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MPs unite in rejecting new US ambassador over Israel stance

'Divest from backers'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: MP Abdul Kareem Al-Kandari, during his participation in the demonstration organized at Al-Erada Square to express solidarity with the people of Palestine and to condemn the Israeli bombing of Gaza hospital, announced that if the new US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara submits her credentials, he will file a grilling motion against the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah.

It is worth highlighting that Karen Sasahara worked as the US Consul General in Jerusalem until the US Embassy in Israel was moved to Jerusalem and the US Consulate was closed down.

In this regard, MP Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi expressed his support for the call of Al Kandari to dismiss the credentials of Karen Sasahara in objection to the stance of the United States of America in support of Israel.

Al-Ajmi stressed the need to work on a practical way to force Israel to commit to the international laws and stop the brutal attack on Gaza. The lawmaker called for punishing Israel for the war crimes it committed recently including the bombing of Gaza Hospital which resulted in more than 800 victims so far.

He stressed that condemnation is no longer enough, and the international community must take firm action.

Also, MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi supported the call of Al-Kandari to reject the credentials of the new US Ambassador to Kuwait, stating that those who support the murder of innocent people of Palestine are not welcome in Kuwait.

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Opinion

When will the PM return or let someone else come?

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

THE Prime Minister of any country is known for his duties, and the characteristics he possesses in order to manage the state. He should have the ability to anticipate problems and work on avoiding them.

Therefore, when the state is paralyzed because the limited powers of the ministers do not qualify them to implement decisions, especially when they require the signature of the Prime Minister, it means his absence is obstructing the work of the government as a whole.

It is true that the tasks of the Prime Minister are exhausting, but even so, he must constantly follow up, which is why he must always be present to head his work team.

This is due to the fact that irrespective of what a country is facing, its Prime Minister does not have the luxury of time to explore other countries, especially if the region is experiencing a critical situation and major regional challenges; let alone the crises that the state is suffering from, which necessitates everyone to abandon their own considerations.

In addition to that, there is talk circulating in the country's diwanias about disagreements between members of the ruling house, and the Prime Minister's desire to pass his own agenda, the most important of which is that the Cabinet should not be grilled by the parliament, in addition to the rumor about disagreements between the Cabinet members and disparity between them.

In light of the above, His Highness the Prime Minister is not exempted from his responsibility, as he is primarily concerned with running the country. He is the one who chose his team, and therefore he must bear the responsibility in this regard.

This is not the time for meditation, as the political arena seems devoid of any official or decisions. Neither can the Minister of Finance implement his project without the approval of his boss, nor can the Minister of Commerce and Industry, who is responsible for searching for sources to secure goods in the event that the regional situation reaches unavoidable limits, make any decisions, especially regarding financing, without checking with the Prime Minister.

The same applies to the Minister of Health, who must have an integrated plan in this regard, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is aware of what is happening and must have a clear and thoughtful plan, as all these powers must be given to them without the need to check back with the Prime Minister if the latter does not wish to fully exercise his powers.

There is no doubt that the Acting Prime Minister has many files, and his assignment to this task is limited. Also, he does not have the full powers of his actual boss. Hence, the atmosphere in Kuwait seems out of the ordinary, as if it was left to the unknown. This is what we emphasized yesterday, and we repeat it again today.

The drums of regional war are beating everywhere. There are open files on various developments, including those related to the threats that Kuwait faces from more than one party, especially those involved in supporting some organizations and groups that are considered terrorist.

Therefore, the situation is open to all possibilities, and this must be in the considerations of His Highness the Prime Minister who is determined to complete his vacation, which appears to be open.

There is a Kuwaiti proverb - "The hottest thing we have is the coldest thing they have".

If the rumors are true that the man does not want the position anymore, or as we mentioned before, if he has a specific agenda, then this must be announced, because leaving matters in such an ambiguous manner represents the greatest catastrophe.

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Day by Day

A SAYING suggests: A wise person ought to approach an ignorant person much like a doctor approaches a patient.

The ignorant person finds contentment in his lack of knowledge and is at ease with his uncomplicated perspective, which spares him the troubles of deeper understanding.

This person is content with his surroundings, shies away from being held responsible for his ignorance. When you find yourself in disagreement with such people, advisors will caution you: 'Do not exert yourself, for they lack knowledge, and their mind struggles to comprehend'.
... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Middle East outrage grows over Gaza hospital carnage



Bodies of Palestinians killed by an explosion at the Ahli Arab hospital are gathered at the front yard of the al-Shifa hospital, in Gaza City, central Gaza Strip, Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2023. (AP)

Kuwait slams barbaric attack as toll passes 3,000; US unlocks aid

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip, Oct 18, (Agencies): Doctors hamstrung by dwindling medical supplies rushed Wednesday to save people badly wounded in a massive blast at a Gaza City hospital the day before, performing surgery - often without anesthesia - on patients lying on floors, as Israel kept up its attacks on the besieged territory.

The Hamas militant group blamed Israel for the massive blast at the al-Ahli Hospital - saying nearly 500 died - while Israel blamed a rocket misfired by other Palestinian militants.

Public outrage over the hospital carnage spread through the Middle East as U.S. President Joe Biden landed in Israel in hopes of preventing a wider conflict in the region. The war started when Hamas militants rampaged across communities in southern Israel on Oct. 7.

Upon his arrival, Biden embraced Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu - and expressed concern for the suffering of Gaza's civilians. He later said the hospital blast appeared not to be Israel's fault.

"Based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team, not you," he told Netanyahu in remarks in front of the media.

Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel resumed shortly before Biden's arrival, after a 12-hour lull. Israeli strikes

on Gaza also continued Wednesday, including on cities in south Gaza that Israel had described as "safe zones" for Palestinian civilians.

After the hospital blast, Jordan canceled a meeting between Biden, Jordan's King Abdullah II, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi. Biden was now visiting only Israel.

The State of Kuwait on Tuesday strongly condemned and denounced the Israeli occupation forces' barbaric airstrike on the Baptist Al-Ahli Hospital in the Gaza Strip, where hundreds of innocent civilians were killed.

The occupation forces targeting of hospitals and public facilities is a violation of the International Humanitarian Law, according to a statement from Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ministry said that Kuwait also urged the international community and the UN Security Council to immediately stop such inhuman acts against the Palestinian people.

Such practices run counter to all laws, religious teachings and human norms, it said.

Kuwait also reiterated its principled stance in support of the Palestinian people and vowed to continue offering the assistance they need to alleviate their suffering.

It also renewed the call for serious and swift action to stop such gruesome crimes.

More than 3,300 Palestinians have been killed and some 12,000 others injured since Israeli bombardments on the Gaza Strip began, Palestinian Health Minister Dr. Mai Al-Kaila said on Wednesday.

Citing a dearth of essential healthcare supplies across hospitals in the Gaza Strip, the minister said the lives of thousands of patients have been put at great risk as a result of the acute shortages.

In the West Bank, the death toll there has reached 62, while more than 1,300 people were injured amid the worst wave of violence in Palestinian territories not seen in decades.

Kuwait on Wednesday said its support for the Palestinians would remain "unwavering" at a time where a spate of Israeli occupation attacks on the Gaza Strip has plunged the region into its worst violence in decades.

Calling for a decisive end to "Israeli atrocities" committed against the Palestinian people, Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah told a gathering of top diplomats from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea city of Jeddah that these "appalling" acts contravene international laws and basic humanitarian principles.

The Kuwaiti minister thanked Saudi Arabia for the initiative to host the talks given the alarming status quo, where Israeli forces have stepped up attacks on the Palestinians to "unprecedented levels," which includes the "targeting of innocent civilians and critical infrastructure," he underlined.

He expressed Kuwait's "vehement condemnation" of these "criminal acts" perpetrated by Israeli forces, calling on the international community to intervene and ensure the protection of innocent Palestinians, chiefly, the establishment of "safe passages" that allow the delivery of much needed aid, the minister said.

Continued on Page 2

Regional conflagration fears up

Drone attack on US troops in Iraq intercepted: official

BEIRUT, Oct 18, (AP): Two suicide drones launched at a base hosting U.S. troops in Iraq were intercepted Wednesday, a defense official said.

Hours later, an Iranian-backed militia in Iraq announced it had launched another drone attack on a second base. No injuries were reported in either incident.

The salvos came at a time of increasing tension and fears of a broader regional war in the wake of the latest Hamas-Israel war.

Since the beginning of the war on Oct. 7, all eyes have been on Hezbollah, the powerful Hamas ally across Israel's northern border in Lebanon and its formidable arsenal. The group has traded so-far limited strikes with Israel on the border in recent days.

But Iranian-backed militias in Iraq have also threatened to attack U.S. facilities over American support for Israel.

"Our missiles, drones, and special forces are ready to direct qualitative strikes at the American enemy in its bases and disrupt its interests if it intervenes in this battle," Ahmad "Abu Hussein" al-Hamidawi, head of the Kataib Hezbollah militia, said in a statement last Wednesday. He also threatened to launch missiles at Israeli targets.

Following Tuesday night's blast that killed hundreds at a hospital in Gaza, the group issued another statement in which it blamed the U.S. and its support for Israel for the catastrophe and called for an end to the U.S. presence in Iraq.

"These evil people must leave the country. Otherwise, they will taste the fire of hell in this world before the afterlife," the statement said.

No group claimed responsibility for the first drone attack Wednesday. A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment to the press, confirmed the attack and interception but would not say which base was targeted.

KFH logs KD 461.5mn net profit

— Details Page 8 —

Kuwait urges citizens to delay travel to Lebanon

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18, (Agencies): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday urged citizens planning to travel to Lebanon to delay it "during this current phase."

The ministry in a statement called upon the citizens present in Lebanon to "voluntarily return" home unless there is a pending need for their presence there, considering the current conditions in the region.

They can seek any help they need by calling the embassy in Lebanon on the phone number: 0096171171441.

Protests have erupted in Lebanon, where Hezbollah has traded fire with Israeli forces at the border, threatening to enter the war with its massive arsenal of rockets.

"The Arab street has a voice. That voice may have been ignored in the past by governments in the region and the West ... but they cannot do this anymore," said Badr Al-Saif, a history professor at Kuwait University. "People are on fire."



Protesters try to remove barbed wires that block a road leading to the U.S. embassy, during a demonstration in solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza, in Aukar, a northern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023. (AP)

NewsWatch

PARIS: Six airports near French capital of Paris were evacuated on Wednesday due to bomb threats, according to local authorities.

French news service (BFM) quoted police sources as saying that the six evacuated airports were Lille, Lyon, Nantes, Nice, Toulouse and Beauvais.

The source also confirmed that the airports were evacuated and bomb disposal team is currently working on dispelling doubts.

The French civil aviation directorate mentioned that flight movement at the said airports has been paused for the time being.

The Palace of Versailles was evacuated on Tuesday for the second time this week following a bomb threat. (KUNA)

NEW DELHI: Indian police said on Tuesday that at least 11 persons were killed and several others were injured following two separate explosions at firecracker units in South Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

The explosions in firecracker factories in Rangapalayam and Kichanayakanpatti of Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu killed at least 11 people and injured others, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, citing police sources.

Firefighters managed to put out the fire with the help of the local residents and the injured were taken to a nearby hospital. (KUNA)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:32 Asr 14:49
 Sunrise .. 05:50 Maghrib .. 17:15
 Zohr 11:33 Isha 18:32

Local

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

Weather

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Hot, humid over coastal areas and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be

thunderly at times.

By Night: Mild, humid and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-42 km/h with a chance for light fog forming.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	34	27
Kuwait Airport	34	21
Abdaly	35	19
Jahra	43	27
Salmiyah	32	27
Ahmadi	32	28
Nuwaisib	33	24

Continue funding agency, global community urged

FM lauds UNRWA efforts to aid Palestinians; deaths condoled

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call from the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) Philippe Lazarini on Wednesday.

The minister applauded the agency's efforts to aid Palestinians, also expressing his deepest condolences over the death of UNRWA's workers by the Israeli aggression's attacks on Gaza Strip.

The minister also affirmed Kuwait's support to UNRWA's work, calling on the international community to continue funding the agency to ease the suffering of Palestinians.

On his part, Lazarini explained measures taken by UNRWA in Palestine to deliver humanitarian aid, affirming the need for extra efforts by the international community to ensure a safe delivery of aid.

Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jarah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah participated Wednesday, via video call, in the 24th meeting of the ministerial committee charged with following up on the implementation of the decisions regarding joint Gulf action.

In a statement to KUNA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Sheikh Jarah Al-Sabah affirmed in his speech Kuwait's keenness to continue implementing the Su-

preme Council's decisions, under the directives of the political leadership, expressing hope for the GCC Council to achieve all its goals.

The Deputy Foreign Minister praised the achievements made by the GCC Council, advancing its path in all fields in a way that best serves the member states and their people.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah conveyed on Tuesday to the Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq and Omani people the greetings of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti government and people.

This came during Sultan Haitham's reception of the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council member states and the GCC Secretary General Jassim Al-Budaiwi following their emergency meeting in Muscat today to discuss the escalation in the Palestinian territories.

The Kuwaiti FM also wished the Sultan of Oman everlasting wellbeing and further progress and welfare for Oman.

For his part, Sultan Haitham sent sincere greetings to the Kuwaiti leadership, government and people and wished them further progress and prosperity.

The GCC foreign ministers listened to Sultan Haitham's vision on the current situation in the Palestinian territories and his directives for cementing joint GCC action to maintain security, stability and prosperity.



Philippe Lazarini



The Chinese Navy ship docked at the Shuwaikh Port, Kuwait. Inset: The Chinese Navy officers are received by the Kuwait Navy officers at the port.

Kuwait first country in ME to back BRI: Liu Xiang

Ties with Kuwait deep-rooted: Charge d'Affaires

By Abdullah Al-Masri

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18, (KUNA): Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait Liu Xiang on Wednesday hailed the deep-rooted ties between China and Kuwait, which was the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing.

In a statement to KUNA upon the arrival of the 44th naval fleet of the Chinese Navy at Shuwaikh port Wednesday, Liu mentioned that China must make every effort to implement the outcomes of the visit of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China last month, and to meet with the Kuwaiti and Chinese leaderships.

He added that both sides are linked by a deep traditional friendship, as Kuwait is the first country in the Middle East to sign cooperation documents within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative with China.

In recent years, cooperation and exchanges between both sides in various fields have achieved productive results, especially since the Chinese President Xi Jinping successfully met with His Highness the Crown Prince in the Chinese city of Hangzhou last month, which provided strong momentum to develop the Chinese-Kuwaiti ties, he stated.

He added that the fleet arrived for a five-day visit, underscoring that this visit, the third of its kind, will undoubtedly enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between the Chinese and Kuwaiti armies.

China is a strong and steadfast defender of global peace and stability, and since 2008, it has been sending naval fleets to participate in international ship escort operations over the past 15 years, he pointed out.

Chinese naval forces dispatched 45 fleets, completed about 1,600 escort missions for over 7,200 Chinese and foreign ships, and actively implemented the Global Security Initiative proposed by Xi, which demonstrates China's assumption of responsibility in protecting global peace and stability, he said.



KUNA photo

Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Sa'adoun meets the visiting Korean team.

Speaker receives Korean delegation

Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Sa'adoun received Wednesday, former Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea and current member Park Byeong-seug and his accompanying delegation.

The delegation included, former Deputy Speaker member Kim Sang-

hee, former Minister of the Interior and Safety member Jeon Hae-cheol, member Lee Won-wook and Legislative Research Officer Jeong Hanseul.

The meeting was also attended by South Korea's Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha, Deputy Chief Mission Lee Byoung Gwan and Cousul Lee Jinkuk. (KUNA)

Other Voices

Make your life more beautiful

By Ahmad alsarraf

Recently, as I am rapidly approaching eighty, I began learning my fourth foreign language, although my degree of proficiency in each varies greatly.

While learning Spanish a few weeks ago, I found it easy for two reasons: It contains many words that I know, some of which are common in our environment, such as *sabat*, *trousers*, *olives*, *sugar*, *shirt*, and *mais*, and some of them are in common with Arabic, Persian, French, English, and many others. It is also an easy language to write, as the way its words are pronounced is often the same as the way they are written, and this is an advantage that I did not find in other languages that I know, and I have always complained to myself about my weakness in "spelling"!

The number of Spanish speakers is approximately 500 million, and it is the language of more than 20 countries. There is also a large community in the United States that speaks Spanish, in addition to residents of Puerto Rico.

Only in the past few decades has the world learned the benefits of speaking more than one language. It was believed that teaching a child a second language hinders the development of his cognitive abilities.

This has proven to be untrue, and that speaking more than one language has clear practical benefits in an increasingly globalized world, as well as a blessing in disguise.

Moving from speaking one language to another, forces the brain to resolve the internal conflict, giving it an exercise

that strengthens its cognitive muscles.

Scientists also found that it has other advantages, other than what was mentioned, as it gives the bilingual speaker the ability to communicate with a wide group of people. Bilinguals are also generally more skilled than monolinguals at solving certain types of mental puzzles.

Being bilingual also makes you more intelligent, at least in the eyes of others. Mastering other languages also has a profound effect on the mind, improving non-language cognitive skills and even protecting against dementia in old age. Knowing a second language improves the ability to read and the ability to describe. The Russian language, for example, is rich in many names for shades of one color compared to others, and thus its speaker can describe the color of a car, for example, more accurately than a non-speaker.

Bilinguals are also characterized by a greater degree of attention, which is used for planning, solving problems, performing various other tasks that require mental effort, and remembering directions better, for example while driving.

As bilingualism affects the brain from childhood to old age, there is reason to believe it may also apply to those who learn a second language later in life.

In a recent study conducted on a number of elderly people who speak Spanish and English, scientists found that individuals who had a higher degree of bilingualism were more resistant than others to the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's; the higher the degree of bilingualism, the later the onset of the disease.

Learning a second or new language also stimulates the brain and attention, expands the chances of finding a job or a good job, enhances creativity, improves memory, and makes traveling to countries whose language you know safer and more enjoyable.



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3K Kuwaitis, expats undergo tests

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: The activities organized by the Kuwait Heart Foundation (KHF) on the occasion of the World Heart Day resulted in 3,000 citizens and residents being tested as part of the "Use the Heart to Know the Heart" celebration, which was held throughout the week in coordination with the Sabah Al-Ahmad Heart Center.

In a press statement issued yesterday, the Secretary General of the foundation Dr. Rashid Al-Awaish revealed that about 20 percent of the individuals who were tested were discovered to suffer from high blood cholesterol levels. He indicated that the tests included analyzing

the diabetes and cholesterol levels, and measuring blood pressure, weight and height.

Dr. Al-Awaish stressed the need to conduct periodic tests for the early detection of chronic, non-communicable diseases, and other diseases that can be controlled in the early stages of detection.

He affirmed the importance of awareness campaigns to publicize the dangers of chronic non-communicable diseases, especially cardiovascular diseases.

Dr. Al-Awaish also stressed the need to quit smoking, exercise regularly, and follow a comprehensive healthy diet, as well as conduct periodic check-ups to prevent the risk of heart diseases.

He explained that the mobile heart disease awareness unit will be launched at the beginning of November, and will continue for a period of seven months until the end of May 2024. It will move to different areas, including cooperative societies, commercial malls, schools and other places crowded with patrons.

Dr. Al-Awaish revealed that he is expecting the unit to attract between 400 to 500 people per month.

MPs unite

Continued from Page 1

Furthermore, MP Jinan Boushahri said even though the bombing of Gaza Hospital by Israel is indisputably a war crime, she is not expecting any international action.

She stressed the need for the leaders of Arab and Muslim countries to take brave decisions aimed at changing the course of the war in occupied Palestine.

The lawmaker concluded by insisting that the current status of weakness and helplessness is no longer acceptable by Arab citizens.

In a related context, MP Hassan Jawhar called upon His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to withdraw the Kuwaiti funds invested in the international companies and investment funds that have announced their support to Israel.

He revealed that eight investment funds and companies, in which Kuwaiti funds have been invested, have already declared their support for Israel through the chairpersons of those companies.

Also, MP Hamad Al-Matar suggested allowing Palestinian teachers working in Kuwait to bring their families here and facilitating the sponsorship procedures, adding that the execution of his suggestion will reflect positively on the teachers' performance.

Meanwhile, MP Marzouq Al Ghanim renewed his call to his colleagues as well as the National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun to collect signatures needed for his proposal to hold an extraordinary parliamentary session for discussing the severe Israeli attacks on Gaza and supporting the Palestinian issue.

Al-Ghanim said he believes that his proposal should be approved by all of the MPs, stressing that it is supposed to be very easy to obtain the required 33 signatures to enforce the proposal.

He concluded by stating that the National Assembly of Kuwait has always adopted honorable positions regarding the Palestinian issue, and it is not expected to wait for a couple of weeks to take action.

Middle East outrage

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait has repeatedly warned of the repercussions if the international community continues to handle the situation with "double standards," he told the OIC foreign ministerial-level talks, reiterating Kuwait's support for an independent Palestinian state based on 1967 borders.

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly denounced the airstrike launched by the Israeli occupation forces on (the Baptist) Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in central Gaza city on Tuesday evening.

"The horrendous crime which left hundreds of civilians dead, including women and children, is a stark violation of the international laws, notably the International Humanitarian law," according to a press release from the Ministry.

The Israeli occupation paid no heed to the repeated calls from the international community to stop their attacks against civilians, the statement pointed out.

Stressing the need of international protection for the Palestinian civilians, the Ministry said, the latest serious escalation of hostilities made it imperative for the international community to give up double standards and selective approaches to implementation of the International Humanitarian law.

The Ministry reiterated the need of opening safe corridor to allow delivery of medical supplies and foodstuffs to the besieged civilians in Gaza Strip in keeping with appeals of international aid organizations.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jassim Al-Budaiwi strongly denounced the barbaric airstrike launched by the Israeli occupation forces on the Baptist Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in central Gaza city on Tuesday evening.

Reiterating the GCC states' firm stance against Israel's serious violations, he urged the international community to shoulder their responsibilities for halting the actions of the Israeli occupation forces.

"Israel's targeting of the Baptist Al-Ahli

Arab Hospital is a stark evidence of the serious violations and brutality of the Israeli occupation forces which do not recognize the international conventions and laws," the GCC chief added.

The war between Israel and Hamas was "pushing the region to the brink," Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told state-run television.

The Israeli military held a briefing Wednesday morning laying out its case for why it was not responsible for the explosion at the al-Ahli Hospital.

Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said it was not firing in the area when the blast occurred. And, he said, Israeli radar confirmed a rocket barrage was fired by the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad from a nearby cemetery at that time of the blast, around 6:59 p.m. Independent video showed one of the rockets in the barrage falling out of the sky, he said.

The misfired rocket hit the parking lot outside the hospital. Were it an airstrike, there would have been a crater there; instead, the fiery blast came from the misfired rocket's warhead and its unspent propellant, he said.

The Israeli military also released a recording they said was between two Hamas militants discussing the blast, during which the speakers say it was believed to be an Islamic Jihad misfire.

In a latest development, US President Joe Biden said Wednesday that Israel had agreed to allow humanitarian assistance to begin flowing into Gaza from Egypt, with the understanding it would be subject to inspections and that it should go to civilians and not Hamas militants.

In remarks from Tel Aviv where the president had gone to show support for Israel following a brutal and deadly Oct. 7 attack that killed roughly 1,400 people, Biden cautioned the nation against all-consuming rage.

"I understand. Many Americans understand," Biden said, likening the attack to the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S. that killed nearly 3,000 people. "You can't look at what has happened here ... and not scream out for justice. While you feel that rage, don't be consumed by it."

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Personal interests, political gains, 'bedoun' intertwined

"HAS the situation of those who conceal their original nationality, escalated to the point of using the term bedoun (unspecified nationality), which undermines all efforts to unveil their true identity through conclusive documents, is being coined? The term in question 'Unspecified nationality' comprises individuals who demand Kuwaiti citizenship mysteriously appeared in Kuwait and were granted this classification," columnist **Dr Saud Mohammad Al-Asfour** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"This assertion, despite its unconstitutional nature, undermines the endeavors of the Central Agency to address the situation of illegal residents in Kuwait to address the situation of undocumented residents. These efforts were undertaken with utmost sincerity and precision by individuals like Saleh Al-Fadhala and those alongside him, aiming to expose imposters persistently asserting their right to Kuwaiti nationality even after their deceitful tactics has been exposed. This cannot be tolerated under any circumstances in a country with its own constitution and laws that prohibit the endorsement of such unwarranted claims.



Dr. Saud Al-Asfour

"What's perplexing is that some individuals within this group disown their true lineage to their home country, placing the blame on their fathers or grandfathers merely because they were born there and granted citizenship. Now, they demand Kuwaiti citizenship simply because of their place of birth. If we accept this argument, every expatriate born in Kuwaiti hospitals could legally claim Kuwaiti citizenship. Similarly, every Kuwaiti born in foreign countries could assert the right to those countries' citizenship.

"In my view, personal interests and political gains are intertwined with this matter, at the expense of the nation and this group. Hence, those obstructing the preservation of the demographic structure, represented by our esteemed Sheikh, whom we deeply respect and admire, His Excellency Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, must address this issue.

"This matter glaringly exposes the objectives behind this peculiar demand and the potential ramifications if it were to be approved in the National Assembly. It is an exceedingly perilous matter that should not be tolerated. Anyone claiming to protect the nation and its constitution through this peculiar demand is, either deliberately or inadvertently, directly or indirectly, paving the way for undesirable consequences in the future.

"Enacting this law directly rejects categorizing these individuals as 'illegal residents' and introduces a new designation for them: 'unidentified nationality.'" It's as though the state has now forgotten about them and must acknowledge their right to nationality. Don't you understand?

"This situation is incredibly peculiar. If there were Bedoun represented in the National Assembly, they would express similar sentiments with distinction! What sets apart those with genuine citizenship from this group claiming their rights were usurped? I find it distressing to witness tampering with the demographic structure that my forefathers and fathers defended, despite the unwarranted alterations resulting from an increase in those who undeservedly claim it. Don't you understand?

"What remains for the citizen in his homeland? The right to education is in jeopardy, as evidenced by the thousands of individuals denied admission to the only public university, the Kuwait University, and the newly established Sabah Al-Salem University, along with privately funded universities that have strained the state's budget.

"A small group of MPs has proposed a draft law to the National Assembly, mandating compulsory education for the Bedoun residing in the state. Granting them equality with Kuwaitis in Kuwait is against the law, yet it is proposed for approval. Don't you understand?

"What remains for the citizen in his homeland? Our hospitals grapple with an overwhelming number of patients, insufficient medication, and inadequate services. Meanwhile, these individuals propose a flawed project affirming their entitlement to essential order and equality with authentic Kuwaitis in their homeland. Don't you understand?

"What will be left for Kuwaitis in their homeland if a law is later introduced obliging them to have housing entitlements, without benefits, and equal to genuine Kuwaitis? Thousands of Kuwaitis have waited for housing for many years, struggling with the escalating costs of land and high rent. Do we possess the budget to approve such a measure? Will the budget sustain this in the future? Don't you understand?

"This represents only the tip of the iceberg in the repercussions that approving this unwarranted claim would bring. Don't you understand?

"In clear terms, we demand an end to this tampering with the demographic structure and an end to the injustices inflicted upon Kuwait with this law concerning this group, which hasn't hesitated to receive everything from the state to improve its affairs, maintain its dignity, and act as a positive force driving the nation's progress all while knowing they reside illegally on its land. You have portrayed Kuwait poorly in international forums, despite being elected by its people to avert adversity and bestow upon them luxury, security, and safety."

Also:

"The family is a social component that is in the interest of the person, especially if he is abroad and the working conditions are not easy," columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"It is wrong to address any issue as an emotional reaction or response to any pressure in any form. It is difficult to keep a husband away from his wife, or vice-versa, and a mother from her daughter, or

vice-versa, and other situations. Solutions must often come after extensive, careful, and realistic studies, taking all humanitarian circumstances into consideration, according to the many different circumstances, and are not limited to moments of disaster only.

"Decisions such as laying off and terminating the services of residents who have reached the age of 60, and preventing family members from joining, under the pretext of relieving pressure on the demographics and public services provided by the state, are decisions that have not been adequately studied, in terms of the repercussions of this matter on the field of work, such as medicine and specialties that require to seek the help of external expertise to complement local expertise, and the implications of such decisions on the level and type of productivity.

"Simply impose health insurance on those who will join a breadwinner, and legalize -- not prohibit -- any other services (provided they are not under the umbrella of humanitarian services). Are calamities and disasters really what have begun to correct the humanitarian aspect of our laws, when we are the country of humanity, as we are known to be?!"

"Joining a breadwinner is clear from its name, which is when a family member joins the breadwinner, who came to Kuwait in search of work and livelihood for his entire family (he is the breadwinner).

"Enrollment may not be wide open, but rather with a minimum number. There are many measures that the state is aware of that can prevent any of our guests in Kuwait from becoming dependent, other than bans. We hope that the competent authorities in our country will be careful in their decisions, and avoid a reaction based on tense and immediate emotional pressures.

"It is difficult for a person to leave his homeland and country except for circumstances that he cannot change. Therefore, we must study these circumstances, and extend a helping hand to him in a rational way that prevents him from turning into a burden on society and the state, but rather into a productive person who respects our country and all its laws, while applying sanctions to him like the case of the Kuwaiti."

"With the start of the camping season in the sites designated by the Kuwait Municipality during the period from November 15 to March 15, the municipality launched an awareness slogan "Your hand is in our hands... the land is clean," columnist **Khaled Al-Arrafa** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"This slogan must be applied by those who go to these sites, as they must maintain the cleanliness of the place designated for them to set up their camps in exchange for an amount and insurance amounting to a total of KD 150, of which KD 50 is non-refundable and KD 100 is refundable insurance fees in the event that the place is delivered clean after the end of the season.

"The municipality has developed an easy mechanism for booking camps electronically, through which the site can be reserved and fees can be paid online with the aim of making it easier for citizens to implement their reservations without review.

"This year, the site study and modernization committee identified 19 sites distributed in the northern and southern parts of the country. Service centres, security points and branches of cooperative societies will also be provided, in addition to containers and machinery for cleaning work to serve camp owners.

"Therefore, camp owners must assist the relevant authorities in the country, adhere to the sites specified by the municipality, and avoid violating the law by setting up camps outside the boundaries of the camping areas or exploiting the season by setting them up near residential areas, which is considered as violation of the conditions of camping and the environment.

"We hope that the municipality's teams will intensify their efforts on camping areas, enforce the law on violators and remove all camps that were set up in violation of the rules and regulations, which will lead to stopping any possible encroachment of camps into residential areas or along the highway lines.

"We urge everyone - Please keep the wild environment clean."

"The current government and the National Assembly, with their respected and distinguished members, know that the years pass quickly in the life of nations, and that they are in a historical era that may be considered the most important in the history of Kuwait since its inception," columnist **Sami Al-Nisf** wrote for **Annahar** daily.

"It is related to creating real alternatives for the depleted oil revenues, as every barrel of oil extracted from the ground cannot be replaced.

"Also, the oil reserves of most countries in the world will not last long, and the consumer countries will not depend on the few countries with long-term oil reserves. Rather, the world will turn to alternative sources. Experts expect oil, at that time, will not have any strategic value left or will be depleted.

"We were exposed to very harsh lessons in the past, such as the economic climate catastrophe during which some people became rich and others had nothing, or the invasion catastrophe during which people went to bed on Wednesday night with everything and woke up on Thursday morning with nothing.

"What we need is to replace narrow thinking with realistic thinking and to work like our Gulf brothers, coordinate with them and draw on their successful experiences to transform Kuwait into a financial, investment and tourism hub by opening the country, promoting social openness, enforcing flexibility of laws and fighting administrative and financial corruption."

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary



Municipality vehicles in the area to remove campsites set up illegally.

KUNA photo

'Remove campsites in 24 hours'

The head of the Spring Camps Committee in the Kuwait Municipality, Faisal Al-Otaibi, has given 24 hours for the owners of illegal campsites pitched in open areas in Al-Subbiya, Kabad, and Arhiyah, to remove their camps immediately.

Al-Otaibi told Al-Rai daily the committee will meet next week to put in place a strict mechanism

to punish violators who pitch illegal camps and those who do not adhere to the applicable law and regulations.

The expatriates in this case will be fined as per the laws of the Kuwait Municipality, the Environmental Police, and the Environment Public Authority and may even be deported from the country.

Mol to tackle transactions of 'self-sponsor' residents

Kuwaiti deported in public interest: Cairo

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Acting Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled has issued a regulatory directive mandating the processing of Article 24 (self-sponsor) residency holders transactions at the residence affairs departments across the six governorates as of next week.

Reliable sources informed Al-Jarida that residence permit transactions for this category of residents, wherein the sponsor is the applicant, were previously handled by the office of the Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Residence Affairs.

However, these transactions encountered prolonged processing times due to the Ministry's recent cancellation of numerous residence permits registered under this article. The cancellations were primarily limited to the wives of citizens, investors, and specific private cases, excluding others.

In a separate development, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled has issued the Ministerial Resolution No. 1062/2023 concerning maritime safety regulations for small ships, wooden boats and cruisers registered with the Maritime Transport Administration to install automatic identification devices (AID).

This measure is aimed at precisely determining the location, whereabouts, and speed of these small ships in case of emergencies. Moreover, the resolution grants the Coast Guard forces the capability to verify the identity of ships registered with the MTA and other vessels that may intrude into Kuwaiti territorial and economic waters.

It's worth noting that the Maritime Transport Administration, previously under the Ministry of Communications, has been transferred to the Ministry of Interior, specifically to the General Administration of the Coast Guard. This move was undertaken to enhance the organization of maritime operations.

Cairo deports Kuwaiti: The Egyptian Official Gazette (Al-Waqa'i) has published a decision by the Egyptian Minister of Interior, Major-General Mahmoud Tawfiq, stipulating the deportation of a Kuwaiti from Egypt citing "reasons related to the public interest," reports Al-Rai daily.

The decision, No. 1896 of 2023, is based on Law No. 89 of 1960 regarding the entry, residence and exit of foreigners in Egypt and its amendments, and the memorandum of the General Administration of Passports, Immigration and Nationality regarding the request to deport the Kuwaiti citizen.

Biometric passport: Tamim Madani, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Syrian Embassy, announced the embassy is set to install devices to issue new biometric passport starting next week anticipating their readiness for operation by early



Some food items whose expiry dates had been tampered with.

Dates tampered with

"Inspectors from the Commercial Control Department under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry took action by closing down the facility and warehouse of a food factory situated in the Sabhan area for extending the expiry dates of products whose validity had ended," reports Al-Rai daily.

"Reliable sources said "inspection officers found food products which showed attempts were made to deceive consumers into believing they were safe for consumption.

"Upon investigation, it was found that the factory workers had changed the expiry dates which had already been returned from various cooperative societies.

November, reports Al-Rai daily.

The new system, he said, aims to streamline the processing of passports.

The Syrian charge d'affaires said the embassy is actively extending the validity of current passports wherever feasible. Additionally, they are developing tailored solutions for specific cases to facilitate the community members until the new system is fully implemented.

Furthermore, he clarified that the embassy issues identification papers for newborns valid for 6 months, which are recognized and accepted by the Kuwaiti authorities. This measure ensures compliance with residency regulations for newborns until they are provided with a new passport.

In an effort to serve the community, the embassy has thus far distributed approximately 7,200 passports out of the 8,200 delayed passports and called on those concerned to visit the embassy to collect their passports.

KD250m spent for 'needy' aid

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: The Family Welfare Department in the Ministry of Social Affairs disburses approximately 250 million dinars annually in the form of aid, which is deposited at a rate of 20 to 21 million in bank accounts of about 45,000 beneficiaries each month of those who are eligible, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This is done in accordance with the Aid Law and its executive regulations.

According to the sources, this aid is disbursed to the following categories -- students, married students, the elderly, orphans, widows, divorcees, the sick, the financially disabled, unmarried women, families of prisoners, prisoners who have been released and are being rehabilitated and women married to non-Kuwaitis.

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Council's committee discusses amended building regulations

Listing telecommunications towers vital: Dr Kamal

By Inass Awad

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Head of the joint technical, legal and financial committee in the Municipal Council Dr. Hassan Kamal says, "The committee completed the discussion on the amended building regulations submitted by the executive agency in the presence of the concerned authorities, which include the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority of Kuwait (CITRA), the Ministry of Health, and Kuwait Municipality.

In a press statement issued after the end of the committee meeting yesterday, Dr. Kamal stressed the importance of making a list of the telecommunications towers, considering the random spread of these

towers that are scattered in many locations and on the rooftops of licensed and unlicensed buildings.

He revealed that all telecommunications towers installed on the rooftops of houses are unlicensed.



Dr Kamal

Dr. Kamal explained that the committee focused its discussions on two matters - the first related to the service itself and its necessity, and the second related to setting controls and mechanisms for its publication and distribution in a correct manner that does not result in any health or environmental harm to citizens and residents of the country.

Responsible

The municipality is responsible for coordinating with CITRA regarding the heights of these towers, their locations, and the distance between them, as well as their aesthetic aspect. The responsibility of the Ministry of Health with CITRA is limited to ensuring that providing the service to companies will not affect human health.

He expressed appreciation for the cooperation of the Min-

istry of Health in this aspect with the joint committee in responding to correspondence related to the issue.

Dr. Kamal highlighted the obligation of CITRA to use modern technologies in the design and manufacture of telecommunications towers, especially after noticing the presence of many of them in inappropriate shapes and in sensitive locations in the country.

He stressed the importance of benefiting from the amended regulations in new housing cities and the necessity of specifying locations for telecommunications towers there in coordination with CITRA, PAHW and Kuwait Municipality to avoid randomness in their distribution.

Regarding the private and model housing regulations, Dr. Kamal revealed that the committee has completed the initial review of the regulations, taking into account the balance between the system of exceptions and violations and the actual need. It will soon be subject to final review and amendments, after which discussions will be held on the schedules for investment housing, commercial and craft uses, and others included in 15 agendas.

He explained that the new and amended building regulations will completely eliminate

exceptions and violations, and will be applied to everyone without discrimination. It will also eliminate the chaos resulting from investors entering private and model housing areas and turning them into buildings, especially in new housing cities. It will activate the municipality's supervisory role.

Relevant

It is necessary for the relevant authorities in the country, especially the National Assembly and PAHW to participate in setting the controls and conditions for private housing, as they were the cause of the fierce attack launched by the investment and commercial sector on private housing areas due to the long waiting period that the citizens suffer from to obtain a home.

If there is a real need to add percentages for commercial and investment uses in private housing in new residential cities, then there is no harm in adding them within the framework of the new building regulations in coordination with PAHW because they will be studied and codified. Also, the supervisory role of the municipality will be activated. Otherwise, it will prevent the existence of a model residential area in Kuwait in the future.



Top and above: Some photos from the event.

Boursa Kuwait lights its building in pink & holds breast cancer awareness event

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Boursa Kuwait continued its Breast Cancer Awareness campaign with an awareness session presented by Dr. Mervat Saud Al-Saleh, a General and Breast Cancer Consultant and Professor at Kuwait University as well as the first female surgeon member of the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons to be licensed in Saudi Arabia, for its female employees as well as those of the KCC and brokerage firms located in the Boursa Kuwait building.

The company's month-long campaign for October also included a series of informative posts about the disease and the benefits of early detection and downstaging on its social media platforms. Additionally, like many buildings across Kuwait and around the world, the Boursa Kuwait building was lit up in pink, the color associated with breast cancer since 1992, to commemorate this month.

The World Health Organization recognizes October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month - the Pink Month - and actively seeks to educate those concerned about the disease, including early identification and signs and symptoms associated with breast cancer, with this year's theme being 'Keeping Her in the Picture'. This powerful statement calls upon everyone to play a crucial role in the fight against breast cancer, ensuring that women around the world remain at the forefront of the battle for health and awareness.

Worldwide

Female breast cancer has now surpassed lung cancer as the most diagnosed cancer worldwide, with an estimated 2,261,419 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in women across the world in 2020. However, the number of women who have died of breast cancer has decreased by 43% since 2020 following a peak in 1989. This is thanks to early detection, treatment improvements, and greater breast cancer awareness. As a result, more than 460,000 breast can-

cer deaths were prevented during that period.

During her session, Dr. Mervat Al-Saleh spoke about the benefits of early detection and screening, and applauded Boursa Kuwait's efforts to raise awareness about this noble cause. "With the modern advancements in medicine, we have become well-equipped to save the lives of people diagnosed with this and virtually all forms of cancer, especially if it is detected early. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for giving me this opportunity to emphasize the importance of regular screenings and self-examinations in our fight against breast cancer."

Collaborated

Additionally, the bourse collaborated with MedCell to offer attendees of the session and other patrons free blood tests, body composition analysis and vital signs monitoring on the Boursa Kuwait premises. These tests are beneficial in screening risk factors associated with various types of cancer, including breast cancer. The company also offered attendees exclusive discount vouchers on the tumor markers lab package for women, ultrasounds and mammograms at its laboratories and imaging center.

Supporting and serving the communities and people across Kuwait is a responsibility that Boursa Kuwait takes very seriously. The company seeks to be a force for good for both external and internal stakeholders, actively giving back and driving positive impact through an ongoing and diverse range of community and social impact endeavors, including several health-based initiatives with institutions to organize blood drives, awareness sessions and others. Boursa Kuwait is committed to making a positive, long-lasting impact in the community in which it operates, championing a series of initiatives aimed at preserving the well-being of the community and has established internal policies and procedures to ensure the sustained health of its employees.

Exhibition runs from Oct 19 to 21

Kuwait Insurance participates in 'Watheefti'

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Kuwait Insurance Company announced its plans to participate in the "Watheefti" exhibition, the largest employment exhibit organized by the private sector in Kuwait. This engagement comes from Kuwait Insurance Company's belief in the importance of supporting youth and providing them with job opportunities. The exhibition will be held over three days, from October 19th to 21st, at Arena 360 Mall.

"Watheefti" exhibition, organized by Zone Company, aims to introduce young people to the job opportunities available in companies, and to support them in discovering new horizons that can fulfill their career ambitions and allow them to benefit from their technical expertise and their professions.

Commenting on the involvement, Mr. Sami Sharif - CEO of Kuwait Insurance Company, expressed his pleasure in participating, stating: "Kuwait Insurance Company is the ideal choice for job seekers, due to an energetic work environment that encourages innovation and creativity and enhances employees' productivity and career growth. The main focus at KIC for achieving strategic objectives is to offer employees the latest expertise and skills necessary to keep pace with the developments that the insurance industry is going through. The company also continuously provides training and experience opportunities



Sami Sharif

to its employees in various fields through KIC Academy so that they can build a successful career path that helps them occupy future leadership positions within the company".

He concluded by stating: "We thank all the organizers and those in charge of the Watheefti Fair, inviting qualified graduates, in addition to those looking for a promising career prospects, to visit the company's corner in the exhibition and learn more about the nature of work in the company's departments. Representatives from the Human Resources Department will be available during the exhibition to answer inquiries, and introduce the young cadres to Kuwait Insurance Company's future strategy".



October

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Transformative partnership contributes to Kuwait's progress and prosperity

AIU partners up with KFH to propel academic excellence, knowledge exchange

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: American International University (AIU) and Kuwait Finance House (KFH) proudly announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on September 20, 2023, at the prestigious KFH Headquarters. Representing AIU at this historic signing was Mr. Nael Al Awadhi, an esteemed member of the AIU Board, while Mr. Zeyad AlOmar, Group Chief of Human Resources, represented KFH. This momentous occasion signifies a bold step towards fostering academic improvement, innovative training, and groundbreaking research initiatives.

Committed

AIU, an institution deeply committed to shaping the future, aligns its vision with Kuwait's Vision 2035, a national blueprint for transformation and development. This partnership serves as a testament to AIU's unwavering dedication to contributing to Kuwait's socio-economic growth and prosperity.

Together, AIU & KFH will explore new frontiers of research, harness the power of cutting-edge technology, and equip students with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in the world of finance and beyond. Aiming to create a dynamic hub for knowledge exchange that will transcend boundaries and cultivate innovation at its core.



Group photo from the event.

AIU is excited for this transformative journey with KFH and is confident that this partnership will not only empower AIU stu-

dents but also contribute to the progress and prosperity of Kuwait and the broader international community.

Sovereign funds key for funding ventures

Kuwait explores global partnerships

By Salem Al-Medhen

ABU DHABI, Oct 18, (KUNA): An official of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) has affirmed necessity of establishing sovereign investment funds based on international partnerships for financing key projects.

The official, Naif Al-Haddad, the director of strategic research at KDIPA, was speaking to KUNA after participating in the World Investment Forum.

He indicated in the interview with KUNA that stakeholders have become particularly aware of the importance of such funds, based on lessons learned from the experience of coping with the outbreak of the coronavirs.

Development ventures

He affirmed that KDIPA's participation in the event is aimed at promoting the development ventures in Kuwait in the sectors of energy, water, sewage and public health, in addition to transports, communications, realty and waste treatment.

Al-Haddad also indicated that the forum constituted an opportunity to lure foreign investors to partake in the development schemes in Kuwait.



Photo during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding at the KFH Headquarters.

General Manager of Scientific Center explores Dasman Diabetes Institute

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Eng. Msaed A. Alyaseen, General Manager of The Scientific Center, paid a field visit to Dasman Diabetes Institute, which was established by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences. Eng. Alyaseen was met by Dr. Qais Saleh Al-Duwairi, Director-General, and Mr. Tarek Abdullah Aleryan, Director of Public Relations and Media at Dasman Diabetes Institute. Eng. Alyaseen's visit aimed at getting to know closely the important institutions in Kuwait and

strengthening scientific cooperation. During his visit to the Institute, many scientific and research topics and issues of common interest between the two sides were discussed.

Dr. Al-Duwairi briefed Eng. Alyaseen about the institute's scientific progress, its importance, and its role in the service of scientific research in Kuwait, discussing ways to enhance joint research and scientific cooperation. In turn, Eng. Alyaseen praised the institute's impressive developments and achievements.

Efforts to provide Kuwaiti cadres with opportunities in banking sector

KIB participates in another round of Watheefti career fair

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is pleased to announce its participation in the second edition of the Watheefti career fair, the biggest of its kind in Kuwait and the most attractive to national young professionals. As a leading financial institution dedicated to fostering talent and empowering the local Kuwaiti community, KIB is eager to connect with prospective job seekers at this massive event.

Commenting on the Bank's presence at the fair, Feras Al-Darmi, General Manager of the Human Resources Department at KIB, said: "Watheefti is a highly anticipated event that brings together job seekers and employers from various industries in the country. We are delighted to be a part of the fair for the second consecutive year, and are eager to connect with individuals who are passionate

about pursuing a career in the banking industry."

Al-Darmi added: "During the job fair, attendees will have the opportunity to meet with KIB representatives at our special booth and learn about the diverse career opportunities available within our organization. Whether you are an experienced banking professional looking to advance your career or someone considering a career in the financial industry, our team will be on hand to provide information and answer any questions you may have."

Attendees

Inviting attendees to visit KIB's special booth, he said: "Be it an interest in finance, customer service, IT, or any other area of expertise, we have positions that may align with your skills and career goals. In addition to learning about career opportunities,



Feras Al-Darmi, General Manager of the Human Resources Department at KIB.

attendees can expect to discover the many benefits of working at KIB, including competitive compensation packages, professional

development programs, and a commitment to a supportive and collaborative work environment."

Taking place from October 19th to the 21st at The Arena - 360 Mall, the Watheefti career fair will gather participants and recruiters from various industries of the Kuwaiti private sector. To further support the fair, conferences, workshops and other activities will be held at the adjacent Grand Hyatt over three days.

It is worth noting that KIB maintains its position as a leading financial institution committed to fostering economic growth and providing career opportunities. The Bank is continuously eager to participate in various events to engage with job seekers and offer opportunities that suit their aspirations, always living up to its main 'Bank for Life's'logan.



The General Manager of The Scientific Center and the Director-General of Dasman Diabetes Institute pose for a group photo.

Aspiring youth candidates with opportunities in telecom market

stc sponsors 2nd Watheefti career fair

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship and participation in the 2nd Watheefti career fair. The event, which is set to take place today, Thursday 19th October till 21st October at the Arena 360 Kuwait, is a testament to stc's ongoing commitment to support the local education system and empower the younger generation. The career fair in its second edition will be inaugurated today under the patronage and presence of His Excellency the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Ali Al Manea.

stc's sponsorship of the fair strongly aligns with its educational 'upgrade' initiative, emphasizing the Company's role in bolstering education, and supporting local initiatives that provide the younger generation with opportunities to pursue various career paths. As part of its participation, members from stc's recruitment team will be present at the stc booth welcoming students and fresh graduates who are interested in learning more about the

positions and work environment within the Company. The recruitment team will also be conducting interviews and guiding interested candidates through the resume submission process, where they will have the opportunity to begin their professional journey with stc. The HR team will also participate in the workshops and seminars that will be held throughout the 3-day event.

Through its sponsorship and participation, stc aims to demonstrate its robust commitment to attracting and hiring Kuwaiti talent, aligning with the Kuwaitization law and the Company's strategic approach to empowering the younger generation across various levels and professions. As part of its strategic approach, stc annually implements or participates in several initiatives to attain its underlying goals. These initiatives include participating in career fairs, arranging value adding internships, and sponsoring programs intended to educate and equip the younger generation for their future careers.

stc expressed that it is proud to participate in the 2nd Watheefti career fair and commended the organizers for hosting the fair once again for students, especially considering the successful turnout in its first year. The fair features numerous value-adding benefits that can assist and prepare students for the transitional shift from an academic into a working environment. Workshops and seminars will be held throughout the 3-day event, where students can learn about different work environments from some of the leading companies in Kuwait.

As an active member within the community, and a pioneer within the private sector, stc stated that it will continue to participate in and organize initiatives that support the community across various aspects that focus on and benefit the younger generation. Through its educational 'upgrade' initiative, stc envisions a future where its efforts ripple through the Kuwaiti economy, fostering innovation, driving growth, and most importantly, empowering the nation's future leaders to steer Kuwait towards unparalleled success and prosperity.

To find out more about stc's events, promotions, and sponsorships, follow stc's official social media platforms, visit one of stc's branches, download mystc mobile application, visit www.stc.com.kw or contact the customer service center by dialing 102 for around the clock assistance.



stc sponsors 2nd Watheefti career fair poster.

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World News Roundup

Politics

Big year for labor

Calif gov delivers wins & surprises

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Oct. 18, (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom again seized the national spotlight this year as he signed some of the most ambitious laws in the country to raise worker wages and to force companies to disclose a wide range of climate emissions, efforts that further cement the state's - and the governor's - status as a leader on a host of liberal causes.

But the Democrat disappointed some progressive advocates as he vetoed high-profile bills to give unemployment benefits to striking workers, require courts to weigh a parent's support of their child's gender identity in custody proceedings and decriminalize some psychedelic drugs. He also supported a controversial bill to force more people into mental health or addiction treatment, a proposal aimed at addressing the state's persistent homelessness crisis.

His actions on more than 1,000 pieces of legislation - nearly 15% of which he vetoed - showcase how Newsom plans to govern in his second and final term as leader of the nation's most populous state. Newsom's moves are increasingly seen through the lens of a possible presidential bid beyond 2024, though he insists he does not plan to run.

Some observers say his moves are largely consistent with both the views of California voters and the political tone that Newsom struck in his first term.

While Newsom delighted labor advocates with many of his signatures, he also angered them with some vetoes. He even won praise from Republicans for signing a bill to increase penalties for child sex trafficking after criticizing some Democratic lawmakers for initially opposing the bill.

Political consultant Elizabeth Ashford, who advises Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and has worked for former governors Jerry Brown and Arnold Schwarzenegger, is skeptical of the idea that Newsom's actions are about appealing to a national audience. If he's taking more moderate stances on some issues, including crime and homelessness, it's likely in response to what California voters want, she said.

Indeed, California's unabated homelessness crisis and the proliferation of fentanyl on the streets have been among the most visible and stubborn issues during Newsom's tenure.

Move

"I think that it's very much how you see both Jerry Brown and Arnold Schwarzenegger move into a more middle posture," Ashford said. "It's because that's what Californians want their governor to be."

Newsom's actions reflect that he is "a consistently left-of-center Democratic governor," said Wesley Hussey, a political science professor at California State University, Sacramento. "I think maybe he draws the line where it's going to cost the state a lot more money."

Newsom justified many of his vetoes - such as on a bill to make free condoms available to public high school students - by saying there was not enough money in the state budget to cover the cost. It came after he worked with lawmakers this year to try to close a projected \$31.5 billion budget deficit.

Californians typically rank the economy and jobs as the most important issues in the state, said Mark Baldassare, the statewide survey director at the Public Policy Institute of California, and Newsom signed key legislation aimed at boosting workers. Health care workers will gradually receive a minimum hourly wage of \$25, fast-food workers will be paid at least \$20 an hour, workers will get more paid sick leave and lower-level legislative staffers will be able to unionize.

But in a year when hotel workers, Hollywood actors and writers, and health care workers went on strike, Newsom also vetoed a bill that would have given unemployment benefits to striking workers.

Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, who heads the California Labor Federation, said "it's almost cruel" that workers who go on strike aren't guaranteed insurance benefits. "We have workers who are putting everything on the line right now by going on strike," she said. "They're doing this because, quite honestly, this economy has failed them."

Newsom also vetoed a bill that would have protected domestic workers who get injured or sick on the job and a proposal to save driver jobs while automated semi-trucks are tested for their safety on public roads.

In recent years, Californians have had to cope with wildfires, intense heat waves, and violent winds and rain. So it's not surprising that many of them also say the environment is one of the state's most pressing issues, Baldassare said.

Also:

RALEIGH, NC: North Carolina Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper sued state Republican lawmakers on Tuesday over a measure that eliminates his authority to pick elections board members, while voting rights groups filed yet another lawsuit challenging provisions of a law that they contend will discourage young people from voting.

Both measures became law last week, when the GOP-controlled General Assembly overrode Cooper's vetoes of them.

The governor's lawsuit, filed in state court against House Speaker Tim Moore, Senate leader Phil Berger and the state, challenges a measure that would transfer his power over the elections board to legislative leaders.

Cooper said the board changes, which would take effect Jan. 1, run counter to the state constitution and state Supreme Court rulings in the 2010s that demand a governor have control over executive agencies to carry out laws. State voters also rejected a 2018 referendum that would have given lawmakers more say over the composition of the State Board of Elections.

The governor suggested that GOP legislators advanced the election board bill because Republicans now hold a majority on the court and expect a favorable ruling.

LOS ANGELES: The mayor of Connecticut's largest city denied under oath Tuesday ever discussing absentee ballots with a campaign volunteer who resembles a woman seen on surveillance video stuffing papers into a drop box multiple times ahead of the mayoral primary.

In a court hearing, Bridgeport Mayor Joe Ganim tried to distance himself from Wanda Geter-Patky, a local Democratic official and supporter who has been accused by Ganim's opponent of absentee ballot fraud in connection with Ganim's narrow victory in September's primary. Geter-Patky last week refused to say whether she was the woman seen on surveillance footage making multiple trips to an election drop box and stuffing papers inside that looked like ballots.



Newsom



Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, (left), and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa review the honor guard on the occasion of their meeting at Chigi Palace, in Rome, on Oct. 17. (AP)

Europe

Putin meets with Hungary's prime minister

Italy PM defies fears of harming democracy

ROME, Oct. 18, (AP) — When Giorgia Meloni took office a year ago as the first far-right premier in Italy's post-war history, many in Europe worried about the prospect of the country's democratic backsliding and resistance to European Union rules.

The European Commission president issued a decidedly undiplomatic warning that Europe had "the tools" to deal with any member, including Italy, if things went "in a difficult direction." There were fears in Brussels that Rome could join a strident nationalist bloc, notably Hungary and Poland, in a clash with EU democratic standards.

But since being sworn in, Meloni, whose Brothers of Italy party has neo-fascist roots, has confounded Western skeptics.

She has steadfastly backed NATO support for Ukraine, especially on military aid for Kyiv against Russia's invasion. That's no small feat.

Leadership

Her main governing coalition partners are parties whose leadership was long marked by pro-Russian sympathies - the League of Matteo Salvini, and Forza Italia, founded by Silvio Berlusconi, the late former premier who was feted at his last birthday with bottles of vodka sent by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The first woman to be Italy's premier, Meloni "won out against Salvini and Berlusconi. She showed that she emancipated herself against these two male leaders," said political analyst Massimo Franco.

While Meloni ran an election campaign "raging against Europe" and "promising she would clash with Brussels over budget issues" once in office, she didn't do either, noted Tommaso Grossi, a policy analyst for the European Policy Centre, a Brussels-based think tank.

Meloni's first trip abroad as premier was to Brussels. After meeting with the EU's most powerful officials, including Commission President Ursula von der Leyen - who raised the democracy warning - Meloni ventured that the encounters probably helped "dismantle a narrative about yours truly."

When Meloni was hosted at the White House in July by President Joe Biden, the welcome was warm - reflecting in

part her apparent resolve to end Italy's participation in a Chinese infrastructure-building initiative known as Belt and Road that has worried the West.

Fears for Italy's democracy have proved to be "exaggerated," said Franco, who noted that Italy's president serves as a guarantor of the republic's post-war constitution. "The real risk for Italy is not authoritarian, it's chaos, it's an incompetent ruling class."

In her own words, Meloni's biggest challenge is illegal migration. "Clearly I had hoped to do better on migrants," she told Italian Rai state TV in an interview marking her year in office. "The results weren't what we had hoped to see."

Meloni had campaigned with an unrealistic - and unrealized - promise of a naval blockade of the northern African coasts where migrant smugglers launch overcrowded, unseaworthy vessels toward Italy. By mid-October, the number of migrants arriving by boat has nearly doubled to 140,000 compared to the same period a year ago.

Von der Leyen stood by Meloni's side in solidarity on the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa, after some 7,000 migrants had stepped ashore there in just over one day last month. She borrowed one of Meloni's favorite lines: "We will decide who comes to the European Union, and under what circumstances. Not the smugglers."

Also:

BEIJING: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held talks on Tuesday with Vladimir Putin in a rare in-person meeting for the Russian president with a leader of a European Union country.

Orbán and Putin met in Beijing before an international forum on one of Chinese President Xi Jinping's signature policies, the Belt and Road Initiative. Their meeting focused on Hungary's access to Russian energy.

EU and other Western leaders have largely eschewed contact with Putin over Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that began in February. Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer met with Putin in person in April 2022.

"Hungary never wanted to confront Russia. Hungary always has been eager to expand contacts," Orbán told Putin, according to a Russian transla-

tion of his remarks broadcast on Russian state television.

Bilateral ties between the two countries have suffered because of EU sanctions against Moscow, he said.

Hungary's stance on the war has confounded its European partners and led to deadlocks in providing financial and military assistance to Kyiv. Orbán has refused to supply Ukraine with weapons and not allowed their transfer across the Hungarian-Ukrainian border. He has also threatened to veto EU sanctions against Moscow, though has always ultimately voted in favor of them.

Orbán's meeting with Putin appeared to be a boon for the Russian president, who could point to it as a sign that unity within the EU on its support for Ukraine - and its condemnation of Russia for starting the war - was faltering.

WASHINGTON: The United States has quietly delivered a small number of long-range ballistic missiles that Ukraine said it urgently needed and that President Joe Biden promised last month, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed Tuesday, saying they were used on the battlefield against Russia and "executed very accurately."

"Today I express special gratitude to the United States," Zelenskyy said in his evening address, adding that the missiles "have proven themselves."

The U.S. has refused to discuss the delivery publicly, but officials familiar with the move also confirmed it earlier in the day. Fewer than a dozen of the missiles got into Ukraine within the last few days, said officials. Their arrival at the warfront gives Ukraine a critical ability to strike Russian targets that are farther away, allowing Ukrainian forces to stay safely out of range. The officials were not authorized to publicly discuss the matter before an official announcement and spoke Tuesday on the condition of anonymity.

The delivery of the Army Tactical Missile System, known as ATACMS, was shrouded in secrecy, with the expectation that the first public acknowledgment would come when the missiles were used on the battlefield. That intense secrecy is a marked change from previous US weapons sent by the Biden administration.



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak leaves 10 Downing Street to go to the House of Commons, London, for the weekly Prime Minister's Questions Oct. 18. (AP)



Kelly



Trump

America

Trump back to fraud trial: Donald Trump returned Tuesday to the civil fraud trial that imperils his real estate empire, watching and deploring the case as an employee and an outside appraiser testified that his company essentially put a thumb on the scale when sizing up his properties' value.

Inced by a case that disputes his net worth and could strip him of such signature holdings as Trump Tower, the former president is due to testify later in the trial. But he chose to attend the first three days and came back Tuesday to observe - and to protest his treatment to the news cameras waiting outside the Manhattan courtroom.

Star witness Michael Cohen, a onetime Trump fixer now turned foe, postponed his scheduled testimony because of a health problem.

Instead, Trump company accountant Donna Kidder testified that she was told to make some assumptions favorable to the firm on internal financial spreadsheets. Outside appraiser Doug Larson said he didn't suggest or condone a former Trump Organization comptroller's methods of valuing properties. (AP)

Kelley gets 2 months in jail: A federal judge on Tuesday sentenced a former Republican candidate for Michigan governor to two months behind bars for joining a mob's Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, where he riled up other rioters and ripped a tarp outside the building.

Ryan Kelley, who finished fourth in a primary field of five Republican gubernatorial candidates last year, pleaded guilty in July to a misdemeanor for his role in the siege.

Several months before his guilty plea, Kelley posted on social media that the Capitol riot was an FBI "set up." His campaign posted the words "political prisoner" on Facebook after his June 2022 arrest.

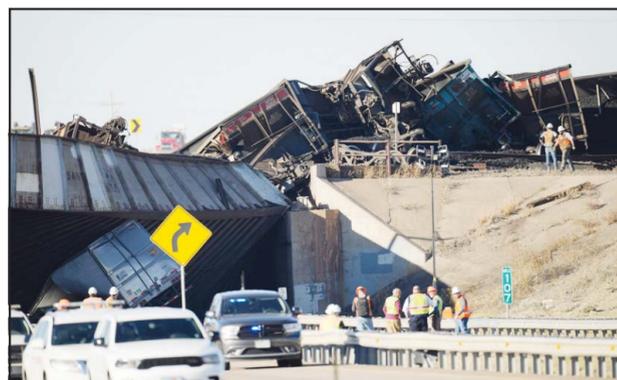
US District Judge Christopher Cooper told Kelley that he misused his platform as a candidate for public office by promoting lies about election fraud, including the baseless claim that Jan. 6 was somehow part of an FBI plot.

"A lot of folks voted for you. A lot of folks followed you," Cooper said before sentencing Kelley to 60 days of imprisonment and ordering him to pay a \$5,000 fine. (AP)

Brawl in courtroom: Family members of a murdered 16-year-old girl tried to at-

tack her ex-boyfriend during a court hearing Tuesday after he had pleaded guilty to shooting her nearly two dozen times while she was walking her dog.

Frank DeLeon, 19, agreed to plead guilty to murder in the January 2022 death of Diamond Alvarez in exchange for a 45-year prison sentence as part of an agreement with



Workers toil to clear cars that derailed in an accident on Interstate 25 north of Pueblo, Colo. A broken rail caused a train derailment that collapsed a bridge over an interstate highway in Colorado, killing a truck driver and blocking the road for days, federal authorities said Tuesday based on their preliminary findings.

prosecutors.

Alvarez was shot 22 times as she walked her dog in southwest Houston. She had planned to meet DeLeon, who was 17 at the time, to talk with him after finding out he had been in another relationship while they were still dating, prosecutors said. Alvarez's family members had previously said DeLeon had texted her shortly before she was killed and had asked her to meet him in a field near her home. (AP)

Jury convicts 2 employees: A federal jury has convicted two senior employees at a Wisconsin corn plant of falsifying records and obstructing an investigation into a fatal corn dust explosion in 2017, Justice Department officials announced on Tuesday.

Corn dust is explosive, and high concentrations are dangerous. Federal regulations require grain mill operators to perform regular cleanings to reduce dust accumulations that could fuel a blast.

Jurors found Derrick Clark, vice president of operations at Didion Milling, and Shawn Mesner, a former food safety superintendent at the company, guilty of multiple safety, environmental and fraud charges on Friday. The two men are the latest in a growing list of Didion employees found guilty in association with the 2017 explosion that killed five people at the company's Cambria corn mill. (AP)

Asia

'Mahfud for VP'

Russia FM Lavrov arrives in NKorea

NORTH KOREA, Oct 18, (AP) — Russian Foreign Minister **Sergey Lavrov** arrived in North Korea on Wednesday, according to Russian state news agency Tass, the latest in a flurry of diplomatic activity between the two countries in which Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited North Korea in July and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia in September.

Earlier in the week, Lavrov accompanied President Vladimir Putin on a visit to Beijing that underscored Chinese support for Moscow during its war in Ukraine.

Lavrov last visited North Korea in 2018. During his two-day visit he is to meet with North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said. Putin also accepted an invitation from Kim to visit North Korea, but the timing has not been announced.

During Kim's visit to Russia he met Putin at Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome and inspected fighter jets at an aircraft factory in Russia's far east.

The White House said on Friday that North Korea has delivered more than 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions to Russia for its ongoing war in Ukraine.

Speculation about a possible North Korean plan to refill Russian munition stores drained by its protracted war with Ukraine flared during Kim's visit to Russia.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. believes Kim is seeking sophisticated Russian weapons technologies in return for the munitions to boost North Korea's military and nuclear program.



Lavrov

Security min to run for VP: Indonesia's ruling party on Wednesday named the nation's top security minister as the running mate to the party's presidential candidate in next year's election in Southeast Asia's largest democracy.

Muhammad Mahfud will be seeking the vice presidency alongside the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle presidential hopeful **Ganjar Pranowo**, former Central Java governor.

The announcement by PDIP chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri was attended by three leaders of PDIP's partner parties for the February election and sets up a potential three-way race, with Pranowo expected to face former Jakarta Gov. **Anies Baswedan** and Defense Minister **Prabowo Subianto**.

Baswedan choose his running mate as Muhaimin Iskandar, the chairman of National Awakening Party, which has strong ties to the country's largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, which boasts over 45 million members.

PDIP's pick is considered by many as a move aimed at boosting Pranowo's popularity in the world's most populous Muslim-majority country.

Mahfud, former chief justice of the Constitutional Court, is closely affiliated with NU and was long involved in related organizations, including the NU's youth wing GP Anor.

'Comfortable with friends': Fiji's prime minister said Wednesday on a visit to Australia's capital that his government was "more comfortable dealing with traditional friends" such as Australia as China pursues closer security ties in the Asia-Pacific region.

Sitiveni Rabuka and Australia's **Anthony Albanese** met during the Fijian's first state visit to Australia since he most recently came to power in December last year. The 75-year-old former army colonel and coup leader had previously been Fiji's prime minister from 1992 until 1999.

Rabuka sided with Australia in what he described as the "rivalry" and "one-upmanship" between the United States and China.

"We're more comfortable dealing with traditional friends, that we have similar systems of government, that our democracies are the same brand of democracy, coming out of the Westminster system," Rabuka told reporters.

"Our justice system, our policing system -- we're more comfortable with friends that we have had over a longer period," Rabuka added.

HK protester gets 47 months: A Hong Kong man who was shot by police during pro-democracy protests in 2019 was sentenced Wednesday to 47 months in prison on charges of rioting, assaulting a police officer and perverting the course of justice, in the latest court ruling that severely punished participants in the anti-government movement.

Tsang Chi-kin was the first known victim of police gunfire during the months-long protests beginning in June 2019. Then a secondary school student, he was shot at close range after he swung at a police sergeant with a rod. His shooting further inflamed already widespread public anger against the police, who were condemned as being heavy-handed in quelling the unrest.

Tsang was charged with rioting and assaulting police. But after he was released on bail, he failed to appear in court. In October 2020, he tried to seek asylum at the U.S. Consulate but was turned away.

He hid in various locations in the city with assistance from members of a YouTube channel that was critical of the Hong Kong government, and then attempted unsuccessfully to flee by boat to Taiwan. He was recaptured by police in July 2022.

'Held for breaking embargo': Australian journalist **Cheng Lei** says she spent more than three years in detention in China for breaking an embargo with a television broadcast on a state-run TV network.

Cheng's first television interview since she was freed was broadcast in Australia on Tuesday almost a week after she returned to her mother and two children, aged 11 and 14, in the city of Melbourne.

The Chinese-born 48-year-old was an English-language anchor for state-run China Global Television Network in Beijing when she was detained in August 2020.

She said her offense was breaking a government-imposed embargo by a few minutes following a briefing by officials.

Her treatment in custody was designed to "drive home that point that in China that is a big sin," Cheng told Sky News Australia. "That you have hurt the motherland and that the state's authority has been eroded because of you."



Sergio Massa, Argentine Economy Minister and ruling party presidential candidate speaks during a campaign event in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Oct 17. Argentine general elections are set for Oct 22. (AP)

Lat/Am

Guatemala cabinet minister steps down

Argentina political vets seek to thwart Milei

BUEENOS AIRES, Argentina, Oct 18, (AP) — Economy Minister Sergio Massa and former Security Minister Patricia Bullrich adapted shrewdly over their combined seven decades in Argentine politics. It remains to be seen whether experience is an asset or a liability in what has already been an atypical presidential race.

Javier Milei, the mop-topped freshman lawmaker who leads most polls ahead of Sunday's vote, has railed against what he calls the political caste. He points to Massa and Bullrich as embodiments of an entrenched establishment and garnered the most votes in August primaries, sending shockwaves through the South American nation.

Massa and Bullrich convey themselves as safer bets to govern the crisis-engulfed country than the firebrand upstart who pledges to abolish the Central Bank, slash public spending and dollarize the economy. Most polls show Massa in second place and Bullrich third.

Secure

Polls have been notoriously unreliable, however. A few show Massa leading the first round and at least two show Bullrich ahead of him. Should Milei fail to secure outright victory on Oct. 22, the top two candidates will go to a November runoff.

Massa, 51, has aspired to the nation's top job for years, most recently in a 2015 campaign. Raised in a middle-class home in a Buenos Aires suburb, he became a lawyer, quickly reached the upper echelons of politics and has remained for more than two decades.

He promises to increase the purchasing power of salaries and compares himself to right-wing opponents who he says will scrap workers' rights. His time as Economy Minister saw inflation and poverty soar and the currency tank.

"Massa as a candidate carries the

burden of being a minister," said Martín Kalos, an economist who runs Buenos Aires-based consultancy Epyca.

Massa says he inherited an already-bad situation exacerbated by a devastating drought that decimated the country's exports. What's important, he says, was his willingness to leave his comparatively cozy position as leader of Congress' lower house to take the thankless job of Economy Minister.

"I'm not one of those who gets scared in the face of a challenge," Massa said at a political rally in May. "Many of those who now proudly talk about candidacies on television were hiding under the bed."

In the pragmatism that buoyed his career in recent years observers see him as a shape-shifter. The word voters most identify with Massa is "pancake," slang for a flip-flopper, according to a recent poll by Giacobbe & Asociados.

In 2008, Massa was plucked from his position as mayor of Buenos Aires suburb Tigre to become Cabinet Chief of then-President Cristina Fernández, who was locked in a fierce battle with the powerful farming sector.

He left Fernández's government less than a year later and founded a center-right party that was in opposition to his former boss, pushed for more business-friendly policies and accused Fernández of corruption.

Massa's newfound party emerged as the big winner of 2013 midterm elections and many thought he would be a shoo-in for the presidency in 2015, but he came in third place. He later left old rancor aside and joined a coalition with Fernández as running mate on a ticket led by current President Alberto Fernández and after their victory, Massa took on an increasingly starring role in their administration.

Also:

GUATEMALA CITY: The sudden resignation of a Guatemalan Cabinet

minister appears to signal a division within the administration of President **Alejandro Giammattei** over how to remove roadblocks by pro-democracy protesters that have stretched into a third week.

Interior Minister **Napoléon Barrientos**, a retired brigadier general, resigned late Monday following a shooting near one of the roadblocks that killed one person and wounded two others.

Barrientos had said publicly that he preferred to seek dialogue with protesters who have demanded the resignation of Attorney General **Consuelo Porras** over her office's investigations into the election victory of President-elect Bernardo Arévalo.

Porras had urged the blockades' immediate removal, with force if necessary. On Monday, hours before Barrientos quit, she had called for him to be fired for not heeding a court order to clear them.

RIO DE JANEIRO: A draft congressional report on Brazil's Jan. 8 riots on Tuesday accused ex-President **Jair Bolsonaro** of being the insurrection's mastermind and recommended he be criminally charged with attempting to stage a coup.

The report by **Sen. Eliziane Gama** followed months of hearings by a committee investigating the uprising in Brasilia. It proposed charges against Bolsonaro including the violent overthrow of democratic rule, and a slew of other charges against dozens of people citing "extensive documentation," including bank statements, phone records and messages.

Bolsonaro, who lost his reelection bid last fall, has denied any involvement in the rioting, which took place after he had quietly left the country to stay in Florida while refusing to attend the inauguration of incoming President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

down of a 2015 peace agreement signed between the government and the rebels who once drove security forces out of northern Mali as they sought to create the state of Azawad. (AP)

Battle to dethrone Zulu king: The battle for the throne of South Africa's ethnic Zulu nation has reached the courts as a faction of the royal family seeks to dethrone the king after less than a year.

The North Gauteng High Court in the capital Pretoria is hearing legal arguments this week in the royal succession battle between **King Misuzulu kaZwelithini** and his half-brother, Prince Simakade Zulu, who believes he is entitled to be king.

The Zulu nation is the largest ethnic group in South Africa with an estimated 12 million Zulu-speaking people, predominantly in the KwaZulu-Natal region.

They are acknowledged for resisting British colonialism in the early 1800s and the Zulu king is arguably the most influential traditional leader in South Africa.

Prince Simakade wants the court to overturn President Cyril Ramaphosa's recognition of King Misuzulu as the rightful heir.

He is disputing the traditional and legal processes followed to appoint Misuzulu, and his lawyers have told the court that Ramaphosa's decision to recognize Misuzulu and grant him the relevant certificate was rushed. Previous attempts to stop the coronation of the king were unsuccessful last year.

Misuzulu ascended to the throne last year after the 2021 death of his father, King Goodwill Zwelithini, who ruled for over 50 years, making him the longest reigning Zulu monarch. (AP)



United Nations peacekeepers stand guard at the entrance to a polling station covered in separatist flags and graffiti supporting the creation of the independent state of Azawad, in Kidal, Mali on July 27, 2013. (AP)



Museveni



Misuzulu

Africa

Tourists, guide dead in attack: The two tourists killed, along with their tour guide, in an attack near a Ugandan national park were a newlywed couple, the country's president said in a statement Wednesday.

The honeymooners - a South African woman and a British man - died when unknown assailants set ablaze their tour vehicle along a road by Queen Elizabeth National Park. Their local guide was also killed.

President **Yoweri Museveni** described the attack as a "cowardly act on the part of the terrorists attacking innocent civilians and tragic for the couple who were newlyweds and visiting Uganda on their honeymoon." He said the terrorists "will pay with their own wretched lives."

Attacks within and around national parks are rare in Uganda, with specialist police units deployed there. Queen Elizabeth National Park, one of the country's most popular conservation areas, is located in a remote area of southwestern Uganda near the Congo border.

Ugandan police blamed the attack on the Allied Democratic Forces, or ADF, a shadowy rebel outfit with ties to the Islamic State group. Museveni asserted the ADF's responsibility, urging security agencies to ensure the group "is wiped out."

Ugandan troops are currently hunting down the ADF deep inside Congo. Ugandan authorities say hundreds of ADF rebels have been killed in airstrikes in recent months.

According to Museveni, "a small group of terrorists running away from our operations in Congo" attacked the tourist vehicle.

The ADF originated in Uganda but later was forced to flee to eastern Congo, where it is accused of carrying out multiple attacks targeting civilians. The group is not known to claim responsibility for attacks it carries out. (AP)

Peacekeepers departing: United Nations peacekeepers started departing from two bases in northern Mali Monday as part of a forced withdrawal from the country amid increasing insecurity and a rise in attacks by Islamic extremists.

The UN mission said it wanted to complete its departure quickly from two camps in the Kidal region, Tessalit and Aguelhok. Attacks in northern Mali have more than doubled since the peacekeepers completed



Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, (left), and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese exchange rugby jerseys after a bilateral meeting at Parliament House in Canberra Oct 18. Rabuka said his government was 'more comfortable dealing with traditional friends' such as Australia as China pursues closer security ties in the Asia-Pacific region. (AP)

Region	Index	Change	Closing pts
JAPAN	Nikkei	+1.96	32,042.25
EUROPE	Euro Stoxx 50	-32.89	4,119.43
	UK	-53.89	7,621.32
DUBAI	DFM	-54.40	3,883.06
SAUDI	Tadawul	-17.34	10,714.06
PHILIPPINES	PSEi	-12.63	6,268.27
PAKISTAN	KSE 100	-121.69	49,406.19

Business

KFH reports record net profit of KD 461.5 mln (USD 1.5 billion) up to the end of Q3 2023, an increase of 124.3%

EPS of 30.81 fils

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq said that KFH has, by the grace of Allah, reported a record net profit for its shareholders of KD 461.5 million (USD 1.5 billion) up to the end of the third quarter of 2023, an increase of 124.3% compared to the same period last year. KFH showed its highest-ever quarterly profit in history, and the biggest in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Earnings per share up to the end of Q3 2023 reached 30.81 fils; an increase of 61.1% compared to the same period last year.

Net financing income up to the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 713.9 Million; an increase of 40.4% compared to the same period last year.

Net operating income up to the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 739.8 Million; an increase of 59.7% on the same period last year.

Financing receivables as of the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 19.0 Billion, an increase of KD 155 million or 0.8% compared to the end of last year.

Total assets as of the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 37.1 Billion, an increase of KD 99 million or 0.3% compared to the end of last year.

Also, shareholders' equity as of the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 5.2 Billion.

Depositors' accounts as of the end of Q3 2023 reached KD 21.1 Billion, an increase of KD 46 million or 0.2% compared to the end of last year.

In addition, the capital adequacy ratio reached 16.44% which is above the minimum limit required by regulators. This ratio confirms the solid financial position of KFH.

Efficient Strategy

Al Marzouq said that the positive growth in all important financial indicators and the record profits achieved by KFH emphasize the Bank's successful and efficient strategy and the benefits and significance of the acquisition deal.

He pointed out that KFH maintained good ratios in terms of profitability, ROA, ROE, improving asset quality as well as the coverage ratio



Hamad Al Marzouq

Al Marzouq: KFH reported its highest-ever quarterly profits in history and the biggest in the Kuwaiti banking sector

- Net financing income reached KD 713.9 Million; an increase of 40.4%
- Net operating income reached KD 739.8 Million; an increase of 59.7%
- The enhanced synergy across the Group consolidates its global leading position



Abdulwahab Al Rushood

Al Rushood: Expertise and leadership drive KFH to sustain record results

- KFH topped the largest listed companies on Boursa Kuwait
- Strong operational performance and commitment to best responsible banking practices
- 40% growth rate in the usage of digital services through KFHonline

of provisions for non-performing debt, cost to income ratio and all key financial indicators.

Al Marzouq explained that KFH has solid credit ratings, high liquidity ratios and strong capital base that support its business growth and financial position locally and globally. It also enjoys wide geographical expansion in Kuwait, Bahrain, Türkiye, UK, Germany, Egypt, Malaysia, and others.

Elements of strength

Al Marzouq stressed that KFH continues its strategy to improve the role of core banking activity in achieving profitability and sustainable growth, keeping pace with developments in

digitization, AI and innovation. He also highlighted the importance of investing in human resources, enriching knowledge, supporting entrepreneurship and youth, providing financing solutions and corporate banking, supporting SMEs, as well as enhancing synergy across the Group to boost KFH's leading position globally. Moreover, he emphasized the importance of continuing KFH's unprecedented role in social commitment and executing strategic community initiatives inside and outside Kuwait.

Sustainability efforts

Al Marzouq explained the vital role of KFH in green finance and linking

investments to SDG. He said that in appreciation of its outstanding endeavors, KFH has picked up various awards in sustainability such as Best Islamic Bank for ESG- global category 2023 from Euromoney magazine and Kuwait's Best Bank for Sustainable Finance award from Global Finance magazine. These Awards are based on a number of criteria including KFH's evident efforts in applying ESG norms, growth in sustainable instruments and green finance of total financing portfolio.

Financial robustness and credit worthiness

Meanwhile, KFH Acting Group

Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood said that there are many factors behind the record results in Q3 fiscal 2023 and the sustainable growth KFH maintained for several years. These include the optimal implementation of KFH's strategy, robust operational performance, applying best responsible banking practices, risk management, balanced priorities, and strong solvency and creditworthiness.

"As the largest bank in Kuwait, KFH also ranked first among the listed companies on Boursa Kuwait in terms of capital base and market capitalization to reach KD 10.5 billion. This

means that KFH has greater ability to support companies and lead giant financing deals," said Al Rushood.

Digital Excellence

"KFH's strategy of digital transformation gained significant momentum as the digital initiatives and applications included many aspects with the aim of improving customer experience and meeting customers aspirations and increasing financial inclusion. In addition, KFH offers a comprehensive financial solution at the fingertips of the customer anytime and anywhere through alternative channels i.e., KFH Go branches, KFHonline (mobile application and website), as well as KFH XTM devices," explained Al Rushood.

He added that at the end of Q3, KFH customers carried out more than 152 million digital banking transactions through KFHonline on mobile and website, with a growth of about 40% compared to the same period last year.

Awards & Recognitions

Al Rushood added that KFH bagged prestigious world-class awards, the most prominent of which were: 2023 World's Best Islamic Financial Institution and Best Islamic Corporate Bank from Global Finance magazine, Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait, and World Best Islamic Bank for ESG 2023 from Euromoney magazine in addition to three global awards in Human Resources from Brandon Hall Group among many other prestigious awards, according to the criteria and methodologies of each magazine. These awards are in recognition of KFH's pioneering role, prominent contributions in the Islamic banking industry and in offering distinguished financial solutions and services.

He stressed the importance of maintaining positive results and praised the trust of shareholders and customers, and the support of the Board of Directors.

He also praised the role of the regulatory authorities and the efforts of staff and all partners and stakeholders and emphasized the necessity to move forward in strengthening KFH's leadership locally and globally.

Highest in Kuwait banking sector

بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House

Praise be to Allah

Financial Results up to the end of Q3 of 2023

461.5
Million KD

124.3%

Financial Results up to the end of Q3 of 2023

Record Profits

	30/09/2023	30/09/2022	%		30/09/2023	31/12/2022	%
Net Profit for Shareholders "KD Million"	461.5	205.8	124.3	Total Assets "KD Million"	37,069	36,969	0.3
Earnings per Share "Fils"	30.81	19.13	61.1	Financing Receivables "KD Million"	18,995	18,840	0.8
Net Financing Income "KD Million"	713.9	508.5	40.4	Depositors' Accounts "KD Million"	21,076	21,030	0.2
Net Operating Income "KD Million"	739.8	463.4	59.7	Shareholders' Equity "KD Million"	5,216	5,358	(2.6)

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@kfhgroup

oil drops

Kuwait crude oil dropped 39 cents during Tuesday's trading to reach USD 93.81 per barrel compared with USD 94.20 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Wednesday. Brent futures also lost 25 cents to USD 89.90 pb and West Texas Intermediate maintained value at USD 86.66 pb. (KUNA)

ABK appoints Al-Duwaisan as GM of Corporate Banking

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is pleased to announce the appointment of Ahmad Khalid Al-Duwaisan as General Manager of Corporate Banking, effective 15 October 2023. This appointment comes following the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait and is a significant step in ABK's strategy to further strengthen its leadership team and enhance its corporate banking operations. Expressing his confidence, Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait at ABK, said, "We are delighted to welcome Ahmad Khalid Al-Duwaisan to ABK as our new General Manager of Corporate Banking. His extensive experience makes him an excellent addition to our strong leadership team. We are certain that with his guidance, ABK's Corporate Banking

division will continue to grow and thrive." In his part, Al-Duwaisan expressed his gratitude for the opportunity, stating, "I am honored to join ABK and look forward to working with the Bank's talented team to deliver exceptional services to our valued customers and contribute to overall growth and success." With over 20 years of experience in the field of corporate banking, Al-Duwaisan brings a wealth of expertise and knowledge to his new role. Previously serving as the General Manager of the Corporate Banking Group (CBG) at Gulf Bank, he successfully managed a portfolio of KD 4.2 billion funded and unfunded assets, and liabilities of KD 1 billion across various industries.



Ahmed Al-Duwaisan, General Manager of Corporate Banking at ABK

Inflation and growth concerns resurface

Global equity markets broadly negative in third quarter of 2023

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global equity markets were mostly negative in Q3 2023 as gains from earlier in the quarter were wiped out in September – the worst month of the year for equities. Various headwinds weighed on sentiment, most notably rising oil prices which reignited inflation concerns and strengthened the case for extended "higher for longer" Fed monetary tightening. GCC equity markets mostly followed suit despite higher oil prices, influenced by the negative global sentiment.

The concerns about inflation and growth prospects were compounded by elevated bond yields, reflecting expectations of higher inflation and prolonged monetary tightening. The 10-year treasury yield reached a 16-year high of 4.6% in late September, with higher bond yields offering a compelling risk-free investment alternative in an increasingly volatile equity market. Moreover, higher bond yields have shrunk a previously higher equity risk premium,

implying a weaker risk-reward proposition for equity investments. The higher yields, typically a reference for the pricing of loans, carry negative implications on the broader economy, increasing the likelihood of an economic downturn, and suppressing equity valuations, especially for growth stocks. Moving into mid-October, equity markets remained mostly bearish, with adverse geopolitical developments in the Middle East compounding pre-existing market weakness.

European and US equities lead losses in third quarter

Third quarter losses were led by US and European markets, erasing a significant portion of the gains achieved in previous quarters, with the Euro Stoxx 50 and S&P500 down 5.1% and 3.6% q/q, respectively. The downturn was concentrated in September, with declines led by the tech/growth-heavy Nasdaq composite, down a steep 5.8% m/m to the lowest level since May, while the S&P500 fell 4.9% m/m to a 3-month

low. European markets also fell (Euro Stoxx 50 -2.8%) as the ECB raised its key interest rate to a record high, while economic weakness continued to weigh on Chinese equities (CSI 300 -2%), with declines likely curbed by the monetary stimulus measures rolled out by the Chinese authorities during the quarter.

GCC equities track global peers lower despite oil market rally

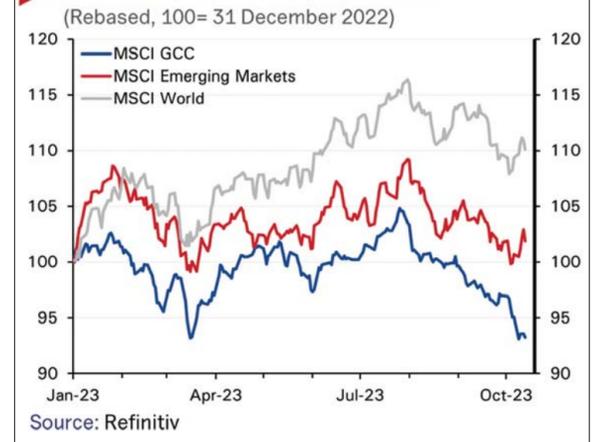
The negative global sentiment spilled over into GCC equity markets, triggering a sell-off despite higher oil prices, pushing year-to-date performance into negative territory for most regional markets. As in global markets, GCC investors were also concerned about higher-for-longer interest rates and their negative implications on oil demand, economic growth, and equity market liquidity. The MSCI GCC fell 3.2% q/q in Q3 2023, losing 2.7% in September alone, led by Saudi Arabia (-3.8% m/m), while Kuwait's All-Share shed 1.7%. The rout accelerated in early October, as the

MSCI GCC fell a further 3.9%, led by Saudi Arabia (-4.3%), while the Kuwait All-Share fell a steep 3.8% (to October 13). The October slump pushed combined GCC equity market returns deeper into negative territory: the MSCI GCC was down -6.8% YTD as of October 13, from -3% as of the end of Q3.

Mounting headwinds dampen equity market outlook

Equity market prospects remain uncertain given the mounting global economic headwinds, which have severely weighed on confidence as of late. The deteriorating geopolitical landscape, oil market volatility, still elevated bond yields and inflation and growth uncertainty are notable downside risks for equity markets. A faltering Chinese economy with a yet-to-be-resolved property crisis is an additional factor weighing on the global demand and growth outlook. The upcoming earnings season will also be key in shaping the equity market's direction. Confidence could be restored should the mentioned risks

Chart 1: Major global equity indices



subside, especially if signs of economic resilience and under-control inflation become apparent, paving the way for a possible equity market recovery, though downside risks could outweigh for now.

Chart 2: Global indices quarterly change

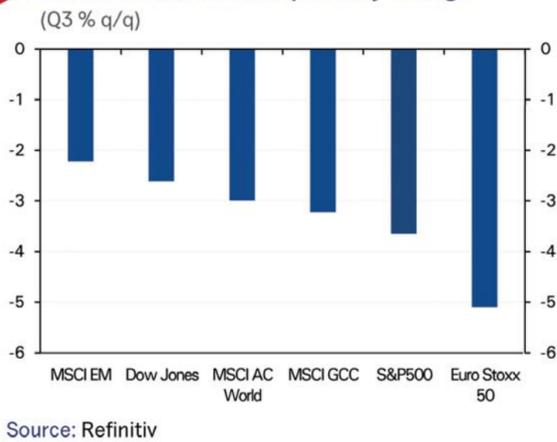


Chart 3: Select GCC equity indices

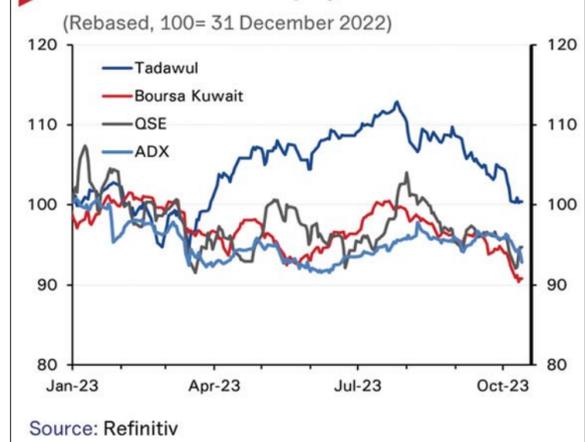
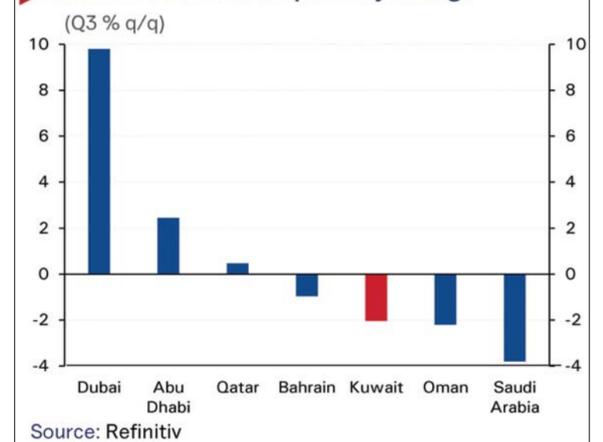


Chart 4: GCC indices quarterly change



UAE market leading region in terms of proceeds

GCC IPOs raise \$ 6.8 billion in first nine months

KUWAIT CITY, October 18: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" released its research report titled "Initial Public Offerings (IPO) in the GCC markets", which raised total proceeds of USD 6.8 billion through 29 offerings during the first nine months of 2023, marking a year-on-year decline in value by 56% compared to the first nine months of 2022, where issuers raised USD 15.6 billion through 30 offerings.

Geographical Allocation:

Markaz's report stated that the UAE led the region in terms of IPO proceeds in 9M-2023, raising a total of USD 3.9 billion from 4 offerings and recording a decrease of 63% in value compared to 9M-2022. The UAE led the region in terms of IPO proceeds in the first nine months of 2023 constituting 58% of total GCC IPO proceeds while recording a decrease of 63% in its value compared to the same period of 2022. Listings in Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) witnessed the highest proceeds with USD 3.7 billion while listings in Dubai Financial Market (DFM) raised a total of USD 0.2 billion. The Saudi Exchange (Tadawul) witnessed 23 initial public offerings

in the stated period of 2023 that generated total proceeds of USD 2.4 billion, constituting 36% of total GCC IPO proceeds. This represents a drop of 46% year-on-year in value when compared to proceeds raised by Saudi IPOs in the first nine months of 2022. Muscat Securities Market (MSM) witnessed 1 IPO with total proceeds of 244 million, constituting 4% of total GCC IPO proceeds raised during the first nine months of 2023.

Top 5 GCC IPOs by Proceeds during 9M-2023:

Markaz's report highlights the top 5 GCC IPOs by proceeds during 9M-2023. Abu Dhabi National Oil Company gas business, ADNOC Gas, has raised USD 2.5 billion in proceeds marking the largest IPO on ADX and surpassing Borouge, which raised USD 2.0 billion in June 2022. ADNOC Gas offered 3.84 billion shares, or 5% stake, which was covered more than 50 times. ADNOC Gas IPO proceeds constituted 36% of total GCC IPO proceeds in the period.

ADNOC Logistics and Services IPO raised a total of USD 771 million in proceeds marking it the second largest IPO on ADX after ADNOC Gas. ADNOC Logistics and

Services offered 1.41 billion shares or 19% stake and was covered 163 times. ADNOC Logistics and Services IPO proceeds constituted 11% of total GCC IPO proceeds in the first nine months of 2023.

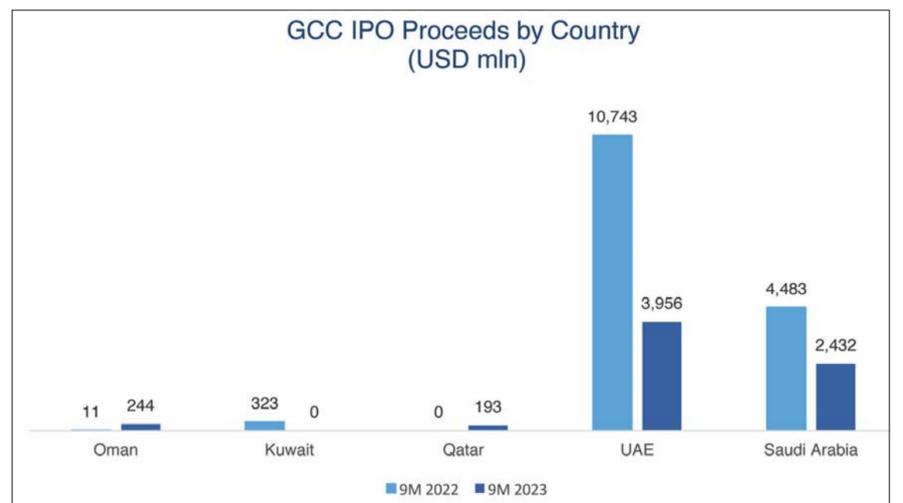
Presight AI IPO raised a total of USD 496 million in proceeds through the sale of 1.35 billion shares, or 32% stake, with total demand of investors which reached 136 times. Presight IPO constituted 7% of total GCC IPO proceeds the stated period of 2023.

Jamjoom Pharma raised a total of USD 336 million from the IPO of its products. The company floated 21 million shares, or 30% stake, with a coverage ratio of 67 times. Jamjoom Pharma IPO proceeds constituted 5% of total GCC IPO proceeds in the period of 2023.

Lumi Rental Company raised a total of USD 290 million through offering 16.5 million shares, or 30% of its capital, on Main with demand that covered the offering 11.5 times. Lumi Rental Company's IPO proceeds constituted 4% of total GCC IPO proceeds in the first nine months of 2023.

GCC IPO Pipeline:

Oman's OQ Gas Network is plan-



ning to float 2 billion shares, or 49% of its share capital, the share sale could raise as much as USD 771 million. Mulkia Investment Company intends to offer 1.3 million shares, or 20% of its capital, on Tadawul in October.

Lana Medical Co. issued the prospectus to list 720,000 shares, or 20% of capital, on Nomu-Parallel Market. The offering period for qualified investors will run for five days from Nov. 12-16. The UAE is also expecting 11 IPOs in 2023, raising upwards to \$2 billion. The Capital Market Authority in Saudi Arabia approved, on Sept. 27, View Limited Real Estate Development Co.'s request to register and offer 600,000 shares, or 18.18% of its share capital, on Nomu-Parallel

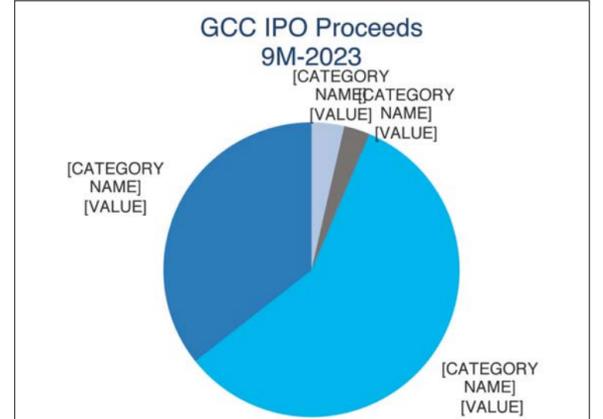
Market. The CMA's approval is valid for six months.

Sources: The information and statistical data herein have been obtained from sources (Bloomberg, Capital IQ, Zawya and daily newspapers) we believe to be reliable but in no way are warranted by us as to its accuracy or completeness. Markaz has no obligation to update, modify or amend this report.

Annual GCC IPO Value (USD mln)



GCC IPO Proceeds 9M-2023



China's Q3 GDP grows 4.9 pct

China's economy grew 4.9 percent year-on-year in the third quarter, official data showed Wednesday.

Gross domestic product (GDP) growth of the world's No. 2 economy in the July-September period slowed from the second-quarter's 6.3 percent expansion, the National Bureau of Statistics said on its Website.

In the first three quarters of this year, the GDP grew by 5.2

percent from the year before, achieving the government-set 2023 growth target of around 5.0 percent.

"The growing momentum in the economic recovery process, a slew of pro-growth policies and a relatively lower base from the same period last year will contribute to the country's economic growth in the fourth quarter," Sheng Laiyun, deputy head of the bureau told a press confer-

ence in Beijing, according to state-run Xinhua News Agency.

"There has been a positive recovery and improvement in supply and demand during the first nine months. Additionally, the expectations and operating situation of the real economy sector have also shown positive signs," Sheng said, adding that the economic operation will continue its sound momentum in the fourth quarter. (KUNA)

EU Economic and Financial Affairs Council added Tuesday Antigua and Barbuda, Belize and Seychelles to the EU blacklist of tax havens saying all three jurisdictions were found to be lacking with regard to the exchange of tax information on request.

The Council, which is meeting in Luxembourg today said in a statement it removed British Virgin Islands, Costa Rica and Marshall Islands from the list saying they have reformed their tax ad-

EU updates tax havens blacklist

ministration and agreed to good tax governance.

With these updates, the EU blacklist consists of the following 16 jurisdictions: American Samoa, Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Bahamas, Belize, Fiji, Guam, Palau, Panama, Russia, Samoa, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and US Virgin Island and Vanuatu.

The Council said it regrets that these jurisdictions are not yet cooperative on tax matters and in-

vites them to improve their legal framework in order to resolve the identified issues.

In addition to the list of non-cooperative tax jurisdictions, the Council approved the usual state of play document (Annex II) which reflects the ongoing EU cooperation with its international partners and the commitments of these countries to reform their legislation to adhere to agreed tax good governance standards (KUNA)

Worries about low-priced Asian imports linger

Major South Korean solar panel plant opens in the US

Open mkts, blns in new investments promised for 'Belt and Road' projects



Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers a speech during the Belt and Road Forum at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023. (AP)

Putin and Xi meet in Beijing, call for close policy coordination

BEIJING, Oct 18, (AP): Chinese President Xi Jinping promised foreign companies greater access to China's huge market and more than \$100 billion in new financing for other developing economies as he opened a forum Wednesday on his signature Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

Xi's initiative has built power plants, roads, railroads and ports around the world and deepened China's ties with Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Mideast. But the massive loans backing the projects have burdened poorer countries with heavy debts, in some cases leading to China taking control of those assets.

At the forum's opening ceremony at the ornate and cavernous Great Hall of the People, Xi promised that two Chinese-backed development banks - the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China - will each set up 350 billion yuan (\$47.9 billion) financing windows. An additional 80 billion yuan (\$11 billion) will be invested in Beijing's Silk Road Fund to support BRI projects.

"We will comprehensively remove restrictions on foreign investment access in the manufacturing sector," Xi said. He said China would further open up "cross-border trade and investment in services and expand market access for digital products" and carry out reforms of state-owned enterprises and in sectors such as the digital economy, intellectual property rights and government procurement.

The pledges of hefty support from Beijing come at a time when China's

economy has slowed and foreign investment has plunged.

Xi alluded to efforts by the United States and its allies to reduce their reliance on Chinese manufacturing and supply chains amid heightened competition and diplomatic frictions and reiterated promises that Beijing would create a fairer environment for foreign firms.

"We do not engage in ideological confrontation, geopolitical games nor clique political confrontation," Xi said. "We oppose unilateral sanctions, economic coercion and the decoupling and severance of chains," a reference to moves elsewhere to diversify industrial supply chains.

Reiterating Chinese complaints that such moves are meant to limit China's growth, Xi said that "viewing others' development as a threat or taking economic interdependence as a risk will not make one's own life better or speed up one's development."

"China can only do well when the world is doing well," he said. "When China does well, the world will get even better."

Representatives from more than 130 mostly developing countries are attending the forum, including at least 20 heads of state and government. Russian President Vladimir Putin is attending, reflecting China's economic and diplomatic support for Moscow amid the isolation brought by its war in Ukraine.

Addressing the forum right after Xi, Putin praised BRI as being "truly important, global, future-oriented, aimed at creating more equitable, multipolar world relations."

"This is truly a global plan," he said, adding that it aligns with Russia's plan "to form a large Eurasian space, as a space of cooperation and interaction of like-minded people, where a variety of integration processes will be linked." He referred to other regional organizations, such as the security-oriented Shanghai Cooperation Organization,

the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Eurasian Economic Union of former Soviet states.

Several European officials including the French and Italian ambassadors to China and former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin walked out while Putin spoke and returned afterwards.

On Tuesday, Putin met with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who is the sole European Union government leader attending the forum. Their meeting was a rare instance of the Russian president meeting a European leader since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine in February 2022.

Putin met with Xi after the opening ceremony.

Also in attendance are the presidents of Indonesia, Argentina, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, Kenya among other countries, as well as U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres. Most Western European countries and U.S. allies sent lower level or former officials to the forum.

Guterres highlighted the BRI's potential to bring development to neglected areas while stressing the need for projects to be environmentally sustainable. He said the initiative could help drive the transition away from reliance on fossil fuels.

"Developing countries will need massive support for a fair, equitable and just energy transition toward renewables while providing affordable electricity to all," Guterres said.

He also called for an "immediate, humanitarian" ceasefire in the Israel-Palestine war after a strike killed hundreds at a Gaza City hospital on Tuesday.

With the BRI, China has become a major financier of development projects on a par with the World Bank. The Chinese government says the initiative has launched more than 3,000 projects and "galvanized" nearly \$1 trillion in investment.

It has also attracted criticism from

the U.S., India and others that China is engaging in "debt trap" diplomacy: Making loans Beijing knew governments would likely default on, enabling Chinese interests to take control of the assets. An oft-cited example is a port that the Sri Lankan government ended up leasing to a Chinese company for 99 years. Many economists say China did not make the bad loans intentionally.

A key concern is whether the BRI can become more sustainable in terms of debt burdens, said Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS China Institute in London. The initiative now aims to become smaller and greener after a decade of big projects that boosted trade but left big debts and raised environmental concerns.

China will also "monitor the debt sustainability of BRI countries more closely," Christoph Nedopil, director of the Asia Institute at Griffith University in Australia, wrote in a report.

"Chinese financial institutions will likely limit their exposure to projects that do not have stable cash flows from within the project," he added. "That being said, 'beautiful' strategic projects, such as strategic railways or ports, will still find Chinese financial creditors."

The leaders of Russia and China met Wednesday in Beijing and called for close foreign policy coordination, as concerns grow about possible conflicts with the West over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and Beijing's rising threats against Taiwan.

At their morning meeting, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin discussed trade and the 10th anniversary of Xi's trademark Belt and Road Initiative that has built highways, ports and power plants across Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere.

The policy has left many states deep in debt to Chinese banks, and the attempt to pump new life into it comes at a time when China's own economy has slowed considerably due to huge overinvestment in real estate.

DALTON, Oct 18, (AP): A South Korean company has begun production at a huge new solar panel factory in Georgia even as industry leaders say surging Asian imports could dampen efforts to make more solar components in the United States.

Qcells, a unit of South Korea's Hanwha Group, said Wednesday that it can now turn out enough solar panels to generate 5.1 gigawatts of power yearly at a two-factory complex in the northwest Georgia city of Dalton. That's almost 40% of U.S. solar panel capacity, according to figures from the Solar Energy Industries Association.

Qcells opened its first factory in 2019 and an even larger plant in phases since, what the company describes as the largest solar investment in American history.

"It's another milestone as we as a company really strive to become a global leader and a U.S. leader in solar manufacturing," said Scott Moskowitz, Qcells head of market strategy and public affairs, speaking with The Associated Press after a plant tour Monday.

The company says its new plant is the first solar module factory in the U.S. to begin production since passage of President Joe Biden's signature climate legislation. Qcells' \$208 million investment again shows how federal incentives are spurring a nationwide boom in renewable energy and electric vehicles.

Industry jitters about a flood of cheap solar panels from overseas show how dependent on federal policy the solar industry remains. That's a threat in part because former President Donald Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican nomination, is hostile to renewable energy.

Qcells leaders say the new plant showcases more efficient equipment and processes, part of a much larger investment intended to bring key steps in solar manufacturing to the U.S. A solar panel, or module, is assembled from solar cells most commonly made from wafers cut from ingots of polysilicon.

Today, the company's solar cells are imported from Asia. But 30 miles (50 kilometers) south of Dalton in Cartersville, Qcells is building a \$2.3 billion complex to take polysilicon refined in Washington state and make ingots, wafers and solar cells - in addition to 3.3 gigawatts of solar modules. That plant is scheduled to open in phases starting next year.

Currently, no silicon ingots or wafers are made in the U.S. But Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, besides offering a extra tax credit on American-made solar equipment, lets manufacturers earn incentives for every unit of polysilicon they refine and every wafer, cell and module they make. For example, Qcells earns a tax credit of 7 cents per watt

for every panel it makes in Dalton, or \$34.30 for every 490-watt residential panel made.

Even with that boost, solar industry leaders warn, factories will struggle to compete with a new spike in cheap Asian imports. They're again urging federal officials to investigate whether solar panels are being dumped at unfairly low prices. Previous investigations have led to anti-dumping tariffs on panels made in China and Taiwan.

U.S. officials shouldn't regard the spike as a normal market fluctuation, said Mike Carr, executive director of the Solar Energy Manufacturers for America Coalition, a group that includes Qcells. He argues Chinese component makers are pushing out cheap modules from southeast Asian factories, tanking panel prices to ensure Chinese dominance and smother U.S. manufacturing.

"This is likely to be the No. 1 new energy source in the 21st century," Carr said. "It's already cheaper than pretty much anything else to install. It is the path to meeting our climate goals. So I think it becomes a real national security kind of concern. The way OPEC is in oil markets, we don't want to allow China to become that same controller of supply in solar."

Qcells sees current low prices as a "near-term challenge" in achieving economies of scale and serving a long-term market, Moskowitz said. Beyond trade policy, he said, requiring federal agencies to buy American-made products and promoting panels produced with fewer carbon emissions could bolster Qcells.

Politics envelops the solar industry. Vice President Kamala Harris visited the plant earlier this year. At the state level, Republican Gov. Brian Kemp has wrestled with Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff over political credit for electric vehicle and renewable energy investments flowing to Georgia.

"Out of all the places Qcells could have gone, they chose to operate and expand here in Georgia because of our unrivaled assets and the competitive package we put together," Kemp said in a statement.

Ossoff and fellow Georgia Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock note they authored the component incentives that benefit Qcells, emphasizing federal policy.

"Our state is emerging as the advanced energy capital of the nation, thanks to federal infrastructure and manufacturing policies that are benefiting Georgia more than any other state," Ossoff said in a statement.

Qcells, for its part, praises both state and federal assistance.

"To build these markets up and to have them work, you need a whole government approach," Moskowitz said.

Still way more than BoE target of 2%

Inflation in UK 'unchanged' at 6.7 percent in September

LONDON, Oct 18, (AP): Inflation in the U.K. held steady at 6.7% in September as easing food and drink price rises were offset by higher prices at the pump for motorists, official figures showed Wednesday.

The flat reading reported by the Office for National Statistics was disappointing as most economists had predicted another, albeit modest, fall.

It means that the U.K.'s inflation rate remains more than three times higher than the Bank of England's target rate of 2%. The bank, though, is not expected to raise interest rates at its next policy meeting in early November, opting instead to keep its main borrowing rate unchanged at the 15-year high of 5.25%.

Last month, the bank brought an end to nearly two years of interest rate rises as inflation fell from multi-decade highs above 11%.

Most economists expect a sizeable decline in inflation next month.

"Progress on falling inflation has stalled, for one month at least," said James Smith, research director at the Resolution Foundation think tank. "It should fall sharply next month to below 5%, as energy prices fall for most people."

The Bank of England, like other central banks, has raised interest rates aggressively from near zero as it sought to counter price rises first stoked by supply chain issues during the coronavirus pandemic and then Russia's invasion of Ukraine,

which pushed up food and energy costs.

Higher interest rates, which cool the economy by making it more expensive to borrow and bearing down on spending, have contributed to bringing down inflation worldwide. Though most economies have avoided falling into recession, fears remain that the British economy could start to see output shrinking in coming months, hardly the best backdrop for the governing Conservative Party ahead of a general election.

The U.K. has the highest inflation rate among the Group of Seven leading industrial economies - the U.S.'s rate for example is 3.7%.

Some economists attribute that to Britain's departure from the European Union, which has created worker shortages in some sectors and frictions in trade, raising costs for businesses.

The flat reading will raise concerns, certainly among homeowners, that rates will stay higher for longer. Because there is a lag between actual rate hikes and mortgage rates, lots of homeowners and renters have yet to see increases in their housing costs.

Unlike in the U.S., for example, most homeowners in Britain lock in mortgage rates for only a few years, so those whose deals expire soon know that they face much higher borrowing costs in light of the sharp rise in interest rates over the past couple of years.

Europeans love them anyway

Europe is looking to fight the flood of Chinese electric vehicles

LONDON, Oct 18, (AP): When Laima Sprunge-Janssen was looking to replace her French-made gasoline-powered SUV with an electric car, she considered models from Volvo and Nissan.

The Volvo extras she wanted would have busted her budget, while the Nissan lacked the "wow factor." The Copenhagen, Denmark, resident ended up buying a compact SUV from China's BYD.

"I really, really love the car," Sprunge-Janssen said. For the equivalent of about \$50,000, the Atto 3 SUV came with "all these goodies" like a 360-degree dash cam, two years of free charging and an extra set of winter tires. Her husband likes it so much he's considering buying another BYD to replace their other car, from Volkswagen's Skoda brand.

"I'm sorry, Europe. Go home," she said. "China has a better offer."

Her enthusiasm underscores how Chinese automakers are winning over drivers as they make major inroads into Europe's electric vehicle market,

challenging long-established homegrown brands in an industry that's key to the continent's green energy transition.

The competitive threat has spurred the European Union to launch an investigation into Beijing's support for its EV industry. That adds to tech-related tensions between the West and China, which is one of Europe's biggest trading partners and the world's biggest auto market.

China's EV onslaught, along with massive U.S. clean energy funding that has drawn investment away from Europe, shows how the 27-nation bloc is caught in the middle of the global race for green technology.

Chinese EV makers are drawn to Europe because auto import tariffs are just 10% versus 27.5% in the U.S., independent auto analyst Matthias Schmidt said. Europe also has the world's second-biggest EV battery market after China.

Nevertheless, the geopolitics. Climate-conscious car buyers in Europe who are grappling with an in-

creased cost of living rave about how Chinese EVs are affordable yet packed with features and stylish design. Concerns about the threat to local carmakers and jobs just aren't a factor for them.

British retiree John Kirkwood replaced his Volkswagen Passat three years ago with an MG5 station wagon because the 30,000-pound (\$36,000) price tag "wiped the floor" with its nearest rival - a Kia that cost thousands more.

"It's nice. It's quiet, it's refined" and very quick, Kirkwood said, adding that he had few qualms about British brand MG's Chinese ownership.

MG - owned by SAIC Motor, China's biggest automaker - is the largest Chinese EV player in Europe, BYD, backed by billionaire investor Warren Buffett, is growing fast. There's also Geely, which owns Sweden's Volvo and a stable of EV brands including Polestar, Lynk & Co. and British sports car maker Lotus. Behind them are a slew of startups, like NIO and Xpeng.

'Additional facts have come to light that show his criminal culpability'

Prosecutors seeking to recharge Baldwin in 'Rust' set shooting

SANTA FE, N.M., Oct. 18, (AP) — Special prosecutors are seeking to recharge actor Alec Baldwin in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on the set of a Western movie in 2021, describing Tuesday their preparations to present new information to a grand jury.

New Mexico-based prosecutors Kari Morrissey and Jason Lewis said they'll present their case to the grand jury within the next two months, noting "additional facts" have come to light in the shooting on the set of the film "Rust" that killed Halyna Hutchins.

Baldwin, a coproducer of the film, was pointing a gun at Hutchins during a rehearsal inside a rustic chapel on a movie-set ranch near Santa Fe when the gun went off on Oct. 21, 2021, killing the cinematographer and wounding director Joel Souza.

"Additional facts have come to light that we believe show Mr. Baldwin has criminal culpability in the death of Halyna Hutchins and the shooting of Joel Souza," Morrissey and Lewis said in an email. "We believe the appropriate course of action is to permit a panel of New Mexico citizens to determine from here whether Mr. Baldwin should be held over for criminal trial."

Baldwin has said he pulled back the hammer - but not the trigger - and the gun fired. Attorneys for Baldwin said the latest move by prosecutors is misguided.

"It is unfortunate that a terrible tragedy has been turned into this misguided prosecution. We will answer any charges in court," Luke Nikas and Alex Spiro said in an email.

Special prosecutors initially dismissed an involuntary manslaughter

charge against Baldwin in April, saying they were informed the gun might have been modified before the shooting and malfunctioned. They later pivoted and began weighing whether to refile a charge against Baldwin after receiving a new analysis of the gun.

The recent gun analysis from experts in ballistics and forensic testing based in Arizona and New Mexico relied on replacement parts to reassemble the gun fired by Baldwin - after parts of the pistol were broken during earlier testing by the FBI. The report examined the gun and markings it left on a spent cartridge to conclude that the trigger had to have been pulled or depressed.

Evidence

The analysis led by Lucien Haag of Forensic Science Services in Arizona stated that although Baldwin repeatedly denies pulling the trigger, "given the tests, findings and observations reported here, the trigger had to be pulled or depressed sufficiently to release the fully cocked or retracted hammer of the evidence revolver."

An earlier FBI report on the agency's analysis of the gun found that, as is common with firearms of that design, it could go off without pulling the trigger if force was applied to an uncocked hammer - such as by dropping the weapon.

The only way the testers could get it to fire was by striking the gun with a mallet while the hammer was down and resting on the cartridge, or by pulling the trigger while it was fully cocked. The gun eventually broke during testing.

Authorities have not specified exactly how live ammunition found its way on set and into the .45-caliber revolver made by an Italian company that specializes in 19th century reproductions.

The weapons supervisor on the movie set, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, has pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter and evidence tampering in the case. Her trial is scheduled to begin in February.

In March, "Rust" assistant director and safety coordinator David Halls pleaded no contest to unsafe handling of a firearm and received a suspended sentence of six months of probation. He agreed to cooperate in the investigation of the shooting.

In the revived case against Baldwin, first reported by NBC News, a grand jury would "determine whether probable cause exists to bind Baldwin over on criminal charges," special prosecutors said.

The 2021 shooting resulted in a series of civil lawsuits centered on accusations that the defendants were lax with safety standards. The cases have included wrongful death claims filed by members of Hutchins' family. Baldwin and other defendants have disputed the accusations that they were lax with safety standards.

The company Rust Movie Productions has paid a \$100,000 fine to state workplace safety regulators following a scathing narrative of safety failures in violation of standard industry protocols, including testimony that production managers took limited or no action to address two misfires on set before the fatal shooting. The filming of "Rust" resumed this year in Montana, under an agreement with the cinematographer's widow, Matthew Hutchins, that made him an executive producer.

Film

Variety



This image released by Apple TV+ shows Lily Gladstone, (left), and director Martin Scorsese on the set of 'Killers of the Flower Moon.' (AP)

Film

'Killers of the Flower Moon' rooted in personal exploration

Scorsese still curious, in awe of cinema

NEW YORK, Oct. 18, (AP) — A moment from years ago keeps replaying in Martin Scorsese's mind.

When Akira Kurosawa was given an honorary Academy Award in 1990, the then 80-year-old Japanese filmmaker of "Seven Samurai" and "Ikiru," in his brief, humble speech, said he hadn't yet grasped the full essence of cinema.

It struck Scorsese, then in post-production on "Goodfellas," as a curious thing for such a master filmmaker to say. It wasn't until Scorsese also turned 80 that he began to comprehend Kurosawa's words. Even now, Scorsese says he's just realizing the possibilities of cinema.

"I've lived long enough to be his age and I think I understand now," Scorsese said in a recent interview. "Because there is no limit. The limit is in yourself. These are just tools, the lights and the camera and that stuff. How much further can you explore who you are?"

Scorsese's lifelong exploration has seemingly only grown deeper and more self-examining with time. In recent years, his films have swelled in scale and ambition as he's plumbed the nature of faith ("Silence") and loss ("The Irishman").

His latest, "Killers of the Flower Moon," about the systematic killing of Osage Nation members for their oil-rich land in the 1920s, is in many ways far outside Scorsese's own experience. But as a story of trust and betrayal - the film is centered on the loving yet treacherous relationship between Mollie Kyle (Lily Gladstone), a member of a larger Osage family, and Ernest Burkhart (Leonardo DiCaprio), a WWI veteran who comes to work for his corrupt uncle (Robert De Niro) - it's a profoundly personal film that maps some of the themes of Scorsese's gangster films onto American history.

More than the back-room dealings of "Casino," the bloody rampages of "Gangs of New York" or the financial swindling of "The Wolf of Wall Street," "Killers of the Flower Moon" is the story of a crime wave. It's a disturbingly insidious one, where greed

and violence infiltrate the most intimate relationships - a genocide in the home. All of which, to Scorsese, harkens back to the tough guys and the weak-willed go-alongs he witnessed in his childhood growing up on Elizabeth Street in New York.

"That's been my whole life, dealing with who we are," says Scorsese. "I found that this story lent itself to that exploration further."

"Killers of the Flower Moon," a \$200-million, 206-minute epic produced by Apple that's in theaters Friday, is an audacious big swing by Scorsese to continue his kind of ambitious, personal filmmaking on the largest scale at a time when such grand, big-screen statements are a rarity.

Spectacle

Scorsese considers "Killers of the Flower Moon" "an internal spectacle." The Oklahoma-set film, adapted from David Grann's 2017 bestseller, might be called his first Western. But while developing Grann's book, which chronicles the Osage murders and the birth of the FBI, Scorsese came to the realization that centering the film on federal investigator Tom White was a familiar type of Western.

"I realized: 'You don't do that. Your Westerns are the Westerns you saw in the late '40s and early '50s, that's it. Peckinpah finished that. 'Wild Bunch,' that's the end. Now they're different," he says. "It represented a certain time in who we were as a nation and a certain time in the world - and the end of the studio system. It was a genre. That folklore is gone."

Scorsese, after conversations with Leonardo DiCaprio, pivoted to the story of Ernest and Mollie and a perspective closer to Osage Nation. Consultations with the tribe continued and expanded to include accurately capturing language, traditional clothing and customs.

"It's historical that Indigenous Peoples can tell their story at this level. That's never happened before as far as I know," says Geoffrey Standing Bear,

Principal Chief of Osage Nation. "It took somebody who could know that we've been betrayed for hundreds of years. He wrote a story about betrayal of trust."

"Killers of the Flower Moon" for Scorsese grew out of a period of reflection and reevaluation during the pandemic. COVID, he says, was "a gamechanger." For a filmmaker whose time is so intensely scheduled, the break was in some ways a relief, and it allowed him a chance to reconsider what he wants to dedicate himself to. For him, preparing a film is a meditative process.

"I don't use a computer because I tried a couple times and I got very distracted. I get distracted as it is," Scorsese says. "I've got films, I've got books, I've got people. I've only begun this year to read emails. Emails, they scare me. It says 'CC' and there are a thousand names. Who are these people?"

Scorsese is laughing when he says this, surely aware that he's playing up his image as a member of the old guard. (A moment later he adds that voice-mail "is interesting to do at times.") Yet he's also been enough with technology to digitally de-age Robert De Niro and make cameos in daughter Francesca's TikTok videos.

Scorsese has for years been the preeminent conscience of cinema, passionately arguing for the place of personal filmmaking in an era of movie-going where films can be devalued as "content," theater screens are monopolized by Marvel and big-screen vision can be shrunk down on streaming platforms.

"I'm trying to keep alive the sense that cinema is an artform," Scorsese says. "The next generation may not see it that way because as children and younger people, they're exposed to films that are wonderful entertainment, beautifully made, but are purely diversionary. I think cinema can enrich your life."

"As I'm leaving, I'm trying to say: Remember, this can really be something beautiful in your life."

LOS ANGELES: Britney Spears wrote that she had an abortion while dating Justin Timberlake more than 20 years ago, according to a peek inside her hotly anticipated memoir.

"If it had been left up to me alone, I never would have done it," she writes of the procedure, according to the excerpt from "The Woman in Me" published Tuesday in People magazine. "And yet Justin was so sure that he didn't want to be a father."

The pregnancy "was a surprise, but for me, it wasn't a tragedy," she wrote in the excerpt, saying that she had wanted to start a family with Timberlake - it was just earlier than expected.

"But Justin definitely wasn't happy about the pregnancy. He said we weren't ready to have a baby in our lives, that we were way too young," she wrote. The couple broke up in 2002. It's unclear when the pregnancy happened.

Representatives for Spears declined to offer further comment. Representatives for Timberlake did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press. The AP has not been able to independently review a copy of the "The Woman in Me" yet.

Spears, a prolific user of social media, has not posted to Instagram or X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, since the People stories were published.

In the excerpt published in People, she characterized the abortion as "one of the most agonizing things I have ever experienced in my life."

Spears' long-awaited memoir will be published Oct. 24, just months after her divorce from Sam Asghari was announced and promising to shed light on the 41-year-old's tumultuous decades in the spotlight.

"No one knows what I really thought ... until now," reads a teaser for the book she posted Sunday. The audiobook will be narrated by actor Michelle Williams.

Hailing from Kentwood, Louisiana, Spears rose to fame as a tween on "The Mickey Mouse Club," alongside other future stars like Ryan Gosling and Timberlake - a trajectory chronicled in other excerpts published by People.

Despite some further attempts at acting - in the People excerpts, she says the lead in "The Notebook" came down to her and Rachel McAdams and that she was relieved

when 2002's "Crossroads" was "was pretty much the beginning and end of my acting career" - she found indelible stardom with her music career, starting with 1999's "...Baby One More Time."

She had two sons with Kevin Federline, but was placed under a court-ordered conservatorship - mostly under the supervision



Spears



Timberlake

of her father - that controlled her life, money and voice after public breakdowns. That conservatorship would last nearly 14 years, ending in late 2021, after a swelling #FreeBritney movement that helped secure new limits on conservatorships in California.

Many of Spears' allegations against her father and others who

operated the conservatorship are expected to be heard in a civil trial scheduled for next year.

A 2021 documentary, "Framing Britney Spears," included an old interview in which Timberlake spoke of sleeping with a former girlfriend and indicated he ridiculed her in his "Cry Me A River" music video. That sparked a backlash in which

fans accused the former NSYNC member of contributing to Spears' breakdown and also renewed ire about his role in Janet Jackson's so-called wardrobe malfunction during the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show. Subsequently, he apologized to Spears and Jackson "because I care for and respect these women and I know I failed." (AP)

Features

ARABO TIMES

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People & Places

People

'Revelation liberating'

Pinkett Smith opens up on feeling worthy

NEW YORK, Oct. 18, (AP): Jada Pinkett Smith is feeling free these days. She's no longer hiding that she's been separated from megastar husband Will Smith for seven years.

"It's a weight off my shoulders, honestly," said Pinkett Smith whose new memoir, "Worthy," is out now. "Ever since the Oscars, it's so interesting how such an intense event can bring you closer together, and I would say that after that, we really dove in and dug in and got to this beautiful place we are now."

The actor, who first revealed the bombshell news to NBC's Hoda Kotb last week, details her much-gossiped about marriage throughout the biography. Through the years, the couple has faced rumors - of having an open marriage, a swinging lifestyle and questions about their sexual orientations - all while wearing smiles, seemingly portraying a picture-perfect life.

The daytime Emmy award winner briefly thought about scrapping the project; she started writing the 400-plus page book, co-written with Mim Eichler Rivas, at the top of 2022. But after Will infamously slapped Chris Rock in real time during the Oscars over a joke about her shaved head, Pinkett Smith wondered if writing a book was the right choice.

"The only time I reconsidered possibly was after the Oscars...because I was like I can't write a book and not talk about this piece," she told The Associated Press, admitting that she felt like the scapegoat for Will's actions. "It took me a while to figure that out."

While the Smiths' marriage dynamic may still be confusing to some - they're technically still married but have lived separate lives for years with divorce not an option - the "Collateral" actress says they're working toward resolution.

Healing

"We love each other...we are figuring out right now as we speak, what that looks like for us. But there's no being separated. There's no, 'we're going to get divorced,'" she said. "I'm not giving up on that dude. And he's not giving up on me... So, let's just stop and let's get to this deep healing and figure this out."

With talent and serendipitous timing, the Baltimore native headed to Hollywood in the early '90s during a peak period where the industry was welcoming in young, Black actors and creatives. She eventually landed a role on "A Different World," the "The Cosby Show"-spinoff which inspired a generation of young African Americans to pursue college educations, particularly at historically Black colleges and universities. She went on to star in films like "Menace II Society," "Jason's Lyric," "Set It Off," "The Nutty Professor" and in "The Matrix" franchise.

Pinkett Smith says while her husband had aspirations to become a global, superstar actor, she didn't share those same dreams which caused friction. While she considered how revealing intimate details to the world would further affect their family, it's her story to tell - "before Jada Pinkett Smith, there was Jada Pinkett," she notes.

"Will completely understood that this was my point of view and that I had a right to talk about my point of view," Pinkett Smith said of her husband, who posted an Instagram video with the cheeky caption "notifications off" on Sunday in reaction to the media frenzy the book has stirred. "We're even talking about writing a book called 'Don't Try This at Home'... just talking step-by-step of where were our pitfalls and how we got through everything we've gotten through."

In the Dey Street-HarperCollins book, Pinkett Smith intimately chronicles everything from childhood lessons learned while in her grandmother's garden, navigating being the child of drug addicts, along with tales of dealing drugs as a teen and the consequences that followed. In another revelation, she describes contemplating taking her own life while crushed by depression during a midlife crisis after turning 40.

Criticism

But the book also sheds light on her path to Hollywood, creative endeavors and her journey through motherhood with her two children with Will, Jaden and Willow, and her "bonus" child Trey from Will's first marriage. She details the unconventional freedoms she's allowed the children to have that have drawn criticism at times. There are writing prompts in the memoir, encouraging readers to reflect on their own lives.

In the autobiography, Pinkett Smith also discusses her friendship with rap icon, actor and activist Tupac Shakur. She says there was a deep love between the two but maintain they never had a romantic feelings toward each other. They met in high school at Baltimore School for the Arts, and they both would grow up to navigate Hollywood and the trappings of fame. Shakur was killed in 1996.

Last month, Las Vegas authorities arrested Duane "Keffe D" Davis, the last living suspect in the drive-by shooting. Davis has been charged with murder.

"I'm glad that the arrest was made (of) this person we always knew was in the car with the person who shot 'Pac. And I'm hoping we get more information," said Pinkett Smith. "I want to know who called the hit."

The 52-year-old says she doesn't suffer from depression or suicidal thoughts anymore, and she credits the controversial, plant-based psychedelic ayahuasca for her healing. Pinkett Smith says she's learned to keep a positive mindset, supported by a daily routine that includes meditation, prayer, scripture readings from various religions and yoga.

Pinkett Smith has launched a 13-city "Our Worthy Journey" book tour with stops that include London, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. While not everything in her life is perfect, she feels worthy these days.

"(I'm) feeling so comfortable in my skin. I know who I am. And I know who I am in regards to my relationship to Divine Source," she said, pointing to the sky before holding her heart. "I know that I have everything that I need right here and that anything else that anybody else wants to offer me is a gift - is a gift! And I'm deeply grateful."



Pinkett Smith



This image released by Sesame Workshop shows Brandi Carlile, (center), with muppet characters Big Bird, (left), and Mr. Snuffleupagus on the set of the children's show 'Sesame Street.' (AP)

Television

Season to premiere with cooking octopus and celebs

Iconic 'Sesame Street' back with more fun

NEW YORK, Oct. 18, (AP): The upcoming season of "Sesame Street" features an octopus as a chef, an exploration of American Sign Language and Quinta Brunson giving Cookie Monster a little bit of attitude.

The 54th season of the iconic children's show debuts Nov. 9 on MAX with a gentle satire of Brunson's hit mockumentary "Abbott Elementary," mimicking that show's single-camera style and confessional cut-aways.

"It was really fun to kind of zoom in on Cookie Monster making a joke about eating a cookie and Quinta Brunson giving him a little bit of side-eye," says Executive Producer Sal Perez in an exclusive interview previewing the season.

Brunson came in with an advantage most celebrity guests don't have: In her early days in Los Angeles, she attended a puppet workshop created by Jim Henson, creator of The Muppets.

"When a celebrity or a guest comes on set with that sort of knowledge and understanding, it just takes the content that we're doing that much further," says Perez. "We were lucky to have her."

Brunson joins other celebrities during the season like Ariana DeBose, Brandi Carlile, Eugene Cordeiro, Dan Levy and Kal Penn, who booked his ticket after making a plea dressed as Cookie Monster on "Live with Kelly & Mark" to be on "Sesame Street."

Other highlights this season include an exploration of Bessie Coleman, the first woman of African American and Native American descent to earn her pilot's license in the US. And Elmo celebrates Alphabet Day by singing the ABC song while

a deaf friend signs the alphabet using American Sign Language.

Grover takes over Hooper's store and brings in his chef, who happens to be a muppet octopus. The only flaw is that the chef only makes bread - from pita to baguettes.

"So no matter what anybody orders in the restaurant, the only thing that the octopus can make is bread," he says. "It was a really, really unique way to show different cultural identities within food."

The season also includes a segment called "Proud of My Name," where Rosita feels frustrated when her basketball coach shortens her name and Elmo and Gabrielle encourage her to speak up that she wants to be called "Rosita."

Education

"Sesame Street," designed by education professionals and child psychologists, is shown in more than 150 countries, has won 193 Emmys, 10 Grammys and received a Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime artistic achievement, the first time a television program got the award.

In 2015, the longtime PBS show began a pact with HBO that gave the premium cable channel the right to air new episodes nine months before they air on PBS.

This season marks the second that Perez is executive producing the show and returns to last season's self-identity and belonging curriculum. He grew up watching "Sesame Street" and joined the Sesame Workshop in 2006. During this latest season's filming, he also welcomed a second child. His first, a daughter now 4, is, of course, a fan.

"I would be lying if I didn't say that there were a few episodes in the season that were inspired by some of the trials and tribulations of my then-

2 or 3-year old as she was growing up," says Perez. Some of those include being scared by slides and the wonders of flamingos.

DeBose - the Broadway star and Oscar-winner for "West Side Story" - kicks off the season singing the song "Friendship Feeling" with Elmo, Abby and Cookie Monster.

"It's really fun when you have someone like that who's so excited to be with us and able to sing along. Obviously having a wonderful voice does not hurt," says Perez.

Carlile recorded a song about nature with a special twist: Both Big Bird and Snuffleupagus joined her, a rare puppet pairing these days on "Sesame Street." Perez calls it "magic."

"To be honest, it was the first time in this role that I've seen Snuffy in person and I teared up," he says. "I made sure to be on set because it's such an emotional moment for everybody."

Also:

LOS ANGELES: The sweet and smart comedy "Upload" is back on Prime Video for a third season. Created by Greg Daniels ("The Office"), the series takes place in the (near) future where one can opt to be uploaded to a virtual afterlife. The more money you have, the better the second life is. It stars **Robbie Amell**, a computer programmer, who was uploaded in season one - and falls for his still-living digital concierge, Nora (Andy Allo.) The first two episodes drop Friday, Oct. 20.

Detective **Harry Bosch** returns in the second season of "Bosch: Legacy" on FreeVe on Friday, Oct. 20. Bosch was originally introduced by author **Michael Connelly** in his books and adapted for TV. He's now retired from the LAPD, solving cases as a private investigator.



A Bonhams employee displays 'Miliu jaune' by Wassily Kandinsky during a media opportunity at Bonhams auction rooms in London, Monday, Oct. 16. The painting estimated at 850,000-1,250,000 UK Pounds (1,000,000-1,500,000 US Dollars) goes on sale in the Impressionist and Modern Art Sale on Oct. 19. (AP)



Martin



Yang

Variety

LOS ANGELES: The Oscars are enlisting a group of live television veterans to oversee its 96th show in March.

Raj Kapoor will serve as executive producer and showrunner, **Katy Mullan** will executive produce and **Hamish Hamilton** will return to direct for the first time in nearly a decade, the film academy said Tuesday.

Kapoor, who has worked on the Oscars for the past seven years, also has credits on the Grammys, the Emmys and "Adele: One Night Only," while Mullan produced "Beauty and the Beast: A 30th Celebration" and the opening and closing ceremonies of the London Olympics. Hamilton, meanwhile, has three Academy Award telecasts on his resume already, including the 82nd Oscars hosted by **Steve Martin** and **Alec Baldwin** and the 86th Oscars hosted by **Ellen DeGeneres**, in addition to 14 Super Bowl halftime shows and the London Olympics opening.

"Their deep love of cinema, fresh vision, and tremendous live television expertise is perfect for our reinvigorated show," Academy CEO **Bill Kramer** and Academy President **Janet Yang** said in a joint statement.

No host has been announced yet. The Hollywood actors strike has disrupted much of the traditional leadup to awards season, with actors unable to promote projects. But the Oscars, which celebrate all aspects of filmmaking, are forging ahead with plans. The 96th Oscars are scheduled for Sunday, March 10, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.

"Having worked with Raj, Katy and Hamish on many special and memorable projects over the years, we have full confidence in their vision for the 96th Oscars," Walt Disney Television executive **Rob Mills** said.

"Their creativity, infectious energy and sincere love for the movies will be the ticket to making this year's ceremony a night to remember," Mills added.

Lisa Love and **Raúl Ávila** will also return to design the "red carpet aesthetic," which last year included scuttling a red carpet altogether. There was instead a champagne-colored walkway to the theater.

Like many awards shows, the Oscars have suffered decreased ratings in recent years, and not just because of the pandemic editions.

But they've also had a modest rebound with the past two shows. This year's ceremony, hosted by **Jimmy Kimmel**, drew 18.7 million viewers in March. Though much improved from the 10.4 million who tuned into the Union Station Oscars in 2021, and the 16.6 million who witnessed **Will Smith** slap **Chris Rock** in 2022, it was also the third lowest rated show. Prior to 2018, viewership had never

been lower than 32 million.

Conventional wisdom suggests that viewership is directly related to the popularity of the movies nominated for the top awards. This year might have the answer yet; but that's a lot of pressure to put on "Barbenheimer." (AP)

MIAMI: Lolita, an orca whale held captive for more than a half-century, died from old age and multiple chronic illnesses, according to a report released Tuesday by the Miami Seaquarium.



Lauryn Hill performs during 'The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill' 25th anniversary tour on Tuesday, Oct. 17, at the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J. (AP)

Lolita - also known as Tokitae, or Toki - died Aug. 18 at the age of 57. Her carcass was transported to the University of Georgia, where a necropsy was completed the next day. The Seaquarium released an executive summary of her necropsy Tuesday to the Miami Herald.

The exam supported early reports from the Seaquarium, which cited kidney failure as the cause of death. The veterinarian who conducted the necropsy found that Lolita suffered from acute and chronic bronchointerstitial pneumonia and renal degeneration, as well as a chronic condition of the heart implying the degeneration of the cardiac valves.

Animal rights activists had been fighting for years to have Lolita freed from her tank at the Seaquarium. The park's relatively new owner, The Dolphin Company, and the nonprofit Friends of Toki announced a plan in March to possibly move her to a natural sea pen in the Pacific Northwest, with the financial backing of Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay.

Lolita retired from performing last spring as a condition of the park's new exhibitor's license with the US Department of Agriculture. She had not been publicly displayed since. In recent months, new upgrades had been installed to better filter the pool and regulate her water temperature.

Federal and state regulators would have had to approve any plan to move Lolita, and that could have taken months or years. The 5,000-pound (2,267-kilogram) orca had been living for years in a tank that measures 80 feet by 35 feet (24 meters by 11 meters) and is 20 feet (6 meters) deep. (AP)

The Conversation

Experts reveal the dual role of interleukin-31

Paradox: Molecule that causes itching can ease skin inflammation

By Marlys Fassett

University of California, San Francisco

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

Itching can be uncomfortable, but it's a normal part of your skin's immune response to external threats. When you're itching from an encounter with poison ivy or mosquitoes, consider that your urge to scratch may have evolved to get you to swat away disease-carrying pests.

However, for many people who suffer from chronic skin diseases like eczema, the sensation of itch can fuel a vicious cycle of scratching that interrupts sleep, reduces productivity and prevents them from enjoying daily life. This cycle is caused by sensory neurons and skin immune cells working together to promote itching and skin inflammation.

But, paradoxically, some of the mechanisms behind this feedback loop also stop inflammation from getting worse. In our newly published research, my team of immunologists and neuroscientists and I discovered that a specific type of itch-sensing neuron can push back on the itch-scratch-inflammation cycle in the presence of a small protein. This protein, called interleukin-31, or IL-31, is typically involved in triggering itching.

This negative feedback loop - like the vicious cycle - is only possible because the itch-sensing nerve endings in your skin are closely intertwined with the millions of cells that make up your skin's immune system.

Immune

The protein IL-31 is key to the connection between the nervous and immune systems. This molecule is produced by some immune cells, and like other members of this molecule family, it specializes in helping immune cells communicate with each other.

IL-31 is rarely present in the skin or blood of people who don't have a history of eczema, allergies, asthma or related conditions. But those with conditions like eczema that cause chronic itch have significantly increased skin production of IL-31. There is strong evidence that IL-31 is one of a small set of proteins that immune cells produce that can bind directly to sensory neurons and trigger itching. Small amounts of purified IL-31 injected directly into skin or spinal fluid leads to impressively rapid-onset itching and scratching.

However, when my colleagues and I induced rashes in mice by exposing them to dust mites, we found that itch-sensing neurons turned down the dial on inflammation at the site of itching instead of promoting it. They did so by secreting small molecules called neuropeptides that, in this context, directed immune cells to respond less enthusiastically. In sum, we had discovered an inverse relationship between itching and skin inflammation, tethered by a single molecule.

But if IL-31 triggers itching, which can worsen inflammation by making patients scratch their skin, how does it reduce inflammation?

We found the answer to this paradox in a little-known function of sensory neurons called neurogenic inflammation. This nerve reflex triggers sensory neurons to release various signaling molecules directly into tissues, including specific neuropeptides that promote signs of inflammation like increased blood flow to the skin. Neurogenic inflammation acts within the same nerves that transmit sensory information like itch, pain, touch and temperature, but differs by the path it takes: away from the brain rather than toward it.

Neurons

We discovered that IL-31 can induce neurogenic inflammation, mapping a direct pathway going from IL-31 through sensory neurons to repress immune cells in the skin. When we engineered mice to be unresponsive to IL-31, we similarly found that they had more activated skin immune cells that produced more inflammation. This means the net effect of IL-31 is to blunt overall inflammation.

Our study shows that IL-31 causes sensory neurons in the skin to perform two very different functions: They signal inward to the spinal cord and brain to stimulate an itching sensation that typically leads to more inflammation, but they also signal back out to the skin and quell inflammation by inhibiting certain immune cells.

Although paradoxical, this makes evolutionary sense. Scratching an itch can feel very satisfying but doesn't have much utility in the modern world where we're more likely to suffer from compulsive scratching than encounter stinging nettles. In contrast, unchecked inflammation underlies many chronic autoimmune diseases. Therefore, turning off an immune response in inflamed tissue can be as important as turning it on.

Our discoveries raise important questions about the implications of modifying IL-31 to treat different diseases. For one, it isn't clear how IL-31-sensing neurons interface with other neuronal circuits that also regulate skin inflammation. Furthermore, some patients have higher levels of allergic proteins in their blood or develop asthma flares when taking existing drugs that target IL-31. IL-31 is also found in some lung and gut cells - how and why would an itch-inducing molecule be present in internal organs?

Anatomical niches where sensory neurons and immune cells converge are present throughout the human body. If an itchy molecule like IL-31 can use neuronal circuitry to dampen an immune response in the skin, similar molecules like those used in migraine drugs could be repurposed to treat skin conditions, too. (AP)

NEW YORK, Oct 18, (AP) - Are 3D mammograms better than standard 2D imaging for catching advanced cancers?

A clinical trial is recruiting thousands of volunteers - including a large number of Black women who face disparities in breast cancer death rates - to try to find out.

People like Carole Stovall, a psychologist in Washington, D.C., have signed up for the study to help answer the question.

"We all need a mammogram anyway, so why not do it with a study that allows the scientists to understand more and move closer to finding better treatments and ways of maybe even preventing it?" Stovall said.

The underrepresentation of women and minorities in research is a long-simmering issue affecting health problems including Alzheimer's disease, stroke and COVID-19. Trials without diversity lead to gaps in understanding of how new treatments work for all people.

"Until we get more Black women into clinical trials, we can't change the science. And we need better science for Black bodies," said Ricki Fairley, a breast cancer survivor and advocate who is working on the issue.

Black women are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer than white women and tend to be diagnosed younger. But it's not clear whether 3D mammography is better for them, said Dr. Wortia McCaskill-Stevens of the National Cancer Institute.

"Are there populations for whom

this might be important to have early diagnosis?" asked McCaskill-Stevens. "Or is it harmful," causing too many false alarms or unneeded follow-up tests and treatments?

McCaskill-Stevens, who is Black, leads NCI's efforts to boost access to cancer research in minority and rural communities. She has joined the study herself.

Technique

The newer 3D technique has been around for a decade, but there's never been conclusive evidence that it's better than 2D at detecting advanced cancers. The screening technique combines multiple pictures of the breast taken from different angles to create a 3D-like image. Both 3D and 2D mammograms compress the breast and use low doses of radiation.

Prior studies suggest that 3D finds more cancers than 2D, but catching more cancers doesn't necessarily mean more lives saved. Some cancers missed by standard screening may not progress or need treatment. Previous studies did not randomly assign patients to a screening method, the gold standard for research.

The notion "that if it's new, it's shiny, then it's better," isn't necessarily true, McCaskill-Stevens said. "Until we have the evidence to support that, then we need well-designed randomized trials."

The trial has enrolled nearly 93,000 women so far with a goal of 128,000. The NCI-funded study is now running in Canada, South Korea, Peru,

Argentina, Italy and 32 US states. A site in Thailand will soon begin enrolling patients.

"We added more international sites to enhance the trial's diversity, particularly for Hispanic and Asian women," said Dr. Etta Pisano, who leads the study.

Overall, 42% of participants are Hispanic. As recruiting continues, enrolling Black women and other women of color will "absolutely" continue as a priority, Pisano said.

Participants are randomly assigned to either 2D or 3D mammograms and are followed for several years. The number of advanced cancers detected by the two methods will be compared.

At the U.S. study sites, 21% of study participants are Black women - that's higher than a typical cancer treatment study, in which 9% of participants are Black, McCaskill-Stevens said.

Study

The University of North Carolina has signed up more Black women than any other study site. Nearly a quarter of the nearly 3,000 women enrolled at UNC's two locations are Black.

"Women in North Carolina want to take part in something that's bigger than them," said Dr. Cherie Kuzmiak, who leads the UNC arm of the study. "They want this active role in helping determine the future of health care for women."

In Washington, D.C., word of mouth has led to successful recruiting.

'Not a Bot' program will not apply to existing users

Musk's X tests \$1 fee for new users in spam fight

LONDON, Oct 18, (AP) - Elon Musk's social media platform X has begun charging a \$1 fee to new users in the Philippines and New Zealand, in a test designed to cut down on the spam and fake accounts flourishing on the site formerly known as Twitter.

The company said late Tuesday that it has started trying out the annual subscription method for new and unverified accounts. The program, dubbed Not a Bot, won't apply to existing users.

It's not clear why it only applies to New Zealand and the Philippines or why those countries were chosen.

"This new test was developed to bolster our already successful efforts to reduce spam, manipulation of our platform and bot activity, while balancing platform accessibility with the small fee amount," the X support account tweeted. "It is not a profit driver."

Since Musk bought X a year ago,



Elon Musk, who owns Twitter, Tesla and SpaceX, speaks at the Vivatex fair, June 16, 2023, in Paris. Elon Musk's social media platform X has begun charging a \$1 fee to new users in the Philippines and New Zealand. It's a test designed to cut down on the spam and fake accounts flourishing on the platform. (AP)

he has introduced a slew of changes such as renaming the platform and

gutting its workforce - including its content moderation team.

Outside watchdog groups say the changes have allowed misinformation to thrive on the platform, a problem that exploded after the Israel-Hamas war erupted.

Musk previously turned to premium subscriptions as a tactic to boost the financially struggling platform's revenue.

One of his first product moves was to shake up the site's blue check verification system by launching a service granting checks to anyone willing to pay \$8 a month. A flood of impostor accounts forced the service's temporary suspension days after launch.

Under the test, new subscribers will get access to basic functions like posting content, liking or bookmarking posts, and reposting, quoting or replying to posts from other accounts.

The platform said new users who don't subscribe will only be able to read posts, watch videos and follow other accounts.

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Celtics hit 23 3-pointers to beat Knicks

Williamson gets off to quick start in Pelicans win over Magic



Netherlands' captain Scott Edwards plays a shot during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup match between South Africa and Netherlands in Dharamshala, India. (AP)

Netherlands shock SAfrica

'An extremely proud moment'

DHARAMSALA, India, Oct 18, (AP): On the heels of Afghanistan beating defending champions England, the Netherlands caused another upset at the Cricket World Cup by beating South Africa by 38 runs.

Skipper Scott Edwards scored a famous half-century and then the Dutch bowlers chipped in to stun the Proteas.

In a rain-curtailed game, Edwards' 78 off 69 balls saw the Dutch recover from 140-7 to finish with 245-8 in 43 overs. Pacers Logan Van Beek and Paul Van Meekeren shared five wickets, while veteran spinner Roelof Van Der Merwe took 2-34 as South Africa collapsed to 207 all out (42.5 overs).

CRICKET

It was the Netherlands' first win in the competition and it comes nearly a year after the Dutch sent the Proteas packing from T20 World Cup.

While it is still early days in this World Cup, the Netherlands' win could see a similar impact as the

tournament progresses.

South Africa are still on four points from three games but have lost their unbeaten record in sensational fashion. They are ahead of Pakistan - also on four points from three games - on net run-rate.

The Netherlands are now eighth in the points' table, ahead of Australia on net run-rate.

"It is an extremely proud moment for us," said Edwards, who was named player of the match. "We came here with high expectations and we have a very good team.

"We want to take a chance at

qualifying for the semifinals, and for that you need to beat the top teams. South Africa are one of the favorites, and we have got our first win out of the way," he added. "Hopefully there will be more."

Morning rain at Dharamshala delayed the game by two hours. The toss took place an hour later, and play was further delayed by an hour as rain returned. Once the weather cleared, there were no more interruptions and the game was reduced to 43 overs per side.

South Africa won the toss and opted to field, and its fast bowlers made

good use of the conditions. Pacers Lungi Ngidi (2-57), Marco Jansen (2-27) and Kagiso Rabada (2-56) shared six wickets amongst them.

The Netherlands was down to 82-5 in 20.2 overs, with none of the top-order batsmen crossing the 20-run mark. Sybrand Engelbrecht was the top-scorer among the first five batsmen with 19 runs off 37 balls.

But the Dutch persevered as Engelbrecht added 32 runs off 31 balls for the sixth wicket with Teja Nidamanuru (20).

Engelbrecht's dismissal brought Edwards to the crease, and he made his way to 50 off 53 balls. He had scored six fours and a six by then, carefully crafting lower-order partnerships.

Edwards put on 30 off 40 balls with Nidamanuru, and then another 28 off 41 balls with Logan van Beek (10). Then, he pressed on - scoring 28 runs off his last 16 balls.

At the other end, Van Der Merwe smacked 29 off 19 balls, including three fours and a six. The duo put on 64 off 37 balls as the Netherlands crossed 200 in the 40th over.

It wasn't over yet - Aryan Dutt hit three sixes to score 23 off nine balls. The shell-shocked Proteas had conceded 64 runs in the last five overs.

The Netherlands carried this momentum forward, using a clever mix of pace and spin against the South African batsmen.



Netherlands players wave at spectators after they beat South Africa during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in Dharamshala, India. (AP)

'We're still learning'

Reyna scores twice as US dominate Ghana

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Oct 18, (AP): Gio Reyna ran to the corner flag with a wide smile, then hugged Christian Pulisic and more American teammates. About a half-hour later, Reyna did it again and jumped with an arm overhead in front of the fans and tapping his chest for emphasis.

Reyna scored his first two international goals since a family feud with coach Gregg Berhalter erupted at last year's World Cup, leading the United States to a 4-0 rout of Ghana in an exhibition.

SOCCER

Reyna put the U.S. ahead in the 10th minute, Pulisic doubled the lead with a penalty kick in the 19th, and Folarin Balogun scored in the 22nd to give the Americans three goals in a 12-minute span. Reyna scored again in the 39th for sixth international goal and first two-goal game for the U.S.

Reyna told the U.S. Soccer Federation after the game that he did not want

Best of the Rest

Pakistan complain: The Pakistan Cricket Board has filed a complaint over the "inappropriate" behavior of some fans during Pakistan's World Cup game against India at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

Videos that circulated on social media showed Pakistan cricketers subjected to religious-centric chants as India beat Pakistan by seven wickets in front of more than 100,000 fans Saturday.

The PCB said Tuesday it filed a complaint with the International Cricket Council "in respect of inappropriate conduct targeted at the Pakistan squad during the India vs Pakistan match."

India improved to 8-0 against its archrival in the 50-over World Cup as Pakistan was bowled out for 191, losing its last eight wickets for only 36 runs. (AP)

to speak with reporters. He has not spoken with media following national team matches since the World Cup.

Reyna has been regaining fitness since fracturing a leg last June and played the first half for the second straight match. The

20-year-old midfielder's first game under Berhalter since the controversy was Saturday's 3-1 loss to Germany.

A son of former U.S. captain Claudio Reyna and American midfielder Danielle Egan, Gio Reyna was limited to a pair of substitute appearances in Qatar. Berhalter said during a management conference after the tournament he nearly sent a player home for lack of effort during training, remarks clearly about Reyna.

Berhalter leads the Americans in a two-leg CONCACAF Nations League quarterfinal next month, likely against Trinidad and Tobago. The winner gets a berth in next year's Copa America.

"We're still learning.

Sri Lanka lift ban on Gunathilaka: Sri Lanka's cricket authorities have lifted a ban on international player Danushka Gunathilaka following his acquittal in an Australian court of sexual assault charges.

Sri Lanka Cricket said its executive committee accepted a recommendation by an inquiry panel to restore Gunathilaka's right to play cricket.

He was arrested in Australia last November, hours before his team was due to return home following the Twenty20 World Cup. He remained in Australia until Sept. 28 when he was acquitted of raping a woman he met on a dating site.

Police initially charged the 32-year-old Gunathilaka four offenses but prosecutors later dropped three of those charges.

Gunathilaka maintained his innocence, pleading not guilty to one count of sexual intercourse without consent. (AP)

We're still adapting to the game," Tim Weah said. "We're on the path that we're rising and we're doing well."

Ghana eliminated the U.S. from the 2006 and 2010 World Cups and the Americans opened the 2014 tournament with a win over the Black Stars. The 11th-ranked U.S. matched their highest victory margin against an African opponent, set against South Africa in 2000.

The Americans went ahead after Sergio Dest dribbled toward goal and passed wide to Balogun, whose cross bounced off defender Nicholas Opoku. The ball fell to Reyna, who one-timed a right-foot shot from about 12 yards for his first U.S. goal since June 2021.

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct 18, (AP): Brandon Ingram scored 18 points, Zion Williamson had 16 and the New Orleans Pelicans beat the Orlando Magic 104-92 on Tuesday night.

Williamson finished the first quarter with 10 points, four steals, two assists and a rebound. He shot 6 of 8 in 16 minutes overall. Ingram was 8-of-16 shooting. The Pelicans were 35 of 59 from inside the 3-point line but just 7 of 28 outside it.

Franz Wagner scored 19 points and Moritz Wagner had 16 for Orlando. The brothers combined to shoot 15 of 21 while the rest of the Magic shot 20 of 63.

Celtics 123, Knicks 110

Jason Tatum scored 28 points, Kristaps Porzingis scored 20 and host Boston beat New York with the help of 23 3-pointers.

The Celtics put it up from deep 52 times, shooting 44.2%. Jaylen Brown added 17 points for the Celtics, playing alongside Tatum for the first time this preseason.

Quentin Grimes scored 22 points for the Knicks, who rested their starters.

Thunder 124, Bucks 101

Josh Giddey scored 19 points, Chet Holmgren scored 18 and Oklahoma City beat visiting Milwaukee.

Giddey finished 9 of 12 from the field and Holmgren was 7 of 8. The Thunder were 48 of 85 (56.5%).

BASKETBALL

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 18 points for Milwaukee. In his second game with the Bucks, Damian Lillard scored five points on 2-of-11 shooting. He's 5 of 21 in two preseason games.

Raptors 106, Bulls 102

Scottie Barnes and Pascal Siakam scored 22 points apiece and visiting Toronto beat Chicago to improve to 3-0 in the preseason.

Zach LaVine scored 25 points and Nikola Vucevic had 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Bulls, whose starters played the majority of the game. Chicago used only three bench players.

Clippers 116, Nuggets103

Paul George scored 23 points shooting 9 of 13 and Kawhi Leonard scored 11 and host Los Angeles beat Denver's reserves.

Rookie Hunter Tyson scored 19 points and former Clipper Reggie Jackson scored 15 for the Nuggets.

Timberwolves 138, Ra'anana 111

Luka Garza scored 30 points, Josh Minott scored 23 and host Minnesota, absent its starters, beat Maccabi Ra'anana of Israel.

Dwayne Bacon, who played collegiately at Florida State, scored 26 points for Ra'anana. Dakari Tucker, who played at Utah, added 24 points for the Israeli club.



Denver Nuggets guard Justin Holiday (9) defends against Los Angeles Clippers forward Paul George (13) during the first half of a preseason NBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)

Auger-Aliassime wins successive matches for 1st time since March as Bouzkova advances in China

TOKYO, Oct 18, (AP): Felix Auger-Aliassime defeated Sebastian Ofner 6-4, 6-1 to advance to the quarterfinals of the Japan Open on Wednesday, winning consecutive matches for the first time since March.

The 23-year-old Canadian, who had not won back-to-back matches since Indian Wells, rallied from a break down in a tight first set before racing through the second by winning the final six games.

"I need results like this," said Auger-Aliassime, after backing up his win over Aleksander Vukic in the first round. "I believe in my game and I believe in myself that I have what it takes to win at this level. I have done it before but it is about doing it and having a lot of belief and a positive mind. I am happy that my level is translating to the match court after a couple of months."

Auger-Aliassime next plays American qualifier Marcos Giron, who upset eighth-ranked Casper Ruud 6-3, 6-4.

Fifth-seeded Tommy Paul beat fellow American Mackenzie McDonald 6-4, 6-2. The 12th-ranked Paul will play Ben

Shelton or Jordan Thompson.

Also, Shanghai Masters winner Hubert Hurkacz lost his first-round match to No.57 Zhang Zhizhen 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (4).

Zhang fired 10 aces and broke serve three times to avenge his defeat to the 11th-ranked Hurkacz in Shanghai last week.

Third-seeded Marie Bouzkova advanced to the quarterfinals of the Jiangxi Open in China by beating Amina Anshba 7-5, 6-0.

TENNIS

Nao Hibino of Japan followed her victory over top-seeded Beatriz Haddad-Maia in the first round with a 6-3, 7-5 win over Kimberly Birrell. The 93rd-ranked Hibino will play Diana Shnaider in Friday's quarterfinals after the Russian advanced when Vera Zvonareva retired due to illness when trailing 6-3, 0-1.



United States midfielder Lennard Maloney (left), heads the ball past Ghana midfielder Salis Abdul Samed (right), during the second half of an international friendly soccer match in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)

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A file photo of Al-Qadsia and Kazma in action

Al-Qadsia take on Kazma in volleyball 'showdown'

Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: There are four exciting matches lined up in the sixth round of the Al-Ittihad volleyball tournament. The action kicks off as Burgan take on Al-Sahel at 5:00 PM in the Al-Ittihad Hall. The spotlight turns to the most highly anticipated showdown of this round, featuring Al-Qadsia and Kazma at 7:00 PM, in the very same hall.

Meanwhile, at the Yarmouk Hall in Mishref, Kuwait will face off against Al-Shabab, and Al-Arabi will meet Yar-

VOLLEYBALL

mouk at 6:30 PM in the "Kuwait" Hall in Kaifan.

As things stand in the team rankings, Al-Qadsia currently lead the pack with 12 points, holding a slight edge in round results over Burgan in the second spot. Al-Kuwait, Kazma, and Al-Arabi are each at 9 points, while Al-Shabab follow with 6 points, Al-Sahel has 2 points, Al-Tadamon stand at 1 point, and Yarmouk are yet to secure a score.

This tournament serves as invaluable preparation for the teams before the commencement of the league championship. It not only enhances the experience of professional and local players but also facilitates the prompt recovery of injured players.

England in 'awe' of the Springboks

PARIS, Oct 18, (AP): So, it's those Springboks once again for England at the Rugby World Cup.

The team that have handed the English more painful losses - physically and metaphorically - than anyone else on the sport's biggest stage.

The team that beat them in two of the last four World Cup finals, in 2007 and 2019.

The team whose flyhalf, Jannie de Beer, drop-kicked them out of the tournament in the 1999 quarterfinals.

The team that has handed them their biggest ever World Cup defeat - 36-0 in the pool stage in 2007.

Do they have a score to settle when they renew their Rugby World Cup rivalry with South Africa in the semifinals in Paris on Saturday? Too right.

And England knows exactly how hard the task will be.

"They are a running threat, they are a kicking threat, they

RUGBY

have got an incredible set-piece, they have got an unbelievable defense," England defense coach Kevin Sinfield said. "Do you want me to keep going?"

Sinfield was informed this week that England had the best tackle success rate of the teams in the quarterfinals, at 86%. He wasn't aware, he claimed, and he barely raised a smile at it.

"If we are going to be anywhere near South Africa at the weekend, that number needs to be massively increased," Sinfield said.

Their bodies sore, no doubt, from a draining quarterfinal win against Fiji on Sunday, England's players sat down in their team hotel a few hours later to watch the France-South Africa match in the last eight in Paris.

It was an instant classic, especially the first half that took the breath away.

"We saw the game," Sinfield said, "... and were in awe of the physicality that they brought."

Respect for the Boks, then, is high among the England squad. Just don't mistake it for fear.

England's confidence has been rebuilt on the back of its run to the semifinals. They are the only unbeaten team in this Rugby World Cup, chiefly due to a kind draw that has seen Steve Borthwick's team avoid all of the world's top five in the pool stage and quarterfinals.

There was a defiance to Borthwick after the 30-24 victory over Fiji as he faced some of the media which, he said, predicted a pool-stage exit for England.

Kuwait kick off Olympic qualifiers with Japan showdown

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

Messi stars in Argentina's WC qualifying 'win' over Peru; Brazil's Neymar injured

Venezuela rout Chile

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay, Oct 18, (AP): Lionel Messi scored twice in Argentina's 2-0 win at Peru in a World Cup qualifier on Tuesday, playing the entire match for his national team. The 36-year-old appeared fit after he was sidelined for several matches with his club Inter Miami because of muscular pain

Also Tuesday, Brazil - the archrivals of the defending World Cup champions - took two serious blows at Uruguay. Brazil lost 2-0 to the hosts, their first defeat in 37 World Cup qualifying matches, and saw their star Neymar leave the Centenario Stadium in Montevideo on crutches with a left knee injury.

SOCCER

Elsewhere, Venezuela beat Chile 3-0. Yeferson Soteldo opened the scoring shortly before the break, Salomón Rondón added a goal in the 72nd minute, and Darwin Machis scored seven minutes later. Last week, Venezuela earlier had a 1-1 draw against Brazil.

Ecuador and Colombia had a scoreless draw, and Paraguay beat Bolivia 1-0 on Antonio Sanabria's goal in the 69th minute.

Argentina lead South American qualifying with 12 points in four matches. Uruguay, Brazil and Venezuela have seven points and are separated by goal difference. Colombia has six points, and Ecuador, Paraguay and Chile have four each. Peru has one point and Bolivia has zero.

The next World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada will include 48 teams, meaning direct entry for the top six teams in South America. The seventh-place team will contest an intercontinental playoff for a berth.

Two more rounds of South American World Cup qualifying will be played in November. Brazil and Argentina will face off at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Nov. 21.

Messi increased his total to 106 goals in 178 international appearances, moving within two of Iran's Ali Daei for second on the career list behind Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo at 127.

The defending World Cup champions never faced risks at Lima's National Stadium against a Peruvian team that have yet to score in four qualifying matches. Argentina's confident performance could be traced to Messi finally playing as a starter and appearing fully healthy.

The 36-year-old made it 1-0 after a counterattack in the 32nd minute. Enzo Fernández passed to Nico González on the left. A low cross found Messi at the edge of the box, and he shot it to the left angle of goalkeeper Pedro Gallese.

Messi scored again 10 minutes later after Enzo Fernández found him nearly at the same spot. Messi shot it to Gallese's right corner. He later had a goal disallowed for a low margin offside caught by video review in the 57th minute.

Peruvian and Argentinian fans tried to invade the field after the match to hug Messi, who led the World Cup champions to their eighth straight victory since they won last year's title in Qatar.

Last Thursday, Messi played for almost an entire half of Argentina's 1-0 victory over Paraguay.

After a slow start to the match in Montevideo, Maximiliano Araújo easily beat Marquinhos on the left flank and crossed the ball to Darwin Núñez, who headed it into the net.

The second half started with Brazil



Argentina's Lionel Messi (left), and Peru's Franco Zanelatto battle for the ball during a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup 2026 at the National stadium in Lima, Peru. (AP)

Barca remain on track to reduce debt

BARCELONA, Spain, Oct 18, (AP): Barcelona are on track to reducing their debt without having to resort to new financial levers, the club said Wednesday while announcing a higher-than-expected net profit of 304 million euros (\$320.5 million) for the 2022-23 season.

Barcelona said the club's operating income was 1.26 billion euros (\$1.33 billion), with expenses at 1.16 billion euros (\$1.22 billion), which enabled the reduction of the net debt for a second consecutive season. The debt dropped from 680 million euros (\$717 million) in June 2021 to 552 million euros (\$582 million) in June this year, the club said.

"We have managed to seal the hole, but work must continue to reduce the debt to a sustainable amount," said Eduard Romeu, vice president of the club's economic department. "We are returning to ordinary current income. That means without extraordinary operations, without levers or sales."

Barcelona recently resorted to a series of financial operations to help reduce their debt, including the advance sale of television

rights for the Spanish league. The club said most of their spending came on sports salaries, amounting to 676 million euros (\$712 million), or 79% of the 860 million euros (\$906 million) in revenue not accounting for the sale of TV rights.

The club said they expect to make a profit in the current financial year despite the reduction in income resulting from the transfer of games to the smaller Olympic Stadium in Montjuïc while the Camp Nou undergoes renovation work. It said the forecast is to generate 859 million euros (\$905 million) and a profit of 11 million euros (\$11.5 million) before taxes.

Court officials said earlier Wednesday club president Joan Laporta will also be investigated by a judge looking into the payments made by Barcelona of millions of euros (dollars) over several years to a company that belonged to the vice president of Spain's refereeing committee.

The investigation is related to the previous stint of Laporta in charge of the Catalan club. Former presidents Sandro Rosell and Josep Bartomeu are also being investigated.



A Kuwaiti is challenged by opponents.

Saudi Arabia face Korea

DOHA, Oct 18: The Kuwaiti national handball team embark on their journey in the Asian qualifiers for the 2024 Paris Olympics, currently taking place in Doha, Qatar. Their initial match is against the Iranian national team, scheduled for 3:00 this afternoon. This game marks the commencement of the preliminary round matches in the second group, which also features Japan and Bahrain. Meanwhile, in the first group, Saudi Arabia face Korea, the UAE compete with China, and India play against Qatar.

In the preliminary round of Group Two, Kuwait will encounter the Japanese team on Saturday. Following that, they face the Bahraini team on the 22nd of this month, with the round concluding by playing against Kazakhstan on the 24th of the same month.

Heading the delegation of our national handball team for the Paris 2024 qualifiers is the Secretary of the Federation, Qayed Al-Adwani. The team are sup-

HANDBALL

ported by treasurer Khaled Ghuloum, Board of Directors member Mubarak Al-Daihani, team director Faisal Siwan, team administrator Abdulaziz Al-Zaabi, and the technical staff led by Algerian coach Saad Hagazy. His compatriot, Mohamed Masoudan, assists him, while Tunisian goalkeeper coach Ayman and physiotherapist Mehdi Bakoush complete the team. Additionally, the squad consists of 20 players, including prominent names such as Muhammad Bouyabes, Hassan Safar, and many more.

Before the official matches commenced, Kuwait played a test match against Saudi Arabia, which they lost with a score of 21-28. This match provided valuable insights and preparation for the team.

Abdulaziz Al-Zaabi, the director of the first handball team, revealed that the team's coach, the Algerian Saad Hagazy, employed new tactics and strategies during the trial match against Saudi Arabia.

Al-Kuwait 'perform' Umrh ahead of Aleppo challenge

Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 18: Al-Kuwait are gearing up for a significant match against Al-Ahly Aleppo Club of Syria on October 24th in the third round of the AFC Cup's third group competitions. Al-Kuwait Club have scheduled their departure for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Saturday.

Currently, Al-Abyad hold the second position in the group with four points, closely following leaders Al-Kahraba of Iraq, and just ahead of Al-Wahdat of Jordan with 3 points. At the bot-

SOCCER

tom of the standings is Ahly Aleppo with 0 points.

Before their pivotal encounter with the Syrian team at the King Fahd Sports City Stadium in the Al-Hawiyah area, the "Al-Abyad" delegation will embark on a journey to Mecca to perform Umrh rituals. Subsequently, they will head to the city of Taif for the match.

The international players are set to join the training session this evening after concluding their participation with the first and Olympic teams. The players include Abdul Rahman Kamil, Dhari Al-Otaibi, Fahd Al-Hajri, Mishari Ghanem, Mohsen Falah, Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Ahmed Al-Zanki, Reda Hani, Faisal Zayed, Muhammad Daham, Sultan Al-Faraj, Muhammad Al-Rashed and Ibrahim Kamil.



Mahdi Barahma

The ranks of Al-Kuwait appear to be complete now that Moroccan player Mahdi Barahma has recovered from his injury. He took part in a friendly match against Al-Jahra at the beginning of this week and is ready to start. He had been sidelined due to injury since the commencement of local competitions at the end of last August. Additionally, Ibrahim Kamil is also available to the technical staff, led by Serbian Boris Bunjak. The only player absent will be Amr Abdel Fattah, who requires a period of medical rehabilitation.

Al-Abyad, leading the Zain Premier League with 12 points, are scheduled to hold their final training session this evening before their match against Khaitan tomorrow evening, marking the start of the fifth round of the league.



Brazil's Rodrygo (left), and Uruguay's Manuel Ugarte battle for the ball during a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup 2026 at Centenario stadium in Montevideo, Uruguay. (AP)



India's Ishan Kishan attends a training session ahead of the ICC cricket world cup match against Bangladesh in Pune, India. (AP)

Sports

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Infantino urges AFC members to be united for 2034 World Cup

Saudi Arabia WC bid boosted by Indonesia changing sides after Australia co-host talks

GENEVA, Oct. 18, (AP): Saudi Arabia's FIFA-favored bid to host the men's World Cup in 2034 passed on Wednesday one of the few barriers left in what seems an inevitable win.

One week after revealing talks with Australia about bidding to co-host the 2034 World Cup, Indonesian soccer leader Erick Thohir said his federation is now with Saudi Arabia.

Thohir's change of plan was detailed in a statement on the Indonesian soccer federation website hours before an online meeting of the Asian Football Confederation, whose 47 members include Australia, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, FIFA President Gianni Infantino urged AFC members to "be united for the 2034 World Cup."

Infantino has long been a close ally of Saudi soccer and the kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and FIFA's surprise decision two weeks ago to fast-track bidding for the

2034 men's tournament was seen as favorable for them.

AFC members responded quickly to Infantino's urging and the Japan federation proposed united support behind the Saudi bid backed by Uzbekistan, Lebanon and India.

"Japan has a plan to host the FIFA World Cup by 2050 but now it's time for Asia to get united and make a single bid (for 2034)," Japanese federation official Tsuneyasu Miyamoto said, praising Saudi Arabia for a "long football history, massive passion and a wonderful vision for 2034."

Australian officials did not take part in the online discussion.

After an initial technical problem connecting to the meeting, Saudi federation president Yasser al Mishehal said: "It's always known that Asia is always united."

"We have been overwhelmed by a huge number of supporting letters, announcements from all over the world. This puts a big responsibility on us to

really deliver a successful bid," said al Mishehal. He is a member of the FIFA Council and likely candidate for the AFC presidency in 2027, the year Saudi Arabia hosts the men's Asian Cup after an extensive stadium-building program.

SOCCER

The Infantino-chaired FIFA Council agreed two weeks ago only members of the AFC and Oceania's soccer body - New Zealand and scattered Pacific islands - can bid for the 2034 tournament, and also accepted just a single 2030 co-host bid teaming Europe, Africa and South America across six nations.

FIFA give federations in Asia and Oceania an Oct. 31 deadline to show interest and just one month more to submit a detailed bidding agreement with government support.

Saudi Arabia confirmed its intention

almost immediately after FIFA opened the contest on Oct. 4. Within minutes, the AFC's president, Bahraini royal family member Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, said the Saudis had its united backing.

Speculation about an Australia-Indonesia plan, possibly including Malaysia and Singapore, suggested there was not total Asian unity.

Indonesia's announcement Wednesday isolated Australia if it wants to make a 2034 bid to follow its successful co-hosting of the 2023 Women's World Cup with New Zealand.

"There is enough division already all over the world. We have occasions to send messages of unity," Infantino said Wednesday in a video message from Zurich to AFC members.

Infantino reminded them of his message at a soccer officials' meeting this month in Tashkent, Uzbekistan - "to be united in Asia as well, to be united for the 2034 World Cup."

FIFA wants to confirm the 2030 and 2034 World Cup hosts late next year at separate meetings of its 211-member federations.

The Europe-led bid of Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Argentina, Paraguay and the inaugural 1930 host Uruguay is the consensus choice for 2030. The South Americans are set to get just one game each of the 104-game slate, yet that removes their soccer body from the 2034 picture as FIFA looks to rotate hosting between continents.

North and Central American soccer body CONCACAF gets its turn in 2026 when the United States, Canada and Mexico host the first 48-team, 104-game edition.

Thohir, an Indonesian government minister who has close ties to Infantino, said Wednesday his country still aims to host when Asia next gets its turn after 2034. That could be in 2046.

Indonesia hosts the men's Under-17 World Cup for FIFA next

month after being stripped in March of the Under-20 version because the Muslim-majority nation refused to stage the games of Israel, which had qualified.

The Australian soccer federation also has shown interest in hosting the 32-team Club World Cup for FIFA in 2029. Getting a FIFA promise for that tournament is a potential prize for letting the Oct. 31 deadline pass.

Saudi Arabia will host the last annual seven-team Club World Cup for FIFA in December. The club tournament is relaunched as a four-yearly, 32-team tournament in June 2025 in the United States.

Winning World Cup hosting rights can accelerate a Saudi state soccer project fueled by oil riches, which has already led to the buying of Premier League club Newcastle, the take over and funding of four storied domestic clubs, plus sponsorship of international competitions by the "Visit Saudi" tourism board.

England book Euro 2024 spot, Denmark 'thwart' San Marino

Kazakhstan stun Finland

LONDON, Oct. 18, (AP): England became the ninth team to book a place at next year's European Championship after beating Italy 3-1 at Wembley Stadium, two years on from losing the final to the Italians at the same venue.

Denmark and Hungary also could have qualified but both must wait until the next qualifying games in November. And tiny San Marino briefly looked on track for a historic draw in their narrow loss to the Danes.

Italy took the lead with a goal for Gianluca Scamacca - his first for his country - but England turned the game around with two goals from captain Harry Kane and one from Marcus Rashford.

England join host nation Germany and previously qualified Austria, Belgium, France, Portugal, Scotland, Spain and Turkey at next year's 24-team tournament.

Defeat to England deepened the gloom around the Italian team amid a scandal around players' alleged involvement in an illegal betting ring. Premier League midfielders Sandro Tonali and Nicolò Zaniolo left the Italy camp last week after being questioned by police.

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Italy's game with Ukraine on Nov. 20 will decide which team get the second qualifying spot in Group C along with England. Italy are seeking to avoid missing a second tournament in a row after failing to qualify for the World Cup last year. The decider is officially a home game for Ukraine but will take place in Germany because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The Ukrainians had to recover from a goal down to beat Malta 3-1. The win was sealed when Chelsea winger Mykhailo Mudryk scored a powerful long-range shot for his first international goal.

San Marino threatened the greatest shock in their soccer history as they held the score level with Denmark at 1-1 until Denmark scored again to seal a 2-1 win that leaves them on the verge of qualification.

San Marino captain Alessandro Golinucci scored his country's first goal in a competitive game for two years to level up the score in the 61st minute - with substitutes charging onto the field to join the celebrations - but Yussuf Poulsen's header nine minutes later put Denmark ahead again.

San Marino have tried to qualify for the European Championship nine times and have lost every game with the sole exception of a 0-0 draw with Estonia in 2014. San Marino have won only one game ever, beating Liechtenstein 1-0 in a 2004 friendly.

Denmark could have secured qualification but needed other results to go their way. A 2-1 win for Kazakhstan against Finland earlier ensured Denmark would have to wait until next month's games. Group leader Slovenia won 1-0 against Northern Ireland.

Kazakhstan are trying to qualify for their first-ever European Championship and upset Finland with two late goals from Bakhtiyor



Serbia's Aleksandar Mitrovic (right), challenges Montenegro's Igor Vujacic during the Euro 2024 group G qualifying soccer match between Serbia and Montenegro, at the Rajko Mitic Stadium in Belgrade, Serbia. (AP)

Zainutdinov including an 89th-minute winner. Kazakhstan must win their last two games against San Marino and Slovenia next month to have any chance.

Hungary needed a win over Lithuania to qualify but instead drew 2-2 after recovering from being 2-0 down at halftime. Serbia are second in Group G and edged closer to qualifying by beating Montenegro 3-1.

France recovered from a glaring defensive error to beat Scotland 4-1 in a friendly between two teams that have already qualified for the European Championship.

An errant pass from Eduardo Camavinga allowed Billy Gilmour to score Scotland's opening goal before France responded with two goals from defender Benjamin Pavard, one by Kylian Mbappé and another for Kingsley Coman.

Fans of Sweden's soccer teams will be advised against wearing clothing in national colors when they travel abroad in the wake of the killing of two Swedish supporters before a European Championship qualifying match in Belgium.

At least one of the men shot dead in the incident in Brussels on Monday was wearing a Swedish soccer jersey.

At a news conference in Stockholm, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said "everything indicates this is a terrorist attack against Sweden and Swedish citizens, just because they are

Swedish."

Martin Fredman, head of security for the Swedish soccer federation, said Tuesday that fans making trips abroad will be advised not to wear the blue-and-yellow attire associated with the country's sports teams.

"It's the case that a perpetrator has targeted Swedish citizens," Fredman said, "so it would be reprehensible not to go with a recommendation that we should avoid (Swedish team clothing) when we are out on trips like this."



England's Harry Kane celebrates after scoring his side's third goal during the Euro 2024 group C qualifying soccer match between England and Italy at Wembley stadium in London. (AP)

All-woman series to race in Saudi Arabia

LONDON, Oct. 18, (AP): Formula One's F1 Academy series for female drivers will race next year in Saudi Arabia to start an expanded schedule with a more prominent role in grand prix weekends.

The event in March in Saudi Arabia - which lifted a ban on women driving on its roads in 2018 - starts an expanded seven-round calendar announced for the F1 Academy in its second season. The series will also race in Miami

in May before heading to Spain, the Netherlands, Singapore, Qatar and Abu Dhabi.

For the first time, all F1 Academy events will be held as support races for the F1 championship.

Of the six F1 Academy events in this year's inaugural season, only the finale this week at the Circuit of the Americas in Texas is supporting an F1 event. Spanish driver Marta Garcia leads the standings with three races remaining.

Italian hits out at newspapers

Juve's Fagioli apologizes for 'naïve error' after 7-month ban

TURIN, Italy, Oct. 18, (AP): In his first public words since being implicated in a betting scandal, Juventus midfielder Nicolò Fagioli has apologized for a "naïve error" but also hit out at newspapers.

The statement, across two Instagram stories posted on Wednesday, came the day after Fagioli was banned for seven months by the Italian soccer federation for betting violations, and ordered to undergo treatment for a gambling addiction.

"I thought I would start by apologizing not only to Juventus fans but to all fans in the world of soccer and sport for the naïve error that I made," Fagioli wrote.

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"But instead I am obliged to start with the rubbish that newspapers write about me just to put me in a bad light with thousands of falsehoods...or maybe better, just to get a couple more views. I will speak soon."

His suspension was reduced from the minimum of three years after he admitted betting on soccer matches - but never those involving his team - and came to a plea bargain with the FIGC, co-operating fully from the start.

The 22-year-old Fagioli, considered one of the country's top young midfielders, alerted the federation's prosecutor about the case after Turin

prosecutors launched a criminal investigation.

Italian daily Gazzetta dello Sport carried excerpts from Fagioli's deposition by Turin prosecutors. He told them he racked up debts of almost 3 million euros (\$3.17 million) and had to borrow from teammates after receiving threats that the people he owed money to would "break (his) legs."

Fagioli said the worst period was last March and April. He was shown crying on the bench during a match at Sassuolo on April 16 after being substituted following a mistake.

"I was thinking about my debts from betting," Fagioli added.

Premier League players Sandro Tonali and Nicolò Zaniolo were questioned by police at Italy's training camp last week and more Serie A players could be implicated.

Midfielder player Tonali, who joined Newcastle from AC Milan in the off-season, has admitted to betting on soccer matches and having a gambling addiction - and has already been heard by Turin prosecutors - while Aston Villa midfielder Zaniolo said he played blackjack on a website that he was unaware was illegal, but that he has never bet on soccer matches.