



cricket

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baseball

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US, Bahrain sign to deepen strategic partnership



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, accompanied by Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa (right), speaks before they sign a Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement during a signing ceremony at the State Department, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023, in Washington. (AP)

Security key

WASHINGTON, Sept. 14, (KUNA): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and visiting Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa inked on Wednesday the "Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement" meant to strengthen the strategic partnership between their two countries. In a speech ahead of signing the deal, Blinken said, "As both a major non-NATO ally and a major security partner, Bahrain is already one of the United States' longest standing and closest partners in the Middle East."

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Libya dead may triple

Thousands buried in mass graves

DERNA, Libya, Sept 14, (AP): The Libyan city of Derna has buried thousands of people in mass graves, officials said Thursday, as search teams scoured ruins left by devastating floods and the city's mayor said the death toll could triple.

The deluge swept away entire families on Sunday night and exposed vulnerabilities in the oil-rich country that has been mired in conflict since a 2011 uprising that toppled long-ruling dictator Muammar Gaddafi. Health officials have confirmed 5,500 deaths and say 9,000 people are still missing.

Here's a look at the latest developments. Daniel, an unusually strong Mediterranean storm, caused deadly flooding in towns across eastern Libya, but the worst-hit was Derna. As the storm pounded the coast Sunday night, residents said they heard loud explosions when two dams outside the city collapsed. Floodwaters washed down Wadi Derna, a valley that cuts through the city, crashing through buildings and washing people out to sea.

A U.N. official said Thursday that most casualties could have been avoided.

"If there would have been a normal operating meteorological service, they could have issued the warnings," World Meteorologi-

cal Organization head Petteri Taalas told reporters in Geneva. "The emergency management authorities would have been able to carry out the evacuation."

The WMO said earlier this week that the National Meteorological Center had issued warnings 72 hours before the flooding, notifying all governmental authorities by email and through media.

Officials in eastern Libya warned the public about the coming storm but did not suggest the dams could collapse or present an evacuation plan.

The startling devastation reflected the storm's intensity, but also Libya's vulnerability. Oil-rich Libya has been divided between rival governments for most of the past decade - one in the east, the other in the capital, Tripoli - and one result has been widespread neglect of infrastructure.

The two dams that collapsed outside Derna were built in the 1970s. A report by a state-run audit agency in 2021 said the dams had not been maintained despite the allocation of more than 2 million euros for that purpose in 2012 and 2013.

Libya's Tripoli-based Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah acknowledged the maintenance issues in a Cabinet meeting Thursday and called on the Public Prosecutor to open an urgent investigation into the dams' collapse.

The disaster brought a rare moment of unity, as government agencies across the country rushed to help the affected areas.

Opinion

To the Minister of Commerce ... also 'Knowledge has come to you' again

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE industrial sector is of great importance to any country due to its contribution to the nation's self-reliance in terms of providing necessities for its citizens, and also for solving unemployment problems.

The more effective and well-established the industrial sector is, the greater strength it gives the economy in the face of crises, as well as to the trade movement, which depends on local consumption. It also enhances trade exchange with countries.

Here we turn to the Minister of Commerce Mohammed Al-Aiban, who occupies a sensitive position because his ministry represents the backbone of the state through its supervision of commercial and economic activities in the country, and the provision of goods and services.

In the absence of a Ministry of Industry, it supervises this sector, which is sensitive to national security. It is also as important as the internal, defense, and financial sectors; in fact, its role exceeds the other three in protecting food and industrial security.

Your Excellency the Minister, justice for people begins with eliminating injustice against them, starting with providing job opportunities and social protection for citizens. In this regard, your role is great, especially when reconsidering the decisions of the Public Industry Authority that obstruct the development of this important sector.

Given the fact that the ministry is under the control of importing merchants, who are fighting local industries from needlework to cars, your role should be to work on revitalizing the local industries, manufacturing and others, and even building integrated industrial cities, as well as not allowing merchants to expand by exploiting commodity subsidies in order to accumulate their wealth. These billions spent on this sector can build dozens of farms and factories. That is why we said yesterday to your colleague, the Minister of Finance, that a bag of rice will not enrich the poor, nor will a box of tea.

Rather, citizens want security of livelihood. This can only be achieved by lifting subsidies on goods and services, and allocating financial brackets to the needy, retirees, and those with low limited incomes, as well as not enriching merchants and the rich through subsidies. This is because waste has become an established characteristic of governmental and commercial behavior. We do not know whether the entire quantities reach the stores and the needy, or whether a major fraud operation is taking place with them, as is the case with projects that cost public funds many times above their actual cost.

In all countries of the world, the ministries of Commerce and Industry work to stimulate local production by facilitating procedures and providing services to stakeholders. This is why the UAE, for example, has become an industrial hub, as has Saudi Arabia, and they now have many factories, including medicines, that are exported to the Arab world.

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Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com

Follow me on:



ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

Day by Day

MINISTER of Information, it is imperative to acknowledge that progress is irreversible, and therefore, I earnestly hope that the forthcoming media law proposal will refrain from imposing imprisonment penalties.

The proposed mechanism appears quite explicit concerning acts of disrespect towards the Amir, the Crown Prince, the Divine Being, the Companions, and the family of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon them.

However, when addressing matters related to dissent against the government, economic concerns, or the stability of the local currency, it is essential to ensure that security authorities or the government do not misconstrue these issues, thereby contradicting the principles enshrined in the Constitution.

It is worth noting that no piece of legislation in the world should warrant lengthy imprisonment periods. The Kuwaiti public has become highly enlightened and discerning, with an understanding that allows them to express their thoughts or opinions within the bounds of the law, without fear of transgressing it. ... Yet tomorrow is another day

Zahed Matar



A general view of the flooded city of Derna, Libya, is seen Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023. The rainwater that gushed down Derna's mountainside and into the city has killed thousands and left thousands more missing, washing entire neighborhoods out to sea. (AP)

UAE nets over \$1b Captagon

DUBAI, Sept 14, (AP): Police in Dubai seized 86 million tablets of the amphetamine known as Captagon hidden in a shipment of doors and decorative building panels, authorities said Thursday, estimating its street value at just over \$1 billion.

The bust comes as sales of the amphetamine have become a Mideast-wide problem during Syria's long war.

A surveillance video released by the Interior Ministry in the United Arab Emirates shows suspects trying to bring the Captagon tablets through Dubai's massive Jebel Ali Port. They were hidden in five shipping containers of doors and panels, with the drugs themselves weighing over 13 tons, authorities said.

The UAE "stands as an impenetrable fortress against any threat aimed at jeopardizing the security and well-being of the Emirati society," Interior Minister Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan said in a statement.

Authorities did not identify the arrested suspects but described their operation as an "international criminal organization," without saying the source of the drugs. A Dubai police anti-narcotics official, Maj. Gen. Eid Mohammed Thani Hareb, said the drugs were to be transferred to an unidentified third nation.

The value of the seizure given by authorities put the price of a pill at nearly \$12. Costs can be as high as \$25 a pill in neighboring Saudi Arabia.

Syria has become the world's leading trafficker of Captagon, a highly addictive amphetamine, during the war. Hundreds of millions of pills have been smuggled over the years into Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries, where the drug is used recreationally and by people with physically demanding jobs to keep them alert.

The United States, Britain and European Union accuse Syrian President Bashar Assad, his family and allies, including Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group, of facilitating and profiting from the trade.

Newswatch

WASHINGTON: The White House said it has warned that the United States could freeze the Iranian assets again if Iran used those funds for purposes other than humanitarian transactions.



Kirby

Strategic Communications **John Kirby** said, "These Americans have been suffering a terrible ordeal. I think you all know that."

"Many of them were held in the Evin Prison under ghastly conditions and that we have been working very, very hard to bring them home to their families just as soon as possible."

"Now to secure their freedom, the United States is pursuing an arrangement in which Iranian funds held in South Korea are moved to restricted accounts in Qatar where they would be available for humanitarian transactions only. (KUNA)

VIENNA: Kuwait called for Iran to continue its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to abide by the Security Council's resolution 2231 in order to maintain the safety of its nuclear program.

This came in a statement by Kuwait's Envoy to the United Nations in Vienna Ambassador **Talal Al-Fasam** on Sunday, during the discussion meeting of IAEA board of governors, to verify and monitor Iran's nuclear activities in light of Security Council resolution 2231.

The statement stressed on all countries to produce and develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in light of the treaty. (KUNA)

Rebuilding begins in Marrakech

Many families shelterless

AMIZMIZ, Morocco, Sept 14, (AP): Rachid Alachoun, a 40-year-old plumber, washes clothes on the roof of his home. Half of it remains standing while the other half can be found in piles of rocks visible from the roof.

Alachoun is among the survivors near the epicenter of an earthquake that hit Morocco last Friday. Authorities have reported 2,946 deaths and several thousand injuries.

Though he has to walk through boulders and wires to get to his kitchen or bedroom, he has stayed in his family's home in Amizmiz near the Mellah, the old Jewish quarter. He said the tent that authorities gave them is too small for his entire family.

So his life at home goes on. Chairs in the remnants of the family home are covered with the dust of broken walls and possessions that are too large to carry out - a washing machine, tables and a fridge - are still trapped inside.

He cooks chicken, carrots and olives in a clay pot on the gas stove in an area he's kept tidy. The situation is especially precarious when aftershocks strike, such as a 4.6-magnitude tremor on Thursday morning.

The Alachouns were told last Saturday that assistance was on the way. Food and water arrived but they lacked shelter until Tuesday, when authorities allocated them one of about 30 small yellow tents set up in a square near the center of town - one of several encampments near Amizmiz.

"They told us not to come to get supplies and that supplies would come. So we waited," Alachoun's sister, Loubna, said from the coated polyester tent she is sharing with another brother, father, mother and a close family friend.

The Alachouns are among many Moroccans now asking questions about their futures, particularly as nights get colder and winter approaches. Though many villagers have been provided food and water, officials have said it could take five to six years to rebuild towns in the High Atlas and have created a special fund for recovery.

Rebuilding has already begun in parts of the old city of Marrakech, including the old Jewish Quarter, that are frequented by tourists, while efforts in Al Haouz - the province hardest hit by the earthquakes - are still focused on immediate humanitarian needs.

People from the region's mountain villages may move before their homes are rebuilt, but the Alachouns are dedicated to staying. Most people in the region identify as part of Morocco's largest indigenous group, Amazigh, and cling tightly to their homeland. The Alachouns doubt that any financial assistance could get them an apartment large enough to house their family in Marrakech, more than an hour away.

Such is the case for many families with small children. Until Friday, Naima Ait Brahim Ouali, a house cleaner, lived on the third floor of an apartment building with her five children in Sourejdj, a now-destroyed neighborhood in Amizmiz. She and her daughter fell down the staircase as the earthquake shook their building, ripping the top floor straight off, she said.

Now her entire neighborhood has relocated to a corner of a tent city in the center of town. She worries about the future for her five children - ages 25, 20, 19, 14 and 10 - some of whom had just started school last week.

Her daughters enjoy studying Arabic, with one passionate about reading the Quran. Her sons have a penchant for drawing and theater. But now fear strikes around 11 p.m., the time the earthquake hit last Friday.

"They saw death," she says of her five children, including a daughter who has experienced nightmares.



Rescue workers carry a woman who was injured by an aftershock, in the town of Imi N'tala, outside Marrakech, Morocco, Sept. 13, 2023. (AP)



NEIGHBORS



Cranes are seen on the new extension of the Grand Mosque during the Hajj pilgrimage in the Muslim holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia, Sunday, June 25, 2023. Saudi Arabia is pumping billions of dollars into the holy city of Makkah to meet its ambitious economic targets, with high-end hotels, apartment blocks, retailers and restaurants planned for areas around the Grand Mosque. (AP)

Plans for 30 million religious tourists a year

Saudi's bank on the call of prayer

Billboards line the Umm Al Qura highway leading to the Grand Mosque in Makkah, displaying manicured public spaces, glass-fronted stores and sleek towers. It's part of a \$26 billion project to bring more Muslims to the holy city's high-end hotels, residences, retailers and restaurants.

Makkah is being rapidly pushed to an even grander scale. An ambitious plan to reshape the economy aims to bring in more than 30 million religious tourists a year by 2030, and for tourism to contribute up to \$80 billion, or 10% of GDP, as the kingdom reduces its reliance on oil.

The government is homing in on religious tourism because the demand already exists. Saudi Arabia is home to Islam's two most sacred cities, Makkah and Madinah.

Muslims around the world are required by their faith to perform the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in their lives if they are able. Millions more come for the Umrah, a lesser pilgrimage that can be done any time during the year. Together, the Hajj and Umrah drew some 20 million pilgrims in 2019, before the pandemic.

Neighboring Dubai and Qatar can never compete with this offering, even as they host global events and major sporting competitions.

Tourism currently contributes 4.45% to Saudi Arabia's GDP. Although there are no official figures on how much revenue the Hajj generates, it is considered to be upward of \$12 billion.

"Saudi Arabia never has to worry about foreign competition, as there is only one Makkah and only one Madinah," said Bahrain-based economist Omar Al-Ubaydli. "This is a great foundation for building a successful income source. Enabling people to shop, visit museums, attend conferences while performing Umrah is a great strategy for income growth."

For more than a decade, furious development has transformed the center of Makkah with fields of towers surrounding around the Grand Mosque, housing the Kaaba, Islam's holiest site. Facing the mosque's main entrance is the centerpiece, the monumental Makkah Royal Clock Tower, the fourth tallest building in the world. Makkah is an alternative spelling of the city's name.

Hotels within walking distance or a view of the Grand Mosque charge eye-watering amounts during the Hajj and Ramadan seasons. The best spots are already taken by a Pullman, a Raffles, and other luxury hotels.

So companies are targeting areas northwest and northeast of the

Grand Mosque. And Umm Al Qura Road is ripe for development.

Behind the bright billboards along the highway are a jumble of cranes, craters and piles of grey rubble in the ongoing construction of the \$26 billion Masar Makkah development project. The plan is to lay down a 3.5-kilometer-long (2-mile) swath of hotels, residential buildings, parks and malls leading up to the Grand Mosque area. Local media report that the company leading the project demolished thousands of homes and paid out more than \$2.9 billion in compensation to their residents over a period of five years.

On the other side are low-rise and dingy pilgrim lodgings, budget eateries, and tiny stores crammed with pilgrimage essentials -- a world away from the shiny and upscale future for Makkah envisioned by Saudi Arabia. Scores of pilgrims, mostly from developing countries, sit on the sidewalks. The curb appeal improves the closer you get to the Grand Mosque.

The Associated Press reached out to several Saudi officials and construction firms with detailed questions about religious tourism and plans to develop Makkah's hospitality sector but received no response.

At a press conference in Makkah, Hajj Ministry spokesman Ayedh al-Ghweinim spoke about the work taking place, saying the government "is always keen to develop the Hajj and Umrah experience and improve the services provided." He said development is ongoing "to keep pace with the numbers" of pilgrims coming from abroad and "provide an exceptional experience."

Twenty-seven projects, each valued at \$25 million or more, are underway in Makkah, according to the Global Data Construction Intelligence Centre. Of these, 13 are in the hospitality, retail and residential sectors, and the rest in transport.

Other multi-billion-dollar projects of tower complexes, like Jabal Omar and Thakher Makkah, talk about "lively, all-inclusive communities" and "balanced spirituality."

The attempt to blend religious tradition and innovation requires sensitive handling by Saudi Arabia's leadership, as well as the developers and companies moving in. Makkah is revered by Muslims around the world as the place where the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was born and preached 1,400 years ago. Any perceived harm to the sanctity of the holy sites, even unintentional, could upset the faithful.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia's leadership wants to emphasize the modern, new Makkah by showing off the grandiose new construction and projects in the pipeline. At the 24-hour Starbucks near the Grand

Continued on Page 3

editor's choice



Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:12 Asr 15:13
Sunrise .. 05:32 Maghrib .. 17:55
Zohr 11:44 Isha 19:13

Local

Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Very hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 10-38 km/h.
By Night: Hot to rather hot with

Weather

light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind to northerly wind with speeds of 12-40 km/h.	Abdaly	48	32
	Jahra	48	34
	Salmiyah	45	35
	Ahmadi	44	37
	Nuwaisib	46	31
	Wafra	47	31

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

Deal reached on implementing 'segregation'

Bid to mark bilateral relations

HH Kuwait Crown Prince's visit to Britain being prepared: UK envoy

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: The British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis announced an upcoming visit by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad to Britain, reports Al-Qabas daily.

She revealed that an upcoming meeting is being prepared between His Highness the Crown Prince and the British Monarch King Charles.

When asked whether the visit will include the signing of bilateral agreements between the two countries, Ambassador Lewis said, "The purpose of the visit is to celebrate the bilateral relations and the ties that bring together the two countries, the ruling family in Kuwait and the British royal family. I do not know whether any agreements will be signed in any field or not."



Belinda Lewis

Regarding setting the date for this visit, the ambassador said, "It has not been determined yet, but we hope it will be in the near future."

On the sidelines of an event held on Monday at Camp Arifjan to remember the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Ambassador Lewis praised the visit of His Highness the Deputy Amir to Britain ten days ago, describing it as excellent and contributing to strengthening strategic relations.

When asked whether that visit touched on the free trade agreement, she said, "Yes. The British Prime Minister encouraged Kuwait to raise its ambitions in the agreement, expressing her hope to achieve progress either with Kuwait or other Arabian Gulf states."

Ambassador Lewis concluded her statement by announcing that the next meeting of the joint steering committee between the two countries will be held before the end of the year in Britain.

Municipal Council meets Monday

Tent market removal on agenda

By Enas Awadh
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: On Monday next week, the Municipal Council will hold its fourth regular session of the second term, which is the first session after the end of the summer vacation. During the session, it will discuss a number of items on its agenda, the most important of which is the request to extend the validity of the Municipal Council's decision regarding the location of the Firefighters Club in Al-Masail area, Block 7.

It will also discuss the draft controls and rules for naming cities, suburbs, regions, streets and squares, as well as the responses to the questions of members of the Municipal Council, such as the question of Fahad Al-Muwaijri regarding the removal of the tent market in Al-Rai area, and another by Abdullah Al-Enezi regarding the road from the Sulail Jahra Bridge that connects the Sixth Ring Road to the Mutlaa City.

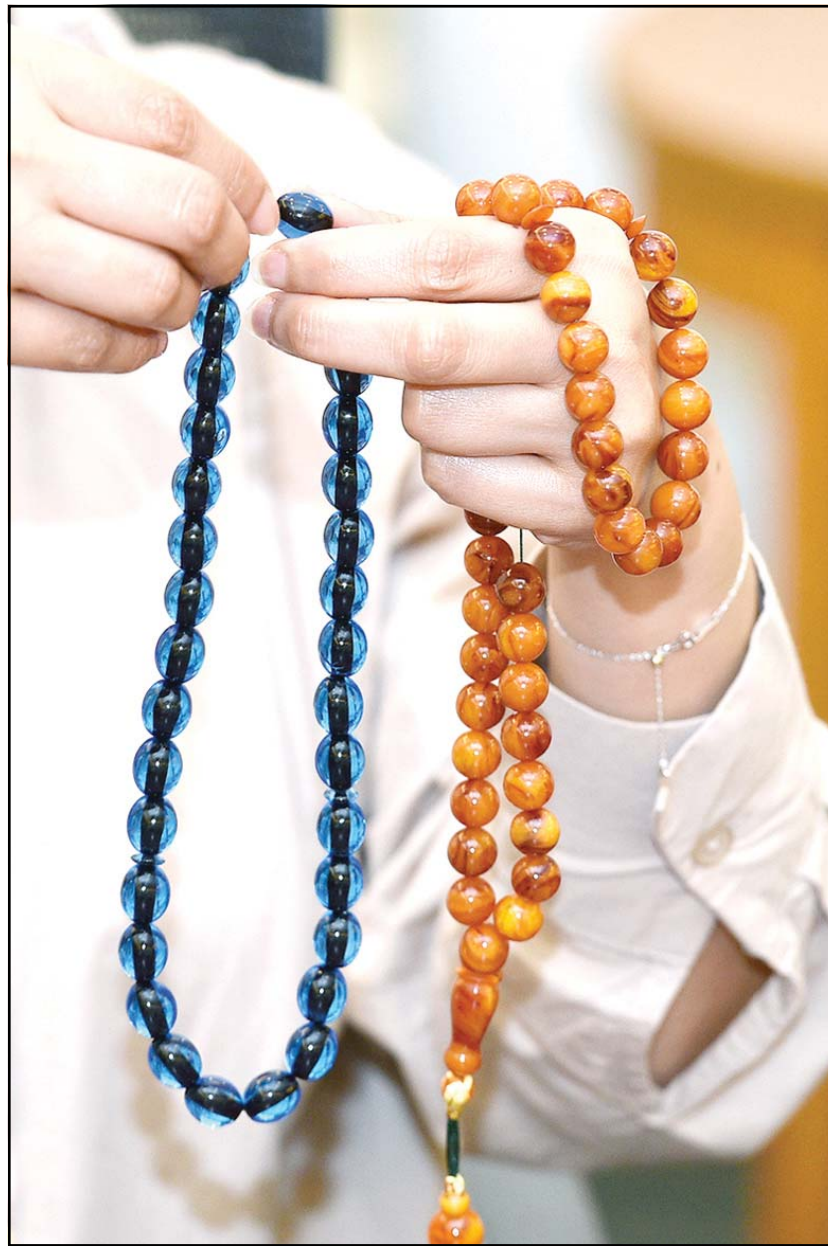
During the session, which will be chaired by Abdullah Al-Mahri, the Municipal Council will discuss a number of proposals, the most prominent of which is the proposal submitted by members Abdullatif Al-Daei, Sharifa Al-Shalfan, Munira Al-Amir, and Fahad Al-Abd Al-Jader regarding designing the visual identity of the Municipal Council. It will also discuss the proposal submitted by the Vice President of the council Khaled Al-Mutairi

regarding the allocation and establishment of a second integrated health center in Abdullah Al-Mubarak area. Two other proposals will be discussed, one of which was presented by Alia Al-Farisi regarding the cleanliness of Kuwait City and replacing the black bags for residential containers with eco-friendly bags, and the other by Muneera Al-Amir regarding activating performance measurement standards in the work system of the Kuwait Municipality.

The Municipal Council will also discuss a number of requests from ministries and government agencies, including a request from the Public Authority for Road and Transportation (PART) for the expansion of the location of the underground rainwater collection tank within Andalous Block 8 area and two connecting lanes for rainwater drainage.

It will discuss requests of the Ministry of Electricity to allocate sites for a secondary transformer station in the Abdullah Al-Salem suburb, and a secondary transformer station in Qadisiya area, as well as to allocate a terrestrial cable route in Doha area to feed the main transformer stations to serve the Entertainment City project.

The Municipal Council will also tackle a request to expand the site allocated to it in the commercial and administrative center in Farwaniya area to construct a building for citizen service that includes all departments.



Detailing of the parts of the misbah.

Kuwaitis master tangling of beads

By Khaled Al-Jales

Kuwaitis have mastered the craft of tangling beads as an art form passed down through generations, an often strenuous effort that requires both time and patience.

Presenting a workshop on the intricacies of this activity, Yousef Al-Qallaf, a practitioner of this art from that is deeply embedded in Kuwaiti tradition, displayed the vast array of beads that are used in this local pastime. (KUNA)

Service offices at doorstep

Steps taken to collect power dues

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: The Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad announced the opening of two customer service offices in the near future in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak area, indicating that work is currently underway in preparation for their opening.

He revealed that the construction of a customer service office building in Mutla'a will also begin soon in order to make it easier for citizens and residents to complete their electricity transactions without going to the ministry's headquarters in South Surra and enduring the burden of effort and time.

Dr. Al-Ostad said this yesterday morning during the opening of the Customer Affairs Office in Sabah Al-Ahmad area in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Customer Affairs Eng. Falah Al-Mutairi, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Distribution Networks Sector Eng. Faisal Al-Sumait and a number of department directors in the ministry.

He explained that, "The customer service sector has developed many plans to collect the ministry's dues from citizens. In view of the advent of the academic year and its requirements, we have reduced the

pace of collections, so that it will return to its pace in the middle of October.

The ministry's keenness to collect from citizens the dues owed to the ministry is in the interest of the citizens so that these dues do not accumulate on them. There are also plans in the Customer Affairs Sector to collect dues from the government and oil sectors and all other sectors.

The ministry and its work teams are proactive in completing tasks. Evidence of this is the opening of the customer service office in Sabah Al-Ahmad area, as it is the first government services office for citizens in the new cities, especially in the Sabah Al-Ahmad area, which is a great distance from the city.

Directives were given to the ministry's officials regarding the necessity of completing all private electricity transactions through the new office to save citizens time and effort."

Dr. Al-Ostad stressed the ministry's keenness to make all its services digital, even though there are many services now available to people that contribute to facilitating procedures and saving time and effort.

He said the tender for phase two of the project for smart electricity and water meters is currently in the process of being tendered and will be installed in all housing sectors.

Non-compliant face closure

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: Chairman of the parliamentary Values Enhancement Committee MP Muhammad Hayef disclosed that the committee had a meeting with Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Mane, Kuwait University President Professor Faye Al-Dhefai and a number of senior university officials recently.

Hayef confirmed that an agreement has been reached on strictly implementing Gender Segregation Law number 24/1996 at the university. He quoted Al-Dhefai as saying that the departments, which are not segregated will be closed until the completion of the registration of new students as per the aforementioned law. He hailed Al-Dhefai and the senior university officials for responding to the committee's demand, which is based on the law and Kuwaiti traditions.

On the other hand, MP Adel Al-Damkhi asked State Minister for Municipal and Communication Affairs Fahd Al-Shulah about the decision of Kuwait Municipality to collect fees from citizens who built car sunshades. He wants to know if the Municipality considered law number 79/1995, which stipulates the need for the National Assembly to ratify a special legislation on such fees.

MP Majed Al-Mutairi forwarded queries to Al-Shulah about the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA). He inquired why the authority has not established its permanent headquarters till date despite the allocation of a special budget for this purpose; if the concerned institutions including the Municipality have approved the establishment of the permanent headquarters; copies of the response is in the affirmative and reasons if the answer is 'no'; if a tender was floated for this purpose; copies of the tender and approval of the concerned monitoring institutions if the reply is 'yes'; if the rent contract for the temporary headquarters of CITRA in Al-Hamra Mall is still valid; if the contract was renewed for a longer term; rent amount; if the delay in establishing the permanent headquarters and continuous renting of a temporary headquarters are considered squandering of public funds; why CITRA has only one branch (located at Kuwait International Airport); why it has no offices at the land borders, as citizens passing through the land borders have to go to its office at the airport to process their transactions and then return to the land borders to collect their commodities; and strategy of CITRA after abolishing the Cyber Security Department and establishing the National Center for Cyber Security.

MP Mubarak Al-Tasha forwarded queries to the finance minister about the procedures followed in the nomination and appointment of the new Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC), and criteria for choosing the board chairman and members among the nominees.

He demanded for copies of the curriculum vitae of the chairman, vice chairman and members. He wants to know their connection with the civil aviation sector, how do they contribute to the improvement of the performance of KAC, if any of the new board members worked at Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) or its subsidiaries, their names if the answer is 'yes' and the legal basis for their appointment at KAC, if the institutions tasked to nominate the board members confirmed that none of the nominees have violated Conflict of Interests Law number 1/2023.

In another development, MP Hamdan Al-Azmi urged the Ministry of Education to take legal action against a British school for

showing a film promoting homosexuality to the children. He stressed the need to impose tough penalties such as the cancellation of the license in order to deter other schools from engaging in activities prohibited by Islam and against the righteous human nature.

On the other hand, Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun had separate meetings with Minister of Finance Fahd Al-Jarallah; Ambassador of the Czech Republic Jaroslav Siro; Director General of the Arab Center for Educational Research in Gulf Countries Dr. Muhammad Mutair Al-Shareekah; and a delegation from the Kuwait Society for the Families of the Prisoners of War, Martyrs and Missing Persons including Chairman Faye Al-Anzi, and members Badr Al-Sawagh and Nawaf Al-Huwaider.

Makkah

Continued from Page 2

Mosque, a \$25 jute shoulder bag shows the clock tower and neighboring high-rises alongside the coffee chain's logo. Branding for Vision 2030, the economic diversification program, is everywhere.

Makkah residents have mixed feelings about the dramatic transformation of the city. "It is not the Makkah that we know," said Fajr Abdullah Abdul-Halim, a 57-year-old who was born and raised in the city but now lives in Jeddah. Her family used to live near the Grand Mosque. Now both the homes are gone. "Before, there were neighborhoods near the Grand Mosque, but now it is mostly towers and overpasses."

Old neighborhoods like Ajyad, Sad, Jarwal and Shweika, have been remodeled to absorb the increased capacity for religious tourism.

Abdul-Halim said although locals want to live in the city, the construction work has pushed them to the outskirts. "People say it's better to move out for better schooling and work."

An Egyptian chef who has worked in Makkah for six years is happy about the new developments and the prospect of wealthier tourists because it means more business for his restaurant. But he acknowledges it comes at a cost, with low-paid laborers from Bangladesh and Myanmar being some of the hardest hit as they get priced out of more neighbourhoods.

Wide-reaching demolitions have also redefined certain parts of the city.

Another Egyptian, who has lived in Makkah for over a decade and spoke anonymously welcomes the near-constant construction and development because of its positive effect on the economy. The investment has led to new restaurants, hotels, shops and better infrastructure. He has been paid good money to work on projects across the city.

But he worries that the luxury hotels could become a distraction from the religious experience synonymous with Makkah. "Maybe when people come they will forget about the Kaaba... and focus on the buildings and highways," he said. (AP)

Security intensified at roads around schools

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: In conjunction with the Ministry of Interior's preparations for the upcoming academic year, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, chaired a security meeting at the Ministry of Interior's headquarters, reports Al-Rai daily.

During the meeting, which was attended by assistant undersecretaries and Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Minister Al-Khaled received a comprehensive briefing on the Ministry of Interior's field sectors' readiness for the 2023-2024 academic year and the coordination mechanisms among them. He also examined the deployment strategy for security and traffic operations across the country, including the deployment of both stationary and mobile patrols on main and secondary roads, intersections, and in the vicinity of educational institutions.

The Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior emphasized the importance of promptly addressing traffic congestion, maintaining a firm stance against any violations, and fostering a culture of courtesy and assistance to motorists to ensure their safety on the roads.

He directed the intensification of security presence on highways and all key intersections leading to residential areas, as well as near educational institutions, to prevent traffic disruptions and unauthorized parking in front of schools. He also called for the consistent presence of supervisory and leadership personnel to monitor security and traffic conditions regularly.

Furthermore, he stressed the importance of conducting awareness campaigns for vehicle drivers and guardians to promote compliance with traffic regulations, rules, and safe road behaviors that enhance road user safety.

Temp to hit 46C

Another hot weekend

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14, (KUNA): Weekend forecast weather will be very hot in midday and hot at night, said the meteorological department on Thursday.

The department director, Abdulaziz al-Qarawi, said in remarks to KUNA that Kuwait would remain gripped with the seasonal Indian law depression, coupled with unsteady hot winds that would cause dust waves particularly in undeveloped areas.

The heat today is expected to hit 48 degrees and fall to 32 degrees at night. On Friday, the highest heat level is expected at 46 degrees day time and 29-32 degrees at night.

On Saturday, Al-Qarawi said the temperature would soar to 46 degrees maximum and drop to the 32-29 degrees level at night.

Kuwaitization: Officials in the cooperative sector have affirmed pursuit of "Kuwaitizing" supervisory jobs in the consumer cooperative stores in line with the government policy to alter the geographic status and overhaul the labor market.

The officials, interviewed by KUNA, affirmed that the consumer cooperative societies have used all means to employ Kuwaiti nationals for jobs that had been performed by expatriates.

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Photos by Leah Qurtal

Photos during the gathering attended by esteemed dignitaries commemorating the JSDF's establishment.
Japan's ambassador highlights Kuwait's vital role in Mideast stability

Kuwaiti-Japanese military relationship robust, evolving: Al-Otaibi



September

Room Promotion





By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: Brigadier General Fahad Al-Otaibi, the Director of Military Cooperation, affirmed the robust and evolving Kuwaiti-Japanese military relationship in various domains. He made these remarks while representing the Chief of General Staff at an event hosted by the Japanese Embassy to commemorate the 69th anniversary of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces' establishment.

Brigadier General Al-Otaibi expressed a mutual interest in collaborating with Japan in military education and training. He mentioned plans for conducting English-language courses in Kuwait or Japan next year, under Kuwaiti military leadership and aligned with forthcoming military strategies.

He lauded the historical cooperation between the two nations, highlighting Japan's deployment of mine-clearing ships during the Iraqi invasion, a gesture deeply appreciated by Kuwait.

Defense agreements

Regarding future defense agreements, he indicated Kuwait's openness to such arrangements with friendly and allied countries and expressed hope for joint military exercises.

Brigadier General Al-Otaibi delivered a speech on behalf of the Chief of Staff, acknowledging the significance of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces' founding in 1954 and their role in safeguarding Japan.

He acknowledged Japan's expanded global role and its assistance to Kuwait during the Gulf War, particularly the deployment of minesweepers to secure sea communication routes for Kuwaiti supplies.

He reiterated Kuwait's gratitude for Japan's support during challenging times and emphasized the shared values of peaceful cooperation that underpin their respective



H.E. Morino Yasunari, Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait

military cultures.

The Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait, Morino Yasunari, highlighted Kuwait's vital role in Middle East stability, emphasizing their partnership in peace and security efforts.

Yasunari mentioned Japan's humanitarian assistance and reconstruction activities in Iraq, expressing a desire to enhance cooperation with Kuwait's Armed Forces, particularly in education and training.

He noted Japan's anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and participation in multinational forces in the Sinai Peninsula, while acknowledging global security challenges, such as the conflict in Ukraine, and Japan's commitment to a free and open international system.

Yasunari celebrated the Japanese Self-Defense Forces' 69-year history, emphasizing their contributions to global peace, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. He also highlighted Japan's efforts to strengthen defense capabilities through new national security and defense strategies.

Accounts movement under supervision

Local banks seek CBK opinion on banking control mechanism

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: The local banks have sought the opinion of the Central Bank of Kuwait regarding the required control mechanism for banking operations between bank employee accounts and customer accounts, reports Al-Rai daily.

The sources explained that the banks have asked the supervisory regulator to provide them with the adequacy of the procedures followed by them to monitor their employees' accounts, and whether the central bank had any directives that should be taken into account.

Due diligence

In this regard, the Central Bank stated that banks must fulfill due diligence requirements to verify the integrity of the funds and information available to them, whether about the movement of customer or employee accounts, and compare it with their financial data recorded in the Know Your Customer form, to ensure the extent of its consistency with the transactions executed on their accounts.

The Central Bank asked banks to rely on the instructions that were issued previously and amended last February, which specified the frameworks and concepts that banks must take into account when setting policies and work procedures that must be followed to verify compliance with fulfilling the requirements of the instructions for monitoring the accounts of their employees and customers.

The sources indicated that banks rely,

in implementing oversight instructions on employee and customer accounts, on the instructions of the Central Bank and their established internal control systems, especially with regard to unusual money flows that are transferred to the customer's accounts, whether he is an employee or a customer from outside the bank, with Taking into account increased due diligence with the employee client.

The sources said that the banks follow a more careful policy in accordance with the instructions of the Central Bank on employee accounts, as once any unusual amounts pass into the employee accounts, they are immediately inquired about the source of these funds, and any evidence confirming their safety, especially if the liquidity flowing to the employee's account is high compared to the size of the money.

According to sources, banks maintain a comprehensive review process for customer account opening documents, including a thorough examination of any negative records, before authorizing new accounts or processing financial transactions.

Furthermore, banks meticulously inspect incoming fund transfers to customer accounts. During this process, they consider the regular income sources or request evidence of their legitimacy if they surpass conventional financial thresholds. This scrutiny is particularly applicable to funds that are regularly deposited into the client's accounts.

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Speaker Al-Saadoun receives the Czech ambassador.

KUNA photo

Audiences of Parliament Speaker Al-Saadoun

National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun on Thursday received the Czech Ambassador to the State of Kuwait Jaroslav Siro. Meanwhile, Al-Saadoun received Director of the Gulf Arab States Educational Research Centre (GASREC) Mohammed Al-Sharjia.

Also, Al-Saadoun received a delegation of the society of the families of the martyrs, prisoners and the missing. The delegation included the society chairman Fayed Al-Enezi, its board members Badr Al-Sewagh and Nawaf Al-Huwaider. (KUNA)

Amir congratulates Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador on national days

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of congratulations to the President of Nicaragua Daniel Ortega on his country's National Day. His Highness the Amir wished the president wellness and the Republic of Nicaragua and its friendly people further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President Daniel Ortega on his country's National Day, wishing his country further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-

Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President Daniel Ortega on his country's National Day. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad sent a congratulatory cable to the President of Costa Rica Rodrigo Chaves Robles on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished President Rodrigo good health and further progress and prosperity for his people and country. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad also sent a congratulatory cable to President Rodrigo Chaves Robles on his country's National Day. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf sent a congratulatory cable to President Rodrigo Chaves

Robles on his country's National Day. Also, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad sent a cable of congratulations to El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele on his country's National Day. His Highness the Amir wished the president all wellness and the Republic of El-Salvador and its friendly people optimum progress and prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad also sent a cable of congratulations to President Nayib Bukele on his country's National Day, wishing his country further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf sent a cable of congratulations to President Nayib Bukele on his country's National Day.

Taxi driver nabbed for helping maids escape from sponsors

Two-vehicle collision kills woman

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: After an extensive week-long operation involving searches, investigations, and surveillance, officers from the General Administration of Residence Affairs Investigations have arrested an Egyptian mobile taxi driver for helping female domestic workers from their sponsors' homes and aiding them work on hourly or daily basis, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to a security source the arrest was based on reports from concerned citizens about female workers fleeing from their homes.

In response, an investigative task force was assembled to monitor areas associated with these reports and the diligent efforts of the task force culminated in the arrest of the suspect as he was attempting to smuggle a domestic worker from her sponsor's residence in Abu Futaira. Subsequently, he was detained and subjected to further investigation.

The source revealed that the suspect had confessed to engaging in this illegal activity for an extended period of time and had cooperated with investigators by disclosing the location of an apartment in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh where absconding workers were being sheltered. Dur-

Health centers issue 6 m sick leaves in 20 months

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: According to the Ministry of Health in 2022 and until August 2023 the primary health care centers have issued a total of 3,377,106 sick leave certificates, while they amounted to 2.7 million sick leaves as of last August, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The announcement said the ministry has now approved the proposal put forth by the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi about the new electronic platform to issue sick leaves and that the specific details of this mechanism will be clarified in the upcoming weeks, prior to the service's implementation.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, the ministry's spokesperson, elaborated that the proposal presented to the Civil Service Commis-

sion sought to amend Civil Service Council Resolution 39 of 2006. This amendment will enable employees to obtain specified sick leaves through electronic platforms, aligning with the practices seen in advanced healthcare systems.

The introduction of this new service is a response to situations where medical consultation is unnecessary, making it more convenient for citizens and alleviating the burden on healthcare centers and medical personnel.

Dr. Al-Sanad emphasized that the service will enhance public satisfaction, reduce the risk of disease transmission during periods of seasonal illness, and result in fewer patient visits and reduced waiting times.

ing a subsequent raid, security authorities found three runaway domestic workers.

In a separate incident, officers from Residency Affairs Investigations arrested an Asian who was operating a maids recruiting agency in the Farwaniya Governorate. This agency was founded to employ runaway female workers, and during the operation, authorities found seven runaway maids on the agency premises.

Woman dies in accident: A woman died as a result of a two-vehicle collision on the Fifth Ring Road, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Public Relations and Media Department of the General Fire Force stated the Sulabikhat Fire Brigade was sent to the location of the accident and upon arrival found the woman had succumbed to her injuries. The cause of the accident is not known. The corpse of the woman has been referred to Forensics.

diwaniya **ديوانية**

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Nations eager to participate in shaping new chapter of history'

"THE world wakes up every day to a new variable that shapes the features of a different world order that is inevitably coming, posing a challenge to countries that are part of the new history-making movement or outside of it. It seems clear that the successive summits and major meetings in the recent period, which were based on the economic and development dimension, and went beyond the stage of political theorizing, to move toward giant economic blocs, practical projects, and realistic alliances, are changing the international scene politically, economically, and geopolitically," columnist **Azzam Al-Sabah** wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"The Ukrainian conflict triggered a series of repercussions that unfolded across various dimensions, encompassing the realms of politics, economics, and beyond. Yet, the pivotal moment lies in the war's role in postponing the emergence of a new, multipolar world order. The continued conflict hints at the presence of international actors working to manage the Ukrainian crisis rather than staunching the ongoing wounds of war. Their motivations appear to be driven by political and economic goals.



Al-Sabah

"This shadow cast by the Ukrainian crisis looms over recent global events like the BRICS summit and the G20 summit. At these gatherings, participants displayed a concerted effort to advance new economic alliances that could exert substantial influence on global affairs and chart their own trajectories.

"Notably, the expansion of the BRICS group from 5 to 11 countries, with the recent invitation extended to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Iran, Argentina, and Ethiopia, was a significant development. These additions were carefully selected based on their regional and international significance. This expansion solidifies the group as a formidable force, representing roughly half of the world's population and boasting the presence of major oil-producing nations.

"The G20 summit introduced yet another noteworthy facet to this evolving landscape, proposing a novel model for global integration. Perhaps the most striking concept unveiled was the idea of establishing an economic corridor linking India to Europe via the Middle East.

"Amidst these rapidly evolving dynamics, China's ambitious project continues to unfold, aiming to position itself as a colossal economic, technological, and military power. This effort encompasses both bilateral alliances and international blocs that view China's project as a promising future within the emerging world order.

"The introduction of the "economic corridor" concept by the G20 harks back to the "Chinese Silk Road," which serves as a magnetic force drawing the world's economies toward China through substantial investments. The Gulf nations, including Kuwait, are poised to play a pivotal role in this project, contributing to regional stability and development.

"Another facet of the emerging world order is manifested in the succession of military coups in several African countries, reflecting a desire to break free from the past. As traditional global powers relinquish their spheres of influence to rising players, these coups represent an important shift in the geopolitical landscape.

"Although the contours of the new world order remain uncertain, it is clear that nations are eager to actively

participate in shaping this new chapter of history rather than passively observing from the sidelines. Achieving security, stability, and peace will be instrumental in the realization of this evolving global order, a sentiment echoed by the evolving landscape of political alliances."

Also:

"Changes in the region and the world are happening at an increasingly rapid pace. Each day brings surprising shifts in international politics and the emergence of new organizations. It all began with the formation of the "BRICS" group in 2009, and we've seen economic trends pushing for the inclusion of countries with significant financial and economic influence, as exemplified by the recent developments at the BRICS summit in India, particularly the proposal for an economic corridor linking India with the Middle East and Europe," columnist **Abdul Rahman Al-Otaibi** wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"China, with its substantial economic power and expanding global footprint, has raised concerns not only for the United States but also to some extent, the European Union. Recent military coups in countries with European support, such as France, may align with China's interests.

"Russia remains entangled in the Ukrainian conflict, and the world is unmistakably shifting towards multipolarity. In this context, countries must strategically reposition themselves to mitigate risks and pursue their long-term interests.

"The question we face is: Where do we stand amid these developments? Do we have a strategic plan that anticipates these variables and offers a strategic vision to safeguard against negative hesitations and maximize the benefits of these new alliances, employing a principle of strategic maneuvering?

"Countries with limited geographical size must maintain a balanced distance from various alliances, emphasizing economic ties as a means to enhance stability and security. However, this balance can be compromised in a hostile economic and investment climate, potentially impeding their flexibility in safeguarding strategic security, especially in the face of internal tensions that suggest instability to outsiders.

"Freedom and democracy in any state should serve to advance interests, not undermine them. Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to internal affairs, acknowledging that frustrations may arise from issues rooted in the past. Expecting quick fixes from the government is unrealistic, as it lacks a magic solution and relies on the sincere cooperation of all stakeholders.

"Succumbing to voices of unknown entities on social media which often serve specific agendas by criticizing government efforts, is unwise and acknowledging the need for improvements in selection processes, accountability, and government media transparency, it's essential to recognize that constructive criticism should be objective, not driven by personal gain or political vendettas.

"We've heard calls for change and reform in the past, but results have been elusive. Aristotle wisely noted that self-awareness is a challenging pursuit, while teaching others is easier. In the face of regional and international changes, Kuwait's security and interests must be preserved.

"Kuwait is not merely a source of income; it is our homeland, our sanctuary, and the very air we breathe. It embodies dignity over wealth, spiritual richness over financial gains."

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary

Education minister issues decision

Bedouns with expired 'cards' to be enrolled in all schools

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Adel Al-Mane recently issued a decision on allowing Bedoun stu-

dents with expired security cards to enroll in public and private schools for academic year 2023/2024, reports Al-Qabas daily. This is part of the ongoing prepa-

rations for the new academic year to ensure the smooth flow of the educational process, with the approval of the Council of Ministers.

To the Minister

Continued from Page 1

On the other hand, in Kuwait, commerce and industry employees exploit the judicial police to obstruct people's work. That is why many factories are closed, and we started importing everything, even medical supplies such as cotton and medical gauze, as well as masks, after improvised decisions eliminated them.

Kuwait needs to reconsider all the problems arising from the expansion of support, which, continued in this manner, will eliminate financial surpluses, i.e. if there is a surplus, and an industrial strategy, as is the case with other countries. Otherwise, the national product will continue to decline. Relying on oil as the state's main source of income has many disadvantages.

That is why we ask you, Your Excellency the minister - does your ministry have the ability to address these

problems, or will you act as your predecessors when they used to bury their heads in the sand when faced with any problem?

US, Bahrain

Continued from Page 1

"In today's meeting, we'll discuss how to deepen our strategic partnership, including through the framework that brings us here today, the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement.

"This agreement deepens our cooperation in three very important ways," Secretary Blinken pointed out.

First, it expands our security and defense collaboration. For more than 25 years, of course, Bahrain has hosted the US Navy's 5th Fleet, and we stand shoulder to shoulder in our mission to secure critical shipping lanes that sustain the entire global economy.

"This agreement will strengthen coordination between our armed forces and the integration of our intelligence capacities, allowing us to even better deter and respond to threats as they arise.

"Second, it enhances our economic relationship. Since 2006, our free trade agreement has more than tripled trade and investment to about USD three billion a year.

"Today's agreement builds on this, in part by identifying new investment opportunities for the private sector partners in the United States.

"And third, at a moment when technology holds so much potential to better our lives, this agreement advances scientific and technical cooperation between our countries, including through increased information sharing and exchanges between our people," he went on.

"And already, we're collaborating in areas like health security and digital technology. I think we'll see, with today's signing, all of this become elevated."

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USD stable

The US dollar remained stable on Thursday vis a vis the Kuwaiti Dinar trading at KD 0.308 and the Euro also steadied exchanging at KD 0.331 compared to Wednesday's exchange rates.

The Central Bank of Kuwait said in its daily bulletin that the sterling pound also remained stable at KD 0.345, while the Swiss franc stood at KD 0.345, and the Japanese yen remained stable at KD 0.002.

Exchange rates declared by the CBK reflect average prices and not rates of actual transactions. (KUNA)

Chevron reports LNG outage

A Chevron Corp. liquefied natural gas plant in Australia reported a production outage Thursday as workers escalated a strike action against facilities that provide more than 5% of global LNG supplies.

The U.S. energy giant said in a statement that it was working to resume full production at its Wheatstone facility "following a fault which has impacted about 25% of LNG production." "The cause has been identified and restart activities have com-

menced," the statement said.

Chevron's Wheatstone and Gorgon plants in Western Australia state account for more than 5% of global LNG supply.

Chevron did not link the disruption to an escalation Thursday in the strikes at its Wheatstone and Gorgon LNG plants. Around 500 workers at the two Chevron sites have been taking limited strike actions since Sept. 8 in a dispute over wages and conditions. (AP)

applications for US jobless benefits tick up

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits last week ticked up modestly after falling to the lowest level in seven months the week before, as companies continue to retain employees despite the Federal Reserve's efforts to cool the economy.

U.S. applications for jobless claims rose by 3,000 to 220,000 for the week ending Sept. 9, the Labor Department reported Thursday. Jobless claim applications are seen as representative of the number of layoffs in a given week.

The four-week moving average of claims, a less volatile measure, fell by 5,000 to 224,500.

The Federal Reserve is well into the second year of its battle against inflation, having raised interest rates 11 times since March of last year. At 5.4%, the Fed's benchmark borrowing rate is at the highest level in 22 years. The Fed's rate hikes are meant to cool the job market and bring down wages, which many economists believe helps to ease pressure on price growth. (AP)

Market Movements

14-09-2023

		Change	Closing pts			Change	Closing pts
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+1.41	33,168.10	UAE	- DFM	-0.41	4,034.00
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+0.21	45,690.96				
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	+0.96	6,208.40				
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+0.29	11,154.54				
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+0.92	19,540.33				

Business

Europe's central bank hikes key interest rate to record high even as recession threat grows

'Inflation has declined and we want it to continue to decline'

FRANKFURT, Germany, Sept 14, (AP): The European Central Bank hiked its key interest rate to a record high Thursday, pressing its fight against stubbornly high inflation that has been plaguing consumers - even as worries grow that higher borrowing costs could help push the economy into recession.

The increase of a quarter-percentage point comes as central banks around the world, including the U.S. Federal Reserve, try to judge how much anti-inflation medicine is too much - and what's the right point to halt their swift series of rate hikes before the economy tips into a downturn and people lose their jobs.

"Inflation has declined, and we want it to continue to decline and to reinforce that process," ECB President Christine Lagarde said at a news conference. "And we are doing that not because we want to force a recession, but because we want price stability to be there for people who are taking the brunt of inflation."

Nevertheless, the bank signaled that its 10th straight hike could be its last, shifting its emphasis from raising rates to keeping them high enough for long enough to beat down inflation.

Thursday's decision raises the ECB's benchmark deposit rate to 4%, up drastically from minus 0.5% just a little more than a year ago and the highest since the euro was established in 1999.

Lagarde reiterated that interest rate levels "will make a substantial con-

tribution to bringing down inflation" and that borrowing costs would stay high "for as long as necessary." Analysts said those statements indicate that this rate hike would likely be the last.

"The ECB's communication was clear: today was the last hike in the current cycle," said Carsten Brzeski, chief eurozone economist for ING bank.

"Looking ahead, a further weakening of the economy and more traction in a deflationary trend will make it very hard to find arguments for yet another rate hike before the end of the year," Brzeski said.

Annual inflation of 5.3% in the 20 countries that use the euro currency is well above the bank's target of 2%, robbing consumers of purchasing power and contributing to economic stagnation.

But there is the growing awareness that higher borrowing costs are weighing on decisions by consumers and businesses to invest and spend and are becoming a burden on the economy.

Interest rates combat inflation by raising the cost of credit for things people want to buy, particularly houses, and for business investment in buildings and equipment. That cools off demand for goods and relieves upward pressure on prices.

The flip side is that rate hikes can hurt economic growth if they're overdone.

Europe's major economies - Germany, France, Spain and Italy - saw shrinking activity in August in the services sector even at the tail end of a strong tourism summer in Spain and Italy, according to S&P Global's surveys of purchasing managers. Services is a broad category that includes

hotel stays, haircuts, car repairs and medical treatment.

That comes on top of a slowdown in global manufacturing that is hitting Germany, Europe's biggest economy, particularly hard.

The eurozone economy has been teetering on the edge of recession since last year, barely growing in each of the first two quarters of this year.

Yet the economic picture does not resemble a typical recession because unemployment is at a record low of 6.4%. Labor shortages have sent people's pay higher - one factor complicating the ECB's inflation fight.

Also weighing on the outlook is a weaker euro against the strengthening U.S. dollar as investors take the view that economic weakness will hit Europe and China. They are betting that the U.S. Federal Reserve might manage a "soft landing" by finishing its rate hikes without pushing the economy into a downturn.

The Fed made its 11th rate increase in July, bringing its key rate to the highest level in 22 years after pausing in June. Economists and investors generally expect the Fed to skip a rate hike at its meeting next week, but it could increase again in November.

Inflation is lower in the U.S. - at 3.7% - than in Europe despite an upward bump from gasoline prices in August.

Central banks around the world have been hiking rates to stamp out inflation that broke out after the sharp economic rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic strained supply chains and Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent food and energy prices higher.

Asian shares mostly higher after US inflation data ease rate hike worries

Wall Street climbs as stocks worldwide rise

NEW YORK, Sept 14, (AP): Stocks are rising on Wall Street Thursday after a blizzard of reports suggested the U.S. economy is still humming, though inflation may be too.

The S&P 500 was 0.7% higher in midday trading. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 243 points, or 0.7%, at 34,819, as of 11 a.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was 0.8% higher.

Some of the strongest action was in the bond market, where Treasury yields swung in opposite directions several times following the mixed economic data.

One report said U.S. shoppers spent more at retailers last month than economists expected. Such spending has been a linchpin keeping the economy out of a recession, but it could also be encouraging retailers to keep trying to raise prices further.

The strong spending is a result of a remarkably resilient job market, which has withstood a steep jump in interest rates since early last year. A separate report Thursday morning said fewer workers applied for unemployment benefits last week than expected, which implies the number of layoffs remains low.

A third report said prices getting paid at the wholesale level rose more last month than economists expected. That could be a discouraging signal for households if the higher-than-expected inflation gets passed on to shoppers at the consumer level.

To try to get inflation back down to its 2% target, the Federal Reserve has been increasing interest rates sharply. The hope on Wall Street is that a slowdown in inflation since last summer means the Fed is done with its rate hikes, which slow the economy and hurt investment prices.

Treasury yields initially jumped following Thursday's reports on fears they could push the Fed to raise rates again or at least to keep rates higher for longer. But economists pointed out much of last month's acceleration in wholesale inflation was due to higher fuel prices, which can shift direction sharply and quickly.

Ignoring those and other particularly volatile prices, underlying inflation trends in Thursday's report were closer to economists' expectations. That echoed a report from a day earlier on inflation at the consumer level, which showed overall inflation accelerated to 3.7% in August largely because of a leap in fuel prices.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury initially jumped to nearly 4.30% immediately after the eco-



A currency trader watches monitors near the screens showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI), (left), and the foreign exchange rate between U.S. dollar and South Korean won at the foreign exchange dealing room of the KEB Hana Bank headquarters in Seoul, South Korea. (AP)

nomical data's release Thursday morning. But it later eased back, only to swing again. It was sitting at 4.25%, roughly where it was late Wednesday.

The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks expectations for the Fed, also bounced up, down and back again following the reports. It was sitting at 4.96%, down from 4.98% late Wednesday, after briefly leaping above 5.02%.

Traders pared back expectations for the Fed to raise rates again some time this year, though they're still betting on a nearly 42% chance of that, according to data from CME Group.

Optimism that the Fed may be done hiking rates may be overdone, warned Mike Loewengart, head of model portfolio construction at Morgan Stanley Global Investment Office.

"The Fed is still likely to remain on hold next week, but if the economy continues to surprise to the upside, all bets are off as to what they'll do after their final two policy meetings of the year," he said.

In the stock market, shares of chip designer Arm Holdings are set to begin trading later in the day. It priced its stock at \$51 per share in an initial offering. The offering valued Arm at \$54.5 billion and could be an encouraging signal for the IPO market, which has slowed since the stock market began tum-

bling early last year on fears about higher interest rates.

Stocks of energy producers were helping to lead the market after oil prices rallied. Crude has been climbing for months as oil-producing countries try to support its price by curtailing their supplies. A barrel of U.S. crude rose 1.6% to \$89.90. Brent crude, the international standard, climbed 1.8% to \$93.52.

That helped Exxon Mobil to rise 1.5% and Marathon Oil to rise 2.7%.

Hewlett Packard slumped 2.4% after Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway revealed it trimmed its stake in the personal computer and printer company. Berkshire still owns 115.5 million shares in HP after selling 5.5 million earlier this week.

Delta Air Lines, meanwhile, became the latest airline to cut its profit forecast because of higher costs. It said higher-than-expected costs for fuel and maintenance are cutting into its earnings, and its stock slipped 0.2%.

Europe

Germany's DAX was down 0.2% at 15,626.43 and the CAC 40 in Paris lost 0.2% to 7,206.57. In London, the FTSE 100 gained 0.4% to 7,558.88.

Asia

Shares were mostly higher in Asia on Thursday after a highly anticipated report showed infla-

tion accelerated across the U.S. in August, but not by much more than expected.

U.S. futures rose and oil prices also were higher.

The subdued increase in U.S. prices eased worries over the likelihood of another interest rate hike by the Federal Reserve, leading Tokyo's Nikkei 225 to surge 1.4% to 33,168.10. In Seoul, the Kospi jumped 1.1%, to 2,561.45.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index slipped 0.1% to 17,995.21 on renewed concern over China's property sector. Major real estate developer Country Garden's Hong Kong-traded shares sank 4.6% ahead of a deadline for a bond repayment.

The Shanghai Composite index declined 0.3% to 3,114.38, while in Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 advanced 0.6% to 7,195.10.

Oil

In other trading Thursday, U.S. benchmark crude oil added 56 cents to \$89.07 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 32 cents on Wednesday.

Brent crude, the pricing standard for international trading, was up 53 cents at \$92.41 per barrel.

Currencies

The U.S. dollar slipped to 147.14 Japanese yen from 147.47 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0745 from \$1.0732.

'Demand will peak before 2030'

Fossil fuel is still in 'demand' despite contrary claims: OPEC

VIENNA, Sept 14, (KUNA): OPEC said on Thursday that fossil fuel was still in demand despite claims contrary to this fact.

On the International Energy Agency's (IEA) recent Op-Ed published on September 12, 2023, asserting that fossil fuel demand would peak before 2030, OPEC noted in a statement that consistent and databased forecasts do not support this assertion.

It is an extremely risky and impractical narrative to dismiss fossil fuels, or to suggest that they were at the beginning of their end, indicated OPEC.

"In past decades, there were often calls of peak supply, and in more recent ones, peak demand, but evidently neither has materialized."

OPEC went on to say, "The difference today, and what makes such predictions so dangerous, is that they are often accompanied by calls to stop investing in new oil and gas projects."

"Such narratives only set the global energy system up to fail spectacularly. It would lead to energy chaos on a potentially unprecedented scale, with dire consequences for economies and billions of people across the world," said OPEC Secretary General, Haitham Al-Ghais.

This thinking on fossil fuels is ideologically driven, rather than fact-based.

It also does not take into account the technological progress the industry continues to make on solutions to help reduce emissions. Neither does it acknowledge that fossil fuels continue to make up over 80 percent of the global energy mix, the same as 30 years ago, or that the energy security they provide is vital.

Technological innovation is a key focus for OPEC, which is why Member Countries are investing heavily in hydrogen projects, carbon capture utilization and storage facilities, the

circular carbon economy, and in renewables too.

While some may suggest that a number of these oil-focused technologies are still immature, they ignore the fact that many technologies referenced in net-zero scenarios are at an immature, experimental or even theoretical stage.

"In recent years, we have seen energy issues climb back to the top of the agenda for populations as many glimpse how experimental net zero policies and targets impact their lives. They have legitimate concerns. How much will they cost in their current form? What benefits will they bring? Will they work as hyped? Are there other options to help reduce emissions? And what will happen if these forecasts, policies and targets do not materialize?"

"Thankfully, there has been a reawakening across many societies of the need for energy security and economic development to go hand-in-hand with reducing emissions. In turn, this has led to a reevaluation by some policymakers on their approach to energy transition pathways," OPEC said.

"Cognizant of the challenge facing the world to eliminate energy poverty, meet rising energy demand, and ensure affordable energy while reducing emissions, OPEC does not dismiss any energy sources or technologies, and believes that all stakeholders should do the same and recognize short- and long-term energy realities," said Al-Ghais.

In the interests of contributing to future overall global energy stability, OPEC will continue to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders to foster dialogue, that includes the views of all peoples, so as to ensure inclusive and effective energy transitions moving forward.

Asia's private market exchange ADDX plans expansion in key MENA markets

SINGAPORE, Sept 14, (PRNews-wire): Singapore-headquartered ADDX is looking to expand its private market exchange platform into the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Middle East/North Africa (MENA) markets in a bid to drive a more efficient allocation of strategic growth capital and bridge the gap between private companies seeking financing and capital providers.

The expansion of the rapidly growing blockchain-enabled investment platform aims to bring about more financial opportunities for unlisted enterprises such as micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and entrepreneurial startups. These enterprises are expected to play an essential role in developing strategic sectors and sustainable economic growth across the region.

The ADDX private market investment and trading platform is backed by global financial institutions spanning traditional financial exchanges, national banks and asset managers, a

number of which are leveraging the platform to make access to early stage, high-growth private companies simple and more flexible. The company is regulated in Singapore, which is recognized for instituting some of the most rigorous regulatory standards in the world.

Since its inception in 2017, the company has raised a total of US\$140 million in funding from institutions such as Singapore Exchange, the Stock Exchange of Thailand, Temasek subsidiary Heliconia Capital, the Development Bank of Japan, UOB, Hamilton Lane, Tokai Tokyo Financial Holdings and KB Securities, a subsidiary of Korea's largest banking group KB Financial Group.

By expanding into the MENA region, ADDX will expand access to strategic growth capital for pre-IPO companies not only from local market financial institutions and investment funds but also from funds across Asia and key financial markets worldwide.

INVESTMENT STRATEGY & RESEARCH

KAMCO INVEST

Oil Markets Monthly Report September 2023

Output cuts and rate pause talks pushes oil to over USD 92/b...

Oil prices reached the highest level in 10 months and traded above the USD 90/b mark following consistent gains since the last week of August-2023. Initial gains were led by consistent decline in crude oil inventory in the US that reached the lowest level since December-2022. Lower stock of refined products across the globe also supported prices. In addition, the announcement from Saudi Arabia and Russia to extend the ongoing voluntary cuts aggregating to 1.3 mb/d until the end of the year have provided a boost to oil prices since the start of this month. The cuts have also resulted in a sharp decline in crude oil at sea that reached 1.04 billion barrels, the lowest since the start of August-2022, as per Kpler.

On the demand front, growing optimism of a rate hike pause by the US Fed and in the EU, as per a survey of global economists, resulted in expectations of a stronger crude oil demand recovery along with soft landing in economic growth later this year. In addition, China's crude oil imports remained strong last month, although other macro-economic data suggested a slowing economy that the government is trying to counter with the help of various reforms announced recently. Oil demand in the US also remained steady during May and June-2023, according to revised data from the EIA. Consumption rose to a 5-year seasonal high of 20.7 mb/d during June-2023 led by record summer consumption of natural gas liquids, although consumption in the transportation sector remained below pre-pandemic levels.

On the supply front, the oil market overlooked the consistent rise in crude oil output in the US over the last few weeks, as per data from the EIA. Weekly data showed production staying at 12.8 mb/d since the last three weeks, the highest since the start of the pandemic and inching towards the pre-pandemic record of 13.1 mb/d. Oil rig count data from Baker Hughes also showed the first increase in 13 weeks last week. A report from Rystad Energy backed up this increase saying that US independent shale oil producers have increased investments to grow output at the fastest rate in three years during Q2-2023. However, this could be a temporary spike as shale output has been shrinking at a faster-than-expected pace, especially in the Permian Basin and New Mexico, with output expected to fall to 5.8 mb/d this month to the lowest since February-2023.

Meanwhile, OPEC crude oil production showed a marginal increase during August-2023, as per data from OPEC secondary sources. Aggregate OPEC production reached 27.44 mb/d during the month as per OPEC monthly report, registering an increase of 113 tb/d. The increase was led by higher output mainly from Iran, Nigeria, Libya and Iraq that was partially offset by decline in production mainly in Saudi Arabia, Angola and Venezuela. With the ongoing production cuts, the OPEC monthly report showed an expected supply gap of more than 3 mb/d in Q4-2023, the biggest deficit in more than a decade.

Oil Prices

Crude oil futures reached 10-month high levels and traded around USD 92/b following consistent gains since the last week of August-2023. Brent oil future prices are more than 10% over the last three weeks despite downward pressure coming from talks of a thaw between US relations with Venezuela and Iran. There were reports that the US government is in talks with Venezuela to explore easing sanctions whereas production and exports from Iran have increased recently led by back-door diplomatic efforts, according to a Bloomberg report. The net gain in prices, however, highlighted a tightening market for both crude oil as well as refined products globally. In addition, despite concerns on the broader economy, demand from China remained robust as the country once again focused on filling strategic reserves as well as increasing exports of refined products. A rebound in the country's aviation sector also supported demand for jet fuel.

Moreover, expectations of lagging shale output in the US also supported prices. A report from the US EIA forecasted a second consecutive month of decline in US shale output, although monthly production in the remained elevated at 12.8 mb/d. Higher production was also reflected in the first increase in oil rig count in the US in 13 weeks to reach 513 rigs during the week ended 8-September-2023. However, higher export-focused refinery runs in the US resulted in consistent withdrawals from the inventory reserves. According to the latest weekly report, total crude oil inventory in the US reached 416.6 million barrels, the lowest since December-2022, following four straight weeks of declines.

Daily oil price data showed one of the longest running positive streaks in prices since last month. As a result, average monthly OPEC crude oil basket prices witnessed the second consecutive m-o-m growth in August-2023 with an increase of 7.7% to average at USD 87.33/b. The gains in average Brent crude oil was slightly smaller at 7.6% to average at USD 86.1/b while Kuwait crude grade saw a gain of 7.7% to average at USD 88.8/b during August-2023.

World Oil Demand

World oil demand growth forecast for 2023 was kept unchanged from the last month at 2.45 mb/d in OPEC's latest monthly report with demand expected to reach 102.1 mb/d this year. However, adjustments were made at the country level for Q3-2023 based on actual data for July-2023 with upward revisions to demand data for China, US and OECD Europe. These upward revisions were completely offset by downward revisions to 2H-2023 data mainly for the Other Asia region. Demand growth forecast for 2024 was also kept unchanged at a growth of 0.3 mb/d to reach 104.3 mb/d. Near term expectations for US oil demand shows a slight decline in driving activity in the coming months, following a seasonal pattern. However, air travel is expected to remain strong and as such gasoline and jet fuel are expected to drive demand. In Europe, supply chain bottlenecks and sluggish manufacturing activity are expected to weigh on demand during Q3-2023, but improve marginally in Q4-2023.

Oil demand in China remained robust during August-2023 with crude oil imports reaching 12.43 mb/d, the third-highest daily rate and up 20.9% vs. July-2023, as per data government data. Imports since the start of the year was up 14.7% y-o-y. The growth was mainly led by strong demand for transportation fuel, including gasoline and jet oil, further supported by efforts to build strategic inventory as well as higher refinery runs that are aimed at exporting refined products.

Oil demand in India is estimated to have grown by 118 tb/d or 2.5% during August-2023, according to a report by S&P Global Commodity Insights, led by better factory activity and increased mobility. A report from ET showed that the country reported a steep decline in imports from Russia and Iraq that was replaced mainly by supplies from Saudi Arabia. The decline in imports from Russia was mainly due to refinery maintenance.

In the European region, demand for refined products have seen a sharp increase. According to data from Vortexa, Europe's diesel imports are set to reach the highest level in eight months this month. Much of the supplies are originating from Middle Eastern suppliers, although the second half of September-2023 may see a dip due to refinery maintenance.

World Oil Supply

Global liquids production remained broadly unchanged in August-2023 after seeing a decline during the previous month. According to preliminary data, global oil supply

Average Crude Oil Prices, USD/b	Jul-2023	Aug-2023	Change (USD)	YTD Avg. 2022	YTD Avg. 2023
OPEC Reference Basket	81.1	87.3	6.3	105.3	80.6
Arab Light	83.5	89.6	6.1	106.2	82.6
Basrah Light	78.8	85.4	6.6	103.2	77.9
Bonny Light	79.9	86.5	6.6	109.9	80.7
Djeno	72.6	78.7	6.1	99.9	73.1
Es Sider	79.7	86.4	6.7	107.7	79.8
Girassol	82.1	89.1	7.0	110.5	82.2
Iran Heavy	81.5	87.6	6.1	105.1	80.9
Kuwait Export	82.4	88.8	6.4	106.2	82.0
Merey	63.3	68.5	5.2	81.6	61.1
Murban	80.8	87.2	6.5	103.7	81.0
Rabi	79.6	85.7	6.1	106.9	80.1
Saharan Blend	80.3	86.7	6.4	110.7	81.4
Zafiro	81.5	87.5	6.1	109.7	81.1
Other Crudes					
Brent	80.1	86.1	6.1	107.3	80.6
Dubai	80.3	86.5	6.1	101.3	80.1
Isthmus	72.6	79.6	7.0	98.8	69.9
LLS	78.4	84.0	5.6	102.4	78.3
Mars	77.2	82.1	4.9	97.7	75.2
Minas	77.5	85.0	7.5	101.9	78.7
Urals	65.1	74.5	9.4	85.3	58.2
WTI	75.9	81.4	5.6	100.3	75.8
Differentials					
BrentWTI	4.2	4.7	0.5	7.0	4.8
BrentLLS	1.7	2.1	0.4	5.0	2.3
BrentDubai	(0.2)	(0.3)	(0.1)	6.0	0.5

Source: OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report - September-2023

World Oil Demand - 2022/2023, mb/d	2022	Q1-23	Q2-23	Q3-23	Q4-23	2023	Y-o-Y Growth	% Chg.
Americas	25.11	24.71	25.42	25.68	25.19	25.25	0.15	0.58
of which US	20.43	20.11	20.72	20.83	20.37	20.51	0.08	0.39
Europe	13.52	13.10	13.40	13.99	13.39	13.47	(0.05)	(0.35)
Asia Pacific	7.38	7.81	6.93	7.22	7.65	7.40	0.02	0.31
Total OECD	46.00	45.62	45.75	46.89	46.22	46.12	0.12	0.26
China	14.85	15.63	15.96	15.57	16.11	15.82	0.97	6.51
India	5.14	5.40	5.40	5.21	5.50	5.38	0.24	4.69
Other Asia	9.02	9.40	9.44	8.99	9.14	9.24	0.22	2.41
Latin America	6.44	6.60	6.70	6.73	6.68	6.68	0.24	3.75
Middle East	8.30	8.63	8.32	8.86	8.73	8.64	0.34	4.09
Africa	4.40	4.69	4.27	4.43	4.88	4.57	0.17	3.79
Russia	3.56	3.69	3.45	3.60	3.87	3.65	0.09	2.49
Other Eurasia	1.15	1.24	1.21	1.02	1.23	1.17	0.02	2.03
Other Europe	0.77	0.84	0.77	0.75	0.83	0.80	0.03	4.00
Total Non-OECD	53.62	56.12	55.51	55.17	56.96	55.94	2.32	4.32
Total World	99.62	101.74	101.26	102.06	103.18	102.06	2.44	2.45

Source: OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report - September-2023

World Oil Demand - 2023/2024, mb/d	2023	Q1-24	Q2-24	Q3-24	Q4-24	2024	Y-o-Y Growth	% Chg.
Americas	25.25	24.90	25.59	25.89	25.34	25.43	0.18	0.71
of which US	20.51	20.25	20.86	20.99	20.51	20.65	0.14	0.69
Europe	13.47	13.15	13.46	14.06	13.42	13.52	0.06	0.41
Asia Pacific	7.40	7.84	6.95	7.25	7.65	7.42	0.02	0.29
Total OECD	46.12	45.89	46.00	47.20	46.42	46.38	0.26	0.56
China	15.82	16.20	16.42	16.19	16.78	16.40	0.58	3.67
India	5.38	5.63	5.64	5.44	5.69	5.60	0.22	4.09
Other Asia	9.24	9.66	9.69	9.35	9.55	9.55	0.31	3.35
Latin America	6.68	6.79	6.88	6.95	6.84	6.87	0.19	2.84
Middle East	8.64	8.91	8.76	9.41	8.98	9.02	0.38	4.40
Africa	4.57	4.80	4.45	4.60	5.01	4.72	0.15	3.28
Russia	3.65	3.75	3.56	3.75	3.94	3.75	0.10	2.75
Other Eurasia	1.17	1.27	1.24	1.08	1.28	1.22	0.04	3.77
Other Europe	0.80	0.86	0.78	0.77	0.84	0.81	0.01	1.72
Total Non-OECD	55.94	57.88	57.43	57.54	58.86	57.93	1.99	3.55
Total World	102.06	103.76	103.43	104.74	105.28	104.31	2.25	2.20

Source: OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report - September-2023

Non-OPEC Oil Supply - 2022/2023, mb/d	2022	Q1-23	Q2-23	Q3-23	Q4-23	2023	Y-o-Y Growth	% Chg.
Americas	26.92	27.90	28.00	28.53	28.52	28.24	1.33	4.93
of which US	19.28	20.10	20.66	20.64	20.50	20.48	1.19	6.19
Europe	3.58	3.69	3.64	3.65	3.87	3.71	0.13	3.70
Asia Pacific	0.48	0.45	0.45	0.48	0.47	0.46	(0.01)	(2.83)
Total OECD	30.97	32.04	32.09	32.67	32.87	32.42	1.45	4.67
China	4.48	4.63	4.63	4.50	4.50	4.56	0.09	1.91
India	0.77	0.76	0.78	0.79	0.78	0.78	0.00	0.58
Other Asia	2.3	2.31	2.26	2.31	2.37	2.31	0.01	0.47
Latin America	6.34	6.69	6.76	6.88	6.80	6.78	0.45	7.05
Middle East	3.29	3.27	3.29	3.25	3.30	3.28	(0.01)	(0.32)
Africa	1.29	1.24	1.27	1.28	1.30	1.27	(0.02)	(1.65)
Russia	11.03	11.19	10.85	10.22	9.57	10.45	(0.58)	(5.27)
Other Eurasia	2.83	3.00	2.93	2.94	2.98	2.96	0.13	4.61
Other Europe	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.00	(2.73)
Total Non-OECD	32.44	33.21	32.87	32.26	31.70	32.50	0.06	0.19
Total Non-OPEC Production	63.42	65.25	64.96	64.93	64.57	64.92	1.51	2.38
Processing gains	2.40	2.47	2.47	2.47	2.47	2.47	0.07	2.96
Total Non-OPEC Supply	65.81	67.72	67.43	67.39	67.04	67.39	1.58	2.40
OPEC NGLs and non-conventionals	5.39	-	-	-	-	5.44	0.05	0.93
OPEC Crude Oil Production	28.85	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total World Supply	100.05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report - September-2023

Non-OPEC Oil Supply - 2023/2024, mb/d	2023	Q1-24	Q2-24	Q3-24	Q4-24	2024	Y-o-Y Growth	% Chg.
Americas	28.24	28.71	28.75	29.21	29.52	29.05	0.81	2.85
of which US	20.48	20.74	20.96	21.23	21.39	21.08	0.61	2.96
Europe	3.71	3.92	3.80	3.75	3.89	3.84	0.13	3.39
Asia Pacific	0.46	0.47	0.44	0.45	0.44	0.45	(0.01)	(2.87)
Total OECD	32.42	33.10	32.99	33.41	33.85	33.34	0.92	2.83
China	4.56	4.58	4.57	4.54	4.54	4.56	(0.01)	(0.11)
India	0.78	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.78	0.79	0.01	1.69
Other Asia	2.31	2.29	2.27	2.25	2.25	2.26	(0.05)	(2.18)
Latin America	6.78	6.95	7.02	7.15	7.23	7.09	0.31	4.50
Middle East	3.28	3.33	3.32	3.31	3.31	3.32	0.04	1.30
Africa	1.27	1.28	1.31	1.34	1.35	1.32	0.05	3.92
Russia	10.45	10.27	10.39	10.52	10.63	10.45	0.00	(0.02)
Other Eurasia	2.96	3.02	3.02	3.00	3.04	3.02	0.06	2.10
Other Europe	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.00	(1.15)
Total Non-OECD	32.50	32.63	32.80	33.00	33.24	32.92	0.41	1.28
Total Non-OPEC Production	64.92	65.73	65.79	66.41				



Shoppers wait to purchase items in a boutique on Tennyson Street, Saturday, Aug. 5, 2023, in northwest Denver. On Thursday, the Commerce Department releases U.S. retail sales data for August. (AP)

wholesale price inflation accelerated in August

U.S. wholesale prices increases accelerated in August, a sign that inflation remains stubbornly persistent despite a series of sharp interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve.

The Labor Department said Thursday that its producer price index - which measures inflation before it hits consumers - increased 1.6% last month from a year earlier. That is up from a small 0.8% yearly increase in July and just 0.1% in June. Sharply higher gas prices drove much of the increase.

Excluding the volatile energy and food categories, core inflation rose 2.2% in August from a year earlier, down from a 2.4% yearly increase in July.

Wholesale prices are still rising more slowly than consumer costs, a sign that inflation may continue to cool as the weaker wholesale price gains translate into smaller price increases for the consumer. The Thursday data reflect prices charged by manufacturers, farmers and wholesalers.

The government said Wednesday that the consumer price index, the most widely-followed inflation gauge, rose 3.7% in August from a year ago, up from a 3.2% yearly gain in July. Yet excluding the volatile energy and food components, core inflation fell to 4.3% in August from 4.7% in July.

Also Thursday, the government said retail sales rose 0.6% in August, largely because sharply higher gas prices pushed up gas station sales. Excluding fuel, retail sales rose just 0.2%.

On a month-to-month basis, wholesale prices rose 0.7% in August, the biggest gain in more than a year, up from a 0.4% increase in July. Core wholesale prices ticked up 0.2% last month, down from 0.3% in July. The Federal Reserve, which is fighting inflation by raising interest rates, closely monitors core prices because they are considered a better measure of future inflation trends. (AP)

LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Flavors of Far East' promotion



Cutting the ribbon to declare open the event.



Guests taking a look at some of the items on display.



Some of the items on display.



Guests pose by some of the items on display.

Dajeej outlet hosts event

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading regional retailer, launched its 'Flavors of Far East' promotion, which runs from 13 to 19 September across all outlets of the hypermarket, captivating the interest of shoppers in Kuwait.

The event was inaugurated on 13 September at the Dajeej outlet of the hypermarket, in the esteemed presence of ambassadors from four South-East Asian countries - Indonesian Ambassador H.E. Leena Marianna, Philippine Ambassador H.E. Jose Cabrera III, Thailand Ambassador H.E. Ekapol Poolpipat, and Heiu Tran, Commercial Attaché, Vietnam Embassy, along with the top management of LuLu Hypermarket.

The inauguration was followed by an array of exciting cultural displays and events featuring products, foods and cuisines from Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Exclusive discounts and offers

of the five nations.

The 'Flavors of Far East' promotion provided a wide range of products from each of the participating countries, all of which were available at amazing prices. Shoppers were also able to indulge their taste buds with delectable sample offerings at the 'street-food' counters set up by the five countries on the occasion. A renowned chef from Thailand had prepared a variety of authentic Thai delicacies that were thoroughly enjoyed by visitors.

During the week-long promotion, visitors immersed themselves in the cultures and cuisines of the five South-East Asian countries. Adding to the atmosphere of the event were large cutouts and displays of various monuments and places of interest in these vibrant nations. The creatively designed displays that truly showcased the essence of each nation was a major highlight of the promotional event.

Traditional cultural performances from Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, added an authentic touch to the festivities, while special selfie areas were also opened up so visitors could click pictures of themselves and their loved ones against iconic features and travel spots

This promotional event highlighted LuLu Hypermarket's long-term commitment to providing shoppers with an unparalleled shopping experience. It exemplified their dedication to offering the best products from across the world at competitive prices to shoppers in Kuwait.

Offshore wind energy projects advance in NJ amid opposition

Project will not injure marine life

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. Sept 14, (AP): Two major offshore wind power projects are taking steps forward in New Jersey as the owners of one project agreed to bring the federal government in on their environmental monitoring plans at an earlier stage than has ever been done, and federal regulators said plans for another project are not expected to kill or seriously injure marine life.

They come as New Jersey continues to grow as a hub of opposition to offshore wind projects from residents' groups and their political allies, mostly Republicans. The state's Democratic governor and Democratic-controlled Legislature want to make the state the East Coast leader in offshore wind energy.

Community Offshore Wind, a joint venture between Essen, Germany-based RWE and New York-based National Grid Ventures, on Thursday announced a five-year partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to promote the exchange of data and expertise on environmental monitoring for offshore wind projects.

The agreement will bring the federal agency into the company's planning process at a much earlier stage than is currently done in the offshore wind industry, an arrangement that could become the new industry standard, according to company president Doug Perkins.

"Instead of us coming up with this on our own and getting some feedback from the agencies, we will work to-



A worker uses an industrial cutting machine to open a section of the street in Ocean City, N.J. on Sept. 12, 2023, at the start of land-based probing along the right-of-way where a power cable for New Jersey's first offshore wind farm is proposed to run. Federal regulators have determined that plans for Orsted's wind farm off Ocean City are not expected to kill or seriously injure marine life. (AP)

gether to make sure that it's efficient in the data they collect," he said. "It creates the opportunity, the avenue for us to engage with them, and for them to engage with us, to make sure that our plans, how we're sampling, where we're sampling, when we're sampling, fits with what they do and with what will be required of the industry."

Jon Hare, director of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center, praised the proposed collaboration.

"With help from a number of collaborators and the fishing industry, our agency maintains some of the world's most comprehensive data sets on large marine ecosystems," he said. "Our goal is to bring offshore wind energy monitoring activities into this partnership. This agreement is our first chance to make these partnerships a reality and show by example that effective scientific monitoring benefits

everyone."

Community has leased a 125,000 acre site 60 miles (97 kilometers) off Long Island, New York, and 37 miles (60 kilometers) off Little Egg Harbor in New Jersey. Its project has yet to be designed but is likely to include at least 100 wind turbines. It could be active by 2030 or 2031, Perkins said.

On Wednesday, NOAA released a letter of authorization for Denmark-based Orsted's Ocean Wind I project in southern New Jersey.

It involved approval of plans for unintentional harassment or injury of marine mammals during construction of the project, which would build 98 turbines about 15 miles (24 kilometers) off the coast of Ocean City and Atlantic City. The impact is referred to by the agency as "take," which refers to harassment or injury of animals.

"Ocean Wind did not request and

(the National Marine Fisheries Service) neither expects nor authorizes incidental take by serious injury or mortality," the agency wrote.

Opponents of offshore wind blame the deaths of 70 whales along the East Coast since December on offshore wind site preparation work. But three federal scientific agencies say there is no evidence that such work is responsible for the deaths, about half of which have been attributed to vessel strikes.

NOAA is requiring Orsted to take a number of steps designed to avoid harm to whales, including a moratorium on the detonation of underwater explosives from Nov. 1 through April 30; visual and acoustic monitoring of the waters near such explosions before, during and after them; shutting down pile driving "if feasible" if an endangered North American right whale or other marine mammal enters certain prescribed zones; and noise mitigation steps including using the least amount of hammer force possible for foundation installations.

David Shanker, a spokesman for the Save the Right Whales Coalition, called the decision "appalling." The group recently sent NOAA the results of a study by an independent acoustics company asserting that offshore wind survey vessels have been exceeding approved decibel levels and appear to be using other-than-approved devices.

"There has been a complete breakdown in the system designed to protect marine wildlife and protect the North Atlantic right whale from extinction," Shanker said.

NOAA declined comment.

Earlier this week, Republicans in the state Senate called for a moratorium on all offshore wind projects. They asked for a special session of the Legislature to consider measures to prohibit further tax breaks for offshore wind companies beyond one already given to Orsted. Senate Democrats declined comment.

Al-Hassad

More draws and annual returns

Weekly	K.D.	Quarterly	K.D.	Monthly	K.D.
10,000		250,000		100,000	

Max number: 2212110000 Terms and Conditions Apply

Al-Hassad campaign visual

Ahli United Bank congratulates winners of Al-Hassad Wkly Draw

KUWAIT CITY, Sept 14: Ahli United Bank (AUB) Congratulates the Winners of Al-Hassad Weekly Draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account, which was held on 13 September, 2023 at the bank's head office in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as a representative from Deloitte as the external auditor to oversee the draws as per the instructions of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in this regard.

The Bank Announced 10 Winners Of KD 1,000 As Follows: Mahmud Hassan Mohamed Aly, Esmail Ahmad Abdullah Al-Qabandi, Lubna MA Shaqlusi, Habib A H Ahmed Al-Awadhi, Jassim Mohammad Al-Dousari, Abdulrahman Abdullah Abdulrahman, Sarah Rashed Al-Tukhaim, Fahad A J Al-Hasan, Mansour Mohammad Naser Al-Azmi and Najah Barrak Naser Al-Noun.

In its new package, Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account provides a suite of unique features, including the simplest and easiest savings program and a unique account-opening feature online with all ease with an instant deposit option.

To be eligible to participate in the draw, the customer should have a minimum balance of KD 100, whereby the customer has two chances to participate, with up to 30,000 chances per draw, in addition to rewarding annual profits. Every KD 50 invested entitles the customer to one chance in the draws, provided that to maintain his balance for at least fifteen days before the draw date. The longer the customer keeps his balance the bigger the chances of participation in the draw with every KD 50 in the account. Draws are held every Wednesday based on the draw scheme. On religious and national holidays, the draw is postponed to the next business day.

For more information on Ahli United Bank's products and services, customers are invited to visit any of the Bank's branches, dial the customer services "Hayakom" on 181 2000, or log on to the Bank's website at www.ahliunited.com.kw

The Conversation

'Trust is grounded in predictability'

Why humans can't trust AI: Don't know how it works, its intentions

By Mark Bailey

National Intelligence University

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

There are alien minds among us. Not the little green men of science fiction, but the alien minds that power the facial recognition in your smartphone, determine your creditworthiness and write poetry and computer code. These alien minds are artificial intelligence systems, the ghost in the machine that you encounter daily.

But AI systems have a significant limitation: Many of their inner workings are impenetrable, making them fundamentally unexplainable and unpredictable. Furthermore, constructing AI systems that behave in ways that people expect is a significant challenge.

If you fundamentally don't understand something as unpredictable as AI, how can you trust it?

Trust is grounded in predictability. It depends on your ability to anticipate the behavior of others. If you trust someone and they don't do what you expect, then your perception of their trustworthiness diminishes.

Systems

Many AI systems are built on deep learning neural networks, which in some ways emulate the human brain. These networks contain interconnected "neurons" with variables or "parameters" that affect the strength of connections between the neurons. As a naive network is presented with training data, it "learns" how to classify the data by adjusting these param-

What is USB-C? The one device connector to rule them all

By Shreyas Sen
Purdue University

Apple announced on Sept. 12, 2023, that it plans to adopt the USB-C connector for all four new iPhone 15 models, helping USB-C become the connector of choice of the electronics industry, nine years after its debut. The move puts Apple in compliance with European Union law requiring a single connector type for consumer devices.

USB-C is a small, versatile connector for mobile and portable devices like laptops, tablets and smartphones. It transfers data at high speeds, transmits video signals and delivers power to charge devices' batteries. USB stands for Universal Serial Bus. The C refers to the third type, following types A and B.

The USB Implementers Forum, a consortium of over 1,000 companies that promote and support USB technology, developed the USB-C connector to replace the older USB connectors as

well as other types of ports like HDMI, DisplayPort and VGA. The aim is to create a single, universal connector for a wide range of devices.

The key features and benefits of USB-C include a reversible connector that you can insert in either orientation. It also allows some cables to have the same connector on both ends for connecting between devices and connecting devices to chargers, unlike most earlier USB and Lightning cables.

USB-C's widespread adoption in the electronics industry is likely to lead to a universal standard that reduces the need for multiple types of cables and adapters. Also, its slim and compact shape allows manufacturers to make thinner and lighter devices.

USB-C refers to the physical connector. Connectors use a variety of data transfer protocols - sets of rules for formatting and handling data - such

as the USB and Thunderbolt protocols. USB-C supports USB and Thunderbolt, which makes it suitable for connecting laptops, smartphones, tablets, monitors, docking stations and many other devices.

The latest USB protocol, version 4, provides a data transfer rate of up to 40 gigabits per second, depending on the rating of the cable. The latest Thunderbolt, also on version 4, supports up to 40 gigabits-per-second data transfer and 100 watts charging. The newly announced Thunderbolt 5 will support up to 80 and 120 gigabits-per-second transfer and 140 to 240 watts power transfer over a USB-C connector.

Due to the fragmented nature of technology evolution, computer users a decade ago were struggling with too many connectors: USB for data; power cables for charging; HDMI, DisplayPort or VGA for video; and Ethernet

for internet. This called for an industry-wide effort to convergence on an all-purpose connector.

Since its introduction in 2014, USB-C has gained widespread popularity and has already become the connector of choice for most non-Apple devices. Apple converted the iPad Pro to USB-C in 2018 and now is doing the same for the best selling Apple device, the iPhone. Some market forecasts suggest there will be close to 4 billion USB-C connector sales by 2025 and 19 billion by 2033.

Thanks to the industrywide adoption of USB-C, consumers soon won't have to ask "Is this the right connector?" when they reach for a cable to charge or sync their portable devices. And if you're an iPhone user and find yourself with a new model, you can recycle your no-longer-needed Lightning cables by, for example, bringing them to an Apple store. (AP)

Trust relies not only on predictability, but also on normative or ethical motivations. You typically expect people to act not only as you assume they will, but also as they should. Human values are influenced by common experience, and moral reasoning is a dynamic process, shaped by ethical standards and others' perceptions.

Unlike humans, AI doesn't adjust its behavior based on how it is perceived

by others or by adhering to ethical norms. AI's internal representation of the world is largely static, set by its training data. Its decision-making process is grounded in an unchanging model of the world, unfazed by the dynamic, nuanced social interactions constantly influencing human behavior. Researchers are working on programming AI to include ethics, but that's proving challenging.

The self-driving car scenario illustrates this issue. How can you ensure that the car's AI makes decisions that align with human expectations? For example, the car could decide that hitting the child is the optimal course of action, something most human drivers would instinctively avoid. This issue is the AI alignment problem, and it's another source of uncertainty that erects barriers to trust.

Convinced

One way to reduce uncertainty and boost trust is to ensure people are in on the decisions AI systems make. This is the approach taken by the US Department of Defense, which requires that for all AI decision-making, a human must be either in the loop or on the loop. In the loop means the AI system makes a recommendation but a human is required to initiate an action. On the loop means that while an AI system can initiate an action on its own, a human monitor can interrupt or alter it.

While keeping humans involved is a great first step, I am not convinced that this will be sustainable long term. As companies and governments continue to adopt AI, the future will likely include nested AI systems, where rapid decision-making limits the opportunities for people to intervene. (AP)

eters. In this way, the AI system learns to classify data it hasn't seen before. It doesn't memorize what each data point is, but instead predicts what a data point might be.

Many of the most powerful AI systems contain trillions of parameters. Because of this, the reasons AI systems make the decisions that they do are often opaque. This is the AI explainability problem - the impenetrable

black box of AI decision-making.

Consider a variation of the "Trolley Problem." Imagine that you are a passenger in a self-driving vehicle, controlled by an AI. A small child runs into the road, and the AI must now decide: run over the child or swerve and crash, potentially injuring its passengers. This choice would be difficult for a human to make, but a human has the benefit of being able to explain

their decision. Their rationalization - shaped by ethical norms, the perceptions of others and expected behavior - supports trust.

In contrast, an AI can't rationalize its decision-making. You can't look under the hood of the self-driving vehicle at its trillions of parameters to explain why it made the decision that it did. AI fails the predictive requirement for trust.

Political path for legislation difficult



Eaton's artificial intelligence-powered iQ-Cruise system improves fuel efficiency and environmental sustainability.

Improve fuel efficiency

Eaton & Traxen sign deal for AI-powered iQ-Cruise

GALESBURG, Mich., Sept 14: Intelligent power management company Eaton has announced an exclusive global alliance with Michigan-based technology developer Traxen to sell, distribute, service, and provide installation support for their cutting-edge iQ-Cruise system. This collaboration aims to support the commercial transportation industry by improving fuel efficiency and environmental sustainability while helping fleet profitability.

Unlike existing available adaptive or predictive cruise control systems that work independently of each other, iQ-Cruise integrates both functions in a single device and applies artificial intelligence (AI), to provide automatic, more natural speed control with significant fuel savings. iQ-Cruise works with automated manual transmissions, including the Eaton Cummins Automated Transmission Technologies portfolio of transmissions. A monthly subscription fee covers all hardware, installation support and regular software updates.

Traxen's iQ-Cruise system utilizes AI, advanced algorithms, GPS and high-definition 3D maps to determine the most fuel-efficient driving style for Class 8 commercial vehicles in real time. While driving with the system engaged, it continuously monitors live data including traffic conditions, vehicle load, and terrain, utilizing its automated cruise control capabilities to optimize the vehicle's speed and acceleration/deceleration to maximize fuel efficiency.

Partner

"We are happy to partner with Traxen to bring its unique iQ-Cruise system to the commercial vehicle market," said Tim Bauer, vice president, North America Aftermarket, Eaton's Mobility Group. "This collaboration aligns with Eaton's commitment to deliver intelligent solutions that maximize efficiency and sustainability for our customers."

"Eaton's broad reach and expertise in the industry makes them the perfect partner to help Traxen scale its groundbreaking technology in the commercial transportation industry," said Ali Maleki, CEO of Traxen. "Our iQ-Cruise system empowers fleet owners and operators to save fuel without compromising truck performance or safety."

Initial feedback from United Road, a leading vehicle and heavy-haul transportation service and early adopter of the iQ-Cruise® system, shows that fuel consumption and emissions reduction can be significant.

Study sheds light

AI essential 'part' of creative toolkit

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept 14: Canva, the world's only all-in-one visual communication platform, has released new insights from more than 4,000 marketing and creative leaders on their attitudes towards generative AI. The company commissioned Morning Consult to survey marketers and creatives from the US, UK, France, Germany, Spain, Brazil, Mexico, India, and Australia to understand how AI is transforming their organizations and their roles.

Generative AI is fast becoming a fixture in the modern workplace. Ninety-seven percent of marketing and creative leaders are comfortable with the rise of generative AI, with three-fourths (75%) already considering it an essential part of their creative toolkit.

AI is unlocking productivity and elevating creativity. The majority (80%) agree that AI-powered tools reduce the minutia of repetitive tasks, freeing them up to focus on the more creative and meaningful parts of their role. Sixty-nine percent say generative AI tools are enhancing their team's creativity and saving them at least 2-3 hours per week. More than a third (36%) of teams are saving between 4-5 hours per week on creative projects. Of the minority (17%) who feel generative AI tools are limiting their team's creativity, the most common objection (48%) was preventing the development of original ideas.

The AI ecosystem is fragmented and complex. More than two-thirds (69%) believe there are already too many generative AI tools, with 65% overwhelmed by the learning curve. While most are excited about the opportunities to elevate creativity, 54% feel pressured to use it to keep pace with change and 47% say they don't know how to get the most value out of the technology. Generative AI is transforming the content creation process. With marketers and creatives tasked with creating huge volumes of content, many are turning to AI for assistance.

"We are thrilled to witness the remarkable impact of Traxen's iQ-Cruise® solution on our fleet. Using iQ-Cruise® we have realized more than 6% fuel economy savings with some frequent users saving as much as 10%-15%," said Jason Walker, chief operating officer, United Road.

Discussion

"The key point was really that it's important for us to have a referee," said Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and X, during a break in the daylong forum. "It was a very civilized discussion, actually, among some of the smartest people in the world."

Schumer will not necessarily take the tech executives' advice as he works with colleagues on the politically difficult task of ensuring some oversight of the burgeoning sector. But he invited them to the meeting in hopes that they would give senators some realistic direction for meaningful regulation.

Congress should do what it can to maximize AI's benefits and minimize the negatives, Schumer said, "whether that's enshrining bias, or the loss of jobs, or even the kind of doomsday scenarios that were mentioned in the room. And only government can be there to put in guardrails."

Other executives attending the meeting were Meta's Mark Zuckerberg, former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates and Google CEO Sundar Pichai. Musk said the meeting "might go down in history as being very important for the future of civilization."

First, though, lawmakers have to agree on whether to regulate, and how.

Congress has a lackluster track record when it comes to regulating new technology, and the industry has grown mostly unchecked by government in the past several decades. Many lawmakers point to the failure to pass any legislation surrounding social media, such as for stricter privacy standards.

Schumer, who has made AI one of his top issues as leader, said regulation of artificial intelligence will be "one of the most difficult issues we can ever take on," and he listed some of the reasons why: It's technically complicated, it keeps changing and it "has such a wide, broad effect across the whole world," he said.

Sparked by the release of ChatGPT less than a year ago, businesses have been clamoring to apply new generative AI tools that can compose human-like passages of text, program computer code and create novel images, audio and video. The hype over such tools has accelerated worries over its



Microsoft founder Bill Gates arrives on Capitol Hill as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D, N.Y., convenes a closed-door gathering of leading tech CEOs to discuss the priorities and risks of artificial intelligence and how it should be regulated, in Washington on Sept 13. (AP)

Phenom AI Day empowering organizations

Tech experts demonstrate & explain AI's application for human resources

PHILADELPHIA, Sept 14: AI Day agenda published - Phenom experts to demonstrate and explain AI's role for empowering organizations to hire faster, develop better and retain longer, while reaching new levels of efficiency.

Broadcasting live from Phenom Studios, AI Day is a technical deep-dive that will cover: the data models powering HR technology; bias and ethics; and impact and use cases across industries. Topical themes will include: Solving Real World HR Problems with Generative AI; Building the Right Infrastructure to Scale AI; The Intelligence Layer; Going From Talent Scarcity to Prosperity; Unlocking Recruiter and Hiring Team Efficiency; Transitioning from a Reactive to Proactive Hiring Process; Future-Proofing the Workforce by Mastering Skill and Compe-

tency Gaps; Navigating AI Compliance within an Organization and Leveraging a Development Tools Infrastructure to Scale AI

"We encourage every HR leader to join us and better understand the role of AI in hiring, developing and retaining talent now and for the future," said Mahe Bayireddi, CEO and co-founder of Phenom. "Intelligence, automation and experience is the recipe companies need to get right in order to succeed in their talent acquisition and talent management efforts."

With Phenom, candidates find and choose the right job faster, employees develop their skills and evolve, recruiters become wildly productive, managers build stronger-performing teams, HR aligns employee development with company goals, and HRIS creates a ho-

listic tech infrastructure through seamless integrations.

Phenom has a purpose of helping a billion people find the right job. Through AI-powered talent experiences, employers are using Phenom to hire employees faster, develop them to their full potential, and retain them longer. The Phenom Intelligent Talent Experience platform seamlessly connects candidates, employees, recruiters, hiring managers, HR and HRIS — empowering over 500 diverse and global enterprises with innovative products including Phenom Career Site, Chatbot, CMS, CRM, AI Scheduling, One-Way Interviews, Campaigns, University Recruiting, Talent Marketplace, Workforce Intelligence, Career Pathing, Gigs, Mentoring, and Referrals.

potential societal harms and prompted calls for more transparency in how the data behind the new products is collected and used.

Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota, who led the meeting with Schumer, said Congress needs to get ahead of fast-moving AI by making sure it continues to develop "on the positive side" while also taking care of potential issues surrounding data transparency and privacy.

"AI is not going away, and it can do some really good things or it can be a real challenge," Rounds said.

The tech leaders and others outlined their views at the meeting, with each participant getting three minutes to speak on a topic of their choosing. Schumer and Rounds then led a group discussion.

During the discussion, according to attendees who spoke about it, Musk and former Google CEO Eric Schmidt raised existential risks posed by AI, and Zuckerberg brought up the question of closed vs. "open source" AI models. Gates talked about feeding the hungry. IBM CEO Arvind Krishna expressed opposition to proposals favored by other companies that would require licenses. In terms of a potential new agency for regulation, "that is one of the biggest questions we have to answer and that we will continue to discuss," Schumer said. Musk said afterward he thinks the creation of a regulatory agency is likely.

Outside the meeting, Google CEO Pichai declined to give details about specifics but generally endorsed the idea of Washington involvement.

"I think it's important that government plays a role, both on the innovation side and building the right safeguards, and I thought it was a productive discussion," he said.

Some senators were critical that the public was shut out of the meeting, arguing that the tech executives should testify in public.

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., said he would not attend what he said was a "giant cocktail party for big tech." Hawley has introduced legislation with Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., to require tech companies to seek licenses for high-risk AI systems. "I don't know why we would invite all the biggest monopolists in the world to come and give Congress tips on how to help them make more money and then close it to the public," Hawley said.

‘Tranq has devastated our local community’

Xylazine spreads to every region of US, says Millennium Health

SAN DIEGO, Sept 14: According to the Millennium Health Signals Report the powerful, veterinary tranquilizer xylazine—also known as “tranq”—was detected in urine drug tests from every region of the country, with the highest rates in the Eastern US. This analysis of the nationwide spread of xylazine is the most current and substantive to date since xylazine use rose to prominence.

Increased awareness of the threats posed by xylazine is needed among clinicians and public health officials across the U.S. and geographical changes in xylazine use should be monitored closely with timely and reliable sources of surveillance data,” says Scott Walton, CEO. “Although xylazine use among those who use fentanyl is currently concentrated in the East, a 2022 DEA report suggested that xylazine appears to be following the same east-to-west path as fentanyl. Time will tell if this becomes the case. We will continue to closely monitor xylazine and provide real-time updates about any shifting use as part of our commitment to help prevent drug overdose deaths.”

According to Leonard Kamen, DO, Clinical Associate Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Sidney Kimmel Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Philadelphia, “Xylazine has devastated our local community. The challenges it has brought are many because at present there are no treatments specifically approved for xylazine use nor any xylazine-specific overdose reversal agents approved for xylazine-involved overdoses. Clinicians should carefully monitor patients who report unusual drug effects when taking what they thought was fentanyl, or those who have the telltale skin wounds associated with xylazine use.”

Use

The report also identified that the use of multiple substances (i.e., poly-substance use) is significantly higher among those testing positive for fentanyl and xylazine compared to those who had used fentanyl but not xylazine. Specifically, prescription opioid, heroin, gabapentin, benzodiazepine, cocaine, fentanyl analogue, and methamphetamine use were all greater among those who had used fentanyl and xylazine.

“This is a substance no human being was meant to ingest and often people may be exposed to it without their knowledge, which increases the risk. Though the effects of xylazine cannot be reversed using naloxone, xylazine often is used alongside opioids, which naloxone can reverse, so it should be administered in a suspected overdose,” said Chief Clinical Officer Dr. Angela G. Huskey at Millennium Health. “This is a dangerous situation, and it’s spreading rapidly. We are trying to sound the alarm on the need to integrate clinical monitoring into our national response so we can provide advance warning and know in real-time where people need help.”

The Millennium Health Signals Report™ provides a summary of America’s epidemic of illicit drug use and originates from Millennium Health’s Emerging Threat Intelligence (ETI) Program™. The ETI program provides real-time surveillance of drug use trends to help clinicians, researchers, public health officials, and policymakers address the significant increase in drug overdose deaths.

Millennium Health is an accredited specialty laboratory providing medication monitoring via definitive urine and oral fluid drug tests to support improved clinical decision-making as part of treatment for millions of Americans with chronic pain, mental illness, substance use disorders, and other health conditions. Drug testing is used to obtain objective information about patients’ recent use of prescription medications and/or illicit drugs and helps monitor the effectiveness

of treatment plans. We also conduct real-time tracking of emerging drug use trends to help researchers, public health officials, and policymakers address the significant increase in drug overdose deaths.

MaaT Pharma (Euronext: MAAT – the “Company”), a clinical-stage biotech company and a leader in the development of Microbiome Ecosystem Therapies™ (MET) dedicated to improving survival outcomes for patients with cancer, and Skyepharma, a French independent CDMO, expert in providing innovative solutions for bioproduction as well as complex drugs development and manufacturing, has announced that a significant development milestone has been reached with the completion of the facility and the transfer of MaaT Pharma’s Production and Development teams to the new site. The companies had entered a partnership in February 2022 to build the largest cGMP1 facility, to date, for full ecosystem microbiome therapies in Europe.

Securing

“With MaaT013, our lead asset currently in Phase 3, and MaaT033, our second drug candidate, nearing launch in a Phase 2b clinical study, we have reached a major milestone that will be fundamental to securing our market access strategy. This new GMP manufacturing facility is a testament to the continued growth of MaaT Pharma,” stated **Hervé Affagard**, CEO and co-founder of MaaT Pharma. “Thanks to our strategic partnership with Skyepharma, we have successfully completed the new infrastructure within a year. I also want to take the opportunity to thank the ABL Europe team who have hosted our GMP production since 2016.”

MaaT Pharma, the leading microbiome company in oncology, is one of the few end-to-end microbiome companies that oversees the entire process, including innovative bioprocesses for both donor-derived and co-cultured drug candidates in a GMP environment.

“The on-time completion of our first Skyehub facility is a major achievement for Skyepharma and our partner MaaT Pharma. The whole team is proud to have demonstrated the appropriate agility and expertise to deliver this state-of-the-art building and BioCDMO offering in the challenging 12-month timeframe,” added **David Lescuyer**, CEO and President of Skyepharma. “This reliability is an uncompromising service we want to offer to the biotech partners that are joining us. This is an integral part of the outstanding value accelerator that the Skyehub is providing them.”

Skyepharma is a recognized expert CDMO, offering solutions and technologies to develop hard-to-make oral solids and addresses the complex challenges faced by its worldwide partners to improve patients’ lives. Backed by its strong and continuous double-digit growth over the past 7 years, Skyepharma has continuously invested to keep its offering ever more innovative and focused on customer experience, and ultimately the patients. With the Skyehub Bioproduction® model, Skyepharma can also propose a unique capacity and service offering in the demanding bioproduction area.

The completion of this new infrastructure brings with it positive impacts for the regional and national economy. Overall, the partnership between MaaT Pharma and Skyepharma could lead to the creation of a dozen jobs for specialized workers in the industry over the coming years. These therapies demand advanced manufacturing techniques and procedures and will contribute to the growth of the microbiome sector in France. MaaT Pharma and Skyepharma are currently performing quality qualification according to GMP guidelines, with the first production campaign targeted to start in the new plant by the end of Q3 2023.

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Sept 14: RS Oncology, a clinical stage biotechnology company developing innovative therapies to eradicate mesothelioma and other diseases, was part of a collaboration that recently shared new preclinical data at the IASLC 2023 World Conference on Lung Cancer in Singapore. The data, presented by Dr. Dean Fennell, represented a partnership between RS Oncology and other lead research institutions, including the University of Leicester and the Cuniff Laboratory at the University of Vermont Cancer Center.

Mesotheliomas can transform from a less aggressive epithelioid malignancy to a more aggressive sarcomatoid form. Using biphasic mesothelioma as a model containing both epithelioid and sarcomatoid features, investigators at the University of Leicester, led by Dr. Fennell, conducted a geospatial analysis of patient tissues to explore the molecular signatures associated with the histological regions.

Using sophisticated spatial analysis tools coupled with machine learning approaches, the group found that the more aggressive sarcomatoid regions had distinct molecular signatures driving pro-tumor pathways, drug resistance, and increased metastatic potential.

Increased

These findings were validated across an independent cohort of 150 mesothelioma patient tissues. Notably, tumor regions containing sarcomatoid tissue showed features of increased resistance to oxidative stress – a critical tumor cell adaptation for survival.

In collaboration with Dr. Brian Cuniff’s laboratory, the team then evaluated molecular signatures of human biphasic mesothelioma tumor cells following treatment with the irreversible PRX3 inhibitor RSO-021, which is currently being evaluated in a Phase 1/2 clinical trial in patients with malignant pleural effusion caused by advanced/metastatic solid tumors (NCT05278975). RSO-021 treatment reversed the gene signatures associated with epithelial-to-sarcomatoid transition, including downregulation of hypoxia, glycolysis, and epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition (EMT)-associated genes. These results suggest that this transition, thought to be unidirectional in nature, may be PRX3-dependent, drug-gable, and now reversible.

“Sarcomatoid tumors are highly resistant to anti-cancer therapies, and many patients run out of available treatment options. Our findings may have unveiled a druggable ‘Achilles Heel’ against this terrible disease,” said Dr. Fennell, presenting author on the study. “The ability to treat such tumors with RSO-021 and revert them to epithelioid malignancies could delay or even prevent emergence of the most aggressive features associated with mesothelioma. Further, RSO-021 could potentially sensitize them to other treatments.”

RS Oncology (RSO) is a clinical stage biotechnology company based in Cambridge, Massachusetts with a mission to eradicate mesothelioma and other diseases worldwide through novel science and an innovative business model.

Eczacıbaşı Monrol Nuclear Prod-

Monrol to expand n.c.a. Lu-177 production capacity

‘RSO-021’ may block, reverse progression of mesotheliomas

Shot safe and effective

Nurse Lindsay gets first new updated ‘COVID-19 vaccine’

NEW HYDE PARK, NY, Sept 14: The first American to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in 2020 repeated the feat again as part of a public health awareness event. Sandra Lindsay, RN, became a global phenomenon on Dec 14, 2020, when the Northwell Health critical care nurse director received the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

Nearly three years later, Nurse Lindsay volunteered to be the first American to receive this season’s shot: Pfizer-BioNTech 2023-24 COVID-19 vaccine. This mRNA formulation offers protection against BA.2, BA.2.86 “Pirola,” EG.5 “Eris,” XBB.1.5 COVID variants – needed immunity as COVID hospitalizations begin to rise ahead of the fall and winter season.

Despite serving on the front lines of the pandemic, Nurse Lindsay has yet to be infected with COVID-19. “It’s important that people understand that COVID is still around and can still severely affect an individual,” said Nurse Lindsay. “Having worked through the darkest days of the pandemic and seen the devastating effects it can have, I tell people not to take chances. We have powerful weapons like vaccines to prevent those devastating outcomes.”

This was the third COVID-19 vaccine – and sixth, including boosters – taken by Nurse Lindsay, who has since been elevated to the role of vice president of public health advocacy at Northwell. The FDA approved Pfizer’s vaccine on Monday followed by the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices on Tuesday.

Michelle Chester, FNP-BC, DNP, senior director of Employee Health Services at Northwell, administered the shot. She also gave Nurse Lindsay the vaccine in 2020. Also joining Nurse Lindsay in receiving vaccinations were: Adam Berman, MD, associate chair of emergency medicine at Long Island Medical Center in New Hyde Park; Moshdeh Mehrabian, a



Dr. Michelle Chester, senior director of Employee Health Services at Northwell Health, administers the 2023-24 Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to Nurse Sandra Lindsay, vice president of public health advocacy at Northwell.

respiratory therapist at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset; and Mangala Narasimhan, MD, senior vice president of critical care services at Northwell.

Protection

“Vaccination is and has proven to be an important tool to fight against the severity of COVID-19,” said Jill Kalman, MD, chief medical officer and deputy physician in chief at Northwell Health. “We’re here now to reinforce that there is extra protection available against the newest COVID-19 variants as the FDA and CDC have approved a new seasonal vaccine.”

Northwell has administered about 800,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine since the end of 2020. The FDA and CDC have said the vaccine is safe and effective for anyone ages 6 months and older. Northwell Health will offer both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to its employees and the general public through

its ambulatory network.

“It’s been three-and-a-half years since COVID hit the world and we have not forgotten,” said Bruce Farber, MD, chief of public health and epidemiology at Northwell. “At the peak of the First Wave, our health system had nearly 3,500 hospitalized COVID patients. This week, it’s less than 200. Even though that number has bumped up considerably since July, the majority are incidental cases, meaning that they have been hospitalized for some other reason. Nevertheless, COVID causes a lot of morbidity and it interrupts lives. That’s why we support vaccines as a major way to prevent COVID.”

Dr. Farber also warned of a surge later this fall and into the winter – another possible “triple-demic” of COVID, flu and RSV – unless Americans embrace vaccines. Flu and COVID vaccines can be taken at the same time. RSV is also available and should be considered for at-risk populations.

ucts Co (Monrol), one of the world’s leading radiopharmaceutical producers, has decided to invest 35 million Euros to increase its production capacity for non-carrier-added Lutetium-177 (n.c.a. Lu-177) in response to growing global demand for this product.

Monrol, which manufactures radiopharmaceuticals meeting high quality standards at its production facilities, plans to increase its current n.c.a. Lu-177 production capacity through the expansion of existing production lines at the Monrol Gebze facility in Turkey as well as the establishment of a new production facility at the Gebze campus. The expansion project will come into operation gradually and reach full capacity by 2026.

N.c.a. Lu-177 is the radionuclide that forms the basis of targeted radio-

ligand therapy(*), widely used today in the treatment of prostate cancer and neuroendocrine tumors and expected to be used soon to treat other cancers as well.

“Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men after lung cancer, with its incidence increasing rapidly around the world. By 2040, 2.3 million new cases of prostate cancer are predicted annually worldwide. The production capacity increase at our Gebze facility in Turkey, which will comply fully with EU and US quality standards, will meet the increasing global demand for n.c.a. Lu-177. In fact, we aim to make the Gebze production facility a “center of excellence” for the production of theranostic products,” commented **Aydin Kucuk**, General Manager of Monrol.

Targeted radioligand therapy, is an innovative approach to cancer treatment. Multiple clinical trials are investigating the effects of this treatment approach on various types of cancers across the world.

Headquartered in Istanbul, Monrol is a nuclear medicine company leading innovation for the development and manufacturing of GMP grade radioisotopes and radiopharmaceuticals. Monrol distributes its world-class radiopharmaceutical products portfolio in global markets. As both a CMO and CDMO, Monrol provides early development support to customers and offers fully integrated services for nimble, lean, virtual companies taking new product concepts into clinical trials, demonstrating proof of concept, and going into first-in-human studies.

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Love pop music?

Largest US newspaper chain hiring Swift, Beyoncé writers

LOS ANGELES, Sept 14, (AP): This week the United States' biggest newspaper chain posted to its site two unusual job listings: a Taylor Swift reporter and a Beyoncé Knowles-Carter reporter.

Gannett, which owns more than 200 daily papers, will employ these new hires through USA Today and The Tennessean, the company's Nashville-based newspaper. The chain is looking for "modern storytellers" adept in print, audio and visual journalism, said Michael Anastasi, the Tennessean's editor and Gannett's vice president for local news.

"Seeing both the facts and the fury, the Taylor Swift reporter will identify why the pop star's influence only expands, what her fanbase stands for in pop culture, and the effect she has across the music and business worlds," the company said in its job description.

Similarly, the company wants a journalist who can capture Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's effect on society and the industries in which she operates.

Anastasi said the Tennessean already has a three-person music team and "I put our sophisticated coverage up against anybody." Gannett is always looking for opportunities to make itself essential for paying customers, he said.

Critics of the new roles cited layoffs at Gannett, where the workforce has shrunk 47% in the last three years due to layoffs and attrition, according to the NewsGuild. At some newspapers, the union said the headcount has fallen by as much as 90%. Last year alone, Gannett cut

about 6% of its roughly 3,440-person US media division.

Some journalists said that while hiring these massively popular artist-specific roles reflect their influence in pop culture, they do fail to invest in local journalism at a company known for its local dailies.

Some journalists criticized the job listings for presenting superfan behavior as a full-time journalism job. Music writer Jeremy Gordon said on social media that it "doesn't feel great to see 'full-time stan' go out as an actual journalism job." Stan is slang for "superfan."

If the hire acts more like a fan than a journalist, the decision could backfire on Gannett. But if the job is done well, and the reporters can penetrate tightly-controlled operations to glean insights, they can establish themselves as national authorities on important cultural figures.

Positive

Omise'eke Tinsley, academic and author of "Beyoncé in Formation: Remixing Black Feminism," says this type of role makes space for more positive stories about Black women.

But also, she adds, the existence of both jobs directly reflects Beyoncé and Swift's economic power. "If there wasn't that component to it, there wouldn't be a Beyoncé reporter," Tinsley said.

It is not uncommon for journalists to develop a beat on a specific figure, particularly in politics - as evidenced by Amy Chozick, who the New York Times hired in 2013 to cover Hilary Clinton exclusively.

But most entertainment journalists are responsible for reporting on a wide range of talent - even if they are subject matter experts on a specific artist.

That was the case for Los Angeles Times reporter Suzy Exposito, who called herself an "unofficial" beat reporter on popular reggaetonero Bad Bunny because she spent a disproportionate amount of time in a previous job covering him compared to other priorities.

She said a major challenge for entertainment journalists is the sheer volume of releases from pop artists. "The business of music is a numbers game," Exposito said. "Hit records become deluxe editions become sold-out world tours, and it can be dizzying for a general music journalist to keep up."

So, are artist-specific jobs the future of music journalism?

If a reporter takes the job seriously and provides more than breathless concert coverage, their established expertise could be valuable for a news organization, Grode said. Still, there are very few musicians who have such a wide cultural reach.

The likelihood of fans to click on stories about Swift or Beyoncé makes it an obvious motivating factor in designing the new jobs, Exposito said.

Top artists prioritize the attention and work of expert reporters, leading to what critic Soraya Roberts has called a "culture of sameness" - yet another barrier to local arts coverage.

Variety



This image released by 20th Century Studios shows Kenneth Branagh as Hercule Poirot, left, and Tina Fey as Ariadne Oliver in a scene from 'A Haunting in Venice.' (AP)

Film

Branagh crafts a 'beautiful' horror film

'Haunting in Venice,' sumptuously spooky

LOS ANGELES, Sept 14, (AP): Kenneth Branagh indulges in the kind of macabre theatricality that only a crumbling Venetian palazzo on a stormy Halloween night can provide in "A Haunting in Venice."

Moviegoiners probably long ago made up their mind one way or another about Branagh's stately and flawed Hercule Poirot franchise, but should there be any curiosity left for this third installment is worth it. It is spooky, fun and features Tina Fey, looking smart and sleek in post-war suits as the fast-talking author of wildly successful whodunnits who says things like "I'm the smartest person I know" in a mid-Atlantic accent.

Set in 1947 on a particularly foggy night in the city of canals, "A Haunting in Venice" is beautiful to look at, with costumes by Sammy Sheldon, production design by John Paul Kelly and cinematography by Haris Zambarloukos. And it's embellished with moody but palatable scares that feel reminiscent of classics like "The Innocents" and "The Others," that are enhanced by Hilmar Guðnadóttir's score. In other words, this might not excite a "Saw" enthusiast, but for the more easily scared and skittish it hits just the right notes.

Agatha Christie takes a bit of a backseat here, as Branagh and screenwriter Michael Green take only the loosest inspiration from her 1969 book "The Hallowe'en Party" for their haunting, firstly by moving it to Venice. It's where Poirot has chosen to live out his self-imposed retirement (an enviable exile if there ever was one). His whereabouts are hardly a secret though - desperate folks line up outside of his picturesque apartment hoping he'll take a stab at their cases. But for now, a handsome Italian bodyguard (Riccardo Scamarcio) is there to make sure they don't get close enough to ask.

Fey's Ariadne Oliver gets through the gates, though, with a different kind of offer: She wants Poirot to accompany her to a séance. This medium, she says, appears to be the real deal and only he'll be able to figure out if it's all a trick. Soon he, reluctantly, finds himself at a Halloween party for the city's orphans, held by a famous opera singer, Rowena, (Kelly Reilly) with a famously dead daughter whom they hope to contact later that evening when the children depart.

Branagh recruited a few of his "Belfast" stars into this ensemble, including Jamie Dornan as doctor still

haunted by the war and Jude Hill as his precocious son Leopold. Camille Cottin is a housekeeper, Kyle Allen is the dead girl's ex-fiancé, and Michelle Yeoh is the theatrical medium Mrs. Reynolds, who seems to be having a grand time chewing the scenery as a possible femme fatale. It is a distinct shift in tone from the previous films - sadder and more serious, with grief and death everywhere. Even before Alicia's mysterious death (off a balcony, into the canal with a horrific scrape on her back) the grand palazzo had a body count: It's where doctors are said to have locked up children to die during the plague.

Phenomena

And this crew is in for a long, stormy, claustrophobic night with finger pointing, more deaths and some inexplicable phenomena at play. Poirot's existential crisis is probably the least interesting aspect of the whole thing, despite its centrality to the plot, but Branagh doesn't waste too much of his time diving into those self-indulgent waters.

Maybe Branagh should have been leaning more into horror this whole time with this franchise. Or maybe it's a case of underestimating a director whose work is prolific and not always personal. It can be hard to take stock of a filmmaker's career when they've made great Shakespeare and Cinderella adaptations as well as "Thor" and "Artemis Fowl." But it's always a pleasant surprise when it works as "A Haunting in Venice" very much does.

"A Haunting in Venice," a 20th Century Studios release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "some strong violence, disturbing images and thematic elements." Running time: 107 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: The Netflix golf documentary series "Full Swing" won't have full access at the Ryder Cup.

US captain Zach Johnson says he spoke to all 12 players on his team when concerns were raised about a film crew in the team rooms, and they unanimously decided to keep certain areas off limits.

"Netflix is going to be there," said Seth Waugh,

CEO of the PGA of America. "I would say all things involving the team we leave to the team and the captain. I think there's a sanctity to the team room, and the experience is important to them. It's part of being a team, right? Netflix has been great for the game. They're doing great things. The team collectively decided there are areas of privacy that need to be respected."

Netflix is in production for its second season of the series that has been popular with golf fans and even those who didn't pay much attention to the sport. Nielsen Media Research analysis in US markets showed 60% of viewers are between the ages of 25 and 54, and 63% of viewers watched the PGA Tour in the two months following the series' debut.

The Ryder Cup, which starts the week of Sept. 25 outside Rome, presumably would be a big part of the upcoming season of "Full Swing."

But there were enough concerns from a few players about letting Netflix into the team room at Marco Simone that Johnson polled his players and they chose to keep the team room private.

"It was one of those where we all gathered. I talked to every individual and laid out scenarios," Johnson said in a telephone interview. "And they all felt like it was best to navigate that week of the tournament in a manner which the sanctity and sacredness of Team USA is preserved. We're eliminating scenarios."

A Netflix spokesperson declined comment. Netflix typically does not discuss potential content for a series currently in production.

Stefan Schauffele, the father of Xander Schauffele, said he first was aware of the Netflix presence when he received a player participation and benefits agreement in July, a month before Ryder Cup qualifying had ended.

"Apart from the fact the guys don't get paid, you cannot make a deal with a third party that we are not party to for rights into eternity," said Stefan Schauffele, who said his son did not sign the agreement without changes to the language.

The Americans and Europeans have a team room at the golf course and at the host hotel for the Ryder Cup that historically are off limits to the media and other VIPs not directly involved in the matches.

DENVER: US Rep Lauren Boebert was kicked out of a "Beetlejuice" musical play in Denver on Sunday, according to security footage.

The theater didn't name Boebert, but a spokesperson said Wednesday that the video - which showed Boebert and a guest being escorted out of the venue - was of guests who were kicked out after audience members accused them of vaping, singing, using phones and causing a disturbance.

Her campaign manager confirmed Boebert was kicked out but denies she was vaping. Boebert and the other guest left.

"I can confirm the stunning and salacious rumors: in her personal time, congresswoman Lauren Boebert is indeed a supporter of the performing arts (gasp!)," said Drew Sexton, Boebert's campaign manager, in a text message, adding that Boebert "pleads guilty to singing along, laughing and enjoying herself."

Boebert is in her second term in Congress and is running for reelection in Colorado's 3rd Congressional District, largely covering the state's western half. The theater disturbance was first reported by The Denver Post.

In her relatively short time in Washington, Boebert has built a national profile with a combative style that's grabbed media headlines, most famously by heckling President Joe Biden during his 2022 State of the Union address to Congress.

During the argument in the theater, the two made comments along the lines of "do you know who I am" and "I will be contacting the mayor," according to the venue's statement.

On the social media platform X, formerly Twitter, Boebert said: "Everyone should go see it if you get a chance this week and please let me know how it ends!"

The two guests at first refused to leave the venue, even after an employee threatened to get the police, the theater said in a statement. Once a police officer was on the way, the two left, the theater said.

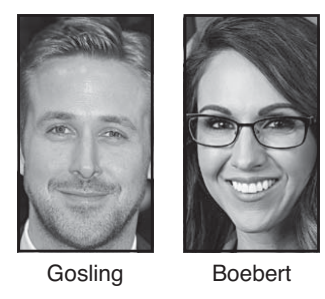
The security footage provided to The Associated Press does not appear to show Boebert leaving. (AP)

ROCHESTER, NY: Is it finally time for Barbie's sidekick to go

from being "just Ken" to National Toy Hall of Fame inductee?

The Mattel doll introduced in 1961 and brought to life by Ryan Gosling in the blockbuster "Barbie" movie is among 12 finalists being considered for induction this year, the Hall of Fame announced Wednesday.

He is up against baseball cards,



Gosling Boebert

Battleship, bingo, Bop It, Cabbage Patch Kids, Choose Your Own Adventure gamebooks, Connect 4, Little Tykes Cozy Coupe, Nerf, slime and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

The National Toy Hall of Fame, housed at The Strong Museum in Rochester, is marking its 25th anniversary with a strong slate of fi-

nalists, said Christopher Bensch, vice president for collections.

"This may have been the year of Barbie at the box office, but perhaps Ken will share some of the spotlight by getting inducted," Bensch said of the character, who in the movie sings "I'm Just Ken."

Barbie was inducted as part of the Hall of Fame's inaugural class

in 1998.

This year's honorees will be inducted Nov. 9 following voting by a selection committee and the public. Each member of the 22-person expert committee will cast ballots for the top three. The three toys receiving the most public votes by Sept. 20 will make up a single ballot. (AP)

People & Places

TV

Trump's 1st interview

'60 Minutes' expands to 90 Minutes for fall

NEW YORK, Sept 14, (AP): The iconic stopwatch won't be reset, but for six episodes this fall, "60 Minutes" will become 90 minutes.

The CBS newsmagazine is stretching on some Sundays when CBS airs an NFL doubleheader, starting Oct. 8. Often, the show doesn't air until 7:30 p.m. on the East Coast those nights (it usually starts at 7 p.m.).

The request to Bill Owens, the show's executive producer, came from top CBS executive George Cheeks, and predated the strikes that have paralyzed Hollywood and left networks looking for more content. Owens said he needed to weigh whether the three extra hours across the six episodes would dilute the broadcast.



Stahl

"My job is to protect the place," he said. "I don't ever want to harm a hair on the head of '60 Minutes.'"

There will generally be two extra pieces on the 90-minute nights, and correspondents are already lobbying for more time to tell their stories. Extra producers have been brought in. Owens said the additional stories would likely lean toward feature or adventure fare, like one Bill Whitaker is preparing about a motorcycle race on the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea.

More than a half century in, "60 Minutes" remains the most popular show in television news. It averaged close to nine million viewers each week last season, ranking first among non-sports, prime-time programs in live viewing, seventh when a time-delayed audience of up to a week is added, the Nielsen company said.

The show's stories get an additional 15 million views each week on various digital platforms, CBS said. That's a different measurement than "viewers," however, and doesn't necessarily correspond to 15 million extra people.

"60 Minutes" has almost completely turned over its correspondent corps since its glory years, with Lesley Stahl remaining as the elder stateswoman. She began in 1991.

Stories

The latest newbie is former ABC correspondent Cecilia Vega, who joined earlier this year. A bit star-struck, she admits that "I still take videos and send them to my mom when I'm walking around the hallways in my office."

She spoke via phone from Poland, where she is working on what she expects will be one of the most important stories in her career, about Ukrainian children who were kidnapped and sent to Russia during the war. She was following one woman who had been working for months to retrieve a relative.

"We are telling what is going on in the war through the eyes of women and children," she said, "and I can't think of anything that is more gut-wrenching."

Owens said that "60 Minutes" has eight stories about the war in Ukraine in the works for its 56th season, which starts Sunday. Besides Vega, Whitaker and Scott Pelley - who won an Edward R. Murrow award for four stories he has done from the war - are both working on the topic.

The show is keeping a close eye on how American money is being spent in Ukraine, for example, and examining how the country's arts and culture has been affected by the Russian invasion.

"We're doing shows about the entirety of the country so people have a sense of what it's like when you're invaded," Owens said.

The attention is intentional. Owens, entering his fifth year as the newsmagazine's top executive, said he believed the Russian invasion of a neighbor in Europe is not getting enough coverage in the US media, either because it's too expensive to devote resources or executives are worried that viewers are getting fatigued about the topic.

The show is not trying to send a political message at a time some are questioning how much American resources should be devoted to the effort, he said.

"The thing that's inspired me the most is the people of Ukraine and their resilience," Whitaker said. "They refuse to be bowed. They refuse to be knocked down. ... It's almost a defiant normalcy."

Besides Whitaker, Stahl, Vega and Pelley, the current "60 Minutes" correspondent team includes Sharyn Alfonsi, Anderson Cooper and Jon Wertheim.

Owens, who began with "60 Minutes" in 2003 as a producer with Pelley, said he often keeps some of the show's legends in mind when running the broadcast - such as Morley Safer, who died in 2016 eight days after announcing his retirement following 46 years as a correspondent.

"I think, often, about what Morley would think about a story because Morley would give it to you right between the eyes and tell you the truth," he said. "I think Morley would be proud of this show."

Also:

WASHINGTON: Former President Donald Trump will give his first broadcast network interview since leaving office, sitting down this week with **Kristen Welker** as she debuts as host of NBC's "Meet the Press" Sunday.

The network said in a release that the interview will be pre-taped at Trump's Bedminster, New Jersey, golf club Thursday and that the same invitation had been extended to President **Joe Biden**. Trump last appeared on the show in 2019.

The former president has largely steered clear of mainstream media interviews during his third campaign for the White House. Instead, he frequently calls in to conservative podcasts, radio shows and far-right cable outlets, and shares his thoughts in posts and videos on his Truth Social site.

The interview comes as Trump remains the clear front-runner for the Republican nomination, even after being indicted four times on a slew of charges, including many connected to his efforts to try to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Trump will also be appearing Thursday on former Fox News host **Megyn Kelly's** SiriusXM show. The interview, taped Wednesday in New Jersey, will be her first with him since the 2016 campaign. Trump and Kelly memorably clashed during a 2015 Republican primary debate, when Kelly pressed him on his history of derogatory comments about women.

Welker is set to debut as host of "Meet the Press" this Sunday, taking over from **Chuck Todd**.

Trump has previously praised Welker's performance moderating the second presidential debate between him and Biden in 2020.



Fashion models walk the runway at the Falguni Shane Peacock Spring/Summer 2024 fashion show as part of New York Fashion Week on Monday, Sept. 11, in New York. (AP)

Fashion

New York It Girl-meets-Mumbai collection

Roach rethinks his image with NY show

NEW YORK, Sept 14, (AP): Celebrity stylist Law Roach has refilled his cup, emerging out of retirement this week for a New York Fashion Week collaboration with luxury Indian fashion brand Falguni Shane Peacock.

The New York It Girl-meets-Mumbai collection shown Monday blended Falguni Shane Peacock's opulent craftsmanship of sequin embroidery and delicate flower detailing with Roach's edgy vision of black baseball caps, hoop earrings and bold golden bangles.

As creative director for the collection, the image architect (a term Roach trademarked) delivered once again. Roach may be into his sixth month of "retirement," but his stardom shows no signs of slowing down.

He sent shock waves through the fashion industry in March, when he announced in a since-deleted Instagram post that his "cup was empty" and that he was tired of the "politics and lies" of celebrity styling.

Now, he says, he is only taking on work that fills his cup.

"Moving forward I will only do certain things that I really feel like will feed me," he told The Associated Press. "And this was one of those things."

Each piece Monday exuded the chic and glamorous style that Roach and his clients like Zendaya have made famous. Roach, one of the few Black stylists in Hollywood, has dressed everyone from Ariana Grande to Celine Dion to Megan Thee Stallion and is often credited with bringing some of the best looks to red carpets.

Roach wore a red pleated skirt with a white button-up shirt and a dupatta over his shoulder as he gleefully strutted in his Air Jordans with the designers at the end of the show, his waist-length straight black hair flowing behind him.

Falguni Peacock said Roach brought a "cool girl" vibe to the collection. After eight years, the husband-and-wife designers returned to New York Fashion

Week to showcase their "2.0" collection and, much like Roach, the reinvention of their brand. Sarah Jessica Parker recently wore an eye-catching Falguni Shane Peacock lehenga and choli on an episode of "And Just Like That," and the duo were co-hosts of a ritzy Diwali gala last year in the city.

At Spring Studios, models catwalked down the runway in looks that could easily be worn off the subway to a gala, from gray sweatpants paired with a shimmery silver beaded blazer or an oversized gray sweatshirt with bubblegum pink feathered skirt or embroidered sheer bottoms.

Roach said he was able to draw on a trip to Mumbai for inspiration for the collection.

"The skills of the artisans in India are unmatched and fashion has borrowed so much from India throughout the decades," Roach told the AP. "That us collaborating together and bringing it to New York Fashion Week is a way to pay homage to everything that has been borrowed from such a lovely country."

Retirement

In the final look of the show, one model wearing sweatpants and a glittering jewel-encrusted breastplate emblazoned with a cross bent down to take off her black heels to walk barefoot - the ultimate cool girl move.

Since announcing his retirement, Roach has not strayed far from his fashion roots. A day after his retirement post, he modeled in a show for Hugo Boss. He continues to work as a stylist with Zendaya, whom he calls family.

But he's focusing on himself and his mental health.

"What I learned in the months, I learned how to truly love myself and I learned that happiness is a habit, and you have to work on it," he said.

Roach got his start in fashion by collecting women's vintage and then opening a store in Chicago where Kanye West would frequent. He went

to make a name for himself as a celebrity stylist taking on several celebrity clients, including Zendaya, whom he transformed from a former Disney star into a style icon. The duo went onto collaborate on the brand Daya by Zendaya and on Tommy Hilfinger's Tommy x Zendaya collection, where Roach served as creative director. He's even starred as a judge on HBO Max's show "Legendary" and as a judge on "America's Next Top Model."

At the apex of his styling career, it came as a shock to many when Roach shared that he would be retiring - with news outlets calling it everything from "surprising" to "eyebrow raising."

But the announcement also came with an outpouring of support. And celebrities turned out for his return to the fashion stage Monday. Entertainer Nick Cannon sat front row with Brenna Tiesi from Netflix's "Selling Sunset" to support Roach.

"He's unapologetically himself at all times," he said. "I love the fact that a brother from Chicago would come in and take the fashion game by storm."

In a neon pink pantsuit with a feather train, TV host and stylist Jeannie Mai Jenkins said the show was one she could not miss.

"The thing I love about Law's style is he rewrites trends, he takes trends and gives it a whole spin," she said.

It's no wonder Roach's celebrity styling client list was so long. His playful spirit comes out with those he works with. Roach teased Shane Peacock backstage over how he got the idea for dip-dyeing the ends of the model's hair cerulean blue because of Shane Peacock's own blue goatee.

When asked for what's next for the image architect, Roach coyly responded: "I'm going to bed."

Not wanting to reveal all his cards, he reiterated that he would be sticking by Zendaya's side but is being intentional about his next moves.

"I never want to leave fashion in its entirety," he said.



Salma Hayek Pinault is photographed on the red carpet for the film 'El Sabor de la Navidad' during the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto on Wednesday, Sept. 13. (AP)



Tang



Dudamel

Variety

NEW YORK: Incoming music director **Gustavo Dudamel** will conduct the New York Philharmonic at its spring gala on April 24, the orchestra said Tuesday as it announced a \$40 million gift from co-chairman **Oscar L. Tang** and wife **Agnes Hsu-Tang** that will endow his position.

Dudamel was hired in February to become the Philharmonic's music director for the 2026-27 season. He conducted the orchestra last May in three performances of Mahler's Ninth Symphony but was not scheduled to lead it in the 2023-24 season, which opens Sept 27. The program of Dudamel's concert was not announced.

As part of the gift, the music director will become The Oscar L. Tang and H.M. Agnes Hsu-Tang Music and Artistic Director Chair starting with the 2025-26 season, when Dudamel becomes music director designate.

The 42-year-old Dudamel has been music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic since 2009, a tenure that will end after 17 seasons when he starts in New York. He quit as music director of the Paris Opéra in May, two seasons into a six-year contract scheduled to run through the 2026-27 season.

Oscar Tang, 85, has been part of the philharmonic board since 2013 and has been co-chairman with **Peter W. May**, since 2019. Tang was CEO of the asset management company Reich & Tang for 20 years before retiring in 1993. (AP)

NEW YORK: The National 4-H Council is growing in a new direction - online - by launching its e-learning platform Clover with a collaboration with Netflix and its new movie "Spy Kids: Armageddon," the organization announced Wednesday.

Jill Bramble, who took over as president and CEO of the National 4-H Council in August, said she wants the new platform to be the digital equivalent of the in-person experience that 4-H has provided to young people for more than 120 years.

"It allows us to keep kids where they are - whether they are in Manhattan, New York or Manhattan, Kansas - and still offer highly relevant and engaging content for young people to prepare for careers of the future," Bramble told The Associated Press in an interview. "The skills that they will need to be successful look very different than they were for us."

Clover features more than 220 online educational activities for students, ages

5 to 18, developed by 4-H's partners in the Cooperative Extension System and its network of land grant universities. The topics covered range from farming to space exploration, from financial literacy to stress management - all designed to inform and empower young people. The innovation, Bramble says, comes in the way the Clover platform engages with the students by using

gamification and entertainment, which led to the collaboration with Netflix.

"It was a natural alignment," she said. "When you think of the intent behind 'Spy Kids,' those kids are tackling some of the world's most pressing issues and they're doing this through coding and gamification. We wanted to align that with what we see is possible through Clover."



Singers Vince Gill, (from left), Emmylou Harris and Ashley McBryde perform at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's 'All for the Hall' benefit concert at Irving Plaza on Tuesday, Sept. 12, in New York. (AP)

Encouraging interest in coding and other STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) disciplines has become increasingly important throughout education, especially after students' science and math test scores declined during the pandemic.

Bob Hughes, director of K-12 Education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's United States Program, recently told The Associated Press that improving STEM education is a high priority for the non-profit, which is not connected to Clover, but last year donated \$1 billion to improve math education in the next four years.

"Math is a such a gatekeeper for future success - and not just success for becoming a physicist, but for your day to day life," Hughes said. "It's a very tough subject for many kids. It's emotional for many kids. And if they don't succeed in mathematics, they can start to develop a mindset and an identity that suggests that not only are they not good at math, but at other academics as well. So math is fundamental."

Clover was developed to help with those fundamentals by increasing students' exposure to subjects like math and science in a less stressful, more entertaining way, Bramble said.

"The pandemic was an inflection point showing what kids need today," she said. "We feel that Clover can support a way to catch up, but it can't do it alone. It's so valuable to have an in-person program that goes along with it - the mentoring aspect that comes with 4-H. It helps bring that sense of belonging that helps a young person catch up to where they need to be." (AP)

Environment

'Planet is sick'

Earth past its almost all 'safe limit' for humans

NEW YORK, Sept 14, (AP): Earth is exceeding its "safe operating space for humanity" in six of nine key measurements of its health, and two of the remaining three are headed in the wrong direction, a new study said.

Earth's climate, biodiversity, land, freshwater, nutrient pollution and "novel" chemicals (human-made compounds like microplastics and nuclear waste) are all out of whack, a group of international scientists said in Wednesday's journal Science Advances. Only the acidity of the oceans, the health of the air and the ozone layer are within the boundaries considered safe, and both ocean and air pollution are heading in the wrong direction, the study said.

"We are in very bad shape," said study co-author **Johan Rockstrom**, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany. "We show in this analysis that the planet is losing resilience and the patient is sick."



Rockstrom

In 2009, Rockstrom and other researchers created nine different broad boundary areas and used scientific measurements to judge Earth's health as a whole. Wednesday's paper was an update from 2015 and it added a sixth factor to the unsafe category. Water went from barely safe to the out-of-bounds category because of worsening river run-off and better measurements and understanding of the problem, Rockstrom said.

These boundaries "determine the fate of the planet," said Rockstrom, a climate scientist. The nine factors have been "scientifically well established" by numerous outside studies, he said.

If Earth can manage these nine factors, Earth could be relatively safe. But it's not, he said.

In most of the cases, the team uses other peer-reviewed science to create measurable thresholds for a safety boundary. For example, they use 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the air, instead of the Paris climate agreement's 1.5 degrees (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial times. This year carbon in the air peaked at 424 parts per million.

Biodiversity

The nine factors are intermingled. When the team used computer simulations, they found that making one factor worse, like the climate or biodiversity, made other Earth environmental issues degrade, while fixing one helped others. Rockstrom said this was like a simulated stress test for the planet.

The simulations showed "that one of the most powerful means that humanity has at its disposal to combat climate change" is cleaning up its land and saving forests, the study said. Returning forests to late 20th century levels would provide substantial natural sinks to store carbon dioxide instead of the air, where it traps heat, the study said.

Biodiversity - the amount and different types of species of life - is in some of the most troubling shape and it doesn't get as much attention as other issues, like climate change, Rockstrom said.

"Biodiversity is fundamental to keeping the carbon cycle and the water cycle intact," Rockstrom said. "The biggest headache we have today is the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis."

University of Michigan environmental studies dean **Jonathan Overpeck**, who wasn't part of the study, called the study "deeply troubling in its implications for the planet and people should be worried."

"The analysis is balanced in that it clearly sounds a flashing red alarm, but it is not overly alarmist," Overpeck said. "Importantly, there is hope."

The fact that ozone layer is the sole improving factor shows that when the world and its leaders decide to recognize and act on a problem, it can be fixed and "for the most part there are things that we know how to do" to improve the remaining problems, said Carnegie Mellon chemistry and environment professor **Neil Donahue**.

Some biodiversity scientists, such as Duke's **Stuart Pimm**, have long disputed Rockstrom's methods and measurements, saying it makes the results not worth much.

But Carnegie Mellon environmental engineering professor **Granger Morgan**, who wasn't part of the study, said, "Experts don't agree on exactly where the limits are, or how much the planet's different systems may interact, but we are getting dangerously close."

"I've often said if we don't quickly cut back on how we are stressing the Earth, we're toast," Morgan said in an email. "This paper says it's more likely that we're burnt toast."

Also:

PARIS: France is sending military forces to distribute water on the French Indian Ocean territory of **Mayotte**, which is facing an unprecedented water crisis prompted by the island cluster's most severe drought in decades.

Troops with the French Foreign Legion and French navy based in the region will work with local authorities to ensure water supplies to local populations, the Defense Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

Authorities have ordered water cuts two days out of three on Mayotte, a territory northwest of **Madagascar** that is the poorest part of France. The water woes come on top of migration tensions around people arriving from the neighboring country of **Comoros**.

Residents protested Saturday outside the Mayotte water management headquarters, carrying banners reading "Mayotte is Thirsty!", according to local media reports. When the water taps are working, families fill up buckets and tubs as they can, but supplies quickly run low, especially in more remote areas.

Around 30% of the population doesn't have access to running water at home, according to regional health authorities. They have noted an increase in the number of people suffering diarrhea, and diseases such as typhoid were already far more widespread than in mainland France.

Authorities appointed a special "water prefect" this summer to deal with Mayotte's most severe drought since 1997. Insufficient rainfall resulted in low water levels in reservoirs that residents rely on to get through the dry season from May to November.



MADRID: Spain this year recorded its third hottest summer since official records began 62 years ago, authorities said Thursday, with temperatures peaking at 46.8 C (116 F) as the country's severe drought dragged on.

The average summer temperature was 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.34 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal, the Spanish weather agency AEMET said.

The World Meteorological Organization said last week that last month wasn't only the world's hottest August scientists ever recorded by far. It was also the second hottest month measured after July 2023.

Since 1961, mainland Spain's average temperature has risen 1.6 degrees C (2.88 degrees F), according to AEMET. Spain's two hottest summers were in 2022 and 2003.

This year's January-August period in Spain equaled the same periods in 2022 and 2020 as the country's hottest ever recorded over those months, AEMET said.

At the same time, this summer was the rainiest since the turn of the century, AEMET said, though most of Spain is still in the grip of an extended drought. Northeast Spain is enduring its most extreme drought since records began. Also, between January and August Spain's coastal waters heated up more than ever previously recorded, according to AEMET.



A woman is silhouetted against the setting sun as triple-digit heat indexes continue in the Midwest, Aug. 20, 2023, in Kansas City, Mo. Earth is exceeding its 'safe operating space for humanity' in six of nine key measurements of its health, and two of the remaining three are headed in the wrong direction, a new study said. (AP)

Health

'No sign of COVID mandates in US'

Americans can get 'updated' shot

NEW YORK, Sept 14, (AP): As Americans fend off a late summer COVID-19 spike and prepare for a fresh vaccine rollout, Republicans are raising familiar fears that government-issued lockdowns and mask mandates are next.

It's been a favorite topic among some of the GOP's top presidential contenders. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis told reporters that people are "lurching toward" COVID-19 restrictions and "there needs to be pushback." South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott posted online that the "radical Left" seeks to bring back school closures and mandates. And former President Donald Trump urged congressional Republicans to stop the Biden administration from bringing back COVID-19 "mandates, lockdowns or restrictions of any kind."

"The radical Democrats are trying hard to restart COVID hysteria," Trump told supporters in Rapid City, South Dakota, during a recent campaign stop. "I wonder why. Is there an election coming up by any chance?"

While some individual schools and colleges have implemented temporary mask requirements, there is no sign that anyone in federal or state leadership is considering widespread COVID-19 restrictions, requirements or mask mandates. The administrations of several Democratic governors denied that any such moves are even under discussion. The overriding sentiment is to leave the decisions to individuals.

"No COVID-19 public health restrictions or mask requirements are being considered by the Murphy administration," said Christi Peace, spokesperson for New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy.

"There are no impending mass lockdowns or mask mandates for New Mexico," said Jodi McGinnis Porter, spokeswoman for the New Mexico Department of Public Health.

It was largely the same message from Democratic governors' offices in several other states that responded to an inquiry about whether any COVID-19 mandates were under consideration. That included Connecticut, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan and Oregon.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, made clear his opposition to COVID-19 lockdowns as well as mask and vaccine mandates when he was campaigning for office last year: "This is an area where I think folks got it wrong," he said of school and business shutdowns. His office echoed the

same sentiment in its response to the AP this week, saying, "The administration's view is that there is no need to impose restrictions."

In the two most populous Democratic-led states, California and New York, the state health departments recommend getting the updated vaccine, but have no requirements for the shot or mask wearing. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul was asked during a news conference Wednesday about whether she would consider mask or vaccine mandates: "We are in a place where we're seeing low numbers; not requiring such actions today," she said.

Elisabeth Shepard, spokesperson for Oregon's Democratic governor, Tina Kotek, noted that the federal public health emergency for the virus outbreak ended in May.

"Currently, COVID-19 lockdowns and mask mandates are not being discussed and the governor has no plans to institute these measures," she said.

Infections

Still, the misleading narrative has proven a convenient scare tactic for Republicans in their efforts to woo voters who see Democrats as oppressive leaders targeting their freedoms.

The GOP presidential hopefuls hammering this message in the last week join a chorus of conservative lawmakers and far-right pundits who have spent the last month warning that tyrannical COVID-19 measures are looming.

In August, conspiracy theorist Alex Jones claimed an anonymous "high-level manager in the TSA" and an unnamed "Border Patrol-connected" source told him that Transportation Security Administration workers would soon need to wear masks and that COVID-19 lockdowns would return in December.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the claims were "utterly false," but they still were amplified by influential Republicans, including Rep. Lauren Boebert of Colorado, who posted on X that she wrote to the TSA demanding answers.

Later last month, when a Black liberal arts college in Atlanta announced it had reinstated a temporary mask mandate in response to student infections, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican from Georgia, posted on X that "Americans have had enough COVID hysteria. We Will Not Comply!"

The school, Morris Brown College,

has since lifted the requirement but is keeping in place other policies, including contact tracing and temperature checks on campus.

Some of the outcry from conservatives has been in response to President Joe Biden's comments last month on COVID-19's recent uptick, which has led to an increase in hospitalizations and deaths nationwide - though a fraction of what the country saw in past surges.

"As a matter of fact, I signed off this morning on a proposal we have to present to the Congress a request for additional funding for a new vaccine that is necessary - that works," Biden told reporters during a visit to South Lake Tahoe. "And tentatively - not decided finally yet - tentatively, it is recommended that, it will likely be recommended that everybody get it no matter whether they've gotten it before or not."

The CDC on Tuesday endorsed those new shots for everyone 6 months and older, and the vaccines will be available at pharmacies, health centers and some doctor offices as soon as this week. But a new federal vaccine mandate is not under consideration, according to a White House official who requested anonymity to discuss the administration's thinking.

A federal mask mandate is also not on the table.

"To be clear, the rumors of a federal mask mandate are not true," said Jeff Nesbit, assistant secretary for public affairs for Health and Human Services. "We now have a range of tools for people to protect themselves from the impact of COVID-19, including vaccines, at-home testing and treatments. Masking is one of several steps people may choose to take to protect themselves if they wish."

Reinstated mask requirements across the country have so far been limited to a handful of local schools and businesses. One example is a Maryland elementary school that required students who were exposed in a classroom's outbreak to wear masks at school for 10 days.

But these isolated measures have sparked outrage from conservatives who have used them to energize their supporters.

Sen. J.D. Vance of Ohio last week unveiled the "Freedom to Breathe Act," a bill that would block the federal government from imposing mask mandates for domestic flights, public transit and schools.



In this July 8, 2013 photo, a rare ghost orchid blooms in Charleston, W.Va. The rare ghost orchid found mainly in Florida and Cuba should be immediately protected by the US as an endangered species, three environmental groups claimed Wednesday, Sept. 13, in a lawsuit arguing that federal officials are unduly delaying a decision. (AP)



Blühm



Brugnaro

Discovery

Van Gogh painting recovered: More than three years after it was stolen from a museum that was shut to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, a painting by Dutch master Vincent van Gogh has been recovered, a little worse for wear, the Groninger Museum in the Netherlands said Tuesday.

Van Gogh's "The Parsonage Garden at Nuenen in Spring," which was painted in 1884, was snatched in an overnight raid in March 2020 from The Singer Laren museum east of Amsterdam. It was there on loan from the Groninger Museum.

"The Groninger Museum is extremely happy and relieved that the work is back," its director, **Andreas Blühm**, said in a statement. "We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to this good outcome."

The museum paid tribute to Dutch art sleuth Arthur Brand for his "key role in this case."

It declined to provide further details about how it was found. It said "the painting has suffered, but is - at first glance - still in good condition." The work will be scientifically examined in coming months. It's being kept temporarily at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.

Its value was not provided. On the rare occasions when Van Gogh's paintings come up for sale, they fetch millions at auction. However, an insurance company had paid the Groninger Museum for the loss and is now the formal owner, although the museum says it will exercise its right to first purchase of the work.

It said that it hopes to have "The Parsonage Garden at Nuenen in Spring" back on display soon, although this "could take weeks, if not months."

The 25-by-57-centimeter (10-by-22-inch) oil on paper painting shows a person standing in a garden surrounded by trees, with a church tower in the background.

It dates to a time when van Gogh had moved back to his family in a rural area of the Netherlands and painted the life he saw there, including with his famous work "The Potato Eaters," in mostly somber tones.

Later, he moved to southern France, where he developed a far more colorful, vibrant style of painting as his health declined before his death in 1890. (AP)



Venice faces UNESCO downgrade: A scowling gondolier ferrying sightseers 10 at a time across the mouth of Venice's Grand Canal scolds passengers to sit still and frets over being shorted the bargain 2-euro fare.

The brief journey perched along the sides of a packed gondola is a far cry from romantic scenes of gondoliers ser-

enading couples as they ply Venice's picturesque canals but is emblematic of the city's plunge into mass tourism.

The storied and fragile lagoon city is not alone in its struggle to manage an on-

slaught of tourists in the low-cost flight era. But the stakes are particularly high this week as the UNESCO World Heritage Committee decides whether to add Venice to its list of endangered world



Tourists walk across a bridge, in Venice, Italy, Wednesday, Sept. 13. The Italian city of Venice has been struggling to manage an onslaught of tourists in the budget travel era. The stakes for the fragile lagoon city are high this week as a UNESCO committee decides whether to insert Venice on its list of endangered sites. (AP)

sites. A decision could come as early as Thursday.

A declassification would appear an indictment of the city's management of tourism, after it escaped a downgrade two years ago when the Rome government enacted a ban on cruise ships off St. Mark's Square and in the Giudecca canal.

"We are trying to avoid this," said Michele Zuin, Venice's top budget official. "But it is not as if we are slaves of UNESCO."

The decision comes just days after housing activists announced over the weekend that the number of tourist beds in Venice now outnumbers the number of residents, citing official city data. A ticker updating the number of tourist beds in a bookstore window aims to keep the alarming trend high in the minds of citizens, interplaying with another nearby that counts the dwindling number of citizens.

Temper flew at a city council meeting this week ahead of a vote that made Venice the first city in the world to charge visitors an entrance fee. Local television clips showed the mayor and a political opponent trading heated insults over the dais as a crowd of concerned citizens overflowed into the corridor. Mayor of Venice is **Luigi Brugnaro**.

Critics charge that the tax was rushed through to impress the UNESCO committee that the city is acting to curb mass tourism. (AP)

Sun dominate Lynx

Gray, Young lead Aces past Sky to open their WNBA title defense

LAS VEGAS, Sept 14, (AP): Chelsea Gray had 20 points and seven assists, Jackie Young added 18 points and the top-seeded Las Vegas Aces beat the Chicago Sky 87-59 on Wednesday night to begin a WNBA playoff series.

The defending champion Aces host Game 2 of the best-of-three series on Sunday. Las Vegas, which had the best record in the league at 34-6, has won all four matchups with Chicago this season.

Kelsey Plum scored 16 points and A'ja Wilson had 14 points, eight rebounds and four blocks for Las Vegas. Alysha Clark added 13 points.

The Aces defense held Chicago to 33% shooting.

Kahleah Copper scored 13 of her 15 points in the first half for Chicago. Courtney Williams had

nine points, 11 rebounds and six assists.

Wilson and Gray each scored 10 points in the opening 14 minutes to help the Aces build a 39-20 lead. Plum had a team-high 13 points in the first half and Young added 10 points as Las Vegas led 53-36.

Las Vegas didn't make a field goal in the opening five minutes of the second half, but Chicago couldn't take advantage.

Plum and Young each made a 3-pointer on back-to-back possessions for a 61-40 lead midway through the third quarter. Las Vegas extended it to 80-50 after an 8-0 run, including six straight points from Gray.

Sun 90, Lynx 60

In Uncasville, DeWanna Bon-

ner scored 17 points and grabbed a season-high 15 rebounds as the Connecticut Sun opened the WNBA playoffs with a 90-60 rout of the Minnesota Lynx.

Game 2 of the best-of-three series will be in Connecticut on Sunday.

BASKETBALL

Alyssa Thomas added 15 points and 10 assists for the Sun, who earned the No. 3 seed after going 27-13 in the regular season. Rebecca Allen also scored 15 points on five 3-pointers and Tiffany Hayes had 14 points and four 3-pointers.

The Sun made 16 of their 30 shots from behind the arc and held Min-

nesota to 35% shooting overall. Connecticut scored 30 points off 19 Lynx turnovers.

Connecticut led by 14 at halftime and took their first 20-point lead in the third quarter at 56-36 on a lay-up by Thomas. The Sun closed the game on a 17-3 run.

Kayla McBride had 16 points for the Lynx, who made the playoffs despite losing their first six games this season. Napheesa Collier added 14 for Minnesota, which also lost three of four regular-season meetings with Connecticut.

McBride scored 14 of her points in the first half and the Lynx used a 16-6 second-quarter run to take a 22-20 lead. But the Sun turned up the defensive pressure and went on a 21-3 run to take a 43-27 lead and control of the game.



Las Vegas Aces guard Chelsea Gray (12) and Chicago Sky guard Marina Mabrey (4) chase the ball during the first half of Game 1 in a first-round WNBA basketball playoff series in Las Vegas. Sky forward Alanna Smith is on the left. (AP)

Stokes 'hits' 182 for highest ODI score by England player to set up huge win



England's Ben Stokes plays a shot off the bowling of New Zealand's Glenn Phillips during the One Day International cricket match between England and New Zealand at The Oval cricket ground in London. (AP)

NBA takes steps to try to ensure its star players appear in more games

NEW YORK, Sept 14, (AP): The NBA took steps Wednesday to try to ensure that its star players appear in more games, particularly nationally televised matchups and the in-season tournament that is being added this year.

The league's board of governors approved a new player participation policy that will take effect for this upcoming season, replacing the player resting policy that was implemented prior to the 2017-18 season. The new rules focus primarily on star players - someone who has been an All-Star or on the All-NBA team in any of the prior three seasons. There are 50 players who fit into the star category.

"It's a shared view by everyone in the league, it's not just coming from the league office," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. "I think whether it's our teams, our players association, individual players, I think there's an acknowledgement across the league that we need to return to that principle that this is an 82-game league. ... I think there's a statement of principle that if you're a healthy player in this league, the expectation is that you're going to play."

Increased player participation is a top priority for Silver as the league negotiates a new media rights deal. The current deal ends in 2025.

Teams will have to manage their rosters to ensure only one star player is unavailable per game at the most.

"What we've tried to do as the league office is work through all the different issues recognizing the genuine concern from the fans and of course the media that's paying for the opportunity to broadcast those games," Silver said.

The league will have the ability to penalize teams that violate the policy by fining them \$100,000 for the first infraction and \$250,000 for the second. Each successive violation will increase by \$1 million.

The NBA also wants teams to maintain a balance between the number of

BASKETBALL

one-game absences a star player has at home and on the road, as well as refrain from any long-term shutdowns where a star player stops playing games.

The league will allow teams to submit written requests in advance for older players for back-to-back games. This is for a small pool of stars who are either 35 or older at the start of the season or have played in over 34,000 regular-season minutes or 1,000 games in their careers. LeBron James, Kevin Durant and Stephen Curry all fit in that category.

"The Players Association was very much a part of it," Silver said of discussions on the new policy. "We had extensive discussions with them and then with individual groups of players, particularly the veterans in the league, about how they thought we should be approaching it." Teams will be able to make other requests to have players miss games that include personal reasons, player's prior injury history and end-of-season flexibility.



Silver

We were thoroughly outplayed: NZ

LONDON, Sept 14, (AP): Ben Stokes is in record-breaking form heading into the Cricket World Cup.

In clubbing 182 off 124 balls, Stokes made the highest score by an England player in one-day internationals to set up the team's 181-run win over New Zealand in the third match of the series at The Oval.

Stokes beat the previous best mark by an England player - 180 by Jason Roy against Australia in Melbourne in 2018 - and posted the 24th highest individual score ever in the 50-over format.

How he compiled his innings - a measured start of 13 in 19 balls before he opened his shoulders to hit nine sixes and 15 fours - underlined why England was so keen to get Stokes out of ODI retirement ahead of the team's defense of the World Cup title in India starting next month.

"Coming back into the team after a while out, it's nice to come back and help the team," said Stokes, who



England's Sam Curran celebrates dismissing New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell during the One Day International cricket match between England and New Zealand at The Oval cricket ground in London. (AP)

Stokes, who has starred for the country in the big games in all formats, "but that was amazing."

Stokes' spot in England's team for the World Cup - as solely a batter - is guaranteed and so appears Malan's after he came up just short of his fifth ODI century, when he was caught behind off Boult.

Elsewhere, there might be a few issues developing in the batting lineup three weeks out from the tournament.

Roy was absent again after having another back spasm hours before the match. The opener missed the first two games with the same problem and could now be a doubt for the World Cup.

Harry Brook, who is not in the provisional squad and is pushing to replace Roy or another batter, dropped out of the team to accommodate the return of Malan and has only made 25 and 2 in this series.

Meanwhile, Joe Root was dismissed for 4 to add to scores of 6 and 0 this series.

Also worrying Wednesday was the late-innings meltdown after Stokes' dismissal when he was caught by Will Young at square leg off a full toss from pacer Ben Lister. From 348-5, England was all out 22 balls later for the addition of just 20 runs.

As for the Black Caps, they left out spinner Mitchell Santner after he jarred his knee fielding in the second ODI and were completely outplayed with bat and ball.

England and New Zealand meet in the first game of the World Cup on Oct. 5.

New Zealand keen to fix the basics in second Rugby World Cup match

WC to pay tribute to victims of disasters in Morocco, Libya

LILLE, France, Sept 14, (AP): Rugby fans and players will pay tribute to the victims of the natural disasters that have hit Libya and Morocco with a "moment of solidarity" ahead of a World Cup match between France and Uruguay on Thursday.

The international federation and French organizers said the moment will be observed before the national anthems are played at the Stade Pierre Mauroy in the northern French city of Villeneuve-d'Ascq close to Lille.

Authorities in Morocco have reported nearly 3,000 deaths and several thousand injuries after the earthquake that hit the country. In Libya, thousands of people have been killed because of devastating floods.

France is looking to follow up its win over the All Blacks with a second straight victory in Pool A. It is Uruguay's first match in the tournament.

New Zealand should rack up a pile of points against Namibia on Friday in the Rugby World Cup.

It has more important needs, though. New Zealand's set-piece has been unsteady in its last two matches - both historic defeats to France and South Africa - and coach Ian Foster wants his side to start fixing its foundations.

The All Blacks are traditionally quick to repair issues, so after the record-sized thrashing from South Africa last month, they were expected to make a statement against France in the

RUGBY

World Cup opening match in Paris last Friday. But the same issues persisted, and New Zealand lost a pool game for the first time in tournament history.

It has three more pool games - Namibia, Italy, Uruguay - to get its mojo back in time for an expected quarter-final against probably South Africa or Ireland.

"We still want to play (an attacking game) but we also know in those big games that you've got to get some basics right," Foster said.

The scrum against France conceded two penalties and a free kick. One throw-in was lost. From their kick-chase, the All Blacks retained only five of their 17 attacking kicks, and conceded two more penalties.

They gave away 12 penalties in all, and France goalkicked five of them. France conceded only four penalties.

"You've got to get your set-piece right," Foster said. "If you start to creak there or you misinterpret what the refs want, then that generates pressure. That was one of the big lessons in that France game."

The All Blacks have made 10

Hermoso and Bonmatí nominated

Fired Spain WC winning coach Vilda left off FIFA award list

GENEVA, Sept 14, (AP): Spain's Women's World Cup winning coach Jorge Vilda was left off the short-list of nominees for the annual FIFA awards announced Thursday, a week after he was fired following an international uproar in the wake of the final.

Vilda was not among five candidates for the Best Women's Coach Award for 2023, which did include England coach Sarina Wiegman, whose team lost the final to Spain. The candidates were picked by a FIFA-appointed expert panel that included United States great Mia Hamm.

Spain forward Jenni Hermoso is one of four Spain players who are among the 16 candidates for the women's player of the year award. Rubiales is being investigated for assault.

Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé

are competing with six Champions League winners from Manchester City and four others for the Best Men's Player Award.

Messi won last year's award after leading Argentina to the 2022 World Cup title.

Voting will be done by national team captains and coaches, selected

SOCCER

journalists plus fans through an online poll through Oct. 6. No date has been announced for the awards ceremony. Manchester City's Pep Guardiola is the likely favorite among five candidates for the men's coaching award.

Vilda stayed on as Spain coach through the Women's World Cup after Rubiales helped him weath-

er a rebellion one year ago by 15 players dissatisfied with his leadership. Only three of the players returned for the World Cup, including Aitana Bonmatí who is among the nominees for the player of the year award.

Mapi León, one of the Spain rebels who continued to refuse to play for Vilda, is nominated after helping Barcelona win the Women's Champions League and Spanish league title.

Vilda was among those who at first applauded Rubiales when he refused to resign despite facing widespread criticism over his behavior at the final.

Bonmatí already won the Golden Ball as best player at the World Cup. She also won the UEFA best player award two weeks ago, when she used her acceptance speech to show support for Hermoso.

changes but are also taking the game seriously by picking their best four available props and their two best locks: Sam Whitelock, who will tie Richie McCaw's New Zealand caps record of 148, and Brodie Retallick will extend their world record second-row partnership to 66 tests.

New Zealand is also under pressure to play hard for 80 minutes after fading against France.

Namibia won't be expected to last 80. Its conditioning faded against Italy

and gave up three tries in the last 10 minutes last weekend.

The pragmatic Namibians want to break New Zealand's rhythm, defend better, improve their discipline, and adapt to the speed and intensity. To them, any improvement will help toward their main goal - beating Uruguay at the end of the month and ending their 14-year World Cup losing run.

South Africa hooker Malcolm Marx was ruled out of the remainder of the



Japan's Amato Fakatava runs to score his team's first try during the Rugby World Cup Pool D match between Japan and Chile at Stadium de Toulouse, Toulouse, France. (AP)

Rugby World Cup on Thursday with what the team described as a long-term knee injury.

Marx sustained the injury in a training session on Wednesday when his knee was "caught in contact," the Springboks said. The team didn't immediately give any more details on the exact nature of the injury but suggested Marx was facing a long time on the sidelines.

"He's been working very hard to be in the best form possible for the tournament and it's tragic that his campaign has ended this way," coach Jacques Nienaber said.

It's a blow to the defending champions' chances of retaining their title in France, with the 29-year-old Marx one of the form players in the team. He was also part of the 2019 title-winning squad.

South Africa has just one other specialist hooker in the squad in Bongani Mbonambi, who was selected to captain a second-string Springboks team against Romania on Sunday.

However, South Africa also selected 36-year-old utility forward Deon Fourie in its squad, who can play hooker as well as his most recent position of flanker. He had already been picked to be the reserve hooker against Romania.

Nienaber said Thursday that loose forward Marco van Staden also had previous experience at No. 2 and might be called on to play there.

CRICKET

added that he apologized to Roy for taking his record.

England, which had Jonny Bairstow out first ball, was 13-2 after 16 balls when Stokes and Dawid Malan (96 off 95 balls) came together and put on a 199-run stand for the third wicket. A late collapse after the departure of Stokes ended with England all out for 368, with Trent Boult impressing with the figures of 5-51.

The New Zealanders were reduced to 70-5 after recalled seamer Chris Woakes (3-31) removed three of the top five in the batting order, and only Glenn Phillips (72 off 76 balls) went big before they were bowled out for 187.

"We were thoroughly outplayed," New Zealand captain Tom Latham said.

The tourists can only draw the series now, with England 2-1 up heading into the final match at Lord's on Friday. The teams shared their recent Twenty20 series 2-2.

Stokes, England's test captain, has made a seamless return to the ODI a year after retiring from the format because of what he described as an "unsustainable" schedule.

He made 52 in the first ODI and now has surpassed his previous best ODI knock of 102, making his fourth hundred in 93 innings in the format.

"He's played a few good ones," England captain Jos Buttler said of

Braves 'win' NL East title

Cardinals pip Orioles

PHILADELPHIA, Sept 14, (AP): The Atlanta Braves clinched their sixth straight NL East title, beating the Philadelphia Phillies 4-1 on Wednesday night behind Spencer Strider's major league-leading 17th win and Austin Riley's two-run homer.

Kirby Yates struck out Brandon Marsh to end the game and the players danced in a mob near the mound as Phillies fans booed them off the field. Yates earned his fifth save.

Atlanta took special satisfaction in clinching on the same Citizens Bank Park field where the Phillies eliminated them last October in the NL Division Series. The Phillies won that series 3-1 - just as Atlanta won this four-game set.

Cardinals 1, Orioles 0
In Baltimore, Richie Palacios homered, rookie Drew Rom and four relievers combined on a three-hitter and St. Louis beat Baltimore to trim the Orioles' lead in the AL East to two games.

Gunnar Henderson's two-out triple off Ryan Helsley in the ninth inning gave the Orioles a chance to pull even, but Aaron Hicks popped out.

BASEBALL

In a game dominated by strong pitching and tight defense, Palacios provided the lone run with a solo shot over the right-field scoreboard in the fourth inning off Kyle Gibson (14-9). It was his fourth homer of the season and third in two nights.

Rays 5, Twins 4
In Minneapolis, Randy Arozarena hit a tiebreaking home run with two outs in the ninth inning, helping Tampa Bay beat Minnesota heading into a weekend showdown with AL East leader Baltimore.

Arozarena sent a 448-foot drive to the third deck above left field on a 3-2 sweeper from Griffin Jax (6-10), who leads the staff in losses.

Padres 6, Dodgers 1
In Los Angeles, Blake Snell scattered one hit over six scoreless innings, Juan Soto and Luis Campusano homered and San Diego won its first series against their NL West rivals in two years.

Snell (14-9), a favorite for the NL Cy Young, allowed just a single to Mookie Betts leading off the game and struck out eight. The right-hander, who leads the majors with 93 walks, issued only one.

Betts got on base twice - stealing second each time - only to be left stranded. He was the Dodgers' only base runner through seven innings.

Marlins 2, Brewers 0
In Milwaukee, Braxton Garrett pitched six innings of four-hit ball and Miami beat NL Central-leading Milwaukee after dropping the first two games of the four-game series.

Miami (75-71) moved within one-half game of Cincinnati and Arizona for the final NL wild-card spot.

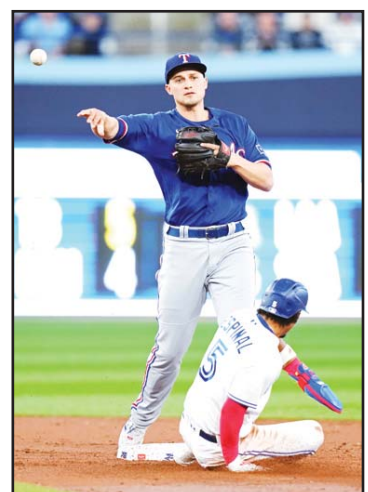
Garrett (9-6) struck out seven and walked two. The Marlins turned two double plays behind the 26-year-old left-hander, who didn't allow a runner past second base.

Astros 6, Athletics 2
In Houston, Hunter Brown and Houston held Oakland hitless until Ryan Noda's one-out single in the ninth inning, sending the Athletics to their first consecutive 100-loss seasons since the 1960s.

Brown pitched six innings, Rafael Montero, Héctor Neris and Bryan Abreu followed with perfect innings as AL West-leading Houston retired 11 straight batters.

Yordan Alvarez hit a three-run homer and Alex Bregman and Kyle Tucker had solo shots for the Astros, who maintained a one-game lead over second place Texas, with Seattle is another half-game back. Tucker's home run was the 100th of his big league career.

Rangers 10, Blue Jays 0
In Toronto, Jordan Montgomery and two relievers combined on a five-hitter, Nathaniel Lowe and Mitch Garver each hit three-run home runs



Texas Rangers shortstop Corey Seager throws to first after forcing out Toronto Blue Jays' Santiago Espinal (5) on a double play hit into by Alejandro Kirk during the second inning of a baseball game in Toronto. (AP)

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Sept. 14, (AP): Results and standings from MLB games on Wednesday.

Tampa Bay	5	Minnesota	4
Seattle	3	LA Angels	2
San Francisco	6	Cleveland 10 inn	5
St Louis	1	Baltimore	0
Texas	10	Toronto	0
Cincinnati	4	Detroit	3
Houston	6	Oakland	2
Kansas City	7	Chicago W. Sox	1
Colorado	7	Chicago Cubs	3
Atlanta	4	Philadelphia	1
Pittsburgh	7	Washington	6
NY Mets	7	Arizona	1
Miami	2	Milwaukee	0
San Diego	6	LA Dodgers	1

American League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Baltimore	91	54	.628	-
Tampa Bay	90	57	.612	2
Toronto	80	66	.548	11-1/2
Boston	73	72	.503	18
New York	73	72	.503	18

National League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
x-Atlanta	96	50	.658	-
Philadelphia	79	67	.541	17
Miami	75	71	.514	21
New York	67	78	.462	28-1/2
Washington	65	81	.445	31

and Texas shut out Toronto to move 1 1/2 games ahead of the slumping Blue Jays in the AL wild-card race.

Robbie Grossman added a two-run homer as the Rangers (81-64) won their fifth straight. It's the fourth time this season that Texas has won at least five in a row, matching Baltimore and Boston for most in the AL.

Mariners 3, Angels 2
In Seattle, Julio Rodriguez hit a run-scoring double and later scored the tiebreaking run after drawing an intentional walk, leading the playoff-contending Seattle over Los Angeles.

Luis Castillo (13-7) added six strong innings for the Mariners, who rebounded from Monday's extra-innings loss to take two of three from Los Angeles. He allowed two runs and three hits in a 104-pitch outing. He struck out eight and walked three.

Rockies 7, Cubs 3
In Denver, Kris Bryant went deep for the second straight game, one of four home runs by Colorado, and the Rockies earned their first series win in a month.

Nolan Jones and Elehuris Montero each hit a two-run homer in a four-run fifth, and Ryan McMahon homered and finished with three hits for the Rockies, who took two of three from the playoff-contending Cubs.

Mets 7, Diamondbacks 1
In New York, Arizona ace Zac Gallen was hit hard in a damaging loss for the Diamondbacks as Pete Alonso and Mark Vientos powered New York to victory.

Joey Lucchesi (3-0) carried a shut-out into the eighth inning. He was charged with an unearned run and five hits over seven-plus innings in his return from Triple-A Syracuse. He walked three and struck out two.

Giants 6, Guardians 5, 10 innings
In San Francisco, LaMonte Wade Jr. hit a game-winning sacrifice fly in the bottom of the 10th inning and San Francisco rallied past Cleveland in the rubber match of a three-game series.

Pirates 7, Nationals 6
In Pittsburgh, Bryan Reynolds hit his 21st homer and singled twice to help Pittsburgh beat Washington.

Josh Palacios and Liover Peguero added two hits and an RBI apiece for the Pirates, who jumped on Jackson Rutledge (0-1) early in his major league debut - then held on late.

Reds 4, Tigers 3
In Detroit, TJ Friedl hit a two-run triple in the second inning and seven relievers combined on five shutout innings as Cincinnati beat Detroit.

The Reds bullpen has pitched 11 scoreless innings as the Reds have won the first two games of the series. The Reds (76-71) are tied with Arizona for the final NL wild card.

Royals 7, White Sox 1
In Chicago, Michael Massey homered for the second straight game, Salvador Perez had three hits and two RBIs and Kansas City won its second straight against Chicago.

Four pitchers combined to limit Chicago to one run on five hits while striking out nine.

Rookie Steven Cruz opened with two scoreless, two-hit innings. Fellow rookie Alec Marsh (1-8) followed, allowing one run on three hits in 4 1/3 innings for his first major league victory. James McArthur got five outs, and Tucker Davidson pitched a 1-2-3 ninth.



The Atlanta Braves pose for a team photo after clinching their sixth consecutive NL East title by defeating the Philadelphia Phillies in a baseball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

Guardiola returns to Man City after recovering from back operation

Ten Hag hit by slew of problems in troubled start to season

MANCHESTER, England, Sept 14, (AP): Manchester United has been beset with problems on and off the field, and the Premier League season is only four games old.

After already losing twice, results and performances have been disappointing; particularly when manager Erik ten Hag was expected to mount more of a challenge to defending champion Manchester City in his second year in charge.

Off the field, it has been even more turbulent.

Amid a backlash from fans, United eventually decided to part ways with Mason Greenwood, six months after a criminal investigation of attempted rape was closed by prosecutors.

The club then had to contend with allegations of domestic abuse made against Brazil winger Antony, who has been given a leave of absence to address the claims.

Meanwhile, Jadon Sancho used social media to air his grievances by saying he had been made a "scapegoat" after being cut from United's squad for its last game before the international break, a 3-1 loss to Arsenal.

All of that comes at the same time as uncertainty continues to surround the ownership of the club, 10 months after it was put on the market.

Regarding the on-field matters,



Brighton and Hove Albion's Evan Ferguson celebrates scoring during the English Premier League soccer match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Newcastle United at the AMEX, Brighton and Hove, England. (AP)

Ten Hag is also dealing with a spate of injuries to key players including Mason Mount, Luke Shaw and Raphael Varane.

In that sense, a two-week pause for international soccer might have been a welcome relief to the Dutch coach. The visit of Brighton to Old Trafford on Saturday, however, represents the potential of another setback for a United team that has looked vulnerable so far this season.

After all, Brighton beat United home and away last season and inflicted a first defeat on Ten Hag in

his opening game as manager.

The south coast club seems serene in comparison to the troubles at United, but has had to handle its own upheaval over the past year after losing star players, its manager and a key executive. Still, the club has continued to over-perform, qualifying for this season's Europa League and unearthed more talent in highly-rated striker Evan Ferguson.

Brighton has become a benchmark of how to run a soccer club well, with an outstanding recruitment set up and savvy, imaginative

managerial hires.

In the last transfer window it brought in about \$204 million in sales, with midfielders Moises Caicedo and Alexis Mac Allister the big departures. Last season, it made sales worth about \$148 million, with Marc Cucurella, Yves Bissouma and Leandro Trossard making moves to Premier League rivals.

Manager Graham Potter was lured away by Chelsea, as well as recruitment chief Paul Winstanley. Yet Brighton secured its highest top flight position, finishing sixth under Potter's replacement, Roberto De Zerbi, advanced to the semi-finals of the FA Cup and qualified for Europe.

"We are always prepared for a head coach suddenly leaving for whatever reason," Brighton owner Tony Bloom said this week. "But until you bring one in and see how they settle, you really don't know how they are going to work out. We were extremely fortunate that we got someone of such high quality as Roberto to come in."

SOCCER

Brighton's preparation for upheaval appears to be the secret to its success. There is an expectation that the league's biggest clubs will try to lure its best talent, as was the case when Chelsea signed Caicedo and Mac Allister joined Liverpool.

"It was not unexpected that Alexis and Moises have left the club in the summer," Bloom said. "But we've been prepared for a number of months."

"I prefer to be in the situation where lots of clubs and lots of the media are talking about our players, which means we're doing something right as a club and obviously those players are performing really well on the pitch."

Ferguson, who scored a hat trick in Brighton's 3-1 win against Newcastle before the international break, has already been linked with a move to United.

It's a measure of Brighton's growing ambition that it has signed highly-rated Barcelona forward Ansu Fati on a season-long loan.

United is still trying to recover from a series of mistakes made in the transfer market since Alex Ferguson retired as manager in 2013. It has been 10 years since the storied club won its last league title, but there is encouragement.

Ten Hag is moving it in the right direction after finishing third last year, qualifying for the Champions League and winning the League Cup.

The former Ajax coach's impressive first year in charge gave rise to hope he could mount a credible title challenge this season.

That could yet materialize, but it has been far from the start he would have wanted.

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has returned to the club after recovering from his recent back operation.

Guardiola is resuming his duties after three weeks away, with City confirming his return on Wednesday.

Assistant coach Juanma Lillo has been in charge since the 52-year-old Guardiola traveled to Spain for the procedure.

In Guardiola's absence, City beat Sheffield United and Fulham to maintain the 100% start to its Premier League title defense. City's squad is beginning to gather following the international break.

Kimmich is 'questionable' for the game

Leverkusen visit Bayern with perfect Bundesliga starts on the line for both

BERLIN, Sept 14, (AP): Despite being so early in the season, Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen will return from the international break with a big game on the line.

The only two teams with perfect records in the Bundesliga will meet in Munich on Friday. Leverkusen has racked up 11 goals in three wins and leads Bayern on goal difference. The defending champions, meanwhile, had to fight back to earn a 2-1 win at Borussia Mönchengladbach in their last game.

Leverkusen has impressed with wins over Leipzig, Gladbach and Darmstadt and its strong start to the season has stoked hopes that Bayern finally has a rival that could potentially end its decade of dominance.

The Bavarian powerhouse has won every title since 2013.

Both teams are being led by new signings in attack - Bayern with England record scorer Harry Kane, and Leverkusen with Nigeria forward Victor Boniface. Together they have been involved in 10 goals for their teams so far.

Granit Xhaka is directing play for Leverkusen following his arrival from Arsenal. Xhaka's off-season signing was just one of several that seem to have paid off quickly for Leverkusen sporting director Simon Rolfes.

The club's loss to Leverkusen in March was Julian Nagelsmann's last as coach.

But Tuchel, who replaced the fired Nagelsmann, has yet to re-establish the team's unquestioned dominance amid boardroom turmoil. Bayern fired CEO Oliver Kahn and sporting director Hasan Salihamidžić almost immediately after winning the title.

For Leverkusen, Friday's trip to Munich is a chance to measure the team's progress against what remains the clear favorite for another league title.

"It's the first real test after three games," Leverkusen midfielder Robert Andrich told Kicker magazine. "Now we can see where we stand."

Tuchel said midfielder Joshua Kimmich is "questionable" for the game after he missed Germany's 2-1 friendly win over France on Tuesday with a slight injury.

Bayern forward Jamal Musiala could play after recovering from the back problem that forced him to miss both of Germany's games.

"He has been training well the last two days and also without any pain," Tuchel said of Musiala. "That means, if it stays that way today, he will definitely be in the squad, and then we'll see."

On Saturday, Borussia Dortmund, which blew its chance of winning the title on the final day of last season, faces a tough game at Freiburg.

Dortmund has been struggling since the season started and the team was whistled by its own supporters after a 2-2 draw against promoted Heidenheim in its last game. It was its second draw in two games after starting with a win over Cologne.

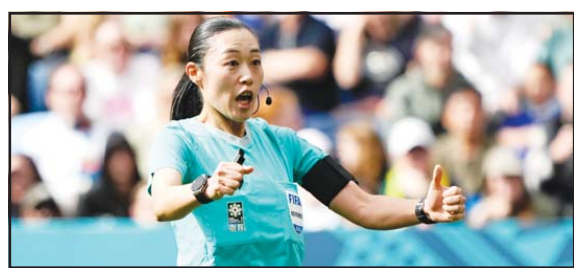
SOCCER

Leverkusen right back Jeremie Frimpong has also starred for the team coached by Xabi Alonso. Frimpong told The Associated Press the aim is to "keep the fire burning" this season.

Leverkusen lost 4-0 on its last visit to Munich but beat the de-



Leverkusen's Florian Wirtz, (left), and Bayern's Joshua Kimmich, (right), challenge for the ball during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Bayer Leverkusen and Bayern Munich in Leverkusen, Germany. (AP)



Referee Yoshimi Yamashita gives directions to players during the Women's World Cup round of 16 soccer match between the Netherlands and South Africa at the Sydney Football Stadium in Sydney, Australia. (AP)

Sports

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Members of Kuwait Taekwondo team with coaches.

KUNA photo

Kuwait 'clinch' 10 medals to close Taekwondo champ'ship

Santos fired as Poland coach

WARSAW, Poland, Sept 14, (AP) — Fernando Santos was fired Wednesday as Poland coach less than nine months after he was hired. The coach who led his native Portugal to the European Championship title in 2016 did not make it to the end of his first qualifying group stage with Poland.

Poland is fourth in its five-team European Championship qualifying group - behind Albania, the Czech Republic and Moldova - after losing three of its five games so far, despite three goals from Robert Lewandowski. Poland is likely to land in the Euro 2024 qualifying playoffs in March.

'Sport has reached new heights'

BEIRUT, Sept 14, (KUNA): Kuwait on Wednesday added 10 more medals, including a gold, to their tally as the Beirut Open Taekwondo championship came to an end.

Hailing the national side's performance during the contest, Kuwaiti delegation chief Faisal Al-Rashidi expressed his confidence that "tomorrow's cham-

TAEKWONDO



Osama Al-Mutairi displays his bronze medal.

pions" have been born, saying the sport has reached new heights at home.

Content with the "exemplary" results his athletes have achieved, head coach Waleed Al-Mershad said the future appears bright for

Kuwaiti Taekwondo athletes.

The two-day contest preceded the Asian Taekwondo championship, both of which featured the participation of Kuwaiti athletes.

World Cup ref Yamashita among 1st women match officials at Asian Cup

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Sept 14, (AP) — Referee Yoshimi Yamashita will return to Qatar to make more soccer history at the men's Asian Cup in January after she worked in the country last year at the men's World Cup.

Yamashita is among five female match officials, including two referees, picked Thursday by the Asian Football Confederation to work in Qatar. The tournament runs from Jan. 12 to Feb. 10.

It is the first time the AFC has appointed female match officials for its marquee men's event.

Katherine Jacewicz of Australia was also picked among the referees. The assistants selected are Makoto Bozono and Naomi Teshirogi of Japan, and Kim Kyoung Min of South Korea.

The 24-team Asian Cup will be played in most of the same stadiums as the men's World Cup, where Yamashita served as the fourth official for six group games. Yamashita was one of three female referees picked by FIFA for the men's World Cup. Stephanie Frappert of France made history working the Germany-Costa Rica game in the group stage.

In April, Yamashita led the first all-female team of match officials for a game in the J-League, Japan's top league.

The AFC said the video review system will be used for the entire tournament for the first time. At the 2019

tournament, video review started being used at the quarterfinal stage.

Marco Verratti left Paris Saint-Germain after 11 years at the club to join Al-Arabi in the Qatar Stars League on Wednesday. The 30-year-old Italy midfielder signed a three-year contract, Al-Arabi said. Financial terms were not released but French media estimated the transfer fee to be 45 million euros (\$48.3 million).

Verratti had joined PSG from Italian club Pescara in 2012 and had three years left on his contract. He was one of the first notable signings made by

SOCCER

PSG's ambitious Qatari-based owners after they took over in June 2011.

"I've been very proud to play for Paris Saint-Germain for over a decade, to rub shoulders with so many great players," Verratti said. "Paris, the club and its fans will always hold a very special place in my heart. I'll forever be a Parisian."

Verratti quickly established himself in a team that would include striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, forward Edinson Cavani, holding midfielder Thiago Motta and then Neymar and Kylian Mbappé after they both joined in the summer of 2017.

Inter-Milan derby could give winners early edge

MILAN, Sept 14, (AP) — The Milan derby has the air of a title match even at this early stage of the season.

Both Inter Milan and city rival AC Milan are off to perfect starts with three wins in three matches, with both playing an exciting style of soccer boosted by new signings that already look set to light up the Italian league.

Both also recorded confidence-boosting victories before the international break, with Milan winning 2-1 at Jose Mourinho's Roma and Inter thumping Fiorentina 4-0.

The derby della Madonnina has always had a special atmosphere. But the intensity has ramped up even more over the past few seasons with both teams fighting for the Serie A title, which Inter won in 2021 only to be dethroned by Milan the following season.

Inter has won five of the past six matches between the two, including both legs of their Champions League semifinal last season.

But after a glut of new arrivals in the offseason, who will emerge on top this campaign?

"Let's say that the derby is the perfect opportunity to find out," Christian Pulisic said in an interview with Italian newspaper Gazzetta dello Sport.

Pulisic has been one of Milan's standout signings and his two goals in the opening three matches already have the Rossoneri fans chanting the name of the United States international.

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"It was love at first sight for me too," Pulisic said. "Especially when I saw the fans. I've never seen a passion like this."

Pulisic, who turns 25 on Monday, came to Milan to revive his flagging club career after falling out of favor at Chelsea. He is among more than 10 new players Milan splashed cash on over the summer to try to wrestle the title back from Napoli.

"We are confident in the title race," he said. "We have strong players, really good players came in, there's a great mix of talent. We can win it, we just have to continue working hard and playing like this."

Milan's powerful attack faces perhaps its sternest test yet against an Inter defense that is the only team yet to concede in the Italian league.

"They have a strong squad and they're difficult to play against, as they showed in the Champions League final too," Pulisic said. "They know how to defend very well and at the same time they have the quality to score goals on the counterattack."

We are confident in the title race: Pulisic

After scoring for Spain, Yamal seeks 1st goal with Barca

BARCELONA, Spain, Sept 14, (AP) — Two years after Lionel Messi left Barcelona, the Spanish club hopes it has found its next star after the emergence of 16-year-old Lamine Yamal.

Yamal returns to Barcelona after an impressive debut for Spain over the past week, when the sleek forward became the youngest player to score in a European Championship qualifier. He also became the youngest player to score for Spain's national team.

"Lamine has this spark, that brilliance that very few players have," Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said about the teenager. "We must be prudent, and give him time and be patient. He can achieve many important things in soccer as long as he is humble and keeps his feet on the ground, which is very important at his age."

Yamal had already set another milestone when he became the youngest starter for Barcelona in a win over Cadiz. He has yet to score for his club, but came very close in a 4-3 win at Villarreal. In that game two weeks

ago, he assisted on a goal by Gavi, hit the woodwork, and helped produce a winner for Robert Lewandowski, who finished off the rebound after a shot by Yamal.

Not bad for a player who had yet to turn 3 years old when Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez helped Spain win the 2010 World Cup.

Yamal, who was born near Barcelona to a mother from Equatorial Guinea and a father from Morocco,

SOCCER

caught the eye of Xavi when he was playing for Barcelona's youth sides last season. His senior team debut in April made Yamal the youngest player to appear for Barcelona at 15 years, 9 months, 16 days.

His breakout this season has coincided with Barcelona loaning out Ansu Fati, who was considered the club's brightest young star before he sustained a serious leg injury. Yamal now looks set to be a regular starter in a young Barcelona lineup that also includes 19-year-olds Gavi and Alejandro Balde and 20-year-old Pedri González.



Yamal

Inter also brought in several players in the offseason, including Marcus Thuram, who joined on a free transfer after deciding not to renew his contract with Borussia Mönchengladbach.

Thuram scored his first goal for the

club against Fiorentina and also has three assists.

"It's easy to play with great players," Thuram said. "They help me a lot in training and that shows during the match. I'm expecting the derby to be a

very tense match but we do this job to play in those kind of matches."

His father Lilian played as a defender for Parma and Juventus and also won the World Cup with France in 1998.



Mexico midfielder Jordi Cortizo (22) moves the ball next to Uzbekistan midfielder Odiljon Khamrobov (9) during an international friendly soccer match in Atlanta. The game ended 3-3. (AP)