



## ARAB PANEL URGES FULL PALESTINIAN MEMBERSHIP IN U.N.

# Syria centerpiece of League summit



KUNA photo  
Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah receives on Wednesday his visiting Bahraini counterpart Dr. Abdullatif Al-Zayani on the sidelines of the preparative ministerial meeting of the 32nd Arab Summit next Friday in Jeddah. During the meeting, both sides discussed ways of enhancing bilateral ties and cooperation, as well as discussing matters of common interests and ways to ensure the success of the upcoming summit.

### UAE, EU discuss ties

**BEIRUT, May 17, (Agencies): Arab foreign ministers Wednesday in Saudi Arabia welcomed back Syria to the Arab League and called for a cease-fire in conflict-hit Sudan ahead of the organization's annual summit taking place in the kingdom.**

This year's summit, starting Friday in the city of Jeddah, will mark the readmittance of war-torn Syria into the 22-member league, after a 12-year suspension.

Syria's membership was frozen following Syrian President Bashar Assad's brutal crackdown on the 2011 mass protests against his rule. The country quickly descended into a civil war that has killed nearly half a million people and displaced half of the country's pre-war population of 23 million.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said Wednesday that the region is at a crossroads, facing a host of challenges. He called for cooperation between Arab countries to achieve security, stability and economic prosperity.

Bin Farhan also welcomed Syria's return, as did the league's Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit and Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf.

Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad held bilateral meetings this week in the kingdom with several of his counterparts as Damascus continues to appeal for much-needed investment in the war-torn country - crippled by the conflict and Western sanctions - and has moved to restore ties with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq.

Mekdad after the meeting told reporters that he hopes Arab governments will help with reconstruction and Syrian refugee returns. He hinted that Assad will attend the summit Friday. "Per usual, Syria cannot be absent from any summit," he said.

Syria's return to the Arab fold comes as Damascus is also trying to amend ties with Turkey, a key backer of the armed Syrian opposition groups in the country's northwest.

But a few Arab countries remain skeptical of Syria's return to the league, primarily Qatar.

Qatar's top diplomat, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, said Wednesday that his country opposes Syria's return but that it doesn't want to stand "against the Arab consensus." Each Arab country, however, can unilaterally normalize relations with Syria, he said.

For that to happen from Qatar's perspective, Syria needs to go "through a just and comprehensive solution" to its conflict, Sheikh Mohammed added.

The Arab Foreign Ministers began on Wednesday their preparatory meeting ahead of Friday's 32nd Arab Summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Saleem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah heads the Kuwaiti delegation to the ministerial meeting.

President of the 31st Arab Summit and Foreign Minister of Algeria Ahmad Atef delivered a speech to the meeting, which stressed the importance of banding together to face regional and international challenges.

The official welcomed the return of Syria to its seat at the Arab League, saying that it would hopefully become a prelude to end the conflict in the fellow Arab country.

He also commended the strong coordination between Arab countries, Türkiye and Iran on the issue of Syria.

On his part, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan delivered a speech after receiving the Presidency of the 32nd Arab Summit, hoping that the meeting, which includes the participation of Syria, would lead to further inter-Arab cooperation.

The Saudi Minister affirmed that the Arab region was filled with human and natural resources that would enable countries to play a more crucial role in the international arena, expressing the same time, Saudi Arabia's keenness on bolstering security and development in the region via the upcoming Arab summit.

On his part, Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abul-Gheit welcomed in his speech Syrian Foreign Minister Dr. Faisal Al-Mekdad, expressing hopes that the re-inclusion of the Syrian seat in the Arab League would lead to resolving the Syrian crisis.

Since the last Arab Summit in Algeria back in November, the Arab region had been in some serious alarming development, which led to the holding of two Arab summits within less than a year.

Abul-Gheit touched on the developments in Syria, Yemen, and Libya in addition to the positive relations between Arab countries and nearby countries, noting that the negative impacts of external interferences required from the Arab world a strong unified stance.

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### Newswatch

**BEIRUT:** A French investigative judge Tuesday issued an international arrest warrant for Lebanon's embattled central bank governor after he didn't show up for questioning in France on corruption charges, a Western diplomat said.

Longtime central bank Gov. Riad Salameh was supposed to appear before French prosecutors Tuesday as part of an ongoing European probe. Lebanese officials have not confirmed receipt of the arrest warrant or commented on the development.

The Western diplomat who confirmed the warrant spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not cleared to speak to media outlets. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Prince Harry and his wife Meghan were involved in a car chase while being followed by photographers following a charity event in New York, the couple's office said Wednesday.

The pair, together with Meghan's mother, were followed for more than two hours by a half-dozen vehicles with blacked out windows after leaving the event.

Their office said in a statement that the chase "resulted in multiple near collisions involving other drivers on the road, pedestrians and two NYPD officers." It called the incident "near catastrophic." (AP)

**SINJAR, Iraq:** An airstrike targeted a militant group in northern Iraq's Yazidi heartland of Sinjar on Tuesday, according to local officials, who attributed the strike to Turkey.

Officials gave conflicting reports regarding the number of casualties. The semi-autonomous Kurdish region's counterterrorism service said in a statement that three fighters were killed in the attack, and one wounded. Ali Hamed, a member of the militia-affiliated town council, however, denied that there were any deaths, saying one civilian was lightly injured in the attack. (AP)

**TUNIS:** A Tunisian appeals court has sentenced a journalist to five years in prison for revealing details of a counterterrorism operation and refusing to reveal his sources, according to his lawyer, prompting outcry from media rights advocates.

Khalifa Guesmi's lawyer said he would appeal to Tunisia's highest court. More than 30 rights groups issued a statement denouncing the conviction and expressing concern about a growing crackdown on dissent.

It appeared to be the worst sentence against a journalist in Tunisia since the 2011 Arab Spring revolution pushed out a long-serving autocrat and ushered in a new democratic system with more media freedom. (AP)

**TUNIS:** A court has sentenced moderate Tunisian Islamist leader Rached Ghannouchi to a year in prison for allegedly referring to police officers as tyrants in what his party said Tuesday amounted to a sham trial.

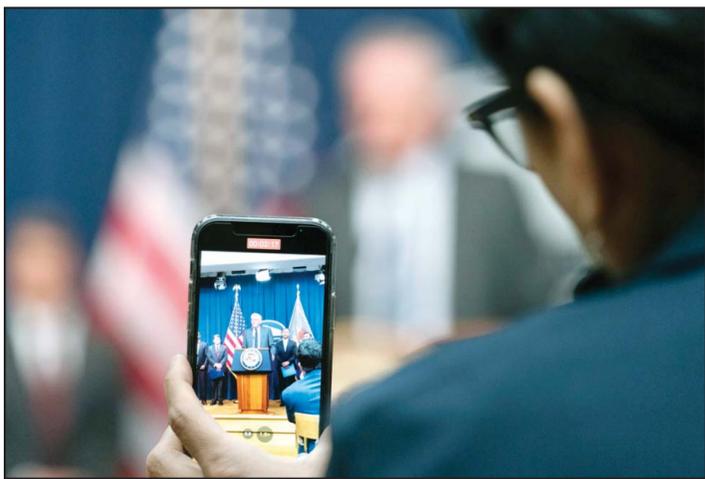
Ghannouchi, 81, founder of the Ennahdha party, has refused to be removed from his place of detention for questioning or to attend Monday's trial, considering that the cases are "political settling of scores targeting opponents of the regime," lawyer Samir Dilou, a former party leader, said in an interview with The Associated Press. (AP)

**CAIRO:** One of Libya's two administrations voted Tuesday to suspend and investigate its prime minister, accusing him of failing to achieve his government's objectives, the parliament's spokesperson said.

Fathi Bashagha was prime minister of Libya's eastern-based parliament, known as the House of Representatives, which operates in Tobruk. Mohamed Mansour, a spokesperson for Bashagha, said the former prime minister would soon publish an official statement regarding Tuesday's decision. (AP)



Palestinian youth participate in an arm wrestling competition in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Tuesday, May 16, 2023. Over a dozen young Palestinian women competed in the first-ever female arm wrestling contest to be held in the Palestinian territories, in the West Bank city of Ramallah. (AP)



Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement Matthew Axelrod of the U.S. Commerce Department, is seen on cell phone as he speaks during a news conference at the Department of Justice in Washington, Tuesday, May 16, 2023. (AP)

### US files criminal cases

## Sensitive tech to Iran, China, Russia

WASHINGTON, May 17, (AP): The Justice Department announced a series of criminal cases Tuesday tracing the illegal flow of sensitive technology, including Apple's software code for self-driving cars and materials used for missiles, to foreign adversaries like Russia, China and Iran.

Some of the alleged trade secret theft highlighted by the department dates back several years, but U.S. officials are drawing attention to the collection of cases now to highlight a task force created in February to disrupt the transfer of goods to foreign countries.

"We are committed to doing all we can to prevent these advanced tools from falling into the hands of adversaries who wield them in a way that threatens not only our nation's security but democratic values everywhere," said Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, who heads the Justice Department's national security division.

One of the newly unsealed cases, in federal court in San Francisco, accuses a former Apple software engineer of taking proprietary data related to self-driving cars before his last day at the company in 2018 and then boarding a one-way flight to China on the night that FBI agents were conducting a search at his house. Prosecutors say the defendant, identified as Weibao Wang, is believed to be now working at a China-based autonomous vehicle competitor.

Other cases disclosed Tuesday have resulted in arrests.

One defendant, Liming Li, 64, was arrested earlier this month on charges that he stole thousands of sensitive files from his California em-

ployer, including technology that can be used in the manufacturing of nuclear submarines and military aircraft, and used them to help competing Chinese businesses.

Li has been in custody since his arrest. A lawyer who has been representing him declined to comment.

Additionally, two Russian nationals, Oleg Sergeyevich Patsulya and Vasilii Sergeyevich Besedin, were arrested in Arizona this month on charges of conspiring to send aircraft parts to Russian airline companies. Lawyers for both men did not immediately return phone messages seeking comment.

The Justice Department also unsealed a separate criminal case accusing a Chinese national of conspiring to transmit isotactic graphite, a material that can be used in the nose of intercontinental ballistic, to Iran in violation of U.S. sanctions. And it charged a Greek national with participating in the smuggling of dual-use technology with a military application, including quantum cryptography, to Russia.

The departments of Justice and Commerce and other agencies earlier this year launched the Disruptive Technology Strike Force as a way to prevent U.S. adversaries from acquiring sensitive technology and address what officials said is a growing problem.

"Our greatest national security concerns stem from the actions of nation-states like China, Russia, Iran and North Korea - nation-states that want to acquire sensitive U.S. technology to advance their military capabilities with their ultimate goal being to shift the world's balance of power," said Matthew Axelrod, an assistant secretary at the Commerce Department.

### Opinion

## Your Highness the PM ... Kindly read the lines below

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

GLOBAL events have once again proven that some Gulf countries can be considered as safe investment and economic havens to attract capital. This happened during the global financial crisis, and before that during the war in Afghanistan, and now the Russian-Ukrainian war.

This region is flexible to a large extent with regard to modernizing laws, is able to adapt to developments according to what serves its interests, and attracts intellectuals, professions and craftsmen.

That is why some of those countries can be described by the popular proverb - "Someone's meat is another's poison".

Some in the region were able to attract foreign capital and worked to enact laws that met the needs of investors, either through residency or ownership.

Through such measures, economic activity was strengthened and the prosperity level increased along with the influence in international relations. In fact, those countries have today become important players in regional affairs and the cornerstone in this matter.

The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman worked to benefit from international changes, and did not rely on oil as the only source of income because they managed to turn a curse into a blessing.

The drop of oil prices or a reduction in the global demand for it will lead to massive deficits in their national product, which means abandoning the well-being they have achieved for the people.

These countries also saw that diversifying sources of income, and attracting intellectuals and investors is what the world is trending on. That is why they have made themselves a station for technology, factories and skilled labor.

Today, those countries do not depend on oil by 90 percent like Kuwait. They are not clouded by the immigrant-citizen complex, as they opened their doors to naturalization or granting life-time residency to everyone with experience and financial solvency.

On the other hand, what did Kuwait do? It expelled talent and experienced people, and stuck to outdated laws. It even enacted more legislation and issued ministerial decisions that serve to close the country for those who spent more than 30 years here and reached the age of sixty, requiring them to either leave or submit to humiliating conditions, and pay unimaginable fees.

Also, it prevents the entry of any visitor who does not hold a university degree and is of a certain age. Since 2009, Kuwait has been referred to in international reports as a "repellant state for investment". Even the people of Kuwait fled to the Gulf states that granted them privileges in order to settle with their capital and invest in projects.

Instead of spending on development projects, about two-thirds of its budget goes to salaries, most of which are disguised and idle unemployment, or to retirees who chose to flee to other countries to live after the closure of all places of recreation, as if the state chose to frown over joy and openness.

Ownership of real estate in the Emirates, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries has become available today because of the conviction that the owner of the apartment, land, or building will not carry it with him when he leaves for his country, or when he dies, but rather will bear the spending on it, fees and services, and this enhances the national income.

We will not talk about the infrastructure in those countries, as it is sufficient to point out that the Dubai Metro alone has achieved fantastic returns within nine years, as well as the trains, road network, bridges, and the rest of the infrastructure and electronic governments that complete people's transactions within minutes. On the other hand, it takes even more than a year to receive the civil ID in Kuwait, and the worst part is that no one knows the reason behind such delays.

There is no doubt that Kuwait lives outside the era due to backward laws, and for this reason, the country needs a different vision and open mindedness.

I wish His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf would read and ponder over these lines, and compare the reality of the brotherly Gulf countries with our bitter reality.

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### Day by Day

IT is said the enemy of men is miserliness and add to this envy and stinginess.

It is also said, curse be the money if it does no good to its owner. A slave is free if he feels satisfied but he remains a captive of slavery if he is greedy.

Many have gone to their

graves with the money they inherited, but when they were asked about their deeds they had no answer. The pleasure of having money goes hand in hand with good behavior.

... Yet, tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

## Prayer Timings

Fajr .....	03:25	Asr .....	15:20
Sunrise ..	04:55	Maghrib ..	18:34
Zohr .....	11:44	Isha .....	20:01

# Local

CIVIL ID STATUS INQUIRY: <https://e.gov.kw/sites/kgenglish/Pages/eServices/PACI/CivilIDStatus.aspx>

## Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

**By Day:** Hot and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind with speeds of 15-50 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for rising dust.

## Weather

<b>By Night:</b> Mild and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to light variable wind with speeds of 10-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.	Kuwait City	37	28
	Kuwait Airport	38	24
	Abdaly	41	21
	Jahra	41	26
	Salmiyah	33	27
	Ahmadi	33	28
	Nuwaisib	36	23
<b>Station</b>	<b>Max Exp</b>	<b>Min Rec</b>	
	Wafra	39	21

## Political system resilient, competent: Dr Al-Humoud

# Kuwaiti democracy sets pioneering model in Arab region: academics

KUWAIT CITY, May 17, (KUNA): Kuwaiti democracy is considered to be an advanced, pioneering and developed example in the entire Arab region, and provides inspiration for promoting political involvement between the ruler and the ruled, academics and activists opined.

Democracy in Kuwait is the culmination of genuine competitive elections that grant the National Assembly (parliament) actual power in spite of some obstacles and challenges, they said in separate remarks to KUNA.

Kuwait's democratic experiment has been different from other democracies since it was created in the Gulf country, given that deep-rooted democracy in the society has reflected on the behavior that controls the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, said Dr. Ahmad Al-Shareef, a professor of media and public relations at Kuwait University.

Since the people of Kuwait pledged allegiance to Al-Sabah Family in 1972, a political system has been based on the shura (consultation) principle and democratization, he added.

The State of Kuwait saw its maiden electoral experiment in 1930 through its municipal council, when people began to lay the foundations of societal development, the professor pointed out.

Formed in 1962, the Constituent Assembly was actually the milestone in the country's democratization, having been mainly tasked with the formulation of the constitution and principal laws, he said, adding that the first vote was held in November 1963.

Echoing Al-Shareef's views, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Humoud, a professor of general law at Kuwait University, said Kuwait's pioneering accomplishments in democratization and all-out development have earned it a distin-

guished status and effective presence in Arab, regional and international arenas.

The Kuwaiti political system has been wielding a plenty of resilience and competence to absorb political differences since the country was created, based on discussions, settlement or judiciary, he said.

Kuwaiti people began to be familiar with democracy at diwanias (gatherings) where the ruler and the ruled used to come together to look into political and societal affairs, the Kuwaiti professor added.

For his part, Dr. Ayed Al-Manaa, a professor of political science and scholar, said that Kuwait's democratic experiment dates back to 1921 when the country's first legislature was established following the approval of the late ruler Sheikh Ahmad bin Jaber Al-Sabah.

Democratic systems differ from one country to another, depending on several factors that are mainly connected with a society's culture and political, economic and security circumstances, he believed.

Kuwait, for instance, has a unique political model centered on relative political participation and the National Assembly is the country's legislative authority, Al-Manaa pointed out.

Kuwait's democratic situation and people's desire to maintain parliamentary life are two vital factors that have stood the most difficult internal and external circumstances, according to the political scholar.

Hussein Abdulrahman, a journalist and political activist, said the State of Kuwait has its unique political experiment involving the freedom of opinion and expression, and political participation.

People's participation in the election of parliamentarians in full freedom, transparency, fairness and professionalism has unquestionably en-

sured the success of the country's electoral process, he added.

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**Suspicious mail:** The Ministry of Communications has warned the public about suspicious e-mails, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In a press statement, official spokesman of the ministry Dr Ahmad Al-Husseini revealed that unknown persons have been sending suspicious e-mails, including a request to pay for the delivery of parcels and postal shipments.

He pointed out these e-mails do not bear the logo of the Postal Sector, as they are sent by unknown persons with the aim of stealing money and data from others.

He disclosed the Postal Sector notifies the public about postal delivery through text messages only, instructing the recipient to log in to the official website and choose the way of receiving the parcel — by personally picking it up from the mail sorting center or through Al-Masail Post or delivery.

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**Trial phase continues:** Director of the Public Relations and Media Department at the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Hamid Al-Azmi said the trial phase of the online distribution of subsidized fodder will continue until June, reports Al-Rai daily.

Al-Azmi clarified that livestock breeders continue to obtain subsidized fodder in the traditional manner — personally getting the subsidy during official working hours.

He added the authority is working hard, in coordination with Kuwait Flour Mills Company, to address technical errors

during the trial phase of the online subsidized fodder distribution mechanism.

# Ex-MPs seek poll delay

Court adjourns deliberations to Thursday

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh  
Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, May 17: The First Instance Court adjourned until Thursday the deliberation on the petition of several former MPs to postpone the parliamentary election scheduled for June 6, 2023 until the Constitutional Court rules on the appeal to cancel its decision to nullify the 2022 Parliament.**

Earlier, the Constitutional Court set May 24 as the date for issuing its ruling on the appeal of six citizens, including some former MPs, to cancel the nullification of the 2022 Parliament.

Lawyer for the petitioners, Attorney Husain Bu Arki, explained this is not an objection to the ruling of the Constitutional Court; as the latter's decisions cannot be appealed. He added the petition is to cancel the nullification ruling.

On the other hand, Second Constituency candidate and former National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim has launched his electoral campaign. He promised to do everything in the interest of the citizens if he wins in the election regardless of his position in the Assembly.

He then talked about the bills that were ratified in the last session he chaired on June 14, 2022; concurrently with the sit-in conducted by some lawmakers. He said that he, in coordination with the government, persuaded the MPs to attend the session in order to achieve quorum. He added the agenda for that session included the ratification of important bills for retirees like granting them KD3,000 incentive and amending the regular pension increment from KD30 every three years to KD20 annually. He stressed that the interest of citizens is his top priority, especially the retirees.

### Announced

In another development, blogger Abdullah Fairouz announced on his Twitter account that he intends to sue Al-Ghanim for spreading false information. He said Al-Ghanim claimed that a member of Sabah Family — cousin of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah — interfered in the parliamentary election by inviting candidates and former MPs to Al-Khuwaisat Chalet, where he asked some of them to quit and others to run for the election in order to control the results.

He gave 24 hours grace period for Al-Ghanim to hand over the pieces of evidence in his possession, if any, to the concerned officials at the Ministry of Interior; otherwise, he will file a case against Al-Ghanim.

Meanwhile, two of the candidates who opted out of the electoral race disclosed that the reason is to unify the votes of their tribes by supporting a few number of candidates belonging to their tribes. These candidates are Dr Badr Al-Shallal from the Fourth Constituency who withdrew in favor of Marzouq Al-Heit — both are Al-Mutairi Tribe members; while Jamaan Awad Al-Azmi withdrew in favor of his fellow Azmi Tribe member Fawaz Al-Azmi.

In addition, member of the nullified 2022 legislature and First Constituency candidate Osama Al-Zaid has affirmed that the country's financial position is very strong. He asserted this means that improvement of the citizens' standard of living must be the top priority in the coming period. He said the citizens should enjoy the fortune of their country, because they are the owners of such wealth. He then emphasized the need for the next legislature to focus on supporting Kuwaiti families and improving their conditions, especially the retirees.

## Breakthrough expected in Schengen exemption

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: The Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs for European Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi affirmed that the issue of exempting Kuwaitis from obtaining a Schengen visa to visit Europe is still under study by the European Parliament. He expressed his hope that there will be a breakthrough in this file after the upcoming elections of the European Parliament. He said, "There will be a breakthrough, but not this year", reports Al-Rai daily.

In a statement issued on the sidelines of the Swiss Embassy reception in honor of the visiting economic delegation, Marafi said, "We have strong economic and trade relations with our friends in Switzerland."

Meanwhile, the Swiss Ambassador Tiziano Palmelli said the Kuwaiti people know the Swiss people well, which helps deepen the friendship and partnership relations between the two countries. He expressed his happiness about the participation of about 30 Swiss companies in the reception.

The ambassador explained that, "Kuwaiti investments in Switzerland are estimated at about USD 15 billion, according to statistics from the Kuwaiti side. We are happy with the size of these investments, and we seek to increase them in the future."

### Other Voices

## Disturb nature, see disaster

By Ahmad alsarraf

In 1958, China considered mosquitoes, flies, mice, and sparrows an enemy of the people, who, over the course of 3 years, killed nearly a billion birds, 1.5 billion rats, and collected 100 million kilograms of flies and 11 million kilograms of mosquitoes!

The extermination of the birds caused a terrible environmental catastrophe, as a result of a major imbalance, so the numbers of locusts and insects that were eaten by the birds increased dramatically, and as a result, the crops were destroyed, so the famine occurred between 1959 and 1961, and it was the largest in human history, with 55 million Chinese lives lost because of it, and for other reasons.

Immediately after that, China stopped its war on sparrows, and even bought huge quantities of them from the Soviet Union for resettlement.

China also made a bigger and more serious mistake by adopting the "one-child" policy for the family, while rais-

ing the age of marriage and childbearing.

This resulted in the spread of abortions and killing of girls, amounting to tens of millions, due to the desire of the majority for a male child, and the result was a great imbalance in the numbers of the sexes, and with the year 2015 the risks became clear and it was allowed to have a maximum of 3 children, but after a massive population imbalance occurred, with the growth of the desire of many not to marry, or have children, or even the inability to do so, and this will have tremendous economic and security repercussions in the coming decades. High may reach 450 million retirees, by the end of this decade!

On the other hand, he declared that the population of India, after two months, would reach 1.4286 billion, and would be slightly higher than the population of China.

It is noteworthy that India did not follow any coercive policies to reduce the population, but rather its governments sought to encourage immigration, create job opportunities for the largest number, and industrially expand tremendously.

Conclusion: manipulation of the balance of nature always leads to disasters.

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## Kuwaiti Women's Day marked

# Women rights promotion hailed

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: Chargé d'Affaires of the European Union (EU) Delegation to Kuwait Gediminas Varanavicius said Kuwait has made great strides in promoting women empowerment over the years; including a decision issued in 2021 on allowing women to render support services in the Armed Forces for the first time in its history and another landmark decree in 2020 on women joining the judiciary, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In a press statement Tuesday on the occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day, Varanavicius pointed out: "Today marks Kuwaiti Women's Day — a momentous celebration of the day Kuwaiti women secured their right to vote and run for office on May 16, 2005. I would like to extend my congratulations to all Kuwaiti women on this important and historic anniversary.

"Gender equality is one of the founding values of EU. We intend to strengthen our engagement with our Gulf partners, including Kuwait, to promote women empowerment even further through close cooperation with the government, civil society and the private sector. Such cooperation is in line with both the EU Gender Action Plan III and the Strategic Partnership with the Gulf, which was released in May 2022 as a roadmap for broadening EU-GCC ties.

"Since opening in 2019, our delegation has organized a variety of projects as part of wider efforts to promote women empowerment locally. Later this year, we plan on organizing a trip for a group of Kuwaiti women leaders from a variety of professional backgrounds to Brussels. The visit will offer them an op-



Varanavicius

### National Day

## Congrats Norway!

KUWAIT CITY, May 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a cable to Norwegian King Harald V, expressing congratulations on his country's national day and wishing him good health and the friendly country further progress and prosperity.

### Crown Prince

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a congratulatory cable to the Norwegian King Harald V, expressing congratulations on Norway's National Day, and progress and prosperity to the country and its people.

### Prime Minister

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a cable to the Norwegian King Harald V, expressing congratulations on Norway's National Day.

portunity to engage with EU officials and experts, visit EU institutions, gain insight into EU's policies, as well as enhance dialogue between the EU and Kuwait. Women are key agents of development and change. Achieving gender equality and empowering women is vital to building fair, inclusive, prosperous and peaceful societies everywhere."

## HH Amir expresses admiration for Kuwaiti women rights, role

KUWAIT CITY, May 17, (KUNA): Marking Kuwaiti Women's Day anniversary, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed on Tuesday his pride and admiration to the outstanding contributions and achievements of Kuwaiti women and their thrive to prosper the dear homeland.

His Highness the Amir underlined the vital role that Kuwaiti women play in various fields and their answer to many of the required stages of development and renaissance that we all seek.

His Highness the Amir remembered as well the honorable national stances of Kuwaiti women in the various events in Kuwait history that the dear country went through, and their fulfillment of their duties without hesitation or tirelessness, in a way that was the subject of appreciation and admiration.

His Highness the Amir praised the many gains achieved by Kuwaiti women, especially in the recognition of their full political rights, which have always proved that they are worthy of their entitlement.

His Highness the Amir also expressed his congratulations to all his sisters and daughters, the honorable women of Kuwait, on this anniversary, wishing them all success in serving their dear to heart country.

### Crown Prince lauds women's role

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed on Tuesday his admirations to the outstanding role of the Kuwaiti women in the construction path of the dear homeland.

Marking Kuwaiti Women's Day, His Highness the Crown Prince stressed the importance of this role in enhancing the de-

velopment of Kuwait's society, referring to gains made by Kuwait's women on all local and international levels.

In addition, His Highness the Crown Prince voiced sincere congratulations to all women in Kuwait on this anniversary, wishing them success in serving the dear homeland.

**GCC chief lauds Gulf women's role**  
The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi praised on Tuesday the role of the Gulf Women Affairs Committee.

This came in a speech delivered by Al-Budaiwi during the first meeting of the Gulf Women's Affairs Committee held in the Omani capital Muscat, a statement by the GCC Secretariat said.

The committee's meeting is sponsored by the Omani ministry of Social Development and headed by the current sessions Chairperson Maani Al-Bosaedi with the participation of members of the permanent committee for Women's Affairs in the GCC countries.

The meeting will work on coordinating efforts of the GCC countries in international events and conferences related to Women's issues, and highlights policies, systems, and laws in this regards in all fields, Al-Budaiwi noted.

Al-Budaiwi stressed that the GCC countries were keen to raise the level and competence of women, support them and their active participation in all fields at the local, regional and international levels.

He expressed his thanks, appreciation and gratitude to the leaders of the GCC countries for their wise guidance and support for all matters related to Gulf women.



KUNA photo  
Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Dr. Naglaa Al-Mangoush speaks to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) representative.

## 'Libyan stability, security supported'

# Ties with Kuwait deep-rooted: envoy

By Nasser Al-Khammari

KUWAIT CITY, May 17, (KUNA): Libyan Foreign Minister Najla Al-Mangoush said Kuwait has been supporting stability and security in Libya, out of the deep-rooted ties between the two countries and their peoples.

Al-Mangoush made the statement to KUNA Tuesday while concluding her visit to Kuwait, expressing delight at her official visit to Kuwait as part of the Gulf tour.

She met Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, saying that exchanging visits between officials of the two countries deepen the distinguished ties. The Libyan top diplomat said several dossiers of common concern have been discussed during her visit to Kuwait.

She voiced her pride for Kuwait's political and humanitarian stances on Arab, regional and international dossiers. Mangoush stressed the success of her tour to the Gulf, indicating that there is a full support to Libya's stability and Libyans.

On the expected parliamentary and presidential polls in Libya, Mangoush underlined the necessity of proceeding with the electoral path.

She said that the region is facing another challenges, in reference to Sudan's situation, expressing her hope that that Arab country would enjoy stability, security and safety.

Earlier in the day, Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah met with his Libyan counterpart at the Foreign Ministry's H.Q.

During the meeting, Sheikh Salem renewed Kuwait's absolute backing to Libya and all steps it takes to maintain its unity, sovereignty, stability and security, and achieve peace, prosperity and development to its people.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah received on Tuesday his visiting Libyan counterpart Najla El-Mangoush, holding talks on bilateral relations and current developments around the world.

The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, amid the discussions, reiterated his country's unwavering support for Libya and the measures Tripoli takes to protect its security and stability, while the Libyan minister highlighted her appreciation of Kuwait's contributions towards peace in the region.

Libyan Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush arrived in Kuwait Monday, starting an official visit to the country.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Suffering, failure continue ... we still see light at the end of tunnel'

"MAY 16 this year devoid us of any words from those who advance the front ranks, and they would not have had a place if it were not for this date and those who fought for it. We start from here, not from there," columnist **Kawthar Abdullah Al-Joan** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"From here, we begin to go directly to the roots of the formation of Kuwaiti families, which have undergone a change from duty, research and study.

"Many of the characteristics that distinguished our society are no longer a source of joy, but disavowal of them has become the norm.

"The dreams of some have receded at a time when others cling to the lowest achievements and fall into a deep slumber, as if the struggle of fifty years of striving to obtain social and political rights, as guaranteed by the explicit and clear constitution, ended with the issuance of the Amiri Decree on May 16, 2005.

"It is true that no one denies that approving the political rights of Kuwaiti women is a great victory for women in Kuwait, and there is no doubt that it gave women the opportunity to participate in the elections as a candidate and vote as men do.

"The political movement of women and its role in achieving a number of gains that the masses of women in my country were waiting for, and the efforts made by the pioneers of women's work in achieving a recognized role locally, regionally and in the Arab world.

"We have already alerted ourselves of the necessity of training female cadres; in order to run in the election battle, they have the potential and capabilities to go through the experience and be present in the political arena, and with the recognition of the state, and the events follow.

"We went through the experiences of 4 women running in the elections, and they arrived and after them as well. And if our reservations were about the parliamentary performance, then the evaluation after all these years in my opinion no one succeeded, in addition to that the obstacles, there are still those in our society who reject and do not accept women in the National Assembly, and there are still those who fight against them as representatives, and what is happening in terms of internal and secondary voting in some political currents.

"I believe that the lack of readiness of many Kuwaiti women and female representatives who entered the National Assembly greatly affected their lack of continuity, in addition to the lack of interest of women's associations and women's committees in building a representative figure since the beginning, as is happening all over the world, and I can call it an experiment that is still continuing without tangible results. A number of female ministers arrived, but without influence and marginal roles without features.

"It has been 18 years since the Kuwaiti women acquired their political rights, but the actual beginning was in 2009 and with the acceleration of the societal political movement, there was a glimmer of hope that women would break into that movement with seminars and agendas, and in the absence of an umbrella in which women would be present, such as the offices in which all issues and discussions that are carried out are managed.

"The main driver of decisions is without an identity referred to. I say this while I am in pain and grief if it was a dream for us and when it was achieved on the ground it evaporated with an active action.

"Women in leadership positions some of them are distinguished by their giving and promotion in grades and when any leadership position becomes vacant they are appointed by parachutes from abroad, outside the institution, which causes widespread frustration among workers, and then we are surprised why so many competencies seek early retirement.

"The absence of a leadership vision that allows the leadership to fill the vacant position with one of the distinguished sons or daughters of the same institution, and this is his/her right.

The suffering continues and the failure continues. My hand is on my heart from the upcoming electoral wave, as we do not want it to be an arena for racism, factionalism, sectarianism, and tribalism.

"There are many demands for any future female candidate to move away from idealism in the proposal, to understand the political game like a man, and to move towards a more realistic proposal.

"There is no doubt that this requires a lot of preparation, confidence, and adherence to standards and complete transparency, and accordingly, legal protection must be provided to all future female candidates and an environment that helps them to get equal opportunities, regardless of social background.

"Female candidates who are about to run in the elections must leave the cloak of office and work with their own hands for the sake of Kuwait and not for the account of a movement or sect.

"In conclusion I say to my homeland, Kuwait, for which I am working, I still see light at the end of the tunnel. For you, Kuwait, we work."

**Also:**

"The Ministry of Health and its shocking decisions require officials in the ministry to be careful before adopting and implementing them," columnist **Khaled Al-Arafa** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily

"There are a number of messages that we send to the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadi, and the leaders in the ministry.

"Perhaps we will find a move from them to stop the confusion in decision-making, which confirms the loss of the compass in this ministry.

"Our first message today we direct to the first official in the ministry who shocks us from time to time with hasty decisions.



Al-Joan

"The study was not given enough space before it was issued. The beginning was the lack of medicines, which hospitals and health centers are still suffering from, as well as some laboratory analysis materials.

"However, the Ministry of Health announces that matters are under control, and there is no shortage without relying on statistics that confirm this, but only depends on what was conveyed by one official or another, not only as a matter of reassurance, but in order to preserve their leadership positions.

"We say to whomever it may concern in the ministry, do not depend on the statements and assurances of these people. Go to the field, away from the flashes, and see with your own eyes the suffering of the visitors.

"The second message there is another matter that shows the ministry's confusion and haste in issuing decisions, such as the decision to collect fees between (20 and 40) dinars from residents and visitors to exchange blood bags, which I see as a failed and ill-conceived decision that we do not need in the country of humanity.

"First, the blood bank receives donors from all countries, nationalities to donate blood, and it is mainly intended to save emergency cases that need blood, either in cases of accidents or emergency operations.

"But the innovators in the Ministry of Health did not think before issuing their offensive decision of its consequences, and people did not accept it.

"The Ministry of Health began to justify and issue permits one by one to clarify that the decision it does not include the citizen, and then it said it does not include the resident with cancer patients, and finally the permit settled that it does not include the resident and the visitor who has an urgent need for blood.

"We do not need such failed decisions, as everyone knows that supplying hospitals with blood is for emergency cases without regard to nationality.

"Why is this decision that has distorted the image of the ministry, and it has been in effect for years in the ministry's hospitals? The minister of health is required, before issuing such a decision, to state the real reasons that prompted him to impose fees, even though the exchange of blood bags is for emergency cases, unless there are other issues.

"Others have depleted the stockpile to meet the need for normal cases of blood. We are awaiting the officials' response to clarify the reasons.

The third issue concerns the medical services team of the Hajj mission affiliated with the Ministry of Health, which was announced two days ago.

"It is noted that there are names of some leaders and managers who were nominated among the team members, not as leaders. But with another title, administrative titles, and we do not know what the tasks of this job are.

"The minister of health is required to verify the names and know the controls and conditions on which all names were nominated, bearing in mind that there are some names that are present in every Hajj season.

"We hope the Ministry of Health, with all transparency, to achieve this before it is too late, check the names and respond with confidence to those who question the method of selecting team members."

"As the electoral arena heats up, everyone is hoping that the situation will improve where people are loyal to the homeland, independent, free and distinguished," columnist **Mohammad Al-Saqr** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"Efforts must be intensified to ensure a bright future for the youths whose housing need must be addressed. The prices of housing plots and construction cost should be within the income range, instead of the current inflation that made youths unable to afford housing costs.

"The State and its institutions must protect citizens through the establishment of specialized offices that do what is necessary to construct the most suitable housing for those employed in State institutions, civil sectors and others. In this manner, the stage of urbanization and construction does not burden them with exorbitant costs and delays in obtaining houses."

"The upcoming election - from the filing of candidacy to the official announcement of results - will not be the last for Kuwait, but it is important due to the need to get the country out of the dark tunnel," columnist **Youssef Al-Shehab** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"We have been in the dark tunnel for years, along with its negative repercussions on our democracy, economy, society and development.

"Unfortunately, we have yet to hold the compass that will guide us from the dark tunnel to the point of light. Despite our ability to reach the point of light, we have yet to triumph over the lonely darkness in the tunnel of corruption and delayed development.

"The people of Kuwait, who are loyal to their homeland, will soon take the test of conscience - choosing strong and honest candidates who deserve to represent the nation in word and action, not the tribe, sect, relatives, diwaniya and others.

"The responsibility is huge and the trustworthiness of the voice is loud for the one who knows the secrets of the hearts. All glory unto Him.

"Our country has been suffering from mismanagement and councils, in which we found nothing but more corruption, connections, conflicts and weak governments whose members do not even know their position and the role they must play in the interest of the country and citizens.

"Every voter has witnessed representatives who were close to their constituents during the campaign period but turned off their phones upon arrival at the Parliament. We do not blame the representatives, we rather blame ourselves as we complain about them sitting on green chairs."

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary

### 30 years service completed

## Info minister terminates 50 employees

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: Minister of Information Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi recently referred 50 employees, including some supervisors, for retirement as they have completed 30 years in service, reports **Al-Qabas** daily quoting sources.

Sources confirmed that the Administrative Sector is finalizing procedures to officially notify these employees about their retirement. Sources said the sector will obtain approval from the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) and make sure these employees are enti-

pled to pension. Sources affirmed the decision aims to pump fresh blood into the ministry by giving young and competent national employees a chance to prove their leadership capabilities by appointing them to supervisory positions. It is expected that more decisions will be issued soon to fill up a number of vacancies.

On the other hand, sources revealed that the Ministry of Information transferred three departments from the Engineering Affairs Sector to other sectors. Sources said the

News Engineering Department was transferred to the News and Political Programs Sector, the Television Studios Engineering Department to the Television Sector, and Radio Studios Engineering Department to the Radio Sector.

Sources confirmed the employees in the three departments will have the same grades and job titles, indicating the Civil Service Commission approved this step in order to ensure smooth work procedures and expedite communication between departments.

# Don't respond to unknown accounts or numbers: Mol

'Criminal gangs very active'

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: The Ministry of Interior has warned against responding to unknown accounts and numbers, saying criminal gangs are actively calling using international or local numbers or through social networking sites and impersonate several fake characters and request data related to the ATM card or personal identity to commit fraud, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The Ministry has called for not responding to these numbers and reporting them immediately via "WhatsApp" to the Anti-Cybercrime Department on 97283939 and refrain from giving the bank account number or the password to anyone, and not to photograph the ATM card or the password and share it with people.

**Hashish seized:** The Airport customs officers have arrested an unidentified passenger who arrived from an European country for attempting to smuggle hashish into the country, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The daily added, the contraband was hidden inside one of the bags. Some hashish was hidden in a box of creams and some inside a metal box and yet another quantity in glass bottle.

The contraband was packed professionally and re-sealed to make them appear factory produced.

**Fire in basement:** Fire-fighting teams acting on information controlled a fire that broke out in the basement of a commercial complex in Al-Agaila, without causing any injuries, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The Public Relations and Media Department of the General Fire Force said help was dispatched after a report was received by the Central Operations Department about the fire in a commercial complex.

The fire was controlled by the Mangaf, Al-Bairaq and Fahaheel firefighting centers.

**July 25 hearing:** The Court of First Instance scheduled a session for July 25 to deliberate on the urgent petition to suspend the decree on holding the 2023 National Assembly election, pending a decision regarding the appeal against the Constitutional Court's ruling to nullify the 2022 Assembly, reports **Al-Qabas** daily quoting a reliable source.

The source told the daily that the court set this date through its electronic platform, indicating a request for expediting the session might be submitted soon.

**Forger gets jail:** The Criminal Court sentenced an employee in the Ministry of Health to three years in prison with hard labor for forging sick leave application forms and medical seals, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

This ruling is considered a deterrent for malingering employees. The court took the decision after confirming that the accused did not visit a hospital or clinic during his sick leave.

**Transfer ordered:** Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Osama Al-Sultan recently issued a decision on the transfer of certain employees from one educational district to another, reports **Al-Qabas**.

The decision includes the transfer of appointment controller at the Human Resources Department -- Abeer Al-Jabr to work as services supervisor in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational District, services supervisor in the Capital Educational District Youssef Hajja to work in the same position in Hawally Educational District, services controller in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational District Badr Al-Jedai to work in the same position in the Capital Educational District, and human resources observer Jamal Al-Otaibi as head of the Al-Ahed Al-Makhzanayah Department in Jahra Educational District.



Contraband seized from a passenger.

### Speech by Azerbaijan Ambassador

## 'Kuwait helped in time of need'

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: The Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Kuwait Emil Karimov says his country is a victorious country that liberated its lands at the expense of its strength from the 30-year occupation, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

In a speech delivered during a ceremony organized by the Embassy of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the late leader Heydar Aliyev, he stressed that President Ilham Aliyev is successfully continuing the political course of the great leader Heydar Aliyev.

Ambassador Karimov highlighted the level of Kuwait's support for his country.

He explained that, in the first years of the conflict, Kuwait provided humanitarian aid to Azerbaijani refugees and participated in financing a number of projects implemented in Azerbaijan.

The ambassador highlighted the close cooperation between the two countries on a bilateral basis, and within the framework of international organizations such as the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

He said the meeting of the joint bilateral committee between the two countries is scheduled to be held in Kuwait following the Kuwaiti elections and after reaching an agreement on the date to hold it.

The ambassador stressed that approximately 22,000 Kuwaitis visited his country during the past year, and this year is expected to witness a significant growth in the number of tourists.

He talked about the march of the nationalist leader Heydar Aliyev and his role in leading his country and rebuilding it on the basis of the country's strategic interests.

The ambassador affirmed that his country established active relations of cooperation with international organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO, the Council of Europe, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Islamic Development Bank.

He explained that, on December 13, 1994, the late leader Heydar Aliyev met with His Highness the Amir the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad during his visit to Morocco to participate in the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The relations between the two countries were established. After that, two meetings were held between the leaders of the two countries in Copenhagen in March 1995 and in the United States in October of the same year.

The ambassador elaborated on the achievements and contributions made by the President's academic wife Zarifa Aliyeva, as well as her scientific services to the country and the people.

In addition, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Ambassador of Tajikistan Zubaidullah Zbidov spoke about the comprehensive economic and social development that Azerbaijan has been witnessing, which is linked to the name of Heydar Aliyev, as the country at the beginning of its independence faced great challenges, and its leader Haidar Aliyev was able to not only get the country out of chaos, but was able to turn it into a prosperous country.



Emil Karimov

### Manila team arrives for talks

## 'No plans to shut embassy shelter'

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: Coinciding with the arrival of the first official Philippine delegation to Kuwait to conduct discussions related to the repercussions of its labor crisis, local and external indicators highlight the difficulty of the talks, with Kuwait sticking to its position regarding the two points of the "shelter" in the Philippine embassy, and the labor offices' communication with labor sponsors, and considering them the gateway for any treatment of the crisis, reports **Aljarida** daily.

Kuwait believes that these two points represent a violation of laws and the bilateral labor agreement, and therefore no embassy may establish such a shelter center outside the affiliation of the two authorities concerned in this regard, namely the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Public Authority for Manpower.

Local labor information revealed that members of the Philippine delegation arrived in Kuwait, and are expected to start holding meetings with the concerned government agencies, with the aim of paving the way for a new agreement that addresses the demands of the two parties.

In parallel with the Kuwaiti side's assurances in the talks (Public Authority for Manpower and the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs) to adhere to the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled regarding "Manila's non-compliance with the terms of the labor agreement", the Philippines escalated its rhetoric and confirmed, in the words of its Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Eduardo de Vega, that the Philippines has no intention of closing its shelter for runaway or mistreated workers in Kuwait, despite the pressure that Kuwait exerts on it, and the ban it imposed on its workers.

De Vega said, in a television interview yesterday, "While Kuwait is concerned about the shelter that the Philippine government has established in foreign lands, the Philippines will not close it because it will have negative repercussions on our workers.

First of all, if we shut it down, what will happen to the fleeing Filipinos? They will end up on the streets and be arrested by the police. We therefore confirm that we do not intend to close this shelter, which was one of the two recurring issues that the Kuwaiti government was concerned about regarding the bilateral labor agreement between the two countries."



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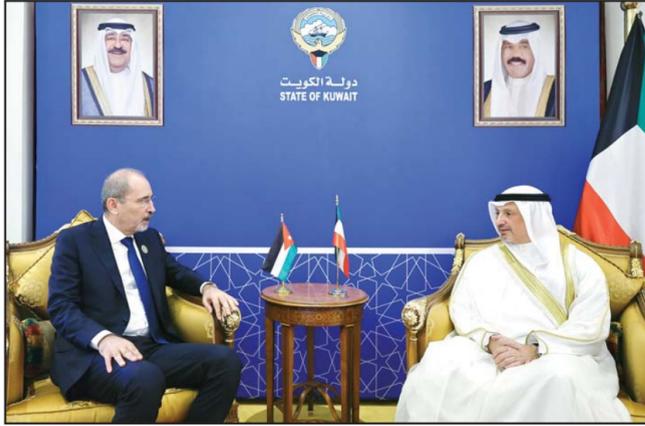
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# Envoy affirms depth of bilateral ties between Britain and Kuwait

'King Charles III at the Coronation ...' photo exhibition opens



KUNA photo  
Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs during his meeting with his Jordanian counterpart.

**KUWAIT CITY, May 17: British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis has affirmed the depth of bilateral relations between her country and Kuwait in various fields, reports Al-Jarida daily.**

Lewis made the affirmation when she delivered a speech at the opening of a photo exhibition entitled, "King Charles III at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II," by Kuwaiti-British relations researcher Issa Dashti at the Bayt Dixon Cultural Center. The Romanian ambassador and a large number of individuals interested in historical affairs also attended the event.

Dixon is an architectural testament to the historic friendship between the United Kingdom and Kuwait, and a symbol of the long partnership between the two countries. Lewis expressed her admiration for the exhibition, which she described as "wonderful, distinctive and most special because it includes rare pictures of King Charles, as well as some collectibles and pictures of high-end clothing and jewelry."

#### Disclosed

Meanwhile, Sheikha Hala Al-Badr disclosed that "the relationship between Kuwait and Britain began in 1775. The rulers and people of Kuwait worked towards strengthening such relations on one hand, while the British Empire worked to consolidate and support it on the other hand. There have been many important stations and positions that strengthened this relationship, proving its strength and solidity throughout history."

She added: "King Charles III made eight official visits to the State of Kuwait, all of them when he was Crown Prince and Prince of Wales. King Charles' relationship with Kuwait is strong and distinguished, along with its rulers and people. We, the government and people, have deep love, appreciation and respect for him."

On the other hand, Dashti, who was awarded the British Empire Medal, asserted: "History will record and document the participation of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad in the coronation ceremony for King Charles III and the Queen Consort. It will have good repercussions for the future generations."

He added: "Bayt Dixon Cultural Center used to be the home of Colonel Dixon's family, who is considered an icon of Kuwaiti-British relations."



The Indian envoy with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lt-Gen Al-Barjas.

#### Indian envoy calls on Lt-Gen Al-Barjas

The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adarsh Swaika met with the Undersecretary in the Ministry of Interior HE Lieutenant-General Anwar Al-Barjas and discussed issues of security cooperation and legal migration of workers as well as facilitation of consular issues affecting the Indian community.

The ambassador also called on the Governor of Farwaniya Governorate HE Sheikh Mishal Jaber Abdullah Jaber Al-Sabah and thanked the Governor for the welfare of the large Indian com-

munity in his jurisdiction. He apprised him of the steps being taken to further strengthen bilateral relations.

Earlier the Indian envoy had also called on HE Dr Abdullah Mishaal Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense to review various aspects of bilateral defense cooperation and thanked the undersecretary for the support to Indian Naval Ship visits last year and apprised him of prospects for greater bilateral cooperation in this domain.

## Kuwaiti, Jordanian FMs discuss upcoming Arab summit and ties

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Wednesday, on the sidelines of Foreign Ministers' preparatory meeting for the 32nd Arab League summit, to be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, next Friday.

The two sides discussed bilateral ties and topics on the meeting's agenda. (KUNA)

Also, Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon Abdallah Bouhabib on Wednesday at the sidelines of the Foreign Ministers preparatory meeting for the 32nd Arab League summit, to be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, next Friday.

During the meeting, both sides discussed

bilateral relations, recent development in Lebanon, and other topics related to the joint Arab action.

He also met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq Fuad Muhammad Hussein, where they discussed current developments in the Iraqi arena and issues of common concern.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Salem held talks on Wednesday with his Omani counterpart Sayyid Bader Al-Busaiddi, just two days before a pan-Arab summit in the Saudi Red Sea city of Jeddah.

The talks revolved around bilateral relations, in addition to some of the most pressing matters that are scheduled to be discussed amid the summit on Friday.



H.E. Chung Byung-ha, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea presented an appreciation plaque to Mr. Hani Ali Al-Mershad, President of Kuwait Taekwondo Federation on the occasion of Kuwait Taekwondo Spectacle 2023 which was attended by a large number of taekwondo enthusiasts at the Sheikh Sa'ad Al-Abdullah Sports Hall Complex (Volleyball Court).

#### United Kingdom tops list

## 'Statistics' on students on foreign scholarships

**KUWAIT CITY, May 17:** According to a recent statistic, the number of students on scholarships at the expense of the Ministry of Higher Education in various countries of scholarship (except for the United States of America) is 14,539, distributed among ten cultural offices, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The statistics revealed that the United Kingdom tops the list in terms of the number of Kuwaiti scholarships, with a total of 7,014 scholarships from various accredited British universities. In second place is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan with a total of 1,915 scholarship students.

According to the statistics, the number of higher education scholarship students to the Arab Republic of Egypt is 1,501, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 948 scholarship students, and then the Republic of Ireland with 927 scholarship students.

The number of scholarship students to the Kingdom of Bahrain is 631, followed by Canada with 493 students, then Australia with 438 students, and then the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with 419 scholarship students.

The number of scholarship students to New Zealand is 103, followed by 80 scholarship students to Malta, and 56 scholarship students to France.

The number of scholarship students in Qatar is eight, in Oman two students, in Spain one student and in the Swiss Confederation three students.

The preparation of this statistic was part of a campaign organized by the Ministry of Higher Education over the past months with the aim of highlighting the work of cultural offices. One week each was allocated to introduce each cultural office.

The campaign is aimed to strengthen communication between the cultural offices and the students abroad by opening direct channels through the ministry's official communication accounts on Twitter and Instagram, and receiving and responding to students' inquiries, as well as highlighting the most prominent achievements of the cultural offices and the most prominent distinguished students.

The statistics covered the work of ten cultural offices located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Egypt, the United Kingdom, and the French Republic (including students from Malta, Spain, and Switzerland), Canada, Ireland, and Australia (including New Zealand students).

The Advisor to the Minister of Education and Higher Education for Media Affairs Wesal Al-Zamil revealed the intention of the Ministry of Higher Education to launch the "Guide Me" campaign to guide students for the second year in a row.

In a press statement, Al-Zamil said the campaign, which will start on May 25, aims to introduce the foreign scholarship plan, and respond to the inquiries of students wishing to register in the plan.

She stressed that the campaign proved to be successful in the first year as it was able to guide students in registering for scholarships.

Al-Zamil explained that the campaign will be launched through the ministry's official accounts on social media. A corner will be allocated for the ministry in the Avenues Mall as part of the campaign to guide students and answer their inquiries, starting from May 28.

#### MoJ team attends forum in Qatar

## Kuwait keen to protect human dignity

**KUWAIT CITY, May 17:** The Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Dr. Amer Al-Ratam today highlighted the importance of international cooperation in the field of combating human trafficking crimes, as it represents a cross-border crime, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This came during the participation of a delegation from the Ministry of Justice, headed by Minister Al-Ratam, in the fourth session of the Governmental Forum to Combat Trafficking in Persons in the Middle East in the Qatari capital, Doha.

Minister Al-Ratam referred to the role of Kuwait in issuing many legislations since 1963 until now and concluding many international agreements to seek to combat trafficking in persons and everything related to human dignity and to prevent all methods of committing these crimes.

He also affirmed Kuwait's keenness to attend such forums to clarify what Kuwait is doing in legislation and executive steps in this regard, as well as to meet with brotherly and friendly countries to exchange expertise and experiences in this regard.



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## 'Signing of MoU reflects determination to develop and consolidate bilateral relations'

# Bilateral relations with Kuwait has reached new horizons: Canada envoy

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: The Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait, HE Aliya Mawani has praised the level of bilateral cooperation between Canada and Kuwait saying it has reached new horizons that are in the interest of the two friendly countries and peoples.

This is in addition to discussing the aspects of intensifying joint coordination and cooperation between the two sides on many regional and international issues, and discussing ways to continue joint efforts in establishing the foundations of international peace and security.

The Canadian envoy speaking to the media at her residence said the visit of Foreign Minister Salem Al-Abdullah to Canada resulted in holding bilateral talks with Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Melanie Jolie, which dealt with all aspects of the close historical ties that bind the two friendly countries and frameworks for strengthening and developing them accordingly.

### Praised

Ambassador Mawani praised the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of a bilateral political consultation mechanism "strategic dialogue" between the two countries, which she said reflects the development and consolidation of bilateral relations in all fields and at various levels, which she said, comes in light of the existence of cooperation agreements between the two friendly countries in the security, trade and military fields, expressing her happiness with this fruitful cooperation.

She explained that the signing of the memorandum reflects the determination of the two friendly countries to develop and consolidate bilateral relations in all fields and at various levels.

On the military cooperation between the two countries, she said "we have a base in Kuwait and it houses about 250 soldiers, most of whom are stationed at Abdullah Al-Salem base. These armed military forces present in Kuwait," she said, "are working to protect the security and safety of Kuwait and the countries of the region and other countries, pointing out that this base is a foundation for the presence of forces and their participation in operations in the region."

### Participation

She referred to the participation of 4,000 Canadian soldiers in the war in Afghanistan, who passed through Kuwait. She also spoke of the Canadian soldiers in Jordan, Jerusalem, Bahrain and Lebanon, but "Kuwait is the main base for Canadian forces in the region," stressing the importance of the region for her country. She also indicated that she will visit Camp Arifjan soon to meet the Canadian soldiers stationed in Kuwait.

Mawani thanked Kuwait for hosting of the Canadian Armed Forces on its territory and for the facilities provided by the government in this context, pointing out that Kuwait is the first Gulf country to sign a cooperation agreement in the military field with Canada.

She also indicated that there are about 7,500 Canadian citizens residing in Kuwait working in various fields, and that discussions to open a direct flight between the two countries are still under discussion.

Regarding granting visas to Kuwaitis, Mawani said: "We invite Kuwaitis to apply for a Canada visa in advance, noting that the period for obtaining a visa may take up to a month" and explained the study visas do not take time, praising the activity of the Kuwaiti Cultural Office in Canada, which she said



HE Aliya Mawani, Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait

works closely with the Canadian government and greatly supports Kuwaiti students studying there.

Regarding the validity period of the visa, she said visas are granted according to the validity of the passport, noting that there is a difference between tourist visa applications and immigrant visas, as there is confusion between them sometimes, and this applies to asylum seekers to Canada residing in Kuwait.

She also clarified that the conditions for obtaining a Canadian visa applies to all nationalities who wish to travel to Canada.

She disclosed about 450 Kuwaiti medical students enroll in Canadian universities annually, and that Kuwaiti doctors, graduates of Canadian universities, hold supervisory positions in Kuwaiti government hospitals.

### Challenge

On the issue of what has come to be known as fake immigration offices and how to deal with them, she said: "Yes, it is true that there are a number of these fake offices and the embassy does not have any authority over them, as these offices are considered a great challenge to the Canadian government and what I can say in this field is to invite immigration seekers to Canada to visit the embassy site and the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain information or contact the embassy directly about this matter because there is a lot of information required from the applicants, including the fingerprint."

On the economic cooperation between the two countries, she disclosed Kuwait is Canada's second economic partner in the Gulf region, and "we have great cooperation with it in various fields such as health and technology, gas and oil, as well as food security, which became a necessity after the Corona pandemic."

Regarding her vision of Kuwaiti women on Kuwaiti Women's Day, she said: Celebrating this day is very important for Kuwaiti women, and "I was fortunate to meet a number of Kuwaiti women who enjoy a great position in Kuwaiti society."

She went on to say, "Kuwaiti women are smart, persistent, and have great capabilities, and they can work more, as they are present as an active element in the private sector, as academics, as well as in government institutions, and they have very great experience. They are also present in the oil sector, and we cooperate closely with them."

She indicated that the Kuwaiti laws related to women and the families are good.

The Canadian envoy praised Kuwait's position in the United Nations regarding the Ukrainian crisis, due to its repercussions at the regional and international levels, as well as the humanitarian efforts made in this framework and the joint work towards preserving the international order, consecrating the values and principles of international law, and maintaining international peace and security.

She also mentioned strengthening its legal and international status to embody its independence and sovereignty over its occupied land.

### Also:

**BRUSSELS:** European Union (EU) High Representative **Josep Borrell** met on Tuesday with UAE Foreign Minister **Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan in Brussels** and discussed a wide-range of issues, said a statement released by Borrell's office.

"Considering the deepening bilateral relations between the EU and the United Arab Emirates, the High Representative and his Emirati counterpart discussed shared concerns and interests related to trade and investment, climate change, with a view of the upcoming COP28 in Dubai, as well as, economic diversification, and energy transition," it said.

They also addressed the negative consequences of the ongoing war in Ukraine. The EU's top diplomat highlighted the importance and necessity for international community to protect the rules-based multilateral world order and uphold respect for the UN Charter.

They also held an in-depth exchange on the geopolitical situation, with particular focus on the EU-facilitated Dialogue between **Kosovo** and **Serbia**, the developments in **Sudan** and **Iran**.

They also received briefly a group of young Emirati students from the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy, who are on a study tour in Europe, added the statement.

# Monetary policy management an obsession that haunts economies

Kuwaiti banks maintain comfortable growth rates

**KUWAIT CITY, May 17: The process of managing monetary policy globally has become an obsession that haunts many major economies, since the start of the monetary tightening cycle in March 2022, the economic and geopolitical developments that central banks in the world anticipate are successive, each according to its location of events and the extent of its exposure to successive variables and its ability to deal with them, reports Al-Anba daily.**

Despite the passage of a year of the monetary tightening cycle, Kuwaiti banks maintained comfortable growth rates in the deposits and loans portfolios, and despite the decrease in the margins between the interest rates on deposits with banks for both the dinar and the dollar, they are still in favor of deposits in dinars, and the margins between the interest rate on the dinar and the US dollar allow the Central Bank the ability to maintain the stability of the exchange rate of the dinar and prevent any speculative operations that may occur.

### Portfolios

Local banks continued to expand their balance sheets during March 2022 to March 2023, by increasing the loan and deposit portfolios, supported by the improvement in the operating environment in conjunction with the reopening of the economy on credit activity, and raising the discount rate (8 times since March 2022 by 250 basis points, to become at 4% currently to a lesser degree than the rate of raising regional and global central in order to devote monetary and financial stability and maintain the competitiveness of the currency.

The national economy serves as a storehouse of local savings and promotes an atmosphere that supports sustainable economic growth,

taking into account the economic conditions locally and globally, the geopolitical repercussions, and the directions of monetary policy in global economies.

The data of the Central Bank of Kuwait's monthly statistical bulletin for the month of March 2023 showed that the budget of local banks expanded to reach 85.4 billion dinars, with a growth rate of 6.8% at the end of March 2023, compared to a balance of 80 billion dinars at the end of March 2022. The deposits and loans portfolios of local banks witnessed growth, as dinar deposits (75.3% of total deposits) continued to grow by 6.1% to reach 35.8 billion dinars at the end of March 2023, compared to a growth rate of 5.6% to reach 33.7 billion dinars at the end of March 2022. The annual growth of loans slowed down to record 5.1% at the end of March 2023 to reach 47.2 billion dinars, to reflect the impact of the previous increases in discount rates, taking into account the period of slowdown.

### Rates

The data also showed that the margins of interest rates on deposits remain in favor of the Kuwaiti dinar compared to deposits in US dollars, as the margins between the interest rate on the dinar and the US dollar still allow the central bank the ability to maintain the stability of the dinar exchange rate and prevent any speculative operations that may occur to take advantage of the price differences between the dollar and the dinar. In addition, deposits in dinars are still attractive under the umbrella of the Deposit Protection Law in light of the successive fears and crises experienced by global markets and banks.

Despite the decrease in the margins between interest rates on deposits with banks for both dinars and dollars, they are still in favor of deposits in dinars, as the interest margin between the dinar and dollars for one-month deposits reached 0.730 percentage points in March 2023, compared to 0.780 percentage points in March 2022. The margin for 3-month deposits reached 0.687 percentage points in March 2023, compared to 0.754 percentage points in March 2022.

Guest

**Ravi Kohli**  
Managing Director,  
City Trade International

**Chaitali B Roy**  
Author / Broadcaster / Journalist

**Sadaaqa**

A show that celebrates India-Kuwait friendship

with Host

**May 25th 2023**  
8 pm

Podcast on:  
Chaitali B Roy

Sadaaqa poster

## Sadaaqa presents Ravi Kohli

Sadaaqa celebrates the long and rich history of friendship and shared cooperation between India and Kuwait.

For centuries, Kuwaiti sailors and merchants sailed to Indian ports leading to a close relationship based on trade and cultural intermingling. In the beginning of the 20th century, Indians began relocating to the Arabian Gulf for work & business.

While following their own individual dreams, they contributed to the development of their adopted home.

Sadaaqa explores this symbiotic relationship and celebrates it through individual experiences.

On May 25, Sadaaqa focuses on the Kohli family of Kuwait.

The Kohlis are one of Kuwait's most well-known Indian families. Mr UC Kohli, grandfather of our guest, Mr Ravi Kohli left India more than a century back. After spending some years in Iraq and Iran,

he shifted to Kuwait in 1936. Here, he set up a spare parts business which was soon booming. Once established, Mr UC Kohli worked hard for the community. His footprints in the field of education is felt even today.

He founded the first Indian school here. Hundreds & thousands of students have passed out of the many branches of the school. Mr Ravi Kohli himself studied there before going to the USA to graduate in Business. After coming back to Kuwait, he had a short stint in the airlines industry. Post that he founded a company that dealt in corporate gifts. He also founded two of Kuwait's very popular Indian restaurants- Dawat and Taal.

In our May episode of Sadaaqa we celebrate the spirit of Indian families like Kohlis who have scripted their own narratives in a foreign land, giving back as much as they have taken.



Group photo of AUK and KISR representatives.



Dr. Rawda Awwad and Dr. Manea Al-Sudairawi signing the MOU.

## Significant step towards fostering collaboration & promoting scientific research

# AUK signs Memorandum Of Understanding with KISR

## 'Achievement source of pride'

# KU registers patent for latest dental procedure

**KUWAIT CITY, May 17, (KUNA):** Kuwait University on Monday completed a registration with US Patent and Trademark Office administrators dealing with an innovative procedure related to periodontal tissue responses during insertions of artificial teeth, using cutting-edge 3D technology.

The breakthrough enables local physicians to easily interact with dentistry

centers across the world, in addition to providing higher quality services on a local level, said Kuwait University Dentistry Faculty professor Dr. Fawaz Al-Zaabi.

Hailing the achievement as a source of pride, Kuwait University acting chief Dr. Fahad Al-Rashidi congratulated the inventor on the creation, saying such work is appreciated and supported on a national level.



KUNA photo  
Kuwait University honors Dentistry Faculty professor Dr. Fawaz Al-Zaabi

**KUWAIT CITY, May 17:** The American University of Kuwait (AUK) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research (KISR) to foster collaboration between researchers, facilitate the sharing of ideas and expertise, provide networking opportunities for career development, and develop training programs for students.

The MOU was signed by AUK president, Dr. Rawda Awwad, and the Director General of KISR, Dr. Manea Al-Sudairawi; also attending the signing ceremony were KISR and AUK representatives.

Dr. Rawda Awwad expressed her enthusiasm towards bringing together both parties' strengths and expertise to create new opportunities for learning and discovery. "The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the American University of Kuwait (AUK) and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) is a significant step towards fostering collaboration and promoting scientific research in Kuwait. This partnership will facilitate the exchange of expertise, resources, and knowledge between the two institutions, leading to the development of innovative solutions to the challenges facing Kuwait and the wider region. Through this MOU, AUK and KISR will be able to leverage each other's strengths and contribute towards the advancement of science, technology, and education in Kuwait."

Also commenting on the occasion, the director of the Office of Research and Grants (ORG) at AUK, Dr. Iyad Abu Doush said, "This MOU will open KISR's research resources and facilities to AUK's faculty and students, providing them with opportunities to

access cutting-edge technology and expertise in various fields of science and engineering. It will also provide training and internship opportunities for AUK students and enable AUK faculty to secure funding for their research projects."

Dr. Manea Al-Sudairawi highlighted the purpose of the MOU and its importance. "The objective of this agreement is to promote the exchange of experiences and develop joint projects that aim to provide advanced technical support, transferring scientific information between both parties. Additionally, it includes sharing facilities and equipment for collaborative research and encouraging participation in scientific seminars, forums, and workshops."

Following the signing, a workshop entitled "KISR - Recent Research" was organized by ORG which featured presentations from Dr. Ahmed Al-Mulla, Dr. Husam Arman, and Eng. Noura Al-Ghurair, showcasing significant advancements in research related to various fields such as energy, environment, techno-economics, and software development at KISR. Attendees from all colleges at AUK had the opportunity to gain insight into ongoing research projects at KISR.

**About AUK:**  
The American University of Kuwait (AUK) is an independent, private, equal opportunity, and coeducational liberal arts institution of higher education. The educational, cultural and administrative structure, methods and standards of AUK are based on the American model of higher learning. The language of instruction is English. More information on the American University of Kuwait can be found at [www.auk.edu.kw](http://www.auk.edu.kw)

## Syria centerpiece

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the Arab League's Ministerial Committee to support Palestine called on the world, Wednesday, to recognize the State of Palestine, and to support its full membership in the United Nations.

This came in a statement issued by the committee held today in Jeddah under the chairmanship of Algeria (the current President of the 31st Arab Summit), and the membership of Jordan, Qatar, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, and Mauritania on the sideline of the 32nd Arab Summit that will be held in Saudi Arabia on Friday.

The statement noted that the Secretariat of the Arab League called to assign its missions abroad and through councils of Arab ambassadors to move to recognize the State of Palestine and support its obtaining of full membership in the United Nations.

The committee called on the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to continue his contacts and consultations with the heads of European Union, African Union, Non-Aligned Movement, BRICS group, and ASEAN, to urge them to recognize the State of Palestine and support its full membership in the United Nations.

The committee concluded its meeting with the call to support the efforts of the State of Palestine to join interna-

## Buffett buys another \$127 million worth of Occidental Petroleum stock

Investor Warren Buffett's company bought another \$127 million worth of Occidental Petroleum stock over the past week to give Berkshire Hathaway 213.9 million shares of the oil producer. Berkshire's latest filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission late Monday showed that it had bought another 2.2 million Occidental shares.

Buffett's Omaha, Nebraska-based conglomerate controls 23.8% of Occidental's stock and holds warrants to buy another 83.9 million shares for \$59.62 apiece, but the billionaire recently told shareholders that

he has no plans to buy the entire company. Many people like to copy Buffett's moves because of his remarkable track record. Buffett doesn't routinely comment on Berkshire's stock purchases.

Buffett has been regularly buying Houston-based Occidental shares since early last year whenever the stock drops below \$60. Berkshire's latest purchases were made at prices between \$56.34 and \$58.52.

Occidental's shares were down slightly Tuesday morning at \$58.23. So Berkshire's warrants remain out of the money.

Berkshire also holds 93,532 preferred shares of Occidental that are worth about \$10.3 billion and carry a hefty dividend, but Occidental recently redeemed 6,468 of them for \$110,000 apiece. Berkshire picked up those preferred shares and the warrants when it helped finance Occidental's purchase of Anadarko in 2019.

In addition to investments, Berkshire owns dozens of companies outright including BNSF railroad, Geico insurance, several major utilities and an eclectic assortment of other companies. (AP)



Berkshire Hathaway Chairman and CEO Warren Buffett smiles during an interview in Omaha, Neb., May 7, 2018. Buffett recommitted to his favorite bank stock, Bank of America, during the first quarter while dumping two other banks as part of a number of moves in Berkshire Hathaway's stock portfolio. (AP)

## Market Movements

17-05-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
UAE - DFM	+1.62	3,565.82	PAKISTAN - KSE 100	-0.34	41,835.57
JAPAN - Nikkei	+0.84	30,093.59	EGYPT - EGX 30	-1.12	16,844.01
SAUDI - Tadawul	+0.64	11,277.60			
PHILIPPINES - PSEi	+0.70	6,635.11			

# Business

## The Conversation

# War rooms and bailouts: How banks, Fed are preparing for a US default – and the chaos expected to follow suit

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

By John W. Diamond  
Rice University

Convening war rooms, planning speedy bailouts and raising house-on-fire alarm bells: Those are a few of the ways the biggest banks and financial regulators are preparing for a potential default on U.S. debt.

"You hope it doesn't happen, but hope is not a strategy - so you prepare for it," Brian Moynihan, CEO of Bank of America, the nation's second-biggest lender, said in a television interview.

The doomsday planning is a reaction to a lack of progress in talks between President Joe Biden and House Republicans over raising the US\$31.4 trillion debt ceiling - another round of negotiations took place on May 16, 2023. Without an increase in the debt limit, the U.S. can't borrow more money to cover its bills - all of which have already been agreed to by Congress - and in practical terms that means a default.

### Default

What happens if a default occurs is an open question, but economists - including me - generally expect financial chaos as access to credit dries up and borrowing costs rise quickly for companies and consumers. A severe and prolonged global economic recession would be all but guaranteed, and the reputation of the U.S. and the dollar as beacons of stability and safety would be further tarnished. But how do you prepare for an event that many expect would trigger the worst global recession since the 1930s?

Jamie Dimon, who runs JP-Morgan Chase, the biggest U.S. bank, told Bloomberg he's been convening a weekly war room to discuss a potential default and how the bank should respond. The meetings are likely to become more frequent as June 1 - the date on which the U.S. might run out of cash - nears. Dimon described the wide range of economic and financial effects that the group must consider such as the impact on "contracts, collateral, clearing houses, clients" - basically every corner of the financial system - at home and abroad.

"I don't think it's going to happen - because it gets catastrophic, and the closer you get to it, you will have panic," he said.

That's when rational decision-making gives way to fear and irrationality. Markets overtaken by these emotions are chaotic and leave lasting economic scars.

Banks haven't revealed many of the details of how they are responding, but we can glean some clues from how they've reacted to past crises, such as the financial crisis in 2008 or the debt ceiling showdowns of 2011 and 2013.

One important way banks can prepare is by reducing exposure to Treasury securities - some or all of which could be considered to be in default once the U.S. exhausts its ability to pay all of its bill. All U.S. debts are referred to as Treasury bills or bonds.

The value of Treasuries is likely to plunge in the case of a default, which could weaken bank balance sheets even more. The recent bank crisis, in fact, was prompted primarily by a drop in the market value of Treasuries due to the sharp rise in interest rates over the past year. And a default would only make that problem worse, with close to 190 banks at risk of failure as of March 2023.

Another strategy banks can use to hedge their exposure to a sell-off in Treasuries is to buy credit default swaps, financial instruments that allow an investor to offset credit risk. Data suggests this is already happening, as the

cost to protect U.S. government debt from default is higher than that of Brazil, Greece and Mexico, all of which have defaulted multiple times and have much lower credit ratings.

But buying credit default swaps at ever-higher prices limits a third key preventive measure for banks: keeping their cash balances as high as possible so they're able and ready to deal with whatever happens in a default.

Financial industry groups and financial regulators have also gamed out a potential default with an eye toward keeping the financial system running as best they can.

The Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association, for example, has been updating its playbook to dictate how players in the Treasury market will communicate in case of a default.

And the Federal Reserve, which is broadly responsible for ensuring financial stability, has been pondering a U.S. default for over a decade. One such instance came in 2013, when Republicans demanded the elimination of the Affordable Care Act in exchange for raising the debt ceiling. Ultimately, Republicans capitulated and raised the limit one day before the U.S. was expected to run out of cash.

One of the biggest concerns Fed officials had at the time, according to a meeting transcript recently made public, is that the U.S. Treasury would no longer be able to access financial markets to "roll over" maturing debt. While hitting the current ceiling prevents the U.S. from issuing new debt that exceeds \$31.4 trillion, the government still has to roll existing debt into new debt as it comes due. On May 15, 2023, for example, the government issued just under \$100 billion in notes and bonds to replace maturing debt and raise cash.

### Risk

The risk is that there would be too few buyers at one of the government's daily debt auctions - at which investors from around the world bid to buy Treasury bills and bonds. If that happens, the government would have to use its cash on hand to pay back investors who hold maturing debt.

That would further reduce the amount of cash available for Social Security payments, federal employees wages and countless other items the government spent over \$6 trillion on in 2022. This would be nothing short of apocalyptic if the Fed could not save the day.

To mitigate that risk, the Fed said it could immediately step in as a buyer of last resort for Treasuries, quickly lower its lending rates and provide whatever funding is needed in an attempt to prevent financial contagion and collapse. The Fed is likely having the same conversations and preparing similar actions today.

Ultimately, I hope that Congress does what it has done in every previous debt ceiling scare: raise the limit.

These contentious debates over lifting it have become too commonplace, even as lawmakers on both sides of the aisle express concerns about the growing federal debt and the need to rein in government spending. Even when these debates result in some bipartisan effort to rein in spending, as they did in 2011, history shows they fail, as energy analyst Autumn Engbreton and I recently explained in a review of that episode.

That's why one of the most important ways banks are preparing for such an outcome is by speaking out about the serious damage not raising the ceiling is likely to inflict on not only their companies but everyone else, too. This increases the pressure on political leaders to reach a deal.

Going back to my original question, how do you prepare for such a self-imposed catastrophe? The answer is, no one should have to.

# Japan rises on 'solid' GDP data; rest of region shaky

WS ticks higher with hopes US may avoid default

TOKYO, May 17, (AP): Asian shares were trading mixed Wednesday as Japan's benchmark jumped on the news of solid economic growth data, while the rest of the region was mired in uncertainty.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 0.8% to finish at 30,093.59. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dipped 0.5% to 7,199.20, after a better-than-expected wage increase report. The wage price index rose 3.7% year on year. But that could mean an interest rate hike in coming months, according to some analysts.

South Korea's Kospi gained 0.6% to 2,494.02. Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 1.2% to 19,745.68, while the Shanghai Composite slipped 0.4% to 3,277.07.

Japan's encouraging GDP data released earlier in the day showed consumption was rebounding after COVID-19-related restrictions were eased and borders opened to tourists.

Japan's economy, the world's third largest, grew at an annual pace of 1.6% in the quarter through March, according to the Cabinet Office. That was the strongest GDP growth pace since April-June 2022 marked a 1.1% decline. The main negative came from declining exports due to sluggish global demand.

Concerns about the Chinese and United States economies weighed on investor sentiments.

"Recent Chinese economic data pointing to a slower-than-expected recovery, falling short of consensus estimates, are adding to these concerns. Despite some rebound in consumer spending, there are mounting concerns that the bulk of China's recovery may already be in the rearview mirror," said Anderson Alves at ActivTrades.

### US

Wall Street was drifting higher Wednesday, though it remains stuck in the tight range where it's been for a month and a half.

The S&P 500 was 0.4% higher in midday trading, on pace for a seventh



A person walks in front of an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei 225 index at a securities firm Wednesday, May 17, 2023, in Tokyo. Asian shares were trading mixed Wednesday as Japan's benchmark jumped on the news of solid economic growth data, while the rest of the region was mired in uncertainty. (Kyodo News via AP)

straight week where it moves by less than 1%. That would be its longest such streak since 2018. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 130 points, or 0.4%, at 33,142, as of 11 a.m. Eastern time, while the Nasdaq composite was 0.4% higher.

Markets got some lift from hopes that the U.S. government may avoid a first-ever default on its debt. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said late Tuesday that Democrats and Republicans could reach a deal by the end of the week, though the two sides remain far apart.

They're staring down a June 1 deadline, which is when the U.S. government could default on its debt unless Congress allows it to borrow more. A default could rock the financial system because Treasuries are seen as the safest possible investment on Earth, and economists say it would likely cause widespread damage across the economy.

Stocks of companies that get much of their revenue from the federal government, and thus may have much to lose if it can't pay its bills, were ticking a bit higher. Lockheed Martin rose 1%, and Northrop Grumman gained 1.5%.

The debt negotiations are just one of the issues hanging over Wall Street.

Worries are also high about a possible recession hitting later this year because of much higher interest rates meant to get painful inflation under control.

One of the main positives that's kept the economy out of a recession so far has been resilient spending by U.S. households. They've continued to spend even as manufacturing, the U.S. banking system and other parts of the economy have cracked under the pressure of high rates.

Target offered some potentially encouraging data on the strength of shoppers when it said its profit fell by less last quarter than analysts feared. But it also said that its seeing softening sales trends early this year, and it did not raise its forecast for full-year earnings. Its stock rallied 3.6%.

### Oil

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude fell 67 cents to \$70.19 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, edged down 64 cents to \$74.27 a barrel.

### Currencies

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged up to 136.71 Japanese yen from 136.36 yen. The euro cost \$1.0866, little changed from \$1.0868.

## G-7 leaders are likely to focus on Ukraine war

HIROSHIMA, Japan, May 17, (AP): The symbolism will be palpable when leaders of the world's rich democracies sit down in Hiroshima, a city whose name evokes the tragedy of war, to tackle a host of challenges including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and rising tensions in Asia.

The attention on the war in Europe comes just days after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy completed a whirlwind trip to meet many of the Group of Seven leaders now heading to Japan for the summit starting Friday. That tour was aimed at adding to his country's weapons stockpile and building political support ahead of a widely anticipated counteroffensive to reclaim lands occupied by Moscow's forces.

"Ukraine has driven this sense of common purpose" for the G-7, said Matthew P. Goodman, senior vice president for economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He said the new commitments Zelenskyy received just ahead of the summit could push members of the bloc to step up their support even further. "There's a kind of peer pressure that develops in forums like this," he explained.

G-7 leaders are also girding for the possibility of renewed conflict in Asia as relations with China deteriorate. They are increasingly concerned, among other things, about what they see as Beijing's growing assertiveness, and fear that China could try to seize Taiwan by force, sparking a wider conflict. China claims the self-governing island as its own and regularly sends ships and warplanes near it.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also hopes to highlight the risks of nuclear proliferation during the meeting in Hiroshima, the site of the world's first atomic bombing.

The prospect of another nuclear attack has been crystalized by nearby North Korea's nuclear program and spate of recent missile tests, and Russia's threats to use nuclear weapons in its war in Ukraine. China, meanwhile, is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal from an estimated 400 warheads today to 1,500 by 2035, according to Pentagon estimates.

Concerns about the strength of the global economy, rising prices and the debt limit crisis in the U.S. will be high on leaders' minds.

G-7 finance ministers and central bank chiefs meeting ahead of the summit pledged to enforce sanctions against Russia, tackle rising inflation, bolster financial systems and help countries burdened by heavy debts.

The G-7 includes the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada and Italy, as well as the European Union.

That group is also lavishing more attention on the needs of the Global South - a term to describe mostly developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America - and has invited countries ranging from South American powerhouse Brazil to the tiny Cook Islands in the South Pacific.

By broadening the conversation beyond the world's richest industrialized nations, the group hopes to strengthen political and economic ties while shoring up support for efforts to isolate Russia and stand up to China's assertiveness around the world, analysts say.

"Japan was shocked when scores of developing countries were reluctant to condemn Russia for its invasion of Ukraine last year," said Mireya Solís, director of the Center for East Asian Policy Studies at The Brookings Institution.

## Bid to avert national default

# Biden, McCarthy name top negotiators

WASHINGTON, May 17, (AP): Debt-limit talks shifted into an encouraging new phase Tuesday as President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy named top emissaries to negotiate a deal to avert an unprecedented national default. Biden cut short an upcoming overseas trip in hopes of closing an agreement before a June 1 deadline.

The fresh set of negotiators means discussions are now largely narrowed to what the White House and McCarthy will accept in order to allow lawmakers to raise the debt limit in the coming days. The speaker said after a meeting with Biden and congressional leaders that a deal was "possible" by week's end, even as - in McCarthy's view - the two sides remained far apart for the moment.

Biden was publicly upbeat after a roughly hourlong meeting in the Oval Office, despite having to cancel the Australia and Papua New Guinea portions of his overseas trip that begins Wednesday. Biden will participate in a Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima, Japan, but then return to Washington on Sunday.

"There's still work to do," Biden said. "But I made it clear to the speaker and others that we'll speak regularly over the next several days and staff's going to continue meeting daily to make sure we do not default."

Senior White House officials, as well as top aides to the four congressional leaders - McCarthy, R-Calif., Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y. - have been meeting daily.

But now, Steve Ricchetti, counselor to the president, Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young and legislative affairs director Louisa Terrell will take the lead in negotiations for the Democratic side, while Rep. Garret Graves, R-La., a key McCarthy ally who has been a point person for the speaker on debt and budget issues, will represent Republicans.

"Now we have a format, a structure," McCarthy said as he returned to the Capitol.

Negotiators are racing to beat a deadline of June 1, which is when the Treasury Department has said the U.S. could begin defaulting on its debts for the first time in history and risk a financial catastrophe. The revised itinerary of Biden's upcoming trip showed the urgency of the talks.

White House officials sought to soften the impact of the trip cancellations. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby noted that Biden will already have met with some of the leaders

of the "Quad" - the purpose of the Australia leg of the visit - while in Japan, and the president is inviting Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese for an official state visit in Washington.

Still, Kirby added, "We wouldn't even be having this discussion about the effect of the debt ceiling debate on the trip if Congress would do its job, raise the debt ceiling the way they've always done."

Even as the Democratic president and the Republican speaker box around the politics of the issue - with Biden insisting he's not negotiating over the debt ceiling and McCarthy working to extract spending cuts with the backdrop of a potential default - various areas of possible agreement appeared to be emerging.

Among the items on the table: clawing back some \$30 billion in untapped COVID-19 money, imposing future budget caps, changing permit regulations to ease energy development and putting bolstered work requirements on recipients of government aid, according to those familiar with the talks.

But congressional Democrats are growing concerned about the idea of putting new work requirements for government aid recipients after Biden suggested over the weekend he may be open to such changes.

## Crypto rules get approval to make Europe a global leader on regulation

The European Union's sweeping set of beefed-up cryptocurrency rules got final approval from member states Tuesday, giving the 27-nation bloc a global lead in regulating the free-wheeling sector.

The European Council adopted the package of rules - known as Markets in Crypto Assets, or MiCA - in the final step of the bloc's legislative process. European Parliament lawmakers endorsed the rules in April, and they're expected to start taking effect in phases starting in July 2024.

The tighter European scrutiny follows a spate of high profile crypto scandals including the collapse of trading firm FTX and the implosion of the TerraUSD stablecoin.

The rules are aimed at improving transparency and combating money laundering and will cover stablecoins - which are usually tied to a hard currency or a commodity like gold that make them less volatile than normal cryptocurrencies.

Other digital tokens as well as bitcoin-

related services such as trading platforms and digital wallets are also subject to the rules, but not bitcoin itself.

"Recent events have confirmed the urgent need for imposing rules which will better protect Europeans who have invested in these assets, and prevent the misuse of crypto industry for the purposes of money laundering and financing of terrorism," said Swedish Finance Minister Elisabeth Svantesson, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the European Council. (AP)



In this file photo, an advertisement for Bitcoin cryptocurrency is displayed on a street in Hong Kong, on Feb. 17, 2022. The European Union's sweeping set of beefed-up cryptocurrency rules got final approval from member states on Tuesday, giving the bloc a global lead in regulating the free-wheeling sector. The European Council adopted the package of rules, known as Markets in Crypto Assets, or MiCA, in the final step in the 27-nation bloc's legislative process. (AP)

## Household credit the weakest quarter since 2020

# Domestic credit growth weak in Q1 of 2023

By National Bank of Kuwait

Domestic credit started the year on a relatively weak note, increasing by 0.6% q/q in 1Q2023, cutting the y/y increase to 5.1% through March. Higher interest rates, banks' lower price competition in terms of retail lending, and normalizing growth following a very strong 2022 are some of the factors behind the softening growth so far this year.

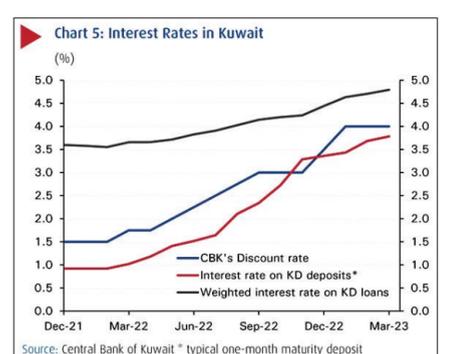
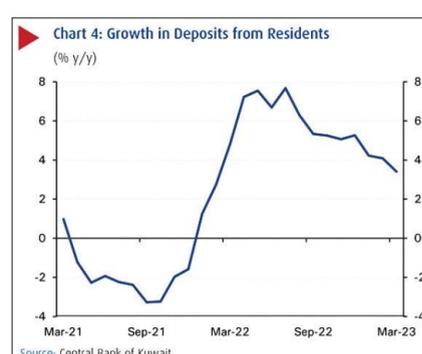
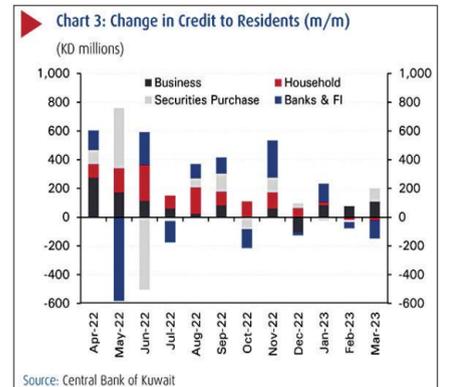
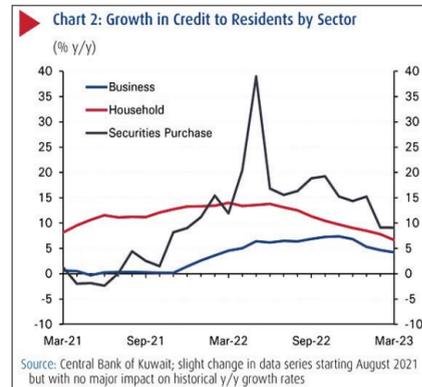
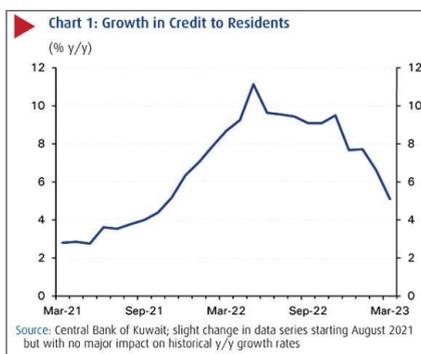
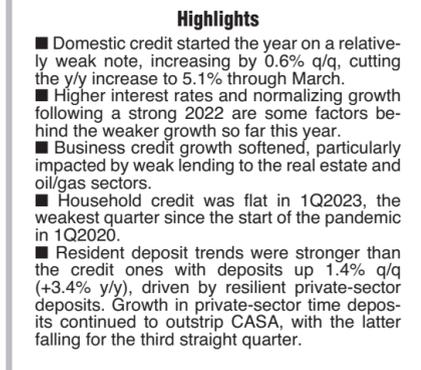
Business credit increased by 1.2% q/q, cutting the y/y increase to 4.2% through March. This follows a strong 6.8% growth in 2022, the fastest annual expansion since 2013. Growth of the various sectors differed markedly with the particularly interesting real estate, in addition to oil/gas, being broadly flat in 1Q2023. On the other hand, industry, construction and other services recorded decent growth of around 3% q/q. Excluding real estate and oil/gas, business credit would have increased by 2.3% q/q (+8% y/y). Looking ahead, business credit dynamics may remain as seen so far this year, especially given the weaker oil price. In contrast, a more optimistic scenario could unfold driven by the major improvement in project awards so far this year, the end (or close to) of the rate-hiking cycle giving corporates more visibility on their borrowing costs, and a stronger appetite by banks to grow business credit given weak household credit demand.

Household credit was flat in 1Q2023 (weakest quarter since the start of the pandemic in 1Q2020), dropping the y/y increase to 6.7%. Higher interest rates, easing price competition among the banks given the higher cost of funds, softening consumer spending growth, and lower real estate sales are all factors that have contributed to this major slowdown in household lending. Another factor is the normalizing growth after two very strong years, which saw household credit expand by 23% between December 2020 and December 2022.

### Resilient private-sector deposit growth

Meanwhile, resident deposit trends were stronger than the credit ones with deposits up 1.4% q/q (+3.4% y/y). Private-sector deposits were particularly resilient, growing by 2.2% q/q (+6.5% y/y), government deposits continued to inch up (+3% q/q), while public-institution deposits remained on a downtrend (-3.9% q/q, -12.2% y/y). By the end of March 2023, out of total resident deposits (KD 47.6 billion) private-sector deposits accounted for 79%, public-institution deposits 14%, and government deposits 7%.

In line with expectations, among KD private-sector



deposits, time deposits continued to increase at a much faster rate than current and saving accounts (CASA). In fact, CASA dropped for the third straight quarter, falling by 9.1% (KD 1.7 billion) between June 2022 and March 2023, while time deposits soared by 4.9% q/q, the fifth straight quarter of solid growth. By the end of March 2023, among private-sector deposits, CASA accounted for 44% of the total, time deposits 51%, and foreign-currency deposits 5%. This compares to 51%, 44%, and 5%,

respectively, in March 2022, when policy interest rates, globally and domestically, started increasing. Looking ahead, given that the rate-hiking cycle is close to its end, if not ended already, it is reasonable to expect that the discrepancy between the growth in time deposits and CASA will start to narrow.

**Hiking cycle mostly done; market expects cuts later in 2023**

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has hiked the dis-

count rate by a cumulative 2.5% since March 2022, half the cumulative 5% increase by the US Federal Reserve (Fed). However, the rate-hiking cycle in the US has either ended or is very close to ending. And while the Fed has repeatedly indicated that there will be no rate cuts in 2023, the futures market continues to reflect cuts commencing in the second half of the year. Whether rate cuts in the US will materialize or not, the big picture for Kuwait is that the rate-hiking cycle is also very close to its end.

## Altman faces Senate committee

### ChatGPT chief says AI should be regulated by US or global agency

The head of the artificial intelligence company that makes ChatGPT told Congress on Tuesday that government intervention will be critical to mitigating the risks of increasingly powerful AI systems.

"As this technology advances, we understand that people are anxious about how it could change the way we live. We are too," OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said at a Senate hearing.

Altman proposed the formation of a U.S. or global agency that would license the most powerful AI systems and have the authority to "take that license away and ensure compliance with safety standards."

His San Francisco-based startup rocketed to public attention after it released ChatGPT late last year. The free chatbot tool answers questions with convincingly human-like responses.

What started out as a panic among educators about ChatGPT's use to cheat on homework assignments has expanded to broader concerns about the ability of the latest crop of "generative AI" tools to mislead people, spread falsehoods, violate copyright protections and upend some jobs.

And while there's no immediate sign Congress will craft sweeping new AI rules, as European lawmakers are doing, the societal concerns brought Altman and other tech CEOs to the White House earlier this month and have led U.S. agencies to promise to crack down on harmful AI products that break existing civil rights and consumer protection laws.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, the Connecticut Democrat who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on privacy, technology and the law, opened the hearing with a recorded speech that sounded like the senator, but was actually a voice clone trained on Blumenthal's floor speeches and reciting ChatGPT-written opening remarks.

The result was impressive, said Blumenthal, but he added, "What if I had asked it, and what if it had provided, an endorsement of Ukraine surrendering or (Russian President) Vladimir Putin's leadership?"

The overall tone of senators' questioning was polite Tuesday, a contrast to past congressional hearings in which tech and social media executives faced tough grillings over the industry's failures to manage data privacy or counter harmful misinformation. In part, that was because both Democrats and Republicans said they were interested in seeking Altman's expertise on averting problems that haven't yet occurred.

Blumenthal said AI companies ought to be required to test their systems and disclose known risks before releasing them, and expressed particular concern about how future AI systems could destabilize the job market. Altman was largely in agreement,

though had a more optimistic take on the future of work.

Pressed on his own worst fear about AI, Altman mostly avoided specifics, except to say that the industry could cause "significant harm to the world" and that "if this technology goes wrong, it can go quite wrong."

But he later proposed that a new regulatory agency should impose safeguards that would block AI models that could "self-replicate and self-exfiltrate into the wild" - hinting at futuristic concerns about advanced AI systems that could manipulate humans into ceding control.

That focus on a far-off "science fiction trope" of super-powerful AI could make it harder to take action against already existing harms that require regulators to dig deep on data transparency, discriminatory behavior and potential for trickery and disinformation, said a former Biden administration official who co-authored its plan for an AI bill of rights.

"It's the fear of these (super-powerful) systems and our lack of understanding of them that is making everyone have a collective freak-out," said Suresh Venkatasubramanian, a Brown University computer scientist who was assistant director for science and justice at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. "This fear, which is very unfounded, is a distraction from all the concerns we're dealing with right now."

OpenAI has expressed those existential concerns since its inception. Co-founded by Altman in 2015 with backing from tech billionaire Elon Musk, the startup has evolved from a nonprofit research lab with a safety-focused mission into a business. Its other popular AI products include the image-maker DALL-E. Microsoft has invested billions of dollars into the startup and has integrated its technology into its own products, including its search engine Bing.

Altman is also planning to embark on a worldwide tour this month to national capitals and major cities across six continents to talk about the technology with policymakers and the public. On the eve of his Senate testimony, he dined with dozens of U.S. lawmakers, several of whom told CNBC they were impressed by his comments.

Also testifying were IBM's chief privacy and trust officer, Christina Montgomery, and Gary Marcus, a professor emeritus at New York University who was among a group of AI experts who called on OpenAI and other tech firms to pause their development of more powerful AI models for six months to give society more time to consider the risks. The letter was a response to the March release of OpenAI's latest model, GPT-4, described as more powerful than ChatGPT.

## Abu Dhabi M'ports Management and Flash Entertainment join 'forces' to form events, venue management powerhouse

Global ambitions set as 'Ethara' is launched in Abu Dhabi

**ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates, May 17, (PRNewswire): Abu Dhabi Motorsports Management (ADMM) and Flash Entertainment (Flash) have officially integrated their activities and operations, combining the complementary expertise of the two entities to launch a new powerhouse that will shape the future of events, entertainment, and venue management throughout the Middle East and beyond.**

The company has been named 'Ethara' - meaning 'thrill' in Arabic - and launches today (May 15). Its ambition is to shape the untapped and unique opportunities in the live events space while continuing to deliver growth that has firmly positioned the Middle East on the global entertainment stage.

Ethara is led by Saif Al Noaimi, formerly the CEO of Abu Dhabi Motorsports Management and Board Member of Flash Entertainment, who will bring his proven leadership to drive commercial expansion across new markets.

Al Noaimi, CEO of Ethara, said: "By combining our strengths, we are perfectly positioned to make memorable moments that matter. By integrating the activities and operations of two of Abu Dhabi's pioneering entertainment and event management titans, Ethara will further establish the Emirate as an economic engine in the entertainment, event management, and sports industries, locally, regionally, and internationally."

He added: "We have an unrivalled wealth of expertise, experience, knowledge and skills,

## Totonji joins Kroll as MD for Saudi Arabia

LONDON, May 17, (Business Wire): Kroll, the leading independent provider of global risk and financial advisory solutions, announced today the appointment of Mahmoud Totonji as Managing Director for Kroll Saudi Arabia.

With over 20 years of experience across the banking, investment and financial services industries, Totonji is an industry veteran with deep relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and across the Gulf region.

Based in Riyadh, Totonji will spearhead the growth of Kroll's office in the Kingdom and lead client relationship management.

Kroll said, "We are delighted to welcome Mahmoud Totonji to Kroll."

"His expertise, leadership and deep understanding of the region will strengthen our presence and expertise in this ever-growing economy."

"The Kingdom continues to represent a significant opportunity for our business, and this

announcement illustrates Kroll's commitment to growth in Saudi Arabia and highlights how we continue to invest and expand our team of experts who are uniquely positioned to help our clients advance their contribution to the Kingdom's Vision 2030 strategy."

Totonji joins Kroll from Moody's Investors Service, where he served as General Manager and Head of Relationship Management in Saudi Arabia.

He has extensive expertise in both establishing and growing the market presence of banking and financial entities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Prior to Moody's, he held senior positions at Barclays Saudi Arabia, Al-Azizia Commercial Investment Company, Middle East Financial Investment Company (MEFIC) and a private family office.

Totonji said, "I am delighted to join the firm at such a dynamic time in its expansion.

which will propel Ethara's success far beyond what either company could achieve alone - all powered by world-class creativity and innovation."

ADMM and Flash have collectively conceptualised, produced, promoted, and delivered over 700 major events to more than 16 million fans in the 15 years since their inception.

These events have included the Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Yasalam After-Race Concerts, Mubadala World Tennis Championships, FIFA Club World Cup, AFC Asian Cup, NBA Abu Dhabi Games, UFC, national celebrations and festivals, as well as many more spanning sport, music, culture, entertainment, corporate, and MICE events.

Ethara welcomes the teams

from both organisations under the new entity across offices in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Riyadh.

Through the combination of expertise, Ethara will now seek to drive reach through an innovative approach to technology and future-focused ambitions across key markets.

"Ethara provides an exceptional platform to realise our collective potential and create experiences of the future, today," said Al Noaimi.

"Ethara is a people-first event, and entertainment powerhouse that promotes and delivers best-in-class experiences."

Ethara will continue to manage and oversee an impressive portfolio of assets, including: Etihad Park, the region's largest open air venue; Etihad Arena, the Middle East's larg-

"Kroll has the unique ability to help companies and government entities address strategic and value-creating business opportunities and is well-positioned to make a meaningful impact in support of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 economic diversification plan."

As the leading independent provider of risk and financial advisory solutions, Kroll leverages our unique insights, data and technology to help clients stay ahead of complex demands.

Kroll's team of more than 6,500 professionals worldwide continues the firm's nearly 100-year history of trusted expertise spanning risk, governance, transactions and valuation.

Our advanced solutions and intelligence provide clients the foresight they need to create an enduring competitive advantage.

At Kroll, our values define who we are and how we partner with clients and communities. Learn more at Kroll.com.

est indoor multi-purpose, state-of-the-art entertainment venue; Abu Dhabi's iconic Formula 1® circuit, Yas Marina Circuit; along with the Yas Conference Centre, offering versatile conference, meeting and events spaces with stunning Yas Island views.

The company will also nurture and enhance existing relationships with local and international partners, which have been established since the inception of both organisations, as well as creating new partnerships that will see future, first-to-market events, ideas and activations.

Photo - <https://mma.prnewswire.com/media/2077286/Ethara.jpg>

Photo - [https://mma.prnewswire.com/media/2077285/CEO\\_Saif\\_AI\\_Noaimi.jpg](https://mma.prnewswire.com/media/2077285/CEO_Saif_AI_Noaimi.jpg)

INVESTMENT STRATEGY & RESEARCH

# KAMCO INVEST

## GCC Inflation Update ..... May 2023

### GCC inflation expected to decelerate in 2023 and in 2024...

Inflation remained relatively low in the GCC in 2022 despite averaging higher than estimates in 3.3% as compared to annual estimate of 3.1% according to the IMF's Regional Economic Outlook. Moreover, the IMF expects GCC inflation to fall in the next two years penciling an average of 2.9% in 2023 and 2.3% in 2024. Lower inflation in GCC countries is mainly attributed to governmental intervention such as price caps on certain products' subsidies on key products or utilities and the strengthening of the USD which all GCC countries have pegged to their currencies except for Kuwait which has linked the Kuwaiti Dinar to a basket of currencies including the USD. On the wider Arab World however inflation is expected to accelerate this year reflecting the economic fallout from the pandemic induced economic restriction as well as the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The IMF expects inflation to reach 9.9% in 2023 for the Arab World as compared to 8.9% in 2022. In contrast the IMF forecasts inflation in the MENA region to reach 14.8% in 2023 underlining the fourth consecutive year in which the MENA region's inflation has exceeded the 10% mark.

In terms of sectoral inflation trends the Food and Beverages subcategory has been one of the most important categories in terms of weight or growth in GCC inflation performance. The Food and Beverages subcategory has showed growth in all the GCC countries except the UAE which has not yet released its monthly inflation stats. The Food and Beverages CPI subcategory for Kuwait recorded a y-o-y monthly growth of 7.5% in March-2023 followed by Bahrain with Food and Beverages subcategory growth of 4.8% during the month.

Among the GCC countries' inflation growth in the Housing subcategory was mixed albeit leaning to positive y-o-y growth during March-2023. Qatar Housing costs rose by 8.7% y-o-y during March-2023 the highest growth among the GCC countries. On the other hand Bahrain's Housing prices contracted by 2.1% during the similar period. In terms of the Communication subcategory the picture was still mixed. Both Bahrain and Qatar recorded negative growth or decline in costs in their Communications inflation rate at -2.5% and -4.8% y-o-y during March-2023 respectively. In the Education subcategory GCC inflation growth has been on a declining trajectory. Saudi Arabia's Education inflation growth fell from a growth of 6.3% in March-2022 to a growth of 3.1% during March-2023 supporting the Kingdom's overall CPI decline during the period. Moreover Kuwait's Education CPI subcategory growth has also dropped from 19% in March-2022 to just 0.5% in March-2023.

The combination of persistent high oil and gas prices and the interest rates hikes by GCC central banks largely in unison with the US Federal Reserve rate increases has been another key pillar which kept GCC inflation rate significantly lower than their global counterparts. Another key driver of the decline in inflation is the decline of global food prices. The FAO (The Food and Agriculture Organization) main food price index witnessed its 12th consecutive month decline in March-2023. FAO index tracks most globally traded food items. The FAO index averaged 126.9 points during March-2023, 20.5% lower than its peak value at the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The fall in global foodstuffs prices has been contributed by a combination of different developments including subdued global food import demand and the extension of a deal which allowed the export of Ukrainian grain via the Black Sea.

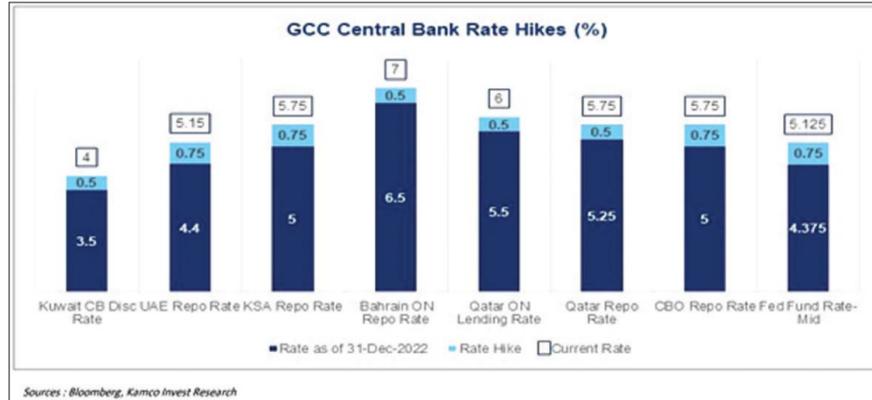
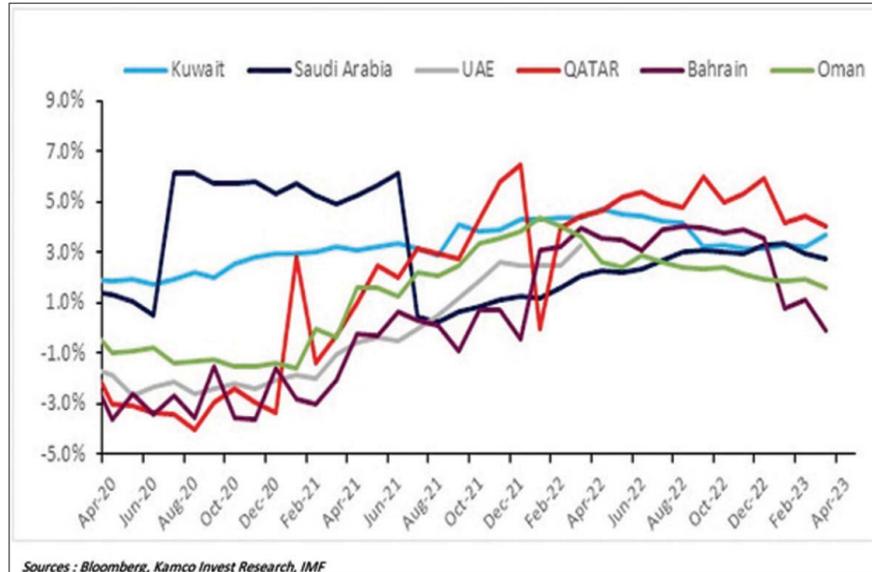
### GCC Rate Hikes

The US Federal Reserve continued its rate increasing measures to reign against inflation. In its most recent rate hike, the US Federal Reserve increased its benchmark overnight interest rate by 0.25% to the 5% and 5.25% range, underlining the Fed's 10th consecutive rate increase since March-2022. In response to the Fed's rate hike, GCC central banks have also increased their benchmark rates. The Central Bank of the UAE has increased its base rate on overnight deposits by 0.25% (25 bps) to 5.15%. The UAE Repo rate currently stands at 5.15% as compared to 4.4% during the end of 2022. Similarly, Saudi Arabia's Central Bank (SAMA) has also matched the US Federal Reserve's recent rate increase by increasing its repo and reverse repo rates by 25 bps to 5.75% recording 75 bps rate increase since the end of 2022. In the GCC, rate hikes since the start of 2023 were in line with the hikes in the US. Bahrain's ON Repo Rate reached 7% up from 6.5% at the start of 2022 while the Qatar ON Lending Rate witnessed similar growth of 50 bps to reach 6% during the similar period.

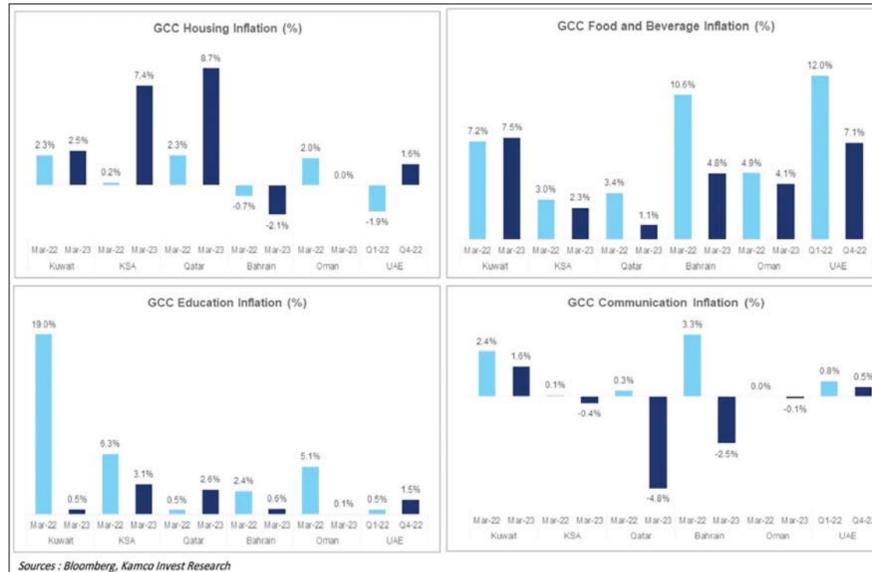
### Kuwait

The Kuwaiti Consumer Price Index's latest inflation reading for March-2023 showed a y-o-y increase of 3.7%. The increase was led by a 7.5% growth in the Food & Beverages index followed by the Clothing & Footwear price index which registered 5.9% y-o-y growth.

Inflation in the Housing Services group, the largest weighted group, witnessed a y-o-y increase of 2.6%. Kuwait's Education Inflation index dropped from 19% price increase in March-2022 to just 0.5% price growth in March-2023 underlining the overall stabilization of Education price hikes. It is noteworthy to point out that



Consumer Price Index	Average	Actual				Projections	
		2000-19	2020	2021	2022	2023e	2024e
<b>Y-o-y percent change</b>							
Bahrain	1.8%	-2.3%	-0.6%	3.6%	2.2%	2.2%	
Kuwait	2.9%	2.1%	3.5%	3.9%	3.3%	2.6%	
Oman	2.1%	-0.9%	1.5%	2.8%	1.9%	2.4%	
Qatar	3.5%	-2.5%	2.3%	5.0%	3.0%	2.7%	
Saudi Arabia	1.8%	3.4%	3.1%	2.5%	2.8%	2.3%	
United Arab Emirates	3.2%	-2.1%	-0.1%	4.8%	3.4%	2.0%	
<b>GCC</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	
<b>Arab World</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	



Kuwait's Education Index was one of the key drivers of CPI in the country and has only started to decline during the last eight months. In terms of m-o-m changes, Kuwait's CPI witnessed a marginal uptick of 0.7% during March-2023 driven by prices of Housing Services and Services and Miscellaneous group which recorded m-o-m growth of 1.1% and 1% respectively.

### Saudi Arabia

The annual Consumer Price Index in the Kingdom witnessed a higher growth of 2.7% y-o-y during March-2023 as compared to 2% y-o-y growth in

March-2022. The overall inflation growth in the Kingdom during March-2023 was driven by higher prices of housing, water, electricity & gas. Rent was a key inflation driver during the month. According to Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Statistics, actual rents for housing increased by 8.7% during March-2023 shedding a light on the growth of rent increase in apartments which witnessed an increase of 22% y-o-y. Food prices in the Kingdom rose by 2.3%, especially, in poultry and meat category which comprise 21% of the food sectors overall weight. Moreover, Transport prices in the

Kingdom recorded an uptick of 1.8% reflecting the rise in vehicle price purchases of 1.6%. In the Hospitality Sector, Restaurant and Hotel prices rose by 6.3% after catering services witnessed a 6.3% price growth during March-2023.

In terms of m-o-m change, the Kingdom's CPI witnessed a marginal growth of 0.1% during March-2023 as compared to February-2023. The Kingdom's monthly CPI growth was mainly contributed by blanket increases in housing, water, gas, and electricity prices by 0.4% which resulted in price growth in actual rents for housing which witnessed 0.4% m-o-m growth. In its latest by-yearly Regional Economic Outlook Report, the IMF forecasted Saudi Arabia's economy to maintain a 3.1% real GDP growth for both 2023 and 2024 on the back of real GDP expansion of 8.7% in 2022 due to elevated crude prices.

### UAE

The UAE Consumer Price index grew by 4.6% during Q4-2022 as compared to the 2.6% increase it witnessed during Q1-2022. The smaller but persistent inflation rate of the Emirates is in line with the global inflation trend but is significantly lower than the global average. In terms of full year, The UAE witnessed an inflation rate growth of 4.8% during 2022, 0.1% lower than UAE Central Bank's forecast. In terms of sub-indices, the UAE Housing sub-index, the category with the biggest weight in the general index (35.1%) registered a 1.6% y-o-y rise in Q4-2022 mainly driven by increases in rents in Dubai.

The Transport index, the second largest index in the UAE's CPI, recorded an 11% y-o-y increase during Q4-2022 while the third largest sub-index, the Food and Beverages sub-index, registered a 7.1% y-o-y growth during the similar period. According to the UAE's Central Bank, inflation in the Emirate would decline and average at 3.2% in 2023 due to weaker price growth expected in almost all categories of the CPI, especially in the Transport and Food and Beverages sub-indices. Moreover, the Emirate's imported inflation is also anticipated to be low due to the general decline in worldwide inflation. Meanwhile, the IMF in its latest Regional Economic Outlook report, has forecasted an inflation rate of 3.4% in 2023 for the

Emirates, the highest inflation forecast among the GCC countries in 2023.

### Qatar

Qatar's inflation rate increased by 4.0% y-o-y during March-2023, recording its lowest mark since February-2022. Qatar's inflation rate growth was driven by an overall prices increase across the eight categories or sub-indices of its CPI. The country's General Consumer Price Index reached 105.55 points in March-2023 witnessing a 0.2% m-o-m growth over February-2023. Inflation during the month was mainly driven by rise in prices in the Recreation & Culture group that saw an increase of 13.6% y-o-y in March-2023 followed by Housing & Utilities and Clothing and Footwear groups with y-o-y increases of 8.7% and 4.9%, respectively. Comparatively, Qatar's Food and Beverages sub-index which has recorded y-o-y decline during the first two months of the year, has registered an uptick of 1% during March-2023. The overall trend in Qatar's inflation is projected downwards. Qatar recorded an inflation rate of 5% in 2022. Meanwhile, in its latest by-yearly projection, the IMF forecasts Qatar an inflation rate of 3% in 2023 and 2.7% in 2024. On the other hand, the Fund also predicts that Qatar's real GDP would fall from a growth of 4.2% in 2022 to a growth of 2.4% in 2023 and further to 1.8% real GDP growth in 2024.

### Bahrain

The monthly y-o-y inflation rate in Bahrain during March-2023 reached its lowest level since December-2021 at -0.1% down from 3.9% in March-2022. The softening of Bahrain's inflation rate was mainly due to the contraction of five out of the eleven sub-indices in the general CPI. Bahrain's Clothing and Footwear sub-index witnessed the largest contraction among other sub-indices at negative 11.7% followed by Alcoholic and Beverages sub-index which witnessed a y-o-y contraction of 5.0% during March-2022. In terms of expectations, Bahrain has the IMF's second lowest projected inflation rate among the GCC countries at 2.2% in 2023 and in 2024. In context, Bahrain witnessed an average inflation rate rise of just 2.5% during the year. Furthermore, the Sultanate has the lowest inflation rate forecast among the GCC countries at 1.9% in 2023 and 3.8% in 2024. Comparatively, Bahrain's real GDP has expanded 4.2% in 2022.

### Oman

The inflation in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 1.6% y-o-y during March-2023 the lowest monthly growth since June-2021. Oman's inflation rise was mainly driven by a 4.1% y-o-y growth of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverage index, the second biggest weighted index. Furthermore, the Sultanate's Restaurant index also recorded a 3.8% y-o-y increase during March-2023 while the Furnishing and Household Equipment sub-index followed with a close 3.7% y-o-y growth during the period. In terms of regional picture, the Sultanate witnessed the second lowest inflation rates among the GCC countries during 2022 at 2.8% after Saudi Arabia which registered an inflation rate rise of just 2.5% during the year. Furthermore, the Sultanate has the lowest inflation rate forecast among the GCC countries at 1.9% in 2023 according to the IMF.

## Sides sign MoU for joint cooperation

# DIC's new horizons initiative connects UAE and Uzbek renewable energy cos.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, May 17, (AP): Dubai International Chamber, one of the three chambers operating under Dubai Chambers, has successfully brought together UAE-based company Empereal Ruby Energy and Innovations and Uzbekistan's SOLAR NATURE to sign a MoU for joint cooperation on solar photovoltaic and solar thermal projects in Uzbekistan and the Middle East.

In the presence of H.E. Alisher Salomov, Consul-General of Uzbekistan in Dubai and the Northern Emirates and Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, President & CEO of Dubai Chambers, UAE's Empereal Ruby Energy and Innovations and Uzbekistan's Solar Nature sign a MoU at Dubai Chambers headquarter in Dubai.

The agreement was signed in the presence of H.E. Alisher Salomov, Consul-General of Uzbekistan in Dubai and the Northern Emirates, and will see the two companies join hands in designing and providing medium to large-scale solar solutions for clean renewable electricity in a cooperation that is set to grow in value to more than US\$100 million over a five-year period.

Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, President & CEO of Dubai Chambers, commented: "This MoU supports the UAE's efforts ahead of COP28 and the nation's renewable energy and sustainability ambitions. Dubai International Chamber is committed to supporting its members to expand, as well as attracting foreign investments to the emirate and enhancing Dubai's reputation as a global business hub."

Manoj Divakaran, Managing Director and CEO of Empereal Ruby Energy and Innovations, said: "There is a large scope for cooperation between the UAE and Uzbekistan within the renewable energy sector, and this was further emphasized during the recent roadshow by the Dubai International Chamber."

Farrukh Asralkhodjaev, CEO of SOLAR NATURE, added: "This partnership will further strengthen the friendly relations between our two countries and apply the best practices of Empereal Energy in Uzbekistan, supporting the countries transition towards a sustainable green economy."

The partnership will provide unique solutions

for the renewable energy market through investments in solar energy projects, water recycling, and architectural solar cladding, and is expected to emerge as one of the leading contributors to the renewable energy and energy transition sectors in Central Asia.

Dubai International Chamber, one of three chambers operating under the umbrella of Dubai Chambers, was established to promote Dubai as a global business hub, attract multinational companies and expand the emirate's trade ties with promising markets. The Chamber has a mandate to meet His Highness Sheikh Mohammed's ambition to increase Dubai's foreign trade from AED 1.4 trillion to AED 2 trillion by 2026.



Photo from the Al-Muzaini Exchange Co's new branch opening ceremony



**Highest quality of financial services**

**Al-Muzaini Exchange opens its 128th, 129th branch in Kuwait**

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: The number one money exchange company in Kuwait, Al-Muzaini Exchange Company recently opened its 129th branch in Al Khairan Mall on Thursday, 11th May, 2023 and opened its 128th branch in Al Khaima Mall, Jahra on Tuesday, 9th May, 2023. This rapid expansion reflects the company's endeavor to always be near its customers and its commit-

ment to providing the highest quality of financial services such as money transfers, foreign currency exchange and bill payments with ease, comfort and safety and at the best prices, seven days a week.

The General Manager of Al Muzaini Exchange Company, Mr. Hugh Fernandes and the company's department managers, along with a number of the company's valued

customers inaugurated the new branch in Al Khairan Mall, Khairan and Mr. Fernandes stated: "We place immense focus in strengthening our leading position in the local market and to ensure that we provide the best financial services experience to our customers and meet all their money transfer needs. It is an incredible achievement for Al Muzaini to have launched two new branches in

Jahra and Khairan within a week and emphasizes our efforts to stay true to our mission; to always be near to our customers and to add to their convenience."

The company always strives to make its financial services accessible to all. In addition to its strong network of branches, Al Muzaini application provides safe and simplified financial solutions with many

features such as: - Availability in all digital platforms, new customer registration, the ability to add a new beneficiary and benefits from the Western Union service and Visa Direct services with simple steps to assist you with your transfers anywhere, anytime.

Al Muzaini is also conducting their Mega Promotion Campaign 2023. Transfer money through Al

Muzaini for a chance to win a BMW X3 2023 and incredible prizes worth over \$130,000. Send money through Al Muzaini's branches, self-service kiosks, online or the mobile app and use any of their services for a chance to win every day. Transferring through the app multiplies your chances of winning. The campaign lasts from 23rd March to 11th June. Al Muzaini, always near you!

Borgan Bank's Kanz semi-annual draw

**'Chance to win KD 500,000'**

**May 31 last day to enter Kanz semi-annual draw**

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: As the month of May approaches its end, Borgan Bank revealed that there are only a few days left to enter the Kanz semi-annual draw, for the chance to win the KD 500,000 cash prize. As part of efforts to maximize people's chances of winning life-changing rewards, the Bank is calling on its current and potential customers to take advantage of the final days to either increase their Kanz account balance or open a Kanz account before May 31, which marks the last day to enter and have a chance to win the semi-annual prize.



Al-Khatrash

The winner of the semi-annual draw will be announced on July 6, 2023, in the presence of the representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry along with the Bank's representatives.

In this regard, Lolwa Saud Al-Khatrash, Senior Manager of Products and Segments at Borgan Bank, said: "Our Kanz account is a highly effective saving solution that also rewards our valued customers, by offering them many chances to win prizes all year long, ranging from KD 2,000 to KD 1,500,000. This year is even more special following the revamp of the Kanz Draw account, to offer attractive new benefits and higher prizes for both our monthly and semi-annual draws. Accordingly, this July's lucky winner will receive a cash-prize of KD 500,000, joining the 240 lucky individuals set to win this year in our monthly draws."

Moreover, Al-Khatrash reminded customers that their chances of winning the cash-prize increases as they deposit more in their Kanz account. She further affirmed Borgan Bank's commitment to elevating customers' banking experience through exclusive benefits and unique prizes, in line with the Bank's motto, "Driven by You".

In addition to the semi-annual draw, Borgan Bank offers a monthly draw with more chances to win KD 2,000 and a mega annual draw with the opportunity to win a grand prize of KD 1,500,000. The Kanz account is accessible to any individual and can be opened in Kuwaiti Dinar or in any other major currencies (i.e., USD, EURO, and GBP) with a minimum balance of KD 200, or equivalent. More information on opening a

Kanz account, the draws or any of the Bank's products and services, is available at any of Borgan Bank branches, through the Call Center at 1804080, and Borgan Bank website www.borgan.com.

Established in 1977, Borgan Bank is currently the third-largest bank by assets in Kuwait. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly focused on the corporate and financial institution sectors, in addition to diversifying its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

Borgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the "Borgan Bank Group", in the MENAT region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria - AGB (Algeria), Tunis International Bank - TIB (Tunisia), and the fully owned Borgan Bank Turkey. Furthermore, Borgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Borgan Financial Services Limited.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years, through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Moreover, Borgan Bank's brand has been built on a foundation of real values - trust, commitment, excellence, and progression - which serve as a reminder of the high standards to which the Bank always aspires. In fact, the Bank's core philosophy of 'Driven by You' is the foundation on which its products and services are continuously developed.

The Bank obtained the ISO/IEC 27001: 2013 Information Security Management Systems certificate (ISMS) and was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2015, making it one of the few banks in the GCC and Kuwait to receive such certification for five consecutive times. The Bank also has the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twenty consecutive years. Moreover, in a testament to its dedication to the development of its human capital, Borgan Bank is the first bank in Kuwait to be certified as a Great Place to Work®, earning the distinct honor in 2023.

Borgan Bank is a majority-owned subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), one of the largest holding companies in the MENA region.

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: In the First Quarter of 2023, Kuwait Insurance Company (KIC) has successfully implemented the new accounting standards, IFRS 9 and IFRS 17 for insurance contracts. This indicates the company's commitment to implement the International Accounting Standards and its ability to quickly adapt to the new variables. It also reflects the company's strength in achieving excellence and complying with the necessary requirements.

Accordingly, Kuwait Insurance Company announced the financial results of the first quarter of 2023, as the Operating Profit for the current period amounted to KD 1.51 million (USD 4.93 million) compared to KD 409 thousand (USD 1.33 million) for the same period last year which shows an increase of KD 1.10 million (USD 3.55 million), equal to 270%.

The Gross Written Premium, for the current period amounted to KD 15.74 million (USD 51.43 million), compared to KD 15.71 million (USD 51.33 million) for the same period last year which shows an increase of KD 35 thousand (USD 114,000) equal to 0.22%.

**Investment**

The net investment income for the current period reduced to KD 904 thousand (USD 2.95 million) compared to KD 3.84 million (USD 12.54 million) for the same period last year, mainly due to the application of the new Accounting Standard "IFRS9" where the realized gain from selling of shares amounting to KD 760 thousand (USD 2.48 million) is recorded in the Retained Earnings directly and not in the Income Statement. In addition, the cash dividends from investments were received in the first quarter of 2022 but this year it will be received in the second quarter.

Thus, Kuwait Insurance Company in the first quarter of 2023, achieved the net profit amounting to KD 1.58 million (USD 5.16 million) compared to KD 2.39 million (USD 7.81 million) for the same



Sami Sharif

**Kuwait Insurance Co announces Q1 2023 financial results**

**KIC applies new IFRS 17 and achieves 270% growth in its operation revenue**

**All-inclusive digital loyalty program**

**KIB launches TV commercial to highlight KIB Rewards program**

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the launch of its new TV commercial designed to shine a light on its all-inclusive digital loyalty program, KIB Rewards. The program, which is the best of its kind in Kuwait, allows customers to collect reward points with every banking transaction and activity upon their registration on the KIB Rewards platform. The commercial comes within the framework of the Bank's commitment to continuously communicate with its customers and provide them with a clear idea about KIB Rewards, which is rich in offering comprehensive and exclusive benefits.

Commenting on this announcement, Marwa Marafie, Manager of Marketing and Corporate Communication at KIB, said: "As part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a communication channel with our customers, we launched the TV commercial to highlight the best rewards program in Kuwait and encourage our customers to register in it to take advantage of the various benefits, which suit their lifestyle and portray our 'Bank for Life' slogan in a modern and unique manner."

**Role**

Marafie added: "The new KIB TV commercial provides a simple description of the registration steps for joining KIB Rewards and focuses on all the benefits and services unique to any other digital rewards program. In addition, the commercial lists the steps required to register in order to obtain and collect points that can be redeemed all year round for a range of valuable products and services, such as airline tickets, hotel reservations, electronics, high-end products, gift cards and e-vouchers, among many others."

Marafie concluded her statement by pointing out that KIB's commercial solidifies the Bank's standing as the 'best' in understanding the needs of its customers. It also highlights KIB's

period last year, with Earnings per Share 8.57 fils for the current period compared to 12.95 Fils for last year.

**Profit**

Mr. Sami Sharif, CEO, stated that the new accounting standard IFRS 17 has been applied to the results of the first quarter of this year, as well as in the results of the first quarter of last year, retroactively, to make them comparable. Mr. Sharif, who is also an actuarial expert, added that the implementation of the new standard may result in positive or negative jumps in profit, during the first two years, which will, gradually normalize by the end of the second year of its implementation.

Mr. Sharif also said that the successes we are achieving are the results of huge effort made in the pre-



Marwa Marafie



KIB Rewards

distinctive role among other banking institutions in terms of continuously providing various tools and products that suit the lifestyle of its customers and are in tune with their aspirations. According to Marafie, this is achieved through innovation and the ongoing provision of new benefits.

Customers interested in benefiting from KIB Rewards should register for digital banking services through the KIB online portal or the Bank's mobile banking app - free of charge. After visiting the KIB Rewards tab on the application or website and following the enrollment process, customers can earn KIB Reward points with every banking transaction listed on the 'Earn Points' page. The points are credited to the customers' accounts at the beginning of every month. On the 'Rewards' page, KIB Rewards registered customers can

review their balance for all earned and redeemed KIB Points.

It is worth noting that KIB affirms its commitment to meeting the requirements of its customers by offering high-quality products and services as part of its comprehensive digital banking vision, in line with its "Bank for Life" slogan. The Bank also maintains its leading role amid fierce competition in the Kuwaiti market thanks to products and services that meet customer expectations and ensure a convenient and innovative banking experience.

**Experience**

Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is a bank that operates according to the Islamic Shari'ah, based in the State of Kuwait. Incorporated in 1973, and originally known as Kuwait Real Estate Bank, KIB made the transition to its current Islamic operating model in 2007. In 2018, KIB embarked on a new phase of its journey full of innovation and development. As part of its new strategic direction, the Bank focuses on offering a next-level customer experience under the slogan: "Bank for Life".

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

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

partment and Branch Directors and the entire staff of KIC.

Mr. Sharif mentioned that in addition to the sales and profits, the company still maintains the Credit Ratings from AM Best and Moody's credit rating agencies as A- (Excellent) and A3 respectively, both with a stable outlook and we are proud in continuing with these ratings as we lead among the various local and regional companies of the insurance sector.

We still look forward to accomplishing a lot in the coming period to enable the company to face challenges in the future that may arise from regional and global developments. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed in achieving our goals, including the Board of Directors, the shareholders and the company's employees.

2.5m off work with long-term sickness in UK

The number of people in the UK not working because of long-term sickness has risen to a record high partly because of ongoing health problems related to the coronavirus pandemic, official figures showed Tuesday.

The Office for National Statistics found that 2.5 million people were not able to work in the three months to March, which is over 6% of the country's working population. That was up nearly 100,000 on the previous quarter.

The agency said the pandemic is likely to be one of the main causes for the in-

crease in the number of long-term sick over the past three years or so, including those suffering from long COVID symptoms such as post-viral fatigue. Many young people have also been unable to work because of mental health issues while those suffering from head and neck problems have potentially grown because of the increase in home-working since the coronavirus pandemic. There's also a backlog of care following the pandemic that will take time to clear. "This is now comfortably the largest number of people out of the labor market due to long-term

health problems that we have ever seen," said Tony Wilson, director of the Institute for Employment Studies.

The monthly labor market figures from the Office for National Statistics, found that unemployment in Britain rose modestly to 3.9% in March from 3.8% the previous month, while vacancies fell to their lowest level for 18 months amid the economic uncertainty of high inflation and rising interest rates. The Bank of England last week raised its benchmark rate for the 12th time in a row to 4.5%, its highest level since 2008. (AP)

Jeep Cherokee SUVs recalled

Stellantis is telling owners of nearly 220,000 Jeep Cherokee SUVs worldwide to park them outdoors and away from other vehicles because the power liftgates can catch fire even when the engines are off.

The company is recalling certain Cherokees from the 2014 through 2016 model years. Water can get into the liftgate control computer, causing an electrical short that can touch off a fire.

The company says it hasn't developed a fix yet. Owners will get notification letters starting June 30. Stellantis says the

problem was caught in a routine review of customer data.

It's not clear how many of the small SUVs have caught fire. Stellantis says in documents posted Tuesday by the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that it has 50 customer assistance records, 23 warranty claims and 21 field reports due to the issue. The company says it's not aware of any injuries.

The power liftgates may stop working before the SUVs catch fire. Stellantis recalled many of the same vehicles in 2015 to fix a similar problem. (AP)

The Conversation

'To put price tag on pain, suffering hard to do'

COVID-19 total cost to US economy to reach \$14trl by 2023 end

By Jakub Hlávka and Adam Rose  
University of Southern California

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

The Research Brief is a short take about interesting academic work.

The economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US will reach US\$14 trillion by the end of 2023, our team of economists, public policy researchers and other experts have estimated.

Putting a price tag on all the pain, suffering and upheaval Americans and people around the world have experienced because of COVID-19 is, of course, hard to do. More than 1.1 million people have died as a result of COVID-19 in the US, and many more have been hospitalized or lost loved ones. Based on data from the first 30 months of the pandemic, we forecast the scale of total economic losses over a four-year period, from January 2020 to December 2023.

To come up with our estimates, our team used economic modeling to approximate the revenue lost due to mandatory business closures at the beginning of the pandemic. We also used modeling to assess the economic blows from the many changes in personal behavior that continued long after the lockdown orders were lifted - such as avoiding restaurants, theaters and other crowded places.

Workplace absences, and sales lost due to the cessation of brick-and-mortar retail shopping, air travel and public gatherings, contributed the most. At the height of the pandemic, in the second quarter of 2020, our survey indicates that international and domestic airline travel fell by nearly 60%, indoor dining by 65% and in-store shopping by 43%.

Contracted

We found that the three sectors that lost the most ground during the first 30 months of the pandemic were air travel, dining, and health and social services, which contracted by 57.5%, 26.5% and 29.16%, respectively.

These losses were offset to a degree by surges in online purchases, a series of large fiscal stimulus and economic relief packages and an unprecedented expansion of the number of Americans working from home - and thus were able to keep doing jobs that might otherwise have been cut.

From 2020 to 2023, the cumulative net economic output of the United States will amount to about \$103 trillion. Without the pandemic, the total of GDP over those four years would have been \$117 trillion - nearly 14% higher in inflation-adjusted 2020 dollars, according to our analysis.

We also simulated four different possible economic outcomes had the

number of COVID-19 deaths been different because of either more or less successful public health strategies in the first 30 months of the pandemic.

The direct health expenses, driven mostly by hospitalization costs in these scenarios, would have totaled \$20 billion in a best-case scenario in which 65,000 Americans would have died from January 2020 to June 2022. In the worst-case scenario, about 2 million would have died during that period, with \$365 billion in direct health-related expenses.

Expenditures

Based on our findings, most economic losses were not due to these health care expenditures.

The COVID-19 pandemic's economic consequences are unprecedented for the US by any measure. The toll we estimate that it took on the nation's gross domestic product is twice the size of that of the Great Recession of 2007-2009. It's 20 times greater than the economic costs of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and 40 times greater than the toll of any other disaster to befall the US in the 21st century to date.

Although the federal government has now lifted its COVID-19 Public Health Emergency declaration, the pandemic is still influencing the US economy. The labor force participation rate, which stood at 62.6% in April 2023, has only recently neared the February 2020 level of 63.3%.

We modeled only the pandemic's standard economic effects. We didn't estimate the vast array of economic costs tied to COVID-19, such as lost years of work after an early death or a severe case of long-COVID-19.

We also didn't assess the costs due to the many ways that the disease has affected the physical and mental health of the US population or the learning loss experienced by students. (AP)

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing 'secures' another 1-2 win at 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps

Staunch competition

KUWAIT CITY, May 17: TOYOTA GAZOO Racing (TGR) has scored a superb victory and double podium finish at 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps following a spectacular third round of the 2023 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) in Belgium. Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and José María López won first place in the No. 7 GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar to earn a Hypercar hat-trick for TOYOTA GAZOO Racing from the opening three races of 2023, following the team's victories in Sebring and Portimão.



TOYOTA GAZOO Racing World Endurance Championship 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium, 26th April 2023.

A remarkable fightback from a back-row start saw the No. 8 GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar's Sébastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa earn an unexpected second place. They now lead the drivers' World Championship by five points over the TGR team's No. 7 hypercar. Its seventh consecutive Spa victory means TOYOTA GAZOO Racing takes an impressive 30-point World Championship lead into the centenary edition of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Competition

The race was marked by especially staunch competition, two safety car periods, and changing weather conditions. Despite these challenges, the two GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercars managed to maintain their leads throughout what is considered one of Europe's most challenging circuits.

With 45 minutes remaining, they

made their final pit stops and Kamui resumed just behind Brendon but closing fast after setting the fastest lap of the race.

A thrilling overtake at Raidillon put the No. 7 back in front and Kamui stretched his lead, taking the chequered flag after 148 laps to earn the No. 7 GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar's second win of the season, by 16.637secs from Brendon.

Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, commented: "Congratulations to both teams for yet another awe-inspiring victory in Belgium. The GR010 Hybrid Elec-

tric Hypercars continue to exceed all expectations and perform across even the most challenging of race-tracks.

Our ongoing motorsports participation allows us to shape a more sustainable future fueled by our passion for developing 'ever-better cars' to ensure that no one is left behind. My most sincere thanks go to our teams who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this most recent win a reality, as well as every Toyota fan whose support is crucial for our ongoing achievements."

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endur-

ance Championship (WEC), and the Nürburgring 24 Hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established TGR, to consolidate all of its motorsport's activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' TGR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making 'ever-better' cars.

Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, TGR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to every-

The TGR team will be competing for a sixth consecutive victory at the Le Mans 24 Hours, the highlight of the WEC season set to take place from 10-11 June.

Race Notes:

No. 7 Toyota GR010 Hybrid Hypercar (Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and José María López)

Position: 1st

No. of Laps: 148  
Best lap: 2:02.327  
Elapsed time: 6:00:24.798

No. 8 GR010 Hybrid Hypercar (Sébastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley, and Ryo Hirakawa)

Position: 2nd

No. of Laps: 239 (+16.637 secs)  
Best lap: 2:05.284  
Elapsed time: 6:00:36.435

Rising mental health demands require innovative insurance model

LOS ANGELES, May 17: Sidecar Health consumer driven health plans offer robust major medical coverage with first of its kind access and no network restrictions or prior authorizations. In honor of Mental Health Awareness month, the company published an article on how a new approach to health insurance can help the nearly 20% of adults experiencing mental illness get access to care.

As the need for mental health treatment continues to rise, the gap between providers and patients widens. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, 149 million

Americans live in federally-labeled Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas.

This deficit is due to increased demand for mental health services and a culmination of issues within traditional insurance models. Inadequate negotiated compensation rates for mental health professionals and increased administrative work associated with insurance claims compared to other medical practices also contribute to the shortage of mental health practitioners.

This shortage may last through 2025, which is far too long for individuals who struggle to receive care.

While telehealth services are another option, sometimes they are not covered by traditional insurance, forcing patients to pay out-of-pocket.

Easy access to mental health services is essential care; mental health treatment reduces the risk of chronic diseases tied to stress, anxiety, and substance abuse, resulting in patients requiring other kinds of medical care 90 percent less frequently than they would otherwise. Governor Mike DeWine is prioritizing expanded mental health services in Ohio as one way of addressing the issue.

With instant-pay non-network insurance models, patients can simply ac-

cess care for mental health conditions with cost transparency and shorter wait times for providers of their choice. These new models are disrupting the industry and offering a new pathway toward solving the longstanding gaps and drawbacks of traditional insurance in mental health treatment.

When given the opportunity to choose their provider, patients are three times more likely to take advantage of mental health benefits and seek treatment.

These numbers are amplified even further with instant-pay models. For example, with the Sidecar Health major medical plans, mental health utili-

zation is 1.5 to 2 times the level of utilization typically seen with traditional health insurance plans.

This doesn't mean Sidecar Health members utilize all types of healthcare more frequently, rather the opposite: for the same major medical members, Emergency Room utilization is 30% less than average levels of utilization for traditional health insurance plans.

There are still far too many barriers to accessing mental health care in the United States. Innovative insurance models, such as Sidecar Health can address these issues by expanding patient choice and giving clarity to upfront costs.

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# Meghan receives Ms Foundation's Woman of Vision Award

NEW YORK, May 17, (AP) — Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, encouraged women to find inspiration to fight for equity as she accepted the Ms. Foundation Women of Vision Award Tuesday night, with Black Voters Matter co-founder LaTosha Brown.

"It's never too late to start," Meghan said at the Ziegfeld Ballroom in Manhattan. "You can be the visionary of your own life... There is still so much work to be done."

Her acceptance speech closed out the Ms. Foundation for Women's annual gala, part of the nation's oldest women's foundation celebration of its 50th anniversary. The gala also kicked off the foundation's largest fundraising campaign ever - \$100 million over the next 12 months - that will be used to further the organization's equity-centered initiatives and its mission of advancing women's collective power.

The foundation is already more than halfway to its goal. It announced that the late photographer and philanthropist Lucia Woods Lindley donated \$50 million, the largest bequest in the foundation's history. Proceeds from the gala itself raised another \$1 million, and nearly \$500,000 was donated by attendees during dinner.

With her mother, Doria Ragland, in the audience, Meghan recounted how Ms. Magazine was always in their house and how it affected her world view.

"I am a woman who remains inspired and driven by this organization," she said, looking over at Ms. Foundation co-founder Gloria Steinem, who introduced her alongside current foundation CEO Teresa

C. Younger. "It allowed me to recognize that part of my greater value and purpose in life was to advocate for those who felt unheard, to stand up to injustice, and to not be afraid of saying what is true and what is just and what is right."

Though the event was her first public appearance since she skipped the coronation of her father-in-law King Charles III earlier this month in order to stay at home in California for her son Prince Archie's fourth birthday, she made no mention of the ceremony. Her husband Prince Harry attended the coronation in London and then rushed back to California.

## Philanthropy

Meghan and Prince Harry direct their philanthropy through their Archewell Foundation, which provided nearly 13 million COVID-19 vaccines with partner Global Citizen and helped resettle nearly 175,000 refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan in the United States with partner Welcome.US, according to its 2022 annual report.

Global Citizen CEO Hugh Evans said the Archewell Foundation leaders helped raise hundreds of millions of dollars for the COVID-19 vaccines through Global Citizen VAX Live, while also helping convince the world's wealthiest nations to provide some of the doses to those living in other nations. Evans said he was impressed with Meghan's work ethic as they teamed up at roundtables promoting the event in 2021.

"I would say she's willing to roll up her sleeves and be practical."

Evans told The Associated Press. "When you see someone willing to spend their time, not doing the glamorous stuff, but willing to do the behind-the-scenes stuff, that's always a good sign."

Black Voters Matter co-founder LaTosha Brown received her Woman of Vision award from her longtime friend #MeToo movement founder Tarana Burke, who led the attendees in song to welcome Brown to the stage. Brown then delivered an uplifting song of her own, before delivering a poignant speech about working for change.

"Even pain has a purpose," she said. "What's happening in this country right now, this isn't just a matter about what the Republicans or the Democrats are going to do. It really is a question about what is it that we're going to do collectively to lean into this moment of discomfort and recognize it as an opportunity to get it right because we haven't gotten it right."

Broadway star Audra McDonald took a break from her current tour to attend the gala to show her support for the Duchess of Sussex and Brown. "I love her so much," McDonald said of Brown. "It's an honor getting to know her a little bit and picking her brain and getting to see that passion and that drive and that wisdom. She's a hero."

Brown's organization Black Voters Matter works with communities in 25 states and the District of Columbia to make their voting more effective, while her Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute funds voter education, registrations and other programs to expand access to voting.

People

## Variety



Helen Mirren poses for photographers upon arrival at the opening ceremony and the premiere of the film 'Jeanne du Barry' at the 76th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Tuesday, May 16. (AP)

## Film

Douglas receives an honorary Palme d'Or

# Cannes opens with Depp, plenty of buzz

CANNES, France, May 17, (AP) — The Cannes red carpet sprang to life again Tuesday with the premiere of the Louis XV period drama "Jeanne du Barry," with Johnny Depp, as the French Riviera movie pageant launched a star-studded and potentially controversy-rife 76th edition.

Thronged of onlookers shouted "Johnny!" as Depp, in purple-hued sunglasses signed autographs and edged back into the spotlight following his explosive trial last year with ex-wife Amber Heard. "Jeanne du Barry," directed and co-starring Maiwenn, has been billed as Depp's comeback - though his prominent presence at Cannes has been hotly debated.

A coterie of stars streamed down Cannes' famous red carpet for the opening night ceremony, including Brie Larson, Uma Thurman, Gong Li, Elle Fanning, Catherine Deneuve (who graces this year's festival poster) and a blue-haired Helen Mirren, who carried a fan labeled #worthit.

During the opening ceremony, Michael Douglas received an honorary Palme d'Or, with his wife, Catherine Zeta-Jones and their daughter, Carys Zeta Douglas, looking on from the audience.

"I'm even older than the festival," said Douglas, 78, after receiving a warm standing ovation.

Douglas and Deneuve officially declared open a festival that promises a Côte d'Azur buffet of spectacle, scandal and cinema set to be served over the next 12 days. It's unspooling against the backdrop of labor unrest. Protests that have roiled France in recent months over changes to its pension system are planned to run during the festival, albeit at a distance from the festival's main hub.

Meanwhile, an ongoing strike by screenwriters in Hollywood could have unpredictable effects on the French Riviera festival.

"My wife is currently picketing with my 6-month-old, strapped to her chest," Paul Dano, a juror, said Tuesday, referencing Zoe Kazan. "I will be there on the picket line when I get back home."

But with a festival lined with some much-anticipated big-budget films, including James Mangold's "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" and Martin

Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon," the party is sure to go on, regardless. Stars set to hit Cannes' red carpet in the next week and a half include Natalie Portman, Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett, Sean Penn, Alicia Vikander, Scarlett Johansson and Abel Tesfaye - also known as the Weeknd.

Earlier Tuesday, the jury that will decide the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or, was introduced. Swedish filmmaker Ruben Östlund, a two-time Palme winner who last year won for the social satire "The Triangle of Sadness," is presiding over a jury including Dano, Larson, Argentine filmmaker Damián Szifron, Afghan director Atiq Rahimi, French actor Denis Ménochet, Moroccan filmmaker Maryam Tourzani, Zambian-Welsh director Runqano Nyoni and French director Julia Ducourmau, who in 2019 became the second female filmmaker to win the Palme d'Or for "Titane."

## Selection

Östlund, 49, wondered whether he might have been handed the opportunity a decade too soon. But while addressing the press, Östlund - whose "The Triangle of Sadness" was nominated for best picture at the Academy Awards - made it clear where his allegiances lie.

"If I can choose between an Oscar and a Palme d'Or, it's an easy choice," said Östlund. "I would rather have one more (Palme) than have an Oscar."

The opening night selection has attracted some controversy. "Jeanne du Barry," which simultaneously opened in French theaters Tuesday, was produced following the much-watched 2022 trial during which both Depp and Heard accused each other of physical and verbal abuse. A civil jury awarded Depp \$10 million in damages and \$2 million to Heard.

Maiwenn has made headlines recently, too. The French actor-director has been accused of spitting at prominent French journalist Edwy Plenel. Earlier this month, she confirmed that she assaulted him in a restaurant.

In remarks to the press Monday, Cannes director Thierry Fremaux defended the choice, praised Depp as an actor and said he paid no attention to the trial.

"To tell you the truth, in my life, I only have one rule,

it's the freedom of thinking, the freedom of speech and the freedom to act within a legal framework," said Fremaux. "If Johnny Depp had been banned from acting in a film, or the film was banned we wouldn't be here talking about it."

This year's festival is headlined by a pair of marquee premieres: Martin Scorsese's Osage Nation 1920s epic "Killers of the Flower Moon," with Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro, and James Mangold's "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," starring Harrison Ford in his final performance as the character.

But as blockbuster as Cannes can be, even those films suggest the wide spectrum of cinema on hand. Both Scorsese and Mangold were first in Cannes decades ago to premiere their early breakthrough films in the Directors' Fortnight sidebar. Scorsese with 1973's "Mean Streets," Mangold with 1995's "Heavy."

This time, though, they'll debut much bigger films, sure to be the hottest tickets on the Croisette. Scorsese has his \$200 million epic for Apple TV+. And Mangold will premiere, as he says, "a more splendidous project" than his minimalist debut.

This year, 21 films are competing for the Palme d'Or, which will be decided by a jury led by last year's winner, Swedish writer-director Ruben Östlund. Seven are directed by women, a new high for Cannes in its nearly eight decades of existence. Among the most anticipated is Italian filmmaker Alice Rohrwacher's "La Chimera," starring Josh O'Connor and Isabella Rossellini.

The festival, running through May 27, will unspool against the backdrop of labor unrest on both sides of the Atlantic. France has been beset in recent months by protests over pension reforms, including raising the retirement age. In the U.S., screenwriters are on strike to seek better pay in the streaming era.

The prospect of a prolonged work stoppage could potentially drive up prices for finished films at Cannes, the world's top movie market. Among the titles seeking distribution is Haynes' "May December," which stars Natalie Portman as a journalist who embeds with a couple (Julianne Moore, Charles Melton) once renowned for their age discrepancy.

**RUSSIA:** A Moscow court has ordered the arrest of prominent film producer Alexander Rodnyansky and theater director Ivan Vyrypaev for "spreading false information" about the Russian army.

The initial court hearings against Rodnyansky and Vyrypaev were held on 27 April, but not reported by the court until Wednesday.

According to the court's press service, Rodnyansky and Vyrypaev, who are outside Russia, will be placed in custody once Russian authorities manage to detain them or to get them extradited. Russia's Interior Ministry additionally put Vyrypaev on the federal wanted list.

Kyiv-born Rodnyansky has been among the most influential figures in Russian cinema in recent decades. He left Russia after the start of the country's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and has repeatedly spoken openly against the war. In October 2022, Russia's Justice Ministry declared Rodnyansky a "foreign agent."

Popular playwright, director and actor Vyrypaev has been living and working in Warsaw for several years and has also spoken in opposition to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Since Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, the government has waged a crackdown on dissent since the Soviet era. (AP)

**MILAN:** US designer Rhuigi Vilasenor is leaving his position as creative director of Swiss fashion house Bally, a move announced Tuesday as a joint decision.

Villasenor has led the creative team at Bally since January 2022, helping boost the brand's visibility with a return to the runway after 20 years and front-row celebrity guests including Adrien Brody, Emily Ratajkowski and Ella Emhoff.

The Filipino-American designer's debut in Milan in September coincided with a flurry of ethnically diverse designers showing collections in Italy's fashion capital.

In a statement, Villasenor called his tenure at Bally "an incredible honor."

Bally CEO Nicolas Giroto said Villasenor's "passion energy and creativity helped catapult Bally back into the spotlight," cit-

ing his "modern, glamorous lens."

An in-house team at the 170-year-old brand will design collections until "a new creative organization is announced," the fashion house said. Bally plans to present a co-ed collection during Milan Fashion Week in September.

Villasenor's departure comes as the brand reports that sales



Loreen



Villasenor

so far this year are up 20% over the previous year. As part of the brand's relaunch, it reopened its New York flagship store and announced a series of capsule collections with Brody, which are set to debut in January 2024. (AP)

**STOCKHOLM:** Swedish singer Lo-

reen, who won the Eurovision Song Contest with her power ballad "Tattoo," returned home on Tuesday, saying she was proud to be only the second person in Eurovision history to have won the contest twice.

"I'm so incredibly happy," a smiling Loreen said after landing at Stockholm's international airport from the English city of Liverpool,

where the event was held.

"On the plane home, I had my first burst of joy and looked out at the sky. I am so incredibly happy about this. I am so proud that Sweden sent me."

She held the trophy - a handmade glass sculpture in the shape of a microphone from the 1950s - saying it was "brutally heavy." (AP)

## People &amp; Places

## Books

## Actor Kelly bares all

## Hanks' novel details moviemaking magic

**The Making of Another Motion Picture Masterpiece**, by Tom Hanks (Knopf)

There may be no one better suited to tell the tale of how a movie gets made than Hollywood icon and master of the motion picture **Tom Hanks**.

His debut novel follows the life of a story from its inspiration to when it hits the silver screen. The fictional tale captures the magic of the process, yes, but also the crawling, detail-packed moviemaking step, presented just so in the bulk of the novel.

The first act takes place in the '70s, introducing readers to Robby Anderson, a 5-year-old with a knack for drawing comic strips, and his hero and Marine veteran uncle, Bob Falls. When Uncle Bob exits Robby's life as quickly as he entered it, all Robby has left of him is a comic likeness he drew of his uncle as a World War II flamethrower superhero.

Robby grows up to create a fully fledged comic strip based on said character, and after fast-forwarding to present day, the strip is discovered in a collection of old comics by genius movie director Bill Johnson, who's seeking inspiration for a Marvel-esque superhero movie he's itching to make.

From there, the novel takes readers by the hand through the ins and outs of moviemaking. Straying from the plot frequently to delve into the many, many characters involved, not a detail is spared. Readers leave each lengthy introduction knowing the character's drink of choice, relationship history and sense of humor.

Perhaps at its heart, this novel acts as a thank you to the unsung heroes of movie production. Drivers, makeup artists and personal assistants alike all get a shot in the spotlight, sometimes at the expense of some semblance of any story progression.

At one point, Bill's agent says his script has "too many scenes, too many characters, too many pages and not enough conflict." The same could be said for this novel, but if you have the patience to sit back and get to know each lovingly crafted character as much as Hanks wants you to, you can learn some interesting aspects of moviemaking and get a glimpse of what it takes to make a motion picture masterpiece.

□ □ □

**"Tell Me Everything"** by Minka Kelly (Henry Holt and Company)

To most of us, **Minka Kelly** is cheerleader **Lyla Garrity** from the much-loved high school football series "Friday Night Lights." And the masked vigilante **Dawn Granger** (Dove) in the DC superhero show "Titans." Or one of the dozens of other roles she has taken on in a prolific acting career that's spanned two decades.

What we don't know is how it all started. And how troubling and painful it was.

Kelly pulls back the curtain on her deeply traumatic early life in a stunning, achingly honest memoir. "Tell Me Everything" is much more than just a title. It's a promise from Kelly to her readers. The 42-year-old actor holds back absolutely nothing.

She shares tales of neglect, abuse and manipulation. The material is harrowing. But it's honest and unflinching. Kelly recounts dancing at peep shows, suffering a beating at the hands of her stepfather and being coerced into making a sex tape.

At its center, though, "Tell Me Everything" is about Kelly's relationship with her late mother, Maureen, an exotic dancer who struggled with addiction and had difficulty making ends meet. The two spent years relying on friends and relatives to take them in, living at one point in a garage and at another, in a storage unit.

In perhaps the most jarring and raw moment of the book, Kelly considers the value of her very existence.

"There have been times, I have to be honest, when I've been mad at her for having birthed me," Kelly writes. "I didn't ask for all this. I didn't ask for this trauma."

Kelly rights the ship as she gets older, though, working as a scrub nurse and eventually as a model and actor. She reconnects with her mom and eventually makes peace with her.

Kelly has called the book a tribute to all working-class single mothers — hers in particular.

"Tell Me Everything" is shocking, yes, but Kelly's story is one of resilience. And, just maybe, catharsis. Kelly revels in telling her story on her terms.

## Also:

**NEW YORK:** Combat veteran and Fox Nation host **Johnny Joey Jones** has a book coming out in June about serving with the Marines Corps in Iraq and Afghanistan and the friendships he formed.

Fox News Books, Fox News Media's publishing imprint, announced Sunday that Jones' "Unbroken Bonds of Battle," will come out June 27.

Jones, 36, was a bomb technician who served eight years with the Marines before a devastating explosion in Afghanistan in 2010 - he stepped on an IED (improvised explosive device) - cost him both of his legs.

"For years people have asked me to write a book about 'my story,'" Jones said in a statement released Sunday by Fox Books. "However, I've always known all along that the most important part of my story is the amazing collection of people and warriors who've become a part of my life. Each of them with inspiring and heroic stories of their own."

Jones, 36, was a bomb technician who served eight years with the Marines before a devastating explosion in Afghanistan in 2010 - he stepped on an IED (improvised explosive device) - cost him both of his legs.

"Unbroken Bonds" is part of Fox Books' "Modern Warriors" series, which also includes **Pete Hegseth's** "Modern Warriors: Real Stories from Real Heroes." (AP)



Luciano Pavarotti, (left), as Radames, Olga Borodina, (second left), as Princess Amneris, Hao Jiang Tian, (third left), as the King, Deborah Voigt (second right), as Aida, and Mark Delavan, (right), as Amonasro, perform during a dress rehearsal of Giuseppe Verdi's 'Aida' Friday, Jan. 12, 2001, at New York's Metropolitan Opera. Sonja Frisell's staging of Verdi's 'Aida' ends its 35-year-run at Metropolitan Opera on Thursday. A new version by Tony Award winner Michael Mayer is to open in 2024-25. (AP)

## Stage

## Second-most performed production in Met's history

## Frisell's 'Aida' takes final bow at Met

NEW YORK, May 17, (AP): Sonja Frisell was a 9-year-old growing up in England when she saw still photos of "Caesar and Cleopatra," a 1945 movie starring Vivien Leigh and Claude Rains.

"My mother wouldn't take me to it because she said it wasn't a subject suitable for young people," Frisell, now 85, said by phone from her home in Portugal.

So began the path to her lavish staging of Verdi's "Aida," the second-most performed production in the Metropolitan Opera's 140-year history. Her version, featuring a Triumphal Scene with 272 people and four horses, will be seen for the 262nd and final time on Thursday night. A new version by Tony Award winner Michael Mayer is to open in 2024-25.

Frisell had been fascinated by the story of the Ethiopian princess and Egyptian military captain Radames since childhood.

"I found out that there was an opera on an Egyptian subject, and I finally managed to see a production in London at the age of 16," Frisell said. "And when I came home, I told my mother it was terrible and I could do it better and I was going to direct opera."

Frisell began working at Milan's Teatro alla Scala in 1963-64 and assisted on Giorgio De Lullo's "Aida" production from 1971-73. She directed her own staging in Rio de Janeiro in 1986.

That was the same year Bruce Crawford, CEO of the advertising agency BBDO International, became the Met's general manager. The company was planning a new Franco Zeffirelli production to open in 1988 and be financed by Sybil B. Harrington. Work was in the design stage.

"It was too expensive because Sybil didn't want to pay any more money than she had already committed, which was a fairly large amount,"

Crawford recalled. "He said that his ambition was to outdo the St. Patrick's Day parade in terms of the participants, and he was going at it with donkeys and horses."

"He was just too much trouble," Crawford added. "So I fired him and I had a search done and found that Sonja had done an 'Aida' in Brazil."

When Frisell and set designer Gianni Quaranta traveled to the Met and presented their images from Brazil, Crawford said they were similar to Zeffirelli's ideas. Frisell, who had worked with Zeffirelli at La Scala, said the director had attended her Rio rehearsals while in Brazil to scout locations for his movie "Young Toscanini."

Frisell said the Met told her Zeffirelli's designs would cost \$5 million to build and would take up too much space in the house, where four productions need to be stored simultaneously.

## Version

"It's so big that we would have to close the Met. We couldn't play anything else," she recalled Crawford recounted in his conversation with Zeffirelli. "And Franco replied: If you want Franco Zeffirelli's 'Aida,' you close the Met."

Frisell returned to her home in Munich, and Crawford called her a few days later with the offer.

According to the Met's figures, she supplemented the six principal singers in the Triumphal Scene with 150 actors, 94 choristers, 62 spears, 41 swords, 31 staves, 30 bows with quivers, 26 rope manacles, 16 dancers, 15 shields, 14 standards, eight axes, six herald trumpeters, four whips, four clubs and four feather fans.

Frisell's version premiered on Dec. 8, 1988, with James Levine conducting Leona Mitchell, Plácido Domingo and Fiorenza Cossotto. Her staging lasted about three times

as long as each of the previous three, by Margaret Webster in 1951, Nathaniel Merrill in 1963 and John Dexter in 1976.

Just like for some singers, a farewell announcement was premature. Frisell's "Aida" made what was thought to be a final appearance in March 2019 and the staging by Mayer, who won a Tony for "Hairspray," was to premiere in an opening-night gala on Sept. 21, 2020. But the entire 2020-21 season was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic and Mayer's rescheduled for a 2024-25 season that opens with Jeanine Tesori's "Grounded."

Frisell's version was brought back for 15 performances this season and is surpassed at the Met only by Zeffirelli's 1981 version of Puccini's "La Bohème," whose total rises to about 550 by this season's end.

"It's sort of a great grand opera spectacle that you don't get to see much anymore," said Steven Pickover, who has directed the "Aida" revivals since 2007.

Mayer's staging, partly stored since 2020 in crates in Newark, New Jersey, has sets by Christine Jones with projections by Michael Grimmer of 59 Productions.

"The audience's natural concern might be after seeing the spectacle of this 'Aida' what's in store for them in the next 'Aida,'" Met general manager Peter Gelb said. "Christine Jones and Michael Grimmer are creating an underground world for 'Aida' of catacombs and pyramids and tombs, with projection. The set will be animated in a way that will be extremely dramatic and visually appealing. It's 'Aida' underground as opposed to above ground."

Frisell isn't worried about her version's demise.

"I don't expect anybody to remember the name Sonja Frisell in 100 years," she said, "but I'm quite sure Verdi and Mozart will be remembered."



Michael Douglas holds aloft the honorary Palme d'Or at the opening ceremony of the 76th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, May 16. (AP) — Details Page 11



Gessen



Masterson

## Variety

**NEW YORK:** The author and journalist **Masha Gessen** has resigned as vice president of the board of PEN America, citing their unhappiness with the literary and free expression organization's cancellation of an event with Russian panelists.

Last week, PEN hosted dozens of events for its annual World Voices Festival, an international gathering of writers and other public figures. One conversation was supposed to include two Russian dissident writers, with Gessen serving as moderator. A separate panel was to feature the Ukrainian writers **Artem Chapeye** and **Artem Chekh**, active members of the Ukrainian military.

In a lengthy statement Tuesday, PEN acknowledged a "misunderstanding" led to the Russians being uninvited. Because of the Russian invasion last year, the Ukrainians had objected to the presence of any Russian panelists - a condition PEN believed applied only to the **Ukraine** event. After learning that Chapeye and Chekh didn't want the Russians at the festival overall, and failing to reach any compromise, PEN called off the Russian panel.

"They (the Ukrainians) informed us that they would be unable to participate, explaining that had both events proceeded, they could face being barred from returning to Ukraine or facing repercussions upon their return," PEN's statement said.

"Faced with the consequences of our mistake and without good options, we made the decision that the event with the Ukrainians should go forward, given their circumstances and the risks they face as soldiers, that they had traveled a long distance to participate, and that they came with a misunderstanding to which we had contributed."

Gessen, whose decision was first reported Tuesday by The Atlantic, is a prominent critic of Russian President **Vladimir Putin** and an award-winning writer. They called PEN's decision a betrayal of its principles and said that PEN should not have tolerated guests being barred from speaking "because someone else doesn't want them to." (AP)

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**LOS ANGELES:** **Danny Masterson** drugged women's drinks so he could rape them, then relied on his prominence

in the Church of Scientology to avoid consequences for years, a prosecutor told jurors Tuesday in closing arguments at the actor's trial.

"The defendant drags his victims to gain control. He does this to take away his victims' ability to consent," Deputy

District Attorney Ariel Anson told the jury of seven men and five women. "You don't want to have ...? You don't have a choice. The defendant makes that choice for these victims. And he does it over and over and over again."

The 47-year-old former star of "That



Uma Thurman poses for photographers upon arrival at the opening ceremony and the premiere of the film 'Jeanne du Barry' at the 76th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, May 16. (AP) — Details Page 11

"70s Show" is on rape trial for a second time after the first ended in a mistrial in December, with a jury hopelessly deadlocked on all counts.

Masterson has pleaded not guilty to raping three women at his home between 2001 and 2003. His attorney, **Philip Cohen**, who briefly began his own closing and will continue in the afternoon, told jurors that inconsistencies in the women's stories that he said Anson downplayed are important for the jury to consider.

"She did a very nice job of ignoring many of them," Cohen said. "What she views as little inconsistencies are at the heart of trying to determine, 'Is somebody, reliable, credible, believable enough for a criminal conviction?'" Anson took aim at the Church of Scientology, of which Masterson is a member and all three women are former members, throughout her argument, emphasizing that church authorities kept the women from accepting what had happened to them and from reporting it to police for years.

"The church taught his victims, 'Rape isn't rape, you caused this, and above all, you are never allowed to go to law enforcement,'" she said. "In Scientology, the defendant is a celebrity and he is untouchable."

The church has denied having any policy discouraging members from going to law enforcement. (AP)

## Climate

## 'Flirting with danger'

## '2 in 3 chance' world will hit 1.5C limit: UN

NEW YORK, May 17, (AP) - There's a two-out-of-three chance within the next five years that the world will temporarily reach the internationally accepted global temperature threshold for limiting the worst effects of climate change, a new World Meteorological Organization report forecasts.

It likely would only be a fleeting and less worrisome flirtation with the agreed-upon climate danger point, the United Nations weather agency said Wednesday. That's because scientists expect a temporary burst of heat from an El Nino will supercharge human-caused warming from the burning of coal, oil and gas to new heights and then slip back down a bit.

The 2015 Paris climate agreement set 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) as a global guardrail in atmospheric warming, with countries pledging to try to prevent that much long-term warming if possible. Scientists in a special 2018

United Nations report said going past that point would be drastically and dangerously different with more death, destruction and damage to global ecosystems.

"It won't be this year probably. Maybe it'll be next year or the year after" that a year averages 1.5 degrees Celsius, said report lead author Leon Hermanson, a climate scientist at the United Kingdom's Met Office.

But climate scientists said what's likely to happen in the next five years isn't the same as failing the global



Taalas

goal. "This report does not mean that we will permanently exceed the 1.5C level specified in the Paris Agreement which refers to long-term warming over many years. However, WMO is sounding the alarm that we will breach the 1.5C level on a temporary basis with increasing frequency," WMO Secretary-General **Petteri Taalas** said in a statement.

"A single year doesn't really mean anything," Hermanson said. Scientists usually use 30-year averages.

Those 66% odds of a single year hitting that threshold in five years have increased from 48% last year, 40% the year before, 20% in 2020 and 10% about a decade ago. The WMO report is based on calculations by 11 different climate science centers across the globe.

## Warming

The world has been inching closer to the 1.5-degree threshold due to human-caused climate change for years. The temporary warming of this year's expected El Nino - a phenomenon that starts with a warming of parts of the central Pacific Ocean and then sloshes across the globe - makes it "possible for us to see a single year exceeding 1.5C a full decade before the long-term average warming driven by human emissions of greenhouse gases does," said climate scientist Zeke Hausfather of the tech company Stripe and Berkeley Earth, who wasn't part of the WMO report.

"We don't expect the longer-term average to pass 1.5C until the early-to-mid 2030s," Hausfather said in an email.

But each year at or near 1.5 matters.

"We see this report as more of a barometer of how we're getting close, because the closer you get to the threshold, the more noise bumping up and down is going to bump you over the threshold randomly," Hermanson said in an interview. And he said the more random bumps over the mark occur, the closer the world actually gets to the threshold.

Key in all this is the El Nino cycle. The world is coming off a record-tying triple dip La Nina - three straight years of El Nino's cooler cousin restraining the human-caused warming climb - and is on the verge of an El Nino that some scientists predict will be strong.

The La Nina somewhat flattened the trend of human-caused warming so that the world hasn't broken the annual temperature mark since 2016, the last El Nino, super-sized one, Hermanson said.

And that means a 98% chance of breaking the 2016 annual global temperature record between now and 2027, the report said. There's also a 98% chance that the next five years will be the hottest five years on record, the report said.

Because of the shift from La Nina to El Nino "where there were floods before, there will be droughts and where there were droughts before there might be floods," Hermanson said.

The report warned that the Amazon will be abnormally dry for a good part of the next five years while the Sahel part of Africa - the transition zone between the Sahara on the north and the savannas to the south - will be wetter.

That's "one of the positive things coming out of this forecast," Hermanson said. "It's not all doom-and-gloom and heat waves."

University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann said reports like this put too much emphasis on global surface temperature, which varies with the El Nino cycle, even though it is climbing upward in the long term. The real concern is the deep water of oceans, which absorb an overwhelming majority of the world's human-caused warming, leading to a steady rise in ocean heat content and new records set regularly.

Mann said it's wrong to think the world's about to exceed the threshold any time now because "a concerted effort to lower carbon emissions can still avoid crossing it altogether," Mann said. "That's what we need to be focused on."

## Also:

**BRUSSELS:** The 27 European Union countries on Tuesday formally adopted new rules that should help the bloc reduce its contribution to global deforestation by regulating the trade in a series of products driving the decrease in forested areas across the world.

Under the legislation, companies trading palm oil, cattle, wood, coffee, cocoa, rubber and soy will need to verify that the goods they sell in the EU haven't led to deforestation and forest degradation anywhere in the world since 2021.

The regulation also covers derived products such as chocolate or printed paper.

Forests are an important natural means of removing greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere, since plants absorb carbon dioxide when they grow.

According to the World Resource Institute, a forested area the size of 10 soccer fields disappears in the world every minute and the EU says that without the new regulation it could be responsible for the loss of 248,000 hectares (612,000 acres) of deforestation per year - a surface almost as large as member country Luxembourg.

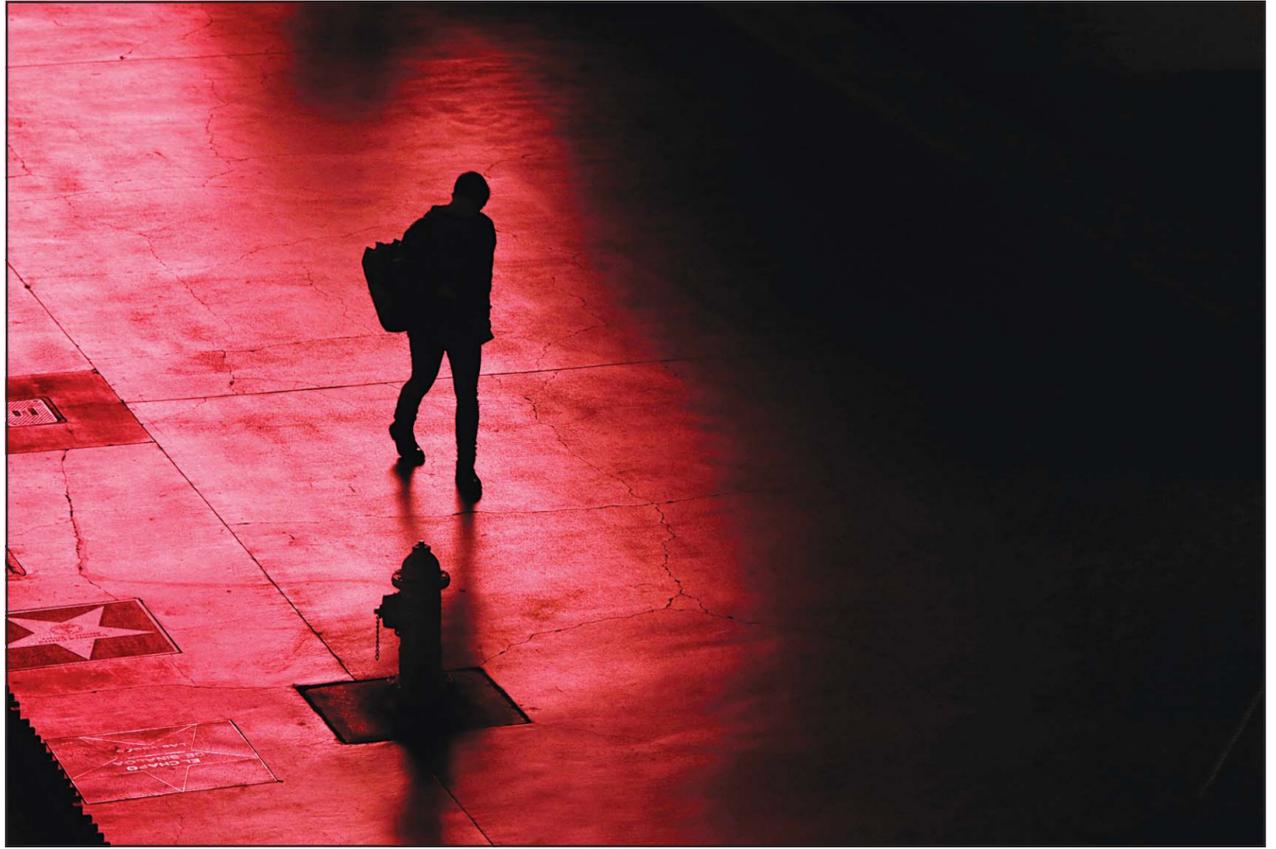
"Effectively implemented, the law could significantly reduce greenhouse emissions that result from the clearing of tropical forests for food and other commodities," said **Stientje van Veldhoven**, the World Resource Institute regional director for Europe. "And it could help protect critical biodiversity and water resources in tropical rainforests."

The law will force companies to show that goods they import comply with rules in the country of origin, including on human rights and the protection of Indigenous people.

Van Veldhoven added that the EU should now cooperate with producing countries to make sure they can adapt to the new legislation without hurting their economies and people's livelihoods.

"This will require incentives for vulnerable groups like smallholder farmers to shift toward deforestation-free practices, ensuring they do not get left behind in this transition," she said.

Forests around the world are increasingly under threat from clearance for timber and agriculture, including soybean and palm oil. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 420 million hectares (1.6 million square miles) of forest - an area larger than the EU - were destroyed between 1990 and 2020.



A person walks along the Las Vegas Strip devoid of the usual crowds after casinos have been ordered to shut down due to the coronavirus, March 18, 2020, in Las Vegas. Loneliness in America can be deadly. In May 2023, US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declared it an American epidemic, saying that it takes as deadly a toll as smoking upon the population of the United States. (AP)

## Health

## 'Millions in US struggling in the shadows'

## Is loneliness normal in American life?

NEW YORK, May 17, (AP) - At the end of "The Searchers," one of John Wayne's most renowned Westerns, a kidnapped girl has been rescued and a family reunited. As the closing music swells, Wayne's character looks around at his kin - people who have other people to lean on - and then walks off toward the dusty West Texas horizon, lonesome and alone.

It's a classic example of a fundamental American tall tale - that of a nation built on notions of individualism, a male-dominated story filled with loners and "rugged individualists" who suck it up, do what needs to be done, ride off into the sunset and like it that way.

In reality, loneliness in America can be deadly. This month, US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declared it an American epidemic, saying that it takes as deadly a toll as smoking upon the population of the United States. "Millions of people in America are struggling in the shadows," he said, "and that's not right."

He cited some potent forces: the gradual withering of longstanding institutions, decreased engagement with churches, the fraying bonds of extended families. When you add recent stressors - the rise of social media and virtual life, post-9/11 polarization and the way COVID-19 interrupted existence - the challenge becomes even more stark.

People are lonely the world over. But as far back as the early 19th century, when the word "loneliness" began to be used in its current context in American life, some were already asking the question: Do the contours of American society - that emphasis on individualism, that spreading out with impunity over a vast, sometimes outsized landscape - encourage isolation and alienation?

Or is that, like other chunks of the American story, a premise built on myths?

## Community

Alexis de Tocqueville, watching the country as an outsider while writing "Democracy in America" in the mid-1800s, wondered whether, "as social conditions become more equal," Americans and people like them would be inclined to reject the trappings of deep community that had pervaded Old World aristocracies for centuries.

"They acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands," he wrote. "Thus not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it ... throws him back forever upon himself alone, and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart."

This has been a recurring thread in how Americans perceive themselves. In the age before democracy, for better and for worse, "People weren't lonely. They were tied up in

a web of connections. And in many countries that's more true than it is in the United States," says Colin Woodard, director of the National Lab at the Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy.

"There's this idea that going out into those vast spaces and connecting with the wilderness and escaping the past was precisely what made us Americans," Woodard says.

Yet many frontier myths skip over how important community has been in the settling and growth of the nation. Some of the biggest stories of cooperation - the rise of municipal organizations and trade unions, the New Deal programs that helped drag many Americans out of the Depression in the 1930s, war efforts from the Civil War to World War II - sometimes get lost in the fervor for character-driven stories of individualism.

Those omissions continue. Fueled in part by pandemic distrust, a latter-day strain of individual-over-community sentiment often paired with invocations of liberty and freedom occupies a significant chunk of the national conversation these days - to the point where advocacy about community thinking is sometimes met with accusations of socialism.

## Solitary

Let's not consign Americans to be the heirs of a built-in loneliness gene, though. A new generation is insisting that mental health be part of the national conversation, and many voices - among them women and people of color - are increasingly offering new alternatives to the old myths.

What's more, the very place where the discussion about loneliness is being held today - in the office of the surgeon general, a presidential appointee - suggests that other paths are possible.

The ways Americans perceive themselves as solitary (whether or not it's true) can be seen in their art.

One of the nation's early art movements, the mid-19th-century Hudson River School, made people tiny parts of outsized landscapes, implying both that the land dwarfed humans and that they were being summoned to tame it. From that, you can draw a line straight to Hollywood and director John Ford's Westerns, which used vast landscapes to isolate and motivate humans for the purposes of telling big stories. Same with music, where both the blues and the "high lonesome sound" helped shape later genres.

In the suburbs, Betty Friedan's groundbreaking "The Feminine Mystique" helped give voice to a generation of lonely women. In the city, Edward Hopper's work - like the iconic "Nighthawks" - channeled urban loneliness. At around the same time, the emergence of film noir - crime and decay in the American city its frequent subject - helped shape the figure of the lonely man

alone in a crowd who might be a protagonist, might be an antagonist, might be both.

Today, loneliness plays out on streaming TV all the time in the forms of shows like "Severance," "Shrinking," "Beef" and, most prominently, the earnest "Ted Lasso," a show about an American in Britain who - despite being known and celebrated by many - is consistently and obviously lonely.

In March, the show's creator and star, Jason Sudeikis, appeared with his cast at the White House to talk about the issue that the show is, in its final season, more about than ever: mental health. "We all know someone who has, or have been that someone ourselves actually, that's struggled, that's felt isolated, that's felt anxious, that has felt alone," Sudeikis said.

## Friends

Solitude and isolation do not automatically equal loneliness. But they all live in the same part of town. During the pandemic, Murthy's report found, people tightened their groups of friends and cut time spent with them. According to the report, Americans spent 20 minutes a day with friends in 2020 - down from an hour daily two decades ago. Granted, that was during peak COVID. The trend, though, is clear - particularly among young people ages 15 to 24.

Perhaps many Americans are alone in a crowd, awash in a sea of voices both physical and virtual yet by themselves much of the time, seeking community but suspicious of it. Some of the modernizing forces that stitched the United States together in the first place - commerce, communication, roads - are, in their current forms, part of what isolates people today. There's a lot of space between the general store and Amazon deliveries to your door, between mailing a letter and navigating virtual worlds, between roads that connect towns and freeways that over-run them.

And if Americans can figure out more about what connects and what alienates, some answers to the loneliness epidemic might reveal themselves.

"We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately," Benjamin Franklin, not incidentally the country's first postmaster general, said under very different circumstances. Or perhaps it's put better by the American poet Amanda Gorman, one of the country's most insightful young voices. This is from her poem "The Miracle of Morning," written in 2020 during the early part of the pandemic.

"While we might feel small, separate, and all alone, our people have never been more closely tethered."

Because the question isn't if we can weather this unknown, but how we will weather this unknown together."



A woman holds an umbrella to shelter from the sun in Bangkok, Thailand, April 22, 2023. A searing heat wave in parts of southern Asia in April this year was made at least 30 times more likely by climate change, according to a rapid study by international scientists released May 17. (AP)

## Discovery

**Sherpa guide regains title:** One of the greatest mountain guides regained his title for the most climbs of Mount Everest after scaling the peak for the 27th time on Wednesday, just three days after a fellow Sherpa climber had equalled his previous record.

Kami Rita, 53, reached the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) summit guiding a group of climbers on the world's highest mountain, and was safe and in good health, said **Mingma Sherpa** of the Kathmandu-based Seven Summit Treks.

A fellow Nepali Sherpa guide Pasang Dawa scaled the peak on Sunday for the 26th time, equalling Kami Rita's record last year.

The season's first wave of climbers reached the summit over the weekend as Sherpa guides fixed ropes and made paths for the hundreds who will attempt to scale the peak over the remaining days of May.

May is the best month to climb Everest since it has the best weather conditions. There are generally only a couple of windows with good weather on the highest section of the mountain in May that enable climbers to reach the summit.

After the end of May, the weather on the mountain deteriorates and climbing becomes dangerous.

Climbers generally reach the Everest base camp in April and spend weeks acclimatizing to the high altitude, rough terrain and thin air before they go up the summit. (AP)

**Bones found in Pompeii site:** The discovery of two skeletons buried beneath a collapsed wall in the Pompeii archaeological site point to deaths by powerful earthquakes that accompanied the devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the first century, experts said Tuesday, in addition to the victims of volcanic ash and gas.

The two skeletons believed to be men at least 55 years old were found in the Casti Amanti, or House of Chaste Lovers, beneath a wall that collapsed before the area was covered in volcanic material. The area was likely undergoing reconstruction work at the time of the eruption in A.D. 79, following an earthquake a few days earlier.

"In recent years, we have realized there were violent, powerful seismic events that were happening at the time of the eruption," said **Gabriel Zuchtriegel**, director of the Pompeii Archaeological Park.

New archaeological techniques and methodology "allow us to understand better the inferno that in two days completely destroyed the city of Pompeii, killing many inhabitants," he added, making it possible to determine the dynamic of deaths down to the final seconds.

More than 1,300 victims have been found in the archaeological site south of Naples over the last 250 years.

**Formula sent to retailers:** An infant formula recalled over potential bacteria contamination was distributed to retailers across eight states even after the recall began, according to a release published by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

this week.

In March, Perrigo Co. issued a voluntary recall of certain lots of its Gerber Good Start SootheProTM Powdered Infant Formula "out of an abundance of caution" due to the possible presence of Cronobacter sakazakii, a germ that can cause serious or deadly infections in infants.

The recall impacted Gerber Good Start formula manufactured between Jan 2



Sherpa



Zuchtriegel

and Jan 18 at the Perrigo's Gateway Eau Claire, Wisconsin, facility. The recalled formula was sold in three different sizes at retailers nationwide, according to a March 17 recall notice.

Cooperative food wholesaler Associated Wholesale Grocers, however, distributed the 12.4-ounce version of the recalled product to its Nashville Division retailers after Perrigo's initial recall notice was published. (AP)

## Khan holds nerve to defend 11 runs off final over

## Lucknow edges Mumbai to stay in contention for top-four



Mohsin Khan of Lucknow Super Giants bowls during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians in Lucknow, India. (AP)

LUCKNOW, India, May 17, (AP): Mohsin Khan held his nerve to defend 11 runs off the final over as Lucknow Super Giants beat Mumbai Indians by five runs to move one step closer to the knockouts in the Indian Premier League.

Lucknow is now up to third in the points table with 15 points from 13 games, trailing Chennai Super Kings on net run-rate, while Mumbai remained on 14 points but moved down to fourth from second.

## CRICKET

Khan conceded only five runs off the last over as Mumbai finished with 172-5, despite opener Ishan Kishan's 59 off 39 balls. Earlier, Marcus Stoinis' 89 not out off 47 balls had powered Lucknow to 177-3 in 20 overs.

Lucknow had a poor start, though, as Mumbai's bowlers rocked the top order. Jason Behrendorff dismissed Deepak Hooda for 5 and im-

pact player Prerak Mankad for a golden duck in the third over. Piyush Chawla made it 35-3 in the seventh over as Quinton de Kock was out caught for 16 runs.

Lucknow had only managed 35 runs in the powerplay overs, when Stoinis and stand-in skipper Krunal Pandya came together. The duo added 82 off 59 balls to resurrect the innings.

Pandya scored 49 off 42 balls, with a four and a six each, before he was retired hurt. It was Pandya's highest IPL score since 2017.

But the night belonged to Stoinis, who hit four fours and eight sixes to up the ante for Lucknow's innings. He scored 50 off 36 balls, and then added another 39 runs off only 11 balls.

Nicholas Pooran only faced eight deliveries at the other end as they added 60 off 24 balls, with Stoinis doing the bulk of the scoring.

It was enough to take Lucknow to a par-plus score on a slowing wicket, even as Mumbai got off to a great start.

Kishan and Rohit Sharma (37) put on 90 off 58 balls, as the five-time champions seemed on track for another successful chase.

Wrist spinner Ravi Bishnoi had other plans as he picked 2-26 in four overs to apply the brakes to Mumbai's innings. He first had Sharma caught in the 10th over, and then 10 deliveries later, he sent back Kishan as well.

The big blow came when Suryakumar Yadav fell to Yash Thakur for seven runs. Yadav chopped onto his stumps trying to manufacture a shot over fine leg.

Mumbai's innings lost steam completely, down to 141-4 in 16.1 overs, as Khan sent back in-form Nehal Wadhwa for 16.

It became 145-5 when impact player Vishnu Vinod was out to Thakur, as Mumbai lost four wickets for 42 runs across 39 deliveries.

Tim David smacked 32 not out off 19 balls, including three sixes, but even his big-hitting prowess was not able to help Mumbai.

## Spurs get chance to select Wembanyama

## San Antonio wins NBA draft lottery

CHICAGO, May 17, (AP): Victor Wembanyama is now set to begin his NBA career with the San Antonio Spurs, after they won the NBA draft lottery and the No. 1 overall pick on Tuesday night.

The Spurs were one of three teams with the best odds - 14% - to land the No. 1 pick, which they'll almost certainly use on Wembanyama. The 7-foot-3 French 19-year-old is one of the most highly touted prospects in NBA history and will be expected to make an immediate impact on the league.

And he had a message for San Antonio.

"I'm trying to win a ring ASAP," Wembanyama told ESPN after the lottery results. "So be ready."

## BASKETBALL

It's the third time the Spurs have won the lottery, and on both previous occasions they made picks that paid off for decades. They chose David Robinson in 1987, Tim Duncan in 1997, and those selections were a major part of how the Spurs became a team that won five NBA titles under coach Gregg Popovich.

"Our future was already bright," Spurs managing partner Peter J. Holt said. "Now, it's going to be through the moon."

General manager Brian Wright called it "an incredible day" for the franchise and the fans.

Charlotte will pick second, Portland moved up to third, and Houston fell to fourth.

"This draft is a deep, talented one," Trail Blazers general manager Joe Cronin said. "We know picks one through six there's always gems to be found, but to move up into the top three is really exciting."

As for getting the No. 1 pick in a year like

this?

"People talk about generational talents and you only think on-court skill, but it's bigger than that," Wright said. "Peter talked about his ability to be a great teammate, his ability to think the game, unique challenges. You see him doing things that you wouldn't have even guessed someone could do - his approach, his professionalism. I think when you use the word generational talent, it extends beyond just your ability to put the ball in the basket. And he's unique in so many ways."

The Spurs were 22-60 this season, tied for the second-worst record in the NBA. Popovich and the Spurs have had incredible success with international players in the past - most notably, Manu Ginobili and Tony Parker, who owns the French team that Wembanyama played for last season.

"He's an incredible young man," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver told ESPN as part of its draft lottery broadcast. "He's 19 years old and I didn't take out a yardstick or meter stick or whatever they use in France, but he seemed all of 7-4 to me. ... He clearly appears to be a generational talent."

Wembanyama finished his regular season with Boulogne-Levallois of France's top pro league earlier Tuesday, his 22-point effort good enough for him to clinch the league's scoring title. It was shortly past 2 a.m. Wednesday in Paris when the lottery results were revealed, and Wembanyama was gathered with family and friends for a celebration.

"Can't really describe it," Wembanyama said in his interview with ESPN, adding "it's a really special moment."

Finally, he knows where his NBA journey will begin. His agents did not respond to multiple requests for comment from The Associated Press.

"I think the team that has the first choice isn't going to get it wrong," said Vincent Collet, Wembanyama's coach in France and also the coach of the French national team - which Wembanyama is expected to play for this summer at the World Cup and next summer at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Detroit had the worst record in the NBA and was one of the three teams with the best odds of winning. The Pistons wound up falling all the way to fifth, the worst of their possible outcomes.

The rest of the lottery order: Orlando will pick sixth, Indiana seventh, Washington eighth, Utah ninth, Dallas 10th, Orlando (from Chicago as part of an earlier trade) in 11th, Oklahoma City 12th, Toronto 13th, and New Orleans 14th.

Wembanyama is wrapping up his third professional season in France and has been the consensus top pick for months. He has the height of a center, the shooting touch of a wing and the passing ability of a point guard.

He wasn't at the lottery because of his game schedule in France. But many of the other top prospects - Scoot Henderson of the G League Ignite, Brandon Miller of Alabama, twin brothers Amen and Ausar Thompson of the Over-time Elite program - were in the room to watch the lottery results get unveiled and get a little better idea of where they may be heading to start their NBA careers.

## Rune beats Djokovic again to reach Italian Open semifinals



Denmark's Holger Rune returns the ball to Serbia's Novak Djokovic during their match at the Italian Tennis Open in Rome. (AP)

## Dane boosts credentials as Grand Slam contender

ROME, May 17, (AP): Twenty-year-old Danish player Holger Rune recorded his second victory over Novak Djokovic in little more than six months, beating the 22-time Grand Slam champion 6-2, 4-6, 6-2 Wednesday to reach the Italian Open semifinals.

Rune, who also defeated Djokovic in the Paris Masters final in November, gave the Serb fits with his rapid court coverage. He made his opponent hit extra balls on points that Djokovic thought he had already finished off.

## TENNIS

The 35-year-old Djokovic didn't appear at his best physically early on and called for a trainer after holding for a 2-1 lead in the second set.

It wasn't immediately clear what the issue was but it appeared that Djokovic swallowed a pill that the trainer gave him.

Djokovic recently returned after three weeks off because of a lingering issue with his surgically repaired right elbow. He's preparing for the French Open, which starts in 11 days.

Rune, meanwhile, is boosting his credentials as a Grand Slam contender after a solid season on clay that included a runner-up finish in the Monte Carlo Masters, a title in Munich, and now a semifinal spot in Rome in his first main draw appearance.

Djokovic stormed out to a 5-2 lead in the second but Rune rallied back, winning a 34-shot rally with a sublime backhand drop-shot winner to set up a key break.

Rune also called for a trainer late in the second set to have his right leg treated, shortly before the match was suspended because of rain with Rune serving to stay in the set at 4-5, 0-30.

After a suspension of more than an hour, Djokovic won two straight points to break Rune's serve and take the second set.

## Geoghegan Hart crashes out of Giro

## Ackermann wins 11th stage in sprint finish

TORTONA, Italy, May 17, (AP): Tao Geoghegan Hart crashed on a rain-soaked road and left the Giro d'Italia on a stretcher during the 11th stage Wednesday, depriving the race of another overall contender three days after Remco Evenepoel tested positive for the coronavirus after reclaiming the pink jersey.

Geoghegan Hart, who won the race in 2020, stood third overall entering the stage, five seconds behind overall leader and Ineos Grenadiers teammate Geraint Thomas.

The entire Ineos team, plus Primoz Roglic, were involved in a crash with 70 kilometers (43.5 miles) to go. The team did not immediately provide a medical report on Geoghegan Hart.

While Thomas and Roglic quickly got up and got going again, Geoghegan Hart was loaded into an ambulance.

German rider Pascal Ackermann won the stage in a sprint finish ahead of Jonathan Milan and Mark Cavendish.

Thomas remained two seconds ahead of Roglic, while Joao Almeida moved up to third overall, 22 seconds behind.

The stage followed a lengthy 219-kilometer (136-mile) route from Camaiore to Tortona, with three lower-classification climbs. Before the stage started, four teammates of

Stage 12 on Thursday is a 179-kilometer (111-mile) hill leg from Bra to Rivoli in the Piedmont region that features a second-category climb 30 kilometers (20

miles) before the finish.

The Giro ends in Rome on May 28th.

Four teammates of world champion Remco Evenepoel tested positive for the coronavirus and followed the Soudal Quick-Step leader by pulling out of the three-week Giro d'Italia, their team said Wednesday.

Evenepoel had won Sunday's individual time trial to reclaim the leader's pink jersey, but his team later announced that he tested positive for COVID-19.

## CYCLING

"Following the positive test of maglia rosa Remco Evenepoel on Sunday, a further round of tests were made on the riders and staff that remained in Italy, with Jan Hirt, Josef Cerny, Louis Vervaeke and Mattia Cattaneo unfortunately unable to continue," the Belgian team said in a statement before Wednesday's Stage 11.

Team doctor Toon Cruyft said that after Evenepoel tested positive two more riders started to feel unwell Monday, but their antigen tests returned negative.

"Therefore a PCR test was carried out on the seven remaining riders, the results of which showed that the four guys were positive," he said. "We will continue to monitor and implement our testing protocol on the three riders and staff that remain at the race."



Germany's Pascal Ackermann celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 11th stage of the Giro D'Italia, tour of Italy cycling race, from Camaiore to Tortona. (AP)

## Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix canceled

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IMOLA, Italy, May 17, (AP): This weekend's Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix in northern Italy was canceled Wednesday because of deadly floods in the region.

Formula One said it made the decision for safety reasons and to avoid any extra burden on the emergency services, after consulting with Italian political figures. Drivers including Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen gave their backing, and Ferrari said the team supported the decision to call off its home race.

## MOTOR RACING

"It is such a tragedy to see what has happened to Imola and Emilia-Romagna, the town and region that I grew up in and my thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the flooding and the families and communities affected," F1 president and CEO Stefano Domenicali said.

At least five people have died in the flooding and 5,000 more have been evacuated, while electricity supplies and cell phone networks have been severely affected. Thousands of fans were expected at the circuit from Friday for practice sessions ahead of the race, adding more load to an already stretched transport system.

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# Judge HR in 8th breaks maple leaf sign in deep center, sends Yankees past Jays



New York Yankees' Aaron Judge grounds out next to Toronto Blue Jays catcher Danny Jansen during the first inning of a baseball game in Toronto. (AP)

## Red Sox overcome Mariners

**TORONTO, May 17, (AP):** Aaron Judge's tie-breaking, two-run homer broke a large maple leaf attached to the front of the Rogers Centre's restaurant, lifting the New York Yankees to a contentious 6-3 win over the Toronto Blue Jays on Tuesday night after pitcher Domingo Germán was ejected for sticky stuff.

Judge was booed while striking out in his first two at-bats following allegations of sign stealing Monday, when he hit a pair of solo homers in a 7-4 win. With the score 3-3 in the eighth inning Tuesday, Judge stared straight ahead at Erik Swanson (2-2). His 448-foot drive to center chipped a corner of a white maple leaf below the windows of a redesigned social area that opened this year as part of the ballpark's renovation. He has 11 homers this season.

Ryan Weber (1-0) allowed three hits in 2 1/3 scoreless innings for his first Yankees decision. Wandy Peralta earned his third save. Gleyber Torres had two hits and two RBIs. Torres and Harrison Bader each drove in a run in the third and Isiah Kiner-Falefa hit his first homer of the season.

### BASEBALL

Germán was ejected after he walked to the mound to start the bottom of the fourth and umpires checked his hands for banned sticky stuff.

Toronto got four straight two-out hits in the fifth. Kevin Kiermaier homered, Bo Bichette hit an RBI double and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. chased Ron Marinaccio with an RBI single.

#### Twins 5, Dodgers 1

In Los Angeles, Bailey Ober allowed one run in six innings, Kyle Farmer homered and drove in three runs, and Minnesota defeated Los Angeles as Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw took the mound three days after the death of his mother.

Marianne Tombaugh died Saturday, according to Ellen Kershaw. The pitcher's wife made the announcement that day during the dedication of a refurbished youth baseball field supported by his charity foundation.

Kershaw (6-3) struck out seven in four innings, but faced constant traffic. The left-hander allowed seven hits, one walk and hit a batter.

Ober (3-0) allowed one run on six hits and struck out six, and Willi Castro had two hits, including an RBI single, and two stolen bases for the AL Central-leading Twins, who have won five of seven.

#### Marlins 5, Nationals 4

In Miami, Jorge Soler hit a two-run, walk-off homer as Miami rallied to beat Washington.

The Marlins were down to their last out when Garrett Cooper doubled off reliever Hunter Harvey (2-1). Luis Arraez singled to score Cooper and pull Miami within 4-3. Pinch-runner Jon Berti stole second before Soler drove a 3-2 pitch by Harvey over the wall in left-center for his 10th homer and the come-from-behind win.

Arraez and Cooper each had two hits. Andrew Nardi (3-1) pitched a scoreless ninth and earned the victory.

Trailing 2-1, the Nationals scored three runs in the eighth inning against relievers Huascar Brazoban and Steven Okert. Jeimer Candelario hit a game-tying single off Brazoban, and Dominic Smith tagged

Okert for a two-run single and a short-lived 4-2 lead.

#### Red Sox 9, Mariners 4

In Boston, Masataka Yoshida doubled, tripled and drove in three runs while scoring on a wild pitch, and Boston ended a four-game losing streak with a win over Seattle.

Justin Turner, Triston Casas and Jarren Duran homered for Boston, which was swept by the last-place St. Louis Cardinals and lost the series opener to Seattle.

Nick Pivetta (3-3) allowed four runs on six hits and four walks, striking out six in 5 1/3 innings.

Taylor Trammell homered for Seattle, which had won three out of four and 10 of 14 since starting the season 11-16.

#### Rays 8, Mets 5

In New York, Isaac Paredes homered twice and drove in five runs, ruining Justin Verlander's home debut for New York, as Tampa Bay rolled to the win.

Jose Siri also went deep and Harold Ramirez had two RBI singles among his three hits for the Rays, who improved the best record in baseball to 32-11. Yonny Chirinos (2-1) got 14 outs in relief after opener Jalen Beeks tossed two scoreless innings.

New York trailed 6-0 before Brett Baty homered and Pete Alonso launched a two-run shot. Pinch-hitter Eduardo Escobar connected for a two-run homer in the ninth off Jake Diekmann.

#### Rangers 7, Braves 4

In Arlington, Adolis García extended his MLB-leading RBIs total to 44 with a two-run homer, Dane Dunning was solid while filling the rotation spot of injured ace Jacob deGrom and Texas beat Atlanta in an interleague matchup of division leaders and won for the eighth time in 14 games.

Dunning (4-0) allowed one run over six innings in his third start since deGrom went on the injured list April 29 because of elbow inflammation. He had four strikeouts without a walk. Will Smith picked up his eighth save in nine chances.

Ronald Acuña Jr. homered for the third game in a row for the NL East-leading Braves (26-16), who lost for the fifth time in six games.

Jared Shuster (0-2), Atlanta's top pitching prospect recalled from Triple-A Gwinnett, didn't allow a hit until a leadoff single in the fourth. Nathaniel Lowe had an RBI double before García's 11th homer.

#### Athletics 9, Diamondbacks 8, 12 innings

In Oakland, Ryan Noda hit a tying grand slam in the seventh inning. Esteury Ruiz drove in the winning run with an infield single that bounced off shortstop Nick Ahmed in the 12th and Oakland beat the Diamondbacks.

The A's came back from deficits of 2-0 and 8-4, winning on a walkoff hit for the second time in five days. Austin Pruitt (1-1) pitched the final three innings for the victory.

With Ramon Laureano starting the 12th at second base, Scott Mc-

Gough (0-4) struck out Shea Langeliers before an intentional walk to Jace Peterson. Nick Allen, who homered in the fourth, then reached on an infield single before Ruiz's winner in front of another sparse crowd of 3,261 at the Coliseum.

#### Orioles 7, Angels 3

In Baltimore, Ryan Mountcastle hit a two-run homer and doubled after entering the game as a pinch-hitter, and Baltimore defeated Los Angeles.

Dean Kremer (5-1) rebounded after allowing a homer by Mickey Moniak to lead off the game, winning his third straight start, and Ryan O'Hearn also homered for Baltimore. O'Hearn started as designated hitter in the No. 9 spot, but after his solo shot in the second tied the game at 1, Mountcastle pinch-hit for him after the Angels lifted right-hander Chase Silseth (0-1) in the fourth.

Cedric Mullins, Jorge Mateo and Tarrin Vavra also drove in runs for Baltimore.

#### Tigers 4, Pirates 0

In Detroit, Michael Lorenzen had a season-high seven strikeouts in six innings, Spencer Torkelson doubled twice and Detroit beat slumping Pittsburgh.

Lorenzen (2-2) gave up five hits and two walks and has allowed just two runs in his last three starts. Riley Greene had three hits.

Shut out for the second time in three games, Pittsburgh has lost 12

of 14 games while scoring just 22 runs. Luis Ortiz (0-2) allowed four runs, three earned, and seven hits in three-plus innings.

#### White Sox 8, Guardians 3

In Chicago, Luis Robert Jr. homered for the fourth straight game, Gavin Sheets and Jake Burger went deep off Shane Bieber in Chicago's six-run fifth inning in a victory over Cleveland.

Lance Lynn (2-5) allowed three runs - one earned - on seven hits in seven innings. He struck out seven and walked none.

Robert's solo shot to deep left in the eighth was his AL-leading 12th homer of the season. He became the first White Sox player to homer in four consecutive games since Matt Davidson in 2017.

Sheets' three-run shot and Burger's two-run drive were among six straight hits by the White Sox with two outs in the fifth as Chicago jumped ahead 6-0.

#### Astros 7, Cubs 3

In Houston, Yordan Alvarez had two hits and drove in two runs and Chas McCormick added two hits and made a nifty grab in Houston's win over Chicago.

Justin Steele (6-1) hadn't given up more than three runs in a game this season before the Astros

jumped on him for four runs in the fourth inning for a 5-1 lead. Steele allowed five hits and five runs with eight strikeouts in six innings.

The Astros had four of their season-high six doubles in that inning en route to their third consecutive victory. Houston starter Cristian Javier (4-1) allowed two hits and one run in six innings for his second straight win.

#### Royals 5, Padres 4

In San Diego, Salvador Perez hit a two-run double in Kansas City's five-run second, Brady Singer pitched six solid innings and the Royals snapped a four-game skid with a win over San Diego.

The Royals jumped on starter Seth Lugo (3-3) in the second, with Bobby Witt Jr., Nate Eaton and Matt Duffy also driving in runs. Lugo gave up five runs on four hits in his two innings. The Padres have lost eight of 10.

Singer (3-4) lasted six innings, giving up seven hits and four runs, two of which were earned. Scott Barlow got his fifth save with a scoreless ninth.

#### Giants 4, Phillies 3

In San Francisco, Joey Bart's routine pop fly turned into a tie-breaking RBI double and San Francisco dealt Philadelphia its third straight loss.

With a runner on first and two outs in the fourth inning, Zack Wheeler got Bart to pop up just behind first base. Phillies first baseman Kody Clemens lost track of the ball in the air and a sliding attempt at a catch by second baseman Bryson Stott was unsuccessful, allowing Casey Schmitt to score. LaMonte Wade Jr. followed with an RBI single to give San Francisco a 4-2 lead.

Taylor Rogers (1-2) pitched a scoreless inning with two strikeouts, earning his first win as a member of the Giants. Thairo Estrada and Michael Conforto had RBI singles for San Francisco, which beat Philadelphia for the fifth straight time.

#### Reds 3, Rockies 1

In Denver, Nick Senzel hit a go-ahead two-run homer in the seventh inning, helping Cincinnati past Colorado.

Colorado's Ezequiel Tovar ended an 0-for-8 skid before breaking up a scoreless game in the bottom of the sixth inning with his third home run of the season. He connected on a 2-1 offering from the Reds' Brandon Williamson, who was making his major league debut and had retired 14 in a row.

Williamson, a 25-year-old left-hander, struck out six in 5 2/3 innings and had allowed only a single to Charlie Blackmon in the first inning before Tovar hit a 415-foot shot to right-center.

Tyler Stephenson drew a two-out walk in the seventh from Peter Lambert (0-1) before Senzel drove the first pitch he saw 429 feet over the center field wall for his fourth homer. The Reds added a run in the top of the eighth on Matt McLain's RBI single.

Derek Law (3-4) earned the win and Alexis Díaz got three outs for his 10th save.

#### Brewers 3, Cardinals 2

In St. Louis, Nolan Arenado homered for the fifth straight game for St. Louis in a loss to Milwaukee, which got homers from Joey Wiemer and Brian Anderson.

Milwaukee starter Wade Miley came out with a left lat strain in the second inning after throwing 22 pitches. Joel Payamps (2-0), the fourth of six pitchers, got the victory with 1 2/3 innings of work. Devin Williams pitched the final 1 2/3 innings for his sixth save.

St. Louis starter Jordan Montgomery (2-6) pitched 5 1/3 innings, allowing three runs on eight hits with a walk and seven strikeouts. He is 0-6 in seven starts since winning at Milwaukee on April 8.

## Balogun opts to play for US instead of England

### Panama, Guatemala grouped together

MIAMI, May 17, (AP): Panama, Guatemala, El Salvador, Curaçao, Martinique and Nicaragua were drawn into Group A of the CONCACAF Nations League on Tuesday night.

Jamaica, Honduras, Cuba, Haiti, Grenada and Suriname were drawn into Group B. Each nation will play four matches in September and October. The top two teams in each League A group will advance to November's quarterfinals along with the United States, Mexico, Canada and Costa Rica, which have automatic berths in the final eight.

Quarterfinals will be played in two-leg, total-goals series in November, and the four winners will advance to the semifinals next March. The four quarterfinal winners also qualify for next year's Copa América, South America's championship, while the quarterfinals advance to playoffs for two more berths in the Copa América, which will be played in the United States from June 14 to July 14 in 2024.

### SOCCER

In the draws for Nations League lower leagues:

#### League B

Group A: Guadeloupe, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Sint Maarten

Group B: Barbados, Dominican Republic, Montserrat, Trinidad and Tobago

Group C: Belize, Bermuda, French Guiana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Group D: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Guyana, Puerto Rico

#### League C

Group A: Anguilla, Bonaire, St. Martin

Group B: Aruba, Cayman Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands

Promising striker **Folarin Balogun** has opted to play for the U.S. national team rather than England.

FIFA said in a statement to The Associated Press on Tuesday that it approved a request to change Balogun's national team affiliation from England, which he had represented at the under-21 level.

The 21-year-old Balogun, who has 19 goals in the French league this season while on loan at Reims from Arsenal, was born in New York and grew up in London. He had also been eligible to play for Nigeria through family ties.

Balogun confirmed the move in a video on his social media accounts using the slogans "I'm coming home" and "Let's make history."

Balogun has been in demand after a breakout season in France.

He was dueling with Kylian Mbappé to top the scoring charts for much of the season, although the Paris Saint-Germain star now leads with 26 goals. Balogun is tied for fifth.

Balogun, born in Brooklyn to Nigerian parents who were living in London, said the choice to play for the U.S. was taken with his family.

Balogun explained last year in an interview with the French league website how he



From left, Leverkusen's Adam Hlozek and Jonathan run during the final training session in Leverkusen, Germany, May 17, 2023. German team Bayer 04 Leverkusen will face Italian team AS Roma for a second leg Europa League semifinal soccer match on Thursday. (AP)

came to be born in the U.S.

Balogun also acknowledged "London is my city, it's where I grew up, where my friends are, and if people ask me where I'm from, I say I'm English. But, yes, I am a mixture of all these cultures."

He was nurtured at Arsenal, where he had coaching sessions with club great Thierry Henry, and played for England and the U.S. at youth level before establishing himself in the England U21s.

His decision to represent the United States came five weeks before England plays in the Under-21 European Championship being hosted by Romania and Georgia.

FIFA rules allow players to change national eligibility before playing in a competitive game at senior level.

The U.S. and Hudson courted Balogun on a visit to Florida in March. The top player pool is expected to be used for CONCACAF Nations League games in Las Vegas against Mexico on June 15 and three days later vs. Panama or Canada.

Minnesota United star **Emanuel Reynoso** has been cleared to resume full participation in team activities following his early-season no-show, the MLS club announced on Tuesday.

The two-time All-Star midfielder was suspended without pay by Major League Soccer on Feb. 10 after failing to report to preseason training. Minnesota United officials cited unspecified family issues as the reason for Reynoso's absence. The 27-year-old finally traveled from his native Argentina to Minnesota on May 6 to begin the reintegration process.

Reynoso has 16 goals and 28 assists in 71 games for Minnesota since joining the club midway through the 2020 season. Last September, he signed a three-year designated player contract extension with a club option for 2026. He's the highest-paid player on the Loons with full-season compensation of more than \$2.1 million scheduled for 2023, according to MLS Players Association salary data.

## MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, May 17, (AP): Results and standings from the MLB games on Tuesday.

Detroit	4	Pittsburgh	0	Minnesota	5	LA Dodgers	1
Baltimore	7	LA Angels	3	Oakland	9	Arizona 12 inn	8
Boston	9	Seattle	4	LA Dodgers	9	Minnesota 12 inn	8
Tampa Bay	8	NY Mets	5	Detroit	4	Pittsburgh	0
NY Yankees	6	Toronto	3	Miami	5	Washington	4
Texas	7	Atlanta	4	Milwaukee	3	St Louis	2
Houston	7	Chicago Cubs	3	Cincinnati	3	Colorado	1
Chicago W. Sox	8	Cleveland	3	San Francisco	4	Philadelphia	3
Kansas City	5	San Diego	4				

American League East Division				National League East Division			
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	32	11	.744	Atlanta	26	16	.619
Baltimore	27	15	.643	Oakland	21	21	.500
Toronto	24	18	.571	Philadelphia	20	22	.476
New York	25	19	.568	New York	20	23	.465
Boston	23	20	.535	Washington	18	24	.429
Central Division				Central Division			
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	24	19	.558	Milwaukee	24	18	.571
Detroit	19	21	.475	Pittsburgh	22	20	.524
Cleveland	19	22	.463	Chicago	19	23	.452
Chicago	15	28	.349	Cincinnati	19	23	.452
Kansas City	13	31	.295	St Louis	17	26	.395
West Division				West Division			
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	26	16	.619	Los Angeles	27	16	.628
Houston	23	19	.548	Arizona	24	19	.558
Los Angeles	22	21	.512	San Diego	20	23	.465
Seattle	21	21	.500	San Francisco	19	23	.452
Oakland	10	34	.227	Colorado	18	25	.419

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San Francisco Giants' Casey Schmitt runs home to score against the Philadelphia Phillies during the fourth inning of a baseball game in San Francisco. (AP)



Luton Town's Carlton Morris (left) and Sunderland's Luke O'Nien battle for the ball during the Sky Bet Championship play-off semi-final second leg match at Kenilworth Road, Luton. (AP)

# Sports

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## Inter reach 1st CL final in more than a decade

Nerazzurri complete 3-0 aggregate win over Milan

**MILAN, May 17, (AP):** Inter Milan reached its first Champions League final in more than a decade with a 1-0 victory against city rival AC Milan.

Inter had a 2-0 lead from the first leg of the semifinal and Lautaro Martinez's 74th-minute goal ended any hopes for Milan to stage a comeback.

Several players from both teams fell to the ground in tears at the final whistle as the Nerazzurri won the so-called "Euroderby" 3-0 on aggregate to progress to its first final since it won the league, Italian Cup and Champions League under José Mourinho in 2010.

Inter players and staff celebrated for long afterwards with their fans, singing and dancing in front of the Curva Nord packed full of Nerazzurri supporters in an electric atmosphere at San Siro - the stadium that both teams share.

"It's obviously a great emotion, a dream that I had together with the guys, that we nurtured right from when the draw was made," Inter coach Stefano Inzaghi said. "We had to believe in ourselves and we have got here by merit, no one has gifted us anything."

### SOCCER

Inter will face either 14-time champion Real Madrid or another juggernaut in Manchester City on June 10 in Istanbul. The second leg of the other semifinal is on Wednesday, with the scoreline locked at 1-1.

"Whoever we end up with, we will be unlucky, because they are two really great teams with incredible quality," Inzaghi said with a wry smile. "I will watch tomorrow's match, like I watched the first leg. ... Obviously we will follow it closely."

For Milan, the lengthy wait goes on. It last reached the showpiece event in 2007, when it won the last of its seven titles.

"At the moment there's only disappointment, there's only disappointment because we could have been in a Champions League final," Milan coach Stefano Pioli said. "But if we think that last year we went out in the group stage and this year we managed to reach the semifinals we can and should be proud."

"But it's clear we dreamt of reaching the final, we wanted the final, we wanted to beat our rivals."

Milan was able to welcome back Rafael Leão. He missed last week's loss with a thigh injury and the Rossoneri were hoping his comeback would inspire the team to do the same.

The difference was immediately apparent as Milan played with an intensity it sorely lacked in the first leg amid a frantic start from both teams.

Brahim Diaz saw a weak shot comfortably smothered by Inter goalkeeper André Onana early on before Leão almost got Milan back into it with his first real sight of goal, shortly before halftime. The winger sprinted into the left of the area but his angled drive grazed the outside of the far post.

## 'Qatar expresses interest in hosting Rugby League WCup'

**LONDON, May 17, (AP):** Qatar's push to become a central hub on the global sporting landscape could see the emirate be an unlikely host of a Rugby League World Cup.

Qatar is one of four nations to express an interest in staging the 2025 tournament, rugby league's governing body said Wednesday, after France withdrew its hosting rights.

"We have received expressions of interest from New Zealand, Fiji, South Africa and Qatar already," said Troy Grant, chairman of the International Rugby League. "We are yet to make any assessments in regard to their viability, I'm just being honest about who has reached out. It gives me comfort that there is interest in our sport and our World Cup. How real or viable any or all of those options are, we're yet to make any of those assessments."

Qatar does not have a team or a world ranking in rugby league and has never played an international match.



Grant

The Gulf country is coming off hosting the men's soccer World Cup for the first time last year while soccer's Asian Cup will be held there in January and the men's basketball World Cup in 2027. Doha will host the multi-sport Asian Games in 2030 and Qatar is widely expected to launch another campaign to host an Olympics in 2036.

Rugby league, whose stronghold is in Australia, New Zealand and Britain, is separate from rugby union, which is the version of the sport played in the Olympics.

### RUGBY

Previously, Qatar staged cycling's road worlds in 2016 and the world track championship in 2019 - and struggled to attract crowds for both.

Grant said the Qatari interest in the Rugby League World Cup comprises two approaches combining state and public funding.

French organizers said they couldn't fully meet financial guarantees for the risk of loss demanded by the French government and the IRL is scrambling to save the tournament, which could be delayed or scrapped completely.

## Luton earn shot at playing in Premier League

**LONDON, May 17, (AP):** Luton is heading to Wembley Stadium for a shot at playing in the Premier League for the first time.

Luton beat Sunderland 2-0 to clinch a 3-2 win on aggregate and a place in the Championship playoff final, often labeled the world's most lucrative one-off soccer game because of guaranteed future earnings for the winning team.

The final will be played at Wembley on May 27, with Middlesbrough and Coventry vying to be Luton's opponent. The second leg of their playoff semifinal takes place on Wednesday, with the teams locked at 0-0.

Luton, a club located just north of London, was last in England's top division in 1991-92 - the season before it was rebranded as the Premier League. The team has since dropped as low as English soccer's fifth tier and was playing at that level as recently as 2014.

### SOCCER

Luton finished third in the Championship's regular season behind champion Burnley and Sheffield United, which both earned automatic promotion.



Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez (right), fights for the ball with AC Milan's Fikayo Tomori during the Champions League semifinal second leg soccer match between Inter Milan and AC Milan at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. (AP)

## Jokic records sixth triple-double

# Nuggets hold off Lakers in West finals opener

**DENVER, May 17, (AP):** Denver Nuggets guard Kentavious Caldwell-Pope was playing for the Los Angeles Lakers the last time these teams met in the Western Conference finals in the 2020 NBA bubble.

So, what similarities does he see between LeBron James and Nikola Jokic?

"I feel like the only difference is Bron can jump higher than Jokic," Caldwell-Pope declared after Jokic's monster performance fueled the Nuggets' 132-126 win in Game 1 Tuesday night.

"That's really offensive," Jokic replied in faux indignation about his athletic abilities. "I'm joking. I mean, to be compared to one of the best ever - or THE best ever - I think is really cool."

Jokic doesn't really see many similarities in their play: "We affect the game in different ways," Jokic said. "But he's a really good player."

Nobody was better than Jokic on Tuesday night.

Jokic recorded his sixth triple-double of these playoffs with 34 points, 21 rebounds and 14 assists, powering the Nuggets to a 1-0 lead in the series.

Behind Jokic's sizzling start and strong finish, and Jamal Murray's 31 points while battling an ear infection, Denver beat the Lakers in the opener of the West finals for the first time ever.

After a slow start, Anthony Davis had 40 points and 10 rebounds, and James finished with 26 points, 12 boards and nine assists. Austin Reaves chipped in 23 points and fueled L.A.'s desperate fourth-quarter run that nearly erased Denver's 14-point cushion after three.

Caldwell-Pope scored 21 points against his former team. Michael Porter Jr. had 15 points and 10 boards and Bruce Brown added 16 points.

The Nuggets led by as many as 21 but the Lakers pulled within three points twice in the fourth quarter, once on Reaves' 3-pointer at 124-121 and again on James' pair of free throws that made it 129-126 with 1:12 remaining.

"Yeah, it took us a half to get into the game," James said, "and that was pretty much the ballgame right there. They punched us in the mouth to start. ... I know the game is won in 48 min-

utes, but they set the tone in 24 minutes and we were playing catch-up for the next 24."

In the fourth quarter, Rui Hachimura guarded Jokic, allowing Davis to crowd the paint and make things harder for the Nuggets big man to dominate the paint. But it wasn't enough.

After Jokic sank two free throws with 26 seconds left to give Denver a 131-126 lead, Murray poked the ball from James as he was about to take it to the hoop and Jokic gathered the loose ball before being fouled with 10.9 seconds left. He sank one of two and James misfired from 3 as the seconds ticked off.

"I'd rather clean things up after a win in the Western Conference finals than after a loss, so I will take it," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "But much work to do."

Game 2 is Thursday night at Ball Arena, where the top-seeded Nuggets

are 7-0 in the playoffs and 41-7 overall, the best home record in the league this season.

Jokic said a day earlier that the Nuggets desperately needed to avoid following in the sneaker-steps of the Memphis Grizzlies and Golden State Warriors, both of whom dropped their home opener to the Lakers and wound up losing in six games.

### BASKETBALL

Moreover, James has won his last 20 playoff series in which his team has won the opener.

The Nuggets hadn't taken Game 1 against the Lakers since 1979, when they won the opener of the best-of-three series only to lose the next two. That's the closest the Nuggets have ever come to eliminating the Lakers, who have beaten Denver three times in

the West finals, including in the Florida bubble in 2020.

Flashing his MVP credentials in a stunning display of power in the first quarter, Jokic pulled down a dozen boards and dished out five assists to go with eight points. That made him the first player since at least 1997 to have a dozen or more boards and at least five assists in any quarter of an NBA playoff game.

The Lakers used an 11-2 run to cut the deficit to 11 points before Jokic responded with a jaw-dropping 3-pointer over the outstretched arm of Davis that barely fluttered the net at the buzzer, leaving Davis to trudge back to the bench in disbelief.

"The Joker," who missed out on his third consecutive NBA MVP award this year when he was edged by Philadelphia's Joel Embiid, had 19 points, 16 rebounds, seven assists and two blocks by halftime as the Nuggets took a 72-54 lead into the locker room.



Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (15) pulls down a rebound as Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis (3) looks on during the first half of Game 1 of the NBA basketball Western Conference Finals series in Denver. (AP)