirmed being exposed to violence and that they need urgent therapeutic intervention.

When the total percentage of women currently exposed to violence (43.5 percent) was compared to the total population of women in Kuwait, it was found that the lives of 20 out of every 10,000 women are at risk.

Regarding the identity of the aggressors, the most prominent aggressors against women are first-degree relatives.

On the forms of violence to which women are exposed, verbal violence ranked first with 6.9 percent, followed by psychological

cal violence such as detention, deprivation or blackmail with 4.8 percent, physical violence with 4.3 percent and mental violence with 3.7 percent.

Majority of the study sample expressed their support for the establishment of a hotline that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to report any emergency that might put their lives at risk.

Around 98 percent of the participants confirmed their need for a day counseling center that provides the necessary guidance and treatment for all women who are victims of violence, whether for emergency cases or cases in which there is no threat to their lives; while 86 percent of the study participants affirmed the need for a shelter or housing for abused women that provides protection for victims whose lives are threatened.

Dr Maha Al-Sajari indicated that the results of the exploratory study according to the social and demographic variables of the study sample in all governorates of Kuwait indicate a strong desire to establish shelters, a hotline, and centers for social and psychological counseling for abused women. She said there is a high demand in the Kuwaiti society, especially among the youth group, to establish shelters for abused women. The study also revealed that the father, husband and mother mostly engage in violence toward women, and that verbal violence is the most common type of violence among members of the study sample.

Dr Lubna Al-Qadi explained that the results of this study are consistent with the World Health Organization statistics, stating 30 percent of women in society suffer from violence, and that the aggressor is a first-degree relative of the victim. She stressed that the society needs intensive awareness over long periods on how to build healthy family relationships that are based on understanding and respect and free of various forms of violence.

Dr Anwar Al-Khreinaj said one of the most common factors pushing people to assault others, whether men or women, is the lack of awareness of the concept of violence in theoretical terms, and thus, a generation is created that sees such practices as a legitimate right and part of educational practices.

Al-Khreinaj emphasized the importance of awareness and healthy socialization based on respect for relationships, roles, differences, distances and choices.

‘Most Kuwait’s schools require lots of repairs’

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Kuwaiti volunteer entrepreneur Youssef Al-Omran has requested Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Adel Al-Manea to approve the maintenance of 100 toilets and renovation of 100 sheds in various schools throughout the country, reports Al-Rai daily.

Al-Omran took this step after calling for the repair of street potholes, cleaning parks and dozens of other social initiatives that he launched as part of his volunteering campaign.

In response, Al-Manea instructed the assistant undersecretary for Educational Facilities and Planning to coordinate with Al-Omran in accordance with the regulations and laws. Al-Omran disclosed that the aim of the campaign is “to push for national community participation and support in strengthening love for the homeland through cooperation and solidarity in building a sophisticated and beautiful nation.”

The daily obtained a copy of Al-Omran's letter stating: “Given that Kuwait's schools suffer from lack of maintenance, I launched the volunteering campaign in cooperation with some private companies and banks in order to carry out maintenance works in 100 toilets and renovation of 100 sheds in different schools.” He confirmed obtaining preliminary approval from the minister, indicating the budget will be determined soon.

He went on to say that his volunteer initiative in Jahra Governorate focuses on repairing potholes on the roads leading to the College of Basic Education under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works.



KUNA photo
Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban and Ambassador of Pakistan to the State of Kuwait Malik Mohammad Farooq during the meeting.

Kuwait, Pakistan in food security talks

Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban and Ambassador of Pakistan to the State of Kuwait Malik Mohammad Farooq discussed on Sunday ways to enhance cooperation within food security.

In a statement, the Ministry of Commerce said that Minister Al-Aiban commended during the meeting the coop-

eration between Kuwait and Pakistan, adding that the two countries were eager to develop ties on all possible levels.

The statement indicated that the meeting also touched on food security opportunity offered by Pakistan to Kuwait especially within agricultural and livestock imports. The two sides agreed to hold further meetings to look into other venues of cooperation. (KUNA)

Comp claim filed against ex-PM

Court sets Jan 9 hearing to consider case

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Lawyers Ayed Al-Rashidi and Abdulaziz Al-Yahya filed a compensation claim against the former Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, who was convicted in the Army Fund case. The court has set the session of January 9, 2024 to consider the case.

They clarified that they filed the lawsuit because of the harm they suffered as Kuwaiti citizens and in view of the damage to Kuwait's reputation and the prestige of the state as a result of the defendant's corrupt and sinful act.

The two lawyers confirmed in the lawsuit that the first respondent was the Prime Minister from 2011 to 2019, prior to which he was the First Deputy Prime Minister from December 7, 2006 to November 28, 2011.

They said, “While he was the Prime Minister, the defendant appeared in front of the audio-visual media, attended meetings and issued statements that were published in daily newspapers, local, Arab and international news, and television channels. During those occasions, he addressed the Kuwaiti people with resonant slogans about integrity and transparency in fighting and eliminating corruption.

Surprised

However, the people were surprised when he was convicted by a final ruling. It became clear from the Court of Cassation that he had seized Kuwait's money unlawfully and illegally with the intention of keeping it for himself in breach of the political and legal responsibility assigned to him by His Highness the Amir the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, let alone his failure to shoulder the responsibility of preserving public money and not tampering with it.

The penal laws were established for a number of considerations, including protecting the supreme interests of the state and society and curbing those with deviant behavior. The court alone has the right to enforce the law to assess compensation and deter those who dare to embezzle and tamper with public funds.

It has become a trade from which the corrupt make money, so instead of the defendant honoring his role as a public servant, facilitating the interests of the nation and its people, and combating corruption, he filled his pocket using sin and aggression. However, injustice is no substitute for truth.

His matter was exposed by patriots of this nation, and they brought him to the court of justice with all legal guarantees to be tried in the presence of witnesses. It remains the responsibility of every official, rather, every member of this society, to fight corruption, each according to his ability.”

The lawyers believe that the damages they suffered were a result of the mistake of the defendant in question, and they affirmed that they must be compensated for these damages. They also have the right to request for a temporary civil compensation as reparation for this damage, which is estimated at KD 5,001.

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Officers jailed for theft: The Court of Appeals sentenced a First Sergeant Officer to five-year imprisonment, ordered his dismissal from his position, and imposed a fine of KD 3,000 on him. His partner was also sentenced to five-year imprisonment. They were accused of stealing oil company's cables worth KD 1,500 from a restricted area.

Officers from the Ministry of Interior had arrested the two individuals in possession of electrical cables weighing 500 kilograms from an unknown source and two hacksaws in their car. They confessed to stealing them from the site of a construction company using the seized tools.

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Jail, fine overturned: The Court of Cassation upheld the verdict issued by the Court of Appeals, which refrained from punishing a Kuwaiti citizen who fought for terrorist groups in Syria and also collected USD 20,000 to fund terrorism.

It is noteworthy that the Criminal Court had sentenced him to five-year imprisonment and imposed a fine on him. When questioned by the Public Prosecution, the citizen admitted to transferring a lot of money to a terrorist organization after collecting donations from citizens who were not aware of the matter, as they thought they were contributing to providing relief for the Syrian people.



Top and above: Pictures taken at the meeting.

Canada envoy meets Lulu Kuwait Director to promote business ties

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: In a significant step towards fostering bilateral economic ties, Her Excellency Aliya Mawani, the esteemed Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait, engaged in a productive business meeting with Mr. Mohammad Haris, the Director of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait. The meeting took place at the Lulu Hypermarket Regional Office in Kuwait on the 6th of December 2023.

The meeting showcased the commitment of both Canada and Kuwait in nurturing economic partnerships and enhancing trade relations. The presence of key officials from Lulu Hypermarket added an air of collaboration and innovation to the discussions, highlighting the dedication of both parties to expand their cooperation further.

Lulu Hypermarket, one of the largest retail chains in the region, currently offers more than 250 Canadian products on its shelves. The diversity of these products ranges across various categories, catering to the discerning tastes of Kuwaiti consumers. This range includes premium food items, beverages, consumer goods, and more, exemplifying the remarkable quality and variety that Canadian products are known for.

Ambassador Aliya Mawani expressed her enthusiasm for the ongoing cooperation between Canada and Kuwait, emphasizing the importance of creating mutually beneficial business opportunities. She underscored the potential for the expansion of Canadian product offerings in Lulu Hyper-

market outlets across Kuwait, which aligns with the growing demand for high-quality international products in the Kuwaiti market. The meeting also saw the active participation of Jade Makki, Trade Commissioner from the Canadian Embassy, alongside Ambassador Mawani. Their joint contribution further solidifies collaborative efforts between Canada and Kuwait.

Director Mohammad Haris echoed Ambassador Mawani's sentiments, highlighting the success of the existing collaboration and outlining a strategic vision for the future. He affirmed Lulu Hypermarket's commitment to increasing the diversity of Canadian products available in their stores. The Director also expressed optimism about exploring new avenues for collaboration, encompassing various product categories, and enhancing the shopping experience for the Kuwaiti consumers.

In a notable development, Lulu Hypermarket announced plans to host a significant Canadian festival in upcoming year 2024. This decision, discussed during the meeting, aims to celebrate the rich diversity of Canadian products, providing Kuwaiti consumers with an immersive experience and highlighting the best of what Canada has to offer. Additionally, Lulu Group International revealed plans to open a sourcing and export hub in the upcoming months in Canada, further enhancing the dynamic and forward-looking nature of the Canada-Kuwait business relationship.

‘Dignity, freedom for all’

Kuwait marks 75th Rights Day

By Dalal Sharrar

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait joins other UN member states in celebrating the 75th Human Rights Day under the motto of “dignity, freedom and justice for all” in commemoration of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The Declaration, a milestone in the history of human rights, was endorsed by the UN General Assembly Resolution 217 on December 10, 1948.

The first article of the UDHR reads, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Kuwait's constitution of 1962 and the subsequent legislations enshrined respect for the rights and freedoms of all citizens in keeping with the provisions of the Declaration, Chairman of the National Diwan for Human Rights (NDHR) Jasem Al-Mubarak told KUNA on Saturday.

The Human Rights Day is an annual occasion to shed light on the importance of protecting all members of the society from any abuses and on the challenges facing human rights activists worldwide, he pointed out.

Ambassador Al-Mubarak highlighted the significance of global effort to implement the provisions of the UDHR, the UN Charter and other relevant laws, saying that

the international community needs nothing but political will to protect human rights.

Commenting on the serious human rights violations being committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinians in Gaza Strip, he said, “Regrettably, some countries, including permanent members of the UN Security Council, apply double standards and selective approaches when it comes to implementation of such legally binding documents.”

“What's going on in Gaza is not a war; it's rather a genocide and a crime against humanity,” he stressed, affirming that the Palestinian people have a legitimate right to liberation, self-determination and

statehood.

Ambassador Al-Mubarak noted that the State of Kuwait asserted itself as a peace-loving country that defends human rights and lobbies for humanitarian action in disaster-hit countries around the globe.

In commemoration of Kuwait's trailblazing relief efforts, the United Nations declared Kuwait on September 9, 2014, as “center of humanitarian action” and the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and “leader of humanitarian action,” Ambassador Al-Mubarak added.



Al-Mubarak

News in Brief

Nationality reinstated: The Council of Ministers issued three decisions on the reinstatement of the citizenship of six individuals who were stripped of their nationality for various reasons in 2016 and 2018, reports Al-Qabas daily.

These decisions were published in the Official Gazette ‘Kuwait Al-Yaum’ on Sunday, stipulating the reinstatement of the citizenship of six individuals and those who acquired citizenship as their dependents.

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39,000 register for Hajj: Hajj Campaigns Union Director Ahmed Al-Duwaihi revealed that more than 39,000 citizens and Bedouins have so far registered for Hajj this year, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily, Al-Duwaihi said the registration period for the 2024 Hajj season through the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs platform will end on Dec 13.

He confirmed that the fifth Hajj exhibition will start on Dec 14 and will continue until Dec 20 under the patronage of Minister of Information, Endowments and Islamic Affairs Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi with the participation of the majority of Hajj campaigns and companies that will offer various services for the pilgrims. He added a total of 63 Hajj campaigns will operate trips for 8,000 pilgrims -- Kuwait's quota for this year.

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PADA transfer to MoE: The transfer of the Educational Sector in the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) to the Ministry of Education (MoE) includes the related services, while the authority retains its oversight role over the sector, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources confirmed that the authority fully supports the Ministry of Education to ensure the smooth transition, indicating the two entities will be holding a series of meetings soon to lay down the required vi-

sion and coordinate efforts in the completion of the transition process.

On the disbursement of financial dues to the concerned educational institutions, sources explained a study is being conducted in this regard and the two entities will discuss this in their upcoming meetings.

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New dept on cards: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry intends to establish a new department in its Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Sector next year, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources disclosed the new department will follow up online stores, receive consumer complaints, as well as the licensing of online stores and advertisements for offers and discounts published on social media. Sources pointed out the new department will play an important role as it will help the commercial inspectors identify and contact the owners of online stores in case a complaint is filed against them.

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61 held in campaign: A total of 42 youths and 19 adults were detained at the Traffic Police Unit recently for committing various violations such as driving without a license and other grave violations from Dec 2-8, reports Al-Anba daily.

Statistics issued by the General Traffic Department, headed by Major General Youssef Al-Khadda, revealed that traffic campaigns in the six governorates resulted in the issuance of 18,940 citations for various traffic violations, 29 people wanted by law were arrested, 14 expatriates found to be holding expired residency permits, 55 vehicles were impounded as they were reported to have been used in committing crimes and a person in abnormal condition was nabbed.

During the aforementioned period, 165 vehicles and motorcycles were impounded for violating security and safety regulations or for committing serious violations.

Families’ social conditions being examined: official

9,510 minors and 304 underprivileged children under care of PAMA

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Director of Social Welfare Department at the Public Authority for Minors Affairs (PAMA) Tamader Al-Omar confirmed that the number of those under the care of the authority has reached 9,510 minors; while the number of the underprivileged reached 304 as at the end of November 2023, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an interview with the daily, Al-Omar disclosed that the department organizes diverse activities and events -- recreational, religious and educational -- including Umrah trips, strengthening lessons and others. She said the authority follows up the cases of children in schools, those in quarantine, minors residing outside the country, services provided and conditions of beneficiaries in social care homes.

On the services provided by the department, she cited social and educational services like following up minors in schools in cooperation with experts in the Ministry of Education and social institutions, and registering minors who meet the conditions for periodic assistance in strengthening lessons.

She added the social conditions of families are examined; and in case of problems, research is conducted to find appropriate solutions that are implemented through field visits.

She continued saying that the department also monitors those under quarantine and conducts field visits to check their health and social conditions, and carry out the necessary research to solve their problems.

According to Al-Omar, the authority is following up those residing outside the country, provides them with appropriate services, monitors beneficiaries in social care homes, cooperates with the concerned institutions to identify and solve their problems, and provides them with the appropriate amount of financial and social aid.

‘Implementing Kuwaitization in Kuwait University not possible’

‘Council decides to stop KU’s replacement policy for 4 years’

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Sabah Al-Salem University has justified its failure to implement the Kuwaitization policy and its difficulty in implementing the Civil Service Commission’s decision for the Kuwaitization of government jobs and its suspension for a period of four years due to the increase in the number of students accepted at Kuwait University during the academic year of 2022/2023.

The transition and interim operation of Sabah Al-Salem University City and the nature of work at the university, which differs from other government agencies, in terms of the continuation of classes in late hours into the night, resulted in the need for the provision of university services to its employees due to their technical and administrative competence.

In a memorandum submitted by the university to the minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, it explained that Kuwait University is going through an important and fateful phase through the gradual move to Sabah Al-Salem University City in Shadadiya. The state has harnessed all its facilities and departments to help

in this qualitative and unprecedented move. It has been facilitating the work so that there is no negligence in the management of this important facility, for which the university needs all its trained administrative and technical workers -- both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis -- in addition to other workers so that the university can manage its various facilities in an appropriate manner.

Depends

The university not only depends on faculty members, supporting faculty, and students for carrying out its mission, but it also relies entirely and integratedly on administrative workers, engineers, and assistant scientific researchers, as well as the technical workers in the various laboratories at the university level, including technicians.

The rate of Kuwaitization implemented by the university has currently reached 24.7 percent. The Kuwait University Council decided to stop the university’s replacement policy for a period of four years based on some important aspects related to the difficulty in implementing the Civil Service Commission’s decision on Kuwaitization.

The nature of the work at Kuwait University differs from other government agencies, as the work is predominantly academic in nature. The university is undergoing a major qualitative shift through the phased relocation process to the Sabah Al-Salem University City, which has an area of 6,000,000 square meters. This requires an urgent need for all trained technical and administrative personnel with high experience, both citizen

and expatriate, to manage its new buildings, modern laboratories, halls, theaters, and stadiums, as well as supervise the companies contracting with it for this huge project.

As a result of this qualitative and unprecedented shift, it requires the continuity of all university employees so that it can manage, operate and supervise all its facilities, whether the current facility with its multiple regions -- Khalidiya, Jabriya, Adailiya, Kaifan, Shuwaikh and Fintas -- and the facilities of the new university city -- Sabah Al-Salem University City in Shadadiya -- with its huge and numerous buildings which can accept large numbers of students exceeding the university’s capacity, the extension of the length of the school day from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, and the opening of libraries in all colleges until 9:00 pm.

Some work centers suffer from a scarcity in specialized technical workers with skills and experience such as University Press Department, Storage Affairs Department and Furnishing and Housing Department to deal with the different types of devices and machines. These centers try to maintain their employees due to the difficulty in recruiting technicians in these centers and in consideration of the seriousness of the work environment and operational aspects.

There are work centers that require the presence of employees in the evening. There are currently research laboratories at the university with a severe shortage of workers, namely library management, deanship of Student Affairs, and College of Graduate Studies.



Three ambulances for the Palestinians in Gaza being sent.

Kuwait sends 37th relief aid plane for Gaza

The 37th Kuwait relief plane for the Gaza Strip left to the Egyptian city of Al-Arish on Sunday, carrying 40 tons of humanitarian aid and three ambulances organized by Al-Salam Society for Humanitarian and Charitable Works, in partnership with the International Islamic Charitable Organization and the Ayat Charitable Society.

In a statement to KUNA, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Al-Salam Charitable Society Dr. Nabil Al-Aoun,

said that arrangements had been made with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Egyptian Red Crescent to send relief aid directly to Al-Arish warehouses at the Rafah crossing and deliver it to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Al-Aoun said that the relief aid came at the request of the Palestinian Red Crescent, especially in light of the severe decrease in all aspects of services and various materials in the Strip. (KUNA)

Memo issued in response to MP’s query

MEW cites buildings renting process

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and the Acting Minister of Public Works Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad says the process of renting buildings by the ministry begins with correspondence between the owner and the ministry. It then moves on to specifying the site to be rented, coordinating with the owner to visit the site, the governorate’s controller and the administration director inspecting the site, ensuring the safety of the building and its suitability to receive customers, agreeing on the appropriate rental value, and then signing the contract.

In a memorandum issued in response to a parliamentary question submitted by MP Falah Jamea, Dr. Al-Ostad explained that the number of buildings rented by the ministry is six for which the annual rental value is KD 111,301.

Due to the long documentary cycle required by permanent building construction projects, the ministry turned to renting, especially with urban expansion, which subsequently led to an increase in the number of customers and an increase in demand for electricity and water. This necessitated renting the buildings it needed to meet customers’ needs easier and faster.

Out of the ministry’s great interest to provide the customers with the best service, it established customer service offices in more than 40 residential areas. It is seeking to increase the number of permanent buildings to serve customers, facilitate their transactions, and collect the ministry’s dues more easily and quickly.

The rental process is carried out directly, and not through any committee in this regard. There are no violations or negligence regarding compliance with the contract, and there are no comments from the State Audit Bureau regarding the rental of buildings.

Dr. Al-Ostad concluded by stressing that whenever necessary, the ministry will be instructed to study the matter, develop a complete plan to dispense with the policy of renting buildings, and move towards constructing permanent buildings, in order to preserve public money.

Kuwait, the Palestinian cause — (Part II)

2002 (April 15): Kuwait declares that the Israeli occupation of Palestine is colonization decrying the Israeli army’s attacks and occupation of Palestinian towns.

2002 (April 15): Kuwait Red Crescent Society dispatches a convoy bearing 203 tons of food supplies to the occupied territories.

2002 (April 15): Kuwait launches a donation campaign for the Palestinian people themed, “Kuwait with you Palestine.”

2002 (April 28): The Palestine Charitable Committee of the International Islamic Charity Organization provides prefabricated houses to Palestinian families whose houses have been demolished by the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank.

2002 (April 29): Kuwait sends a convoy of 174 tons of food supplies destined for the Palestinian people to Amman.

2002 (July 15): Kuwait dispatches 180 tons of food including rice, sugar and flour to the Palestinians via Amman.

2002 (October 21): Up to 240 tons of food supplies dispatched by Kuwait to the Palestinian people arrive in Amman.

2002 (October 28): Kuwait donates USD 1.5 million to UNRWA.

2004 (May 25): The Kuwaiti Government earmarks USD two million worth of humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people.

2004 (June 20): The Kuwaiti Government allocates three million to help Palestinians secure dwellings.

2004 (October 10): The Kuwait Cabinet decides to allot USD one million to taper off the Palestinians’ suffering and urges the international community to intervene and end the painful conditions afflicting them.

2004 (December 7): Kuwait declares an annual contribution of USD 1.5 million to the UNRWA.

2005 (November 2): Kuwait affirms it will continue to support the UNRWA through its annual contribution of USD 1.5 million.

2006 (Feb 19): The Arab League confirms that Kuwait has paid its share, USD 40 million, as part of the financial aid for the Palestinian Authority as declared by the 2005 Arab summit, held in Algeria.

2006 (November 13): The late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah orders a financial aid of USD 30 million for the Palestinian people.

2007 (December 17): Kuwait pledges, during a conference for donations for the Palestinian Authority held in Paris, to offer USD 300 million via Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).

2008 (March 27): Kuwait donates USD 1.5 million for the UNRWA.

2008 (June 10): Kuwait donates USD

1.5 million to the UNRWA as a contribution in the fiscal year 2008-09.

2008 (August 11): Kuwait inks a deal with the World Bank to contribute with USD 80 million to the WB-run fund for supporting the Palestinians.

2008 (December 31): A Kuwaiti military plane bearing 10 tons of medical supplies for the besieged Gazans arrives in Al-Arish airport.

2009 (January 14): The National Assembly agrees to donate MPs’ monthly salary to the Gazans.

2009 (January 15): The committee of the stock exchange (Boursa Kuwait) donates USD 500,000 for victims of an Israeli aggression on Gaza.

2009 (January 18): Twelve tons of food supplies and other necessities provided by KRCS arrive in Gaza.

2009 (January 19): The late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah declares during the Arab Economic and Development Summit “a stand of solidarity with Gaza.”

2009 (January 20): Kuwait declares at the end of the Arab Economic and Development Summit, dubbed “the summit of solidarity with Gaza,” that Israel solely holds the responsibility of the brutal attacks on Gaza.

2009 (February 8): A Kuwaiti plane bearing 13 tons of aid for the Gazans arrives in Al-Arish airport.

2009 (March 2): Kuwait donates USD 200 million to the Palestinian Authority for reconstructing Gaza.

2009 (November 4): Kuwait pledges to continue supporting the UNRWA.

2010 (August 29): UNRWA receives Kuwait’s annual contribution amounting to USD 1.5 million.

2011 (June 1): Kuwait Permanent Delegate at the Arab League Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim affirms support for the Palestinian national reconciliation accord.

2011 (September 15): Kuwait signs a deal with the World Bank to contribute for reform programs executed by the Palestinian Authority.

2011 (November 4): Kuwait raises its annual financial contribution to the UNRWA from USD 1.5 million to USD two million.

2012 (November 15): Kuwait signs an agreement with the World Bank contributing with USD 50 million to support the WB Palestinian program for reforms and development.

2013 (April 15): Kuwait donates USD 15 million to the UNRWA to help Palestinians in dire conditions in Syria.

To be continued



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 57.173/-net	BHD 128.000/-net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 61.000/-net	BHD 136.198/-net

Promo period from 1st – 13th December 2023 Terms & conditions apply*



Mohammed Al-Musalam and the participants in the training program.

Program organized in partnership with Headspring

KFH celebrates graduation of new cohort of Leadership Excellence Program

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) celebrated the graduation of a new cohort of the Leadership Excellence program in partnership with Headspring. The program was organized in Kuwait and in Madrid, Spain with a joint venture between IE Business School and the Financial Times, covering 50 leaders from KFH Group and its group banks and subsidiaries.

In his speech in the graduation ceremony, KFH Executive Manager Talent Management, Mohammed Al-Musalam expressed his honor for the new Leadership Excellence graduates, who have been prepared to meet their ambitions, enabling them to continue KFH’s successful journey.

He stressed the importance of ongoing efforts to solidify expertise and professional competencies by investing in developing leaders and building a culture of leadership that contributes to improving performance in partnership with top-tier universities and training institutions worldwide.

Al-Musalam added that these types of qualitative and tailored training programs have become a part of the talent development strategy in order to empower talents and future leaders at KFH. Additionally, these programs provide participants with the necessary learning resources and exceptional capabilities to make a difference, keep pace with KFH’s growth, and maintain its leading standing as the largest bank in Kuwait and the world’s leading Islamic financial institution.

He highlighted the significance of sharing the knowledge and experience gained during the program with teammates and colleagues at KFH, noting that this leads to various benefits, paves the way for creative ideas, and enhances employee engagement.

He went on to say that the talent development team spares no effort to invest in enhancing employees’ career paths, evaluate its effectiveness, and update it to expand the knowledge of KFH leaders.

Al-Musalam indicated that the Leadership Excellence Program has been tailored based on the latest trends in the banking industry and leadership programs, capitalizing on numerous extensive learning sessions that keep pace with KFH Group as a leading banking group. It is the flagship program designed to equip KFH Leaders with the tools and latest thinking to enhance their effectiveness as Leaders.

The program also embodies various traits such as interdependence, resilience and inclusiveness, enabling participants to collaborate and concurrently address challenges by working together.

It is worth noting that all KFH Group leaders went through an intricate selection process to ensure KFH talent pipeline is further supported with this new cohort.

Antonio Montes, Chief Executive Officer at Headspring, said: “Headspring is proud to partner with Kuwait Finance House to design and deliver the Leadership Excellence Program, a fully customized learning experience that underscores KFH’s dedication to investing in its future. By upskilling and developing its current and future leaders, KFH not only ensures its continued success but also future proofs its position as a market leader. Together, we build resilience, inclusiveness, and interdependence, empowering KFH to maintain its leading standing as a powerhouse in the Islamic Finance sector.”

He added: “We work with many organisations in the GCC and are committed to support their vision of driving transformation and responsible leadership. Our partnership with Kuwait Finance House stands as a testament of our shared commitment to positive change in the region.”

Bassém Banna, Headspring’s Vice President of Corporate Partnerships in the Middle East & Affrica, added: In the Middle East and in particular the Gulf region, we are witnessing a structural and cultural shift in the financial sector where leaders are realizing the importance of preparing their future workforce, building future skills and training, retaining and attracting top talent to foster innovative cultures. With KFH, our partnership is strategic, and we are committed to supporting the group in maintaining its leadership position and navigating the uncertainties of the future. In this programme, we have tailored the design and the methodology to align with KFH values and the latest leadership trends in the banking industry, ensuring KFH leaders are equipped with cutting-edge tools and insights to grow as individuals and as business leaders.”

Your Highness

Continued from Page 1

The parliamentarians and ministers turned a blind eye to this major event, because they realized they were able to continue with what they had become accustomed to in previous stages, without being held accountable.

These people are working on the principle of an old anecdote about a ruler, who sent an official to check on the conditions of a neighboring country. This person attended a party held in honor of him in the evening. During that party, they enjoyed playing string musical instruments. The next day when he went to a department to finalize a transaction, he was told, “The strings of the law forbid it because some papers were missing”. When he returned to his boss, he told him, “They contradict themselves by preaching what they don’t practice, which explains their backwardness.”

There are many problems that Kuwait suffers from, starting with the failure of institutions, through the infrastructure that the citizens suffer from, to the lack of seriousness in diversifying sources of income and the failure of education.

Your Highness the Crown Prince, all of this was caused by those who did not put the interest of Kuwait above all other considerations. Therefore, your decision to suspend all decisions related to appointment, promotion, transfer, delegation and secondment in all state agencies represents the first step on the thousand-mile road to reform.

However, Kuwait needs more firm decisions in order to correct the course so that it does not go completely out of date and become a failed state if the profiteers’ tricks continue.

Today, all of Kuwait is breathing a sigh of relief, and is waiting for more to come out of the recovery room.

Expat driving

Continued from Page 1

These streamlined processes align with the Ministry of Interior’s commitment to digital transformation, aiming to enhance efficiency, simplify procedures, reduce paperwork, and ultimately save public funds.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: Marzouq Al-Otaibi, the Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower, underscored the authority’s commitment to enforcing labor laws to regulate the employer-employee relationship, address labor disputes, and streamline labor affairs.

This statement followed a meeting with **Taghreed Jabr**, the Regional Director of the International Penal Reform Organization, and **Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Senan**, advisor to the country for the International Criminal Action Organization.

The discussions focused on fostering international collaboration, sharing experiences in social work, and exploring avenues for joint programs to enhance human rights.

The participants also delved into issues related to individuals in legal conflicts, emphasizing the rights of immigrants and workers, and the collective effort against human trafficking in alignment with international standards

MPs advance

Continued from Page 1

5. Individual candidates and lists with the highest number of valid votes are declared winners. In case two or more candidates in a list obtain the same number of votes, the Higher Elections Commission shall organize a lottery to determine the winner among these candidates.

The Housing and Real Estate Affairs Committee continued its investigation into the delayed implementation of new housing areas, and delayed infrastructure works and provision of basic services for the existing residential areas.

The Budgets and Final Accounts Committee discussed the report of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) on the budget and final accounts of the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers for fiscal 2022/2023 and comments of the Bureau of Financial Controllers (BFC) in this regard. The representatives of SAB, BFC, Ministry of Finance, Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) and Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers attended the meeting.

The Values Enhancement and Negative Phenomena Committee looked into the causes of the widespread bribery in public institutions and ways to combat bribery in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha).

The Public Facilities Committee talked about its tasks to follow up plans to plant trees along the roads and the establishment of more public parks in residential areas.

The Environment, Food and Water Security Affairs Committee discussed its task to follow up plans to add more plants, trees and green spaces throughout the country; especially in the residential areas. The representatives of SAB and Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) attended the meeting.

The Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee deliberated on the capabilities of private institutes, colleges and universities; in addition to increasing the number of seats for Kuwaiti students compared to be more than the overseas scholarship slots. Present at the meeting were representatives of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Board of Directors of the Public Universities Council, boards of directors of private universities, and National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance.

Chairman of the committee MP Falah Al-Hajri disclosed that they also discussed the violations of private universities; indicating that Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Manea, who attended the meeting, confirmed the violations. He added the minister responded well as he issued a decision obligating the private universities to refrain from collecting illegal fees from the students and to refund the illegal fees collected since the establishment of these universities till date.

He said an agreement has been reached to amend Private Universities Law number 34/2000 in a bid to impose penalties on erring universities. He pointed out that the existing law was ratified almost 23 years ago and it has no stipulation on punishing universities if they commit violations.

The Human Rights Affairs Committee talked about ways for the Ministry of Social Affairs to grant more support for the charities in order to provide aid to the Palestinians. Present at the meeting were representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs and State Ministry for Family, Women and Children Affairs.

Meanwhile, MP Majed Al-Mutairi asked Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Manea to provide him with a copy of the contract on the Firewall system for the protection of the ministry’s database including the contractor’s name, term and value of the contract; if approvals were obtained from the concerned monitoring institutions; number of employees in charge of the Firewall system; if the system works properly without any disruption; measures taken against the contractor if there have been disruptions in the system; if the machines causing the disruptions were replaced; if the ministry is preparing a new tender for the provision of another protection system; and if it is true that the ministry recommended awarding the new tender to the same contractor despite the repeated disruptions.

MP Muhammad Al-Hewaila forwarded queries to Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and acting Minister of Public Works Jassem Al-Ostad about the contract for the construction of Terminal Two (T2) at Kuwait International Airport, rate of accomplishment compared to the timetable stipulated in the contract, penalties imposed on the contractor in case of delays, and total expenditures on the project till date.

Heavy fighting

Continued from Page 1

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support for Israel’s goal of crushing Hamas’ military and governing abilities, and returning all the hostages captured in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war.

Hamas and other Palestinian militants stormed into southern Israel that day, killing some 1,200 people and capturing around 240, over 100 of whom were released during a week-long cease-fire late last month.

In response to the attack, Israel launched an air and ground war that has killed thousands of Palestinians, mostly civilians, and forced some 1.9 million people to flee their homes. With only a trickle of aid allowed in, and delivery rendered impossible in much of the territory, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who invoked a rarely-used power last week to call for a cease-fire, said “we are facing a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system.”

“The situation is fast deteriorating into a catastrophe with potentially irreversible implications for the Palestinians as a whole and for peace and security in the region,” he told a forum in Qatar.

Israel’s national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel’s Channel 12 TV late Saturday that the U.S. has set no deadline for Israel to achieve its goals of dismantling Hamas and returning all the hostages.

“The evaluation that this can’t be measured in weeks is correct, and I’m not sure it can be measured in months,” he said.

Israeli forces continue to face heavy resistance, even in northern Gaza, where entire neighborhoods have been flattened by air strikes and where ground troops have been operating for over six weeks.

Israel’s Channel 13 TV broadcast footage showing dozens of detainees stripped to their underwear with their hands in the air. Several held assault rifles above their heads, and one man could be seen slowly walking forward and placing a gun on the ground before returning to the group.

Other videos in recent days have shown groups of unarmed men held in similar conditions, without clothes, bound and blindfolded. Detainees from a separate group who were released Saturday told The Associated Press they had been beaten and denied food and water.

Israel has not commented on the latest video or the allegations of mistreatment, but government spokesman Eylon Levy said “increasing numbers” of Hamas fighters were surrendering and handing over their weapons, calling it a sign of “collapsing” morale.

Residents said there was still heavy fighting underway in the Gaza City neighborhood of Shijaiyah and the Jabaliya refugee camp, a dense urban area housing Palestinian families who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.



Dr. Al-Manea

is not affiliated with the Ministry of Education administratively and organizationally, and that the minister has no authority to interfere in the functional matters of the center because it enjoys complete administrative and financial independence.

Appointed

The minister of education had appointed the director of the Office of Oversight and Internal Audit at the National Center for Educational Development to carry out the work of the Assistant Undersecretary for the Legal Affairs Sector in addition to her original work. He canceled the assignment of the Legal Undersecretary Dr. Muhammad Al-Adwani and transferred him to an administrative position other than his specialization for an educational zone after his promotion to a position in the legal sector.

In the letter addressed to the Ministry of Education, the State Audit Bureau wrote, “The Minister of Education issued on 10/24/2023 the ministerial resolution No. 185/2023 regarding the appointment of the director of the Office of Oversight and Internal Audit at the National Center for Educational Development to carry out the work of the Assistant Undersecretary of the Legal Affairs Sector in addition to her original work.”

The bureau stated that it reviewed and studied the issue from all its administrative and legal aspects and concluded with the opinion that even if the National Center for Educational Development is within the organizational structure of the Ministry of Education, the ministry’s authority is only supervisory in nature.

According to decree No. 308/2006

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Head of the State Audit Bureau’s team formed to audit the work of the Ministry of Education has sent a letter of objection to the Ministry of Education against the decision of Minister Dr. Adel Al-Manea to appoint the legal representative of the National Center for Educational Development as the legal representative of the ministry.

The letter confirms the news published by Al-Seyassah on November 3 about the decision, as the bureau considered the minister’s decision to be in violation of the provisions of the decree No. 308/2006 for establishing the National Center for Educational Development.

It highlighted that the authority of the minister of education is only supervisory, and the center

is not affiliated with the Ministry of Education administratively and organizationally, and that the minister has no authority to interfere in the functional matters of the center because it enjoys complete administrative and financial independence.

The letter confirms the news published by Al-Seyassah on November 3 about the decision, as the bureau considered the minister’s decision to be in violation of the provisions of the decree No. 308/2006 for establishing the National Center for Educational Development.

It highlighted that the authority of the minister of education is only supervisory, and the center

is not affiliated with the Ministry of Education administratively and organizationally, and that the minister has no authority to interfere in the functional matters of the center, as it enjoys complete administrative and financial independence.

The bureau stressed that resolution No. 185/2023 is a clear violation of the provisions of the decree establishing the National Center for Educational Development, and expressed objection to it in accordance with what was stated in Article No. 12 of law No. 30/1964 related to establishing the Audit Bureau and its amendments.

It requested for the situation to be corrected by withdrawing or canceling the objectionable decision and its consequences, and providing the bureau with the measures taken in this regard within a period of ten days from the date of the letter.

In addition, educational sources

highlighted that transferring the director of a legal department in the legal sector to an educational zone is the first precedent in the Ministry of Education.

They said the decision to transfer him and cancel his assignment came due to the lack of response to the legal opinions that Al-Seyassah newspaper referred to for a number of those letters.

The sources said the State Audit Bureau’s letter indicated that the decision must be withdrawn as it violates the provisions of the law, and requested that it be provided with a copy of the withdrawal decision within a maximum period of ten days.

The sources said they wonder whether the Minister of Education will respond to the State Audit Bureau’s observation of the violation, withdraw the decision, and return the former legal representative, or the implementation of the State Audit Bureau’s letter of objection will be circumvented.

Kuwait chairs Arab meeting to discuss Free Trade Zone

CAIRO, Dec 10, (KUNA): The 56th meeting of the Arab League’s Implementation and Follow-up Committee of the Economic and Social Council kicked off on Sunday chaired by Kuwait to discuss the final steps of creating the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone.

Acting Undersecretary of the Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Finance Talal Al-Nemash told KUNA that the committee holds meetings regularly to discuss the trade zone developments.

He said that the meeting’s agenda includes eight main items, the most important of which is follow-up, which discusses the mechanisms for implementing the decisions of the summits and the Economic and Social Council resolutions related to the zone.

The meeting also discusses the Saudi Arabia’s proposal to establish

PAFN request to top agenda

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Municipal Council, in its tenth regular session of the second term on Monday headed by Abdullah Al-Mahri, will discuss a number of items on its agenda, the most prominent of which is the request of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) to amend the decision taken on 21/11/2004 by the committee in charge of carrying out the powers of the Municipal Council to license more than one place for each of the activities permitted in the Capital Slaughterhouse and the central livestock market, and amend the names of activities to comply with the names of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The other items slated for discussion by the Municipal Council during its meeting on Monday include the following:

- the proposal submitted by the residents of Adailiya residential area for stopping the commercial exploitation of the Kuwait Football Association site in Adailiya.
- the renewal of the Municipal Council’s decision taken on 26/07/2021 for the addition of plot No. 17 of the cadastral plan (39557/m) in Qibla Block 15.
- the draft ministerial decision regarding the regulation for the cultivation of state-owned squares adjacent to private and model residential homes.
- the proposal to increase registration fees in the bidders’ register and review the fees for selling bidding documents and company qualification booklets

for establishing the center, it is not affiliated with the Ministry of Education administratively and organizationally, and the minister has no authority to interfere in the functional matters of the center, as it enjoys complete administrative and financial independence.

The bureau stressed that resolution No. 185/2023 is a clear violation of the provisions of the decree establishing the National Center for Educational Development, and expressed objection to it in accordance with what was stated in Article No. 12 of law No. 30/1964 related to establishing the Audit Bureau and its amendments.

It requested for the situation to be corrected by withdrawing or canceling the objectionable decision and its consequences, and providing the bureau with the measures taken in this regard within a period of ten days from the date of the letter.

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World News Roundup

Europe

Bid to win support

Zelenskyy ‘embarks’ on historic Lat Am journey

KYIV, Ukraine, Dec 10, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is heading to Buenos Aires to witness the swearing-in on Sunday of Argentina’s new president, Javier Milei, Zelenskyy’s office said.

It is the Ukrainian leader’s first-ever trip to Latin America as Kyiv continues to court support among developing nations for its 21-month-old fight against Russia’s invading forces.

A political outsider who has railed against what he calls entrenched official corruption in Argentina and promised to uproot the political establishment, Milei ran on a pro-Western foreign policy platform, repeatedly expressing distrust of Moscow and Beijing.

Zelenskyy phoned Milei shortly after the Argentinian’s electoral victory, thanking him for his “clear support for Ukraine” which he described in social media posts as “well-noticed and appreciated by Ukrainians.”

In its readout of the call published shortly later, Milei’s office said he had offered to host a summit between Ukraine and Latin American states, a potential boon to Kyiv’s monthslong effort to strengthen its relationships with countries of the global south.

Zelenskyy and other senior Ukrainian officials have repeatedly presented Ukraine’s war against Russia as resistance against colonial aggression, hoping to win support from Asian, African and Latin American states that in the past struggled to free themselves from foreign domination, sometimes turning to Moscow for support against Western powers.

According to Zelenskyy’s official website, he broke his journey to Argentina to meet with the prime minister of the West African country of Cape Verde, Ulisses Correia e Silva, thanking him for his support for Kyiv’s diplomatic initiatives and discussing efforts to boost Ukrainian grain exports to Africa. It was not immediately clear where the meeting took place.

Zelenskyy expressed his appreciation for Cape Verde’s backing of U.N. resolutions supporting Ukraine’s territorial integrity and calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory before peace talks can begin.

Russia’s intention condemned: Ukraine on Saturday condemned Russia’s intention to organize presidential election voting in occupied Ukrainian territory next year.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said any such balloting held in the occupied regions in the country would be “null and void” and pledged that any international observers sent to monitor the Russian election would “face criminal responsibility.”

“We call on the international community to resolutely condemn Russia’s intention to hold presidential elections in the occupied Ukrainian territories, and to impose sanctions on those involved in their organization and conduct,” Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry said.

Lawmakers in Russia on Thursday set the country’s 2024 presidential election for March 17. On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his candidacy for reelection. He is all but certain to win another six-year term.

Russian authorities are still pondering whether to arrange the voting in Ukraine’s Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. Moscow illegally annexed the four regions in September 2022 but only controls parts of them.

Putin subsequently introduced martial law in those areas, and Russian lawmakers amended regulations to allow elections in territories where martial law was in place. Russian authorities held elections in the annexed regions in September for Moscow-installed legislatures; Ukraine and its Western allies denounced the votes as a sham.

Soviet-era statue taken down: City workers in Kyiv on Saturday dismantled an equestrian statue of a Red Army commander, the latest Soviet monument to be removed in the Ukrainian capital since Russia launched its full-scale invasion last year.

The statue of Mykola Shchors on horseback, erected in the 1950s, was taken down from a pedestal in downtown Kyiv to the applause of a small group of onlookers. City officials said it will be stored in the State Aviation Museum.

“Derussification and decommunization are continuing. We have already dismantled more than 60 monuments related to the history and culture of Russia and the Soviet Union,” Mykhailo Budilov, director of the city’s Department of Territorial Control, said in a statement.

An effort to remove symbols of the Soviet era, which many Ukrainians equate with Russian imperialism, accelerated after Russian forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Georgians rally for EU candidacy: Hundreds of people marched in Georgia’s capital Saturday to support the Caucasus region country becoming a candidate for European Union membership.

The EU is expected to announce Dec. 15 whether it has decided to grant Georgia candidate status, a crucial milestone for potential membership. The government was told last month that it should officially receive candidacy once it addresses specific shortcomings, including in the fight against corruption and election deficiencies.

Participants in the “Your Voice to EU” rally in Tbilisi marched from First Republic Square to Europe Square, where a huge EU flag was unfurled. Organizers said that each star on the flag was made in a different region of Georgia, symbolizing the Georgian people’s unity in the aspiration for their country to join the 27-nation bloc.

The march was initiated by President Salome Zourabichvili and organized by civil society groups.

Truckers blocking Ukraine border: Pickup trucks and tourneys bound for Ukraine’s battlefield are among items stuck in a milelong line at the border with Poland. Components to build drones to fight off Russian forces are facing weeks of delays.

Ukrainian charities and companies supplying the war-torn country’s military warn that problems are growing as Polish truck drivers show no sign of ending a border blockade that has stretched past a month. The Polish protesters argue that their livelihoods are at stake after the European Union relaxed some transport rules and Ukrainian truckers undercut their business.



Ali, right, and Kiana Rahmani receive the Nobel Peace Prize for 2023 for their mother, imprisoned Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi, shown on screen, in Oslo City Hall, Oslo, Norway, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023. Mohammadi is renowned for campaigning for women’s rights and democracy in her country, as well as fighting against the death penalty. (AP)

Children of imprisoned Iranian activist accept Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf

The children of imprisoned Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi have accepted this year’s Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf in a ceremony Sunday in the Norwegian capital. Mohammadi is renowned for campaigning for women’s rights and democracy in her country, as well as fighting against the death penalty.

Ali and Kiana Rahmani, Mohammadi’s twin 17-year-old children who live in exile in Paris with their father, will be given the prestigious award at Oslo City Hall, after which they will give the Nobel Peace Prize lecture in their mother’s name.

Mohammadi, 51, was awarded the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize in October for her decades of activism despite numerous arrests by Iranian authorities and spending years behind bars. She is currently de-

tained in a prison in Tehran.

At a news conference in Oslo on Saturday, Kiana Rahmani read out a message from her mother, in which the imprisoned activist praised the role international media played in “conveying the voice of dissenters, protesters and human rights defenders to the world.”

“Iranian society needs global support and you, journalists and media professionals are our greatest and most important allies in the difficult struggle against the destructive tyranny of the Islamic Republic government. I sincerely thank you for your efforts, for all you’ve done for us,” Mohammadi said in her note.

Kiana Rahmani said she held little hope of seeing her mother again.

“Maybe I’ll see her in 30 or 40 years, but I think I won’t see her again. But that doesn’t matter, because my mother will always live on in my heart, values that are worth fighting for,” she said.

Mohammadi’s brother and husband told reporters in Oslo that she planned to go on a hunger strike on Sunday in solidarity with the Baha’i Faith religious minority in Iran.

Rahmani’s husband, Taghi, previously said that he hasn’t been able to see his wife for 11 years, and their children haven’t seen their mother for seven.

Mohammadi played a leading role in protests triggered by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini last year while in police custody for allegedly violating the country’s strict headscarf law which forces women to cover their hair and entire bodies. (AP)

Politics

New US aid for Ukraine stalled over immigration

Biden grapples with GOP’s terms

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): A deal to provide further U.S. assistance to Ukraine by year-end appears to be increasingly out of reach for President Joe Biden. The impasse is deepening in Congress despite dire warnings from the White House about the consequences of inaction as Republicans insist on pairing the aid with changes to America’s immigration and border policies.

After the Democratic president said this past week he was willing to “make significant compromises on the border,” Republicans quickly revived demands that they had earlier set aside, hardening their positions and attempting to shift the negotiations to the right, according to a person familiar with the talks who was not authorized to publicly discuss them and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The latest proposal, from the lead GOP negotiator, Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., came during a meeting with a core group of senators before they left Washington on Thursday afternoon. It could force the White House to consider ideas that many Democrats will seriously oppose, throwing new obstacles in the difficult negotiations.

Biden is facing the prospect of a cornerstone of his foreign policy - repelling Russian President Vladimir Putin from overtaking Ukraine - crumbling as U.S. support for funding the war wanes, especially among Republicans.

The White House says a failure to approve more aid by year’s end could have catastrophic consequences for Ukraine and its ability to fight.

To preserve U.S. backing, the Biden administration has quietly engaged in Senate talks on border policy in recent weeks, providing assistance to the small group of senators trying to reach a deal and communicating what policy changes it would find acceptable.

Drastic measures

The president is trying to satisfy GOP demands to reduce the historic number of migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border while alleviating Democrats’ fears that legal immigration will be choked off with drastic measures.

As talks sputtered to a restart this past week, Democrats warned Republicans that time for a deal was running short. Congress is scheduled to depart Washington in mid-December for a holiday break.

“Republicans need to show they are serious about reaching a compromise, not just throwing on the floor basically Donald Trump’s border policies,” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Thursday before Republicans made their counteroffer.

But the new Republican proposal dug in on policy changes that had led Democrats to step back from the negotiations, according to the person

familiar with the talks. The GOP offer calls for ending the humanitarian parole program that’s now in place for existing classes of migrants - Ukrainians, Afghans, Cubans, Venezuelans, Nicaraguans and Haitians. That idea had been all but dashed before.

Additionally, those groups of migrants would not be allowed to be paroled again if the terms of their stay expire before their cases are adjudicated in immigration proceedings.

GOP senators proposed monitoring systems such as ankle bracelets for people, including children, who are detained at the border and are awaiting parole. Republicans want to ban people from applying for asylum if they have transited through a different country where they could have sought asylum instead. GOP lawmakers also want to revive executive powers that would allow a president to shut down entries for wide-ranging reasons.

Further, after migrant encounters at the border recently hit historic numbers, the GOP proposal would set new guidelines requiring the border to be essentially shut down if illegal crossings reach a certain limit.

Lankford declined to discuss specifics after the Thursday meeting, but said he was trying to “negotiate in good faith.” He said the historic number of migrants at the border could not be ignored.



University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill listens during a hearing of the House Committee on Education on Capitol Hill, Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023 in Washington. The University of Pennsylvania’s president has resigned amid pressure from donors and criticism over testimony at a congressional hearing where she was unable to say under repeated questioning that calls on campus for the genocide of Jews would violate the school’s conduct policy. (AP)



Whitmire



Lee

America

Whitmire elected Houston mayor: Houston elected Democratic state Sen. John Whitmire as its next mayor on Saturday night, elevating a Texas lawmaker who has represented the city for 50 years by giving him a victory over U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee in a runoff.

Whitmire, 74, who is one of Texas’ most powerful Democratic legislators, will now be at the helm of America’s fourth-largest city. His campaign focused on reducing crime, improving streets and bringing people together. He heavily outspent Jackson Lee, who was running to become Houston’s first Black female mayor.

The congresswoman’s campaign also had to deal with fallout from the release in October of an unverified audio recording that purported to capture her profanely berating staff.

Whitmire built an insurmountable lead among early voters, winning among those voters by 30 percentage points.

Whitmire and Jackson Lee had made it to Saturday’s runoff after emerging from a crowded field of nearly 20 candidates in the Nov. 7 general election.

Both candidates - two of Houston’s biggest political fixtures - touted their decades-long political experience as strong qualifications to lead a growing city facing challenges that include crime, crumbling infrastructure and potential budget shortfalls. (AP)

3 people killed in Atlanta shooting:

A shooting in Atlanta killed three people and left one victim wounded Saturday evening, police said.

The Atlanta Police Department said officers responded to an address on Peachtree

Road NE in the city’s Buckhead district Saturday.

Police said three victims in their 20s were pronounced dead at the scene and the fourth was transported to a hospital. The shooting victim who survived was “alert, conscious



A car is buried under rubble on Main Street after a tornado hit Hendersonville, Tenn., Saturday, Dec 9, 2023. Severe storms that tore through central Tennessee killed six people Saturday and sent about two dozen to the hospital as homes and businesses were damaged in multiple cities. (AP)

and breathing,” police said.

Investigators with a homicide unit responded to the scene to determine the circumstances of the shooting and the investigation was still in progress, police said.

The shooting was linked to drug activity at 3005 Buckhead Apartments, they said.

“This wasn’t like a home invasion type of scenario. We believe that the perpetrators were invited in for that drug exchange. It was some type of drug transaction that was taking place inside the apartment,” Maj. Peter Malecki told WAFB.

Police planned to run tests on handguns recovered at the scene to determine which of the weapons was involved in the shooting, Malecki said.

Police did not identify the victims and there was no information immediately available about a suspect. (AP)

Jury convicts inmate:

South Carolina jurors have found an inmate guilty of charges connected to the death of a fellow inmate during the deadliest U.S. prison riot of the past quarter-century.

The Lee County jury deliberated less than an hour on Friday before finding Michael Juan “Flame” Smith guilty of assault and battery by mob, weapon possession and conspiracy for his role in the 2018 violence. Trial Judge Ferrell Cothran Jr. gave Smith a 45-year sentence, although one five-year term issued will run concurrently with the other time, news outlets reported. (AP)

Lat/Am

EU contemplates sanctions

Arévalo’s legal ‘immunity’ battle draws int’l criticism

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala, Dec 10, (AP): International and regional leaders have rejected the latest attempt by Guatemalan prosecutors to prevent progressive President-elect **Bernardo Arévalo** from taking office on Jan. 14.

Prosecutors asked a court Friday to strip Arévalo of his legal immunity and alleged that minutes seized during a raid of electoral offices showed that results from the presidential runoff vote he won in August had irregularities and were therefore void.

Arévalo said the prosecution was seeking to undermine his ability to govern. Guatemala’s high electoral court, the Organization of American States and officials from the United Nations, the British Foreign Office and the European Union echoed his sentiment.

“Friday’s announcements, aimed at nullifying the outcome of the general elections and questioning the constitution and existence of the Movimiento Semilla party, are extremely disturbing,” U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said in a statement issued Saturday.



Arévalo

The victory of Arévalo and his Seed Movement party posed a threat to those who have long wielded power in Guatemala. The anti-corruption crusader has been a target of legal salvos for month, including arrests of party members, raids and repeated court requests to lift his immunity so prosecutors can investigate him directly.

Türk said he was encouraged that Guatemalans have “been standing up for their rights” by protesting prosecutors’ efforts to invalidate the election. He called on federal authorities to preserve and respect human rights, including freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.

Meanwhile, European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Friday that the EU was contemplating sanctions on those attempting to reverse the vote by Guatemalans.

“These latest actions and statements of the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Guatemala represent an attempt at a coup d’etat, spearheaded by politically motivated prosecutors,” Borrell said in a statement. “They show contempt for the clear will of Guatemala’s citizens.”

The Organization of American States announced it would hold another discussion about the political crisis on Tuesday and potentially sign a resolution on the actions putting a democratic transition of power at risk.



Guyana-Venezuela dispute intensifies: A century-old territorial dispute deepened by the discovery of oil is boiling over between neighbors Guyana and Venezuela. Steeped in patriotism, the Venezuelan government is seizing on the fight to boost support ahead of a presidential election among a population fed up with a decade long crisis that has pushed many into poverty.

Venezuelans on Sunday approved a referendum to claim sovereignty over Essequibo, a mineral-rich territory that accounts for two-thirds of Guyana and lies near big offshore oil deposits. Military confrontation appears unlikely for now, but several countries have echoed Guyana’s concerns over an annexation by its neighbor to the west.

Maduro’s government on Saturday announced in a statement it had accepted a proposal “to hold a high-level meeting” with Guyana to preserve its “aspiration to maintain Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace, without interference from external actors.”

Maduro “received” the proposal in conversations with Brazil President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, according to the statement. Gonsalves in a letter to Maduro and Guyana President Irfaan Ali expressed an “urgent need to de-escalate the conflict” and said both presidents have agreed to meet Thursday in his Caribbean country.

Meanwhile, international security firm Global Guardian expects Venezuela to gradually ramp up tensions and go as far as conducting naval exercises near Guyana, said Zev Faintuch, a senior intelligence analyst at the firm.



14 killed, including cartel leader: A clash between gunmen from a notoriously violent drug cartel and residents of a small farming community in central Mexico left 14 people dead, including the cartel’s leader, authorities said Saturday.

Seven others were injured and still being treated for wounds.

Dramatic video of the fight Friday posted on social media showed villagers in cowboy hats with sickles and hunting rifles chasing down suspected gang members amid bursts of automatic gunfire.

Police in the State of Mexico, which abuts Mexico City, said the bloodshed occurred in the hamlet of Texcaltitlán, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) southwest of the capital.

Officials said 10 of the dead were members of the violent Familia Michoacana drug cartel, including its leader, Rigoberto de la Sancha Santillán, known as “El Payaso” or “The Clown.” Four others killed were village residents. The cartel has been dominant in the area for many years.

The video appeared to show the attackers wore military-style uniforms, some with helmets. Villagers apparently set their bodies and vehicles on fire.



Uncertainty looms over Argentina: As economist Javier Milei assumes Argentina’s presidency on Sunday, the nation wonders which version of him will govern: the chainsaw-wielding, anti-establishment crusader from the campaign trail, or the more moderate president-elect who emerged in recent weeks.

Milei, 53, rose to fame on television with profanity-laden tirades against what he called the political caste. He parlayed his popularity into a congressional seat and then, just as swiftly, into a presidential run. The overwhelming victory of the self-declared “anarcho-capitalist” in the August primaries sent shock waves through the political landscape and upended the race.

Argentines disillusioned with the economic status quo - triple-digit inflation, four in 10 people in poverty, a plunging currency - proved receptive to an outsider’s outlandish ideas to remedy their woes and transform the nation. He won the election’s Nov. 19 second round decisively - and sent packing the Peronist political force that dominated Argentina for decades.



A Chinese Coast Guard ship, bottom, uses water cannon at Philippine coast guard patrol ship, BRP Cabra, center, as it approaches Second Thomas Shoal, locally known as Ayungin Shoal, in the disputed South China Sea on Sunday Dec. 10, 2023. The Chinese coast guard targeted Philippine vessels with water cannon blasts Sunday and rammed one of them, causing damage and endangering Filipino crew members off a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, just a day after similar hostilities at another contested shoal, Philippine officials said. (AP)

Chinese coast guard blasts water cannons against vessels for second day: Philippines

The Chinese coast guard targeted Philippine vessels with water cannon blasts Sunday and rammed one of them, causing damage and endangering Filipino crew members off a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, just a day after similar hostilities at another contested shoal, Philippine officials said.

The Philippines and its treaty ally, the United States, immediately condemned the latest confrontation near the Second Thomas Shoal, where two Philippine navy-operated supply boats and two Philippine coast guard escort ships sailed to deliver food and other supplies to Filipino forces in a long-marooned navy ship that serves as a territorial outpost.

“We condemn, once again, China’s latest unprovoked acts of coercion and dangerous maneuvers against a legitimate and routine Philippine rotation and resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal that has put the lives of our people at risk,” a Philippine government task force that deals with the territorial disputes said in a statement, using the Filipino name for the shoal. “The systematic and consistent manner in which the People’s Republic of China carries

out these illegal and irresponsible actions puts into question and significant doubt the sincerity of its calls for peaceful dialogue,” it said. “We demand that China demonstrate that it is a responsible and trustworthy member of the international community.”

U.S. Ambassador to Manila MaryKay Carlson said her country “stands with the Philippines and partners in vehemently condemning the PRC’s repeated illegal and dangerous actions against Philippine vessels.” She referred to the acronym of China’s formal name. (AP)

Asia

Six dead, three injured in steel structure collapse

China faces criticism on Int’l Human Rights Day

LONDON, Dec 10, (AP): When her husband fled China in 2019 to escape a police crackdown on dissidents, Lu Lina thought she and their young son could soon join him in safety abroad.

She did not know that she would be forced to move house, that her 8-year-old son would be effectively kicked out of school and that border police would block her from leaving the country over the next three years. In the end, the couple had to resort to filing for divorce in China to get around the exit ban.

“After my husband left, police gave our lives so much trouble,” Lu said from Los Angeles, where the family eventually reunited and settled late last year. “Every time the border guards would stop me, take away my phone, my wallet and all my things. They gave no explanation.”

Lu’s husband, Liu Sifang, a musician and former teacher, was among a number of Chinese activists and rights lawyers who were either arrested, forced into hiding or self-exiled after attending an informal get-together in 2019 to discuss human rights.

Rights groups say the punishment of Liu’s family highlights Beijing’s increasingly harsh crackdown on dissent both within China and beyond. As the groups mark the 75th anniversary of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Sunday, they fear that the situation in the world’s second most populous country is getting worse, not better.

Western governments are failing to press China hard enough, the rights groups say, and a more powerful China under President Xi Jinping has become more impervious to international pressure.

“If you look at independent activism around the time that Xi came to power, relative to what you can see now, what’s disturbingly clear is that Xi’s leadership sought to obliterate civil society and to silence dissent, not just inside the country but globally, to ensure that anybody who criticizes him and the regime has to think twice,” said Sophie Richardson, a longtime China observer and former China director at Human Rights Watch.

A new report by the Rome-based rights group Safeguard Defenders, published Sunday to mark International Human Rights Day, alleges that China’s government has stepped up its use of “collective punishment” against the loved ones of human rights advocates in recent years.

“Under Xi Jinping, China is increasingly unwilling to allow political targets to leave the country, slapping them and their families with exit bans, and using transnational repression methods to control the ones who make it out,” according to the report.

Interviews

The report, based on interviews with more than a dozen rights activists and compiled media reports, said it identified at least 50 such cases from 2015 to 2022, including the detention, home eviction, harassment or violent assault of activists’ family members.

This year’s International Human Rights Day - marking 75 years since the United Nations adopted the global foundational document for protecting the rights of every individual everywhere - comes just days after EU leaders visited China for a fresh round of talks.

While the summit focused on trade and the Ukraine war, the EU said that the bloc also expressed its “deep concerns” about the rights situation in China. Both sides said they welcomed the resumption of their human rights dialogue earlier this year.

Wang Lutong, head of European affairs at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said Beijing was willing to continue the dialogue - though he also warned that “human rights should not be used

as a stick to beat China.”

Last week, Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated China’s longstanding defense against international criticism of its human rights record. Beijing opposes “any attempt to force one’s own values and model upon others,” he told a symposium. “We must reject any attempt to interfere in other countries’ internal affairs or contain their development under the pretext of human rights,” he said. “China has ... opened a new path for human rights development that adapts to the changing times and suits our national conditions.”

Also:

BEIJING: A workshop built from steel sheets collapsed in **southern China**, killing six people and injuring three others, authorities said.

An investigation is underway into the cause of Saturday’s accident in Guizhou province. The three injured people remained hospitalized as of late Saturday and there were no updates on their condition Sunday.

Building collapses are not uncommon in **China**, where structures are sometimes thrown up without lawfully obtaining proper permits and safety standards are often ignored.

The illegal addition of extra floors and failure to use reinforcement is often blamed for such disasters. An increase in the number of collapses of self-built buildings in recent years has prompted calls from Chinese leader **Xi Jinping** for additional checks to uncover weaknesses.

In the worst such incident in recent years, a building collapse in **central China** in April 2022 killed 53 people. Additional floors had been added without permission or the use of proper construction methods. Industrial safety in general remains a major problem, worsened by decaying infrastructure, poor safety training and a desire to cut corners to save on costs.

mate” the opposition.

“The battle lines have been clearly drawn,” the CCC said Saturday in a statement on social media site X. “The actions of the court officials who contributed to the demise of democracy in Zimbabwe will be recorded in the country’s history.” (AP)



UN struggles to fund peacekeeping: The United Nations’ top peacekeeping official defended the organization’s missions worldwide as concerns grow that they’ve gone into retreat as African leaders demand their withdrawal from Mali to Congo.

Under Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix said Wednesday that the force operates on a \$5.5 billion budget, which is less than that of the New York City Police Department, even though its force is much larger, with 70,000 personnel worldwide. He told delegates at a U.N. peacekeeping ministerial meeting in the Ghanaian capital, Accra, that efforts had been hampered by divisions among member states.

The majority of U.N. peacekeeping missions are in Africa, including in Central African Republic, Sudan and Western Sahara. However, they’ve faced increasing blowback and scrutiny over their ability to successfully carry out their missions, including protests in Congo from residents claiming peacekeepers did little to protect them from armed groups.

The operations, which require approval from the U.N. Security Council to be extended, have gradually gone into retreat in Africa. (AP)



A paramedic performs a nasal swab test to an ethnic Rohingya man after he and his group landed in Pidie, Aceh province, Indonesia, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023. Two boats carrying hundreds of Rohingya Muslims, including women and children, arrived at Indonesia’s northernmost province of Aceh on Sunday morning after being adrift for weeks. (AP)



Gebeyehu



Al-Burhan

Africa

Positive outlook in Sudan: Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) **Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu** affirmed that Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) agreed to reconvene and negotiate a deal for immediate cessation of hostilities.

The 41st Extra-Ordinary Session of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held by Djibouti on Saturday, saw constructive deliberations on the possibility of a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Sudan, he wrote on his X account.

The conferees have received assurances from the warring parties about their desire to resume the peace talks immediately, Gebeyehu affirmed.

In his address to the summit, SAF Leader and Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council **Abdel-Fattah Al-Burhan** reaffirmed commitment to the Jeddah declaration on humanitarian principles and ceasefire.

On his part, RSF leader Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo proposed, in a statement to the summit, a renewable 30-day ceasefire with the SAF as a prelude to reaching a permanent peace deal. (KUNA)



Zimbabwe holds special elections: Zimbabwe is holding special elections Saturday for nine seats in Parliament after opposition lawmakers were removed from their positions and disqualified from running again. The opposition called it an illegal push by the ruling ZANU-PF party to bolster its parliamentary majority and possibly change the constitution.

This may allow President Emmerson Mnangagwa, 81, who was reelected for a second and final term in August amid international and regional criticism, to run for another term.

All nine opposition lawmakers from the Citizens Coalition for Change party that were removed were elected in the national vote in August. But an official claiming to be the secretary-general of the party recalled them from their positions in the weeks after that election.

CCC leader Nelson Chamisa said the official, Sengezo Tshabangu, held no position with the party and his instructions should be ignored. But Zimbabwean courts recognized Tshabangu’s authority, ruled to remove the opposition MPs and declared them on Thursday ineligible to run. “This is not an election. This is not democracy,” opposition deputy spokesperson Gift Ostallos Siziba told The Associated Press.

Another late-night court ruling Friday left the ZANU-PF candidate set to win one of the seats in the capital, Harare, uncontested.



An elderly woman pushes a wheelbarrow past campaign posters in Mabvuku on the outskirts of Harare, Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023. Zimbabwe was holding by-elections Saturday for nine seats in Parliament after opposition lawmakers were removed from their positions and disqualified from standing again in what they have called an illegal push by the ruling ZANU-PF party to bolster its majority and have the power to change the constitution. (AP)

KIB promotes customers' awareness for safeguarding against fraud

Kuwait International Bank (KIB) continues its commitment to its social role in spreading financial literacy among various segments of society. This comes within the framework of its keenness to educate customers about the risks of phishing and electronic fraud operations, which can violate their privacy and compromise their financial and personal data.

Spreading knowledge about phishing and electronic fraud is part of KIB's constant support of the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) financial awareness campaign, which was launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) in cooperation with local banks. KIB has been providing financial guidance and advice to assist customers and members of the community in following best practices that contribute to the preservation of

their data's confidentiality and prevent them from becoming victims of any phishing, fraud, or identity theft operations.

Mohammed Al-Sarraf, Assistant Manager of the Anti-Fraud Unit at KIB, asserted the importance of exercising caution and vigilance when opening any links or attachments sent via email, text messages, social media applications, or responding to phone calls from unknown sources or unidentified calls that impersonate official or non-official parties. He also highlighted the importance of reporting such incidences by sending a copy of suspicious emails to phishing@kib.com.kw. Al-Sarraf noted that the Bank would never request the sharing of any personal financial information, one-time password (OTP), or other passwords, adding that customers should ensure the

authenticity of digital channels and website URLs before proceeding with online payments.

Al-Sarraf also highlighted the necessity of customers immediately reporting to the Bank any suspicion of a breach, fraud, or unusual activity on the bank account or credit and debit cards. This can be done by contacting the customer service center at the number 1866866 and activating notifications to review the details of every financial transaction, especially payments made through electronic and digital channels.

Al-Sarraf added that customers should ensure the security of their bank accounts with strong passwords and be diligent about changing them regularly, without disclosing or keeping them on their mobile devices.



Mohammed Al-Sarraf, Assistant Manager of the Anti-Fraud Unit at KIB

Market Movements

10-12-2023

		Change	Closing pts			Change	Closing pts
↑ Saudi	- Tadawul	+71.37	11,296.72	↓ Egypt	- EGX 30	-496.33	24,189.83

Kuwait reports impressive 38.4% increase in foreign investments

Foreign direct investment grows by 19.7% in Q2, 2023

By Mahmoud Shendi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Kuwaiti direct investments abroad experienced significant growth in the recent period, surging by approximately 4.08 billion dinars (around 12.9 billion dollars) within a year, marking a robust 38.4% increase. By the end of the second quarter of 2023, the investments reached 14.697 billion dinars (about 47.6 billion dollars), in contrast to 10.614 billion dinars in the same quarter of 2022 (approximately \$34.4 billion).

Central Bank of Kuwait data highlights a remarkable uptick in

Kuwaiti investments abroad during the fourth quarter of 2022, with an increase of around 3.26 billion dinars, reaching 14 billion dinars compared to 10.76 billion dinars in the third quarter of 2022, representing a growth rate of 30%.

The investments made by Kuwaiti banks abroad surged by about 3.31 billion dinars throughout the year, escalating from 3.84 billion dinars in the second quarter of 2022 to about 7.15 billion dinars (approximately 23 billion dollars) in the second quarter of 2023, demonstrating a notable growth rate of 86.2%.

Furthermore, foreign direct investment in Kuwait witnessed an annual increase of about 833 million dinars, reaching 5 billion dinars by the end of the second quarter of 2023, compared to 4.2 billion dinars in the second quarter of 2022, reflecting a growth rate of 19.7%.

Shifting focus to external debt, Kuwait's total external debt rose by about 342 million dinars or 1.8%,

totaling 19.334 billion dinars (approximately 62.7 billion dollars) on an annual basis by the end of the second quarter of 2023. Despite this annual increase, there was a decline compared to the first quarter of 2023, dropping by about 1.1 billion dinars or 5.4%, from 20.44 billion dinars to 19.334 billion dinars.

The data also indicates fluctuations in Kuwait's external debt during the years 2022-2023, with amounts ranging from approximately 18.99 billion dinars in the second quarter of 2022 to 20.44 billion dinars in the first quarter of 2023.

It's important to note that the total external debt encompasses both the general government's external debt balances and the private sector's external debt balances, covering various entities such as local banks, investment companies, exchange companies, insurance companies, and private non-financial companies.



Zain Group and other GCC telco representatives during the alliance meeting.

'Tech, telecom and climate bridging for low-carbon economy'

Zain partners with GCC Telco Alliance to establish 'Sustainability Innovation Hub'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Zain announces the establishment of the Sustainability Innovation Hub in collaboration with the GCC Telco Alliance members along with e&, STC, Ooredoo, Beyon, Omantel, and du, and other key regional and international partners. This initiative is driven by the urgent need to address climate change and expand access to affordable and reliable energy.

As the global energy landscape undergoes a significant transformation, telecom operators are actively seeking alternatives that enhance energy efficiency and reduce their carbon footprint. The Sustainability Innovation Hub aims to bridge the gap between technology, telecom innovation, and climate action for a low-carbon economy. It will bring together cutting-edge technologies, visionary experts, and collaborative efforts to tackle one of the most critical challenges faced by the telecom industry today.

The primary focus of the Sustainability Innovation Hub will be to develop and implement innovative power solutions that are cost-effective, reliable, and environmentally friendly. By harnessing the power of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, the initiative will enable telecom operators to reduce their reliance on traditional fuel sources and move

toward a greener future. This transition will not only lead to substantial long-term cost savings but will also play a significant role in protecting the environment, aligning with the broader sustainability goals of the sector.

The Sustainability Innovation Hub has been established with a clear set of objectives aimed at revolutionizing the telecom industry's approach to energy consumption and sustainability. The hub will foster a collaborative environment where telecom operators, technology providers, and research institutes can share knowledge, resources, and expertise, driving the development of innovative power solutions tailored to the specific needs of the telecom industry.

Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for prototyping, testing, and validating innovative power solutions using GCC telecom networks, the hub will accelerate the development cycle and ensure the effective implementation of new technologies within the industry. Recognizing the importance of skilled professionals in driving innovation, the hub will offer training programs and workshops to enhance the competencies of individuals involved in the design, installation, and maintenance of power solutions within the telecom sector.

Markaz's annual outlook seminar highlights lucrative investment opportunities for 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" concluded its annual seminar titled "Markaz 2024 Outlook: Investment Trends and Opportunities", which was held on December 5th, at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait, in the presence of a group of experts from Markaz, along with local and international prominent institutions. The seminar aimed at sharing insights on emerging investment opportunities regionally as well as globally, in line with Markaz's efforts towards empowering investors to make informed, responsible decisions.

More than 250 attendees were present at the Markaz 2024 Outlook event to learn about the next frontiers of the investment landscape within Kuwait, the GCC region and across the world. During the event, Markaz's experienced senior leadership shared poignant insights into a variety of asset classes including equities, real estate and fixed income, and investment banking services including IPOs and advisory and Mergers and Acquisitions. Through speeches and panel discussions, the seminar addressed important subjects aimed at ensuring investors remain aware and conscientious of their investment portfolio moving into 2024. The seminar's agenda also focused on key topics such as the impact of rising interest rates on various markets and sectors.

The seminar was initiated with a welcoming note by Mr. Abdullatif Al Nusif, Managing Director – Wealth Management and Business Development, at Markaz. This was followed by an overview on regional and global markets and economies, presented by Khaled Al-Saleh, Senior Analyst, Investment Advisory at Markaz, on behalf of Marmore Intelligence, Markaz's research arm. The overview focused on five key risk areas that must be considered, namely, High Interest Rates, Strong US Currency, Geopolitical Risks, High Oil Prices and the China Slowdown. Al-Saleh went on to highlight 10 key themes of focus beyond 2024, which are Climate Change, Demographic Change, Energy Transition, Rising Global Debt, Deglobalization, Cyber Threats, Artificial intelligence, Obesity, Social Media Addiction and Metaverse Economy.

A panel discussion was then held, titled "Where are the opportunities in public equities, fixed income, real estate and investment banking sectors?", which was moderated by Deena Al-Refai, EVP, Wealth Management and Business Development, at Markaz. The panel featured Sami Shabshab, Managing Director, Mar-Gulf, the international real estate arm of Markaz, Rasha Othman, EVP – Investment Banking (Capital Markets and Fixed Income) at Markaz; Mohammad Al-Ghannam, SVP – MENA Equities at Markaz; Abdulrazzaq Razooqi, SVP – Advisory and M&A at Markaz; and last but not least, Muaz Al-Ateeqi, VP – MENA Real Estate at Markaz.

During the session, Sami Shabshab followed that with his views on the adverse effects (Headwinds) in the global real estate sector, the change in the categories of real estate sectors in global markets, his expectations for the best performing sectors in debt markets, and the opportunities available through



Mr. Alghanim, Mr. Khalil and Mr. Al-Osaimi at the annual seminar of Markaz.



Markaz Panel

finding alternative financing sources, and expanding into the European and American markets and the network of partners. Rasha Othman highlighted the most prominent challenges in the fixed income market and the market performance, the impact of the challenges on the GCC bonds market, and the volume of GCC IPOs in 2023, in addition to the regulatory environment for public offerings and listings, and the emerging listing opportunities for family offices. From his end, Mohammed Al-Ghannam provided a recap of the GCC markets performance, his outlook for the economic growth across the GCC, and the thorough selection strategy for stocks. Abdulrazzaq Razooqi discussed the volume of mergers and acquisitions transactions in the GCC in general and in Kuwait in specific, indicating the expectations for growth on that front, and the role of sovereign wealth funds in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, explaining the current shift in investors' strategies, and the expectations across various sectors, especially the health sector. Razooqi showcased the available opportunities available for companies, to enter new sectors or expand existing sectors through mergers and acquisitions, creating stronger and larger entities. Next, Moath Al-Ateeqi revealed the potential growth rates in the medium term supported by economic factors, and the growth of the residential rental sector in the Class-A Buildings category. He under-

pinned the increasing opportunities in the Saudi market driven by the strong government support across all sectors. He highlighted that the Kuwaiti market presents important opportunities with the adoption of the Private Housing Law, and efforts to develop the real estate sector in terms of issuance of new laws, specifically with regard to electronic brokerage and the development of the residential sector.

The seminar also featured a presentation by Artur Mokrzycki, Head of Capital Markets – Europe, at Panatoni, titled "Real Estate – Logistics – the New Chapter", in which he showcased the key drivers in supply chain and manufacturing in the European markets, where the demand is, and what are the available opportunities in these markets.

Following that, Giovanni Leonardo, Head of Investment Management at Schroders & Co Bank AG, provided a presentation titled "Global view on portfolio construction in a dynamic market", where he discussed the expectations for global growth and inflation, and stressed on the fact that the global economy has gradually begun to witness more flexibility, but is yet to overcome some challenging steps.

The seminar was concluded with a special one-to-one interview with Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi, CEO of Boursa Kuwait, themed "Sharing takes on learnings, success stories, and future vision", which was conducted by Ali Khalil, CEO of Markaz.

By National Bank of Kuwait
United States

November's US employment report

Labor data came in better than expected in the US, with signs of a strong labor market across the board. Nonfarm payrolls rose by 199K in the month, higher than the 185K average estimate of economists. The unemployment rate tightened to 3.7%, marking a fourth month low and below forecasts of 3.9%. Average hourly earnings rose 0.4% from the month prior, matching the high estimates from analysts and creating a troubling sign for the Federal Reserve as they seek to cool inflation and spending. Payrolls and labor demand were expected to start slowing, but this report solidifies the strength of the jobs market and portrays consumers are in a strong position to keep spending. Treasury yields rose sharply after the figures with the 2-year rate-sensitive yield rising to 4.74% - its highest level in December. In the futures market, the data deflated bets that the Federal Reserve would ease policy as soon as spring. Odds of a quarter-point cut in March fell, while a full cut is still priced in for May.

Federal Reserve officials are widely expected to keep borrowing costs on hold at the highest level in two decades when they meet this week. Chair Jerome Powell has previously pushed back against growing bets of rate cuts early next year, stressing that policymakers will move cautiously but retain the option to hike again. The solid figures will shift focus to inflation numbers as Fed officials contemplate how long to maintain interest rates at the current 5.25-5.5% range. A further cooling of prices would likely help push the central bank toward rate cuts if the job market avoids a more sustained re-acceleration.

Service Sector Activity Rebounds in November

Amid an increase in business activity, the US services sector picked up last month, surpassing market expectations. The Institute for Supply Management said that its non-manufacturing PMI

Highlights

- US employment remains resilient, with nonfarm payrolls rising by 199K in November compared to the 185K estimated. Unemployment tightened to 3.7%, while average hourly earnings rose 0.4% m/m. The figures deflated bets that the Federal Reserve will cut rates early next year.
- Activity in the US services sector picked up last month, as the non-manufacturing PMI rose to 52.7 from 51.8 in October which had marked a 5-month low.
- The Bank of Canada opted to maintain its key interest rate at a 22-year high of 5% last week.
- Similarly in Australia, the RBA held its cash rate at 4.35% and voiced a neutral tone regarding further moves in its post-meeting statement.
- The US dollar index ended the week 0.79% higher, further supported by the surprisingly strong labor report on Friday.
- The euro and pound fell to lows of 1.0722 and 1.2500, while the Japanese yen gained support with the pair dropping to a low of 141.70.

rose to 52.7 from the 5-month low of 51.8 in October. The rebound was supported by growth in fifteen industries, with transportation and warehousing demonstrating strong activity. New orders remained robust, suggesting steady demand for services, while input prices saw a minor decline offering some relief from inflationary pressures.

Canada
BoC Cites Progress on Cooling Inflation

The Bank of Canada opted to maintain its key interest rate at the 22-year high of 5% last week as widely expected, marking the third consecutive meeting of no change. According to the BoC the latest data "suggest the economy is no longer in excess demand", which implies no rate hikes are expected moving forward. The central bank noted it

remains concerned about inflation risks, but refrains from mentioning that risks are increasing, instead highlighting that higher rates are restraining spending and the labor market continues to ease.

Growth in Canada's economy has stalled, and consumption remains weak. Meanwhile the unemployment rate rose to 5.8% from 5% in just seven months, and such loosening of the labor market typically coincides with recessions. Inflation decelerated to an annual 3.1% in October, and many economists do believe a soft landing is still the base-case scenario for the economy. Nevertheless, key risks facing the country's financial system will be tested. Compared to the US, Canada's highly indebted households carry shorter-duration mortgages that roll over more quickly, representing a major downside risk to the economy.

Asia-Pacific

RBA Holds Cash Rate Steady

The Reserve Bank of Australia also opted to keep rates unchanged at its final meeting of 2023, holding the cash rate at its 12-year high of 4.35%. Although the hold was widely anticipated, markets displayed disappointment at the neutral tone in the post-meeting statement, sending the AUD and government bond yields lower. "Higher interest rates are working to establish a more sustainable balance between aggregate supply and demand," Governor Michele Bullock said. "Holding the cash rate steady at this meeting will allow time to assess the impact of the increases in interest rates on demand, inflation and the labor market."

Following the meeting, swap traders trimmed their bets on another RBA hike, and are currently pricing in less than a 30% chance for an increase in the first half of 2024. The RBA has proven to be more careful in its hiking campaign despite core inflation remaining elevated.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30830.

Rates – 10 th December 2023							
Previous Week Levels					This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
Currencies	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.0885	1.0722	1.0894	1.0761	1.0600	1.0900	1.0806
GBP	1.2710	1.2500	1.2724	1.2546	1.2400	1.2700	1.2556
JPY	146.71	141.7	147.5	144.93	145.00	148.00	142.85
CHF	0.8688	0.8664	0.8820	0.8796	0.8500	0.8900	0.8712

ADB OKs a \$200m loan to debt-stricken Sri Lanka

The Asian Development Bank said Friday that it has approved \$200-million concessional loan to debt-stricken Sri Lanka to help stabilize the country's finance sector following an unprecedented economic crisis that engulfed the Indian Ocean island nation last year.

The bank's announcement comes as Sri Lanka is awaiting International Monetary Fund

approval for the second installment of a \$2.9-billion bailout package to rescue the country from bankruptcy.

The ADB said its Financial Sector Stability and Reforms Program for Sri Lanka includes two subprograms of \$200 million each that would help strengthen the stability and governance of the country's banking sector, and deepen sustainable and inclusive fi-

nance, particularly for women-led micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

"The program's overarching development objective is fully aligned with the country's strategy of maintaining finance sector stability, while ensuring that banks are well-positioned for eventual recovery," Takafumi Kadono, ADB's director for Sri Lanka, said in a statement. (AP)

Chinese leaders wrap up annual economic planning meeting

Chinese leaders agreed at an annual planning meeting to step up spending to help rev up the world's second-largest economy, state media reported Friday, without giving details of any policy changes.

The official Xinhua News Agency said leader Xi Jinping chaired the meeting aimed at boosting growth, defusing risks and ensuring stability. The report said that the meeting concluded "the proac-

tive fiscal policy should be appropriately intensified and improved in quality and efficiency."

Recent estimates suggest the Chinese economy has expanded this year at about a 5% annual rate, in line with the government's target. But the recovery after stringent coronavirus pandemic restrictions were lifted was short-lived, and the economy is forecast to slow next year.

The ruling Communist Party's ca-

capacity to steer the economy through challenging times has broad implications for regional and global growth. Earlier this week, the government reported that exports rose in November for the first time since April, and said demand may be picking up after months of decline.

But some economists said they doubted the rise, fueled mainly by exports of vehicles and ships and by the holiday shipping rush, would continue for long. (AP)

Advances are helping the unhoused so they're not left behind

Technological shifts have helped build the cashless society

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): John Littlejohn remembers the days when lots of people had a couple of dollars to spare to buy a copy of Street Sense, the local paper that covers issues related to the homeless and employs unhoused individuals as its vendors.

Today, he's finding fewer people are walking around with spare change. Even well-meaning individuals who want to help are likely to pat their pockets and apologize, he said.

"I would be out here for six or seven hours and wouldn't get more than \$12 to \$15," said Littlejohn, 62, who was homeless for 13 years. "People are like, 'I don't leave the house with cash.'"

But just as technological shifts helped create the problem, further advances are now helping charitable groups and advocates for the unhoused reach those most in danger of being left behind in a cashless society.

Profits

A special Street Sense phone app allows people to buy a copy electronically and have the profits go straight to him. Thanks to Social Security and his income from Street Sense and other side gigs, Littlejohn now has his own apartment.

One of the larger shifts in Western society over the past two decades has been the decline of cash transactions. It started with more people using credit cards to pay for things as trivial as a cup of coffee. It accelerated as smartphone technology advanced to the point where cash-free payments became the norm for many.

This shift has been felt keenly in the realm of street-level charitable giving - from individual donations to panhandlers and street musicians to the red Salvation Army donation kettles outside grocery stores.

"Everybody just has cards or their phones now," said Sylvester Harris, a 54-year-old Washington native who panhandles near Capital One Arena. "You can tell the ones who really do want to help you, but even they just don't have cash anymore."

The cashless world can be particularly daunting for the unhoused. While electronic payment apps such as PayPal or Venmo have become ubiquitous, many of these options require items beyond their reach - credit cards, bank accounts, identification documents or fixed mailing addresses.

Charities have struggled to adapt. The Salvation Army has created a system where donors can essentially tap their

phones on the kettle and pay directly.

Michelle Wolfe, director of development for the Salvation Army in Washington, said the new system is only in place in 2% of the collection kettles in the greater Washington area, but it has already resulted in increased donations. The minimum cashless donation is now \$5, and donors routinely go as high as \$20, Wolfe said.

At Street Sense, similar advances were necessary to keep up with changing consumer habits. Around 2013, executive director Brian Camore said he started receiving "anecdotal reports left and right" from vendors saying people wanted to buy a copy but had no cash. Each vendor purchases the copies from Street Sense for 50 cents and sells them for \$2.

"We were losing sales and had to do something about it," he said. "We recognized that the times were changing, and we had to change with them."

Eventually he heard about an affiliate paper in Vancouver that had developed a cashless payment app and licensed the technology. Vendors can now redeem their profits at the Street Sense offices.

Thomas Ratliff, Street Sense's director of vendor employment, deals directly with the paper's approximately 100 sellers. He cited the COVID-19 pandemic as an extra factor making life difficult for his team.

Fear

For starters, it scared people away from using cash for fear that paper money exchanges would be an infection vector. But the most damaging part was the permanent reduction in the number of people working from downtown offices, cutting off Street Sense's main customer base.

"Commuters have always been the best customers compared to tourists," he said.

But without that steady stream of familiar commuters, Ratliff said his vendors have had to expand their territory. Instead of concentrating on the downtown business district, Street Sense vendors now often travel by Metro to places like Silver Spring, Maryland, to find commercial areas with steady foot traffic.

Ratliff now finds himself doing tech support for his vendors, helping them navigate the complexities of a modern online presence. Among the most common problems: "Changing emails, losing or forgetting passwords, losing your documents."

Beijing raises concerns about trade

Post-summit news confabs highlight the divide between China & the EU

BEIJING, Dec 10, (AP): From trade to human rights, the leaders of China and the European Union differed on a wide range of issues at a summit this week in the Chinese capital.

China, which sees Europe as an important export market, raised concerns about trade protectionism and "de-risking," the EU initiative to reduce its reliance on any one country - such as China - for vital raw materials and products.

The EU, which sees imports from China as a potential threat to companies and jobs, pressured China on its large trade surplus with Europe and its de facto support for Russia in the war in Ukraine.

Separate post-summit news conferences on Thursday evening highlighted the divergent positions. Wang Lutong, the director general for European affairs, spoke to journalists at China's Foreign Ministry.

Then EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU Council President Charles Michel held a joint news conference at the European Union office in Beijing.

Von Der Leyen: "If you just look at the last two years, the trade deficit has doubled. This is a matter of great concern for a lot of Europeans. Such imbalances are just unsustainable. The root causes are well known, and we discussed them. They range from a lack of market access for European companies to the Chinese market to preferential treatment of domestic Chinese companies and overcapacities in the Chinese production."

Wang: "Sometimes the EU relates the imbalance of trade between us to overcapacity and subsidies. But we don't think there is overcapacity in such areas like green energy and clean energy. ... China could be very useful to the green transition not only of the EU but also the whole world. So if you want us to support the EU in green transition, do not be protectionist. You make the choice between being protectionist and encouraging China to participate in your goal in order to achieve that green transition."

Wang: "The Chinese side has expressed concerns to the EU side on its 'de-risking' and restrictive economic and trade policies, including the anti-subsidy investigation against Chinese electric vehicles as well as its 5G poli-

cies. The Chinese side has urged the EU to ensure openness of its trade and investment market, provide an equitable and non-discriminatory business environment for Chinese enterprises and be prudent in using trade remedies."

Von Der Leyen: "Politically, European leaders will not be able to tolerate that our industrial base is undermined by unfair competition. We like competition. It makes us better; it lowers prices; it is good for the consumers. But competition needs to be fair. ... Europe does not want to decouple from China. ... What we want is de-risking. De-risking is about managing the risks we see, addressing excessive dependencies through diversification of our supply chains ... and thus increasing our resilience. And this is not exclusive to China."

Von Der Leyen: "Russia's war of aggression is a blatant violation of international law and the U.N. Charter, and it is a serious threat to European security. And this is why we recalled the need for China to use all its influence on Russia to stop this war of aggression and to engage in Ukraine's peace formula. We also reiterated (to China) to refrain from supplying lethal equipment to Russia and to prevent any attempts by Russia to undermine the impact of sanctions."

Wang: "Sometimes European politicians said to us that China needs to speak to Russia, you need to speak to President Putin about withdrawing their soldiers. This is a very independent sovereign nation. President Putin is making his decision based on his own national interest and security. So that's why we are also urging Europeans to speak to Russians about it. We think ... it's important that Europeans and Russians talk about the possible security architecture in Europe and it's also important that Russians and Americans talk about the possible strategic stability."

Michel: "For the European Union, human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal. We will never turn a blind eye to human rights cases. Today we welcome China's resumption of the human rights dialogue, as we agreed during my visit (in December 2022). It's a step in the right direction and today we continued this conversation at the highest level. We also highlighted cases of specific concern, such as the human rights violations in Xinjiang or Tibet."

LONDON, Dec 10, (AP): European Union negotiators clinched a deal Friday on the world's first comprehensive artificial intelligence rules, paving the way for legal oversight of AI technology that has promised to transform everyday life and spurred warnings of existential dangers to humanity.

Negotiators from the European Parliament and the bloc's 27 member countries overcame big differences on controversial points including generative AI and police use of face recognition surveillance to sign a tentative political agreement for the Artificial Intelligence Act.

"Deal!" tweeted European Commissioner Thierry Breton just before midnight. "The EU becomes the very first continent to set clear rules for the use of AI."

The result came after marathon closed-door talks this week, with the initial session lasting 22 hours before a second round kicked off Friday morning.

Officials were under the gun to secure a political victory for the flagship legislation. Civil society groups, however, gave it a cool reception as they wait for technical details that will need to be ironed out in the coming weeks. They said the deal didn't go far enough in protecting people from harm caused by AI systems.

"Today's political deal marks the beginning of important and necessary technical work on crucial details of the AI Act, which are still missing," said Daniel Friedlaender, head of the European office of the Computer and Communications Industry Association, a tech industry lobby group.

Race

The EU took an early lead in the global race to draw up AI guardrails when it unveiled the first draft of its rulebook in 2021. The recent boom in generative AI, however, sent European officials scrambling to update a proposal poised to serve as a blueprint for the world.

The European Parliament will still need to vote on the act early next year, but with the deal done that's a formality. Brando Benifei, an Italian lawmaker co-leading the body's negotiating efforts, told The Associated Press late Friday.

"It's very very good," he said by text message after being asked if it included everything he wanted. "Obviously we had to accept some compromises but overall very good." The eventual law wouldn't fully take effect until 2025 at the earliest, and threatens stiff financial penalties for violations of up to 35 million euros (\$38 million) or 7% of a company's global turnover.

Generative AI systems like OpenAI's ChatGPT have exploded into the world's consciousness, dazzling users with the ability to produce human-like text, photos and songs but raising fears about the risks the rapidly developing technology poses to jobs, privacy and copyright protection and even human life itself.

Now, the U.S., U.K., China and global coalitions like the Group of 7 major democracies have jumped in with their own proposals to regulate AI, though they're still catching up to Europe.

Strong and comprehensive rules from the EU "can set a powerful ex-

The Conversation

Could solar and batteries power your home when electricity grid goes out?

By Will Gorman, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory; **Bentham Paulos**, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, and **Galen Barbose**, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

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

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In areas where storms or extreme heat and cold have knocked out the power for days at a time, people are starting to ask whether investing in rooftop solar and battery storage systems can keep the lights on and the air conditioner running when the power grid can't.

When the grid goes down, most solar systems that lack a battery will also shut down. But with batteries, a home can disconnect from the grid. Each day, the sun powers the home and charges up the batteries, which provide power through the night.

Our team at Berkeley Lab explored what it would take for homes and commercial buildings to ride out long power outages, of three days or more, with solar and batteries.

For a 2022 report, we modeled a generic power outage for every county in the U.S., testing whether a rooftop solar system combined with a 10- or 30-kilowatt-hour battery could power critical loads, like refrigeration, lighting, internet service and well pumps; if it could go further and also power heating and air conditioning; or if it could even power a whole home.

To put that into perspective, the most popular battery on the market, the Tesla Powerwall, has just over 13 kWh of storage.

In general, we found that even a modest system of solar plus one battery can power critical loads in a home for days at a time, practically anywhere in the country.

But our maps show that providing backup for cooling and heat can be a challenge, though not an insurmountable one. Homes in the Southeast and Pacific Northwest often have power-hogging electric resistance heaters, exceeding the capability of solar and storage during winter outages. Homes with efficient heat pumps performed better. Summer air conditioning load can be heavy in the Southwest, making it harder to meet all cooling needs with solar and storage in a summer blackout.

Larger solar and battery systems can help, but meeting demand during outages still depends on the weather, how energy efficient the home is and other factors. For example, simple thermostat adjustments

during power outages reduce heating and cooling needs and allow solar with storage to maintain backup power over longer periods.

The ability to power commercial buildings varies widely, depending on the building type. Schools and big-box retail stores, with sufficient roof space for solar relative to building power demand, fare much better than multistory, energy-intensive buildings like hospitals.

We also looked at 10 real-world outage events from 2017 to 2020, including hurricanes, wildfires and storms, and modeled building performance for specific locations and real weather patterns during and after the outages.

We found that in seven of the outages, most homes would have been able to maintain critical loads plus heating and cooling using solar with 30 kWh of storage, or just over two Powerwalls.

Impact

But the weather around the outage can have a big impact, especially for hurricanes. After Hurricane Florence knocked out power in North Carolina in 2018, cloudy skies hung around for three days, dimming or even stopping solar panels' output.

Hurricane Harvey, on the other hand, slammed the Texas coast in August 2017 but moved on to cause widespread damage elsewhere in Texas. The skies over Corpus Christi cleared even as it took a week or more to get power restored. Solar and storage would have been a big help in that case, providing virtually all power needs for a typical single-family home, once the skies cleared.

Similarly, we found solar can do well in less cloudy events, like wildfire prevention shutoffs in California, or after the 2020 derecho windstorm in Iowa.

The heat source in a home is also a key factor. In a five-to-10-day outage following an ice storm in Oklahoma in 2020, we found that solar plus a 30-kWh battery could have supplied nearly all the critical power and heat needed for homes with natural gas heaters or heat pumps. But homes with electric resistance heating would have fallen short.

In Texas, over half of homes are heated with electricity, primarily resistance heaters. Energy Star-rated heat pumps - which provide both heating and cooling - use half

as much electricity per unit of heat output as electric resistance heaters and are also more efficient at cooling than the average new air conditioner. Converting older resistance heaters to new heat pumps can not only save money and reduce peak demand but also increase resilience during outages.

Setting up solar and storage to provide backup power in a home or building takes extra work and it costs more - just one Powerwall can run from US\$12,000 to \$16,500 for a full system installation, before incentives and taxes. That's as much as a fair-sized solar system. Nevertheless, a growing number of homeowners are installing both.

Over 90% of new solar installations in Hawaii in 2021 were paired with batteries after a regulation change. Now these distributed power plants are helping power the grid as coal plants are retired.

California has over 1.5 million rooftop solar systems. A growing number of customers are retrofitting batteries on their systems, or adding new solar plus storage, in part because utilities have resorted to "public safety power shutoffs" to lower the risk of wildfires sparked by power lines during dry, windy days.

And new forms of backup power are emerging, especially from electric cars. Ford is partnering with SunRun to combine its F150 Lightning electric pickup truck with solar and a two-way charger that can use the truck's battery to power a house. The standard version of the truck comes with a 98-kWh battery, the equivalent of more than seven Tesla Powerwall stationary batteries.

A fire station in Puerto Rico offers a glimpse of what solar and storage can do. After Hurricane Maria cut power for months in 2017, over 40,000 solar systems were installed on the island, often paired with battery storage. One of those is at the fire station in the town of Guánica, which had been unable to receive emergency calls in previous outages.

When Hurricane Fiona's wind and flooding again knocked out power to most of Puerto Rico in September 2022, the fire station was still operating.

"The solar system is working beautifully!" Sgt. Luis Saez told Canary Media the day after Fiona knocked out power. "We did not lose power all throughout the hurricane." (AP)

ample for many governments considering regulation," said Anu Bradford, a Columbia Law School professor who's an expert on EU law and digital regulation. Other countries "may not copy every provision but will likely emulate many aspects of it."

AI companies subject to the EU's rules will also likely extend some of those obligations outside the continent, she said. "After all, it is not efficient to

re-train separate models for different markets," she said.

The AI Act was originally designed to mitigate the dangers from specific AI functions based on their level of risk, from low to unacceptable. But lawmakers pushed to expand it to foundation models, the advanced systems that underpin general purpose AI services like ChatGPT and Google's Bard chatbot.

Nvidia CEO: Malaysia could be AI 'manufacturing' hub

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Dec 10, (AP): The CEO of technology giant Nvidia said Friday that he views Malaysia as a potential hub for artificial intelligence "manufacturing," though he did not confirm the chipmaker is in talks with a local conglomerate to set up AI data centers in the Southeast Asian country.

Jensen Huang, Nvidia's founder and CEO, told reporters in Kuala Lumpur that the Malaysian conglomerate YTL Corp. could play an important role in setting up AI data centers.

Speaking at a media roundtable, Huang did not confirm reports that Nvidia is in talks with YTL, whose interests span utilities and telecommunications, cement, construction and property development. But he said that "YTL is an extraordinary company and has an incredible leadership and legacy."

Malaysia "is a very important hub for SEA's computing infrastructure. It requires access to land, facilities, power, which is extraordinarily important," he said. "I think YTL could play a great role in that."

Malaysia's expertise in packaging, assembly and other aspects of manufacturing make it well suited for the manufacturing of artificial intelligence, Huang said. He said Nvidia was working with 80 AI startups in the country.

"Here in Malaysia, the data center infrastructure layer of computing, which is one of the most important parts of the AI and the cloud, is very successful here," Huang said.

Southeast Asia will likely be a hub for AI computing because countries need their own AI data centers to refine and

transform data into valuable information. Old data processing centers were designed to hold data files and run applications. AI requires use of each place's culture, language, values, literature and common sense, Huang said.

"I don't know plans of every region well, but I have great confidence that Southeast Asia is going to be a very important technology hub. It's already quite excellent at packaging and assembly and battery manufacturing. It's already very good at many aspects of the technology supply chain," he said.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Business Plus



From monologues into dialogues

Humility can revolutionize annual performance reviews



A hiring sign is displayed at a grocery store in Arlington Heights, Ill., Monday, Dec. 4, 2023. (AP)

By Michal Lehmann, Carnegie Mellon University and Taya Cohen, Carnegie Mellon University

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

Every year, employees worldwide enter annual performance reviews with mixed feelings. Do employees enter these conversations with enthusiasm to learn new things? Rarely. Are managers eager to have these conversations and coach their employees on how they can improve in the coming year? No.

These meetings are typically experienced as difficult conversations. Opportunities for learning and relationship-building are often missed.

In an ideal world, employees would learn and improve from the feedback their manager provides in

the annual review. But there are at least two obstacles that can stand in the way of that best-case scenario.

It can be hard to hear painful truths. Critical feedback can trigger defensive reactions: That's wrong. Who are you to say? This is a disaster, and I'll never be able to improve.

And, even if employees are receptive to the intended message, they may have trouble understanding the information and face difficulties implementing the feedback to improve their performance.

In an effort to get through, managers may try to soften their delivery. For example, they may use the much-maligned "feedback sandwich," which bookends a critique between two compliments. But this tactic can obscure truthful and useful information, resulting in confusion, misunderstandings and worse.

We study organizational behavior and are especially interested in how people interact and communicate at work. Drawing from our research on

humility and feedback, we suggest a new way for managers to approach performance reviews: Create what we call "humble encounters."

By expressing humility, managers can transform performance reviews from monologues into dialogues, with greater learning and improvement as a result. Our studies indicate that when a team member expresses humility to a co-worker, it leads their partner to feel greater "psychological safety" - more comfortable sharing candid opinions and concerns without worrying about backlash or negative consequences. This, in turn, helps improve performance in the team.

Humility has a few key ingredients: You must be willing to view yourself accurately, as you really are. But that's not enough to create a humble encounter. You must also show that you are teachable by exhibiting openness to feedback, ideas and suggestions. Finally, it's critical that you acknowledge and express appreciation for the contributions

that others make.

So, how might a manager do all this in a performance review?

You can signal that you're willing to view yourself accurately by sharing personal experiences of dealing with challenges: "I also struggled with this issue when I first entered the company." By sharing your own challenges and how you worked through them, you signal that you're aware of your own weaknesses and vulnerabilities, as well as your strengths and achievements.

You can signal teachability by demonstrating that you're open to learning from others. Managers can use what organizational culture experts Edgar and Peter Schein call "humble inquiry" - asking questions you don't already know the answer to, listening intentionally and responding with curiosity.

Be mindful of assumptions implicitly conveyed to the listener by how you phrase your questions. Negative assumption questions

- like "What triggers you to argue with your co-workers?" - presup-

pose a problem. The employee might be surprised by this question and the assumption behind it because they don't remember the last time they argued with someone at work. A negative-assumption question can help clarify undesirable behaviors if they are indeed happening, but at the same time it can signal distrust and hinder the receptivity of the receiver.

Another way to express humility is by good listening. It includes three crucial elements: paying attention to the speaker, showing positive intentions toward the speaker, and demonstrating that you understand their message. Managers who listen well to their employees elicit better performance and establish stronger relationships with them.

Spotlighting an employee's strengths and contributions is active acknowledgment of the employee's value without the manager devaluing their own. During the annual review, it's possible to recognize an employee's strengths while still providing developmental feedback.

Managers should provide support by conveying a sense of care, understanding and validation:

"I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations, and I know you can reach them." Using language that communicates support fosters trust and a sense of belonging, thus breaking down walls of defensiveness.

By modeling humility, managers provide employees with two key, seemingly contradictory signals.

They show relational acceptance - a signal that they accept the employee as they are, thereby calming feelings of threat and defensiveness. At the same time, they also communicate an expectation of change. Learning and improvement are not only possible but necessary for the employee to reach their full potential in the job.

In response to managers' humility, employees will reciprocate humble behaviors, showing more willingness to view themselves accurately, be teachable and appreciate others' contributions.

Managers might be concerned that expressing humility might signal weakness. However, research shows that this is not the case.

When leaders are perceived to be humble, they are also seen as effective, competent and charismatic. Therefore, being a humble leader has benefits not only for employees, but also for the leader's reputation.

Humble encounters can transform annual reviews into a more positive and enriching experience for both managers and employees. By enacting the three key aspects of humility - a willingness to view yourself accurately, teachability and appreciation for others' contributions - you can both change your employees' learning curve and strengthen your relationship with them. (AP)

Taking short breaks can provide a fresh perspective

Neuroscience unlocks brain's response to holiday stress

By Seena Mathew University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

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

Just as the shift to shorter days and colder weather can bring with it mood swings and other emotional challenges, the holiday season can also bring about somewhat predictable changes in mood and behavior.

Around this time of year, many of us experience more stress, anxiety and frustration than usual. These stressors have been linked to higher levels of heart failure and an increase in deaths from stroke.

Learning how to recognize what brings about stress and what parts of the brain are actively involved can help with managing the stress response.

As a neuroscientist, I am often curious about the dynamic connection between behavior and the brain. I've learned that, biologically speaking, there are ways to manage

your responses to holiday stressors through awareness of why they happen.

Delays in itineraries, crowded airports and congested highways can easily lead to frustrations for those traveling to spend time with family or friends.

One region of the brain involved in your response to these types of stresses is the hypothalamus, a structure deep in the brain that is involved in trying to keep the body in a stable state, known as homeostasis. The hypothalamus works to regulate the autonomic nervous system, a system that coordinates involuntary responses such as heart rate, blood pressure and respiration. It is the key component of the fight-or-flight response to real or perceived threats.

When you are under stress, such as when you learn that your flight has been delayed or even canceled, your hypothalamus stimulates the release of stress hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine. These hormones in turn trigger physiological responses like increased heart

rate, perspiration and feelings of irritation and frustration.

When you experience these stressors, deep breathing exercises can help stimulate the body's parasympathetic nervous system. This is known as the "rest and digest" system because it is responsible for helping your body relax and recover from stress. By taking slow, deep breaths, you can engage the parasympathetic nervous system, which can in turn calm your nerves and reduce frustrations.

Getting together with family during the holidays can bring about complicated emotions when there are conflicting personalities, unresolved issues or awkward family dynamics.

Frustrating or aggravating conversations with relatives often trigger a region of the brain known as the anterior cingulate cortex. The anterior cingulate cortex has a unique position in the brain, establishing connections with both the "emotional" limbic system and the "cognitive" prefrontal cortex.

This brain region is involved in

monitoring and regulating cognitive processes, conflict resolution and error detection. It plays a role in processing frustration by signaling when there is a conflict between expectations and outcomes. The anterior cingulate cortex is also involved in what's known as action-outcome learning, where you evaluate the consequence of an action and adjust your behavior based on feedback.

When you are feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, taking short breaks to step away from the situation can provide a fresh perspective and allow you to return with a clearer mindset. This break will allow you to reinforce this action-outcome learning, helping you learn to associate an action - a short break - with the outcome of the action, which is more relaxed breathing and a clearer mind.

The holiday season can put an unnecessary burden on those who are experiencing economic or financial hardship. The cost of hosting a holiday meal, buying gifts or traveling can contribute additional financial strain during an already stressful time.

The brain region primarily associated with memory and learning is the hippocampus. When you recall past experiences, such as how much you spent last year during the holidays or remember that the credit card bill is coming soon, you activate your hippocampus. The hippocampus is critical in the interplay of memory formation and recall and retrieval of individual episodic memories.

Some ways to reduce stress may be to make gifts for friends and family instead of purchasing them. To help cut down on travel costs, perhaps take a virtual holiday visit now, followed by an in-person visit later when it is less expensive or when financial strains have eased. When reminded of stressful experiences, the hippocampus sends signals to the hypothalamus and other brain regions to help restore balance in your mind. The hippocampus also aids in your adaptation to these stressors by helping you learn how to adjust your expectations. In the end, you have to remind yourself that it truly is the thought that counts most. (AP)

editor's choice



Shalhoub revisits his iconic role in ‘Mr. Monk’s Last Case’

NEW YORK, Dec 10, (AP): Fourteen years ago, Tony Shalhoub said goodbye to one of his most beloved creations - the obsessive-compulsive private detective Adrian Monk. Monk’s last TV appearance in 2009 was even called “Mr. Monk and the End.”

There was talk over the years of a potential reboot and some possible scripts were floated. But Shalhoub said there wasn’t enough of a compelling reason to return to his phobia-obsessed character.

Then the pandemic hit.

Monk suddenly wasn’t the only germaphobe wiping down their groceries, stocking up on antibacterial wipes and shuddering at the sight of crowded places.

“Monk, in a way, was the canary in the coal mine,” Shalhoub tells The Associated Press. “He seemed so out of touch and so neurotic and so forth. The pandemic was the great equalizer. Everybody got to sort of see the world through Monk’s eyes.”

Viewers have caught up with Monk and so fans get another goodbye with the 90-minute “Mr. Monk’s Last Case: A Monk Movie” hit Peacock on Friday.

Shalhoub reunites on a new murder case with a millionaire as the prime suspect and original stars Ted Levine, Traylor Howard, Jason Gray-Stanford, Melora Hardin and Hector Elizondo.

Shalhoub laughs that when the rock band Eagles got back together in 1994, founding member Glenn Frey said they’d never broke up, they just took a 14-year vacation. “That’s how I felt at the first table read when we all got back together again. We just kind of folded right back into it.”

Monk helped the San Francisco Police Department solve crimes be-

cause his fixations enable him to observe things that others overlook. He walked away after solving his last case - the murder of his beloved wife.

When we reconnect with Monk, it is present day and he’s emerged from the pandemic, having spent most of it in a full protective suit and using in-home rapid tests every 20 minutes. Outside, hand sanitizer use is booming. “Everyone is you,” he is told. “They’re gonna hate it,” he replies.

Obsession

Monk is in a moody place, no longer detecting and lonely. He wrote a memoir but burned through editors and ghost writers. His obsession with details - including nine pages about a suspect’s vacuum cleaner - has prompted his publisher to scrap the book and ask for his advance back. So Monk is reevaluating his life and his career.

“When we’re young, everything’s in front of us. And then when we’re in our middle ages, we feel more settled in the present. But then as we move beyond that, we mostly are looking backwards. We’re looking behind us and we’re reassessing and reevaluating,” Shalhoub says.

“You know, ‘What have I done? What has been my footprint and my impact?’ And I think that’s exactly where Monk is: ‘What has all this meant? What have we really accomplished?’ That further perpetuates these very dark thoughts that he’s having.”

Shalhoub collected three Emmy Awards for his work as Monk over eight seasons. After the show ended in 2009, Shalhoub went on to earn three Tony Award nominations, winning in 2018 for “The Band’s

Visit” and starred in “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel,” winning another Emmy.

He suspects Monk - an unlikely hero in these Marvel days - has been embraced by legions of fans because he has flaws and insecurities, but manages to push through them.

“He uses them and turns them into an asset. Actually, for Monk, they become this superpower in a way,” Shalhoub says. “He doesn’t know where he fits into the general society. So he’s kind of always sort of like walking alongside of humanity and society. Maybe that also makes him a bit relatable.”

He adds: “I always hear about adolescents and young teens relating to him, too, because that’s such a time of life being feeling socially awkward and feeling you’re not really a child, you’re not really a grown up.”

Shalhoub also suspects there’s a little OCD in all of us, whether it’s being annoyed by the placement of something or an odd interaction on the street that sticks in your head.

“Maybe it’s a crooked picture frame on a wall. Not all of us may go over and straighten that frame, but good luck trying to keep your eyes off of it, you know?”

The debut of “Mr. Monk’s Last Case: A Monk Movie” begs the question - is this really a final goodbye to Monk? Shalhoub isn’t sure.

“I thought the door was closed. I really did for a lot of years. But now that we’ve cracked it open, I’m just going to leave that door open,” he says. “I think the next one would have to be called ‘Monk’s Really, Really Final No Kidding Case - This Time We Mean It’ or something like that.”

Variety



This image released by Bleecker Street shows Sara Bareilles in a scene from ‘Waitress: The Musical.’ (AP)

Film

It Used to Be Hers: Sara Bareilles’ full-circle moment

‘Waitress’ returns to the big screen

NEW YORK, Dec 10, (AP): She was an admired pop star with a voice like butter. But writing a musical about a woman who bakes pies? When Sara Bareilles was approached more than a decade ago about penning the score for “Waitress” on Broadway, she literally pictured a mountain in front of her, impossible to climb.

Bareilles hadn’t even yet seen the source material, the 2007 indie movie starring Keri Russell as Jenna, a small-town waitress in an abusive marriage who bakes for solace and self-expression. And though she loved musicals, Bareilles had never written from any character’s perspective but her own. But at that initial lunch meeting, theater director Diane Paulus suggested Bareilles go watch the film and then write something, anything: “Whatever pours out of you.”

A few weeks later, an MP3 file from Bareilles popped into Paulus’ inbox. It was “She Used to Be Mine,” an achingly wistful, painful yet also somehow triumphant anthem for Jenna. And it was ready to go. Paulus thought: “OK, we’ve got our musical.”

Movie audiences will now see Bareilles, as Jenna, sing that song, which has taken on a life as a favored audition song and something people of all ages and genders, professional or amateur, just love to sing. It’s the emotional highpoint of the live-capture version of “Waitress: The Musical” that hit movie screens nationwide on Thursday for five days, a return to the big screen more than 15 years after the story began its life there.

To Bareilles, the full-circle moment means people who could perhaps never afford to see an expensive show will now have the chance - something she describes as “a huge source of pride.”

“I grew up in a small town,” she said in an interview, referring to her youth in Eureka, California. “I think it would have been off the map to be able to come to New York and see a Broadway show. So that was a big motivation.”

Capturing the show, during a return engagement to Broadway in 2021 just as theaters were tentatively recovering from the devastating pandemic shutdown, was not an easy feat. Everybody had to stay healthy or the four-day shoot - two live performances plus some extra work for closeups and the like - would not work.

“It’s already hard to worry about getting sick when

you’re in the theater,” Bareilles said. “And we only had these four days.. But there was so much excitement and buoyancy ... people really wanted to be there and capture this moment to live in perpetuity.”

Jessie Nelson, who wrote the book, says producers moved quickly once they were able to secure Covid relief funding. “We realized that probably never again will we have this incredible group of people together and this beautiful cast,” Nelson says. “It was really this feeling of, we had lightning in a bottle.”

In a sense, the whole story of “Waitress” feels like lightning in a bottle. Both the show and the movie by Adrienne Shelly thread a delicate needle, blending the dark theme of domestic abuse with some outright raunchy comedy. It could have been a fatal mix, especially in a musical, but it was Bareilles, says director Paulus, who found the way to capture it all truthfully.

Attracting

“Sara’s musical score enabled us to ride that emotional journey,” Paulus says. “What was attracting us all ... was that it was addressing this pervasive issue of domestic violence, but doing it in a way that was human and quirky and messy - in a Broadway musical.”

The director says some audience members told her they credited the show with helping them escape their own abusive relationships.

For Bareilles, 43, who only took on the role of Jenna after original star Jessie Mueller’s run ended, it was an artistic journey that changed her career. Back in 2012, all she knew was that she was ready for something different.

“I was newly transplanted to New York City. I had left my band and my boyfriend and my manager and my house. I just was kind of clean-slating my life. And I didn’t really know why,” she says. “And so I think the themes of this woman sort of realizing she’s in a life that she didn’t quite recognize or maybe even entirely want - I was relating to those themes. ‘She Used to Be Mine’ is as much a diary entry for me as it is for Jenna.”

Bareilles adds that someone else helped her with the process of writing - a person she’d call on frequently, though they had passed away years earlier. Shelly, who wrote, directed and acted in her movie, playing the character of Dawn, who was tragically killed by an in-

truder in 2006 at age 40 - before she could learn that her film had been accepted by the Sundance Film Festival.

“I did a lot of talking to Adrienne Shelly during the process of making the show,” Bareilles says. “I did a lot of inviting her into the process and wanting her spirit to be very available and very welcome.” The singer says she feels Shelly was deeply present in the work that emerged. “You become the vessel for it,” she says.

A vessel - and also a musical theater actor. Last year Bareilles was nominated for a Tony award for her much-loved portrayal of the Baker’s Wife (yes, another woman who bakes) in “Into the Woods.” Conquering a Stephen Sondheim role on Broadway was something she could barely have imagined in 2012 when meeting Paulus. In fact, she had just come off what she calls a terrible audition for an earlier production of “Into the Woods.” The role - Cinderella - went to Mueller, eventual star of “Waitress.”

Whatever she does next, Bareilles thinks this movie is likely her last outing as Jenna.

“Never say never,” she says. “But in my heart, this capture feels like a nice bookend for my time as Jenna. I spent a lot of time in that apron and loved every second of it.”

Bareilles and her colleagues are heartened that small productions of the show are taking place around the country, keeping alive what will always be the first Broadway musical led by an all-female creative crew.

“We broke that glass ceiling so that everyone else can walk through that opening ... to be able to say this is possible,” says Paulus. Especially important, she notes, is that the show was a financial success. “So often, my sense before ‘Waitress’ was that feeling of, ‘Can women really be in charge?’” she says. “The door just had to be opened.”

To Bareilles, the guiding spirit will always be Shelly, who she imagines would now be feeling “really proud, really pleased to see that this brainchild and heart child of hers is having a life that is very clearly reaching a lot of people, and deeply resonant.”

“People have very emotional, almost familial connections to this show,” Bareilles says. “It’s a world they want to live inside of, touch base with, reconnect with. And I think this is all from Adrienne.”

LOS ANGELES: Martin Scorsese will be honored with the prestigious David O. Selznick Achievement Award in February, the Producers Guild of America said Thursday.

“Marty’s trailblazing career as a producer, marked by decades of bold, breakthrough projects, demands to be celebrated,” said PGA Presidents **Donald De Line** and **Stephanie Allain** in a joint statement. “His mastery and unwavering commitment to the craft are truly unparalleled.”

A three-time PGA Award nominee with six decades of producing credits, Scorsese recalled the first time he was honored by the guild.

“In March 1965, I was flown out to Los Angeles by the PGA to receive an award for my student film ‘It’s Not Just You, Murray!’ I was 22 at the time. At the same event, a much older filmmaker was also being honored. His name was **Alfred Hitchcock**,” Scorsese said in a statement. “58 years later, I’m proud to say that I am now the much older filmmaker. And I’m touched and extremely honored to be receiving an award named after a true legend among producers, **David O. Selznick**. It makes me feel like I’ve come full circle.”

In addition to “Killers of the Flower Moon,” Scorsese’s producing credits include his own films like “Hugo” and “The Wolf of Wall Street,” as well as those from others, including Hollywood productions, indies, documentaries, foreign films and those from first time directors. He’s also produced television, including “Boardwalk Empire.”

Surprisingly, Scorsese has never won the guild’s top award for best theatrical motion picture.

Scorsese will accept the honor at the Producers Guild Awards on Feb. 25 in Los Angeles, joining the ranks of previous honorees like **Steven Spielberg**, **Tom Cruise** and **Kevin Feige**. (AP)

PARIS: French actor **Gerard Depardieu**’s behavior toward women came under renewed scrutiny in **France** after a documentary showed him repeatedly making obscene remarks and gestures during a 2018 trip to **North Korea**.

The footage, filmed by a professional crew that covered Depardieu’s visit during the 70th anniversary of North Korea’s formation, was included in an investigative

documentary that aired Thursday on national TV channel France 2. It had never been shown before to the public. Some excerpts quickly went viral on the social media.

Depardieu, 74, is among France’s most well-known stars. He was put under investigation in December 2020 for rape and sexual assault, reportedly at his Paris



Scorsese



Depardieu

home, following allegations from actor **Charlotte Arnould** in 2018. The investigation is ongoing.

Depardieu has denied any criminal conduct.

In the video recorded in North Korea by an unnamed video production company, Depardieu can be seen making groaning sounds and sexual comments in front of

women, including about a 10-year old girl. He can also be seen posing for a photo while saying he was “touching the bottom” of a North Korean interpreter by his side.

The documentary also features French comedian **Helene Darras**, who accused Depardieu of touching her bottom when she was a young extra for the 2008 film “Disco.”

The Paris prosecutor’s office said Thursday that Darras filed a complaint against Depardieu in September for alleged sexual assault.

In a brief phone call with the journalists who worked on the documentary, Depardieu said, “This whole thing is deeply bothering me” and declined an interview offer. (AP)

People & Places

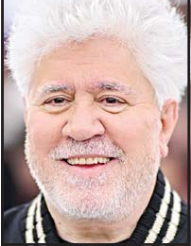
Opera

Cultural treasure

‘Don Carlo’ celebrates La Scala’s new status

MILAN, Dec 10, (AP): Italian melodrama’s official recognition as a global cultural treasure was celebrated recently during La Scala’s season premiere of Verdi’s “Don Carlo,” with some of the drama spilling out into the theater with a pair of anti-fascist cries before the curtain went up.

Singer Patti Smith and Spanish director **Pedro Almodóvar** joined an audience of mostly Italian glitterati that showered the 4-hour production with 13 minutes of applause along with roses and carnations. La Scala premiere veterans Russian soprano Anna Netrebko as Elisabeth of Valois and Italian baritone Luca Salsi got the loudest reception. Michele Pertusi persisted in his role as the Spanish king despite a worsening cold that dropped into his windpipes in the third and fourth acts, winning the crowd’s admiration.



Almodóvar

“This is the most important evening of the opera theater in the world,” Salsi, who sang in his fifth premiere, said backstage. “We are all colleagues, friends. I think you saw this complicity on the stage.”

“Don Carlo” hit hot-button topics of power and oppression, playing out in real time, but Italy’s ongoing reckoning with its fascist past spilled over into the gala evening with protests against the institutional seat of honor going to a far-right politician who is the Senate speaker, in the absence of Italy’s president and premier.

A cry of “no to fascism,” went up from the upper tiers of La Scala’s balconies before the anthem, followed by one of “Long live anti-fascist Italy.” La Scala’s unions had protested even before the show with a statement: “Fascists are not welcome at Teatro alla Scala.”

Senate Speaker Ignazio La Russa, a co-founder of Premier Giorgia Meloni’s party whom unions claim has not condemned Italy’s fascist past, sat in the front row of the adorned royal box with Mayor Giuseppe Sala, a left-wing politician who pointedly invited 93-year-old senator-for-life and Holocaust survivor Liliana Segre to join him.

Audience

Segre, who received warm applause from the audience before the curtain went up, acknowledged the royal box debate as she arrived, saying, “it’s nice everyone wants to sit next to me,” and reminded journalists that she has been attending La Scala performances her whole life.

La Russa told reporters that he did not hear the cries. La Scala asserted itself as an anti-fascist force during the regime of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. Famed conductor Arturo Toscanini refused to play the fascist party anthem in the theater or elsewhere, earning him a beating from Mussolini’s Black Shirts. After World War II, Toscanini quickly rehired choral director Vittore Veneziani, who was forced out of his job by Italy’s antisemitic racial laws in 1938.

The start of the 2023-24 season highlighted the UN cultural agency UNESCO’s decision to include Italian lyric opera on its list of intangible cultural treasures. The agency on Wednesday recognized the global importance of the 400-year-old art form that combines music, costume and stage direction.

La Scala’s general manager, Dominique Meyer, told the audience before the opera that Italian opera had helped “the Italian language become known and loved in the whole world.”

Riccardo Chailly, the opera house’s music director, conducted “Don Carlo,” which turns around the power dynamic between the king of Spain and his son, Don Carlo, who driven apart by a love triangle with Elisabeth and Spain’s oppression of Flanders.

Luis Pasqual, the stage director, said Don Carlo’s focus on nationalism and religion remain current as the suffering in the Middle East persists.

“One is tempted to say, ‘How important is it if the soprano is a meter more to the left or the right?’ None at all in comparison with what is happening in the world,” Pasqual, who is Spanish, said. “The only way to react, we who can’t do anything to improve the situation, at least I cannot, is to do our work in the best way possible.”

His direction received boos from the crowd, but he wasn’t bothered. “I am here to serve Verdi,” he said backstage.

La Scala’s season premiere remains one of Europe’s top cultural events, bringing together top cultural, political and business figures as the city observes a holiday for the patron saint St. Ambrose. As such, it is often the target of protests, leading to the center of Milan being cordoned off.

Other more quiet protests made it inside. Some female attendees wore red shoes and jangled their keys as part of growing protests to end violence against women following the killing last month of a 22-year-old student north of Venice. And an Iranian tenor, Ramtin Ghazavi, who sings in La Scala’s choir strode the red carpet wearing a T-shirt reading: Women, Life, Freedom in support of women protesting in his native country.

Also:

NEW YORK: A Ukrainian composer has been commissioned to write an opera about mothers from that country going into **Russia** to rescue their forcibly detained children.

The Metropolitan Opera and Lincoln Center Theater has said that 42-year-old **Maxim Kolomiets** will compose the work to a libretto by **George Brant**, whose “Grounded” with composer **Jeanine Tesori** premiered at the Washington National Opera on Oct. 28 and travels to the Met in the autumn of 2024. Met general manager **Peter Gelb** hopes the company can present the new work by 2027 or ‘28.

The story is fictional but based on events in **Ukraine** and **The Hague**. The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants on March 17 for Russian President **Vladimir Putin** and Russian children’s rights commissioner **Maria Lvova-Belova**, accusing them of abducting children from Ukraine.

“It will be a story of motherhood and childhood, about this strange, very difficult situation where mothers rescue their children and met with many difficulties,” Kolomiets said in a telephone interview. “For people, for listeners, it will be a good understanding.”

He was living in **Kyiv** when the war started last year, then three months later moved to **Leipzig, Germany**, where he had a project and decided to stay.

Gelb said discussions began last fall with Ukraine first lady **Olena Zelenska** when she visited New York and Kolomiets was picked from among 72 applications after vetting by Met dramaturg **Paul Cremona**, Gelb and the Met’s artistic staff.



This image released by Polk & Co. shows the cast of ‘Spamalot,’ (from left), Michael Urie, Nik Walker, James Monroe Iglehart, Christopher Fitzgerald, Jimmy Smagula and Taran Killam during a performance in New York. (AP)

Stage

‘Theater brings people together’

Urie’s comic triumphs in ‘Spamalot’

NEW YORK, Dec 10, (AP): Michael Urie has a very hard job this winter: Not cracking up when he’s not supposed to on Broadway.

The former “Ugly Betty” and current “Shrinking” star is in a revival of the madcap medieval musical “Spamalot” and that means regular silliness from his co-stars.

“At some point, somebody will do something totally stupid and we’ll all crack up laughing,” he said. “I have to bite the inside of my cheek or turn upstage or just really think about my intention.”

You can sympathize with Urie since “Spamalot” is built on shenanigans that includes a group of knights fond of shrubbery, a singing and dancing plague victim, flutulent Frenchmen and killer rabbits.

“The wordplay is so clever and then you’ll get a fart joke or then a rabbit will bite someone’s head off,” said Urie. “I don’t know any other material that is highbrow and lowbrow at the same time or within seconds of each other, but they seem to pull it off.”

He’s joined by a cast that includes theater stars Christopher Fitzgerald, James Monroe Iglehart, Ethan Slater and Leslie Rodriguez Kritzer and “Saturday Night Live” comedian Taran Killam.

Killam and Fitzgerald in particular are liable to make Urie crack up: “The things that I’m ready for, I’m a rock. I can I can keep it together. I’m really good at that. But if somebody throws a curveball, it’s a little tough.”

The stage tale, concocted by “Python” legend Eric Idle and loosely based on the movie “Monty Python and the Holy Grail,” concerns King Arthur and his quest to corral some knights who’ll go off with him to find the grail, the cup Jesus drank from at the Last Supper.

One of the show’s highlights is the rousing final number - “Find Your

Grail,” with the lyrics “Keep your eyes on the goal/Then the prize you won’t fail/That’s your grail” - which Urie says is a simple idea but could be a metaphor for anything we seek.

“Of course, the grail could be anything. It could be a literal cup. It could be singing and dancing. It could be falling in love. But the idea that finding your friend could also be a grail to me is really, really, really beautiful,” he said. “I think theater brings people together. It’s sharing space.”

Urie, who can be seen now in “Maestro” opposite Bradley Cooper, plays Sir Robin, a cowardly knight who soils his pants whenever he’s afraid, which is often. Idle played him on film and David Hyde Pierce originated the stage role when the Tony Award-winning musical debuted in 2005.

Singing

“The role I play was crafted for David Hyde Pierce, one of my heroes and one of our greats,” said Urie. “I think his way of speaking and singing and dancing really works for me. His training is similar to my training and the kinds of parts that he plays, I think are similar to the kinds of parts that I play.”

He also plays a long-winded monk called Brother Maynard, who wields the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch, and a guard who is eager to debate whether swallows can successfully carry a coconut.

“As silly as the show comes off, a really good actor gives it such nuance and gives it so much for the audience to enjoy and so much control. He’s just a just a very, very skilled actor,” said director Josh Rhodes.

For Urie, the material is familiar turf. He remembers watching the original movie as a middle schooler and quoting parts of it with his friends, realizing that was changing the way he thought of comedy.

“I remember as a middle school kid - like a preteen or a teenager - around the same time figuring out that Monty Python was funny and figuring out that the Beatles were good,” he said.

“There’s something about these like these sort of British staples in entertainment that kind of seeped into my consciousness at the same time. I think there’s something pure about the both.”

The Juilliard-trained Urie broke out in “Ugly Betty” but theater fans knew him for his winning solo turn in Jonathan Tolins’ utterly charming play “Buyer & Cellar,” playing a clerk in Barbra Streisand’s underground mall. His other stage credits include a powerful revival of “Angels in America” to the big Broadway musical “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying.”

“I wasn’t able to really, like, make it big in theater until I was on TV, which is just sort of the nature of like selling tickets,” he said. “But I’m really grateful that I got that break and I was able to get a foot in the door in the theater.”

Early next year, he’ll also star alongside Sutton Foster in an off-Broadway revival of “Once Upon a Mattress,” a musical comedy set in 15th century Europe. “This is my medieval phase,” jokes Urie. “I’m doing medieval musicals, which I think is working out for me.”

But right now, he’s got to be silly. Urie says one of the good things about doing “Spamalot” is that audiences who arrive have come for a good time, knowing what to expect.

“So many times when you do a play, especially in New York, they’re like, ‘What’s this going to be? Go ahead, entertain me, move me.’ But with ‘Spamalot,’ it’s more like, ‘OK, don’t mess it up.’ It’s more like, ‘We’re with you, but you better bring it. You better bring out a rabbit or I’m not going to like it.’”



Patti Smith arrives to attend La Scala opera house’s gala season opener, Giuseppe Verdi’s opera ‘Don Carlo’ at the Milan La Scala theater, Italy, Thursday Dec. 7. The season-opener Thursday, held each year on the Milan feast day St. Ambrose, is considered one of the highlights of the European cultural calendar. (AP)



Zephaniah



Harry

Variety

LONDON: Prince Harry lost a preliminary round Friday in his libel case against the publisher of the Daily Mail tabloid over an article that said he tried to hide his efforts to retain publicly funded protection in the **UK** after walking away from his role as a working member of the royal family.

A judge at the High Court in London ruled that Associated Newspapers Ltd. can continue to argue that the story reflected an “honest opinion” about the facts of the case and therefore was not libelous. The publisher, which is the defendant in the case, has a “real prospect” of showing that public statements issued on Harry’s behalf were misleading, the judge wrote in his decision.

“I anticipate that, at trial, the defendant may well submit that this was a masterclass in the art of ‘spinning,’” Justice **Matthew Nicklin** wrote. “And, the defendant argues, it was successful in misleading and/or confusing the public.”

A hearing is scheduled for Tuesday to discuss the consequences of the ruling.

The ruling comes just a day after another judge concluded three days of arguments - mostly behind closed doors - over whether the government unfairly stripped Harry of his security detail after he and his family moved to the **US** in 2020.

Harry, 39, the younger son of **King Charles III**, is challenging the government’s decision to provide security on a case-by-case basis when he and his family visit **Britain**. Harry has said hostility toward him and his wife on social media and relentless hounding by the news media threaten their safety.

The Mail on Sunday and Mail Online published an article in February 2022 about the issue headlined: “How Prince Harry tried to keep his legal fight with the government over police bodyguards a secret ... then - just minutes after the story broke - his PR machine tried to put a positive spin on the dispute.” (AP)

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.: Rapper **Kodak Black** has been arrested again in **South Florida**, this time on charges of possessing cocaine, jail records show.

The **Broward County** jail listed **Bill Kapri**, Kodak Black’s legal name, as being

in custody Thursday. The jail records say Plantation police charged him with improperly stopping or parking his vehicle, cocaine possession and tampering with evidence.

Kapri is no stranger to South Florida law enforcement. He was arrested last year on charges of trafficking in oxycodone and possession of a controlled substance without a prescription. He was freed on a \$75,000 bond, and regular drug testing was a condition of his release.

Kapri was ordered to drug rehab for 30 days earlier this year after missing a drug

test in February and then testing positive for fentanyl several days later, according to court records.

Then last June a warrant for his arrest was issued after authorities said he didn’t show up for a June 9 drug test. (AP)

LONDON: **Benjamin Zephaniah**, a British poet, political activist and actor who drew huge inspiration from his Caribbean roots, has died. He was 65.

Zephaniah died Thursday after being diagnosed with a brain tumor eight weeks



This image released by Peacock shows Tony Shalhoub as Adrian Monk in a scene from ‘Mr. Monk’s Last Case: A Monk Movie.’ (AP) — Details Page 11

ago, his family said in a statement on Instagram.

“We shared him with the world and we know many will be shocked and saddened by this news,” the family said. “Benjamin’s wife was by his side throughout and was with him when he passed.”

Zephaniah, who was born in **Birmingham** in central **England** on April 15, 1958, was a sharp-witted and often provocative presence across British media as well as regularly performing at political gatherings and demonstrations.

Widely recognizable from his long dreadlocks and his local accent, Zephaniah was never shy in espousing his views on bigotry, racism, refugees, revolutions and healthy eating. Arguably, he was the most well-known poet in Britain of his time, equally at home performing in school classrooms or at big political rallies.

“I admired him, respected him, learnt from him, loved him,” British author and poet **Michael Rosen** said.

The son of a Barbadian postal worker and a Jamaican nurse, Zephaniah imagined himself as a poet from a very young age, but he struggled at school as a result of dyslexia. He was kicked out at age 13, unable to read or write, and learned to do both as an adult.

In his 20s, he traveled to London, where his first book “Pen Rhythm” was published. He would subsequently write collections focusing on particular issues, including the U.K. legal system and Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories.

His writing was often classified as dub poetry, which emerged in **Jamaica** in the 1970s combining reggae beats with a hard-hitting political message. (AP)

CDC report highlights need for awareness

Chronic fatigue syndrome not rare ... it affects 3.3m in US

NEW YORK, Dec 10, (AP): Health officials on Friday released the first nationally representative estimate of how many US adults have chronic fatigue syndrome: 3.3 million.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's number is larger than previous studies have suggested, and is likely boosted by some of the patients with long COVID. The condition clearly "is not a rare illness," said the CDC's Dr. Elizabeth Unger, one of the report's co-authors.

Chronic fatigue is characterized by at least six months of severe exhaustion not helped by bed rest. Patients also report pain, brain fog and other symptoms that can get worse after exercise, work or other activity. There is no cure, and no blood test or scan to enable a quick diagnosis.

Doctors have not been able to pin down a cause, although research suggests it is a body's prolonged overreaction to an infection or other jolt to the immune system.

Condition

The condition rose to prominence nearly 40 years ago, when clusters of cases were reported in Incline Village, Nevada, and Lyndonville, New York. Some doctors dismissed it as psychosomatic and called it "yuppie flu."

Some physicians still hold that opinion, experts and patients say.

Doctors "called me a hypochondriac and said it was just anxiety and depression," said Hannah Powell, a 26-year-old Utah woman who went undiagnosed for five years.

The new CDC report is based on a survey of 57,000 US adults in 2021 and 2022. Participants were asked if a doctor or other health-care professional had ever told them they had myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome, and whether they still have it. About 1.3% said yes to both questions.

That translated to about 3.3 million US adults, CDC officials said.

Among the other findings: The syndrome was more common in women than men, and in white people compared with some other racial and ethnic groups. Those findings are consistent with earlier, smaller studies.

However, the findings also contradicted long-held perceptions that chronic fatigue syndrome is a rich white woman's disease.

There was less of a gap between women and men than some previous studies suggested, and there was hardly any difference between white and Black people. The study also found that a higher percentage of poor people said they had it than affluent people.

Those misperceptions may stem from the fact that patients who are diagnosed and treated "traditionally tend to have a little more access to health care, and maybe are a little more believed when they say they're fatigued and continue to be fatigued and can't go to work," said Dr. Brayden Yellman, a specialist at the Bateman Horne Center in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The report relied on patients' memories, without verifying their diagnoses through medical records.

That could lead to some overcounting, but experts believe only a fraction of the people with chronic fatigue syndrome are diagnosed, said Dr. Daniel Clauw, director of the University of Michigan's Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center.

"It's never, in the US, become a clinically popular diagnosis to give because there's no drugs approved for it. There's no treatment guidelines for it," Clauw said.

The tally likely includes some patients with long COVID who were suffering from prolonged exhaustion, CDC officials said.

Long COVID is broadly defined as chronic health problems weeks, months or years after an acute COVID-19 infection. Symptoms vary, but a subset of patients have the same problems seen in people with chronic fatigue syndrome.

Diagnosed

"We think it's the same illness," Yellman said. But long COVID is more widely accepted by doctors, and is being diagnosed much more quickly, he said.

Powell, one of Yellman's patients, was a high school athlete who came down with an illness during a trip to Belize before senior year. Doctors thought it was malaria, and she seemed to recover. But she developed a persistent exhaustion, had trouble sleeping and had recurrent vomiting. She gradually had to stop playing sports, and had trouble doing schoolwork, she said.

After five years, she was diagnosed with chronic fatigue and began to achieve some stability through regular infusions of fluids and medications. She graduated from the University of Utah and now works for an organization that helps domestic violence victims.

Getting care is still a struggle, she said.

"When I go to the ER or to another doctor's visit, instead of saying I have chronic fatigue syndrome, I usually say I have long COVID," Powell said. "And I am believed almost immediately."

ST. LOUIS, Dec 10, (AP): The dangerous bacteria that sparked powdered formula recalls and shortages last year has infected two babies this year, killing a Kentucky child and causing brain damage in a Missouri infant.

Federal health officials confirmed recently that two cases of invasive infections caused by *cronobacter sakazakii* have been reported in 2023, both in infants who consumed powdered infant formula made by Abbott Nutrition, the company at the center of the 2022 crisis.

Food and Drug Administration officials said there was no evidence that the infections were linked to manufacturing and no reason to issue new recalls. The bacteria are found naturally in the environment and also can make their way into infant formula after the packaging is opened.

"There is no indication of a broader public health concern related to this product at this time," the FDA said in a statement.

Kentucky health officials notified the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Nov. 15 that a child who consumed Similac Total Comfort powdered formula died after being infected with *cronobacter sakazakii*.

In Missouri, 6-week-old Mira White, of Sikeston, was diagnosed in early March with a brain infection caused by the bacteria, which was detected in an open container of Similac NeoSure formula in her home.

Inspections

The same type of bacteria led federal investigators to shut down an Abbott formula plant in Sturgis, Michigan, last year when inspections sparked by four infant illnesses, including two deaths, showed widespread contamination in the plant.

Since falling ill, Mira has suffered nearly constant seizures and inconsolable bouts of crying, said her 33-year-old mother, Asian Davis. Brain scans showed neurological damage and missing tissue caused by the infection.

"It affected her brain real bad," Davis said. "She'll grow, but it will be a slow progress."

FDA investigators said they "did not identify a causal link" between Mira's infection and the Casa Grande, Arizona, factory that made the formula marketed for premature babies. Abbott officials said they found no *cronobacter* in batches of formula at the plant. The bacteria also weren't found in unopened cans of Similac NeoSure formula from Mira's home.

In Kentucky, the FDA said it "has not found evidence" of contamination after a Nov. 21 inspection at an Abbott plant. Officials did not identify the child or the location of the plant.

Abbott officials said there is no evidence that conditions at the company's manufacturing plants or contamination in sealed products caused the illnesses.

Frank Yiannas, a former FDA official in charge of food safety response, cautioned that a negative test does not guarantee there's no contamination.

"A positive test result means a lot. A negative test result doesn't mean anything," he said.

Food safety advocates say the tragic cases underscore the overlooked risk of powdered formula, particularly for babies

No evidence of manufacturing link: FDA

2 babies infected with fatal bacteria sometimes detected in infant formula

Action sought against illicit products

'China's fruity e-cigarettes target teens'

WASHINGTON, Dec 10, (AP): House lawmakers are demanding information from federal officials on what they are doing to stop the recent influx of kid-appealing electronic cigarettes from China.

Members of a new congressional committee on US-China relations sent the request Thursday to Justice Department and Food and Drug Administration leaders, calling attention to "the extreme proliferation of illicit vaping products."

The letter cites Associated Press reporting on how thousands of new disposable e-cigarettes have hit the market in recent years, mostly manufactured in China and sold in flavors like watermelon and gummy bear.

The FDA has declared all such products illegal. Companies seeking to sell e-cigarettes in the US are required to first seek permission from the FDA, though many of the products imported from China have skipped that step. The agency has only authorized a tiny handful of tobacco-flavored vapes for adult smokers.

In May, the agency called on customs officials to block imports of Elf Bar, a small, colorful vaping device that is the

No. 1 choice among teenagers.

The AP has reported that the company behind Elf Bar has been able to evade the ban by simply renaming its products, which remain widely available in convenience stores and vape shops.

Problem

"We ask you to work with the Customs and Border Protection to address this urgent problem with all due speed," states the bipartisan letter from 12 members of the committee, including Chairman Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis., and ranking Democrat Raja Krishnamoorthi of Illinois.

The special committee was established early this year with the goal of countering Chinese policies that can damage the US economy. Tensions between the two countries have been rising for years, with both China and the US enacting retaliatory measures on imports.

The committee's inquiry comes amid an improving picture for teen vaping. Last month, an annual government survey showed the percentage of high school students using e-cigarettes fell to 10%

from 14% in 2022.

Still, more than 2.1 million students continue to vape. More than half say they use Elf Bar, double the rate of any other brand.

The FDA's tobacco center has recently stepped up actions against stores selling illegal e-cigarettes following a blistering assessment of the agency's track record earlier this year. Among other steps, the FDA-commissioned report called on regulators to work more closely with other federal agencies to clear the market of unauthorized e-cigarettes.

FDA leaders have pointed out that they rely on the Justice Department to prosecute cases against vaping companies identified by tobacco regulators. But in many instances, prosecutors may decide against filing charges for various reasons.

In their letter, lawmakers specifically ask the head of the Justice Department's consumer protection branch whether he "has sufficient resources or expertise to litigate vapor-related referrals from FDA."

Lawmakers are seeking answers to more than a half-dozen questions by Jan. 15.

Also:

NEW YORK: A salmonella outbreak tied to tainted cantaloupe has now killed eight people – three in the US and five in Canada, health officials reported Thursday.

Dozens more illnesses were reported by both countries. In the US, at least 230 people have been ill in 38 states and 96 have been hospitalized since mid-November, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The tainted cantaloupe was also shipped to Canada, where 129 cases have been reported, including 44 hospitalizations, health officials reported.

Many of the people who fell ill reported eating pre-cut cantaloupe in clamshell packages and trays sold in stores. Consumers should not buy, eat or serve cantaloupe, if they don't know the source, the CDC said.

New recalls of whole and pre-cut fruit have been added to a growing list, the US Food and Drug Administration said. Last week, Cut Fruit Express initiated a recall of cantaloupe chunks and fruit mixes containing cantaloupe. On Tuesday, TGD Cuts, LLC launched a recall of specific fresh fruit cup, clamshell and tray products that contained cantaloupe from the company TruFresh.

Health officials are still working to determine whether additional products are linked to the illnesses.

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SPORTS



Devin Haney, left, throws a punch at Regis Prograis during the WBC super lightweight title boxing bout Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, in San Francisco. (AP)

'It's a dream come true'

Haney beats Prograis, wins WBC belt

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 10, (AP): Devin Haney beat Regis Prograis by unanimous decision in his division debut to win the WBC super welterweight title in his hometown on Saturday night.

Haney (31-0) remained unbeaten with a slow but dominant victory over Prograis in front of a sellout crowd at Chase Center in San Francisco, home of the Golden State Warriors.

All three judges scored the bout 120-107 in Haney's favor. Prograis (29-2) lost for the first time since October 2019.

BOXING

"It's a dream come true," Haney said. "I knew I had him hurt a few times. I went in there and was real disciplined. I made it as easy as possible."

It was Haney's first fight as a super welterweight after dominating as the undisputed lightweight crown. Haney made the decision to move up after having trouble making weight at lightweight.

Now as a two-division champion, Haney is eyeing a third title.

"I want to talk to my dad and see what's next," Haney said. "I want to do a fight at 147 but there's a lot of fights at 140."

The San Francisco native was cheered wildly while repeatedly land-

SA & NZ lose but still advance to Cape Town Sevens quarterfinals

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Dec. 10, (AP): South Africa and New Zealand lost pool games and still managed to advance to the Cape Town Sevens quarterfinals.

Samoa failed to qualify even though it beat New Zealand in a repeat of the 2022 final.

In the women's competition, Australia, New Zealand and France swept their pools as they did last weekend in Dubai in the first leg of the sevens world series.

On the men's side, South Africa's unbeaten start to the world series - including another victory in Dubai - was ended by Ireland 14-12 in their pool decider.

Ryan Oosthuizen and newcomer Quewin Nortje combined for Rosko Specman's opening try, but Ireland went in front after Hugo Lennox set up Gavin Mullin for consecutive tries and a 14-5 lead at halftime. Offloading er-

rors plagued both teams after the break and nobody scored until, with 35 seconds left, South Africa's Dewald Human went over from a ruck cleanout.

Ireland, the only unbeaten men's team, drew a quarterfinal against New Zealand, which lost to Canada 19-7 and Samoa 21-14. But New Zealand advanced as one of the two best third-placed teams thanks to a 35-5 thrashing of pool winner Australia.

RUGBY

Australia has a quarterfinal against South Africa, which is hunting its first home title since 2015.

Fiji rebounded from an opening loss to France by beating Dubai finalist Argentina 19-12 despite losing Josese Batirerega to a red card after a high tackle. Fiji will face France again in the quarters.

Prograis couldn't avoid Haney's crisp right hand to the head that repeatedly landed and opened a small cut on his nose in the sixth round.

Arizona rolls past Wisconsin as Kansas holds off Missouri

Houston improved, mauls Jackson State

TUCSON, Arizona, Dec. 10, (AP): Pelle Larsson scored a career-high 21 points, Caleb Love added 20, and No. 1 Arizona rolled to a 98-73 win over No. 23 Wisconsin on Saturday.

The Wildcats - playing as the top team in the country for the first time in nine years - looked comfortable in their new role, using a 25-8 run to end the first half and take a 17-point halftime lead.

Larsson finished 6 of 6 shooting from the field, including 4 of 4 on 3-pointers. The Wildcats (8-0) shot 58% from the field.

John Blackwell had 17 points to lead the Badgers (7-3), who came into the game on a six-game winning streak. Steven Crowl added 11 points and AJ Storr had 10.

Kansas 73, Missouri 64
In Lawrence, Kan., Hunter Dickinson had 13 points and 16 rebounds, Kevin McCullar Jr. and KJ Adams had 17 points each and Kansas beat rival Missouri.

BASKETBALL

Sean East II led Missouri (7-3) with 21 points and Nick Honor scored 17, but the Tigers were without one of their guards, Caleb Grillo.

Kansas (9-1) dominated in the paint scoring 42 points down low, but were careless with the ball and committed 16 turnovers, which kept Missouri in the game in the first half.

Houston 89, Jackson State 55
In Houston, Emanuel Sharp scored a career-high 25 points, LJ Cryer added 21, and Houston defeated Jackson State.

Houston improved to 10-0 for the third time in school history, joining the 2018-19 and 1967-68 teams. The Cougars shot 42% and were 11 of 30 on 3-pointers.

Coltie Young scored 13 points to lead Jackson State (2-7). Ken Evans Jr., who entered averaging 20.4 points per game, was held to six points and was ejected in the second half after getting his second technical foul. The Tigers shot 43%.

Purdue 92, Alabama 86
In Toronto, Zach Edey matched his season high with 35 points in his hometown, Braden Smith had a season-high 27 points and Purdue rallied to beat Alabama 92-86.

Playing in his home city for the first time since he was a high school sophomore in 2016-17, Edey made 11 free throws without a miss, was 12 for 20 from the field and had seven rebounds. He passed Robbie Hummel to move into the top 10 on Purdue's career scoring list.

Smith also had eight assists for Purdue (9-1), which has won 32 straight nonconference regular-season games.

UConn 101, Ark-Pine Bluff 63
In Storrs, Conn., Alex Karaban scored a career-high 26 points to lead UConn to a rout of Arkansas-Pine Bluff.

Tristen Newton scored 16 points, Cam Spencer had 15 and Donovan Clingan added 11 points and blocked three shots for the Huskies (9-1), who shot 56% from the floor and made 13 3-pointers.

Washington 78, Gonzaga 73
In Seattle, Keion Brooks Jr. scored 17 points, Sahvir Wheeler added 16 and Washington rallied from an 11-point second-half deficit to beat Gonzaga.

The Huskies snapped a seven-game losing streak to the Bulldogs and picked up their first win over their in-state foe since a 99-95 victory in 2005.

Franck Kepnang also had a big game controlling the paint with 14 points, seven rebounds and five blocked shots for Washington.

Marquette 78, Notre Dame 59
In Milwaukee, Oso Ighodaro scored 20 points, Tyler Kolek added 17 and Marquette defeated Notre Dame.

It was the second straight blowout win for the Golden Eagles (8-2).

Markus Burton led Notre Dame (4-5) with 20 points.

Creighton 109, Central Michigan 64
In Omaha, Neb., Isaac Traudt set



Arizona guard Caleb Love (2) dunks over Wisconsin guard Max Klesmit (11) during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game, Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, in Tucson, Arizona. (AP)

Indiana extends win streak

Wildcats women use big 3rd quarter to win over Missouri

ST. JOSEPH, Mo., Dec. 10, (AP): Ayo-ka Lee scored 28 points on 12-of-15 shooting and No. 13 Kansas State used a big third quarter to roll to an 84-56 win over Missouri in the inaugural Bill Snyder Basketball Classic on Saturday.

Snyder, a former football coach at Kansas State and member of the College Football Hall of Fame, is a St. Joseph, Missouri native.

Brylee Glenn scored 12 points for the Wildcats (9-1). Serena Sundell had 11 points and eight assists, and Gabby Gregory had 10 points.

Abby Feit and Hayley Frank had 13 points apiece for the Tigers (7-4) and Mama Dembele had 11.

Indiana 66, Rutgers 56
In Piscataway, N.J., Mackenzie Holmes scored 25 points, Sydney Parrish had 14 points and 10 rebounds, and Indiana ran its winning streak to seven games with a win over Rutgers in their

career highs with five 3-pointers and 18 points off the bench, and five other Creighton players scored in double figures as the Bluejays routed Central Michigan.

Creighton (8-1), which shot a season-best 65%, scored its most points against a Division I opponent in six years and has won three straight blowouts since getting upset by Colorado State on Thanksgiving.

Texas 77, Houston Christian 50
In Austin, Texas, Max Abmas had 16 points and seven assists and Texas beat Houston Christian.

Kadin Shedrick had 15 points, three blocks and four of the Longhorns' 13 steals. Dillon Mitchell produced his third double-double of the season with 13 points and 12 rebounds for Texas (7-2). Tyrese Hunter added 12 points, five assists and three steals.

Saint Mary's 64, Colorado St 61
In Fort Collins, Colo., Joshua Jefferson scored 16 points including a key 3-pointer down the stretch and Saint

Big Ten Conference opener.

Yarden Garzon and Chloe Moore-McNeil both had 11 points as the Hoosiers (8-1) gave coach Teri Moren her 100th conference win.

Kaylene Smikle led Rutgers (6-6) with 19 points. Antonia Bates had 11 points and Destiny Adams and Kassandra Brown both had 10 points and eight rebounds.

Gonzaga 80, Rice 72
In Houston, Eliza Hollingsworth scored all 21 of her points in the first half, Yvonne Ejim had 18 points and

BASKETBALL

10 rebounds and Gonzaga used a hot start to defeat Rice.

Kaylynne Truong added 15 points for the Bulldogs (10-2). Hollingsworth was 7-for-7 shooting with four 3-pointers in the first half and took only three shots in the second half. Ejim and Truong both had 12 points in the second half.

Destiny Jackson led the Owls (5-4) with 16 points, Dominique Ennis had 14, Malia Fisher 13 and Shelby Hayes had 11.

Mary's sent Colorado State to its first loss of the season.

Augustas Marcilionis led the Gaels (5-5) with 18 points before fouling out, and Aidan Mahaney added 10 points.

Utah 73, BYU 69
In Salt Lake City, Gabe Madsen made five 3-pointers and scored 17 points, and Utah beat BYU.

Utah (7-2) shot 49% from the field in its fourth consecutive win. Brandon Carlson had 15 points and eight rebounds, and reserve Kebe Keita added 10 points.

Kentucky 81, Penn 66
In Philadelphia, Aaron Bradshaw celebrated his homecoming with 17 points and 11 rebounds and Rob Dillingham also scored 17 points to lead Kentucky past Penn at the Wells Fargo Center.

Antonio Reeves scored 16 points for Kentucky (7-2).

Kentucky was considered the home team even though the Quakers traveled about 4 miles for the game.

Albany rolls into first FCS semifinals

South Dakota State topples Villanova

BROOKINGS, S.D., Dec. 10, (AP): Isaiah Davis ran for 192 yards, including a 66-yard touchdown run, and top-seeded South Dakota State, the defending national champions, defeated eighth-seeded Villanova 23-12 on Saturday in the quarterfinals of the FCS playoffs.

That touchdown early in the fourth quarter was the only offensive score by either team going into the wind, which gusted up to 45 miles an hour.

The Jackrabbits (13-0), who won their 27th-straight game, are home against the winner of No. 4 Idaho and No. 5 Albany in the semifinals next weekend.

The only other touchdown going into the wind was Matthew Durrance's punt block, scoop and score covering 45

yards in the second quarter that gave South Dakota State a 10-6 lead.

Albany 30, Idaho 22
In Moscow, Idaho, Reese Poffenbarger threw three touchdown passes to Brevin Easton, including the go-ahead score in the fourth quarter, and Albany rallied for a 30-22 victory over Idaho in the Kibbie Dome to advance to the semifinals of the FCS Championship.

FOOTBALL

No. 5 seed Albany (11-3) advances to the semis for the first time in program history after notching a victory in its first trip to the quarterfinals. The Great Danes, who won the Coastal Athletic Association for the first time, will play No. 1 seed South Dakota State on Friday. No. 2 seed Montana will host unseeded but nine-time champion North Dakota State in the other semifinal on Saturday.

Army 17, Navy 11
In Foxborough, Mass., Army linebacker Kalib Fortner scored on a fourth-quarter strip sack and then stuffed quarterback Tai Lavatai six inches from the goal line with 3 seconds left to help the Black Knights beat Navy 17-11 and win the 124th meeting of the nation's oldest service academies.

After falling behind 17-3, Lavatai led the Midshipmen to one touchdown to make it a one-score game and then drove them to the Army 6. With no timeouts and about 30 seconds left, Lavatai threw two incompletions before hitting Alex Tecza, who was tackled inbounds at the 2.

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Kuwaiti players Muhammad Dahham and Reda Hani in training session.

Semi-finals spot on the line

Kuwait face Al-Wahdat in decisive AFC Cup clash

AMMAN, Dec 10: Kuwait is set to embrace the spirit of triumph as it faces Jordanian side Al-Wahdat at the Amman International Stadium at 7:00 pm. This encounter marks the culmination of the second group stage in the AFC Cup competition. Currently standing at third place with 6 points, Kuwait faces tough competition from Al-Wahdat in second place with 9 points, and the leading Iraqi team Al-Kahraba with 10 points. Meanwhile, Syria's Ahli Aleppo has bowed out of the competition with only two points.

Following the AFC's approval of Jabal Al-Mukaber's withdrawal from the first group stage, results from the fourth-placed teams in the second and third groups will

be nullified. Consequently, Kuwait stands to lose two points (from two draws against Al-Ahly Aleppo), and Al-Wahdat faces a deduction of 6 points, having triumphed over the Syrian team twice. Al-Kahraba

SOCCER

is set to lose three points pending the outcome of their match against Al-Ahly Aleppo in the final round.

Under this scenario, Al-Kahraba would maintain its lead with 7 points, while Kuwait and Al-Wahdat would share 4 points each. This positions "Al-Abyad" to secure a spot in the West

Asia region semi-finals by clinching a victory as the second-best team.

Turning to the upcoming match, "Al-Abyad" has regained its momentum, securing victory in the Zain Premier League. In the ninth and final round of the first division, they defeated Al-Nassr 2-1 under the guidance of Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul. This marked a recovery from their previous heavy defeat against Al-Arabi (0-3) in the eighth round.

Despite facing the absence of key players such as Tunisian Yassine Amri, who is sidelined due to a leg muscle tear, and the injured trio of Youssef Nasser, Ibrahim Kamil, and goalkeeper Dhari Al-Otaibi, Maaloul remains confident.

The team boasts skilled players, including Tunisian Yassin Al-Khanisi, Faisal Zayed, Muhammad Dahham, Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Ali Hussein, Bahraini Mu-

hammad Al-Marhoun, Reda Hani, Fahd Al-Hajri, and Sami Al-Sanea, who can replicate their previous victory against Al-Wahdat (2-1) in the first leg.

No Santos player will wear Pelé's No. 10, says 'new' club president

SAO PAULO, Dec 10, (AP): No player of Brazil's Santos team will wear the number 10 jersey made globally famous by the late Pelé as long as the club plays in the country's second division, the new club president said Saturday.

Marcelo Teixeira, elected on Saturday as Santos' president, said he made the decision as a tribute to the club's biggest star, who died on Dec. 29 at 81 due to colon cancer.

"Until Santos is back in Serie A, which is its standard, we will not play with the number 10 shirt," said Teixeira, who was Santos' president on two previous occasions. "This year's Brazilian league

was named after King Pelé. We will continue in this mission. We will be back in the top division, but until then, we won't wear our most glorious shirt."

Every match of this year's Brazilian league celebrated Pelé in the 10th minute of play, in a reference to the number on the shirt that he wore for Santos and Brazil.

Teixeira, a businessman, beat four rivals and ended with 53% of the vote to return to the presidency at Santos on Jan. 1. Years ago, he suggested the club should retire Pelé's "10" for good, but the three-time World Cup winner himself said he didn't want that to happen.

Crew win third MLS Cup

Defending champions LAFC beaten

COLUMBUS, Ohio, Dec 10, (AP): Cucho Hernandez and Yaw Yeboah scored in the first half and the Columbus Crew held on to beat defending champion LAFC 2-1 on Saturday to win their third MLS Cup.

The Crew added the title to their championships in 2008, when they beat the New York Red Bulls, and 2020, when they defeated the Seattle Sounders. Columbus lost to the Portland Timbers in the 2015 title game.

Only the LA Galaxy (five) and D.C. United (four) have won more titles.

Los Angeles was looking to become the fourth MLS team to win consecutive titles.

SOCCER

Hernandez scored in the 33rd minute and Yeboah added a goal in the 37th. Denis Bouanga scored for LAFC in the 74th.

First-year coach Wilfried Nancy was pleased how the Crew finished the match.

"Obviously, really happy because of the second half we knew there would be a difficult moment and the way we were able to enter this difficult moment, that's why we won," Nancy said. "Yes, we play a good first half and I am so happy because the most important thing for me was not to win, was to be ourselves and my players did it."

Hernandez, voted the MVP of the match, put Columbus up 1-0 on a penalty kick. He deposited the ball in the lower left corner for his fifth goal in six playoff matches this season. He is 9 for 9 from the spot in all competitions in his Crew career.

"I've taken seven or eight penalties this year, but this was the one I was nervous," Hernandez said. "I knew I couldn't miss it."

LAFC defender Diego Palacios was whistled for a handball off his right arm at the top of the box, setting up the penalty.

The goal was the first allowed by LAFC in four matches.

Yeboah doubled the lead for the Crew, the highest-scoring team in MLS in the regular season, when Malte Amundsen threaded a pass through to Yeboah on the left flank on the last of 11 passes in the build-up.

From there, Yeboah dribbled to the goal box and slipped a shot past goalkeeper Maxime Crepeau.

"We know that anyone who gets the ball can score for us," Yeboah said. "We always want to attack. We always want to go."

"Malte, we have a good connection. I've been making that run all year."

LAFC coach Steve Cherundolo said the story of the game was his team's play in the first half.

"They played a fantastic game," Cherundolo said. "They played exactly how you need to play against LAFC. If you want to beat us, create enough mo-



Columbus Crew players celebrate with the trophy after defeating Los Angeles FC to win the MLS soccer championship match in Columbus, Ohio. (AP)



Los Angeles FC's Mario González (9) and Columbus Crew's Rudy Camacho (right), head the ball in the second half of the MLS soccer championship match in Columbus, Ohio. (AP)

ments where we were forced to make mistakes, even though I don't think they were mistakes that we normally make."

The objective for the Crew in the second half was to avoid the same fate as FC Cincinnati a week earlier in the Eastern Conference final. Then, Columbus rallied from a two-goal deficit in the final 15 minutes of regulation and won 3-2 in extra time.

Bouanga made it 2-1, scoring on his own rebound after Patrick Schulte made the save at the left post. Bouanga, who led the MLS with 20 goals, has 38 goals in 49 matches in all competitions this year. "They deserved to win," LAFC defender Giorgio Chiellini said. "I don't think they're better in general, but I thought they played much better tonight."

LAFC had the better of the play af-

ter the Bouanga goal, but the Crew did not break.

"I'm really proud because as a coach, I want to see my team face and embrace adversity and they did it in our way," Nancy said.

Crew captain Darlington Nagbe won his fourth MLS Cup, two with the Crew (2020) and also for Atlanta United (2018) and the Portland Timbers (2015) to become the 10th player with four or more.

It was even more special for Nagbe because he missed the 2020 final after he contracted COVID-19 two days before the match.

"He runs the show. He's the calmest. He's the man," Crew midfielder Aidan Morris said.

The Crew missed the playoffs the last two seasons before hiring Nancy from CF Montreal.

Countdown to Ministries futsal Super Cup

Electricity and Water, Education face off

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: This evening at 7:00, the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Futsal Complex is set to host the eagerly anticipated Super Cup match for ministries, government agencies, and institutions in futsal. The showdown will feature the Ministry of Electricity and Water team, the reigning champions of the league's last edition, facing off against the Ministry of Education team, the current cup champions.

Both teams are eager to secure a new accolade ahead of the upcoming league's kick-off scheduled for the 19th of this month, organized into two groups. The first group, consisting of 4 teams, and the second group, with 5 teams, will see the top two from each group advancing to the semi-finals.

Hamid Al-Hazeem, Deputy Director General of the General Sports Authority for the Sports for All Sector and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Ministries League, expressed that the technical committee for the Futsal League has finalized all arrangements for the Super Cup match. This high-stakes encounter marks the commencement of the new season's competitions.

Al-Hazeem emphasized the committee's anticipation for a distinguished match, echoing the directives of Youssef Al-Baidan, Director General of the Authority, who is keen on the

event's success throughout the current league and cup season.

In a related development, the Tech-

FUTSAL

nical Committee of the Ministries' Speedball League has approved the



Hamed Al-Hazeem – Deputy Director General of the General Sports Authority for the Sports for All Sector and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Ministries League.

Leaders PSG stretch 'winning' streak to 8

PARIS, Dec 10, (AP): Paris Saint-Germain beat Nantes 2-1 for an eighth straight win in the French league.

Meanwhile, 10-man Monaco downed Rennes 2-1 and leapfrogged Nice into second place. PSG substitute Randal Kolo Muani scored the winner by converting a rebound in the 83rd minute after goalkeeper Alban Lafont saved a header from Lucas Hernandez.

Bradley Barcola gave PSG the lead by rounding Marcus Coco to slot into the far corner just before halftime. But mid-table Nantes grew bolder in the second half and Egypt striker Mostafa Mohamed equalized by heading home a corner in the 55th. PSG played at a comfortable pace, maybe thinking about a decisive Champions League game at Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday, and created very little in the first half. PSG extended its league lead to six points over Monaco.

Monaco striker Folarin Balogun got hold of a loose ball after a goalmouth scramble in the 51st and set up Vanderson who side-footed home against Rennes. Vanderson's joy didn't last long as he received a second yellow card in the 74th for a late challenge on Mahamadou Nagida.

Youssef Fofana doubled Monaco's lead in the 85th by taking a pass from Balogun and roaming forward to guide the ball into the bottom corner.

competition conditions. Six institutions, including the Ministry of Education, Kuwait University, Ministry of Defense, Public Authority for Sports, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Electricity and Water, will participate in a league system with a single round culminating in the champion securing the highest points.

Best of the Rest

Gnabry gets injured again: Bayern Munich forward Serge Gnabry faces another spell on the sidelines with a thigh injury sustained less than five minutes after coming on as a substitute.

The Bavarian powerhouse said Sunday that Gnabry "suffered a muscle tendon injury in his left adductor area" during the team's 5-1 loss at Eintracht Frankfurt in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

Bayern said Gnabry is ruled out for "the coming games" but did not give a specific timeframe for his absence. He's likely to miss the rest of the year - Bayern visits Manchester United in the Champions League on Tuesday in the first of only three games before the winter break.

Gnabry has endured a season to forget so far. The Germany forward fractured his arm in a German Cup game at Preußen Münster in September and has made only five Bundesliga appearances, including Saturday's.

Gnabry's brief substitute appearance was not the shortest to be cut short by injury in the Bundesliga. Hertha Berlin forward Prince Boateng had to go off injured two minutes after going on as a substitute in a game at Bayern on Aug. 27, 2005.

Saturday's loss at Frankfurt was Bayern's first Bundesliga defeat this season. (AP)

WC men's slalom canceled: Snow and rain overnight in the French Alps forced the cancellation of a World Cup slalom Sunday in yet another loss to the men's season.

The tally is now six races canceled, one abandoned and just two completed in a difficult season so far. A giant slalom Saturday was won by Marco Odermatt at Val d'Isère as snow fell.

The International Ski and Snowboard Federation said the slalom could not start "due to the present slope conditions after last night's rain and snow to ensure the safety and fairness for the racers."

The scheduled start time already was pushed back Saturday in anticipation of course workers needing more time to clear the snow. (AP)

Exciting soccer action unfolds in Higher Education Sports Games

Gulf University battles General Authority for padel Championship glory

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: The Men's Turf Football League, sponsored by Warba Bank, is in full swing as part of the Third Higher Education Sports Games, organized by the Kuwait School Sports and Higher Education Federation. The league features the participation of 14 government educational bodies and institutions.

In today's action-packed schedule, the first round of the fourth group will witness two exciting matches. The College of Technology and Aviation will face off against the American University of Kuwait at 5:15 pm, followed by the American International University's clash with the Kuwait College of Science and Technology at 7:00 pm. All the matches are set to unfold at the Sports City Stadium in the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in Shuwaikh.

Simultaneously, the Warba Bank Padel League is reaching its pinnacle with the final match today between Gulf University and the General Authority for Applied Education and Training at 7:00 pm on

the Gulf University stadiums. Prior to the final showdown, a match to determine the third-place holder will take place at exactly 6:00 pm,

featuring the Saad Al Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences and the American University.

Walid Nassar, Chairman of the



Some of the players in action.

Technical Committee of the Football League, highlighted the committee's commitment to addressing concerns from participating institutions regarding scheduling conflicts with the Private Universities League. He emphasized that adjustments were made to the league dates to accommodate teams that qualified for the semi-finals of the Private Universities League, ensuring a smooth and inclusive competition.

PADEL

Dr. Salman Haji, Vice Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Third Higher Education Sports Games, commended Warba Bank's sponsorship, noting its significant contribution to elevating the competition. This year, the bank expanded its support by announcing financial rewards for the first three place holders, a noteworthy enhancement compared to the previous editions where recognition was limited to the champion and runner-up.



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (center), lifts the NBA Cup while celebrating with teammates after they defeated the Indiana Pacers 123-109 in the championship game in the NBA basketball In-Season Tournament in Las Vegas. (AP)

Sports

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Lakers win NBA In-Season Tournament title

Davis scores 41 as James named MVP

LAS VEGAS, Dec 10, (AP): As Commissioner Adam Silver prepared to hand LeBron James the MVP trophy of the inaugural NBA In-Season Tournament, he cautioned that “it doesn’t come with a franchise.”

James bent over in laughter, but he has been serious about wanting to own an NBA expansion team in Las Vegas.

For now, he’ll more than settle for the individual honor and tournament championship after scoring 24 points and adding 11 rebounds Saturday night to help the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Indiana Pacers 123-109 in the final.

“My enthusiasm about being here post-career, bringing a team here has not changed,” James said. “The fans are amazing here. They have everything already: WNBA team, they have a baseball team (Athletics) coming in soon, NFL team, hockey team, F1 (Formula One) was just here. This is a place that loves great attractions, and I think the NBA will be another great addition to this city.”

As well as James played Saturday, the star was teammate Anthony Davis, who had 41 points and 20 rebounds - numbers that would have been season highs if they counted. This is the only game in the tournament that doesn’t figure in the standings or statistics.

BASKETBALL

Davis also shot 16 of 24, had five assists and blocked four shots.

“They’re a hell of a one-two punch,” Lakers coach Darvin Ham said about James and Davis. “That one or two could be either one of them on any given night. At the end of the day, they know how to take it to the next level when everything is on the line.”

Los Angeles is the first In-Season Tournament champion because the two headliners received plenty of help.

Austin Reaves scored 28 points, D’Angelo Russell added 13 points and Cam Reddish set the tone defensively by limiting the damage by Indiana’s Tyrese Haliburton, who emerged as one of the faces of this tournament.

He had 20 points and 11 assists against the Lakers, often passing to a teammate rather than trying to force the action.

“(Reddish) didn’t score a lot (nine points), but I felt like he was one of the best players on the court with the way he defended and really changed the game on that end of the floor,” Reaves said.

Also for the Pacers, Bennedict Mathurin scored 20 points and Aaron Nesmith had 15.

In addition to taking home a trophy, Lakers players on standard contracts each made \$500,000 and the Pacers received \$200,000 apiece. Players on two-way deals take home half those amounts.

The tournament and the title game had a combination of a NBA playoff and one-and-done NCAA Tournament kind of atmosphere, and the Pacers and Lakers played as if their seasons were on the line.

Los Angeles making it Las Vegas where it was essentially the home team before a sellout crowd played Sunday like it had been here before. The situation was different for the Pacers, who are still trying to prove they are a championship-level team.

“We just got outplayed tonight from



Abrar Al-Musallam with other winners on the podium.

Abdulaziz Al-Masaieed tourney sets new participation record

Rising star Al-Musallam dominates show jumping tournament

Napoli need only a draw against Braga

Champions League groups climax with Man Utd, Newcastle on the brink and uncertainty for PSG

LONDON, Dec 10: All options are open for struggling Manchester United and injury-hit Newcastle in their final Champions League group games this week: Advance to the round of 16, drop into the Europa League, or suffer the financial and sporting blow of outright elimination.

Man United must rebound from an embarrassing 3-0 loss Saturday at home to Bournemouth in the Premier League and needs to beat Bayern Munich, which already advanced a month ago.

Newcastle hosts AC Milan in a must-win meeting of two teams facing the same jeopardy in the competition’s tightest group, where Paris Saint-Germain and Kylian Mbappé can yet deny them both.

SOCCER



West Indies' Matthew Forde bowls against England during the third ODI cricket match at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. (AP)

for the second wicket.

But the West Indies lost regular wickets including captain Shai Hope, who was out for 15 after making 109 and 68 in the first two matches of the series. The home team had slipped to 122-5 with just over 10 overs remaining.

Carty’s second ODI half century from 58 balls helped steady the West Indies, while Will Jacks brought England strongly back into the match with career-best figures of 3-22 from seven overs.

CRICKET

Jacks’ testing off-breaks stalled the West Indies and they needed 36 runs from the last five overs with four wickets in hand.

Shepherd turned the match in the home team’s favor when he struck two sixes and a four among 24 runs from the 31st over bowled by Gus Atkinson. That put the West Indies in sight of victory and they eased to their winning total in the 32nd over which included five wides from Liam Livingstone.



KUNA photo

Drivers in action during the 24H Series Middle East Trophy.

CP Racing claim title

The conclusion of the Hankook 12H Kuwait marked the end of the second and final 24H Series Middle East Trophy powered by Hankook, held at Kuwait Motor Town. CP Racing secured the title in the GT3 category, with Manamauri Energy claiming second place and KKramer Racing securing third.

In the 992 GT3 race, Red Camel

led the pack, with RABDAN by Fulgenzi and KKramer Racing securing the second and third positions respectively.

The GTX category witnessed Toro Verde emerging victorious, followed by Razoon - More Than Racing and Vortex V8 in the second and third spots respectively. (KUNA)

an opponent from their own country or a team they already faced in the group stage.

Third-place teams in Champions League groups keep playing in February in the knockout playoffs for the second-tier Europa League.

Feyenoord and Young Boys are assured of being in the Europa League playoffs, and either Porto or Shakhtar will join them. The picture is uncertain elsewhere.

The showdown games next week with third place at stake for teams eliminated from Champions League contention include Lens hosting Sevilla and Salzburg hosting Benfica. Newcastle vs Milan could end up in this category if PSG is winning at Dortmund.

Sevilla is the supreme Europa League team with a record seven titles, all in the past 20 years. The latest Europa title in May is why Sevilla got into the Champions League this season after a lowly 12th place in La Liga. Sevilla must win at Lens on Tuesday.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 10: Abrar Al-Musallam, the skilled horsewoman from the Hunting and Equestrian Club, emerged victorious in the prestigious show jumping tournament named in honor of the late Uncle Abdulaziz Al-Masaieed, renowned as the “Dean of the Kuwaiti Press.” The event unfolded at the Kuwait Equestrian Center in the Sabhan area, witnessing robust participation from both male and female riders representing various local clubs.

In the climactic “Grand Prize” round, set at a challenging height of 140 cm, Abrar Al-Musallam exhibited exceptional prowess. She not only secured a spot in the distinguished final round but also clinched the championship with a remarkable time of 37.79 seconds, devoid of any penalty points. Following her lead were accomplished knights Carlos Lange, Ghazi Al-Jariwi, Shaker Al-Kazemi, Fawaz Al-Subaie, Fawaz Al-Rashed, and Yara Al-Hunaidi.

EQUESTRIAN

Nasser Abdulaziz Al-Masaieed, the chairman of the tournament’s organizing committee, had the honor of crowning the champions. The event drew the attention of Mishal Al-Subaie, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Youth, and Anwar Al-Hasawi, Vice President of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society. Notably, a donation was presented to the people of Gaza during the tournament.

In a significant milestone for Kuwaiti equestrianism, Nasser Al-Masaieed proudly announced that the tournament achieved its objectives by securing a live international broadcast on the globally influential “Clip My Horse” platform. This marked a transition from the local to the international stage, allowing a global audience to witness the competition live.

Al-Masaieed expressed optimism about the future of equestrian sports in Kuwait, anticipating the second round of the tournament in March and a forthcoming league with five tournaments in the next season. He emphasized the importance of government and private sector support for equestrian sports, given its growing popularity among male and female riders.

Abdulaziz Al-Masaieed highlighted a groundbreaking achievement in terms of participation, with the current championship boasting over 540 participants – a historic record surpassing the previous limit of 350. He extended heartfelt congratulations to Abrar Al-Musallam for her outstanding performance, swift timings, and flawless victory. The image of the triumphant champions on the podium captured the essence of their achievement.