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MOBILITAS OPENS FACILITIES IN OMAN AND BAHRAIN UNDER FLAGSHIP BRAND AGS

Muscat – France-based MOBILITAS Group – which specialises in global mobility, physical and digital records management, and heritage conservation – has launched two new subsidiaries in Oman and Bahrain under its flagship brand AGS.

The opening of new offices in Oman and Bahrain will serve to fortify the French-owned group's presence in the Middle East region, MOBILITAS Group said in a press statement.

"We are excited to enter these two vibrant Gulf markets at once," commented Cedric Castro, CEO of the MOBILITAS Group. "Our expanded presence in the region allows us to better cater to our clients' needs and, in doing so, cement our position as a leader in the international mobility market."

While AGS Bahrain is a fully owned MOBILITAS Group subsidiary, AGS Oman is a joint venture with Omani-owned Allied Logistics LLC, a leader in the Sultanate's international moving sector.

Allied Logistics was founded in April 2013 and made an immediate impact on the local market. We employed experienced industry professionals, who have a long history with Oman. Our entire team has been hired locally, to ensure we are knowledgeable, and have an excellent understanding of working in the Sultanate. In Oman, Allied Logistics will be fully integrated into the MOBILITAS network as AGS Oman but will continue to serve its significant client base under the leadership of Allied Logistics' current Managing Director, Marcus Maguire.

Marcus Maguire announced that Allied Logistics has entered into a joint venture with MOBILITAS Group and will rebrand the moving division to AGS Global Solutions Oman. However, their freight forwarding and logistics division, will continue to operate under the Allied Logistics brand.

He said, "This partnership represents a significant step forward in our company's growth and

expansion, and I am confident that it will bring numerous benefits to both organisations. By combining our resources and expertise, we are creating a strong and dynamic alliance that will deliver exceptional value to our customers. AGS Oman will be the only true global moving company within Oman with a worldwide network, that can offer the same company door-to-door solutions. I am excited about the opportunities this joint venture will bring, and I look forward to working closely with MOBILITAS Group to achieve our shared goals and vision."

Growing regional footprints

Together with AGS Saudi Arabia, which is scheduled to open its doors later this year, the new branches in Oman and Bahrain allow the MOBILITAS Group to serve clients across the Arabian peninsula.

Established in 2011, AGS Dubai was MOBILITAS Group's first subsidiary in the region, followed shortly by AGS Qatar. The group's expansion into Bahrain and Oman brings the number of AGS branches in the region to five and to 148 worldwide.

Founded 48 years ago, MOBILITAS Group is a French, family-owned mid-sized company that specialised in the mobility of goods and people before diversifying into physical and digital records management, and heritage conservation. With more than 4,500 employees in 99 countries, the MOBILITAS Group – led by the third generation of the TAIEB and CASTRO families – is today one of the world leaders in international mobility (relocation of companies and individuals, support for executives on assignment) and continues its progress towards the podium of the largest players in physical and digital records management and heritage conservation.

Call for tougher measures to prevent illegal selling of fish on Muscat streets

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Despite the government's continuous efforts to curb street vending activities in Muscat and beyond, the capital city is witnessing illegal selling of fish every day.

Muscat Daily took a tour around busy market places in three areas, and found out that the bylanes and small thoroughfares in Ghala industrial area, Mabela industrial area, and North Al Hail buzzing with activities as soon as pick-up trucks arrive with fish in the evening.

Sale of fish is conducted on these streets every evening. Local residents are not quite



happy with such 'illegal activities' in their neighbourhoods. Some of them called for tougher measures to prevent illegal selling of fish on streets.

Speaking to Muscat Daily, Hamoud al Hadrami, a resident of Seeb, said, "Unfortunately, this negative phenomenon has spread to Seeb as well. It is

causing a lot of problems such as traffic congestion, random gathering and bad smell." He explained that selling of fish on streets can be hazardous

We call on the responsible authorities to take strict decisions to curb this practice, which employs expatriates who don't have legal residence cards

HAMOUD AL HADRAMI

to environment and health as vendors throw fish waste on the streets.

"We call on the responsible authorities to take strict deci-

sions to reduce this practice, which employs expatriate workers who do not hold legal residence cards," said Hadrami.

According to Naser al Saeedi, a taxi driver, vendors in Ghala industrial area are seen in the evening as "many of the expatriate workers in these areas need to buy fish after finishing their work at night".

He felt that the authorities should provide a lasting solution to this phenomenon.

Sultan Saif, a resident of Mabela, said that street vendors are regularly seen in the fifth industrial area of Mabela.

"The responsible authorities regularly conduct campaigns to restrict such practices and I advise people to buy fish from of-

ficial markets and malls to help the authorities to curb this phenomenon."

"I also think providing mobile carts equipped with refrigerators to sell fish in those industrial areas and other places will help reduce random selling and provide job opportunities for citizens," said Sultan.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) issued a decision No 312/2014, notifying that it would be illegal to sell fish outside markets and ports specified by the ministry.

'Selling fish on the streets can be hazardous to the environment and human health as vendors throw fish waste on the streets,' the ministry stated.

UK trade minister sheds light on opportunities under free trade pact

Muscat - Nigel Huddleston, Minister of State at the Department of Business and Trade in the United Kingdom (UK) visited Salalah on Thursday and met with a number of officials at the port and the Free Zone of Salalah - the affiliates of the Asyad Group.

The UK minister underlined prospective investment opportunities and business incentives for Oman and the GCC states that can result from the free trade agreement between the GCC and the UK.

Huddleston also underscored the importance of utilising the free trade agreement, especially in light of sectors that set Oman apart in logistics, technology, financial services and other economic sectors.

He also highlighted the agreement's role in promoting trade growth between the two countries through investment opportunities for the UK companies in Oman due to its strategic loca-



tion and being a central logistic hub of international maritime trade.

Huddleston also shed light on the agreement's role in boosting Oman's and the UK's participation in the production and distribution of green energy to global markets.

"Salalah will become a hub for green hydrogen projects," he added.

Dhofar to get new medical college; pact signed for students' training

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health and Dhofar University on Thursday entered into a partnership to facilitate training for the College of Medicine students at the Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah and Nizwa Hospital.

The agreement was formalised by H E Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, and Yousuf Alawi Abdullah al Ibrahim, Vice President of Dhofar University's Board of Trustees.

This move is significant as the upcoming College of Medicine will be the pioneering institution of its kind in the Dhofar governorate, with a core mission to enhance national health competencies.

The collaboration is geared towards equipping medical students with both theoretical and practical insights, aligning with the ministry's broader vision of



bolstering human resource capacities in the health sector.

The agreement's objectives include licensing medical faculty, ensuring a conducive training environment, streamlining a rigorous training regimen in compliance with set guidelines, and involving students in quality-boosting health service research. Yousuf Alawi said that the

new Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah will require more skilled health professionals. He envisions the College of Medicine as a primary source of such expertise for Dhofar governorate's healthcare landscape.

In the same vein, Dr Siham al Sinani, vice president of Professional Competence Affairs at the Oman Medical Specialty Board,



Affiliating Dhofar's College of Medicine with SQU augments the credibility of the graduates produced from that institute

DR SIHAM AL SINANI

lauded the college's contribution to the nation's medical education fabric. She asserted that affiliating Dhofar's College of Medicine with Sultan Qaboos University augments the credibility of the graduates produced from that institute. The board also expressed its eagerness to assist in the students' future qualification processes.

Dr Hani al Qadhi, from the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, recognised the agreement as a milestone for Oman's health and academic sectors.

He underscored the pressing need for a medical college in the Dhofar region, which would significantly benefit the local populace and the nation at large.

Highlighting a shared mission, the Ministry of Health (MoH) acknowledged the vital role of academic entities in uplifting healthcare standards across Oman.

As a testament to this synergy, Sultan Qaboos University and Dhofar University have also inked a cooperation agreement.

This collaboration encompasses academic, training, foundational planning, curriculum development, educational methods, and evaluation procedures, all aimed at ensuring the success of Dhofar's College of Medicine.

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

So, we have witnessed history being made, the Chandrayaan 3 landing successfully on the Moon's south surface. 'To the Moon and back' would now be an easy claim to make, wouldn't be? The roadside Romeo's will have to be innovative with making some taller, unachievable, larger than life claims now. They can't rely on 'to the Moon and back' since that is something we have seen with our own eyes. The girlfriends wouldn't flinch when being called chaand or they wouldn't be moved with romantic gestures of singing the Savage Garden song, Love you to the Moon and back. All you Casanovas or hopelessly romantic guys out there, look out for your next statement to achieve the unachievable.

Well in that context they have proven that nothing is unachievable. Everything is achievable with a little patience and whole hoard of dedication, and focus.

However, that did make a mighty statement back then, 'to the Moon and back', but the bad news for you lover boys is, that it is taken. On the other hand, what is this incessant need to woo a person you love,

with such fairy-tale claims. Is it because its poetic, romantic, never seen or heard or is it purely the need to procreate an unachievable goal and hence the partner would not see them as unfit to keep up to their words. Now I know I'm being too harsh out here, but do I see the need to be harsh to these false promises made just to woo the person you like.

TO THE MOON AND BACK

But let's not be a pessimist here, my new motto in life is to look at things in a brighter light, maybe even a neon light, which could blur your vision immediately if you are above the age of 40, but besides that point. Well, the optimistic reason being that we like to create a wonderland, a place in our head, in our make-believe world to make something far, closer to us. To visualise a world full of love and making unachievable goals be achievable. And when we live in that little head of our, life seems prettier than the harsh realities of today's age. In our imaginary world within

the head, we have the blatant reality kept aside neatly pleated on a table; and fantasy takes the front seat in the play. Disclaimer, I love my inner world, its far more glamorous and colourful.

Is that so, when we fall in love first, it's exciting, rosy and invigorating, but as times passes somewhere the magic dies? Do we stop fantasising about our glamorous inner world and only look at our life as mundane and colourless. Does a visualisation of 'to the Moon and back' start looking like a dream that won't come true?

But you know what, when the Chandrayaan went to the Moon and did what was unattainable, it made us believe that our unachievable goals, can also be attained. It thrustured the power of belief, the power of hope, the power of hard work, the power of consistency, the power of faith and the power of intelligence. It made us believe that, if we strive harder, hang in longer, and make a fraction of use of our grey matter, then nothing is impossible, and after all we could achieve that poetic version of a romance novel.

It makes us believe that we can achieve any aspiring dreams, if only we go for it!

Oman sees growth in date production; honey yield declines



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's production of dates went up by 2,734 tonnes in 2022, while honey production declined by 414,140kg over the previous year.

Data from the National Center for Statistics and Information revealed that date production increased to 377,066 tonnes - up by 2,734 tonnes in 2022 - compared to 374,332 tonnes in 2021.

The lead in date production was taken by Dakhiliyah governorate, producing 90,200 tonnes. This was followed by North Batinah with 57,923 tonnes and South Batinah with 54,715 tonnes.

Other notable contributors include North Sharqiyah (52,586 tonnes), Dhahirah (46,204 tonnes), and South Sharqiyah (30,237 tonnes). Buraimi and Muscat governorates produced 19,257 and 12,832 tonnes respectively, while Dhofar, Musandam and Al Wusta governorates had smaller yields, the latter producing just 132 tonnes.

In honey production, the governorates of North and South Sharqiyah were at the forefront, producing 147,088kg of honey. They were closely followed by North and South Batinah with 131,269kg and Dakhiliyah with 126,470kg. Together, these governorates accounted for 75.8% of Oman's total honey production.



MoL declares more than 900 vacancies in govt sector

Muscat - The Ministry of Labour (MoL) on Thursday announced the availability of 909 job opportunities in various government units, the registration for which will be open for two weeks from the day of announcement.

These job openings are for various academic levels- starting from the doctorate degrees to below general diplomas.

Of these vacancies, 871 are for those with a bachelor's degree or higher, 13 for those with a post-general education diploma, and 25 for those with a general education diploma or lower. This is fifth announcement of the ministry in a series of job announcements for administrative units this year, as part of a well-planned strategy to meet the need of various government units.

CI affirms Oman ratings; outlook remains positive

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Capital Intelligence Ratings (CI) announced on Friday that it has affirmed Oman's long-term foreign currency rating and long-term local currency rating at 'BB'. The sovereign's short-term foreign currency rating and short-term local currency rating have been affirmed at 'B'.

The outlook for the sultanate's sovereign ratings remains 'positive', CI Ratings said in a statement.

'The affirmation of the ratings and outlook reflects the significant decline in gross central government debt and CI's expectation that fiscal and external balances will remain in surplus over the forecast period, with government and external debt returning to low levels in net terms,' CI said.

'The improvement in Oman's public and external finances remains supported by still favourable oil prices and more prudent fiscal and debt management policies, including the utilisation of recent hydrocarbon windfalls to repay, prepay, and buy back expensive external debt.'

The ratings are also supported by Oman's relatively sound banking system and CI's expectation that financial support for the sovereign would be forthcoming from other GCC countries in the event of need, CI added.

The rating agency, however, said that Oman's ratings are constrained by the limited diversification of the economy and significant structural budgetary



The positive outlook reflects Oman's ongoing efforts to reduce government debt to a safe threshold of 30% of GDP, as well as our assumption that the government will pursue moderate fiscal reforms to keep the budget in surplus

CI RATINGS

weaknesses (including the vulnerability of revenues to volatile oil prices and relatively high expenditure rigidities).

The positive outlook, as per CI, indicates that the sultanate's ratings are likely to be upgraded in the next 12 months.

'The outlook reflects ongoing efforts to reduce central govern-

ment debt to a safe threshold of 30% of GDP, as well as our assumption that the government will pursue moderate fiscal reforms to keep the budget in surplus,' the rating agency said.

CI acknowledged that Oman's central government budget position improved significantly in 2022, posting a surplus of 7.5%

of GDP compared to a deficit of 2.8% in 2021.

It said, 'Central government debt declined to 38.6% of GDP in the first half of 2023, from 40% at the end of 2022. This decline is due to the repayment of debt to the tune of 3.6% of GDP (of which 73.3% was external debt denominated in foreign currency).'

CI projects Oman's central government debt to decline to 37.2% of GDP by the end of 2023. It said that the decrease in external government debt has helped to improve the debt structure and alleviate some of the pressure on the interest bill arising from tighter local and international monetary policies.

According to CI, the Omani government's interest expense

declined to 6.4% of total revenues in 2022, compared to 9.4% a year earlier, and is expected to remain at an estimated 7% over the next two years.

Moving forward, CI's baseline scenario assumes that oil prices will remain high throughout 2023-2025, averaging \$72 per barrel - exceeding Oman's budgeted average fiscal breakeven oil price of \$67 per barrel.

'We expect the central government budget surplus to average 1.4% of GDP during this period, and central government debt to decline further to 35.9% by the end of 2024,' CI added.

Economic growth remains 'robust'

Oman's economic growth remains robust, supported by high hydrocarbon production, according to CI Ratings.

The rating agency said that the sultanate's real GDP is expected to have expanded by around 4.7% in the first quarter of 2023 and is projected to increase by an average of 3.3% in the 2023-2025 period.

'Oman's current growth outlook benefits from external demand for crude and condensate oil and key manufacturing goods (e.g., plastics, chemicals, base metals). Domestic demand is expected to continue to recover in 2024, in tandem with a decline in inflationary pressures and stabilizing interest rates,' CI stated.

'The relatively sound financial condition of the Omani banking sector benefits from good capital buffers and the current moderate stock of non-performing loans,' the rating agency added.



Maha granted extension for Block 70 deal

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Swedish energy firm Maha Energy on Friday announced that it has been granted by Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals an extension of the initial phase of the exploration and production sharing agreement (EPSA) for the onshore Block 70.

After the extension, the initial phase of the EPSA runs until December 31, 2023, Maha Energy said in a statement.

Maha Energy commenced in March 2023 a production test on Block 70. Driven by its commitment to effectively conclude the production testing, the company requested to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in July 2023 for an extension of the initial phase of the exploration and production sharing agreement.

'During the extended initial phase, Maha Energy intends to implement activities and tests necessary to support any decision regarding a second phase of the EPSA, a possible declaration of commerciality of Block 70 or relinquishment,' the company

noted in its statement.

Maha Energy is the operator of Block 70 with a 65% working interest, with Mafraq Energy holding the remaining 35%.

During the extended initial phase, Maha Energy intends to implement activities necessary to support any decision regarding Block 70's declaration of commerciality, such as: (i) running detailed simulations of the long-term behaviour of the reservoir and wells at Block 70; (ii) restarting the cold production of wells and troubleshooting for the maximum possible sustained rates contingent on reaching specifications; and (iii) preparing a detailed plan for enhanced oil recovery (EOR) such as steam, waterflooding, or other production enhancement methods to be performed during a possible second stage of the extended initial phase.

Block 70 is an onshore block that includes the shallow undeveloped Mafraq heavy oil field. The block is located in the middle of the prolific oil producing Ghaba Salt Basin in the central part of Oman.

ECB hikes interest rates again, maybe for last time

Frankfurt, Germany - The European Central Bank hiked a key interest rate to a record high Thursday as it battles stubbornly high inflation but indicated that its historic hiking cycle may be at an end.

Polymakers raised borrowing costs by another quarter point, taking the closely-watched deposit rate to 4.00% - its highest level since the introduction of the euro in 1999.

It marked the 10th straight increase since the central bank launched the most aggressive hiking cycle in its history in July last year after energy and food costs surged following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The bank pushed ahead with another hike despite growing signs of a rapidly deteriorating economic outlook in the 20 countries that use the euro.

But, while the ECB reiterated inflation was still "expected to remain too high for too long", it also said borrowing costs had reached levels that would help bring price rises back to the two-percent target in a timely manner.

Speaking after the rate decision was announced, ECB president Christine Lagarde stressed that rates had now reached levels that would make a "substantial contribution" to taming fast-rising prices.

She held back from making a firm commitment to no more increases, insisting that officials "can't say" yet that rates had peaked and future decisions would depend on incoming data.



ECB President Christine Lagarde

ECB raised key rate by another quarter point, taking the closely-watched deposit rate to 4.0% - its highest level since the launch of the euro in 1999

Polymakers divided

But analysts nevertheless believed the language indicated the current run of interest rate increases was ending.

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

Berenberg Bank economist Holger Schmieding agreed it was the final increase for now, and that the central bank had "signalled that it expects to be on hold from now onwards for a significant period of time".

Observers had been divided ahead of the meeting about

whether the ECB would pause or hike, and Lagarde conceded some on the 26-member governing council had wanted to stay their hand.

But she insisted a "solid majority" ultimately backed a hike and the discussion was neither "antagonistic" nor "adversarial".

Highlighting the continued difficulties in bringing consumer prices under control, the ECB raised its forecast for inflation this year and next. They lowered it slightly for 2025 to 2.1%, close to the ECB target.

But it also slashed its forecasts for eurozone growth over the next three years, and Lagarde acknowledged the picture was worsening.

"The economy is likely to remain subdued in the coming months," she said. "The risks to economic growth are tilted to the downside."

Recent data showed second-quarter growth reached just 0.1%, lower than previously estimated, and the EU on Monday also slashed its 2023 and 2024 GDP forecasts for the single currency area - pointing in particular to weakness in Germany.

Europe's top economy is struggling to get back on its feet after sliding into recession around the turn of the year, hit by an industrial slowdown, high energy costs, and slowing exports to key partners such as China.

The weak data had fuelled calls for the ECB to pause its hiking cycle for fear it could deepen a downturn.

AFP

US auto workers and companies face off on day two of strike

Wayne, US - Workers and management from the iconic "Big Three" auto giants were to face off at the negotiating table Saturday on the second day of a strike threatening to disrupt the economy and rock the 2024 presidential election campaign.

After a failed last-minute push by General Motors, Ford and Stellantis to produce an agreement before the deadline late Thursday, United Automobile Workers members walked out Friday.

They appeared determined to stick with the action, even as Ford quickly announced that ripple effects from the walkouts meant temporary layoffs of 600 jobs.

UAW President Shawn Fain said late Friday that it wasn't true "negotiations have broken down." However, he added that "our members and allies are standing strong at the picket



lines. Anyone who wants to stand with us can grab a sign and hold the line."

"Tomorrow, we expect to be at the bargaining table," he said. "All three companies have received a comprehensive counteroffer from our union, and we await their response."

Only about 12,700 of the 150,000 workers represented by the UAW are on strike. However, the decision by the rival compa-

nies' employees to act in unison sent a powerful message in their battle for pay increases of 40%.

The upheaval in the crucial sector, involving brands like Jeep, threatens the US economy in a period of strong growth and inflationary pressure. President Joe Biden, who is seeking reelection next year, gave his backing to the strikers, saying he understood their "frustration."

Speaking on live TV from the

White House, Biden said workers had not been able to benefit from enormous corporate profits, which exceeded \$20bn for the three giants in just the first half of 2023.

"The companies have made some significant offers but I believe they should go further to ensure that record corporate profits mean record contracts for the UAW," the Democrat said.

AFP

EU fines TikTok €345mn over child data

London, UK - A European Union regulator fined Chinese-owned social media platform TikTok 345mn euros over child data breaches on Friday.

Ireland's Data Protection Commission said in a statement that it has handed down the "administrative fine", which is equivalent to \$369mn, over the breaches it uncovered in a two-year inquiry.

The watchdog gave TikTok three months "to bring its pro-



cessing into compliance" with its rules.

EU member Ireland's DPC plays a key role in policing the bloc's strict General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

The watchdog in September 2021 began examining TikTok's compliance with GDPR in relation to platform settings and personal data processing for users aged under 18.

It also looked at TikTok's age verification measures for persons under 13 and found no infringement, but found the platform did not properly assess the risks to younger people registering on the service.

The DPC highlighted Friday in its ruling how children signing up had TikTok accounts set to public by default, meaning anyone could view or comment on their content.

AFP

Badr SOI Fertility Centre to showcase cutting-edge treatments at health meet

The Sultanate of Oman is buzzing with excitement as the highly anticipated Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC) is set to take place from September 18 to 20.

This three-day healthcare extravaganza, hosted at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), is poised to become a pivotal event in the healthcare calendar. The exhibition will open its doors at 9.00am and will close at 8.00pm daily, while the conference will follow a meticulously crafted agenda, running from 9.00am to 4.15pm.

OHEC is gearing up to welcome distinguished officials from various ministries, top-level delegates, and industry leaders. Featuring international exhibitors from over 16 countries, including the Czech Republic, Iran, India, Oman, Poland, India, Thailand, Turkey, and the UAE, this event promises to be a global healthcare spectacle.

Over 5000 visitors are expected to converge over the



three days to exchange knowledge and insights. The spotlight at OHEC will shine on healthcare, medical tourism, hospital infrastructure, and medical technology - all critical elements propelling sustainable progress in the sector.

At OHEC, the Badr SOI Fertility Centre from Badr Al Samaa Medical Centre, Mabela will proudly showcase its advanced facilities, including high-end genetic diagnostic tests for embryos. These tests, such as Preimplantation Genetic Screening (PGS) and Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD), are designed to eliminate genetic anomalies and inherited diseases, including Down syndrome and other chromosomal disorders in the fetus.

Visitors to OHEC will have the privilege of a free IVF consultation with Dr Gauri Agarwal, a distinguished specialist IVF & gynecologist expert at Badr SOI IVF & Fertility Centre with 12 years of experience in successfully treating thousands of infertile couples. Dr Agarwal will share her extensive knowledge and expertise in the field.

Dr Agarwal - as a key note presenter in the conference - will share her views on contemporary approach to In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF).

Badr SOI IVF and Fertility Centre located at Badr Al Samaa Medical Centre in Mabella, is always at the forefront, offering a comprehensive range of services. This includes In vitro Fertilization (IVF), Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI), Blastocyst Transfer, Intrauterine Insemination (IUI), Oocyte Freezing, PRP & Ovarian Rejuvenation, and facilities for reproductive genetics sample collection.

Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, which places a high priority on the health and productivity of the nationals and expats of Oman through a well-organised, equitable, efficient, and responsive health system rooted in societal values of equity and social justice, the presence of the Badr SOI IVF & Fertility Centre at OHEC holds paramount importance. It will enrich participants' medical knowledge and introduce them to the latest scientific and technological developments in the field of infertility.



Bank Muscat's KYC can now be updated online

In line with its customer-centric vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and to meet customers' expectations for seamless experience, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, has recently launched a new service through its Internet and Mobile banking channels.

'Customers can now update their Know Your Customer (KYC) details without having to visit the branches,' the bank stated.

KYC is the process of verifying and maintaining the identity, information and documents of the customers, at all times to serve them better. The addition aims to ease the process for customers to update their details on time to avoid any delays in their transactions.

The new service further expands the list of options available to customers through the bank's various digital channels and enhances banking convenience leading to reduce waiting times when visiting branches.

The new feature enables customers to update their KYC details online by logging in to their Mobile or Internet Banking account and navigating through the app via < Requests / Customer Services < KYC < Update KYC and follow the on-screen instructions. After uploading the required documents, the details are instantly updated in the bank records and customers will receive a confirmation SMS and email notification. Customers can also update their civil or resident ID details and passport details through this service.

Hongqi unveils sizzling summer offers on premium models

Hongqi, the epitome of Chinese luxury automotive engineering, is thrilled to announce its Summer Campaign featuring an array of irresistible offers on four of its most sought-after models: The H9, Hongqi Ousado, Hongqi HS5, and Hongqi H5.

This summer, every Hongqi vehicle comes with a suite of benefits including free insurance, free registration, seven free services, seven years unlimited kilometres warranty, an RO100 fuel card and seven years roadside assistance.

'In a special gesture to the educators shaping our future, Hongqi is extending additional benefits exclusively for teachers,' the company stated.

As a luxury vehicle brand, Hongqi redefines opulence with top-notch features, the latest technology, and an unwavering focus on safety. The Hongqi H5 is an executive sedan with sportiness ingrained, perfect configuration, and performance to match. It features a stylish silhouette with the 'Wing of Hongqi' greeting light, a nature-



inspiring panoramic sunroof, and luxurious interiors.

The Hongqi HS5 greets drivers with unique Red Flag wings and features the Hongqi family's classic waterfall intake grille. This model is aesthetic and luxurious, equipped with advanced interconnection technology. Safety is a priority, with the ability to judge collisions within the speed of 75km per hour. The driving experience is enhanced by five driving modes, aviation-class headrests, and real-time active indoor air cleaning.

The Hongqi H9 is a stunning sedan with a steel cage-style chassis, capable of tackling tough terrain. It features an imposing straight fall grille and plush interiors, including an intelligent, oriental artistic cabin with one-touch zero-gravity seats. The H9 also offers a pioneering L2.5 Autonomous driving function and a 2.0L turbocharged Direct Injection engine, enhanced by a 48V Recovery System for powerful performance.

While the Hongqi Ousado is a luxury sedan that combines performance and elegance. It features a powerful engine, advanced safety systems, and a spacious, luxurious interior. With cutting-edge technologies, it offers a safe and comfortable driving experience.

The one-of-a-kind panoramic sunroof measures 1010x890mm, providing an unbelievably wide view. The Ousado also boasts a stylish design, with a classic waterfall intake grille. It's an ideal choice for those seeking a blend of luxury and performance.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said, "As the sole distributor of Hongqi in Oman, MHD ACERE is thrilled to offer these special promotions. We believe that the combination of cutting-edge technology, safety features, and luxurious design makes Hongqi the perfect choice for discerning customers in Oman.

"These special offers on Hongqi models are our way of saying thank you for the continued support and trust in MHD ACERE and the Hongqi brand."

ISWK (Cambridge Curriculum) displays spectacular show at WSC in Bangkok

A six-member delegation from the Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir came back from Bangkok, after registering an impressive performance at the prestigious World Scholar's Cup (WSC) Global Round 2023 in Thailand's capital.

Their exceptional performance has not only made the school proud but has also garnered international acclaim.

Competing against 700 teams from around the world, ISWK (Cambridge Curriculum) secured an impressive 13th place at the WSC Bangkok Global Round, the school informed.

This remarkable feat was possible due to the collective efforts of the young scholars, who displayed unparalleled dedication, perseverance and talent throughout the week-long competition.

The team, Oman's sole representative at the global event, returned home with a remarkable tally of 37 Gold and Silver



medals, along with the prestigious International Recognition Trophy. The WSC competition spanned six subjects, including Science and Technology, History, Art, Literature, Music, and Special Area.

ISWK (Cambridge Curriculum)

delegates participated in both the Junior and Senior divisions, showcasing their academic prowess in various domains.

Among the standout performers, Krish Kamath shone brightly and secured an astounding 10 Gold and 3 Silver medals. His exceptional performance earned him the privilege of being chosen as the Flag Bearer to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the event's spectacular closing ceremony, where he was also honoured with the Country Topper Gold Medal.

Samarth Pujari demonstrated his academic prowess by winning an impressive 8 Gold and 2 Silver medals in the fields of writing, debate, quiz and overall team achievement.

Siddarth Shankar with 3 Gold and 4 Silver medals, not only excelled academically but also had the honour of serving as a Judge for the debate showcase - an opportunity extended to only 20 selected individuals.

Nikhilesh Itlapuram secured 1 Gold and 3 Silver medals, earning praise for his overall performance.

The students are now eagerly preparing to represent the school at the Tournament of Champions (TOC) at the prestigious Yale University, US, from November 2 to 8 this year.

Egypt jails dissident as pressure mounts ahead of vote

Cairo, Egypt - An Egyptian court has sentenced prominent dissident Hisham Kassem to six months in prison, his lawyer and political movement said, a move barring him from taking part in campaigning for next year's presidential election.

It comes one day after Egypt's only candidate campaigning so far for the election, Ahmed al-Tantawi, revealed his phone had been bugged by authorities, according to a report by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab. A day earlier, Tantawi had denounced harassment by the security forces against his teams and supporters.

Kassem was also slapped with a 20,000 pound (about US\$650) fine after being found guilty of defaming a former minister and 'contempt of officials', Gameela Ismail, a member of his Free Current liberal opposition movement, wrote on X, formerly Twitter. His lawyer Nasser Amin wrote on Facebook that the verdict would be appealed in a court hearing set to take place on October 7.

Kassem, 64, had begun a hunger strike, his supporters said earlier this month, after the opening of his trial, before ending it days ago.

He was initially summoned after a former minister complained he had shared online articles suggesting the minister had embezzled funds.

The opposition activist was later accused of 'contempt' by officers during questioning at a police station. He has been in custody since August 20.

Kassem's Free Current coalition advocates economic liberalisation and calls for an end to the army's stranglehold on the Egyptian economy.

London-based Amnesty International on Thursday called on Egypt's authorities to 'immediately release' Kassem, saying he had been 'arbitrarily detained'.

"The prosecution of Hisham Kassem for simply posting critical messages online is a signal that the Egyptian authorities' relentless campaign to silence peaceful critics and punish dissent... is continuing in full force," said Philip Luther, Amnesty's research and advocacy director in the region. Several opposition figures, including renowned activist Ahmed Douma, received presidential pardons in past weeks in what many analysts saw as a bid to curry public and international favour ahead of next year's election.

AFP

Iran thwarts family of Amini from commemorating death anniversary

Paris, France - Iranian authorities on Saturday prevented the family of Mahsa Amini from holding a ceremony to commemorate the first anniversary of her death, confining her father to his home after briefly detaining him, rights groups said.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died a few days after her arrest by religious police for allegedly violating the strict dress code for women in force since shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Her family says she died from a blow to the head but this is disputed by Iranian authorities. Anger over her death rapidly expanded into weeks of taboo-breaking protests which saw women tearing off their mandatory headscarves in an open challenge to the Islamic republic's system of government under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Mahsa Amimi's father Amjad Amini was detained while exiting the family home in the western town of Saqez and then released after being warned not to hold a memorial service at her graveside, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN), 1500tasvir monitor and Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) said.

He was now not being allowed to leave the family home, with members of the security forces stationed outside, the groups added in separate statements.

"Amjad Amini is under house arrest... Security forces are preventing him from visiting his daughter's grave," said IHR.



A woman browses a phone while standing along a street in Tehran on September 10 (AFP)

Amjad Amini is under house arrest... Security forces are preventing him from visiting his daughter's grave

IRAN HUMAN RIGHTS

Official news agency IRNA described the reports of the arrest as 'false', saying they were aimed at 'inciting the population to protest'.

Amjad Amini was already summoned by intelligence offi-

cials last week after his announcement he planned to hold a memorial ceremony. One of Amini's uncles, Safa Aeli, was detained in Saqez on September 5 and remains in custody.

There was no sign of the ceremony taking place at her grave at the Aichi cemetery in Saqez, with the rights groups saying security forces had blocked access to the site.

'Chokehold on dissent'

The protests sparked by Amini's death lost momentum after several months in the face of a crackdown that saw security forces kill 551 protesters, according to IHR, and arrest more than 22,000, according to Amnesty International.

Iranian authorities say dozens of security personnel were also killed in what they describe as 'riots' incited by foreign governments and hostile media.

Seven men have been executed after being convicted in protest-related cases. Campaigners say the authorities have renewed their crackdown in the runup to the anniversary, putting pressure on relatives of those killed in the protests in a bid to stop them

speaking out.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said family members of at least 36 people killed or executed in the crackdown had been interrogated, arrested, prosecuted or sentenced to prison over the past month.

"Iranian authorities are trying to impose a chokehold on dissent to prevent public commemoration of Mahsa Jina Amini's death in custody," said HRW's senior Iran researcher, Tara Sepehri Far.

Kurdish-focused group Hengaw said people in western Iran were expressing discontent through a general strike, with shops shut down in a dozen towns and cities including Saqez.

Persian-language channels based outside Iran, including Iran International, broadcast footage of residents shouting 'Death to the dictator' and the main protest slogan of 'Woman, Life, Freedom' from apartment blocks in Tehran and its satellite city of Karaj overnight.

In a symbolic move, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi met on Friday with families of security personnel killed during the protests while on a visit to the northeastern city of Mashhad, state media said.

While some women are still seen walking in public without headscarves, particularly in wealthy, traditionally liberal areas of north Tehran, the conservative-dominated parliament is currently considering a draft law that would impose far stiffer penalties for non-compliance.

AFP

Ethiopia rights body accuses govt forces of Amhara abuses

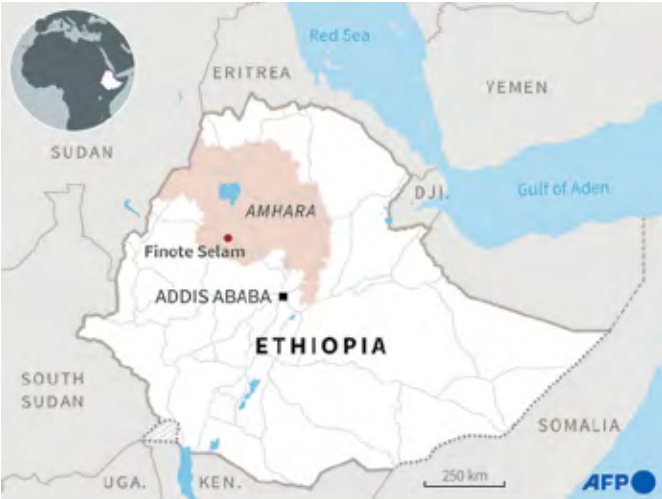
Nairobi, Kenya - Ethiopia's human rights body has accused federal government forces of carrying out extra-judicial killings in the restive region of Amhara and mass arbitrary detentions.

Fighting erupted in Amhara in early July between the national army and local militia fighters known as Fano, after months of tensions.

The unrest prompted the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on August 4 to declare a six-month state of emergency which gave the authorities sweeping powers to arrest people, impose curfews and ban public gatherings.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said in a statement late on Friday it had been told by witnesses, residents and victims' families of 'extra-judicial killings committed by government security forces in various parts of the region' which it described as 'very concerning'.

The state-backed but independent body said 'many civilians' had been killed and injured and property destroyed in the fighting in cities, towns and some rural villages across Amhara.



Map of Ethiopia locating Amhara region and the town of Finote Selam

It also said there had been widespread 'arbitrary arrests' not only in Amhara but the neighbouring region of Oromia and the capital Addis Ababa.

An unknown number of civilians remain in detention, with those arrested usually accused of supporting the Amhara militias and/or hiding weapons, it added.

"EHRC calls for the necessary investigations to be made and accountability to be ensured on those entities that committed killings and arbitrary arrests on civilians."

The UN Rights Office said in late August that at least 183 people had been killed in the Amhara unrest since July.

The situation is impossible to verify on the ground, as the federal authorities restrict access to the region.

The Amhara clashes revived worries about the stability of Africa's second most populous country, months after a peace deal in November 2022 ended a two-year conflict in the neighbouring region of Tigray.

AFP

European Union pulling away from Turkey, says Erdogan

Istanbul, Turkey - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday accused the European Union of pulling away from Turkey, whose efforts to join the bloc have stalled amid criticism of Ankara's efforts to address democracy and rule of law concerns.

Erdogan secured a pledge from Brussels to resurrect the membership talks first started in 2005 in exchange for lifting its blockade of Sweden's drive to join the NATO military alliance in the wake of Russia's Ukraine invasion. Earlier this month, the EU's enlargement commissioner Oliver Varhelyi travelled to Turkey, saying that while membership had 'huge potential', the bloc needed to see action on human rights issues before talks resume.

"The European Union is trying to distance itself from us," Erdogan told reporters at Istanbul's Ataturk airport before flying to New York for the UN General Assembly.

"We will carry out our own assessment of the situation and we also could take another direction," he said.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AFP)

We will carry out our own assessment of the situation and we also could take another direction

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

Erdogan has made mending torn ties with Western allies a priority after winning a difficult election in May following years

of tensions after his government launched a sweeping crackdown in the wake a failed coup in July 2016, sparking accusations of human rights abuses.

During his trip, Varhelyi said 'there are very clear criteria set out also by the European Council that would need to be addressed'.

"And these criteria are related to democracy and the rule of law and, for example, a credible roadmap for moving forward in these reforms," he said.

AFP



Former US President and 2024 Presidential hopeful Donald Trump claps after speaking at the CWA Summit 2023 in Washington, DC, on Friday (AFP)

Sinner, saviour or both?: Trump woos evangelicals, women

Washington, US - Former US president Donald Trump courted evangelical Christians and women at two back-to-back Washington events on Friday - voting blocks whose loyalties to him once seemed contradictory but have now become a well-established part of his base.

The legal, moral and sexual escapades of the scandal-plagued frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination have earned him indict-

ments, impeachments and public scorn in many quarters.

But support among his devotees remains strong.

"As a woman I understand that he can be offensive," Joan Horswell, a 76-year-old retired nurse from Texas, told AFP.

But 'personally, I like him', she said at the 'Pray Vote Stand' summit, put on by the conservative Christian group Family Research Council.

Something of a rock star

among white evangelical Protestants, 84 per cent of whom voted for him in 2020, Trump also holds his own among women, having won 44 per cent of their vote in the last election, according to the Pew Research Center.

"This election will decide whether America will be ruled by Marxist, fascist, communist tyrants who want to smash the Judeo-Christian heritage," Trump, 77, said at the summit, 'or whether America will be

saved by God-fearing freedom-loving patriots like all of the people in this room'. "Is he a flawed individual? Sure. But most Christians will say, we are all sinners. Jesus is not on the ballot," said William Wan, a 60-year-old Catholic engineer from Winter Garden, Florida who attended the summit. Still, Trump may strike many as offensive.

He was found liable in a civil trial in May for sexually abusing writer E Jean Carroll in 1996. He's

also set to go on trial for allegedly paying election-eve hush money to a porn star. And he was heard boasting of groping women when the infamous 'Access Hollywood' tape was published.

But lots of conservative evangelicals believe he 'is the perfect man for the job precisely because he does not reflect Christian values', Kristin Du Mez, a history professor at Calvin University, told AFP.

AFP

UN risks widening rifts as Zelensky takes centre stage

United Nations, US - More than 140 world leaders will head to the United Nations next week at a time of myriad crises, as a starring role for Ukraine's leader may only highlight the growing global fragmentation.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who a year ago was obliged to appear virtually, will join leaders including President Joe Biden when the UN General Assembly formally opens on Tuesday as he seeks to rally support against Russia's bloody invasion.

But while Western powers have rallied behind Ukraine, the war has laid bare deep divisions, with some developing countries uneasy about the billions of dollars devoted to Kyiv, even as the war also affects the poor by driving up food prices.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will kick off the week on Monday with a summit on development, hoping to keep a focus on meeting elusive goals for helping the neediest countries. "We will be gathering at a time when humanity faces huge challenges - from the worsening climate emergency to escalating conflicts, the global cost-of-living crisis, soaring inequalities and dramatic technological disruptions," Guterres said of the General Assembly.

"People are looking to their



This file photo shows Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky arriving to attend a ceremony marking Ukraine's Independence Day, in Kyiv on August 24, this year, amid the Russian invasion (AFP)

leaders for a way out of this mess. Yet in the face of all this and more, geopolitical divisions are undermining our capacity to respond," he said.

"A multipolar world is emerging. Multipolarity can be a factor of equilibrium. But it can also lead to escalating tensions, fragmentation and worse."

'Growing rift'

Zelensky is expected on Wednesday to attend a special session on Ukraine at the Security Council - raising the possi-

We will be gathering at a time when humanity faces huge challenges - from the worsening climate emergency to escalating conflicts

ANTONIO GUTERRES

bility of a dramatic confrontation with Russia, a veto-wielding permanent member. A day later, Zelensky will head to Washington for talks at the White House and on Capitol Hill.

Despite the starring role, Zelensky 'has to tread carefully', said Richard Gowan, an expert on the United Nations at the International Crisis Group.

"If he's too hardline, he may actually turn this opportunity into a bit of a diplomatic crisis," he said.

An overwhelming majority of countries have voted to condemn Russia's invasion launched in February 2022.

But leaders such as Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva 'have made it very clear that they believe that now it's time for diplomacy, and you may see quite a lot of friction between the Ukrainians and countries from the Global South', Gowan said.

A senior European diplomat said that the war was 'stealing away political and economic attention' from other pressing problems such as food insecurity, the climate crisis, inequalities and access to finance.

"There is a growing rift between the developing world and the developed world. Preparing for this week is also making sure that that rift doesn't grow further," the diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

At the summit on Monday, governments will be urged to show new urgency in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals - 17 wide-ranging ambitions that the United Nations wants to fulfill by 2030 including ending extreme poverty.

AFF

Hawaii revises down fire death toll

Los Angeles, US - The number of people thought to have died in the fast-moving wildfire that tore through part of Hawaii last month dropped on Friday, as authorities revised their figures.

The state's governor, Josh Green, said scientists sorting through remains now believed that 97 people had perished in Lahaina, down from a previous official toll of 115.

"That number dropped a little bit because the Department of Defense and all of their physical anthropologists were able to help us discern better who was in cars or in houses," Green said in a Facebook video.

"So thank God, fewer people have passed away."

Green gave no details on the confusion, but the aftermath of large-scale disasters often sees repeated revisions of figures. The commingling of remains was a particular issue in Lahaina, with some victims believed to have fled with other people or with pets.

Green said the number of people whose whereabouts were unconfirmed - those who have been reported missing and not found among the dead or confirmed safe - now stood at 31.

AFF

Two Russians, American reach International Space Station

Baikonur, Kazakhstan - Two Russian cosmonauts and an American astronaut docked with the International Space Station on Friday after blasting off amid raging tensions between Moscow and Washington over Ukraine.

Earlier on Friday Roscosmos cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai Chub and NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara lifted off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan aboard the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft.

The crew docked at the ISS three hours later, the Russian space agency said.

At the orbiting station, the trio will join three Russians, two Americans, a Japanese astronaut and a representative of the European Space Agency.

The liftoff took place after Russia's first lunar mission in nearly 50 years failed last month.

The ISS is a rare venue for co-operation between the United States and Russia, whose ties



Russian Roscosmos cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai Chub and US NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara (AFP)

broke down after Moscow unleashed its offensive in Ukraine last year.

Kononenko alluded to the tensions during a pre-flight press conference on Thursday, saying

that 'unlike on earth' cosmonauts and astronauts took care of each other in space.

"We hear each other there, and we understand each other, and we are very sensitive to our relationships," he said. "We always take care of each other."

O'Hara praised the station's 'legacy' and said it had been bringing the countries together.

"I'm excited to get on board and see the crewmates who are waiting for us," she added.

Kononenko, 59, and Chub, 39, were scheduled to spend a year on the ISS, while O'Hara, 40, was to spend six months aboard. It was the first mission to space for both O'Hara and Chub.

Chub said that travelling to space was his 'childhood dream' and he had dedicated 'all his life' to reaching that goal.

The three take over from Russians Dmitry Petelin and Sergey Prokopyev, as well as NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, who have spent one year aboard the ISS.

AFF

N Korea leader inspects weapons with Russian defence minister

Moscow, Russia - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met on Saturday with the Russian defence minister in Vladivostok, where he inspected state-of-the-art weapons including a hypersonic missile system on the latest leg of a rare visit outside his country.

Upon arriving in Vladivostok, a Pacific port city near the Chinese and North Korean borders, Kim was greeted by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and an honour guard.

Shoigu and Kim were seen smiling as they inspected some of Russia's most advanced nuclear bombers at an airfield before boarding a warship, a video released by the Russian defence ministry showed.

Kim's extended tour of Russia's far eastern region, which began on Tuesday, has focused extensively on military matters, as evidenced by his own officer-dominated entourage, a symbolic exchange of rifles with President Vladimir Putin and a



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un and Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu visit Knevichi aerodrome near Vladivostok on Saturday (AFP)

tour of a fighter jet factory in Komsomolsk-on-Amur.

Historic allies, Russia and the North are both under rafts of global sanctions - Moscow for its Ukraine assault, Pyongyang for its nuclear tests.

Kim's first official visit abroad

since the coronavirus pandemic has fanned Western fears that Moscow and Pyongyang will defy sanctions and strike an arms deal.

Moscow is believed to be interested in buying North Korean ammunition to continue fighting

in Ukraine, while Pyongyang wants Russia's help to develop its internationally condemned missile programme.

The Kremlin has said no agreement has or will be signed.

After meeting Kim on Wednesday at the Vostochny cosmodrome, roughly 8,000km (5,000 miles) from Moscow, Putin talked up the prospect of greater cooperation with North Korea and the 'possibilities' for military ties.

At the Knevichi airfield in Vladivostok on Saturday, Kim was shown strategic U-160, Tu-95MS and U-22 3 bombers.

"These aircraft form the air component of Russia's strategic nuclear forces," the defence ministry said in a statement.

According to footage released by Moscow, Kim was shown carefully listening to senior representatives of the Russian military and inspecting the aircraft.

AFF

G77+China summit in Cuba calls for change of rules in global order

Havana, Cuba - The G77+China, a group of developing and emerging countries representing 80 per cent of the world's population, kicked off a summit in Cuba Friday with a call to 'change the rules of the game' of the global order.

The meeting comes at a time of growing frustration with the Western-led world order amid widening differences over the Russian war in Ukraine, the fight against climate change, and the global economic system.

"After all this time that the North has organised the world according to its interests, it is now up to the South to change the rules of the game," Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said at



Cuban President Miguel Diaz Canel speaks during the inaugural session of the G77+China Summit at the Convention Palace in Havana on Friday (AFP)

the opening of the summit.

Diaz-Canel said that developing countries were the main victims of a 'multidimensional crisis' in the world today, from 'abusive unequal trade' to global warming.

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres is joining some 30 heads of state and government from Africa, Asia and Latin America at the two-day summit in Havana.

At the opening of the meeting he called for a world that was 'more representative and responsive to the needs of developing economies', stressing that these countries were 'trapped in a tangle of global crises.'

The bloc was established by 77 countries of the global South

in 1964 'to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity', according to the group's website.

Today it has 134 members, among which the website lists China although the Asian giant says it is not a full member.

Cuba took over the rotating presidency in January.

Latin American leaders such as Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro, Colombia's Gustavo Petro, and Argentina's Alberto Fernandez were present at the summit, alongside Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, Angola's Joao Lourenco and Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi.

AFF

Aid begins to arrive in flood-hit Libya

Sunday’s floods submerged port city of Derna, washing thousands of people and homes out to sea

Derna, Libya - Shipments of international aid began to arrive in Libya on Saturday, offering a lifeline to thousands despite dwindling hopes of finding more survivors days after deadly flash floods.

Sunday’s floods submerged the port city of Derna, washing thousands of people and homes out to sea after two upstream dams burst under the pressure of torrential rains triggered by a hurricane-strength storm.

Conflicting death tolls have been reported, with the health minister of the eastern-based administration, Othman Abdeljalil, putting the number of lives lost at 3,166.

The World Health Organization said ‘the bodies of 3,958 people have been recovered and identified’, with 9,000 more still missing, as it announced 29 tonnes of aid had arrived in the eastern city of Benghazi.

“This is a disaster of epic proportions,” said Ahmed Zouiten, the WHO’s Libya representative. “We are saddened by the unspeakable loss of thousands of souls.” An AFP correspondent saw two aid-laden planes, one from the United Arab Emirates and another from Iran, land in Benghazi, more than 300km (186 miles) west of Derna.

A steady stream of vehicles trickled into Derna on a makeshift road as diggers toiled to shift rubble near an apartment block with a missing facade. In Al-Bayda, 100km west of Derna, people worked to clear roads and



Military personnel supervise the arrival of aid supplied by the UAE for survivors of the floods that submerged Libya’s eastern city of Derna, at the airport of Benghazi on Saturday (AFP)

homes of the mounds of mud left behind by the flash flood.

‘Confusion and chaos’

A volunteer in Al-Bayda who is originally from Derna said she

had received word from many people of the ‘confusion and chaos’ of relief efforts in the flood-stricken port city.

“I have also lost a lot of loved ones there,” said Rahab Shneib. “Despite the ongoing efforts

of many humanitarian organisations to bring comfort to the heart, it is important to note that many people have remarked on the lack of organisation.”

Derna resident Mohammad al-Dawali said: “In this city, every

single family has been affected.”

Seir Mohammed Seir, a member of the security forces, said more than 1,500 families had been saved, along with a three-month-old girl.

“Her entire family died, she

was the only one who survived.”

The floods were caused by hurricane-strength Storm Daniel, compounded by the poor infrastructure in Libya, which was plunged into turmoil after a NATO-backed uprising toppled

This is a disaster of epic proportions. We are saddened by the unspeakable loss of thousands of souls

AHMED ZOUITEN

and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The Islamic Relief aid organisation warned of a ‘second humanitarian crisis’, pointing to the ‘growing risk of water-borne diseases and shortages of food, shelter and medicine’.

But the Red Cross and the World Health Organization pointed out that contrary to widespread belief, the bodies of victims of natural disasters rarely pose a health threat.

The spokesman for the eastern-based Libyan National Army, Ahmed al-Mesmari, said the flood had affected ‘over 1.2mn people’.

“Everything was washed away... the waters have completely cut off the roads in these regions,” he said.

The United Nations has launched an appeal for more than US\$71mn to assist hundreds of thousands in need.

“We don’t know the extent of the problem,” UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said on Friday, as he called for coordination between Libya’s two rival administrations. AFP

US woman among 18 NGO staff detained in Afghanistan

Kabul, Afghanistan - Afghanistan’s Taliban authorities have arrested at least 18 staff of an international NGO, including an American woman, accusing them of carrying out Christian missionary work, the country’s leaders said on Saturday.

The International Assistance Mission (IAM) confirmed its staffers were picked up from its office in Ghor province, central Afghanistan, and taken to the capital Kabul.

Security and intelligence forces had been observing the group for some time, Abdul Wahid Hamas Ghor, a government spokesman for the province, told AFP.

“Documents and audios were obtained that showed they were inviting people to join Christianity,” he said, without

providing further details. He said 21 people were arrested, including an American woman.

IAM said in a statement earlier that 18 people, including a ‘foreigner’, were being held and that it had no information about the nature of the allegations. The American woman and two Afghan staff were the first to be detained on September 3, followed by 15 more Afghan employees on Wednesday. “Should any charges be lodged against our organisation or any individual staff member, we will independently review any evidence presented,” it added.

IAM’s website says the organisation is founded on Christian values, but that it does not provide aid according to political or religious belief.

“We value and respect local customs and cultures,” the

Swiss-registered group said in a statement on Saturday.

IAM has operated in Afghanistan since 1966 - through previous royal, communist and Taliban governments - when it specialised in eye care, later branching out into other areas of health and education.

In 2010, 10 IAM medics, including eight foreigners, were shot dead in an attack in remote northern Afghanistan.

At the time, competing theories emerged over the motive for the attack, with police saying it was likely a robbery.

However, two militant groups claimed responsibility, including Taliban leaders who said the medics were Christian missionaries and accused them of working as military spies.

AFP

EU to address migrant surge in Italy

Brussels, Belgium - The EU said on Saturday that its top official Ursula von der Leyen would visit the Italian island of Lampedusa, as Rome called on Brussels for help after a surge in migrant arrivals.

The president of the European Commission, the EU’s executive arm, will head to the island on Sunday with Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, officials from both sides said.

Before that, the interior ministers from Italy, France, Germany and Spain were due to hold phone talks on Saturday afternoon with the EU’s home affairs commissioner on the crisis.

Meloni has urged the EU to act to relieve the pressure after thousands of people landed by boats over three days this week on Lampedusa, just 90 miles (145km) off the coast of Tunisia.

The spike in arrivals has rekindled the debate over how Europe shares responsibility for asylum seekers.



New migrants arrive on a Guardia di Finanza ship, in the harbour of Italian island of Lampedusa, on Friday (AFP)

Lampedusa, Italy’s southernmost island, has long been a landing point for migrant boats from North Africa. But this week its migration centre, built to house fewer than 400 people, was overwhelmed.

Between Monday and Wednesday, around 8,500 people - more than the entire local

population - arrived in 199 boats, according to the UN migration agency.

Images of people sleeping in the open air, scaling the perimeter fence and wandering around the town sparked anger among members of Italy’s hard-right government.

Deputy Prime Minister Mat-

teo Salvini called the arrivals an ‘act of war’, and on Friday, Meloni urged the European Union to do more to help.

“The migratory pressure that Italy has been experiencing since the beginning of the year is unsustainable,” she said in a video message broadcast by her office. AFP

South Africa holds state funeral for Zulu leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi

Ulundi, South Africa - Thousands of people, some holding spears and dressed in traditional warrior clothes, on Saturday attended the funeral of South Africa’s divisive Zulu leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who was implicated in a wave of deadly violence that marked the country’s emergence from apartheid.

Mourners crowded a small stadium in Ulundi, the ancient capital of the Zulu kingdom in eastern South Africa, to pay tribute to the founder of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), who died on September 9 aged 95.

Family members dressed in black, followed by men holding shields and spears, led a coffin



Family members and members of the Buthelezi clan carry the coffin of the Zulu prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, in Ulundi, South Africa on Saturday (AFP)

covered by an animal skin and an IFP flag across a red carpet inside the stadium before it was placed

under a black canopy on the pitch. Earlier, members of the IFP Women’s Brigade chanted ‘He

has led us this far’ in Zulu as guests including President Cyril Ramaphosa and his predecessor Jacob Zuma arrived at the venue, sitting under white marquees opposite an altar. “He treated all of us Zulus as one person. That is why I am here,” said Bonga Makhoba, 31, who said he drove 150km (90 miles) and slept in his car to attend the ceremony.

“I just respect him and I want him to... rest in peace.”

Ramaphosa, who ordered flags to be flown at half staff across the country, was to deliver a eulogy during the service celebrated by the head of South Africa’s Anglican Church.

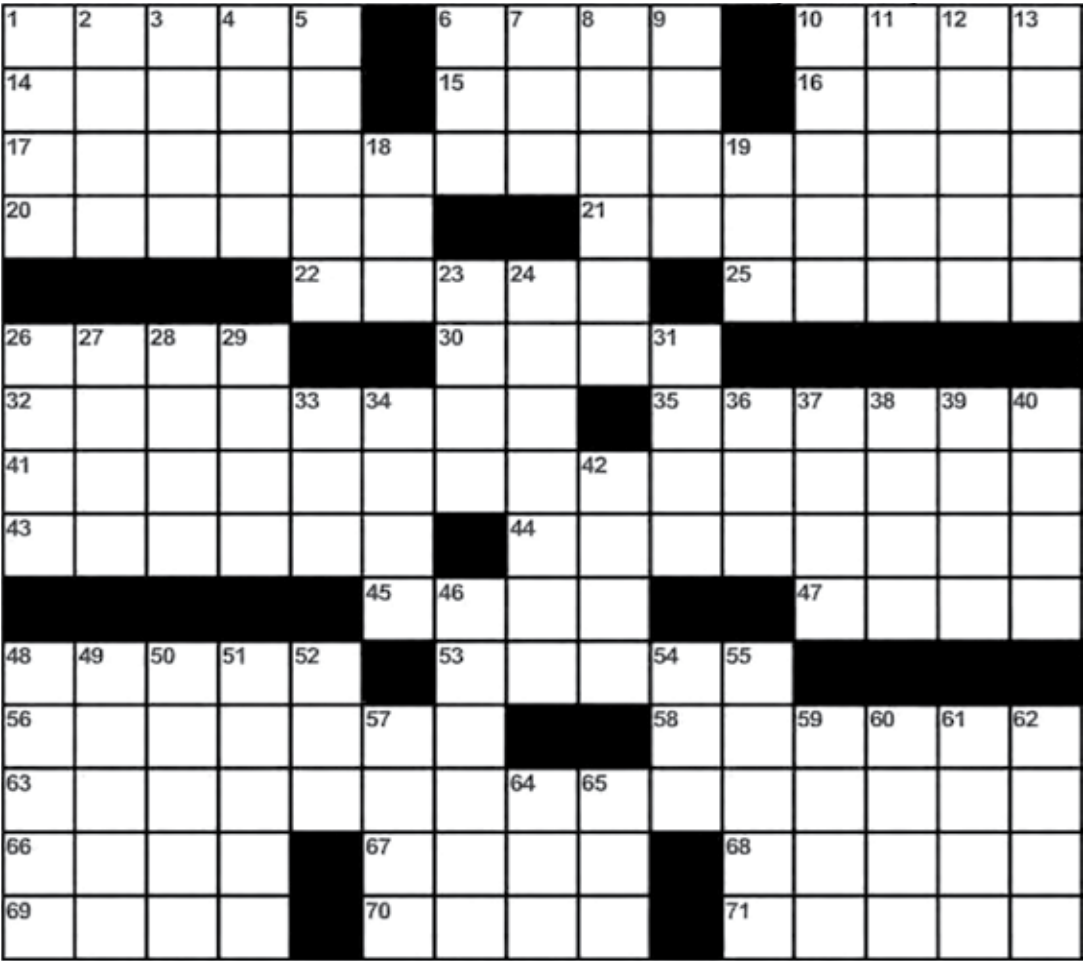
AFP

ON GUARD AMID CLASHES



Indian army soldiers stand guard as a Kashmiri family walks past the Gadole forest of Kokernag in south Kashmir’s Anantnag district on Saturday. Five Indian officers and two suspected rebels were killed in separate gun battles this week in Kashmir, with clashes ongoing, officials said (AFP)

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
- 1) Grads for life

6) Choir recess

10) Wee dogs

14) Main competitor

15) Like a lemon

16) "There's _ day dawning II

17) Wasn't born yesterday

20) Over fast?

21) More eccentric

22) Cranberry product

25) Became white with fright

26) Feels poorly

30) Like a runt

32) One of two writers

35) Ideal place to live

41) What some planes make

43) Is disrespectful verbally

44) Court handout

45) Hearty soup

47) Seven big wet things

48) Genie holders

53) Many-headed mythical monster

56) USA part

58) Overrun

63) Comment

66) Functions

67) "Buona _" (Italian welcome)

68) Car window sticker

69) Salon option

70) Touchy and sensitive

71) Alcohol type

DOWN

1) Vessels of biblical proportions?

2) Dryer accumulation

3) Colored eyeball part

4) Bryn_ College

5) Serbs or Croats, e.g.

6) Fire residue

7) Luau dip

8) Like some living rooms

9) "Cogito_ sum"

10) Coat for severe cold

11) "Wait_ Dark"

12) Fly-catching bird

13) Fencing weapon

18) Caddy contents, some-times

19) Alley_ (NBA pass-shot combo)

23) "Once_ a time"

24) Respectful bow

26) Is directed?

27) A Com Belt state

28) Golden Triangle country

29) Has the evening meal

31) China's dollar

33) First thing into the pool, often

34) Snake sound

36) Dynamite stuff

37) Poems of praise

38) Maine tree

39) Andean civilization

40) Improves, as wine

42) Lecherlike

46) No longer frozen

48) Enjoy immensely

49) Entertain, in a way

50) Parking regulator

51) Light reflector

52) Greed, envy or pride

54) Get _ of (throw away)

55) Battery pole

57) Something to solve

59) Thing on a guitar neck

60) Make impressions?

61) Dance romantically

62) Turnpike tariff

64) Assn. relative

65) Sci-fi gun type
- NOTE PAD
-
- YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE
-
- ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Everyday emails, text messages, or voicemails won't help you to really connect with that certain someone today. You need to use creative communication that has your special brand of flair imprinted on it. Express yourself by writing them a poem, a song, or even a script! Do whatever it takes to make your message stand out from everyone else's. You need to break away from the crowd right now, and you have all the skills you need to do it.
-
- LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Have you had your fill of partying for the time being? If so, then the Universe is offering you some good news. Your alone time is about to increase. Friends and family members have other obligations for the next few days, so it will be just you and your shadow hanging out and looking for fun. Take the time now to come up with a plan for how to fill your time. Pick something you usually can't get others to do, like a foreign movie, sporting event, or challenging hike. Now's your chance!
-
- SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You're about to be hit by an enormous wave of creative energy, so there is no way that you're going to be bored today! You can easily make your own entertainment by either grabbing your zaniest friend for a road trip adventure or going off by yourself to check out that new exhibit at the art museum. The amusing nature of everyday people will also be heightened now, so it's a great idea to go somewhere crowded and enjoy some hilarious people watching.
-
- TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

One of your friends or family members has been acting out of character lately, and it's time for you to find out just what the heck is going on with them. Start a conversation, and be careful not to get to your point too quickly. They will only get defensive. But if you ask them to give you their latest life update, the key information will be divulged soon enough. Chances are they're in a situation that you can help them with, so get ready to be their knight in shining armor.
-
- VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Not everyone is on the same page right now, so you could experience some confusion or tension when working in groups. Just be careful communicating with other people and focus on what you share with them and not on what you disagree about. Be clear with your words, and don't use sarcasm to make your point. If possible, try to avoid working with other people altogether. You can get what you need to get done by yourself. You don't need a helping hand.
-
- CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Recent developments in your romantic life are on your mind big time today. In fact, they're keeping you from giving your full attention to other important matters and people. In order to clear the clouds from your head, you need to talk it out. Verbal communication has long been one of your strengths, and today it will help you get the distractions out of your system. Call up a friend and ask them if you can spill your guts to them. They'll say yes. They always do.
-
- GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

There has been some heat generated between you and another, but, unfortunately, while there's been a lot of flirting, there hasn't been a lot of follow-through! This could be a sign that while this person is indeed interested in you, they're probably a lot more shy than you realize. If you want things to move forward, you're going to have to be the one who puts their foot on the gas pedal. Make your move today. And if you get shot down, at least you'll know not to waste any more time.
-
- LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Even if you're not feeling especially social and outgoing, today is a great day to initiate a conversation with someone you've always been a little bit shy around. They've been waiting for you to open up to them, and they might create a situation where the two of you are alone. When you see them smile, unload one of your classic icebreakers. Don't worry if it's cheesy. Sometimes being cheesy is the best way to break the tension. Remember that eye contact is key too.
-
- AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Trying to always make everything equal between you and your friends is a total waste of time. You have to acknowledge the fact that sometimes you'll give a little bit more and sometimes they'll give a little more. It will all equal out in the end, so stop trying to make it equal now. You could be creating stress and turning a good day into a day full of nickel-and-dime arguments. Life isn't always fair, but it can still be fun.
-
- CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

The trend in your day will be all about unpredictability. Unexpected cancellations, delays, and repeated rescheduling might not be welcome by you, but there is a bright side to all of this chaos: it will free up valuable amounts of time. Sure, you might have worked really hard to prepare for a date or meeting, but try not to be disappointed. All of this preparation won't go to waste. And in the meantime, you can enjoy an unexpected break in your schedule!
-
- SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Right now, the energy around you will support you making a change in direction. And since it's never too late for a new beginning, why not start something new that you've always been curious about? Whether it's a new hobby, relationship, or even a type of food, today is the day to give it a whirl. Mix up your routine today and discover how something new, no matter how minor it may be, can completely transform your attitude about your life.
-
- PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're so busy trying to make everything perfect in your life that you're forgetting how satisfying and beautiful imperfections can be! Today, you need to challenge yourself to step back and take a break from paying attention to detail. Let your eyes focus on faraway ideas instead of immediate minutiae. Get a fresh perspective. You don't have to prove anything now, so relax and remind yourself that being less than impeccable is called being human.
-
- TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE
01. Swahili is NOT one of the two official languages of which of these countries?

A. Ethiopia

B. Kenya

C. Tanzania

D. Uganda
02. Which of these wedding anniversaries is the earliest?

A. Cotton

B. Tin

C. Sapphire

D. Pearl
03. Leonardo di Caprio played multi-millionaire Howard Hughes in which film?

A. Money, Money, Money

B. The Firm

C. The Aviator

D. Gimme, Gimme, Gimme
- Answers: 1. A 2. A 3. C
- KIDS COLOURING
-
- BOGGLER
-
- 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
-
- 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
-

Messi's Miami training ground to be shared with rugby team

Miami, United States - Lionel Messi's Inter Miami training ground is to be shared with a new rugby union team, the clubs announced on Friday.

The Miami Sharks will join Major League Rugby from next season and will train and play their home games on the facility which is part of the same complex as the club's DRV PNK Stadium in Fort Lauderdale.

"The Miami Sharks will join the Inter Miami CF first team, second team and academy teams at the facilities commencing in the first quarter of 2024," the football club said in a statement.

Like Inter Miami, the Sharks will have a strong Argentinian influence with 33-year-old scrum-half Tomas Cubelli their first major signing.

Cubelli made 89 appearances for Argentina and is part of the team currently appearing in France at the Rugby World Cup.

The Sharks will be coached by Argentine Jose Pellicena, former assistant coach of the country's national team.

A more direct connection with the team comes in the form of Inter Miami midfielder Benjamin Cremaschi, whose father Pablo represented Argentina in rugby in the 1990s.

AFP

NICELY DONE!

Mbappe scores twice but PSG lose to Nice for first defeat of season

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain slipped to their first loss of the Ligue 1 season despite a Kylian Mbappe double as an impressive Nice secured a 3-2 victory at the Parc des Princes on Friday, with Terem Moffi scoring twice.

PSG fell behind less than midway through the first half as Moffi found the net following a poor mistake by Mbappe.

The France striker made amends on the half-hour mark, but Gaetan Laborde restored Nice's lead eight minutes after the break and Moffi put another past the ragged hosts.

Mbappe volleyed home to give the reigning French champions hope but Nice held on.

Luis Enrique's PSG, who would have usurped Monaco at the top with three points, instead slipped to third in the early table with eight points from five games, one point behind unbeaten Nice.

"Throughout the match they were fresher than us," said Luis Enrique after his first loss as PSG coach. "Obviously a defeat hurts, we all have to improve, myself included. But I liked our state of mind."

"Of the three goals, two were deflected. Nice played great football, but I'm not worried and I saw the fans support their team even when they were two goals down."

Nice, backed by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, are hoping to bounce back this term from a



Nice's Terem Moffi (R) celebrates after scoring against Paris Saint-Germain in their French Ligue 1 match in Paris on Friday (AFP)

Of the three goals, two were deflected. Nice played great football, but I'm not worried and I saw the fans support their team even when they were two goals down

LUIS ENRIQUE

disappointing campaign last season when they could only finish ninth in Ligue 1.

"Everything must be perfect to get a result here, the opponents must not be at their level, and we must give a complete performance," Nice coach Francesco Far-

iole said. "Beyond the tactical aspects, I saw a team of warriors."

Verratti farewell

Before kick-off, the Parc des Princes bade farewell to Marco Verratti after he ended his 11-year stay at PSG to move to

Qatari club Al Arabi.

Messages from former teammates including Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Thiago Silva were played on the big screen, while Verratti was allowed a lap of honour around the pitch.

AFP

Bayern Munich held by Leverkusen despite Kane finding net again

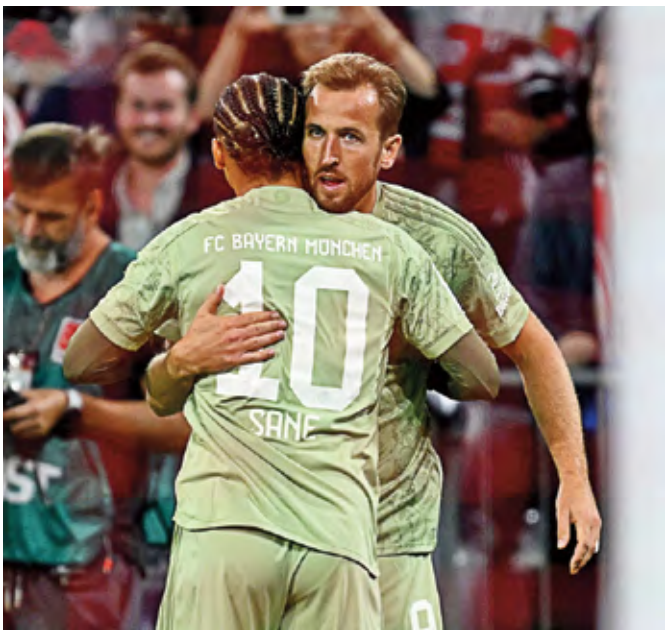
Munich, Germany - Harry Kane's fourth goal in four Bundesliga games was not enough as Bayern Munich were held to a 2-2 home draw by Bayer Leverkusen on Friday, with Exequiel Palacios netting a dramatic injury-time penalty.

Kane opened the scoring just seven minutes in, heading home from close range, but Leverkusen hit back shortly afterwards through Alex Grimaldo's superb free-kick.

Germany midfielder Leon Goretzka looked to have secured Bayern the three points when he scored with four minutes remaining, but a VAR review in injury time showed a foul by Alphonso Davies, bringing Palacios to the spot.

The Argentinian converted to ensure his side remained unbeaten this season.

A frustrated Bayern captain Thomas Mueller approached the referees to complain after the match over "two interesting de-



Bayern Munich's Harry Kane celebrates with Leroy Sane after scoring against Bayer Leverkusen in their Bundesliga match on Friday (AFP)

cisions before the two goals we conceded".

"We're playing a contact sport," Mueller told DAZN, calling the late spot-kick "a very soft penalty".

"In England, the referee wouldn't blow the whistle."

Bayern coach Tuchel agreed, saying: "There was contact but we can't forget that the referee didn't blow the whistle (on the

pitch). "In the 94th minute, in a top game, it's too little. It was super soft."

Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen remain ahead of reigning champions Bayern at the top of the table on goal difference, with both sides on 10 points from four matches.

"A lot happened and for us a draw is good. We want to keep going," Alonso said.

In the week that Bayern unveiled a statue of club legend Gerd Mueller, who scored 365 league goals for the Bavarians, outside their Allianz Arena home, current number nine Kane had his say early.

From a Leroy Sane corner, Kane shed marker Granit Khaka and headed in at the far post.

Despite scoring 19 goals to go unbeaten in their first four competitive fixtures this season, Leverkusen's attack failed to click early and it took a set-piece to get on level terms.

AFP

Turkish clubs take financial hit to attract big names in market

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's biggest clubs lured established stars including Mauro Icardi, Hakim Ziyech and Wilfried Zaha to the Super Lig in the transfer window with a spending spree that leaves them slipping further into the red.

Many eyes have been on Saudi clubs' remarkable transfer outlays which have rivalled those of the top European sides, but Turkish teams have been signing big names under the radar.

Fenerbahce, Galatasaray, Besiktas and Trabzonspor, the four biggest Super Lig clubs, spent almost 120 million euros (\$128 million) between them during the summer window, which ended on Friday evening in Turkey, while only receiving less than 80 million euros in fees.

"It was a fiercely contested transfer window," said Galatasaray Vice-President Erden Timur earlier in September.

Timur said Turkish clubs were forced to change tack due to inflated fees caused by the Saudi



Hakim Ziyech joined Galatasaray from Chelsea on a loan deal

clubs' sudden emergence.

"The average price (for players) multiplied by two or even two and a half, so we had to change strategy," he added.

"We had a spending limit and had to turn to free agents."

Galatasaray has brought in several household names, with former Crystal Palace star Zaha joining on a free transfer, while Ziyech and Tanguy Ndombele have signed on loan deals from

Chelsea and Tottenham respectively. Argentine striker Icardi was snapped up from Paris Saint-Germain for just 10 million euros after a successful loan spell last season, as defender Davinson Sanchez was signed for 9.5 million euros from Spurs.

Fenerbahce signed Cengiz Under from Marseille and Brazil midfielder Fred from Manchester United. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Eric Bailly have arrived at Besiktas on free transfers from Liverpool and Manchester United respectively, while Trabzonspor took on Nicolas Pepe when his Arsenal deal ran out.

Reigning Turkish champions Galatasaray spent 30 million euros this summer, down on the 43 million of the same window last year.

However, the payment of high salaries - more than 90 million euros for the coming season just for Gala and arch rivals Fenerbahce - risks plunging debt-ridden clubs into financial crises.

AFP

Captain Belaid scores as USM Alger shock Ahly to win CAF Super Cup

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - A penalty converted by captain Zineddine Belaid gave USM Alger of Algeria a shock 1-0 win over Al Ahly of Egypt on Friday in the annual CAF Super Cup match.

Nervous and hesitant in the build-up to the spot-kick, Belaid sent goalkeeper Mohamed el Shenawy the wrong way and his kick landed in the corner of the net on 43 minutes.

Even 12 added minutes in the second half was insufficient time

for eight-time Super Cup winners Ahly to find an equaliser in Saudi Arabia.

The Super Cup pits the winners of the two CAF club competitions - the Champions League and second-tier Confederation Cup - against each other in a single match.

This was the first time Ahly lost a Super Cup match when African champions - two previous defeats came after qualifying as winners of secondary CAF

competitions.

USM were Super Cup debutants, and they emulated compatriots Entente Setif, who beat Ahly on penalties during the previous decade.

Ahly must overcome their disappointment quickly as they start their Champions League defence on Sunday against Saint George of Ethiopia in Cairo.

The Egyptian outfit, who have bolstered their attack by signing Moroccan Reda Slim from FAR

Rabat, are seeking a record-extending 12th Champions League title.

USM begin a campaign to win back-to-back Confederation Cup titles with an away match against FAR, the 2005 winners, on September 23.

The latest Super Cup match was staged in Saudi Arabia to "spread interest in the competition", according to the organisers.

AFP



Zineddine Belaid of USM Alger celebrates after scoring against Al Ahly in their CAF Super Cup match on Friday

GAME OF TWO HALVES

Liverpool rally from a goal down to beat Wolves 3-1

Wolverhampton, United Kingdom - Liverpool produced a dominant second-half display against Wolves on Saturday, coming from behind to win 3-1.

Hwang Hee-chan put the home side ahead early against their sluggish opponents at Molineux and they had a succession of chances to extend their lead in a sparkling first-half performance.

But Liverpool flew out after the restart and equalised through Cody Gakpo 10 minutes into the second period.

Jurgen Klopp's men pinned Wolves back from long periods and got their reward when Andy Robertson finished neatly in the 85th minute before an own goal from Hugo Bueno added gloss to the scoreline.

Brighton thump Man Utd

Manchester United's crisis deepened on Saturday as Brighton's Danny Welbeck scored in a 3-1 win against his old club while Manchester City beat West Ham to stay perfect.

Liverpool had a brief taste of life at the top, beating Wolves 3-1 in the early kick-off, while Tottenham scored two goals in stoppage time to beat Sheffield United.

The season is spiralling out of control for Erik ten Hag's United, who started the campaign in



Liverpool's Andrew Robertson (C) celebrates with Harvey Elliott (L) and Mohamed Salah after scoring against Wolves in their English Premier League match on Saturday (AFP)

Brighton's fourth straight league win against United lifted them to third in the table. Ten Hag, in his second season at Old Trafford, now has a huge job on his hands to save United's season besieged by problems on and off the pitch

buoyant mood after ending their trophy drought and finishing third in the league last season.

Some fans dreamed of a long-overdue title challenge but instead they find themselves trailing leaders City by nine points after a third chastening defeat in five matches.

United started brightly at Old Trafford, desperate to put their nightmare start to the season behind them but former youth player Welbeck silenced the home fans in the 20th minute.

A 53rd-minute goal by Pascal Gross gave United a mountain to climb and substitute Joao Pedro made it 3-0 before a consolation for Hannibal Mejbri.

Brighton's fourth straight league win against United lifted them to third in the table. Ten Hag, in his second season at Old Trafford, now has a huge job on his hands to save United's season, besieged by problems on and off the pitch.

Jadon Sancho has been exiled from first-team training after a public spat with the manager while fellow forward Antony has been given a leave of absence to address domestic abuse allegations, which he denies.

Protests continue in the stands against unpopular owners the Glazer family, who appear to have put their attempt to sell the club on hold.



Phil Foden with Pep Guardiola

Guardiola backs Foden's City role after Southgate's England claim

London, United Kingdom - Pep Guardiola insists Phil Foden can play in a number of attacking positions for Manchester City after England boss Gareth Southgate claimed the forward was not able to take a central role for his country.

Southgate said people should "speak to Pep" earlier this week after being asked why he seemed reluctant to use Foden in central areas of his attack.

Southgate's inference was that, as Foden tends to play largely on the flanks at City, it was difficult for him to deploy the 23-year-old centrally in international games.

Foden was below his best at times last season despite City's historic march to Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup glory. Quizzed about Foden's role for his team ahead of the treble winners' trip to West Ham this weekend, City manager Guardiola expressed support for his player.

"I have an incredible relationship with Gareth. A comment from me? It looks like I disagree with him and I completely agree with him," Guardiola told reporters on Friday. "When you play outside it is a completely different role but he knows, I know, that Phil can play in all positions."

AFP

Klopp 'not worried' about possible Saudi move for Salah in January

London, United Kingdom - Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp insists he is not worried about the potential for renewed Saudi Arabian interest in Mohamed Salah when the January transfer window opens.

Salah was reportedly the subject of a £150 million (\$185 million) bid from Saudi Pro League side Al-Ittihad before the Premier League transfer deadline on September 1.

Liverpool rejected the offer but Saudi Pro League director of football Michael Emenalo has claimed the door is not closed on a future move for the Egypt forward.

Klopp is determined to keep Salah but an Al-Ittihad bid of around £200 million has been mooted for January as the Saudi league eyes another marquee signing to join the likes of Neymar, Karim Benzema and N'Golo Kante.

It is a delicate situation that Klopp clearly hoped would be put to bed by the closing of the Saudi transfer window on September 7.

Salah has appeared unaffected by the speculation, scoring twice and assisting twice this



Jurgen Klopp

season, but Klopp bristled when asked if he anticipated more approaches for the 31-year-old in the new year.

"You are kidding me. A week after we close the transfer window, you ask about the January transfer window?" Klopp told reporters on Friday.

"Obviously, you can't wait until December to ask these questions. We will see what happens. Until then, I'm not worried in this moment."

"I didn't even think about it until you opened that wound again. No, I'm not worried."

Klopp has already seen England midfielder Jordan Henderson leave Anfield for the lucrative wages on offer in the Gulf State.

Henderson, 33, recently claimed he did not feel wanted by Liverpool when he returned

from his summer break and decided to join Al-Ettifaq.

Klopp admitted he could not offer Henderson regular playing time this season as he looked to overhaul an ageing midfield.

"We had our talks and I told Hendo I wanted him to stay but we had to talk in these conversations about the possibility of not playing regularly," Klopp said.

AFP



Namibia's fly-half Tiaan Swanepoel tries to tackle New Zealand's scrum-half Cam Roigard during their Rugby World Cup match

Roigard guides New Zealand to 71-3 thrashing of Namibia

Toulouse, France - Live-wire scrum-half Cam Roigard had a field day to help New Zealand to an 11-try 71-3 thrashing of Namibia in the two teams' second World Cup match in Toulouse on Friday.

Roigard scored two tries and set up two more as fly-half Damian McKenzie bagged 26 points to kick start the All Blacks' tournament after an opening 27-13 loss to hosts France in Pool A.

That defeat brought to an end a run of 31 consecutive World Cup pool victories by the All Blacks, who also recorded their largest losing margin (14 points).

It also meant that the three-time champions will likely not top their pool, having finished first in all nine previous tournaments.

"It's a good feeling getting the win today, especially after last week's result," All Blacks captain Ardie Savea told Sky Sports. "Just very proud of the men for having a good week of

prep and then coming here and getting the win like we did.

"There were still a few areas where Namibia put us under pressure but we'll take that."

There was never any drama against Namibia, who came into the game at the Stadium of Toulouse still searching for a first-ever World Cup victory in their seventh consecutive tournament appearance, having opened with a 52-8 defeat by Italy - their 23rd straight loss.

And it was never going to happen against the All Blacks, who avoided a misfiring display like that of a much-changed France team against Uruguay on Thursday.

Going into the game, New Zealand had scored 20 tries in the two Tests between the nations, averaging one every eight minutes of play.

True to form, any resistance was short-lived as Roigard crossed after just 90 seconds after a break by Leicester Fainga'anuku.

Sainz on Singapore pole after Verstappen out in Q2

Singapore, Singapore - Carlos Sainz took pole position in a Ferrari Saturday for the Singapore Grand Prix after a dramatic qualifying session where world championship leader Max Verstappen and his Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez failed to make it into the top-10 shootout.

Sainz's lap of 1min 30.984sec pipped the Mercedes of George Russell and the second Ferrari of Charles Leclerc who was third.

Red Bull had struggled for pace



Max Verstappen

all weekend but nobody expected Verstappen, who has won the last 10 races in a row, to finish 11th fastest in Q2 and be eliminated along with Perez, who was 13th.

Sainz will start from pole for the second consecutive grand prix after also being fastest at the Italian GP two weeks ago.

"A bit like Monza really, we hit the ground running in FP1. I felt very confident all through the sessions and put it together in Q3," said Sainz.

IN A KLAAS OF HIS OWN

Heinrich Klaasen slams 174 as South Africa thrash Australia by 164 runs in fourth ODI to level series

Centurion, South Africa - Heinrich Klaasen slammed 174 off 83 balls to lead South Africa to a 164-run win in the fourth one-day international against Australia at SuperSport Park on Friday.

Klaasen shared an extraordinary fifth wicket partnership of 222 off only 94 balls with David Miller (82 not out) as South Africa piled up 416 for five, their fifth-highest total in one-day internationals, before bowling out Australia for 252.

"To be honest I can't remember the last part of the innings. I'll have to go back and watch it tonight," Klaasen said.

He smashed 13 fours and 13 sixes before being caught on the boundary off the last ball of the innings.

"Some days guys have a day out," said Australian captain Mitchell Marsh, who for the second game in a row was on the losing side after sending in the opposition. "Klaasen was amazing. We got outplayed. Sometimes in international cricket you have to take your hat off."

Alex Carey hit 99 off 77 balls for Australia and was last man out. Lungi Ngidi took four for 51 and Kagiso Rabada three for 41 for South Africa.

South Africa's win tied the series at two matches apiece, setting up a decider in Johannesburg on Sunday.

With the World Cup only three weeks away, Australia had a potentially serious injury concern when in-form opening batsman Travis Head had to retire



South Africa's Heinrich Klaasen celebrates after scoring a century against Australia in their fourth ODI in Centurion on Friday (AFP)

hurt after being struck on the left hand by fast bowler Gerald Coetzee. Australian team management announced that Head was due to go for a scan on Friday night with results not expected until Saturday.

A run spree of such magnitude did not seem likely as accurate Australian bowling and a slower than usual Centurion pitch saw South Africa make relatively slow progress on a ground known for high scoring.

At the second drinks break, the total was 157 for three off 32 overs. The acceleration started

Klaasen was amazing. Sometimes in international cricket you have to take your hat off
MITCHELL MARSH

during a stand of 74 off 57 balls between Rassie van der Dussen (62) and Klaasen.

It went into over-drive when the left-handed Miller joined Klaasen and hit the second ball he faced, from leg-spinner Adam Zampa, for six.

Zampa was hammered for 113 runs off his 10 overs, equalling the record for most runs conceded in a one-day international set by fellow Australian Mick Lewis, also against South Africa, in Johannesburg in 2006.

AFP



Tim Southee

New Zealand's Southee fractures bone to put World Cup in doubt

London, United Kingdom - New Zealand paceman Tim Southee faces a race against time to be fit for the World Cup after dislocating and fracturing a bone in his right thumb on Friday.

Less than three weeks before the start of the World Cup in India, Southee suffered the injury while dropping a catch off England's Joe Root in the final one-day international of the four-match series.

Root, who was on eight at the time, edged Ben Lister to Southee in the slips.

He immediately looked to be in pain and left the field to go for a scan, failing to return.

"An X-ray has confirmed that Tim Southee dislocated and frac-

tured a bone in his right thumb while attempting to take a catch in the 14th over of the first innings," said a New Zealand team spokesman.

"A timeline for his recovery will be established tomorrow when he undergoes further assessment."

New Zealand begin their World Cup campaign against defending champions England in Ahmedabad in the opening game of the tournament on October 5.

Southee, 34, named this week in an experienced New Zealand squad for the tournament, had taken 214 wickets in 156 ODIs before Friday's match at Lord's.

AFP

England's Malan proud to silence critics with century against Kiwis

London, United Kingdom - England's Dawid Malan said he was delighted to silence his critics after blasting a match-winning century in his side's 100-run win against New Zealand on Friday.

Jos Buttler's team scored 311-9 from their 50 overs before dismissing the Black Caps for 211 at Lord's to win the four-match series 3-1.

Malan was last month named in England's provisional World Cup squad for the tournament that starts in India next month.

But some pundits argued his place in the world champions' squad was under threat, with young gun Harry Brook pushing for selection.

Malan, named player-of-the-series after scores of 54, 96 and 127 in his three innings, said it was nice to prove himself.

"I got the call I was going to the World Cup and then obviously there was a little bit of noise leading up to it. But that's part and parcel of World Cups, and part and parcel of being a professional cricketer," he said.

"Until you're on the plane you never really know if you're on it or not. It's satisfying from my point of view to be able to silence



England's Dawid Malan plays a shot during their fourth ODI against New Zealand on Friday (AFP)

some people who always have some negative things to say but my job is to score runs.

"As long as I can keep doing that hopefully I can keep the support from the changing room because I always felt that from the guys that matter inside there."

Malan averages an impressive 61 in 21 ODIs, but said it was hard to win a place in a side packed with white-ball batting stars such as Joe Root, Ben Stokes and Jos

Buttler. "It's incredibly tough and you have to score runs. I guess whenever there is a spot under scrutiny there are always going to be guys pushing for those spots. That's just the territory because those guys have been so good for so many years," he said.

"All I can do is score runs and hope that matters. From a personal point of view I feel I've been pretty consistent in both white-ball formats when I've been given

the opportunity."

Malan, who missed the second match of the ODI series for the birth of his second child, said he would be on baby-sitting duty when he returned home.

The baby is named Dawid - the fifth generation the name has been used. "My wife doesn't like the name so they're calling him 'junior' from what I've been told," the 36-year-old joked.

AFP



Novak Djokovic

Djokovic powers Serbia into Davis Cup quarters

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic returned to the court just five days after his historic US Open title triumph to lead Serbia into the Davis Cup quarter-finals on Friday, while Andy Murray helped Britain edge past Switzerland.

World number one Djokovic eased to a 6-3, 6-4 success against Alejandro Davidovich Fokina to give his country an unassailable 2-0 lead in Valencia after Laslo Djere's earlier 6-4, 6-4 win over Albert Ramos-Vinolas.

It was Djokovic's first appearance in the team competition since Serbia's semi-final loss to Croatia in 2021.

The 36-year-old won a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title last weekend with a straight-sets triumph against Daniil Medvedev in the US Open final.

"I'm on cloud nine with everything that has happened recently on the tennis court," Djokovic said.

"Playing for Serbia, for my country, is something completely different."

AFP

Women's tennis returns to China after Peng Shuai boycott

Guangzhou, China - Professional women's tennis tournaments return to China on Monday, less than two years after the WTA vowed to boycott the country out of concern for player Peng Shuai and risks to its players and staff.

The WTA tournament opening Monday in the southern metropolis of Guangzhou will be the first in mainland China since

2019 - and while no top-20 stars are expected to attend the tournament, it is set to attract plenty of attention.

The WTA suspended activities in China in December 2021, when former world doubles number one Peng briefly disappeared after making - and then withdrawing - accusations of sexual assault against a senior Chinese leader.

Saying the issue was "bigger than business", the tennis body insisted it would not hold events in China until Beijing guaranteed the safety of Peng.

"Given the current state of affairs, I am also greatly concerned about the risks that all of our players and staff could face if we were to hold events in China," WTA chief Steve Simon said at the time.

Peng published a long social media post in November 2021 saying she had been "forced" into sex during a years-long, on-and-off relationship with Zhang Gaoli, a married ex-vice premier of China 39 years her senior.

She has since denied she accused anyone of sexual assault and described the situation as a "huge misunderstanding".

AFP



Peng Shuai



Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan (R) celebrates with Shamim Hossain after the dismissal of India's Suryakumar Yadav on Friday (AFP)

Shakib says Bangladesh 'dangerous' for World Cup after India triumph

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Skipper Shakib Al Hasan on Friday said Bangladesh will be a "dangerous side" in the World Cup after they edged India by six runs for a consolation Asia Cup victory.

India, who had already booked a meeting with Sri Lanka in Sunday's final in Colombo, faltered in their chase of 266 despite a valiant 121 by opener Shubman Gill.

Mustafizur Rahman took three wickets while debutant Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Mahedi Hasan claimed two each as Bangladesh bowled out India for 259 to end their tournament on a high ahead of the upcoming ODI World Cup.

"I think we have got a very good team (for the World Cup)," man of the Shakib, who scored 80 in Bangladesh's 265-8, said after the win. "Lot of injuries, and players coming in and going out didn't help during this Asia Cup. I think we will be a dangerous side in the World Cup."

India rested their key players including Virat Kohli and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah in the

inconsequential clash.

"We wanted to give some game time to the guys, keeping the bigger picture in mind. Not compromising on how we wanted to play this game," India skipper Rohit Sharma said after his first loss in the tournament.

"Get in some players who are likely to play the World Cup. Axar batted brilliantly, but couldn't finish. He showed a lot of character. Not to forget, Gill's hundred was brilliant."

Rohit elected to bowl first to test their batting under lights, which has been difficult in the Sri Lanka leg of the tournament hosted by Pakistan.

Bangladesh slipped to 59-4 before a 101-run stand between Shakib and Towhid Hridoy, who made 54, rebuild the innings and with lower-order contribution posted a total which ultimately proved winning.

Hridoy and Shakib hit back with regular boundaries before pace bowler Shardul Thakur returned for a second spell and bowled Shakib.

MORE THAN A FINAL

Sri Lanka and India eye Asia Cup crown for World Cup momentum

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Rohit Sharma's India face underdogs Sri Lanka in Sunday's Asia Cup final, a crucial momentum-builder heading into next month's ODI World Cup.

The cricketing giants have 13 Asian titles between them and Sri Lanka have a history of sneaking into the tournament's final - to the consternation of fans keen for any showdown between arch-rivals India and Pakistan.

Bangladesh ended India's unbeaten run in the 50-over tournament after edging them out by six runs in Friday's last Super Four match.

Shubman Gill hit 121 but his knock went in vain after India faltered in their chase of 266 in Colombo, where Sunday's final will also be held.

"I don't think it has broken our momentum," Gill told reporters after the narrow defeat.

"We have played good cricket. Sometimes it happens on these wickets. I was set and should have finished off the game."

Gill said clinching India's eighth Asia Cup title would give them "confidence" ahead of the World Cup starting back home on October 5.

India began with a washed-out match in Pallekele against Pakistan, whose fast bowlers rattled their top order and bowled them out for 266 in the only innings possible due to rain.



Kuldeep Yadav took four wickets to help India to victory against Sri Lanka in the super four stage and he would be keen to have a say in final as well (AFP)

Big guns Virat Kohli and returning batsman KL Rahul hit back with centuries in their next outing against Babar Azam's team to rack up 356-2 and crush Pakistan by 228 runs.

India then prevented a gutsy Sri Lankan chase to book their place in the final, but Gill said their opponents were still a threat.

"We will have to pull up our socks and be at our 100 percent to beat them," he said.

'Without our key players'

Sri Lanka, who won the previous edition of the Asia Cup played in the T20 format, came in as underdogs and snuck into the Super Fours with a dramatic win over Afghanistan.

They soon got into their groove on home soil and, despite going down to India, edged out Pakistan in a knockout match for their 11th Asia Cup final.

"We came without our key

players, but still we managed to make the finals," skipper Dasun Shanaka said.

Injuries sidelined Dushantha Chameera and Wanindu Hasaranga, but others stood up at crucial junctures.

Kusal Mendis and Charith Asalanka both hit match-winning knocks to take the team over the line in a rain-shortened match and push a much-favoured Pakistan out of the tournament.

Up-and-coming fast bowler

Matheesha Pathirana and left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage have impressed and lead the tournament's bowling chart with 11 and 10 wickets respectively.

Wellalage rattled India's batting with five wickets including the prized scalps of Kohli and Rohit in their Super Four match on Tuesday.

But Maheesh Theekshana has been ruled out of the final due to an injury which will be a setback.

AFP

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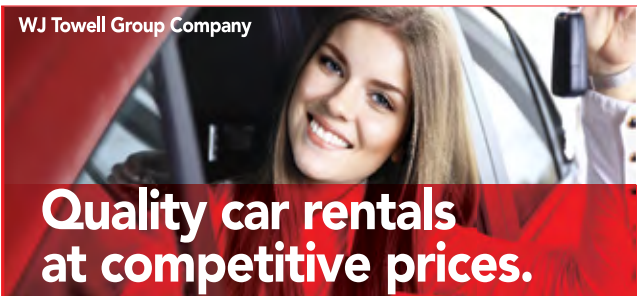
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A giant picture of late French artist Nicolas de Stael (1914-1955), a key figure on the post-war French art scene, at the Museum of Modern Art, Paris

ABSTRACT MASTER

An unprecedented collection of paintings by 20th century abstract master Nicolas de Stael have been gathered for a show that opened in Paris on Friday - including several even his own children have never seen.

The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art includes some 200 paintings by de Stael, a key figure in France's postwar art scene. They include several that have never shown in public because the prolific de Stael was hugely popular with private collectors from an early stage of his career.

The collection has been pieced



Nicolas de Stael's entire life was research, experimentation, and the demand for absolute freedom

PIERRE WAT, curator

Petrograd (now Saint Petersburg) in 1914, de Stael's parents fled the Russian Revolution, only for both to die in poverty and illness in Poland.

Taken in by a Belgian industrialist, he trained in painting against the advice of his adoptive parents and travelled across France and North Africa as a young man, perfecting his skills.

De Stael enlisted in the Foreign Legion in 1939 but was demobilised in 1940 and ended up in Paris where he became immersed in the abstract movement, particularly through a friendship with Georges Braque.

Most of his work was condensed into a dozen years up to his death by suicide in 1955, but was nonetheless marked by several radical changes in style.

"He constantly changed his way of painting, evolving radically towards abstraction from 1942," said co-curator Charlotte Barat-Mabille. The blocky, heavily textured and deceptively simple works quickly proved popular with buyers.

Trips to the south of France and later Sicily helped shift him towards landscapes with bolder, sunnier colours that are among the highlights of the current exhibition.

One stand-out is the huge canvas, 'Parc des Princes' based on one of the first nighttime football matches in Paris, which sold for 20 million euros to a private collector a decade ago.

Gustave de Stael was only one-year-old when his father killed himself. He says studying the work helped him come to terms with his father's decision.

"I think he said everything he had to say, and then he left. He was a very happy and accomplished man as a result. You can't constantly require yourself to improve as you get older," Wat told AFP. He agrees that de Stael was someone entirely dedicated to painting.

"His entire life was research, experimentation and the demand for absolute freedom," he said.

Ever-conscious of his legacy, the painter destroyed countless works, especially from his earlier days. His son thinks there are around 1,100 paintings still in existence with roughly as many drawings.

The exhibition runs at the Museum of Modern Art, in Paris, until January 21.

AFP

Stael's style

RARELY SEEN WORKS BY ABSTRACT MASTER NICOLAS DE STAELE ARE ON DISPLAY AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, IN PARIS, FOR THE NEXT FOUR MONTHS

together from 65 private lenders spread across France, Switzerland, Britain, Belgium and the United States, curator Pierre Wat told AFP.

Around 15 have never been seen by de Stael's children, including masterpieces like 'Flowers' from 1952 - a period when US collectors in particular were snapping up his work.

Born into an aristocratic family in



Paintings by French artist Nicolas de Stael (1914-1955)



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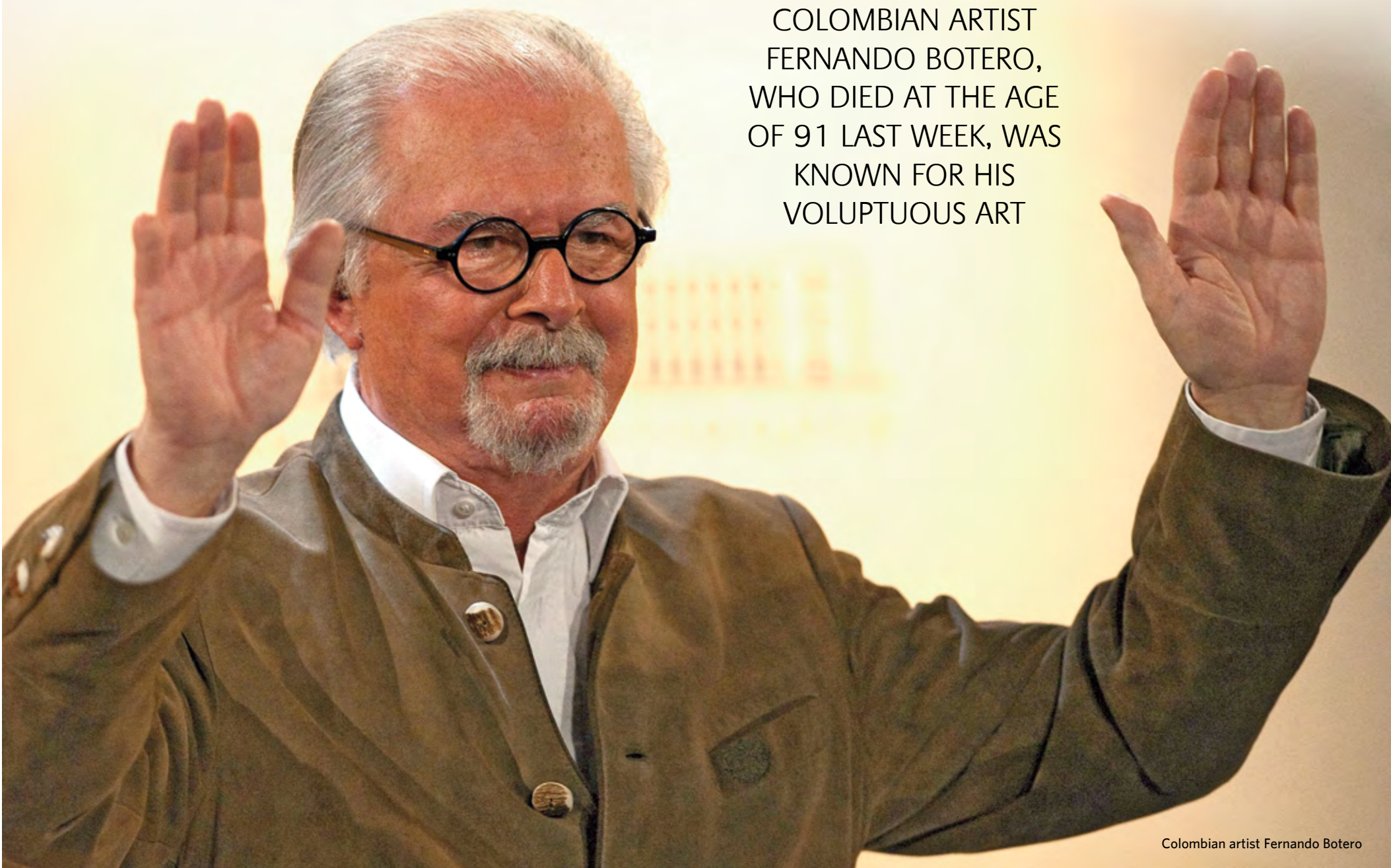
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VOLUPTUOUS ART

'Picasso' of Latin America

COLOMBIAN ARTIST FERNANDO BOTERO, WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF 91 LAST WEEK, WAS KNOWN FOR HIS VOLUPTUOUS ART



Colombian artist Fernando Botero

Colombia's most famous artist, Fernando Botero, 91, left behind an unparalleled legacy of voluptuous depictions of people and animals - his artistic depictions were not just robust in form but also thought-provoking. Botero's works of plump and slightly surreal forms - often with a touch of satire or political commentary - are enormously popular and have been displayed in cities around the world, including Bogota, Madrid, Paris, Singapore and Venice.

"Fernando Botero, the painter of our traditions and defects, the painter of our virtues, has died," president Gustavo Petro posted on social media.

Tributes poured in for the painter, and his hometown - Medellin - declared a week of mourning, with Mayor Daniel Quintero saying his works on display in

that city 'will live forever'. The artist's daughter, Lina, said he died in Monaco, where he had been living, after developing pneumonia in recent days. "He continued painting until the end," despite a battle with Parkinsons disease which made it hard to walk and communicate, she added. Botero - who had been dubbed the 'Picasso of Latin America' - was a passionate and tireless artist, with an oeuvre of more than 3,000 paintings and 300 sculptures.

Even in his later years, he said he was working 10 hours a day. "I work more now perhaps because I know that there is so little time left," he said in an interview with AFP in 2012, the year of his 80th birthday. "I often think about death and it saddens me to leave this world and not be able to paint more. I love it so much."

Mayor Quintero said Botero would be buried in Pietrasanta, Italy, alongside his wife, the Greek artist Sophia Vari, who died earlier this year.

World travels

Botero was drawn to art at a young age and by 15 was selling his paintings of bulls and matadors at the La Macarena bull-fighting ring in Colombia's second-largest city, Medellin, where he was born on April 19, 1932, the son of a modest travelling salesman.

After a first solo exhibition in Bogota in the 1950s, Botero left for Europe, travelling to Spain, France and Italy, where he discovered classical art. He moved on to Mexico, becoming influenced by its muralists, and then to New York in 1960, arriving with "\$200 in my pocket", he said in the 2012 interview.

It was there that he met a German art curator who organised triumphant exhibitions in Germany in the 1970s, launching his name.

"I went from being a complete unknown without even a New York gallery to being contacted by the biggest merchants in the world," he said.

Volume, not 'fat'

The trademark oversized dimensions of his work emerged in 1957 in his painting 'Still Life with Mandolin'. He discovered a new dimension that was more voluminous, more monumental, more extravagant, more extreme.

An admirer of Italian Renaissance art, he does not accept the interpretation that his subjects are 'fat'.

"If I paint a woman, a man, a dog or a horse, I always do with this idea of the volume. It is not that I have an obsession with fat women," he said in an interview with daily Spanish newspaper El Mundo in 2014.

Sculpture became a major component of his work, developed at a renowned Italian center of sculpture, Pietrasanta. He lived in that Tuscan town as well as



Musicians play in front of the sculpture 'Cabeza' (Head) by Fernando Botero, at the Botero Square in front of the Antioquia Museum in Medellin, Colombia



I often think about death and it saddens me to leave this world and not be able to paint more

FERNANDO BOTERO

Monaco, New York and other cities, with regular holidays in Colombia.

Botero said he was inspired by beauty but also the troubles of his native country, gripped by armed conflict for more than 50 years.

In 1995 a powerful bomb placed at his sculpture 'The Bird', in Medellin, killed around 30 people and wounded scores. Botero donated a replica to stand beside the exploded sculpture and called 'Bird of Peace' in 2000.

Some of his work portrays scenes of

Colombian guerrilla fighters, earthquakes and brothels. In a departure, he produced in the 2000s a series depicting abuse and torture at the US-run Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, saying afterward he was driven by shock and anger.

Generous donator

One of the most-sold artists of his lifetime, Botero also gave away much of his production, including about 200 paintings and sculptures to Medellin and many others to the Botero Museum in Bogota.

In 2007 he donated the 25 paintings and 22 drawings of his Abu Ghraib series to the University of California, Berkeley, while many of his sculptures have featured in open-air exhibitions around the world, even travelling to China in 2015.

Experts have estimated the total value of his artistic donations at more than US\$200mn.

AFP



An image of Fernando Botero is displayed at the entrance of the Antioquia Museum in Medellin, Colombia, for admirers to pay floral tributes



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