

Financial stability remains strong: CBO

Our Correspondent Muscat

Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has released its Financial Stability Report 2024, highlighting the country's robust financial system despite global challenges such as geopolitical tensions and tightened monetary policies.

The report noted that while global inflation and economic uncertainties persist, Oman's financial sector has shown resilience, supported by high oil prices and fiscal discipline.

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non-performing loans.

The Systemic Risk Survey conducted in January 2024 indicated strong confidence in

Oman's financial stability. Specialised banks and foreign commercial banks were viewed as the most robust, while insurance

companies and capital market institutions were seen as more vulnerable. Positive rating reviews from leading agencies

since late 2021 underscore international confidence in Oman's economic prospects.

The Composite Financial Stability Indicator showed sustained stability in 2023, driven by improvements in debt sustainability and banking stability. The banking sector continued to expand, maintaining robust earnings and strong capital positions despite two years of tightened monetary policy. Stress tests revealed that banks could withstand various shocks without breaching minimum capital requirements.

The 2023 Credit Conditions Survey indicated rising loan demand across sectors, driven by

economic growth and consumer confidence. However, credit availability for corporates tightened with expectations of continued stringent lending standards in 2024.

The CBO remains vigilant about rising cyber threats and climate change impacts. Policies are being crafted to mitigate cyber risks and incorporate climate risks into financial institutions' risk management frameworks.

In a foreword of the report, Tahir Salim Abdullah al Amri, Executive President of CBO, stated that in the near term, "our assessment indicates that the risks

to the outlook for financial stability in Oman remain low and the Omani banking system is well-poised to leverage its strength to support businesses and households in the event of any unforeseen shocks".

The CBO remains unwavering in its determination to safeguard financial stability, he added. "We will continue to meticulously take stock of global and domestic developments and adopt international best practices ensuring that our financial system remains resilient and fully capable of supporting the economic growth and prosperity of our nation."

Oman plans Mideast's first EV charging equipment factory

Our Correspondent Muscat

In a significant milestone in the sultanate's journey towards sustainable transportation and clean energy, an Omani company has signed an agreement with a Taiwanese firm to establish the first electric vehicle (EV) charger assembly line in the Middle East.

Oman's industrial gases and LPG company Muscat Gases recently signed an agreement with Zerova Technologies, a leading global manufacturer of EV charging equipment and supplies.

Zerova Technologies is pleased to announce a groundbreaking partnership with Muscat Gas aimed at accelerating the growth and development of EVs in Oman. This strategic col-



laboration underscores Muscat Gas's ambition to become the leading provider of EV chargers in the region," a press release stated.

Discussions between Zerova Technologies and Muscat Gas began six months ago. After a series of comprehensive negotiations and detailed analyses, both parties have now formally

entered into an agreement that promises to transform the EV infrastructure landscape in Oman.

"We are thrilled to partner with Muscat Gas in this transformative venture," said a senior official at Zerova Technologies. "Our combined expertise and shared vision for a sustainable future make this collaboration a natural fit. We look forward to supporting Muscat Gas in their mission to lead the EV charging market and contribute to the sultanate's green energy goals."

Known for its innovative approach and commitment to excellence, Muscat Gas is poised to make significant strides in the EV sector. This partnership will leverage Zerova Technologies'

advanced EV charging solutions and Muscat Gas's extensive local expertise to establish a robust and reliable network of EV chargers across Oman.

With manufacturing facilities strategically located in Taiwan, China, Vietnam, Japan, EMEA and the United States, Zerova Technologies designs and manufactures a complete line of EV charging solutions that power brands globally.

In another agreement focused on innovative energy solutions and carbon emission reduction, Muscat Gases signed a partnership agreement with US based O2 Fuel Petrochemical Solutions, a company specialising in fuel additives aimed at enhancing fuel quality and reducing environmental pollution.

Nepal requests Omani embassy in Kathmandu

Muscat - The first meeting of bilateral consultations between the foreign ministries of Oman and Nepal was held in Muscat on Wednesday.

H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa al Harthy, Undersecretary for Political Affairs in Foreign Ministry, and Sewa Lamsal, Foreign Secretary of Nepal, led the consultations. They reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction with the excellent state of relations existing between Oman and Nepal since 1977.

They agreed to promote cooperation encompassing all sectors, especially exchange of high-level visits, trade, investment, economic cooperation, agriculture, energy, tourism, employment, culture, education and direct air



connectivity.

The officials committed to enhance partnership in mutually agreed areas and to work together towards realising economic opportunities for mutual benefit, besides creating more opportunities to promote people-to-people engagement.

The Nepali Foreign Secretary

thanked the Government of Oman for providing employment to more than 21,000 of her countrymen.

She stressed the need to explore untapped potential in economic, cultural and educational spheres and proposed establishment of meaningful collaborative partnerships, including in the pri-

vate sector. She requested the Omani consultation delegation to consider establishing an embassy of Oman in Kathmandu to further consolidate the long-standing relations.

H E Harthy expressed willingness to promote cooperation between Oman and Nepal in all mutually agreed sectors and hoped to conclude pending memorandums of understanding. He underscored the potential of bilateral relations and praised the positive and hardworking nature of Nepali workers.

Earlier in the day, Sewa met H E Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Baowain, Minister of Labour. Discussions centred on cooperation in the field of labour and employment opportunities, among others.

THE LEGEND DOES IT AGAIN!



Cuban wrestler Mijain López made history on Tuesday by becoming the first athlete to win five consecutive gold medals in an individual event at the Olympics. The legendary wrestler won the Men's Greco-Roman 130kg Wrestling competition defeating Chile's Cuban-origin Yasmani Acosta 6-0, a former training partner and friend. López won gold at Beijing 2008, London 2012, Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. He left his shoes in the ring to signal his retirement

Racing driver Harthy partners with MHT to promote Oman

Muscat - Experience Oman, the marketing platform created by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), has announced a partnership with the sultanate's No 1 racing driver Ahmad al Harthy for a unique global promotion of Oman through motorsport.

Harthy, who competes successfully in the globe's two biggest and most competitive GT3 level endurance categories, the FIA World Endurance Championship LMGTC class and the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup, is thrilled to welcome the support of Experience Oman.

"With a goal to make Oman a



go-to destination for tourists from all over the world, Experience Oman's partnership with Harthy and his team Oman Racing marks a key opportunity to achieve this in one of the most glamorous, exciting and passionate sports on the planet," a press statement said.

Collaboration between Expe-

It's a perfect opportunity to further develop the promotion of Oman which we've always strived to do with Oman Racing through our motorsport programmes across the world

AHMAD AL HARTHY

rience Oman and Harthy will help MHT build and develop promotion of the sultanate.

Racing a dual campaign this year - in the FIA World Endurance Championship, where he drives as team-mate to global sporting icon Valentino Rossi in a BMW M4 LMGTC, and in the Fanatec GT World Challenge Eu-

rope powered by AWS Endurance Cup, where he races a sister BMW with the OQ by Oman Racing squad - Harthy's profile will provide major benefits for Experience Oman.

"I am incredibly honoured to be entering into this wonderful new partnership with Experience Oman; it's a perfect opportunity

to further develop the promotion of Oman which we've always strived to do with Oman Racing through our motorsport programmes across the world. This year is our biggest ever challenge on the racetrack at world level, and our most exciting one too," said Harthy.

On the occasion, H E Azan al Busaidi, Undersecretary in MHT, said, "Experience Oman is delighted to partner with Ahmad al Harthy and Oman Racing, helping us expand our promotion of Oman's incredible tourism offer as he competes in top-flight motorsports events across the globe.

"Harthy is an outstanding ambassador for Oman, shining the

spotlight on our country and its incredible potential as an arena for adventure sports. Through this unique partnership, I have no doubt we will inspire travellers with a thirst for an out-of-the-ordinary holiday to come and try some of our adrenalin fuelled attractions and test their limits across our breathtaking diversity of landscapes.

"I am sure, too, that armchair motorsports enthusiasts will be tempted to try other perhaps more relaxing aspects of our tourism offer and enjoy our year-round calendar of cultural, heritage and culinary events, our natural beauty, famed hospitality and, of course, first-class luxury."



Haniyeh killed by two Mossad-recruited Iranian revolutionary guards: Report



Nadeem al Balushi showcases Oman, his music and love for vintage cars

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Masirat al Jawamid: Where history meets adventure

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The village of Masirat al Jawamid, nestled in the mountains of Jabal Akhdar in Dakhliyah, is a captivating destination for adventure seekers and nature lovers. Situated at an altitude of 1,400m above sea level on the edge of Wadi Tanuf, the village is steeped in history and natural beauty.

Although now abandoned, Masirat al Jawamid remains a popular spot for tourists all year round, especially those interested in hiking, adventure sports and tranquil retreats amidst mountains. The village is accessible following a 5.5km hike from the village of Halilat and is surrounded by a wide variety of trees, many of which bear delicious summer fruits. Fossil formations of shells and ancient creatures can be found in the village's rocks,

adding to its unique charm. The village's history dates back over 400 years, showcasing the ingenuity of its inhabitants who carved agricultural terraces into the mountains to grow palm trees, grapes, pomegranates, lemons and seasonal vegetables. These terraces are irrigated by springs and dams through small canals that lead to a large water basin. Saeed bin Mohammed al Jamoudi, owner of a house in the village, said, "Masirat al Jawamid is famous for its historical and archaeological landmarks. Many stone houses carved into the mountain rocks with creative Omani architecture still stand. Although the inhabitants moved to Halilat, they use these houses to store agricultural produce and fertilisers, preserving their natural beauty amidst the towering mountains."

He added that many of the village's youth plan to develop it into a sustainable tourist destination.

RAFO inks two pacts enhancing cooperation with private sector

Muscat - Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) has signed two contracts with private sector companies to improve aviation services and strengthen joint co-operation. These agreements aim to bolster development partnership between RAFO and the private sector.

The first is a memorandum of understanding with Al Sharqiya Aviation focused on enhancing cooperation and improving aviation services for various beneficiaries. Brig Gen Zahran bin Nasser Ambusaidi, Chief of Staff at RAFO, and Capt Najib bin Abdul Fattah al Attar, Director General of Operations at Al Sharqiya Aviation, signed the memorandum.

Additionally, RAFO signed a logistical support contract with SalamAir. This agreement aims to enhance cooperation in various technical and logistical support areas. Brig Gen Ambusaidi and Adrian Hamilton-Manns, CEO of Salam Air, formalised the

agreement. The two agreements represent significant steps in fostering collaboration between the air force and private sector in Oman, aiming to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of aviation services.

BEYOND WORDS

VAISHALI HAMLAI

The columnist is a certified MBTI coach and a best-selling author, who delves into the complexities of the mind and soul to guide and interpret social behaviour

When you think of well-being, what comes first to your mind? Do you think of your physical or mental health? What makes you feel that your well-being is nurtured appropriately by your current life? What brings you happiness? Will temporary happiness adversely affect your well-being? Or does permanent security bring well-being? What makes one feel secure in their environment? Does physical well-being override mental well-being? Do they both weigh the same? Do we as human race give more importance to physical or mental well-being?

But the real question lies in what is well-being? Where do we find our well-being? It's not that one can go to a shop to buy well-being or download the app that will upload your well-being. It must be found. Do we still know how to find our inner joy? Do we know the road map to our own inner workings? Yes, we do! Do we do it for ourselves? Maybe we don't. We don't give ourselves as much credit to be able to find our balance, our Mojo. Aren't we too busy copying the Mojo mix of someone else? We try to recreate our happiness by using other formulae in life. That works in math, not in life. Can we achieve the same

joy by replicating someone else's fix to life? Our well-being is unique to us, and unfortunately cannot be copied from others. And then we wonder why we didn't get out that big chunk of happiness we expected on our platter.

My mojo or my well-being is the journey, the process. The joy I achieve out of the process of exploration and resonance feeds on my well-being. It brings me closer to my inner thoughts and feelings. But again, it's not always the same. It could be different at different

MOJO HUNTING

times. The progression of finding and exploring myself has been my well-being. Maybe COVID has given us much more time to muse and discover ourselves; we were first lost in the world of denial. It has brought us head on with what is important and what should be our priority. The real picture in its bare nakedness!

One thing is for sure; my well-being isn't connected to anyone else. My well-being is a string attached to the one and only me. Sure, there are many other strings connected to that main string, but the man string is to me. Well-being starts with yourself and only your personal well-being. It can disguise sometimes as the result is con-

cerning someone else, but it is ultimately your well-being, not someone else or something else's. What the old saying says; that a happy person can make others happy or unhappy, but to start off, an unhappy soul can only make another unhappy.

So, what really is well-being. My well-being could be physical or mental or physical and mental wellbeing. My well-being could also be leading a life of a hermit, or a life full of wealth. It's your Mojo and only you can find it! Its 'your' well-being. What I perceive as my well-being is my prerogative. But it's not as easy as it sounds. For knowing my Mojo, my well-being, I should understand what excites me. What makes me jump with joy, what puts me to the depth of sadness. What feeds my soul, what makes me trip? I feel it's a lifetime quest to search your well-being, because well-being changes, it's not constant. It's alive. It's party to change as frequent as morning and evening. But the key is understanding that Mojo. That feeling of satisfaction that one feels when the well-being is manifested into your being.

So, I continue this personal quest of understanding and finding my Mojo, my well-being.

And as it is, the journey is sweeter than the destination!



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Khareef boosts SMEs as tourists surge

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Dhofar Khareef 2024 is significantly benefitting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as record numbers of tourists flock to the governorate.

Hundreds of SMEs from across Oman are operating in 18 locations in Salalah and Taqah, including key sites for Dhofar Khareef 2024 events, such as Wadi Darbat, Itin Plain and Ray-sut Beach. These locations host various entertainment and tourism activities, besides specialised exhibitions being held at Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.



Nawafidh Park in Itin Plain, Salalah serves as the main site for tourism activities. Marketing initiatives, implemented by Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development

(ASMED) in partnership with Dhofar Municipality, at the site provide an integrated platform for entrepreneurs to showcase their products. These activities will run until mid-September.



Abdul Hakeem bin Amer al Hadari, Assistant Director of Department of SME Development in Dhofar, informed that the Nawafidh Park marketing initiative, now in its third edition, aims

to support projects of entrepreneurs from various governorates, promote their products and provide them with the opportunity to participate in the activities of Dhofar Khareef 2024.

The site hosts 38 SME projects, featuring mobile carts offering a variety of food and beverages, alongside entertainment activities and public facilities for visitors. Dhofar Municipality, in cooperation with ASMED, has equipped the site to facilitate business operations and boost local economic activities during the tourist season.

Sharing his experience, Mohammed bin Bakhit al Hilali, owner of a mobile food truck, said, "This is my first participation, providing a food cart selling hot drinks - tea in several flavours - and fresh milk served in a traditional way called muathib."

Café owner Abdullah bin

Ahmed al Balushi is participating in Nawafidh Park for the third season. "It supports youth projects in Itin Plain, which is crowded with visitors and tourists, providing an opportunity to market products of entrepreneurs." His mobile café serves coffee and various drinks, including an innovative coconut product and personalised branding on the fruit.

Enhancing their competitive capabilities, ASMED's initiatives and programmes aim to support and enable micro, small and medium enterprises. These efforts contribute to diversify income sources and increase SMEs' contribution to the gross domestic product.

Meet focuses on role of AI in HR development

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The 12th Gulf Conference on Human Resources Development, titled "Towards Effective Productivity," commenced on Wednesday in Salalah. The two-day event focuses on artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation as pivotal elements in the human resources (HR) sector.

Held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, the conference will focus on the balance between human intelligence and AI to enhance productivity. It will also discuss integrating sustainable quality systems into the corporate culture, the role of technology in institutional governance, and strategic planning to achieve Oman Vision 2040.

Addressing the meet, Naif bin Hamed Fadhel, Head of Dhofar Branch of Oman Chamber of



Commerce and Industry (OCCI), highlighted AI's role in improving strategic planning in institutions. "AI enhances productivity and supports innovation in both the public and private sectors by developing effective plans based on data analysis aiding in informed decision-making and devising strategy."

He further emphasised the fact that Oman Vision 2040 focuses on governance and institutional performance with the

objective of building an integrated digital economy leveraging technology, AI and innovation. "The vision seeks to improve productivity, create new job opportunities, and facilitate inter-institutional cooperation through interactive platforms and precise recommendations."

The conference has been organised by the Ministry of Labour, the Dhofar Branch of OCCI, OQ Group and AI Asayel Conferences Company.

It aims to prepare for future challenges by enhancing staff performance and raising productivity in line with Oman Vision 2040. Key topics include sustainability of quality systems, enabling young leaders to improve capabilities and leveraging digital transformation to create sustainable jobs.

The first day of the conference featured several sessions and working papers discussing AI's role in raising awareness, developing corporate governance and its applications in strategic planning. AI was also highlighted as a major driver for increasing productivity.

On the second day, it will review additional working papers focused on corporate culture's role in improving productivity, building sustainable quality systems, and enhancing efficiency of individuals and work systems to accelerate productivity.

Pacts worth RO2mn inked in Dakhliyah

Jabal Akhdar - Dakhliyah Governor's Office has signed several agreements to implement service and development projects worth exceeding RO2mn in the wilayat of Jabal Akhdar.

Sheikh Hilal bin Saeed al Hajri, Governor of Dakhliyah, signed the agreements with representatives of companies responsible for executing the projects on Tuesday.

The projects include building Jabal Akhdar Park in the village of

Saih Qatna, costing RO1,187,384. Spread over 20,000sqm, the park will feature a 1,000sqm children's play area, 5,000sqm of green spaces, walking paths, an area for electric games, prayer rooms and an open air multi-use theatre.

"A number of projects have been approved under the Governorates Development Programme to provide public services for local communities in the wilayats of the governorate,"

Sheikh Hajri stated

Several other development projects were recently announced in the governorate, including redevelopment of a public park in the Al Maamoura area of Bahla, the second phase of designing and constructing internal roads covering 10.3km in Izki, agreements to design and construct internal roads in Al Saih al Ahmar in Bidbid, and the Tawi al Nuf plan covering 6km in Samail.

Suhar Industrial City attracts RO43mn in investments in H1 2024

Suhar - Suhar Industrial City, affiliated to Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has attracted 22 projects during the first half of 2024, with total investment volume exceeding RO43mn and covering an area of over 239,000sqm.

Abdullah Ahmed al Mayasi, Director General of Suhar Industrial City, said that Madayn has completed 100% of infrastructure for the seventh phase of the city this year.

It has also completed assignment of a consultancy studies project for improvement works for Phases 1 to 6.

Mayasi added that in H1 2024, the city was able to attract four projects in the Plastics Industrial Complex (Ladain) with the investment volume reaching RO21mn.



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Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender No.	160/2024/MHT/HQ-33	Tender Name	Management and maintenance of the civil, mechanical and electrical installations of the Ministry's General Office building for the year (2025)
Fees of Tender Documents	25 O.R		
Tender Document Sales End Date	25/8/2024		
Last Date for Bid Submission	17/9/2024		
Grade	Excellent		
E-Tendering Portal	https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om		
Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om , against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.			
The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid .			
The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids			
The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).			
Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om		
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om or 24402200		
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Oman hosts GCC Petroleum Media Forum in Salalah

Our Correspondent
Salalah

The 5th GCC Petroleum Media Forum - an event that brings together senior officials and media persons from around the region under one roof to discuss various issues facing the oil and gas sector - began in Salalah in southern Oman's green landscape on Wednesday.

The two-day forum, hosted by Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals, in collaboration with the GCC Secretariat General, aims to bolster the media's role in addressing energy issues, particularly in the oil and gas sector of the region.

Under the patronage of H E Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the event has brought together media professionals, petroleum industry officials and experts from across the GCC countries.

The primary goal of the forum is to enhance communication and cooperation between media personnel and energy sector experts and address challenges related to oil and gas. The forum also seeks to update media pro-



professionals of the latest sector developments and confront rumors related to oil and gas issues.

In addition, the forum also provided a platform to discuss energy related issues, exchange experiences, and contribute to developing the skills of media professionals in this field.

In his opening address, H E Hadhrami highlighted the signif-

icance of the forum. "Hosting this event in Oman underscores the strong cooperation among GCC countries and aims to improve communication and understanding in the oil and gas sector. This forum aims to highlight the sector's importance and facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences between media and industry experts," he said.

"We are aware of the chal-

"The oil and gas sector plays a crucial role amidst global energy challenges and rapid developments. It is vital for enhancing energy security, sustainable development, and transitioning to renewable energy sources."

Dr Amer bin Nasser al Matani, CEO of the Oman LNG Development Foundation, addressed the need to reduce carbon emissions, protect the environment, and advance social responsibility programmness.

He highlighted Oman's initiatives in clean energy, including leveraging solar and wind resources and promoting green hydrogen projects. "Technological advancements in the energy sector are crucial for our progress," he added.

The first day of the forum featured discussion sessions and workshops focused on developing media professionals' skills in the energy field, and highlighting energy transformations and the importance of global energy security.

The forum also addressed issues such as environmental and social sustainability in the energy sector and media's role in tackling future challenges.



Aramco to take majority share in Petro Rabigh

Dhahran, Saudi Arabia - Aramco has signed a definitive agreement to acquire from Sumitomo Chemical an additional stake of approximately 22.5%, worth US\$702mn, in Rabigh Refining and Petrochemical Co (Petro Rabigh), the complex located on Saudi Arabia's west coast.

In a press statement issued on Wednesday, the company stated that Aramco and Tokyo-headquartered Sumitomo Chemical had been holding 37.5% of shares each in Petro Rabigh, which was listed on the Saudi Exchange in 2008.

Upon the completion of the transaction, in which a share is priced at SAR7, Aramco will become Petro Rabigh's largest shareholder with an equity stake of approximately 60%, while Sumitomo Chemical will retain an equity stake of 15%.

The transaction, which is subject to customary closing conditions, including regulatory approvals and other third-party approvals, is part of a package of financial measures intended to reinforce Petro Rabigh's financial position.

Under the terms of the share sale and purchase agreement, all proceeds received by Sumitomo Chemical from the sale will be injected into Petro Rabigh, through a mechanism to be agreed upon with Petro Rabigh.

Aramco will provide additional funds to Petro Rabigh, via a mechanism also to be agreed upon, matching the US\$702mn from Sumitomo Chemical, to improve Petro Rabigh's financial position and support its future strategy, bringing the aggregate injection amount to US\$1.4bn, according to the release.

Aramco and Sumitomo

Chemical have agreed to a phased waiver of shareholder loans of US\$750mn each, which will result in a US\$1.5bn direct reduction in Petro Rabigh's liabilities.

These measures are expected to improve Petro Rabigh's balance sheet and cash liquidity, as part of a remedial plan that Aramco and Sumitomo Chemical intend to explore with Petro Rabigh.

The agreement is also in line with Aramco's downstream expansion and Sumitomo Chemical's move away from

Aramco will provide additional funds to Petro Rabigh, via a mechanism also to be agreed upon, matching the \$702mn from Sumitomo Chemical, and bring the aggregate injection amount to \$1.4bn

commodity chemicals toward specialty chemicals.

"By increasing our shareholding, we expect to achieve even closer integration with Petro Rabigh and facilitate its turnaround strategy," said Hussain al Qahatani, Aramco Senior Vice President of Fuels

Seiji Takeuchi, Sumitomo Chemical Senior Managing Executive Officer said the transaction will significantly enhance Petro Rabigh's financial position.

SPA

Economic concentration in steel approved

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre, functioning under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), has recently approved an economic concentration request in the steel sector.

This was confirmed by Sultan bin Saif al Maawali, Head of the Economic Concentration Requests Control Department at the ministry.

The ministry, represented by the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre, regularly studies economic concentration processes across all



Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre enhances the efficiency of economic sector

SULTAN AL MAAWALI

economic sectors in Oman.

Consequently, the ministry undertakes subsequent oversight of these requests, which leads to enhanced economic efficiencies by fostering more competitive market conditions. This approval creates more efficient economic entities, benefiting the final consumer.

Maawali noted that some economic concentration requests might have adverse effects on competition, potentially creating barriers to market entry and expansion. This could restrict the ability of current or potential competitors to compete and hinder the flow of both local and foreign investments, especially new ones, which are crucial for in-

creasing production capacities.

The Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Law, issued by Royal Decree No 67/2014.

The goal is to regulate fair competition across all economic sectors to drive economic development, encourage and attract investments, and contribute to the growth of various economic sectors by attracting both national and foreign investments.

Additionally, the Department of Economic Concentration Requests Control conducts subsequent oversight of economic concentration requests in cases

of mergers or acquisitions.

"Oversight of economic concentration requests is one of the most important functions within our department," the head of the department explained.

"It requires an effective system that ensures prompt handling and examination of these requests, analysing them in a coordinated and high-quality manner to ensure legal certainty for the parties involved in the concentration and to guarantee the effectiveness of the decisions issued by the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre regarding these requests, as well as compliance by the concerned parties," Maawali added.

OPAZ launches new initiatives to develop services for investors in designated zones

Muscat - The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has launched new initiatives aimed at enhancing the services offered to investors in special economic zones, free zones, and industrial zones.

These initiatives are part of OPAZ's strategy to improve investor services and standardise the incentives and benefits available across these zones.

"We are continuously refining our strategies to attract investors and improve the business environment. This effort aligns with our commitment to the core ob-

jectives of attracting foreign investment and fostering a conducive environment for the growth of local investments in economic, free, and industrial zones. Our initiatives also support national efforts in this area," said Dr Said bin Khalifa al Quraini, General Director of Investment Development at OPAZ.

In a press statement, Quraini stated that the new initiatives include the introduction of additional electronic services designed to align with investors' expectations and needs.

"A key component of these

efforts is the Investor Services Project, recently undertaken by the Authority to support investment attraction and foster an environment conducive to growth."

The project aims to offer e-government and operational services to investors within the authority's jurisdiction, utilising state-of-the-art technologies and best international practices.

"The platform will further streamline project establishment, improve the efficiency and quality of services for investors, and enhance their competitiveness."

He also emphasised that the new initiatives involve more co-



ordination with the specialists at the Invest Oman Lounge. This collaboration aims to strengthen the lounge's role in attracting

strategic investments to the economic, free, and industrial zones overseen by the authority.

Additionally, OPAZ's plan in-

cludes promoting investment opportunities at various local and international events and making optimal use of specialized communication tools.

"This year, the Authority organized several workshops involving specialists in the investment development sector from both OPAZ and the zones. These workshops focused on providing additional facilities for investors, addressing their challenges, and facilitating the exchange of experiences. Additionally, the discussions included strategies to increase investment volumes in targeted economic sectors

through the enhancement of existing work mechanisms," he added.

Quraini explained that the new initiatives build on the successes of the projects implemented in 2023. These included activating automatic licenses, launching the comprehensive service provider, establishing the strategic project management platform, enhancing the electronic land selection platform, and streamlining various import and export procedures. Notably, the automatic licence initiative enabled investors to obtain project licenses in just 15 minutes.

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Residences at St Regis Al Mouj Muscat handed over to owners

Alfardan Group and Oman Sotheby's International Realty announced the successful handover of The Residences at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort to its owners on August 1, marking a significant milestone in the luxury real estate market in the Sultanate of Oman.

This landmark event marks the debut of the iconic St Regis branded residences in Oman, offering residents all the nuances that come with the 'Live Exquisite' lifestyle.

Commenting on the successful handover of The Residences, Mohamed Sleiman, CEO of Alfardan Properties and Alfardan Hospitality, stated: "The completion and handover of The St. Regis Residences represent significant achievements for us and demonstrate our commitment to delivering exceptional luxury living experiences. We are confident that these residences will attract discerning buyers seeking the pinnacle of elegance and comfort."

The Residences at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, a stunning architectural masterpiece nestled in the heart of Al



Mouj in Muscat, offer residents an unparalleled lifestyle experience. This exclusive development boasts a range of one-to four-bedroom apartments and townhouses, each meticulously designed to embody the epitome of luxury and sophistication.

Residents will have the privilege of enjoying a wide variety of services, including the legendary

St. Regis Butler Service, a 24-hour concierge, and award-winning dining outlets - Hakkasan, Roberto's, Coya, Novikov, and Em Sherif to name a few.

In addition, residents gain access to world-class amenities, featuring a private beach, multiple swimming pools, a state-of-the-art fitness center, and the renowned Guerlain Spa as well as an adjacent Golf Course.

Offering freehold ownership, The St Regis residences present an attractive investment opportunity for those seeking a premier address in Oman.

"We have witnessed strong demand from both local and international buyers who recognize the unique value offered by this prestigious development. This successful handover marks the beginning of an exciting jour-

ney for the new homeowners, who will now get to experience the unparalleled luxury and services that The St. Regis brand is renowned for," said Zhanna Yerkozhanova, General Manager of Oman Sotheby's International Realty, the exclusive sales agency, in her immediate reaction.

Ritovs, the proud new owners, shared their thoughts on the handover, saying "securing our residence at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort is a dream come true".

"The attention to detail, quality of construction, and luxurious amenities have exceeded our expectations. We are thrilled to be part of such an exclusive community, and we look forward to enjoying the exceptional lifestyle that comes with owning a St Regis branded residence."

The Residences at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort is more than just a residence; it is a lifestyle. Owners will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the vibrant Al Mouj area while enjoying the world-class amenities and services of the St Regis brand.



Sohar International takes part in Oman Jobs Fair as silver sponsors

Sohar International, recognised as Oman's best bank, proudly participated as the Silver Sponsor at the Oman Jobs Fair 2024 that took place recently at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center.

The event, held in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, underscored the Bank's commitment to the national objective of workforce empowerment.

The fair, themed 'Empowering and Enhancing Talent in Line with Oman Vision 2040', aimed to bridge the gap between fresh graduates, seasoned professionals, and key employers, fostering new career opportunities.

The Oman Jobs Fair 2024 was graced by H E Dr Mona Salem al Jardani, Undersecretary for Vocational Training in the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, as the Guest of Honour.

The event attracted senior executives from various public and private organisations.

Sohar International's dedicated booth garnered significant attention from fresh graduates, experienced professionals, and job seekers, drawn by the Bank's longstanding reputation for excellence.

Commenting on the bank's sponsorship, Mahira Saleh al Raisi, Chief Human Resources Officer at Sohar International, said, "Sohar International recognises the critical role that job fairs play in bridging the gap between job seekers and employers. These events foster career development and contribute to the national objective of workforce empowerment and economic growth."

At Sohar International, she said, "we believe that human capital is the foundation for achieving strategic goals".

Educating the workforce about job opportunities and ensuring the right people are matched with suitable roles is essential for holistic socio-economic progress, Mahira reminded, while explaining that "by supporting events like this and facilitating direct interactions between potential employees and employers, we help align talent with opportunities that best fit their skills and aspirations".

"This alignment not only enhances individual career satisfaction and productivity but also strengthens the overall efficiency, resilience, and competitiveness of the economy," she added.

In addition to being a networking platform, the Oman Jobs Fair played a pivotal role in addressing career development challenges and solutions, providing invaluable insights into job market trends. The fair brought together key enterprises to present recruitment opportunities and help job seekers to enhance essential skills through workshops and face-to-face interview preparations.

As such, the event reflected Sohar International's efforts of supporting the Youth to learn further about Sohar International's Values and at the same time to provide a Platform by showcasing its brand, culture and values, helping to attract candidates who are aligned with the bank's mission and values.

Sohar International is committed to supporting initiatives that nurture local talent, driving both personal and national growth. Through its continued investment in human capital, the bank aims to foster an environment where economic development and social progress go hand in hand.

BankDhofar sponsors 'Maze' event at Khareef Dhofar festival

BankDhofar, a leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its sponsorship of the 'Maze' event at Khareef Dhofar 2024, in line with the bank's commitment to build relationships with all members of the society by creating unique experiences that reflect the true spirit of our Omani culture and heritage.

This event also brings families together to enjoy and spend an unforgettable time, the bank stated.

Participants have 15 minutes of fun by navigating the maze, earning points for successful completion, increasing their chances of winning the daily or the grand prize of a new car. This activity not only adds a challenge to the participants but also promotes the creation of long-lasting family memories.

"The bank seeks to build a close relationship with its customers through its partnership with various activities that support both the government's and the bank's directions," Said bin Juma al Busaidi, Head of Market-



ing and Corporate Communications at BankDhofar, said.

Busaidi explained that the 'Maze' is one of the activities that creates an atmosphere of interaction and engagement between members of the family or a group of friends in an exceptional atmosphere amidst drizzle and fog, noting that the bank seeks through it to reach different categories in the family and provide them with the best banking solutions, as the bank keeps pace with various digital developments through investments,

adopting innovative strategies to improve customer experience, simplify operational processes, and provide a comprehensive set of digital services.

"Our customers can easily view their financial activities and manage their bank accounts while enjoying the wonderful atmosphere of Dhofar governorate through the mobile application, which has a wide range of features such as paying bills and instant money transfers," Busaidi added.

"Customers can also open

new accounts through the "Intilaqah" application without the need to visit a branch."

The bank also recently launched 'Dhofar Pay' and 'Samsung Pay', a service provided by the bank to customers that allows them to pay by swiping their Android-enabled mobile phones through the payment machine at various points of sale easily and securely without the need to use a direct debit card.

Customers can also visit BankDhofar and Dhofar Islamic bank's 126 branch network spread across the governorates of Oman, in addition to 360 ATMs and cash deposit machines that operate around the clock. The bank's strategy revolves around providing an exceptional and unique experience to customers through distinctive and exclusive services and offers, deepening existing relationships and retaining them.

There are specialised bank accounts for children, youth, women, minors, the wealthy and VIPs by providing financial and need based investment advice.

Oman's Leelangika dance troupe to perform in Tokyo dance festival

Jhumpa Chakraborty, the Director of Leelangika along with her young talented Kathak dancers Aditi Guru, Aviva Shibu, Maheeka Mahanta, Manvi Shanker, Rupsa Mandal are all excited and geared up to participate in the Tokyo International Dance Festival and Competition, to be held in the Japanese capital on August 11 and 12.

Organised by International Dance Council Tokyo section, this international dance competition transcends all genres to encourage dancers from all over the world to overcome the barriers of technique and language, and work together to realise the importance of World Peace - the philosophy of Unesco.

Jhumpa and her troupe Leelangika has performed in the India International Dance Festival in 2015, held in Bhubaneswar, the capital of the eastern Indian state of Odisha; and at the Bharath Nrityotsav in 2016, held in the southern Indian port-city of Vishakhapatnam.

Jhumpa has been awarded the title 'Natyasaaradhi' at the Bharath Nrityotsav. She is a member of the International



Council of Dance, which is a part of the Unesco.

She along with her students have performed at the 50th World Dance Congress, held in Athens, Greece, in 2017 and bagged several awards at the Dance World Cup 2018, held in Mont Tremblant, Canada.

In 2022 Jhumpa along with her students participated at the Barcelona Dance Awards, held at Barcelona, Spain and won the first prize in Ethnic Dance Category and also a special prize from the Catalunya Theatre Jury for the best choreography.

Leelangika students along with their Guru Jhumpa Chakraborty were privileged to perform at the 60th World Dance Congress held at the Dora Stratou Theatre, Athens, Greece in July 2023 and also at the India International Dance Festival held in Bengaluru, the capital of the southern Indian state of Karnataka.

Bangladesh: Interim leader Yunus appeals to stay calm

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Muhammad Yunus issued a statement to the people of Bangladesh on Wednesday as he prepared to become the country's temporary leader.

"I fervently appeal to everybody to stay calm. Please refrain from all kinds of violence," the Nobel laureate and microfinance pioneer said.

"Be calm and get ready to build the country. If we take the path of violence everything will be destroyed."

"I congratulate the brave students who took the lead in making our Second Victory Day possible, and to the people for giving your total support to them," he added.

Yunus, 84, is expected to return to the capital, Dhaka, from Europe on Thursday, having answered a call by student protesters to lead Bangladesh's interim government.

The military said he would be sworn in as interim leader on Thursday.

Bangladesh has been without leadership since its increasingly authoritarian Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India on Monday.

Hasina stepped down following weeks of violent protests against her rule, in particular, a quota system for government jobs that benefited the country's elites.

Yunus conviction overturned

A court in Bangladesh over-



Nobel laureate and microfinance pioneer Muhammad Yunus will be sworn in as interim leader on Thursday

I fervently appeal to everybody to stay calm. Please refrain from all kinds of violence. Be calm and get ready to build the country. If we take the path of violence everything will be destroyed

MUHAMMAD YUNUS

turned a conviction against Yunus on Wednesday, a day before he was set to take charge of the interim government.

He was convicted in January on a labour violation but was immediately granted bail. He subsequently left the country.

Three other colleagues of Yunus also saw their convictions overturned. All four had denied the charges.

The court's decision came off the back of accusations that other courts had been used to

rubber-stamp decisions by Prime Minister Hasina before her ouster.

Authorities had hit Yunus with more than 100 criminal cases, but only the labour charges were able to stick.

Hasina rivals speak out

Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, a longtime rival of Hasina who has also been accused of authoritarianism, spoke via video-link after being released from

house arrest. She urged the country to 'uphold democracy, not revenge politics'.

Tarique Rahman, acting president of the former opposition Bangladesh National Party who is living in exile in London, called on the country's temporary leaders to hold free elections as soon as possible.

He also called for people to 'resist taking the law into your own hands' after reports of mob violence.

DW

Laos: 14 Indian youth rescued from cyber-scam centres

Vientiane, Laos - The Indian Embassy in Laos rescued 14 Indian youth from cyber-scam centres in the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone (SEZ). It further said that officials are working tirelessly with Laos authorities to ensure their safe return back to India.

So far, 548 Indian youth have been rescued, according to the Indian Embassy in Laos.

In a post on X, the Indian Embassy in Laos stated: "Embassy rescues 14 more Indian youth from cyber-scam centres in Golden Triangle SEZ. Our officials work tirelessly and closely with Lao authorities to ensure their safe return back to India. 548 Indian youth rescued so far."

It also issued an advisory for Indian nationals regarding job offers in Laos. It asked Indian nationals not to put themselves at risk regarding any job offers which may be luring and forcing them into committing cyber scams.

In a statement, the Indian Embassy in Laos said: "Instances have come to our notice recently wherein Indian nationals are being lured for employment through Thailand in Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) also known as Laos."

"These fake jobs are for posts such as of 'Digital Sales and Marketing Executives' or 'Customer Support Service' by dubious companies involved in call-centre scams and cryp-

tocurrency fraud in Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in Laos. Agents in places such as Dubai, Bangkok, Singapore and India associated with these firms are recruiting Indian nationals by taking a simple interview and the typing test, and are offering high salaries, hotel bookings along with return air tickets and visa facilitation," it added.

The Indian Embassy in Laos said that victims are illegally taken across the border into Laos from Thailand and held captive to work in Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in Laos under 'harsh and restrictive conditions'.

"At times, they are taken hostages by criminal syndicates indulging in illegal activities and forced to work in strenuous conditions under constant physical and mental torture.

"In some other cases, Indian workers have been brought to Laos to work in other regions of Laos in low-cost jobs such as mining, wood factory, etc. In most cases, their handlers exploit them and endanger them in illegal work. A number of Indians have been rescued under very difficult conditions," it said. The Indian Embassy noted that Lao authorities do not issue work permits to Indian nationals traveling to Laos on visas on arrival in Thailand or Laos.

ANI

Nepal: Five killed in copter crash

Kathmandu, Nepal - A helicopter carrying five people crashed in a forest outside Nepal's capital Kathmandu, killing all five passengers on board, local police said.

Four of the crash's victims are Chinese nationals, with the pilot being a Nepali citizen, according to local police. The helicopter, an Eurocopter AS350, had taken off from Kathmandu international airport, heading towards the town of Syabrubesi.

According to statement by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, the helicopter had lost contact with the tower just three minutes after takeoff. Nepal-based company Air Dynasty owns the helicopter.

DW

Protecting minority religious places in Bangladesh

Dhaka, Bangladesh - In a touching show of solidarity amid turbulent times, Bangladesh's Muslim community has stepped up to protect the country's Hindu temples and churches.

Muslim leaders and student groups are actively guarding these places of worship across the country.

As political unrest persists, student movement leaders in the capital Dhaka have taken on the responsibility of protecting Hindu temples and churches.

Anjum Ahmed, a student protester at Dhaka University, told Anadolu that 'miscreants are systematically targeting various public and private institutions to discredit the students' movement'.

"Some of them have targeted houses and temples of minority Hindus as well, but we are on vigilance to make sure that doesn't happen," said Ahmed.

Even students from Islamic



seminaries (madrasahs) keep a vigilant eye on Hindu households and temples.

Tareque Ahmed, a seminary student, asked a few of his friends to form community secu-

riety groups because there were no police on the scene to keep an eye on Hindu households for their safety.

"We want to make sure that there is no communal violence,"

he said.

Over 13mn Hindus live in the South Asian country with a population of over 171mn. Besides, Buddhists and Christians are also living in the country.

Concerns over minorities' safety came amid political and social chaos in the country due to weeks of protests that led to the fall of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government on Monday.

Hasina on Monday fled to

hankar said.

According to the religiopolitical Jamaat-e-Islami party, volunteers of its student wing, Chhatra Shibir, are 'guarding the temples of the Hindu brothers' to ensure that 'no one can destroy communal harmony'.

Some of them have targeted houses and temples of minority Hindus as well, but we are on vigilance to make sure that doesn't happen

ANJUM AHMED

India, which lauded minority-safety measures taken by Bangladeshi organisations.

"We are also monitoring the situation with regard to the status of minorities," Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar told parliament on Tuesday.

"There are reports of initiatives by various groups and organisations to ensure their protection and well-being," Jaishankar said.

"They also discussed (with) the Hindu community people about their safety and security," the party said on X.

Jaishankar said: "We welcome that, but will naturally remain deeply concerned till law and order is visibly restored."

A transitional government led by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus has been named.

Anadolu Agency

India: Call to declare Wayanad landslides as national disaster

New Delhi, India - Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday speaking in Lok Sabha on the landslides in Kerala's Wayanad urged the Central government to declare it a 'national disaster', provide a comprehensive rehabilitation package for those affected and enhance the compensation given to people.

"I visited Wayanad with my sister some days back and saw firsthand the devastation, pain, and suffering resulting from this tragedy. More than 200 people are dead, and many are missing, but the eventual casualty count is expected to be over 400," Rahul Gandhi said.

The Congress leader com-



Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi speaks during the parliament session, in New Delhi on Wednesday (ANI)

mended the work of various departments who were working in the search and rescue efforts in

the area.

"It is nice to see that all communities came together and

helped," he said. "I urge the Union Government to provide a comprehensive rehabilitation

package, enhance the compensation that people are receiving and declare the Wayanad landslides a national disaster," Rahul Gandhi said in the lower house of Parliament.

Gandhi commended the work of the Union and Kerala state government along with personnel of the NDRF, SDRF, Army, Navy, Cost Guard, Fire Department and others and assistance from the neighbouring states including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Rescue operations by the Indian Air Force, Army and state authorities are underway in the landslide-affected Wayanad region of Kerala on Wednesday.

The rescue and relief opera-

tions in landslide-hit areas of Kerala's Wayanad entered their ninth consecutive day on Wednesday.

"Collaborative rescue operations conducted by the IAF, IA and state authorities are ongoing in the landslide-affected Wayanad region. A specialised team of soldiers, along with the Army, was airlifted by an IAF from Kalpetta to Chaliyar River," PRO Defence Kochi posted on X.

Wayanad's Chooralmala and Mundakkai were hit by massive landslides on July 30, claiming over 300 lives and creating widespread property damage.

Earlier on Wednesday, a special team consisting of six trained army personnel, four

SOGs (Special Operation Groups) of Kerala Police, two forest officers and a dog squad left for the Sunrise Valley of Soojippara waterfalls in Wayanad to carry out a search operation.

"In continuation of yesterday's operation, today we are also sending a team. We are including a cadaver dog and its handler. It is a 13-member team. We want to go some more downstream. Yesterday, four kilometres were covered. Today, we are trying to cover some more areas. We will maximum try to cover downstream," Taposh Basumatary, Superintendent of Police, SOG, told ANI.

ANI

US, China stage concurrent exercises in the South China Sea

Manila, The Philippines - The Philippines, the United States, Canada and Australia jointly staged naval and air exercises in the South China Sea on Wednesday, as Beijing launched its own patrols in the region.

The South China Sea is disputed between China and the Philippines, as well as Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei.

The conflict has reached a flashpoint between Beijing and Manila in recent months, with a number of collisions and confrontations occurring on the water.

A spokesperson for the Philippine navy said the exercises were not directed at any country but instead are 'a collective expression of support for a rules-based international order'.

Testing military interoperability

The US routinely conducts freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, nearly the entirety of which China claims as its own territory.

In a joint statement on Wednesday, the Philippine, US,



Canadian and Australian commanders said their two-day exercises 'underscore our shared dedication to upholding international law and the rules-based order'.

"The naval and air force units of participating nations will operate together, enhancing coop-

eration and interoperability between our armed forces," they added.

"The activity will be conducted in a manner that is consistent with international law and with due regard to the safety of navigation and the rights and interests of other states."

China tests joint strike capabilities

The Philippine and allied exercises coincided with a Chinese air and sea patrol near the Scarborough Shoal.

The shoal is located some 240km (150 miles) west of the Philippines' main island of Luzon and nearly 900km from the nearest major Chinese land mass of Hainan province.

The Chinese military's Southern Theatre Command said it had 'organised a joint combat patrol in the sea and air space' near the area.

It said the patrol tested 'the reconnaissance and early warning, rapid mobility, and joint strike capabilities of theatre troops'.

DW

'Our campaign is fight for future': Harris in first rally with running mate Tim Walz

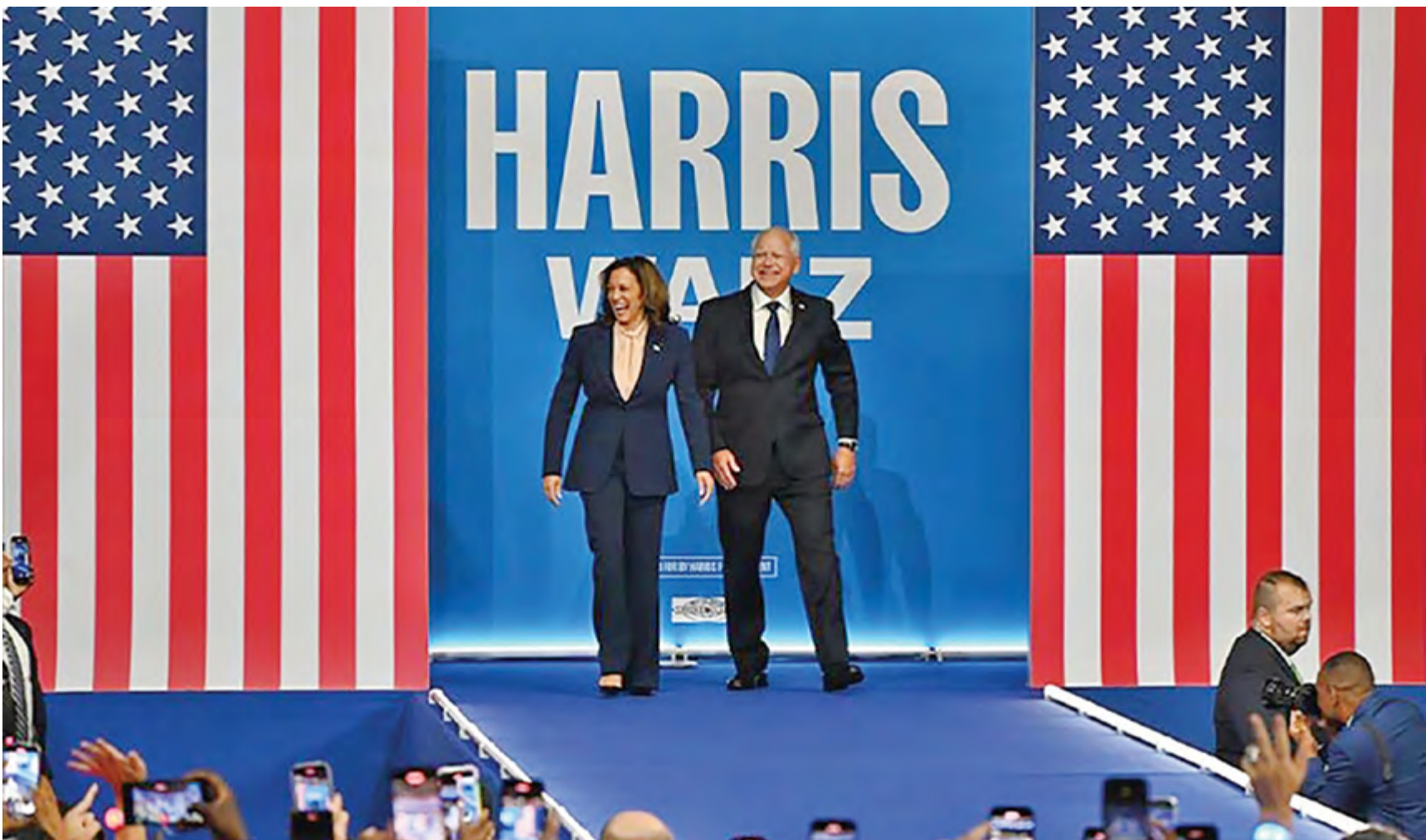
Kamala Harris stated that Tim Walz is the partner her campaign has been seeking

Washington, D.C., US - US Vice President Kamala Harris has described her campaign as 'not just a fight against former US President Donald Trump' but a 'fight for our future', CNN reported. She said that she is fighting for affordable housing, child care, and healthcare.

The Democratic Party's presidential candidate, Kamala Harris, made the remarks at her first rally with running mate Tim Walz.

"This campaign, our campaign, it's not just a fight against Donald Trump. Our campaign, this campaign, is a fight for the future," Harris said in a rally in Philadelphia.

She stated: "We fight for a future where we bring down prices that are still too high and lower the cost of living for American families so that they have the chance not just to get by but to get ahead." Her running mate, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz stood behind her and cheered for her.



The Democratic Party's presidential candidate Kamala Harris attending her first rally with running mate Tim Walz, in Philadelphia

Kamala Harris said she set out to 'find a partner who can help build this brighter future' and turned to introduce Walz to the audience. She stated that he is the partner her campaign has been seeking.

She called Democrats 'underdogs in the race' and noted that the party has the momentum.

Harris said: "Listen, we also need to level set."

Harris stated: "We are the underdogs in this race, but we have the momentum, and I know exactly what we are up against."

She said Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, who was one of the finalists to be her running mate, will help Democrats secure victory in a key state in November, CNN reported.

She called Shapiro 'a dear friend and an extraordinary leader'. Josh Shapiro made the remarks just before Harris and Tim Walz addressed the crowd at the rally. Walz said the Democratic Party will win Pennsylvania with Shapiro's help.

At the rally, Kamala Harris said: "I stand before you today to proudly announce I am now, officially, the Democratic nominee for president of the United States." She said: "And so, now we got some work to do. We need to move to the general election and win that."

Harris' remarks came as the Democratic Party announced that US Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz are officially the Democratic nominees for president and vice president. The Democratic National Committee announced that Harris won the presidential nomination.

She is the first woman of

"We both know the vast majority of people in our country have so much more in common than what separates them."

Harris said: "We are running a campaign on behalf of all Americans and when elected, we will govern on behalf of all Americans."

ANI

We fight for a future where we bring down prices that are still too high and lower the cost of living for American families so that they have the chance not just to get by but to get ahead

KAMALA HARRIS

Thailand: Court dissolves opposition Move Forward

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand's Constitutional Court on Wednesday ordered the dissolution of the Move Forward Party over its proposal to weaken a lese-majeste law that bans any criticism of the royal family, who are still held in extremely high regard by many across Thailand.

The party's leaders will also be banned from politics for ten years, including charismatic former frontman Pita Limjaroenrat. Move Forward had won a majority in legislative elections in 2023, but the party's anti-establishment message earned the ire of country's powerful conservatives, military, and network of wealthy families.

Move Forward had also promoted a reform of the armed forces and pledged to break up powerful monopolies. Some 140 former party members will be allowed to keep their seats in parliament and are expected



to form a new party. Judge Punya Udchachon said the nine-member panel had made the decision 'unanimously'.

Shaky political landscape

Despite their election victory last year, the party's powerful rivals were able to form a bloc that effectively prevented Move Forward from forming a government.

Move Forward had been accused of undermining Thailand's system of governance

with the king as head of state.

It had been ordered to drop the lese-majeste reform proposal in a separate ruling by the same court six months ago, and subsequently dropped the proposal from its platform.

However, the Election Commission still pressed for the party's dissolution. The verdict came amid other cracks in Thailand's political landscape.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, of the ruling populist Pheu Thai party, faces dismissal by the same court over appointing a cabinet minister who was once jailed over bribery charges.

Thavisin and the royalist establishment have been in an uneasy truce since he came to power last year.

The case against Thavisin was launched by 40 military-appointed senators. Thailand was ruled by a military junta from 2014 to 2019.

DW

Ethiopia reels under kidnappings for ransom

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - On the morning of July 2nd 2024, three public buses carrying over 160 school students were travelling to Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, for the summer holidays. Most of the students were from Debarq University in the Amhara region.

At approximately 10am, gunmen intercepted the buses near Garba Guracha town in Oromia province - around 155km north of Addis Ababa. They kidnapped the students and took them to a remote area where the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) is believed to operate.

Two days after the incident, the families of the kidnapped students were contacted for ransom.

"I received a call from my sister on Friday July 4th after not hearing from her for two days," a sister of one of the kidnapped students told DW.

"The phone call was interrupted, but the kidnappers later called me themselves, demanding 500,000 Ethiopian Birr (ETB) (US\$6,200) for her release," she added.



Another family from Hawassa received a ransom demand of 700,000 ETB. "We cannot afford to pay such a large amount," said the elder brother of a kidnapped student.

Confusing families

A week after the kidnapping, the Oromia regional state announced that 160 of the 167 kidnapped students had been released through a government operation coordinated with local residents.

"We managed to release 160 students and are still working to free the remaining seven," said regional spokesman Hailu

Adugna.

However, the families of the kidnapped students dispute this claim. "While listening to the government's statement, I was talking to my sister, who was still in the kidnappers' hands," said the sister of one of the students.

The elder brother from Hawassa also expressed skepticism: "We have seen nothing to support the government's statement. Where are the released students, including my sister?"

While students have frequently been targeted, workers from various industries, including cement and sugar factories, as well as civil servants and farm-

ers, have also been kidnapped and held for ransom.

Despite the best efforts of victims' families, kidnappings still often end in tragedy. In mid-June in the town of Kemise in the Amhara region, a driver in his 30s was kidnapped. His kidnappers initially demanded a ransom of 2mn ETB, which the man's father negotiated down to 500,000 ETB.

After paying the ransom, the father received no further contact. A few days later, his son's body was found a few kilometres from town.

"They killed my son after receiving the ransom," the father told DW.

The 2020 kidnapping of 17 students from Dembidollo University in Oromia marked the beginning of a troubling trend in Ethiopia. As the country recovers from the Tigray War, which ended in 2022, and grapples with an ongoing civil conflict, many Ethiopians are raising concerns over the ability of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's administration to address the security crisis.

DW

Haniyeh killed by 2 Mossad-recruited Iranian revolutionary guards: Report

Istanbul, Turkey - An explosive device was placed under the bed of assassinated Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh by two Iranians recruited by Israeli spy agency Mossad, according to a recent report.

The two Iranians involved were members of the Ansar al-Mahdi security unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the very group responsible for protecting the building and its guests, according to the *Jewish Chronicle*.

"The Iranians themselves realised this after the assassination, when the guards were seen on security camera footage on the day of the assassination moving stealthily in the hallway towards the room where Haniyeh planned to stay, opening the door with a key and entering the room," the report said.

"Three minutes later the guards (who were offered a six-figure sum each as well as immediate relocation to a northern European country) were captured on camera calmly leaving the room, going down the stairs towards the main entrance of the building, leaving and then getting into a black car."

The parking lot guard identified them and opened the gate without any inquiry and an hour later, they were extracted from Iran by the Mossad, it said.



Tensions are running high in the Middle East following the July 31 assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital Tehran

After deciding to proceed with Haniyeh's assassination, the Mossad was looking for an opportune moment to execute the plan.

And it was when Haniyeh received an invitation to Tehran for the inauguration of new Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. "The Mossad, with the assis-

tance of intelligence unit 8200 (the IDF unit responsible for clandestine operations), intercepted phone calls between the organisers of the inauguration and the invited guests."

"When Haniyeh confirmed his arrival, the Mossad began executing the plan; eliminate Haniyeh in the guest house

where he usually stayed during his visits to Tehran," it said.

Tensions are running high in the Middle East following the July 31 assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital Tehran and Israel's assassination of senior Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut.

The two Iranians involved were members of the Ansar al-Mahdi security unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the very group responsible for protecting the building and its guests, report said

Israel assassinated Shukr in an airstrike on a southern suburb of Beirut on July 30.

The escalation comes amid an ongoing Israeli offensive in Gaza which has killed nearly 40,000 Palestinians following Hamas's October 7 attack last year.

Meanwhile, a media report said on Wednesday that Israel had informed the US administration that it was behind the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh.

"While Israel has declined to comment on Haniyeh's killing, it informed US officials immediately afterward that it was responsible," the *Washington Post* reported, quoting three people familiar with the White House's thinking, but without mentioning their names.

"White House officials responded with surprise and outrage to Haniyeh's assassination, which they saw as a setback to their months-long quest to secure a ceasefire in Gaza," the newspaper said.

Anadolu Agency

Niger cuts diplomatic ties with Ukraine

Kigali, Rwanda - Niger announced on Tuesday an 'immediate' end to its diplomatic relations with Ukraine over Kyiv's alleged support of Malian 'terrorist groups'.

The move came days after Mali severed relations with Ukraine over the same accusation.

In a statement on national television, Niger's government spokesperson Colonel Amadou Abdramane said the matter would be referred to the UN Security Council as a case of 'Ukrainian aggression'.

The diplomatic impasse follows a defeat of the Malian Armed Forces during clashes with separatist rebels at the end of July.

Mali announced on Sunday that it was cutting off diplomatic relations with Ukraine following an admission of Ukrainian involvement in a recent deadly terrorist attack in the West African country.

The Malian army admitted on Monday that it had suffered a high death toll following clashes in Tinzaouaten in the north of the country.

Anadolu Agency

Hamas led by Yahya Sinwar to continue ceasefire talks

Istanbul, Turkey - Hamas will continue Gaza ceasefire negotiations after the selection of Yahya Sinwar as its new political chief, a group leader said on Wednesday.

"The negotiations were managed by the leadership, and Sinwar was not far from the negotiation process. He was part of its details," Osama Hamdan told Anadolu.

Hamas named Sinwar as its new political chief on Tuesday to succeed Ismail Haniyeh, who was assassinated in Tehran on July 31.

"The negotiation process will continue," Hamdan affirmed.

"The problem was not Hamas, but Israel, (Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu, and the US, which was not sincere in its mediation or in its attempt to push for a ceasefire."

For months, the US, Qatar and Egypt have been trying to reach an agreement between Israel and Hamas to ensure a prisoner exchange and ceasefire and allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza Strip. But mediation efforts have been stalled due to Netanyahu's



Hamas' new leader Yahya Sinwar

The negotiations were managed by the leadership, and Sinwar was not far from the process. He was part of it

OSAMA HAMDAN

refusal to meet Hamas's demands to stop the war.

'Flexible' Sinwar

Hamdan said Hamas will remain committed to working for a ceasefire, full Israeli withdrawal,

ending the siege, rebuilding the enclave and swapping prisoners. Sinwar 'will continue moving in this direction', he added.

"Sinwar has a high degree of flexibility in managing public affairs and preserves the rights of the Palestinian people."

Sinwar is on Israel's kill list, with Tel Aviv accusing him of masterminding the group's October 7 attack last year, which prompted Israel to launch a devastating military campaign in the Gaza Strip that has killed more than 39,600 people, according to local health authorities.

Hamas has been flexible in talks to reach a ceasefire deal in Gaza, Hamdan said.

"Netanyahu knows well that his attempts for evading will not work," he said. "If assassinating Haniyeh was one of Netanyahu's goals to change the course of the negotiations, he is delusional. The basis of the negotiations is fixed, and the men who negotiated under Haniyeh will continue to work with Sinwar."

Anadolu Agency

Gaza's children face diseases in camps

Deir Al-Balah, Palestine - Hundreds of Palestinian families who have fled Israeli attacks and sought refuge in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip are exposed to various diseases in tents lacking hygienic conditions.

Due to the extreme overcrowding of the camps, lack of hygiene, and the accumulation of wastewater in the area, Gazan children are visiting the health tent in the area with complaints of skin diseases, scabies, and rashes. Palestinian doctors working in the health tent are trying to treat the children with limited resources.

Speaking to Anadolu, Doctor Samih Ahmed, who works in the health tent, said that few volunteer health workers are providing services to the displaced Gazans who have taken refuge in the camp.

With the population in the camp increasing and the infrastructure in the area destroyed, wastewater has reached living areas, said Ahmed, warning that hygienic conditions cannot be ensured in the region where access to water is limited.

As a result, epidemic skin dis-



Palestinians who have sought refuge in Deir al-Balah are exposed to diseases in tents lacking hygienic conditions

eases such as scabies, chickenpox, and rashes have increased among Gazans, he said.

Ahmed underlined that the wastewater flowing from the streets and seeping into the tents has caused an increase in insects, leading to various diseases. With the arrival of the summer season, there have been many cases of skin burns, Ahmed noted.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army

killed 24 more Palestinians in attacks in the Gaza Strip, taking the overall death toll to 39,677 since last October 7, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Wednesday.

A ministry statement added that some 91,645 others have been injured in the assault.

"Israeli forces killed 24 people and injured 110 others in two 'massacres' against families in the last 24 hours," the ministry

also said. "Many people are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

Flouting a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire, Israel has faced international condemnation amid its continued brutal offensive on Gaza since an October 7, 2023 attack by the Palestinian group Hamas.

Anadolu Agency

UK braces for more far-right violence as riots planned in more than 30 locations

London, UK - UK officials and police are bracing for more violent events and disorder across the country on Wednesday, with riots being planned by far-right groups in more than 30 locations.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he expects many of the far-right rioters convicted after the recent widespread violent disorder to be sentenced by the end of the week, as police prepare for 30 more gatherings planned throughout the day, particularly at 8pm (1900GMT).

Starmer, who has repeatedly warned that those involved in violent disorder will face the full force of the law, also warned social media companies against acting irresponsibly by inciting violence and

spreading false information.

However, the violent disorder in towns and cities across England has continued as dozens of new gatherings are expected to take place in various cities, including the capital London.

Cities like Oxford, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Sheffield, and Stoke are among the locations already announced by far-right users on various social media platforms for Wednesday's gathering. Tamworth and Rotherham, where rioters targeted hotels housing asylum-seekers a few days ago, are also among the locations for Wednesday's riots.

Meanwhile, heads of mosques in West Midlands have warned against reactive violence as some communities plan to



hold counter-protests to protect streets from rioters.

A similar message was also issued by Haniya Adam of Green

Lane masjid in Birmingham in the light of messages and threats on social media.

"Our messaging was very

clear: allow the police to do their work. We don't use the language of violence. Our first response is to pray, to call on a higher being

and ask for protection for everyone in the country," he said on Tuesday. Qari Asim, the chair of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board also said they have issued guidance that 'none should take the law into their own hands'.

"It's the job of the police and other authorities to protect individuals and mosques, and we should support them rather than become a hindrance," said Asim.

Anas Altikriti, the CEO and founder of the Cordoba Foundation, also called for not to cause harm or damage.

"Let's not give them the pleasure. Let's make absolutely sure that we act according to our faith, according to our religion," he noted, referring to those who

'would love nothing more than to see Muslims act violently and break the law'. Altikriti also called on Muslims to report every single crime, incident, and attack, whether verbal or physical.

The UK has been in turmoil for days, with violent far-right rioters spewing racist and Islamophobic vitriol targeting Muslims, minority groups, and migrants.

The riots were fuelled by false claims spread online that the suspect arrested for the July 29 fatal stabbing of three children in Southport was a Muslim asylum seeker. The attacker has since been identified by authorities as Axel Rudakubana, a 17-year-old teenager born in Cardiff to Rwandan parents.

Anadolu Agency

KHELIF VOWS TO MAKE ARAB WORLD PROUD

Algerian boxer storms into final amid gender row

Paris, France - Imane Khelif, one of the two boxers at the heart of a gender dispute at the Paris Olympics, vowed on Tuesday to put the controversy behind her and make Algeria and the Arab world proud.

Khelif delivered a flawless performance against Thailand's Janjaem Suwannapheng to reach the final of the welterweight category in front of the massed Algerian fans at a repurposed Court Philippe Chatrier.

When Khelif was announced as the winner, the crowd, waving Algerian flags and scarves, let out an ear-splitting roar.

"I don't want to talk about the controversy," Khelif told reporters.

Khelif, a silver medallist at the 2022 world championships, and Taiwanese boxer Lin Yu-ting have been in the spotlight at the Paris Games as part of a storm that has dominated headlines and been the subject of much discussion on social media platforms.

Khelif and Lin were disqualified by the International Boxing Association from the 2023 World

Championships in New Delhi, with the body saying in a symbolic press conference on Monday that a sex chromosome test had ruled both of them ineligible.

Khelif and Lin are competing in the Olympics after the International Olympic Committee stripped the IBA of its status as the sport's governing body in 2023 and took control of organising the boxing in Paris. The IOC has rejected the results of the IBA-ordered tests as arbitrary and illegitimate, saying there was no reason to conduct them.

At these Games, the IOC is using boxing eligibility rules that were applied at the 2016 and 2021 Olympics which do not include gender testing.

It was all about boxing for Khelif on Tuesday.

"Everyone, the crowd was full of fans and all Algerians and the Arab world must be proud. I hope I can also make them proud in my final match," she said.

"All that matters is for me to be at my best level. I know I'm a great athlete, I just hope people enjoyed watching my match."



Algeria's Imane Khelif celebrates her victory against Thailand's Janjaem Suwannapheng

I don't want to talk about the controversy. All that matters is for me to be at my best level. I know I'm a great athlete, I just hope people enjoyed watching my match.

IMANE KHELIF

Algerian president Abdelmadjid Tebboune wrote on X: "Thank you, Imane, for making all Algerians happy, with this strong and wonderful qualification for the final. The most important thing has been achieved, and God willing will be crowned with Gold. All Algerians are with you."

In a cautious first round, both boxers attempted to keep their distance and engaged sparingly, but Khelif used her jab to better



Kellie Harrington celebrates on the podium after winning gold in the lightweight category

Harrington retires after winning gold

Paris, France - Kellie Harrington beat Yang Wenlu of China by split decision in the final of the lightweight category at the Paris Olympics to retain her crown on Tuesday and become the first Irish boxer to win back-to-back gold medals.

After clinching victory, Harrington said she was hanging up her gloves.

"The last hurrah, I'm done. I've always said I want to retire a champion, that's it," Harrington told Irish national broadcaster RTE.

The last hurrah, I'm done. I've always said I want to retire a champion, that's it

KELLIE HARRINGTON

"It just gives hope to all these young kids, all these teenagers (pointing at the crowd). It gives hope to the people of Ireland but this one was for me."

Brazil's Beatriz Ferreira and Taiwan's Wu Shih-yi claimed the two bronze medals on offer after losing their semi-final bouts against Harrington and Yang respectively.

Ex-world champion Harrington, who impressed in a convincing win over Tokyo silver medallist Beatriz Ferreira in the semi-finals, faced Yang in the light welterweight final at the 2016 World Championships in Kazakhstan.

Bahrain's Yavi dethrones Uganda's Chemutai in steeplechase

Paris, France - Bahrain's Winfred Yavi won the women's Olympic 3,000 metres steeplechase gold medal on Tuesday, dethroning Uganda's Peruth Chemutai who had to settle for silver.

Yavi jumped for joy after crossing the line, having overtaken Chemutai with an explosive final sprint that left the Ugandan who had led most of the race unable to respond.

Chemutai was in shock after Yavi, 24, stole the finish to add the Olympic title to last year's world championship, setting an Olympic record time of 8 minutes 52.76 seconds.

"This is like a dream come true. It's something special," Yavi told reporters. "It means a lot to



Bahrain's Winfred Yavi celebrates winning gold in 3,000 metres steeplechase

me and also to the country."

Kenyan 20-year-old Faith Cherotich, ranked third in the world, claimed bronze on her Olympic debut.

As the crowd in the Stade de France raised the noise, Chemutai and Yavi, 24, pulled ahead of the pack to begin their head-to-head battle over the last 100 metres. Ultimately, it was Yavi who had the greater stamina to cross the line first, arms outstretched to embrace victory.

Having switched allegiance from Kenya to Bahrain at the age of 15, she becomes the third competitor to win athletics gold for her country at the Olympics.

And she celebrated her achievement by dancing and

screaming her delight, with Chemutai and the rest of her opponents strewn, exhausted and dejected, across the track.

Kenya's Beatrice Chepkoech took an early lead and was shoulder-to-shoulder with Chemutai but faded in the last lap and ended sixth, while France's Alice Finot celebrated her fourth-place finish in a very fast race.

Chepkoech, 33, holds the world record of 8:44.32 but has never won an Olympic medal in the event.

In Tokyo, it was Chemutai who delivered the upset and took the gold from favourite Chepkoech to become the first Ugandan woman to win an Olympic medal in any sport.

Brazil stun world champions Spain to reach women's football final

Paris, France - Brazil reached the Olympic women's football final as they claimed a stunning 4-2 win over world champions Spain in Marseille on Tuesday and will face the United States for the gold medal.

Playing their sixth Olympic semi, Brazil capitalised on a number of Spanish defensive mistakes to reach Saturday's final at Parc des Princes where they will seek a maiden title against four-time champions U.S.

Brazil prevailed despite being without captain and all-time leading goalscorer Marta, who received a two-match ban after a red card in a 2-0 loss to Spain in their final group stage game.

They went ahead six minutes in after an attempted clearance by Spain keeper Cata Coll deflected off captain Irene Paredes into her own net.

The South Americans doubled their lead thanks to a Gabi Portillo effort following a superb pass from Yasmim in the final



Brazil's Kerolin (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Spain

seconds of the first half.

Captain Adriana made it 3-0 with a close-range header after a fast counter attack in the 72nd minute before an own goal from Duda Sampaio reduced the deficit five minutes from time.

Brazil substitute Kerolin stole possession and found the net to seal the rout early in stoppage time before Spain's Salma Paraluolo grabbed a consolation in the final minutes. "We went in with a plan and trusted (coach) Arthur

completely," Kerolin told Brazilian broadcaster Globo after Brazil reached their first Olympic final in 16 years.

"I can only congratulate the girls, who went in with great determination."

Star-studded US turn on the style to march into basketball semis

Paris, France - The French basketball team announced their arrival in Paris with a rip-roaring 82-73 win over Canada on Tuesday, riding a wave of national pride into the Olympic men's semifinals while the U.S. turned on the style to stay on track for a fifth straight gold.

The US rolled to a 122-87 win over Brazil without ever needing to go all out, but still served up just enough razzle dazzle to keep the capacity crowd buzzing in an effort that was as much about entertainment as sport.

The routine victory sets up an intriguing final four meeting with Serbia, who advanced with an overtime win over Australia.

The contest will be a rematch of the 2016 Rio Games gold medal final and will feature LeBron James, a four-time NBA most valuable player leading the U.S., against the reigning three-time MVP Nikola Jokic. France will face Germany in the other semifinal. "We understand we're

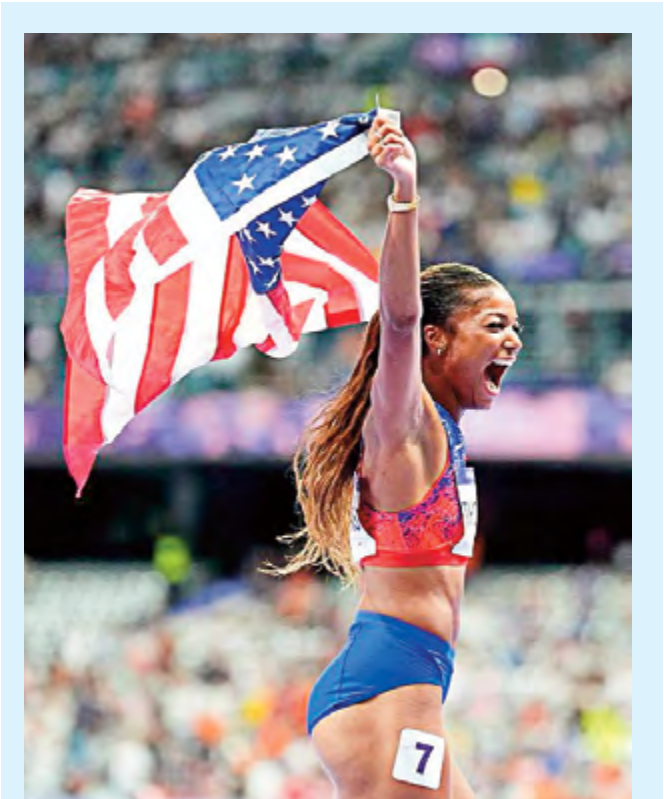


Anthony Davis of the US slam dunks against Brazil

seizing opportunity," said James. "The only game that's guaranteed is the next one now. That's the only thing we focus on and focus on Serbia," he said, adding: "The main goal is, and the only main goal is, for us to win gold.

That's all I care about."

The US and Brazil meeting generated none of the electricity that filled the Bercy Arena hours earlier, when France and Canada engaged in an entertaining up tempo, physical contest.



Gabby Thomas of the US was dominant in the 200 metres final

Thomas blazes to glory in 200m

Paris, France - American Gabby Thomas finally claimed the global title she has promised for so long when she delivered a dominant performance to take Olympic 200 metres gold on Tuesday, denying silver medalist Julien Alfred a sprint double.

Thomas, 27, took bronze in Tokyo and silver in last year's world championships, but gold had eluded one of the sport's most recognisable athletes and she had been vocal about her quest for an Olympic title.

In control of the final throughout the race, Thomas came home in 21.83 seconds and broke into a wide smile of disbelief, hands on her head, as she crossed the finish line.

"Honestly, I kind of blanked out for all of it, I can't even remember what I was doing, I just wanted to win," said Thomas.

"The only moment I remember was crossing the finish line and being in disbelief, that was it."

Alfred, who claimed Saint Lucia's first Olympic medal when she won the 100m on Saturday, was fastest out of the blocks but was a clear second in 22.08, with Brittiany Brown taking bronze for the U.S. in 20.20. "I'm tired. Long five days," Alfred told reporters. "I did feel ready for the 200m tonight. I feel good, no complaints at all. This means a lot. First Olympics, to go back with gold and silver, I can't ask for more than that."

Thomas arrived in Paris with the world's fastest time this season of 21.78 and made an emphatic statement in Monday's semi-finals when she pulled away from the field with ease over the final 50m to cross the line smiling in 21.86 seconds.

The race was a blur for Thomas who has a Harvard degree in neurobiology and Master's in public health from the University of Texas.

Canada's Camryn Rogers wins hammer throw title

Paris, France - Canada's Camryn Rogers won the Olympic women's hammer gold medal with a throw of 76.97 metres on her fifth attempt to unseat three-time champion Anita Wlodarczyk of Poland on Tuesday.

Annette Echikunwoke of the United States took a surprise silver with 75.48 and China's Zhao Jie won bronze (74.27).

Rogers, 25, added the Olympic crown to the world title she won last year in Budapest, her victory at Stade de France coming two days after teammate Ethan Katzberg claimed the men's gold.

Echikunwoke arrived in Paris with the world's ninth best throw this season but briefly led before Rogers coolly stepped into the circle to reclaim the lead in the fifth of six rounds.

The Canadian already had victory locked up before her final throw, but did not break into a smile until the 4kg hammer had left her hands. She then made a beeline for her mum Shari Rogers, a fixture at all her daughter's competitions.

Rogers was fifth on her Olympic debut in Tokyo, then took world silver in 2022 before victory last year in Budapest.

The 38-year-old Wlodarczyk, the world record holder with a staggering 82.98, was fourth on 74.23.



Camryn Rogers

COLE SHOCKERR!

American stuns favourites to win gold in 1,500m

Paris, France - American Cole Hocker delivered one of the all-time Olympic shocks when he won the 1,500 metres gold with a stunning finish to blast past British world champion Josh Kerr as defending champion Jakob Ingebrigtsen faded to fourth on Tuesday.

Once Kerr had eased past the Norwegian on the final straight it seemed the Briton was on course to add gold to the bronze he took in Tokyo, but he did not reckon with Hocker, who found a path up the inside to take one of the most unexpected golds in the history of the blue riband event.

His winning time of three minutes 27.65 was an Olympic record and a massive personal best by more than three seconds. Kerr posted a big national record 3:27.79 and Yared Nuguse took bronze in another huge pb of 3:27.80 as the U.S. had two men on the podium for the first time in 112 years.

"It might be an upset to a lot of people but if you've been following my season you'd know I'd be capable of it," Hocker told reporters.

The time catapulted Hocker to be the seventh-fastest man in history and Kerr the eighth, and even if the hi-tech shoes and track make historical time comparisons difficult, it was still a gripping race.

World athletics chief Sebastian Coe, still the only double 1,500m Olympic champion, said last week he was expecting a "race for the ages" and, if it was not the outcome he expected, he certainly got one, as seven of the first nine finalists set personal bests.

The race had been billed as a showdown between Ingebrigtsen and Kerr, who have been



Cole Hocker of the US wins 1,500 metres gold

It might be an upset to a lot of people but if you've been following my season you'd know I'd be capable of it

COLE HOCKER

swapping barbs for a year, and the Norwegian set a scorching pace from the start to lead coming into the last 200.

Briton Kerr, just as he did in

last year's world championships, surged past him as they hit the final straight, however, and looked set for victory, only for Hocker to find a way through.

"Everything had to go my way today but I knew if they gave me a chance I wasn't going to let it up," Hocker said.

Tentoglou soars to second straight long jump gold to emulate Lewis

Paris, France - Greece's Miltiadis Tentoglou leapt 8.48 metres to become only the second man after Carl Lewis to successfully defend the men's Olympic long jump title on Tuesday, delivering his country's first gold of the Paris Games.

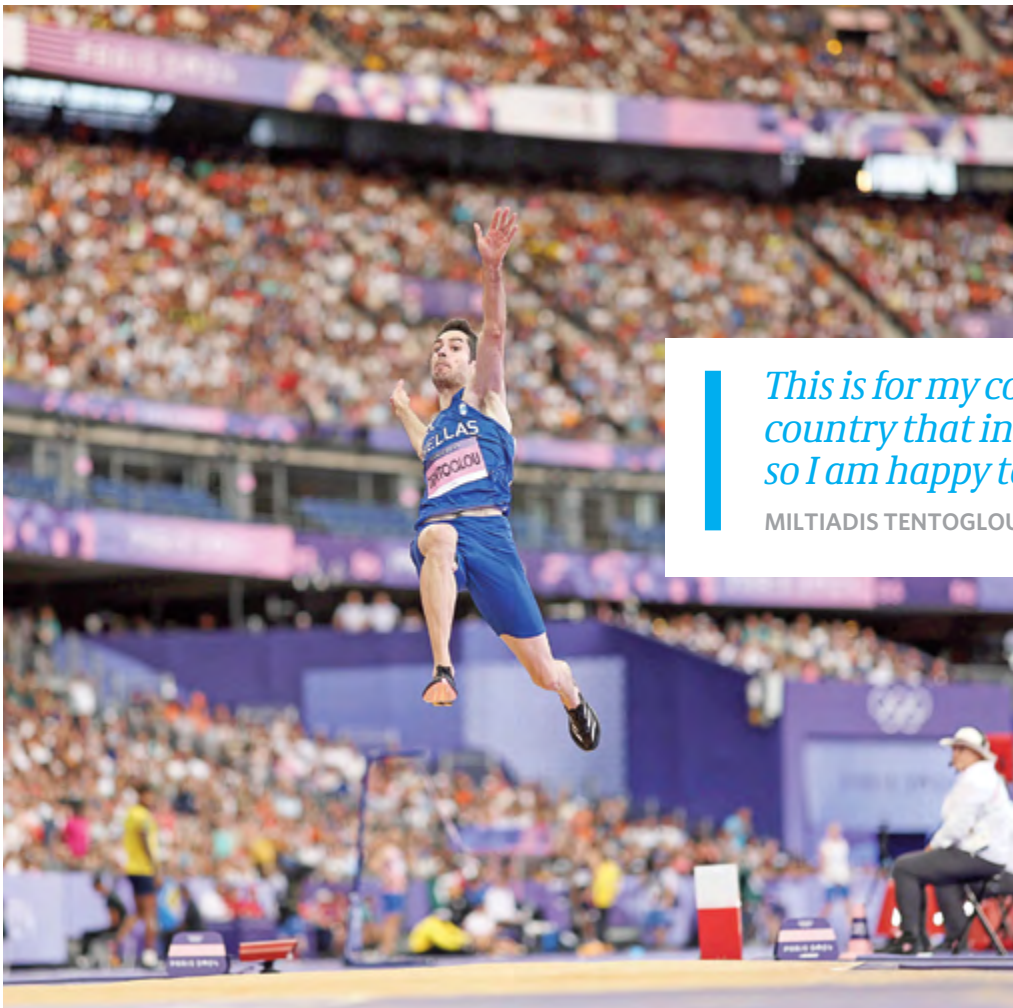
In a high-quality competition, Jamaican Wayne Pinnock took silver with 8.36 and Italy's Mattia Furlani (8.34) claimed bronze.

Poker-faced world champion Tentoglou clinched the title with his second attempt, cracking a smile only once he was able to embrace his team in the stands before wrapping himself in the Greece flag.

Tentoglou joined long jump royalty as only American Lewis, who won the title four times from 1984-1996, had retained the title.

"This is for my country. Greece is the country that invented the Olympics, so I am happy to do it for them," he told reporters.

The world champion arrived in Paris in extraordinary form, having won all but one of the 11 competitions he had contested this season, but was second in the



Greece's Miltiadis Tentoglou wins gold in long jump

This is for my country. Greece is the country that invented the Olympics, so I am happy to do it for them

MILTADIAS TENTOGLOU

standings behind Italy's Furlani after a first attempt of 8.27.

Tentoglou stared solemnly down the runway before his winning leap, an effort that earned gasps from the crowd even as he barely registered a reaction.

He chased a bit of insurance but could only reach 8.24 on the third attempt and clapped his

hands in frustration as he recorded 8.36 on the fourth.

It did not matter, however, as Furlani could not improve on his opening jump and Pinnock took silver with his second attempt after also finishing second at the World Championships in Budapest.

The Greek told reporters he had hoped to jump farther, calling it only a "decent" performance, even as his country's leaders leapt to congratulate him on social media.

Perez powers Spain to gold in mixed marathon race walk

Paris, France - Spain's two-times world champions Alvaro Martin and Maria Perez took the first ever gold medal in the mixed marathon race walk relay by nearly a minute at the Paris Games on Wednesday as the event made its Olympic debut.

The Spaniards, who each collected individual gold in both the 20km and 35km races at last year's worlds in Budapest, finished in two hours, 50 minutes and 31 seconds, with Perez pulling away over the final lap.

She made a case in the post-race press conference for keeping walking in the Olympics amid concern the discipline is losing popularity and could be phased out.

"We have already shown that race walking has to be in all the Olympic Games. We have shown that we can make people (celebrate) with us and suffer with us, and also to the public who are watching us from

home," she said. "I think race walking is really making its place in the Olympic program, it deserves the recognition."

The victory gives Spain three Olympic medals in Paris, with Perez winning silver in the women's 20km a week earlier and Alvaro taking bronze in the men's race.

"I started the year with a very long injury (a stress fracture), I almost had to undergo surgery and it's almost a miracle that I'm

here," Perez said.

"What I have learned from that few months is that little details are very important, and I also don't take anything for granted."

Brian Pintado and Glenda Morejon of Ecuador took silver in 2:51.22, while Australia's Rhidian Cowley and Jemima Montag claimed bronze (2:51:38).

Spain and Ecuador led virtually from the off, initially as part of a group of eight that had be-

come two by the final leg.

Just three seconds separated the two teams when Martin and Perez smacked hands for the exchange.

Perez found another gear over the final leg, and then a kilometre from the finish line, she ditched her sunglasses, smiled and high-fived flag-waving Spanish fans who created a thunderous celebration by banging on cardboard course dividers.



Spain's Alvaro Martin and Maria Perez celebrate their gold in mixed marathon race walk

INDIA HEAVY-HEARTED

Vinesh Phogat disqualified ahead of 50kg freestyle gold medal bout for being overweight

Paris, France - Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat was disqualified just hours before the women's 50kg freestyle final at the Paris Olympics on Wednesday after failing to make weight, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) said.

Phogat had been set to lock horns with Sarah Hildebrandt of the United States for the gold medal. The disqualification means she will not receive a medal of any colour.

"It is with regret that the Indian contingent shares news of the disqualification of Vinesh Phogat from the women's wrestling 50kg class," the IOA said in a statement.

"Despite the best efforts by the team through the night, she weighed in a few grams over 50kg this morning."

The news brought an outpouring of sympathy for her compatriots, with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing her as a "champion among champions" on social media platform X.

"You are India's pride and an inspiration for each and every Indian," Modi said. "Today's setback hurts. I wish words could express the sense of despair that I am experiencing. At the same time, I know that you epitomise resilience. It has always been your nature to take challenges head on."

"Come back stronger! We are all rooting for you."



Vinesh Phogat was in dazzling form in Paris, defeating reigning Olympic champion Yui Susaki of Japan, Yusneylis Guzman of Cuba and Oksana Livach of Ukraine en route to the final

It is with regret that the Indian contingent shares news of the disqualification of Vinesh Phogat from the women's wrestling 50kg class

INDIAN OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION

Earlier, Vinesh stormed into the final on the back of three stunning wins. She defeated reigning Pan American Games champion Yusneylis Guzman of Cuba in the semifinals after getting the better of former European champion Oksana Livach of Ukraine in the quarterfinals.

In her opening match, Vinesh Phogat pulled off a colossal upset against the reigning Olympic champion Yui Susaki of Japan. In the semifinal, both Vinesh and Yusneylis started defensively but the Indian wrestler was awarded a point for Yusneylis's passivity and ended the first period with a slender one-point lead.

Both wrestlers continued to be on guard at the start of the second period. However, Vinesh, in danger of conceding a point on passivity, executed two takedowns to lead 5-0. Vinesh held on to her lead in the final 30 seconds to make it the final.

Shooter Abhinav Bindra, who won India's first individual Olympic gold in 2008, said he was "completely gutted".

"Sometimes you don't need a gold medal to be a true champion to people," he added.

Phogat was one of several Indian wrestlers who came out in protest last year seeking criminal action against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, then chief of the Wrestling Federation of India and a part of Modi's BJP.

India lose to Germany in hockey semifinals

Paris, France - India suffered heartbreak in hockey as they as they went down 2-3 to Germany in the semifinal in Paris on Tuesday and missed a golden chance to enter the final at the Olympics for the first time in 44 years.

Had the Harmanpreet Singh-led side come out winners on Tuesday, they would have played their first final since the 1980 Games.

But all is not lost yet. India, bronze winners in Tokyo in the last edition of the Games, still have a chance of returning from Paris with a hockey medal as they will now cross sticks with Spain in the bronze-medal play-off.

On Tuesday, India started



India were all over Germany in the first quarter, but they failed to make the most of it

brightly and dominated the early exchanges, before the Germans regrouped themselves.

Captain Harmanpreet Singh got his team off to an ideal start, scoring a penalty corner in the first period to give India the lead.

But India's defence would falter in the second period, giving away two penalty corners and one penalty stroke. Gonzalo Peillat converted the first penalty corner for Germany while Christopher Ruehr made the most of the penalty stroke.

Down 2-1 to Germany, India mounted a ferocious counterattack on the German goal. After numerous failed attempts, Sukhjeet Singh found the back of the net to tie the game on a

penalty corner.

It was all to play for in the fourth period, as both teams pressed the attack. Germany's Marco Miltkau ultimately found the back of the net in the 54th minute, scoring the decisive goal and sending his team on to the gold-medal final.

"It just feels incredible," said Miltkau. "Amazing crowd, but from both sides, India and Germany."

"First time playing Olympics, it's [an] amazing feeling. And now, even better playing the final."

Germany will be up against the Netherlands, who blanked Spain 4-0 in the other semifinal, in the gold-medal contest.



Gianmarco Tamberi attends to Mutaz Barshim who cramped up on the runway

Reigning high jump champions Tamberi and Barshim struggle but advance to final

Paris, France - Joint-defending champions Gianmarco Tamberi and Mutaz Barshim advanced to the high jump final but it was anything but smooth as the Italian had three fails at 2.27 metres and his Qatari rival cleared it only after lengthy treatment for an injury.

Three years ago the pair agreed to share gold after asking permission from the event officials in one of the most memorable moments of the Tokyo Olympics. Three days ago, however, Tamberi posted a picture of himself in a hospital bed after being taken ill with what he thought might be a kidney stone.

It delayed his travel plans to France, and, coming after a troublesome thigh injury, it was hardly the ideal build up after things had been looking good in June when he won the European title in Rome with a 2.37 jump that remains the highest anyone has managed this year.

Tamberi, sporting full

length tights, opened with 2.20m but appeared unhappy with his narrow clearance. He made it over 2.24 but, stripped down to his shorts, failed three times at 2.27. That left him in sixth place but still comfortably among the 12 advancing.

In the past my qualification has never been good and then in the final something's changed, so that's the hope

GIANMARCO TAMBERI

"I can say good after the last few days, but I feel tired," he said when asked about his morning's work. "In the approach I can't accelerate as I usually do. But in the past my qualification has never been good and then in the final something's changed, so that's the hope."

Dutch women beat Argentina to enter sixth straight final

Paris, France - Reigning Olympic champions the Netherlands defeated Argentina 3-0 in the women's hockey semi-finals at the Paris Olympics on Wednesday as midfielder Luna Fokke came off the bench to grab a goal and an assist in the second quarter.

The Dutch have reached every final since missing out at the 2000 Sydney Games, when they finished with a second consecutive bronze, and have a chance to make history for the country if both women's and men's teams win gold for the hockey powerhouse.

Belgium and China meet in the second semi later on Wednesday to determine who faces the world's top-ranked

side, who will be playing in their sixth consecutive final, after both lost to the Dutch in the pool stage having conceded three goals.

Argentina, who were beaten by the Netherlands in the final in Tokyo, now have a chance to win their third bronze.

Netherlands opened the scoring in the 21st minute when midfielder Fokke slipped behind the defense on a deep pass and dribbled into the circle to beat keeper Cristina Consentino stick-side, lofting the ball into the right corner of the net.

The Dutch scored a second five minutes later when Laura Nunnink redirected a hard cross from Fokke past Consentino's outstretched leg.



Netherlands players celebrate a goal against Argentina

Saudi Arabia's Abutaleb ousts Israeli Semberg in women's taekwondo

Paris, France - Israel's taekwondo Olympic medallist Abishag Semberg was reduced to tears after being beaten by Saudi Arabia's Dunya Abutaleb in the round of 16 of the women's flyweight in Paris on Wednesday.

Abutaleb, the first Saudi woman to earn direct qualification to the Olympics, won 2-6 5-4 10-0 and capped her victory by landing two kicks to the head and two kicks to the body in the third round.

Both fighters were loudly supported by their compatriots in the stands with some groups side by side.

"I'm very disappointed in myself, this is not where I'm supposed to be, I'm supposed to be much better," a tearful Semberg, speaking in Hebrew, told reporters.

"I've been working my arse off all my life for this."

Semberg said the defeat was all the more upsetting because of



Saudi Arabia's Dunya Abutaleb (R) fights Israel's Abishag Semberg

how important she felt it was to represent Israel on sport's biggest stage.

"This is one of the most important things for me in my life," the 22-year-old said. "This is very disappointing for me, this is not my level. My family are here as well, very disappointing."

Semberg also lost in the round of 16 in Tokyo three years ago but fought her way through the repechage by winning a bronze, the first medal won by Israel in the martial art.

Asked if she could do the same in Paris, she said: "No, I don't think so."



14

CHEESY BITES

Ricotta or Cottage cheese, which one do you prefer?



15

IN TOWN

NHI workshop and presentation held to mark HR Day



16

ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town, in Hollywood and Bollywood

The yearning...

Omani Singer Nadeem al Balushi’s latest Hindi single – *Talab Hai (The yearning)* – is an attempt to showcase Oman alongside his twin obsession with music and vintage cars while his yearning for a big break continues unabated

‘Talab Hai’



Hubert Vaz

A childhood dream to make it big some day in Bollywood is yet on the cards...but Nadeem al Balushi, Oman’s boy next door with a penchant for grasping and singing Bollywood hits with his own little twist, hasn’t quite given up on this ambition.

Having immersed himself wholly in melodies that get the hoi polloi in India in its sway over the past two decades, Nadeem has been a self-taught singer cum musician with a never-say-die attitude. He has not only been chasing his passion with great determination but has also been entertaining audiences for over the past 20 years on his musical journey.

About his latest Hindi single - *Talab Hai* - Nadeem, said, “I used two of my cars - a 1970 Dodge Charger and a 2020 Chevy Silverado - which gave the video good visuals. This video has been well received and I plan to use my own cars in future videos, too, rather than hiring expensive cars to create a false impression.”

“I can sing in five different languages, so the challenge is to be perfect in all these languages so as to give the best output to listeners,” he says acknowledging the fact that there are great differences in Omani music and Hindi Bollywood numbers and that he is comfortable with both.

“India has a wide range of music but I like the Bollywood style, especially the old songs. Omani music, on the other hand, is totally different. But I have my future plan to release a song combining these two - Arabic (Omani music) and Hindi songs. That will be a big challenge for me,” says Nadeem, adding that he has his own unique style which he intends to keep intact in all his endeavours.

“I don’t copy any singers or try to sound like them while singing their popular songs. I stay abreast on what current audiences relish and I follow new trends that are well received to stay relevant. I don’t want my music to sound outdated,” he asserts.

Admitting that the 2001 romantic

comedy *Dil Chahta hai* changed his idea of music altogether, Nadeem pointed out that the songs of this movie seem timeless since the composers had a futuristic imagination. He also disclosed that the ‘King of Pop’ Michael Jackson has also had a lasting impact on him and that he wished that he could sing like the unparalleled MJ.

Nadeem recalls that his most memorable performance, till date, was in Dubai, in front of a 6000-strong audience, as he manned the show all alone on stage with his triple keyboards, fuelling a huge dancing crowd with his renditions.

The Omani singer believes that two things are very important for most men - a dream car and good music while driving it. Nadeem, however, is fond of old-fashioned cars and the 1970 Dodge Charger that he possesses is his ‘dream car’. He bought it in 2016 and it is the only one of its kind in Oman. His first sport car, however, was a Pontiac Trans Am which he procured in 1994.

Earlier, Nadeem did have a collection of five vintage cars of which he sold two - a 1972 Volvo and a 1978 Cadillac since he wasn’t able to secure shaded space to park them around his residence.

The three cars he now owns include the 1970 Dodge Charger RT which he bought after getting impressed on seeing it in the movie ‘Fast and Furious 6’ in 2013 and the way Vin Diesel drove it. The other two are the 1991 Pontiac Trans Am convertible (which he purchased while in USA for his brother’s graduation) and a Replica KITT - the Knight Rider. The talking car KITT had drove Nadeem crazy while he’d watched the Knight Rider Series in the late 80s and saw David

Hasselhoff chasing criminals in this self-driving car.

Asked how he takes care of his favourite cars, Nadeem said, “My vintage cars are like babies and I take good care of them. The most challenging part of owing a vintage car is about getting them ‘passed’ annually (by the traffic authorities). Also, Oman’s hot climate is not conducive for the health of these cars while ordering parts from the USA is a costly affair because of exorbitant shipping tariffs, he said.

Nadeem, who works for an international bank, says he saved up to realise his dream of buying the cars he has, and the idea of using them in his music videos, was an extension of his passion. He enjoys driving them to favourite locations in Oman, wearing his favourite leather jackets, of which he has a huge collection.

A cherished desire for Nadeem was to get an opportunity to sing with the late Indian singer KK who died a couple of years ago amidst a performance on stage.

While he still strives to realise his ultimate dream of making heads turn in Bollywood, Nadeem tells aspiring youngsters in Oman to keep listening to good music and trying to get a unique style. “People like to listen to something new, but remember to respect all musicians and use your music to spread peace and brotherhood.”



I like the Bollywood style, especially the old songs. Omani music, on the other hand, is totally different. But I have a future plan to release a song combining these two. That will be a big challenge for me



cook-up

Cottage cheese and Ricotta cheese are both fresh, relatively mild cheeses but they're not the same thing

Cottage cheese VS Ricotta cheese



Paneer Tikka

- Ingredients**
- 250g paneer (cottage cheese)
 - 1tsp ginger garlic paste
 - 2tbsp thick curds
 - 1tsp red chilli powder
 - ¼tsp turmeric powder
 - ½ tsp garam masala
 - Juice of half a lemon
 - ½ tsp salt – or less to taste
 - ¼ tsp carom seeds
 - 1-2tsp oil for drizzling

Method

Cut the cottage cheese into large cubes. Prepare the marinade by blending all the ingredients, except oil. Take the cubes in a large bowl, add the marinade and toss to coat well. Place in the refrigerator for at least half an hour.

Before cooking, drizzle 1-2tsp oil on the marinated cubes and toss lightly. Now place the marinated cubes on a hot plate, oven grill or air-fryer and cook for 5-6 minutes until the corners get charred. Remove and serve hot with green chutney/ketchup.

Cottage cheese (also known as Paneer) and Ricotta cheese are both fresh cheeses, but there are technical differences. Though they're both made from cow's milk, ricotta cheese is produced with leftover whey from the cheese-making process, whereas cottage

cheese uses the curds. Ricotta cheese means 'recooked' and it is obtained by reheating the leftover whey.

Ricotta and cottage cheese also differ in texture and flavor - Ricotta is smoother and slightly sweeter, while cottage cheese has a lumpier consistency and tangier flavour

Ricotta Polpette

- Ingredients**
- 21 cup ricotta cheese
 - ½ cup grated pecorino cheese
 - 1 mid-sized egg
 - 1 cup bread crumbs
 - Fresh marinara sauce with basil
 - Handful of fresh parsley
 - Sea salt and fresh ground pepper - to taste
 - Dash of fresh nutmeg

Method

Drain the ricotta over a fine-mesh sieve for at least an hour. Once drained, put the ricotta in a large bowl with the finely grated pecorino cheese, egg, breadcrumbs, and chopped

parsley. Then season with salt, pepper and a pinch of nutmeg. Start working the ingredients together with your hands and season more to taste.

If the mix is too smooth to form balls the size of a walnut, add more breadcrumbs. If it is too firm, add some of the marinara sauce. Form the balls, adding them to the pan of marinara sauce. Let them cook in the simmering sauce for about 10 minutes (don't forget to sway the pan from time to time to ensure the polpette get cooked through evenly).

When ready to serve, add some fresh basil to the sauce and dish it up. Serve by itself or with pasta.

FUN WITH FOOD

Complete the Papa Johns slogan:

'Better ingredients.....'

A. Better cheese B. Better pasta
C. Better pizza D. Better lasagna

Email your answers to hubert.vaz@apexmedia.co.om with your name and telephone number. The first two correct answers will win Food Vouchers from Papa Johns.

WINNERS - AUGUST 1

1. Mubeen Ahmed 2. Meenakshi Vinai K
(Answer: 50% off on all items)

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take a break

IN TOWN

H R Day



National Institute of Hospitality conducted a workshop and presentation on Human Resources on August 5



Photos: V.K. Shafeer

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

The allegiances you have to someone special are loosening right now, but it's not a sign that your relationship is dissolving, so don't worry. What's beginning to happen is that you are learning to give people room (and they're learning to give it to you). Things are freeing up a bit, and your responsibilities are centred more around being true to yourself and not around making others happy.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You can dramatically increase your odds of winning by putting more energy into planning. So try to dedicate some time today toward putting your priorities in order. Think about what is best for your community responsibilities. Do what you need to do for the common good. You have some important things left unfinished, and it is about time you started to finish them up.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Although this day won't be jam-packed with excitement, you won't be bored for a minute. Your regular routine holds quite a few interesting (if subtle) nuances today. You may feel inspired to try a new creative experience to stimulate your day and get some juices flowing. A trip to a museum, art supply store, or even an artsy coffee shop would be a great way to while away a free hour.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Wrap up your heart and give it to someone today. You may need a dose of courage, or you may just need a kick in the pants. You've been inside your own head for a while now, and it's enabled you to get back in touch with your emotions and what you need. But today it's time to give more attention to the things and the people that really matter in your life. Reach out and share.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Upcoming events that you fear might be dangerous actually hold no real threat to you or your current lifestyle, so don't spend any time worrying today. Your fears right now are not warranted at all. You may be in a more cautious phase of life, but that is only because certain things are starting to mean a lot more to you. The stakes may be high but you are capable of rising to the occasion.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Fame and notoriety are two things you should embrace, not shy away from. So if you are thrust into the limelight against your wishes today, try to make the best of it. Start preparing to live a more public lifestyle by taking care of your personal issues. Give some thought to a minor makeover of sorts - a new hairstyle or new clothing.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It isn't always easy to get the right perspective on your life, especially right now, when things might feel a bit up in the air. But don't let unknown variables add too much stress to this current situation. Today, you will have time to take a step back and let go of the idea that you have to control every little detail. Listen to other people.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Express yourself in new and creative ways today. It has been quite a while since you've just let loose and felt free to say how you feel, and you are overdue for some prime spotlight territory. Now is the time to make declarations, stake your claim, and make sure the world hears you. Whether you choose to share your true self through your wardrobe or musical tastes, make it a celebration.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You might think that just one more push will make things happen for you, but this is not the case. Now is not the time to keep going. Now is the time to stay put and let things move on without you for a while. There is a momentum going that could carry you where you need to go. If you add to that energy, you will miss the mark.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

When you encounter a coworker or friend who's doing things with style, watch them very closely. There are tips and tricks you could learn that will help you get one step closer to your ideal public image. If you can, align yourself with the people who can make positive changes in your life. Stick to them like glue and suggest some extracurricular activities for the two of you.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You'll be going along nicely today, singing your own song and delighting in the antics of all the people around you. Suddenly, everyone is witty and charming. Before the day is over, you'll be asking yourself why there's no reality TV show based on your life. There's nothing holding you back, and there's little if anything for you to worry about.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

This is one of those wonderful days when your achievements will far outpace any demands that are placed on you. You will definitely meet a big deadline early, so use that extra time to get ahead on another project and blow away more expectations. But be aware that working so efficiently might set you up for additional pressures.

BOGGLER

C	P	A	R
K	N	E	S
G	S	L	A
O	P	I	P

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

9				4				
	3			2		7		6
	5	4			8	2		
4	7	2	1					
				9	2	6		
					4	5	3	2
		3	6			7	1	
5			4		2		8	
				1				5

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. Where is Tabasco sauce made?



- A. Portugal
- B. Chile
- C. USA
- D. Mexico

2. What is hominy made from?

- A. Oats
- B. Wheat
- C. Potatoes
- D. Corn

3. What is the medical term for the knee cap?

- A. Patella
- B. Paella
- C. Patina
- D. Pieta

Answers
1. C
2. D
3. A

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

5	2	8	6	1	7	8	4	9
6	8	9	2	5	4	7	1	3
4	1	7	5	8	9	3	6	2
2	5	4	7	8	6	9	1	3
7	4	1	9	2	6	5	8	3
8	9	6	3	5	1	2	7	4
1	6	2	8	9	4	5	3	7
3	5	6	7	9	4	5	6	8
9	3	8	7	4	1	2	6	5

entertainment



Aamir Khan poised for an early retirement

Rumors are circulating in India's entertainment industry about the potential retirement of Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan. Famously known as Mr. Perfectionist, the speculation regarding the Bollywood star's retirement gained traction after an interview with his son, Junaid Khan, who is set to debut in the Netflix film *Maharaj*. In an interview, Junaid Khan shared that his father is considering retirement, which prompted him to formally embark on his own career in the film world. "I have always been behind the camera on film sets, working on a project for Aamir Khan Productions when my father said to me, 'I'm retiring; why don't you step in?'" he disclosed.



Selena Gomez having a time of her life

Selena Gomez is, in her own words, having the best year of her life. Not only did she win the best actress award at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival for her performance in Emilia Pérez, but she also scored her first Emmy acting nomination for her role in Hulu's *Only Murders in the Building*. "Acting has, and will always be, my heart," she says. "There's so much that I want to do and that I haven't even scratched the surface of, and it's exciting to me."



Tauba Tauba craze goes viral

After a very long time, signature dance moves by a Bollywood actor - Vicky Kaushal - in the dance number '*Husn Tera Tauba Tauba*', of the film *Bad Newz* has gone viral over the internet, social media, and has taken not just the younger generation but also the not-so-young generation by storm. It has already received 156million views on YouTube and numerous dancers - novices and celebrities - have also been uploading their own videos to much acclaim, while every dance academy and online tutorial is busy teaching the steps of this iconic dance number to its pupils with great interest. And poor Vicky gets cornered into doing his hookstep at every single appearance on TV reality shows, concerts, even social gatherings. Sung by Karan Aujla and choreographed by Bosco Martis, this song has beaten all the earlier gimmicky moves by Salman Khan (who is known to set a trend with his hooksteps) because of the sleek choreography. If Sallu's popular, 'towel between the thighs' hookstep in the song '*Jeene ke hain char din*' from the film *Mujse Shaadi Karoge* (2004) has survived two decades, one wonders whether Vicky's current hookstep would also go a long way.



BRITISH OLYMPIAN DATING MISS JOBS

Steve Jobs' daughter Eve confirmed she's dating Olympian Harry Charles, an equestrian from Team Great Britain, when she was seen cheering him on at the 2024 Olympics after he won the gold medal with his team in the show jumping competition. "TEAM GOLD!!!!!" Eve wrote on Instagram. "Beyond proud of you my love !!!!!" In the video she shared, Harry could be seen running over to her, even jumping a fence to give Eve a hug and a kiss after the competition. And the Olympian was equally excited about his win, posting a slew of photos from the 'best day of my life' on Instagram, including one of Eve posing with his family.



'Are you sure?' set to release on Disney+

BTS stars Jeon Jungkook and Jimin are set to star in their own travel documentary *Are you sure?* set to screen on Disney+ on August 8. The show was shot across the USA, Jeju Islands in S Korea, and Sapporo in Japan where the BTS' Busan brothers (as they are lovingly called by fans) relaxed before their mandatory military enlistment. Jimin and Jungkook's infectious chemistry is visible in this spontaneous journey across iconic global destinations.

Zac Efron hospitalised

Zac Efron is on the mend after he was reportedly pulled out of a swimming pool and subsequently hospitalised. The 36-year-old actor took to his Instagram Stories on Sunday, August 4, to share a workout photo of himself, proving to fans that he's recovering. "Happy and healthy," Zac wrote across a snap of himself lifting weights. "Thanks for the well wishes." Over the weekend, *TMZ* reported that the *High School Musical* star was taken to a hospital in Spain after a "minor swimming incident" at an Ibiza villa, a rep for Zac told the outlet. Sources claimed that Zac was discovered inside the pool by two workers, and they pulled him out of the water.



Painful, romantic saga

BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW:
AURON MEIN KAHA DUM THA
Genre: Drama **Starring:** Ajay Devgn, Tabu, Jimmy Shergill, Shantanu Maheshwari, Saiee Manjrekar

Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha is a 2024 Hindi, romantic thriller film written and directed by Neeraj Pandey. The film stars Ajay Devgn and Tabu in their tenth film together, indicating the good chemistry between the two senior stars who have gelled well on the silver screen in the fleeting years of their careers. This is an epic love story that chronicles the life of Krishna (Ajay) and Vasudha (Tabu) as their fledgling relationship faces a lot of hardship and eventually, they separate as Krishna ends up committing multiple murders and is sentenced to life imprisonment. After 22 years Krishna is granted pardon and released from jail and his final meeting with Vasudha forms the crux of the movie. Will they end up together? Will their love survive the test of time? Though Neeraj Pandey tries to deviate from nail-biting thrillers with this tale of renunciation in romance, the film seems to be lacking on several counts and can be utterly boring for some viewers who are used to regular masala flicks. The plot is flimsy and pre-



dictable, the suspense is shallow, some flashbacks are repeated so many times that you'd like to toss your popcorn onto the screen in protest, and the fact that the main characters are portrayed by seasoned stars leaves one with high expectations that are not really met. You can skip this film, unless you want to escape meeting a nasty relative who's planning to visit you.

Rating ★★☆☆☆

WHATS ON

CAT & DOG

MONICA is the owner of DIVA, a famous cat and Internet star. JACK is a thief whose latest heist, an enormous ruby of priceless value, has unfortunately been swallowed by a stray dog named CHICHI. Through a series of coincidences, Monica and Jack find themselves separated from their animals and watch helplessly as they escape to an unknown destination...
Genre: Animation **Starring:** Franck Dubosc, Philippe Lacheau, Reem Kherici, Zehetner **Language:** English



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