

Push for improved govt services, employment and tourism growth

H M the Sultan presides over Council of Ministers meeting in Salalah



(QNA)

Salalah - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq chaired a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Maamourah Palace in Salalah on Thursday.

His Majesty the Sultan reviewed a number of topics. Within the context of improved financial performance in the sultanate over the past period, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his satisfaction with the decline in the volume of public debt and the ensuing positive outcomes that contribute to the consolidation of confidence in the local economy and the establishment of an attractive environment that helps activate various economic sectors.

The Council of Ministers took note of the progress made in the field of employment and affirmed that employment tops the national priorities and that initiatives recently endorsed by the Government will contribute to the generation of more jobs for Omani citizens.

To push forward these initiatives, the Council of Ministers endorsed the allocation of an additional RO50mn to enhance the jobseekers employment programme and other employment efforts in the private sector. The Council of Ministers also endorsed the addition (to the said employment programme) of 1.2% of the value of purchase invoices collected from the sectors of oil and gas, government units and companies af-

Employment Initiatives
RO50mn allocated for jobseekers and private sector employment programmes

Social Welfare
Allocation of RO72mn to support Family Income Support Benefit Programme

filiated to Oman Investment Authority. The authorities concerned will devise clear-cut procedures and terms to ensure the sustainability of opportunities that would be generated.

Within the framework of the Royal attention to social and educational aspects, His Majesty the Sultan hailed the efforts made by the departments entrusted with citizens' livelihood conditions. His Majesty gave directives to the authorities concerned to allocate RO72mn within the State Budget to fund the 'Family Income Support Benefit Programme', as part of the

AI Programme
National Programme for AI and Advanced Digital Technologies approved

Government Service
H M instructs launch of electronic platforms for receiving complaints and suggestions

Social Protection Fund's schemes that were announced recently.

His Majesty the Sultan also congratulated students upon the start of the new school and academic year. He prayed to Allah the Almighty to make it a year full of diligence and hard work. His Majesty commended the efforts made by teachers and academics in preparation for the new year, noting that they are entrusted with grooming a generation armed with knowledge and science and inspired by noble principles and values.

Education Funding
RO40mn approved to accelerate schools construction in areas with growing student populations

Tourism Development
H M praises efforts to attract record visitors to Dhofar Khareef

Within the context of a steady rise in number of students in some governorates, the Council of Ministers approved the allocation of RO40mn to be added to the current Five-Year Plan to help accelerate the construction of new schools.

The Council of Ministers approved the National Programme of Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Digital Technologies and implementation of their projects and initiatives. The step is aimed to raise Oman's ranking in the Government AI Readiness Index through the adoption and localisation of related techniques and legis-

lation, enhance the productivity of economic and developmental sectors, and increase the number of nascent specialised technology companies in developing local solutions.

Pursuant to reports about a rise in number of visitors during Khareef Dhofar (monsoon season) to 1mn this year until the end of August, His Majesty the Sultan lauded the efforts made by the departments tasked with implementing development projects, organising activities and programmes tailored to attract tourists to the governorate, which helped make Dhofar Khareef 2024 a success.

His Majesty underscored the significance of studying tourist aspirations and developing services rendered to them in a manner that sustains their numbers in the coming seasons.

After commending the performance of government institutions and their efforts in tackling related issues that constitute national priorities for improving public services, His Majesty the Sultan stressed the need to develop mechanisms for measuring the level of beneficiary satisfaction for government services and aspects related to the streamlining of procedures in a manner that contributes to upgrading the quality of services and improving the satisfaction of beneficiaries. Continued on Page 03

Dhofar sets goal to be major tourist destination, attract 3.2mn by 2040

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has laid out a plan to transform Dhofar into a sustainable tourist destination, with the goal of attracting over 3mn visitors annually by 2040. This announcement was made during the launch of the Marhaba Dhofar initiative last week, which aims to draw more tourists to the governorate throughout the year.

Khalid al Abri, Director General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, said the ministry's vision is to attract 3.2mn tourists by 2040. The Marhaba Dhofar event is primarily aimed at tourists from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, strengthening Dhofar's reputation as a year-round destination. "We are also targeting key markets like Saudi Arabia, India, China and others," Abri noted. Additionally, the ministry is focusing on promoting adventure tourism and business conferences in the governorate.

Abri highlighted Dhofar's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage as major draws for both domestic and international visitors, and pointed out that new infrastructure projects are in the pipeline to enhance the governorate's appeal and support its growing tourism industry.



Dhofar's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage are major draws for both domestic and international visitors

KHALID AL ABR

Addressing the increase in visitors during the khareef season, Abri assured that there has been no shortage of accommodation. The governorate currently has 63 tourist facilities with 6,000 rooms. In 2025, four new pro-

jects will add another 1,000 rooms, further boosting capacity.

At the announcement, Abri also spoke of the Sekaa platform, a free booking service developed in collaboration with Dhofar Municipality. The platform allows tourists to book accommodation directly, ensuring quality standards and eliminating the need for intermediaries. It simplifies the registration and licensing process for property owners, especially after khareef.

This year, khareef saw a 9% increase in visitors with around 1.06mn tourists arriving in Dhofar

between June and the end of August. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, Omani visitors alone numbered 713,105, marking an 8.7% increase from last year. Visitors from GCC countries reached 171,762, while other nationalities accounted for 121,767 tourists.

With its commitment to sustainable tourism and infrastructure development, Dhofar is on track to becoming a major destination in the region, catering to both adventure seekers and those looking to experience its natural and cultural riches.

MEM working on energy transition strategy to achieve Net Zero goals

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate is stepping up its efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) working closely with public and private entities to craft an energy transition strategy. This initiative aligns with Oman Vision 2040, aiming to provide the necessary energy to support economic growth while reducing carbon emissions.

The strategy focuses on key areas, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, hydrogen development and carbon capture. It is built on five guiding principles: ensuring energy security, transitioning to low-carbon energy, developing local capabilities, building a low-carbon economy, and maintaining Oman's competitive edge in the global energy market.

Highlighting the goals of the



Maryam al Hashmi

plan, Maryam bint Mohammed al Hashmi, Director of Electricity and Energy Efficiency Policies and Strategies at MEM, said, "Our aim is to provide the energy needed for economic growth while supporting Oman's drive towards economic diversification, reducing carbon emissions, creating new job opportunities, and building skilled national talent."

As part of the energy transition, Oman plans to increase the contribution of renewable energy to 30% by 2030, 70% by 2040 and 100% by 2050. Additionally,

the plan targets raising energy efficiency to achieve 6MJ/US\$ of GDP by 2050. The strategy also includes the goal of 100% of new car sales being zero-emission vehicles by 2050.

Oman is also setting ambitious targets for green hydrogen production, aiming to produce 1mn tonnes by 2030, 3.5mn tonnes by 2040 and 8mn tonnes by 2050.

Maryam added that energy transition is a shared responsibility, offering significant opportunities for economic growth given Oman's abundance of renewable energy resources.

On hydrogen energy, she informed that visits will be conducted to designated sites for renewable energy and clean hydrogen projects. These sites, identified by a Royal decree earlier this year, will be part of the ministry's wider strategy and the plans of Hydrogen Oman Company, also known as Hydrom.



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'Musandam Winter' set to be major attraction



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The transformative power of AI in higher education



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Death toll from Israeli raid on Beirut suburb rises to 31

Dhofar, Jabal Akhdar road projects to boost connectivity, tourism

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Significant strides are being made in the sultanate's transport infrastructure, with key road projects nearing completion across the country, particularly in Dhofar and Jabal Akhdar.

According to Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT), the Arjot-Sarfait Road in Dhofar is 93% complete and expected to be fully operational by the end of the year.

H E Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Undersecretary in the ministry, informed that the new route, connecting Salalah with the western wilayats of Rakhut and Dhalkut, will extend to the Sarfait border crossing with Yemen. "The road passes through rugged mountainous terrain requiring rerouting to avoid landslide-prone areas," he said. The project, which costs RO11.3mn, is in its final stages



(Supplied photo)

and aims to ensure safer travel while improving road connectivity in the region.

MTCIT is also working on enhancing access to the picturesque region of Jabal Akhdar. A 9km stretch of road between Seih Qatna and Riyad al Jabal Farm is currently under development, aiming to ease the journey for both residents and tourists visiting the area's scenic landscapes.

The new road will support local tourism and development by connecting about 20 villages, rural areas and popular tourist

spots, including the Al Hail viewpoint overlooking the mountain villages of South Batinah.

The route will also benefit Oman's growing adventure tourism sector, with thousands of visitors, including cyclists and motorcyclists, flocking to Jabal Akhdar each year to explore its challenging terrain.

The ministry highlighted the fact that these projects are not just about improving access but also about raising safety standards, catering to the needs of local communities and enhancing the country's tourism appeal.

6-month 'Musandam Winter' set to be major attraction

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Musandam has announced the third edition of 'Musandam Winter' tourist season, set to begin at the end of October and continue until April 2025.

This year the season will feature a diverse array of events, including cultural and entertainment festivals, sports activities and artistic performances. The announcement was made during a promotional meeting titled Musandam Sector, held under the patronage of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Saeed al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam, last week.

Musandam Winter is part of ongoing efforts to promote tourism, bolster the local economy and diversify income sources. The initiative aims to position the governorate as a



(Supplied photo)

unique tourist destination, attracting visitors from around the world with its stunning natural beauty and rich cultural heritage.

The season will enhance opportunities for cooperation and institutional partnerships while opening doors for investment. It will provide marketing outlets for small and medium enterprises,

productive families, entrepreneurs and artisans, allowing them to promote their products and reach a wider audience.

Tourism activities will be varied, featuring adventure tourism such as rock climbing, mountain hiking and ziplining; cultural tourism that highlights the gov-

ernorate's heritage and traditional industries; and recreational and marine tourism, including dolphin watching, diving to explore vibrant coral reefs, fishing trips, rowing and camping.

The governorate is eager to promote its offerings and increase visitor numbers during this season. It aims to engage government and private institutions in organising events, while also involving civil and volunteer organisations in the initiative.

According to the governor, Musandam Winter fosters a new economic culture in the governorate. "Through a diverse array of events, it will enable small and medium enterprises to expand, establish local partnerships and provide entertainment solutions for residents, ultimately enhancing various projects and creating numerous opportunities for the community in Musandam."

Care 24 to launch advanced rehab centre in Ghala

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Care 24, a venture by Al Hakim International, is set to inaugurate its latest facility - Care 24 Rehabilitation Centre - in Ghala.

The opening, scheduled for September 24, will bring together dignitaries and medical experts from all over Muscat.

Announcing the new venture at a press conference on Thursday, Dr VMA Hakim, Managing Director of Care 24, said there is growing need for robust rehabilitation services in Oman. "We are committed to setting the benchmark for exceptional patient care. The state-of-the-art centre will specialise in comprehensive treatment plans for spinal and musculoskeletal conditions, featuring advanced electrotherapy and spinal decompression machines for faster recovery."



(Supplied photo)

Dr Hakim informed that the centre will also offer targeted occupational therapy and provide children with disabilities effective solutions to enhance motor and sensory integration.

Addressing the press conference, Ahmad Subhani, Director of Care 24 said, "There is no greater reward than being able to relieve people's pain." The centre's highly skilled therapists will

provide specialised care for geriatric patients and stroke survivors, improving their quality of life.

Additionally, the centre will offer vital physiotherapy services, preventing surgeries for up to 79% patients with musculoskeletal issues. Its nursing team will extend services to hotels, home stays and academic institutions.

FDO invites bids for shrimp, tilapia market study to boost aquaculture

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), a state-owned company under Oman Investment Authority, is inviting qualified companies to participate in a tender for a market study on shrimp and tilapia aquaculture in the sultanate.

In a statement, the company said, 'The study is part of FDO's mission to contribute to sustainable economic diversification

within the commercial fishing and aquaculture industries.'

As the investment arm of the government and a key execution entity in line with Oman Vision 2040 goals, FDO aims to enhance the national economy by improving the business environment and empowering the private sector to play a significant role in these industries.

Qualified companies are invited to participate in the tender with bids due by October 2.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water

Resources, farmed fish production in Oman reached 5,117 tonnes, valued at RO15.1mn, this year by August. This marks a 7% increase in volume and a remarkable 50% rise in financial value compared to 2023 when production registered 4,767 tonnes valued at RO10.99mn.

The growth trend has been consistent since 2018, with production increasing from 350 tonnes valued at RO700,000 to 3,179 tonnes worth RO6.9mn in 2022. The diversity of farmed species has also expanded, now including 33 varieties such as white shrimp, Omani abalone and various types of finfish.



إعلان فرصة استثمارية Investment Opportunity

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة المستثمرين للمشاركة في الفرصة الإستثمارية
SOHAR Port and Freezone invites investors to the following investment opportunity

No رقم	Tender Ref الرقم المرجعي	Title العنوان
1	SIPC 2024 -030	Petrochemical Bunkering Terminal "Pre-announcement".

SOHAR Port and Freezone is inviting qualified and experienced entities to show interest in the above upcoming investment opportunity.

Interested companies shall comply with the following procedures and steps:

Step 1:

Send an official letter to Procurement and Contracts Department on SIPC.Procurement@soharportandfreezone.com confirming that they are interested to participate into this investment opportunity.

Step 2:

SIPC Procurement and Contracts Department shall send the standard non-disclosure Agreement (NDA) to the interested companies for signature.

Step 3:

Companies shall sign the NDA and return it back to Procurement and Contracts Department within two working days from receiving the NDA .

Step 4:

Upon signing the NDA by the interested companies:

- The SIPC Procurement and Contracts Department will provide the interested companies ONLY with the investment opportunity documents.
- The documents will include a brief of the opportunity and summary of the technical requirements of this investment opportunity.
- The EOI will provide a guidelines for companies to submit their non-binding technical proposals ONLY.
- No financial proposals are expected at this stage.
- The deadline for submission of Expression of Interest is 15 October 2024.

For any clarification on this pre-announcement, please communicate with us on this e-mail address: sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الشركات ذات الخبرة والكفاءة لإبداء اهتمامها بالفرصة الإستثمارية أعلاه.

عليه فإن الشركات مدعوة للإلتزام بالخطوات التالية:

الخطوة الأولى:

إرسال خطاب رسمي إلى دائرة المشتريات والعقود على SIPC.Procurement@soharportandfreezone.com يؤكدون فيه إهتمامهم بالمشاركة في هذه الفرصة الإستثمارية.

الخطوة الثانية:

سوف يتم إرسال اتفاقية عدم الإفصاح من قبل دائرة المشتريات والعقود بالشركة فقط إلى الشركات المعنية للتوقيع عليها.

الخطوة الثالثة:

يجب على الشركات التوقيع على اتفاقية عدم الإفصاح وإعادتها إلى دائرة المشتريات والعقود في غضون يومين عمل من استلام الاتفاقية.

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- سيضمن المستند موجزا للمشروع وملخصا لمتطلبات الفرصة الإستثمارية.
- سيوفر طلب المعلومات إرشادات للشركات لتقديم كفاءتها الفنية فقط.
- لا يتطلب تقديم أي عروض مالية في هذه المرحلة.
- آخر موعد لاستقبال طلبات خطاب الاهتمام هو أكتوبر ١٥، ٢٠٢٤.

في حالة وجود أي أسئلة أو استفسارات تتعلق بالمناقصة، يرجى التواصل معنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني: sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

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Dhofar blooms as 'sarb' season brings new charm

Our Correspondent
Salalah

As the khareef season departs from Dhofar, taking with it its cloudy skies and drizzles, the region is now embracing the vibrant 'sarb' or spring season, which officially began on September 21.

Although different in character, sarb - which continues until December 21 - is no less charming than khareef, offering its own unique appeal for locals and visitors alike.

After the rainy months of khareef, the people of Dhofar are looking forward to sarb, a time for outdoor gatherings under the sun's warmth. The land, once drenched by the monsoon rain, is now blooming with flowers, and the streams coming to life, making this new season a perfect time to explore the governorate's stunning natural beauty.

Dhofar governorate welcomed the astronomical spring season, or as it is locally called 'Sarb', which affects the coastal states of the governorate from Dhalkut in the west to Mirbat in the east.

A popular destination during sarb is Jabjat, a scenic area nes-



A popular destination during sarb is Jabjat, where camping is a favourite activity ...

SHEIKH TARIQ BIN KHALID AL HINAI



ted within the Dhofar mountain range, located in the wilayat of Taqah. Known as the 'Star of Spring', Jabjat has become one of the most sought-after picnic spots, offering tranquility and breathtaking landscapes that stretch as far as the eye can see.

Camping is a favourite activity in Jabjat, with designated sites managed by local authorities to ensure environmental protection. Sheikh Tariq bin Khalid al Hinai, Wali of Taqah, explained, "With the rise in the number of visitors, we have introduced a camping permit system to regu-

late land use and protect the green spaces." He added that the area's tranquility and natural beauty, combined with various activities on offer, make it an ideal family destination, particularly during the sarb season.

In recent years, Jabjat has seen significant development, with the government improving roads, lighting, and public facilities for the residents and visitors as well. Recreational areas have been set up for children, while local businesses, including shops selling traditional products, have added to the area's charm. These

efforts not only enhance the visitor experience but also boost the local economy.

The growing number of tourists has encouraged small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to invest in the region. Mohammed bin Salem al Mahri, who runs a café in Jabjat, shared that sarb brings economic vitality to the area. "The climate during sarb transforms Jabjat into a major tourist hub, creating opportunities for businesses to thrive."

Visitors, like Adel bin Ahmed Safrar, often associate sarb with Jabjat's serene atmosphere. "The sarb season is just as spectacular as khareef, and Jabjat's unique charm attracts people from across Dhofar, especially during moonlit weekends," he remarked.

Another visitor, Muammar bin Awad al Omari, praised the efforts of local authorities in organising the camping areas and supporting small businesses. "This year's arrangements, from cafés to family-run tents, have made Jabjat even more appealing," he noted.

For the promotion of the sarb season, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism last week organised joint sessions of tourism partners from Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Oman's central public health lab to start operations in 2025

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's state-of-the-art central health laboratory will be operational during the second half of next year, with its construction going on full swing.

The construction of the Central Public Health Laboratory is progressing steadily, with 60% of the construction completed, officials informed, adding that this new facility in Seeb is being developed at a cost of around RO18.2mn, covering an area of over 18,000sqm.

Dr Hanan bint Salem al Kindi, Director of the Public Health Laboratories Department in the Ministry of Health, said the laboratory will centralise all of the ministry's reference public health labs, improving diagnostic capabilities and supporting public health and safety efforts.

"Bringing these laboratories together under one roof will enhance our ability to diagnose and respond to health threats more effectively," she explained.

The three-storey building will include modern biosafety level 3 (BSL3) labs for handling high-risk microbes and level 2 labs for testing viruses, bacteria, chemicals, and toxins. It will also feature a wing for receiving samples, administrative offices, a 130-seat lecture hall, and facilities dedicated to various specialisations, including newborn



screenings and environmental testing.

"We've designed the lab with sustainability and safety in mind," said Dr Hanan. She added that the construction ensures biological containment, with access to mechanical systems

The laboratory will serve as a regional hub for public health research, working closely with WHO

through external corridors to avoid any disruption to containment measures. The laboratory will also house a number of important departments, including those dedicated to viral studies, public health quality control, and genetic sequencing.

Collaboration has been key to the project's development. The

design process involved extensive consultation between Omani health officials and experts from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A team also visited several American labs to study the latest advances in laboratory construction, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once operational, the Central Public Health Laboratory will serve as a regional hub for public health research, working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international bodies. The facility will contribute to improving healthcare not only in Oman but also across the region, positioning the country as a leader in health security and research. Dr Hanan informed that the ministry is already preparing national staff to manage the lab's operations through ongoing training and development programmes.

Push for improved govt services, employment

Continued from Page 01

His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to the Council of Ministers and the departments concerned to launch, in each government institution, an electronic platform to be dedicated to receiving complaints and proposals of beneficiaries during 2025.

In view of the solid social harmony that has marked Omani society throughout history, and, based on the deep-rooted Omani values that reject all forms of extremism, fanaticism and partisanship, the Council of Ministers stressed the importance of fortifying the society and consolidating the role of the family in properly raising children on grounds of tolerant principles to

help them avoid deviant ideas or be influenced by them.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan praised the efforts made by personnel of military and security departments in dealing with incidents aimed to undermine security. His Majesty instructed all state institutions to remain vigilant, monitor such phenomena and address them as soon as possible.

Within his review of regional and international issues, His Majesty the Sultan touched on bilateral relations with a number of Arab and friendly countries. He reaffirmed the sultanate's keenness and continuous efforts to cooperate with all countries in a way that benefits all.

Oman to strengthen trade ties at Gulf-Azerbaijani Economic Forum

Muscat - Oman is set to participate in the Second Gulf-Azerbaijani Economic Forum, taking place this Wednesday in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The event, titled 'Sustainability, Investments, Partnerships', is organised by the Federation of Gulf Cooperation Council Chambers (FGCCC), in collaboration with Azerbaijan's Export and Investment Promotion Authority and supported by the host country's Ministry of Economy and the GCC General Secretariat.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman

Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and head of the FGCCC, said the forum aims to strengthen the trade relations of GCC with Azerbaijan. "We're looking to explore the best joint investment opportunities and increase trade exchanges, especially given Azerbaijan's promising economic potential," he explained.

The forum will focus on showcasing key projects and investment opportunities across several sectors in both the GCC and Azerbaijan, including food security, agriculture, energy, water, logistics, and transportation.



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Investments in SEZAD rise 55% to RO6bn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total cumulative investment committed to the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) rose by the end of June 2024 to RO6bn, compared to RO3.865bn in June last year, recording a robust growth of 55% year-on-year. This growth coincided with the commencement of operations at the Duqm Refinery and several other major economic projects within SEZAD this year.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, said that numerous new investment agreements were signed during the first half of this year in various economic sectors. "This increase reflects the significant interest that SEZAD attracts from both local and international companies, as the zone intensifies its efforts to attract more investments," he said.

Akaak highlighted several major strategic investments in the green industries sector, some of which have reached the construction or final design stages, including the Vulcan Green Steel Plant, the Hyport Duqm Project, the Green Hydrogen Company



The growth in investments reflects the significant interest that SEZAD attracts from both local and international companies

ENG AHMED BIN ALI AKAAK

Project (ACME Project), and the Japanese companies Kobe Steel and Mitsui & Co's project to establish a reduced iron factory.

He added that these projects will reinforce Duqm's leadership in the green industries sector and contribute to Oman's goal of

achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. He noted that SEZAD continues to receive investment requests from numerous international companies, with each request carefully evaluated by relevant authorities to assess the added value that these investments may bring.

Regarding the efforts of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) to enhance the services provided to investors, in collaboration with other government agencies, Akaak said, "In the first

half of this year, the authority completed the implementation of the Cabinet's decision to develop and supervise municipal services and public facilities in areas stripped of public benefit status within SEZAD's master plan, aimed at enhancing development in Duqm and stimulating various economic sectors."

He added that OPAZ made the necessary preparations in the first half of this year to manage licensing services and technical affairs, as well as train employees to provide these services. He explained that the total area of the plans removed from public benefit status within the SEZAD master plan is 33sqkm, distributed across nine different plans. These plans accommodate a variety of commercial, industrial, and residential uses.

Akaak further explained that SEZAD also encompasses several investment zones in sectors such as commerce, industry, tourism, logistics, real estate development, and renewable energy. He noted that in the second half of this year, efforts began to provide the necessary services to all these zones.

Commenting on the progress of ongoing projects, Akaak said that the first half of this year witnessed the official inauguration

of several key economic projects, most notably the Duqm Refinery, one of the region's flagship initiatives. The refinery, with a production capacity of 230,000 barrels per day, is expected to transform Duqm into one of the region's most important energy hubs. It will also increase Oman's total refining capacity to approximately 500,000 barrels per day.

He pointed out that the first half of the year also saw the official opening of the multi-purpose fishing port, the largest of its kind in Oman, as well as the launch of the shipping and customs services station and the government berth at Duqm Port.

Akaak also touched on the new projects that became operational in the first half of this year, stating that SEZAD witnessed the commencement of several projects during the current year.

The CEO of SEZAD confirmed that the zone's growth reflects the strong interest from investors both within and outside Oman. He also praised the support SEZAD receives from OPAZ, which provides direct supervision over business development and investment attraction.

OQGN resolves gas pipeline leak in record time

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) confirmed on Thursday that it successfully resolved a major gas leak in record time in the pipeline between Muscat and Sohar.

OQGN reported that the incident occurred on Wednesday evening in the 16-inch gas pipeline connecting Muscat and Sohar.

"We would like to confirm that the leak was contained in record time, with no impact on any of the company's clients and no significant financial impact," OQGN said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

"The containment of the leak demonstrates our readiness to handle emergencies that may affect the continuity of gas flow to our clients across the sultanate," the company added.

CBO cuts repo rate by 50 basis points

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Thursday reduced its repo rate for local banks by 50 basis points, bringing it down to 5.50% from 6.00%.

Oman's rate cut decision followed the US Federal Reserve's move on Wednesday to lower its key interest rate by 50 basis points, marking the first rate cut in more than four years.

Oman's economy operates under a fixed exchange-rate regime, which means its interest rates are closely aligned with US rates. As a result, the CBO's repo rate typically moves in tandem with the Federal Reserve's policy rate.

The repo rate is the policy rate that allows commercial banks to borrow short-term liquidity from the CBO as the lender of last resort.

"The Central Bank of Oman's monetary policy objective is to sustain and maintain its fixed exchange rate. This policy is aligned with the structure and nature of the Omani economy," the CBO said in a statement released on Thursday.

The US Federal Reserve announced its long-anticipated interest rate cut on Wednesday, reducing the benchmark rate by 50 basis points. This lowered the rate from its highest level in 23 years, as the US central bank sought to ease borrowing costs following progress in the fight against inflation.



Telecom sector revenues reach RO409mn in H1

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Total revenues from mobile and fixed telecommunications services in Oman amounted to RO409.260mn during the first half of this year, according to statistics issued by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA).

The statistics showed that mobile communications revenues amounted to RO 249.420mn, while revenues from fixed communications services amounted to RO159.840mn.

Regarding mobile communications services in Oman, the number of mobile phone subscriptions by the end of the first half of 2024 reached approximately 6.940mn, of which 73% were prepaid and 27% postpaid. The number of broadband subscriptions reached approximately 5.084mn.

The number of fixed-line telephone subscriptions increased



by 2% to reach 441,000 by the end of the first half of 2024, while fixed broadband subscriptions increased by 7%, reaching 576,000.

The number of 5G stations in Oman by the end of June 2024 reached approximately 5,431,

distributed across the various governorates of the sultanate, reflecting a 19% increase compared to the first half of 2023, when the number stood at 4,566.

In terms of postal services, the number of outgoing express

postal items reached 229,000 by the end of the first half of 2024, an increase of 21%. The number of incoming items reached 1,470,350, marking a 78% increase, while local items amounted to 1,787,938, an increase of 11%.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Mahmoud bin Omar al Zadjali, head of the Strategic Planning Unit at the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, explained that the Authority aims to cover more than 90% of residential units and projects across all governorates in Oman with 5G services by the end of 2024.

He emphasised that there has been no significant decline in mobile communications services in Oman, as the change in the number of subscribers between the first half of 2023 and the first half of 2024 reflects only a slight and natural variation of one to two percentage points.

Oman has advanced 26 ranks in the Telecommunications Infrastructure Index, a key component of the e-Government Development Index issued by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Oman now ranks 22nd globally, up from 48th in 2022.

COMMENTARY

The transformative power of AI in higher education

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping various sectors, and education is no exception. As we enter a new era of teaching, learning, and research, AI's transformative potential will profoundly impact higher education institutions.

One of AI's most promising applications in education is personalised learning. Adaptive learning systems utilise AI algorithms to analyse student performance in real time, adjusting course content accordingly. These systems identify knowledge gaps, suggest resources, and predict future performance, creating unique and responsive learning paths for each student.

We are also witnessing the emergence of AI-based tutoring systems that provide tailored one-on-one support. These virtual tutors offer instant feedback, explain complex concepts in various ways, and adapt their teaching styles to match individual learning abilities and preferences, resulting in a more engaging and effective learning experience.

At the admin level, AI empowers ed-

ucators and administrators with tools to streamline processes and enhance decision-making. In admissions, AI-powered systems can analyse video interviews and application essays, aiding universities in making more informed decisions. Administrative tasks, such as course scheduling and resource allocation, can be optimised using AI algorithms, freeing up staff time for student support.

In the classroom, AI is revolutionising content creation and delivery. GenAI leverages natural language processing to provide instant feedback on written assignments, while intelligent content platforms generate customised textbooks by compiling information from various sources. These technologies save educators time and ensure that learning materials are up-to-date and tailored to specific course objectives.

In research, AI is pushing new boundaries. Machine learning algorithms analyse vast datasets at unprecedented speeds, accelerating discoveries in fields ranging from ge-



DR ALI AL BIMANI

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nomics to climate science. AI also transforms collaborative research by helping scholars discover relevant papers and identify potential collaborators across disciplines, speeding up the research process and fostering interdisciplinary innovation.

Beyond academics, AI supports students' well-being and career prospects. AI-powered career guidance systems analyse skills and interests to suggest potential career paths and optimise resumes for specific job applications. Mental health support is another crucial area where AI is making a difference. AI-powered chatbots offer 24/7 mental health support, using cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques to help

students manage stress and anxiety. While these tools don't replace human counselors, they provide an accessible first line of support.

Bridging education-industry gap

However, AI is complex, and many institutions will struggle to find their footing in a highly dynamic sector. That is why bridging the gap between education and the rapidly evolving tech sector requires strategic partnerships between educational institutions, governmental bodies, and industry leaders. Initiatives like the Huawei ICT Academy, collaborating with universities globally, exemplify how industry

and academia can collaborate to benefit students. These programmes equip students with practical tools, resources, and opportunities needed to thrive in our dynamic digital landscape.

Realising this potential requires sustained investment in technology and human capital. Universities must upgrade their digital infrastructure and provide ongoing training for faculty and staff to integrate AI effectively. Curricula across disciplines must evolve to incorporate AI literacy, ensuring that graduates are prepared for a workforce increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.

For instance, several government bodies in Oman play a pivotal role in harnessing AI's transformative power. The Ministry of Education is integrating AI into the curriculum to foster digital literacy from an early age, preparing students for a tech-driven future. Similarly, The Ministry of Higher Education is partnering with global tech leaders to bring advanced AI research and training to Omani universities, ensuring that higher educa-

tion aligns with industry needs.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology is spearheading initiatives to create a robust digital infrastructure, enabling seamless AI implementation across sectors. Together, these ministries are driving a comprehensive strategy to position Oman at the forefront of the AI revolution, promoting innovation, economic growth, and societal progress.

The future of education is here, and it's powered by AI. As we navigate this exciting frontier, we must remain committed to the core values of education and research - fostering critical thinking, creativity, and human connection - while harnessing the transformative power of artificial intelligence to build a more sustainable and inclusive world.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Media Publication

US Fed cuts rate for first time since 2020

Washington, US – For the first time in more than four years, the US Federal Reserve is moving to push down borrowing costs, aiming to bolster the economy and prevent unemployment from rising.

The Federal Reserve cut its influential fed funds rate 50 basis points Wednesday to a range of 4.75% to 5%. The first rate cut since March 2020 marked a shift in strategy from the Fed, which had held its key interest rate at a two-decade high for 14 months before Wednesday.

Fed officials had signalled that the rate cut was coming, but there was a debate among forecasters on whether it would be a 25- and 50-point reduction. With inflation falling and nearing the Fed's goal of a 2% annual rate, policymakers on the Federal Open Market Committee are shifting their strategy away from inflation-fighting mode to preserve the job market.

Fed officials expect to make further cuts in the coming months, reducing the rate by an additional 50 basis points over their next two meetings, according to a survey of the committee's members released Wednesday alongside the policy announcement.

More aggressive approach

In choosing the larger of the two rate cut options on the table, Fed officials indicated inflation was running low enough, and the



risks to the labour market great enough, to justify a more aggressive cut. The central bank's "dual mandate" from Congress requires it to use monetary policy to keep inflation low while preventing severe unemployment.

"The Committee has gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2%, and judges that the risks to achieving its employment and inflation goals are roughly in bal-

ance," the FOMC said in a statement. "The economic outlook is uncertain, and the Committee is attentive to the risks to both sides of its dual mandate."

The more central bankers lower the fed funds rate, the more downward pressure it puts on interest rates for mortgages, credit cards, auto loans, and other credit, encouraging borrowing and spending by businesses and individuals. Fed

officials must balance the need to boost the economy against the risk of reigniting the high inflation that roiled the economy and household budgets in the wake of the pandemic.

Balancing act

The Fed's rate-hiking campaign, which began in March 2022, was meant to slow down the economy and quash inflation. As of August, consumer prices had

risen 2.5% over the year, down from a 9.1% annual inflation rate in June 2022, the highest in more than 40 years.

Subduing inflation came at a cost to the economy: high interest rates have made mortgages unaffordable for many would-be homebuyers. Especially concerning for the Fed, employers have slowed down hiring amid higher borrowing costs for business loans and more consumers

Biden expects more rate cuts, says work 'not done'

Washington, US – US President Joe Biden said Thursday that he expects more interest rate cuts from the Federal Reserve, noting the central bank's work is not finished yet.

Biden said the Fed's latest rate cut is good news for American consumers, meaning that the cost of buying a home or a car would be going down and lower borrowing costs will support economic growth.

He highlighted that annual consumer inflation peaked at 9.1% in June 2022 but it is down closer to the Fed's goal of 2% at the moment. He said inflation in the US has come down faster than almost any other advanced economies in the world.

"That doesn't mean our work is done," he said, adding "I'm not here to take a victory lap."

"Let's be clear: the Fed lowering interest rates isn't a



US President Joe Biden

declaration of victory. It's a declaration of progress to signal we've entered a new phase of our economy and our recovery," he said.

Biden emphasised that monetary loosening would provide greater confidence for businesses and more investment for economic expansion.

"Interest rates are going to be coming down, and they're expected to go down further, and that's a good place for us to be now," he added.

Anadolu Agency

pinching pennies and struggling to repay credit card debt.

The unemployment rate rose to 4.2% as of August from 3.4% in January, which had been tied for a 50-year low. Although un-

employment isn't high by historical standards, it has risen fast enough to set off a typically reliable warning that a recession is imminent.

(Source: Investopedia.com)

Bank of Japan keeps rates on hold

Tokyo, Japan - The Bank of Japan (BOJ) left interest rates unchanged Friday as its chief said the central bank still has time to assess when it needs to raise borrowing costs further, a comment that weakened the yen by tempering market speculation about another possible rate hike within the year.

The BOJ stood pat after it raised the target for the overnight call rate to around 0.25% in July from a range of zero to 0.1% in an effort to dial back its decade-long unorthodox monetary easing amid signs of an economic recovery.

Economic indicators have so far met with the bank's expectations, BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda told a press conference after a two-day policy meeting, underscoring that the BOJ will increase interest rates if the economy and prices move on track.

But he also said the upside risks to prices due to a weak yen is waning following the currency's recent appreciation, and that "we now have more time to assess" if further monetary tightening is necessary.

Following the comment, the yen weakened to the 143 zone against the US dollar as market



BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda underscored that the BOJ will increase interest rates if the economy and prices move on track

players took it as a sign that an additional rate hike will come later than expected.

"The majority of market players had expected the next rate hike to take place in December," said Tomoichiro Kubota, senior market analyst at Matsui Securities Co. "But Mr. Ueda's remarks today prompted some of them to think that maybe it will be delayed until early next year."

The latest decision to keep the policy rate unchanged was en-

dorsed by all its board members, the BOJ said.

The July rate hike, together with follow-up remarks by Ueda about a possible further rate hike within the year, caught market participants off guard and caused the yen to surge, leading to the Nikkei stock index's largest single-day fall in early August.

Following the rapid market moves, BOJ Deputy Governor Shinichi Uchida said the bank would not raise rates further until

markets regain calm, in an apparent bid to reassure investors.

At the press conference, Ueda emphasized that markets "remain in an unstable situation," while adding that the BOJ will closely monitor how overseas economies fare, including in the United States.

The BOJ entering a cycle of less accommodative policy contrasts with other major central banks, which have started loosening their monetary grip to support economic growth.

The US Federal Reserve on Wednesday cut its key rate for the first time in over four years, joining the European Central Bank and the Bank of England, among major banks, in monetary easing.

The opposing trends in Japan and other major economies in monetary policy are expected to narrow the interest rate gap between them, potentially supporting the yen and triggering a significant rebound following years of depreciation.

At the July press conference, Ueda cited the yen's weakness as a factor behind the rate hike, saying the weakening currency could cause prices to rise more than the bank's expectations.

Kyodo News



BoE keeps rates unchanged at 5%

London, UK – The Bank of England (BoE) kept its bank rate steady at 5% during the Thursday meeting, in line with economists' expectations.

The decision to maintain the policy rate was backed by a clear majority, with eight members voting in favour, while only one member, Swati Dhingra, advocated for a 25 basis point reduction.

The Committee also voted unanimously to reduce the stock of UK government bond purchases held for monetary policy purposes, financed by the issuance of central bank reserves, by 100bn pounds over

the next 12 months, bringing the total to 558bn pounds.

In August, the BoE had lowered rates by 25 basis points, as annual inflation fell to 2% in July.

Despite pressure on the eve of the meeting, following the Federal Reserve's sharp 50 basis point rate cut a day earlier, UK policymakers opted to keep rates unchanged amid the "absence of material developments."

"Inflation has eased, the economy is evolving as forecast. A gradual approach to removing policy restraint remains appropriate," the BoE

stated.

Headline economic growth is expected to return to its underlying pace of around 0.3% per quarter in the second half of the year.

Based on a broad set of indicators, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) judged that the labour market continued to loosen but remained tight by historical standards.

The UK's annual inflation rate rose to 2.2% in August, while core inflation—which excludes energy and food costs—rose to 3.6%, slightly surpassing the forecast of 3.5%.

(Source: Euronews.com)

EU and China fail to deliver breakthrough on electric cars dispute

Jorge Liboreiro

A high-profile attempt between the European Commission and the Chinese government to solve the ongoing dispute around battery electric vehicles (BEVs) failed to deliver a breakthrough, as differences remain entrenched.

Hope, however, is not yet lost as both parties vowed to intensify negotiations. Brussels will offer Chinese carmakers a new chance to set minimum prices for their products.

"Both sides agreed to intensify efforts to find an effective, enforceable and WTO-compat-

ible solution to the BEV case... without prejudice to the EU investigation and its deadlines," Valdis Dombrovskis, the Commission's executive vice president in charge of trade, said after a "constructive" meeting with Wang Wentao, China's minister of commerce, on Thursday.

Brussels has accused Beijing of lavishing its BEVs with subsidies to artificially lower their retail price and push European competitors out of the lucrative market. Following a months-long investigation, the Commission found public money spread across the entire supply chain, creating a risk of unsustainable



economic losses for the EU industry.

The executive then proposed a raft of additional import tariffs

that will apply to BEVs made in China, including those assembled by Western firms in the country. The proposed duties,

ranging from 7.8% to 35.3%, according to the brand and their level of cooperation with the investigation, will come on top of the existing 10% rate.

The top-up is supposed to ensure fairer competition and close the price gap between EU and Chinese manufacturers.

Member states need to ratify the tariffs in a vote that should happen sometime before November. If they do so, the rates will become permanent for five years.

From the onset, Beijing has adopted an antagonising position in public, calling the Commission's inquiry a "naked

protectionist act" that "constructed and exaggerated the so-called subsidies." In a tit-for-tat, it launched several probes against sensitive European exports, such as pork, brandy and dairy.

Behind the scenes, however, Chinese officials have sought to achieve a negotiated solution to the dispute and shield domestic companies from the steep tariffs.

This effort reached a peak on Thursday when Minister Wang met Vice-President Dombrovskis in Brussels.

During the encounter, Dombrovskis defended the Commission's proposal as being "based

strictly on facts and evidence" and solely intended to "compensate" for state subsidies, according to a spokesperson. Dombrovskis censured Beijing's retaliatory probes into pork, brandy and dairy as "unwarranted" and called for them to be "terminated."

In a readout, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce reaffirmed its willingness to achieve a solution through "friendly dialogue and consultation" but warned of reprisals to protect domestic companies "if the EU insists on implementing unreasonable tax measures."

(Source: Euronews.com)

FDO celebrates success at Russian expo

Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), a pioneer in advancing Oman's fisheries sector, has expressed satisfaction over its successful participation in the Seventh Global Fishery Forum & Seafood Expo Russia 2024, held in St Petersburg from September 17 to 19.

The event showcased FDO's unwavering commitment to sustainable fishing practices, cutting-edge processing and logistic facilities, and enticing investment opportunities, solidifying its position as a global leader in the seafood industry.

Drawing the attention of over 30,000 visitors from over 70 countries, the expo gathered industry leaders, investors, and traders from around the world, creating a dynamic space for networking, collaboration, and business development. FDO and its subsidiaries - SIMAK, Marsa Al Duqm, Blue Waters, and Oman Pelagic - highlighted the diverse range of Omani seafood products and services, attracting substantial interest from key players in the industry.

"Our participation this year was a resounding success. We had the opportunity to engage with numerous potential partners and investors, further elevating Oman's reputation as a major fish producer and exporter," Salim al Mamari, Investments Director of FDO, commented.

"The event reinforced our commitment to sustainability and highlighted our innovative



investments in aquaculture and fishing technologies, setting the stage for future growth."

FDO's exhibition showcased an impressive portfolio of fresh and frozen seafood, state-of-the-art processing technologies, and sustainable fishing methods. Presentations and discussions at the FDO booth drew considerable attention, particularly to Oman Pelagic's advanced fishing vessels and Blue Waters' aquaculture technologies, which were lauded for their eco-friendly and efficient production processes.

SIMAK's state-of-the-art seafood processing facility, located in the Duqm Special Economic Zone, was a key attraction at the expo. SIMAK produces over 100mn cans annually, with a processing capacity of 30,000 tonnes, positioning itself as a global leader in sustainable seafood processing. Visitors were impressed by the eco-friendly practices adopted, including solar energy utilisation and water conservation efforts.

Located near major ports, SIMAK ensures fast, efficient

distribution to international markets, and its demonstration of high-grade seafood products at the expo led to several inquiries from European buyers looking for sustainably sourced products and white labelling opportunities.

OSARA highlighted its presence by showcasing a variety of Omani shrimp products, drawing significant attention from Russian and European markets. OSARA takes pride in supplying premium and sustainably farmed shrimp from the Arabian Sea coastline of Oman. The OSARA

shrimp farm spans over 700 hectares and is designed to produce over 10000 tonnes of Pacific White Shrimp annually.

The facility benefits from an ample supply of pristine seawater, untouched by industrial or chemical activities, which enhances product safety and quality. OSARA's commitment to responsible aquaculture practices and high environmental standards resonated with global buyers, sparking discussions about future collaborations. OSARA has been instrumental in

solidifying FDO's reputation as a leader in sustainable shrimp farming and expanding Oman's footprint in international seafood markets.

Marsa Al Duqm presented its cutting-edge development of Oman's largest fishery port, set to be fully operational by 2026. The 7.5-square-kilometer port will feature a 10.5-meter dredged channel and modern infrastructure, including a fishing harbor, processing and packaging units, and cold storage facilities.

Attendees were particularly

impressed by the port's potential to enhance operational efficiency and drive economic development within Oman's fisheries sector. Marsa Al Duqm's infrastructure is expected to streamline the logistics of seafood distribution, solidifying Oman's position as a leading exporter of high-quality seafood.

Blue Waters, FDO's aquaculture subsidiary, captivated audiences with its advanced aquaculture technologies. It ensures a steady supply of high-quality, nutrient-rich seafood.



NBO empowers local talents across public and private sectors

In its ongoing commitment to national development and the empowerment of local talent, National Bank of Oman (NBO) continues to celebrate the success of its training initiatives through the NBO Academy of Excellence (AOE).

As one of the first academies established within Oman's banking sector, AOE has fostered growth and innovation across the public and private sectors.

NBO's efforts align closely with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to build a diversified and sustainable economy driven by local talent, innovation, and cross-sector collaboration. The bank's initiatives include specialised training programmes designed to meet the unique needs of professionals in government and private sectors alike.

These programmes focus on enhancing financial literacy, nurturing a culture of innovation, and developing essential skills that drive growth and excellence.

Hassan Abdul Amir Shaban, General Manager & Chief Government Banking and Alliances Officer at NBO, said, "Our goal is to strengthen

Our goal is to strengthen strategic professional relationships with our clients across various sectors, enhancing partnerships

HASSAN AMIR SHABAN

strategic professional relationships with our clients across various sectors, enhancing partnerships and collaboration with NBO. Through these efforts, we aim to exchange knowledge and expertise, contributing to the realisation of Oman Vision 2040, which focuses on developing national talent and fostering economic resilience."

NBO remains committed to being a key partner in achieving national objectives, contributing to creating a knowledge-based economy powered by modern technology. The bank views the empowerment of Omani youth as central to its role in shaping the future.

Nesto Hypermarket opens Bilad Mall in Mabela

Nesto Hypermarket, one of the fastest-growing retail chains in the GCC, proudly announced the grand opening of its 17th outlet in Oman and 129th globally, with the launch of Bilad Mall on Salam Street in Mabela.

The inauguration ceremony took place on September 18, with the chief guest, H H Asiyed Faher Fatik al Said, leading the ribbon-cutting event.

Bilad Mall spans an impressive 215,000sqft and is designed to provide a world-class shopping experience with its opulent interiors and modern store layout. The outlet features 40 checkout counters, over 750 parking slots, and a wide range of facilities, making it a premier destination for families and shoppers in the region.

The mall also includes the exclusive Nesto Home section, offering a variety of home essentials, along with multiple



dining options, including both vegetarian and non-vegetarian restaurants. A kids' play centre, branded as Fun today, adds an entertainment element for families with young children.

Speaking at the event, Haris

Palollathil, Regional Director, Nesto Hypermarket, said, "We are thrilled to bring Bilad Mall to the heart of Mabela. This is a significant milestone in Nesto's journey, and we are committed to delivering unmatched retail

experiences with top-quality products and services for the local community."

Bilad Mall is not just a shopping centre; it's a mini-mall that provides a one-stop solution for all family needs, hosting a variety

of tenants offering diverse retail services. Looking ahead, Nesto is planning to open five more projects within the next two years, contributing to a total of seven projects currently in the pipeline for Oman.

Qatar Airways becomes official partner of UEFA

Qatar Airways has become partner of the UEFA Champions League in a deal that runs until 2030, further solidifying its mission in uniting people through the power of sport.

The World's Best Airline, as voted by Skytrax in 2024, builds on the success of sponsoring UEFA EURO 2020 and UEFA EURO 2024 in an agreement which includes sponsorship rights to the UEFA Super Cup, UEFA Youth League and UEFA Futsal Champions League.

Known for its electrifying competition and showcase of top tier talent, the UEFA Champions League captivates millions of football fans around the world each season. This premier tournament not only represents the pinnacle of European club football but also embodies the values of excellence, perseverance, and international unity principles that resonate deeply with Qatar Airways' own mission and values.

The new UEFA Champions



League format features a thrilling 36-team league phase, which perfectly aligns with Qatar Airways' connectivity with Europe, serving over 50 European destinations from its home and hub at Hamad International Airport in Doha - The World's Best Airport as voted by Skytrax in 2024. This new partnership underscores the

airline's dedication to delivering world-class services and creating memorable experiences for football fans in Europe and across the globe, further solidifying its position as the World's Best Airline.

To celebrate the partnership, the Qatar Airways Privilege Club will be offering UEFA Champions League fans discounts of up to

12% on flight fares along with exclusive ticket promotions. Fans will also have access to exclusive promotions and bespoke travel solutions, such as UEFA Champions League travel packages, all designed to celebrate the spirit of sport while delivering unforgettable experiences to football enthusiasts worldwide.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Badr Mohammed al Meer said, "We are thrilled to join forces with UEFA. As the Official Airline Partner of the UEFA Champions League, Qatar Airways is dedicated to transporting thousands of fans to this esteemed competition. Our partnership with the UEFA Champions League not only strengthens our connection with Europe but also aligns perfectly with our vision of fostering unity and celebrating excellence. This partnership highlights our commitment to connecting people worldwide through our network of over 170 destinations, while supporting this competition."

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin, said, "Qatar Airways and UEFA are united in their passion for sports and global business excellence. This shared commitment is the foundation of our long-lasting partnership as we strive to provide football fans with exceptional experiences."

LuLu on expansion spree in Oman; opens new hypermarket in Mudhaibi

Lulu Hypermarket, Oman's leading retailer has further expanded its presence in Oman with the grand opening of its newest store in Samad Al Shan, Mudhaibi on September 18.

The inauguration of the outlet was held under the patronage of Sheikh Saud Bin Mohammed bin Saud al Hinai, wali of Al Mudhaibi, in the presence of senior government officials in the sultanate, Lulu group chairman Yusuff Ali M A and other dignitaries.

Spanning over 40,000sqft, the Mudhaibi store is the 31st store of Lulu in Oman. It offers a wide range of products across multiple categories, including groceries, fresh produce, electronics, and more.

The spacious layout and modern design provide a comfortable shopping experience for customers.

The new store features an improved décor with multiple check-out counters and liberal parking space to add to a relaxed shopping experience.

Speaking at the launch, Yusuff Ali emphasised the company's commitment to serving the Omani community and contributing to the local economy.

"We are extremely grateful for the continued support of the Government of Oman and the



people of this beautiful country," he said.

"We are committed to fostering a strong partnership with the Omani community and con-

tributing to the nation's economic growth. Our expansion into Mudhaibi is a testament to this commitment.

"By prioritising In Country

Value in our operations, we aim to support local businesses, create employment opportunities, and develop a sustainable supply chain. We believe that this ap-

proach will not only benefit our customers but also contribute to the overall development of Oman," he added.

The expansion of Lulu Hyper-

market reflects the company's strategic approach to reaching new markets and meeting the evolving needs of its customers. The new store is expected to be-

We are extremely grateful for the continued support of the Government of Oman and the people of this beautiful country. We are committed to fostering a strong partnership with the Omani community

YUSUFF ALI

come a popular destination for residents in the area, offering a wide variety of products, competitive prices, and excellent customer service.

Lulu Hypermarket's commitment to providing exceptional value and service is evident in its ongoing expansion.

The Mudhaibi store reflects the company's dedication to enhancing the shopping experience and contributing to the economic development of the region.

Present also on the occasion were Ananth A V, Director Oman, Shabeer K A, Regional Director, Oman of the Lulu Group and other officials.

Six Senses Zighy Bay in Oman ranked 45th among world best

Six Senses Zighy Bay has been named No. 45 in the global ranking of The World's 50 Best Hotels 2024. Following a successful debut in 2023, the second edition of The World's 50 Best Hotels has been announced at a captivating awards ceremony in London, and includes industry-defining hotels from across six continents worldwide.

This evening's awards ceremony once again brought together the global travel and hospitality community to celebrate the world's best hotels. Held at the historic Guildhall, the event showcased exceptional hotel experiences that will inspire consumers, travellers, and hoteliers around the globe.

Nestled between the rugged mountains and emerald waters of Musandam Peninsula, Six Senses Zighy Bay is a sustainable luxury resort just two hours from Dubai. The resort's 82 Omani-style pool villas blend seamlessly into the breathtaking landscape. A pioneer in sustainability, Six Senses Zighy Bay recycles 85% of its waste and leads vital conserva-



tion efforts, including coral restoration and marine life preservation. The award-winning spa guides guests on personal wellness journeys, while the organic Dibba Farm and onsite Organic Garden produces fresh ingredients for unforgettable farm-to-table dining experiences.

Tim Brooke-Webb, Managing Director for The World's 50 Best Hotels, said, "We're thrilled to be

back in London celebrating the second edition of The World's 50 Best Hotels. Bringing together so many influential figures from the travel industry to honour and celebrate the world's finest hotel experiences is truly a special moment. Our heartfelt congratulations go out to every hotel on the list, each of which has clearly made a lasting impression on our Academy of travel experts. We

hope 2024's list inspires travel lovers to choose a truly spectacular destination for their trips."

Six Senses Zighy Bay's General Manager Diletta Guarino said, "Being recognised among The World's 50 Best Hotels is a tremendous honour that reflects our unwavering commitment to sustainability, exceptional service, and creating unforgettable experiences for our guests."

Rishav Raman's 'Dream Door' earns international acclaim

Rishav Raman, an emerging Oman-born filmmaker based in Los Angeles, is making waves on the international film festival circuit with his latest short film *Dream Door*.

The film, which has garnered multiple awards and accolades, is a moving exploration of themes such as isolation, poverty, and the yearning for security.

Written and directed by Raman, *Dream Door* is a Tamil short film that narrates the story of a young boy's longing for a door for his tiny house to feel safe when alone. The film features rising talents Shakti Rithvik and Mohammed Asif Hameed and showcases the cinematography of Nishant Arya and the music composition of Meghana Tadanki.

Having written over ten short films, *Dream Door* is part of Rishav's thesis at the New York Film Academy.

The film has recently won recognition in the festival circuit, winning 'Best Indian Short Film' at the Poombukar International



Film Festival and securing the titles of 'Best Student Film' and 'Best Director' at the Triloka Filmfare Awards. It has also earned a place as a semi-finalist at the prestigious Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival, an Oscar-qualifying event held in New York.

With the short film set to release on YouTube soon, Rishav has his creative calendar packed with new projects. He has written two feature screenplays and

two novels, which are currently in development for potential sale to production and publishing companies.

Reflecting on his journey so far during an interview with Shoutout LA, a leading industry journal in Los Angeles, Rishav states: "I am pleased with the learning and improvement I have experienced over the past few years. There is, of course, a long way to go, but I am excited and motivated for what lies ahead."

IntercityHotel Oman announces special 'Stay & Win' offer for 'CityExplorers'

As the global travel and tourism sector gears up to celebrate World Tourism Day on September 27, IntercityHotel Oman is inviting 'CityExplorers' and urban travellers who love to be 'on the move' to embark on spontaneous adventures and experience the magic of Oman.

In line with the spirit of the day, the hotel chain is offering an exclusive 'Stay & Win' contest for its H Rewards members.

Aligned with the ethos of the World Tourism Day, which highlights the significance of tourism and its global impact, IntercityHotel is reaffirming its commitment to promoting Oman as a premier destination

for travellers seeking authentic and enriching experiences.

It invites H Rewards members to stay at one of its properties in Muscat, Bawshar or Nizwa, to experience Oman's unique natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage and its renowned IntercityHotel hospitality, while offering the chance opportunity to win a stay in Dubai. The hotel reiterates its commitment to providing more than just a place to stay.

With three prime properties in and around Muscat, the Hotel is well-positioned to support Oman's tourism goals by catering to a diverse range of domestic and international guests.



These properties are a hub of urban energy, where travellers can immerse themselves in the local culture, connect with the

city's dynamic vibe, and enjoy the buzzing atmosphere that defines each location.

To participate in the 'Stay &

Win' contest, H Rewards members simply need to book a stay at any of the IntercityHotel Oman properties before

September 27. One lucky winner will be chosen to enjoy a complimentary one-night stay at the vibrant IntercityHotel Dubai Jaddaf Waterfront, complete with breakfast for two. This stylish hotel is the perfect base for exploring Dubai's vibrant culture and modern wonders.

Designed to provide flexible and effortless experience, IntercityHotel stays true to its promise of delivering more than expected, whether you are an adventurer exploring hidden gems or a business traveller looking for a locally rooted base for the trip.

Furthermore, H Rewards - the loyalty program of H World In-

ternational, is designed to enhance the stay with exclusive discounts and benefits across global hotel brands. Members staying at any of the three IntercityHotel properties in Oman during this promotional period are eligible to win, adding an extra thrill to their experience.

The raffle prize - a night at IntercityHotel Dubai Jaddaf Waterfront - is a perfect example of IntercityHotel's commitment to offering unique, cosmopolitan experiences. The 'Stay & Win' offer is more than just a chance to win; it's a tribute to the adventurous spirit and the thrill of discovery that IntercityHotel wants to impart to its guests.

China to ‘gradually resume’ importing seafood from Japan

Beijing, China - China has said that it will ‘gradually resume’ importing seafood from Japan following negotiations between the two nations that guarantee the safety of water released from the closed Fukushima nuclear facility, according to a report by Al Jazeera.

China and Japan on Friday asserted that they had reached a consensus in August over the wastewater release.

In a statement, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it will gradually resume imports of Japanese aquatic products that meet the regulation requirements and standards. “China will begin to adjust the relevant measures based on scientific evidence and gradually resume imports of Japanese aquatic products that meet the regulation requirements and standards,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, as per Al Jazeera.

The statement further informed that officials from both



Officials from both sides had recently conducted several rounds of consultations on Fukushima discharge

sides had recently conducted ‘several rounds of consultations’ on Fukushima discharge.

Notably, China had imposed a ban last year on all seafood imports from Japan. The ban was imposed following the release of treated wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, Nikkei Asia reported.

Although, China was the only country with such attack on Japan, but the ban did pose a serious threat to its neighbour,

as mainland China had accounted for nearly 20 per cent of Japanese seafood exports before the sanctions. Moreover, the ration for Scallops was roughly 50 per cent.

Japan-China bilateral relations soured sharply after China imposed the ban following the first release into the Pacific Ocean on August 24 by Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc., operator of the Fukushima plant.

ANI

Germany: Far-right in lead ahead of Sunday's elections in Brandenburg

About two million voters will cast ballots in regional elections in the state

Berlin, Germany - The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is leading in the polls in Brandenburg, one of Germany’s eastern states, ahead of elections on Sunday.

It is worrying large segments of Germany.

Following state parliamentary elections in Thuringia and Saxony on September 1, about two million voters will cast ballots in regional elections in the state.

Opinion polls indicate that the far-right, anti-immigrant AfD is projected to lead with 28% of the vote.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats (SPD) party is expected to follow closely with 27%, while the centre-right Christian Democratic (CDU) is forecast to place third with 14%.

In the last state parliamentary election in the Brandenburg, known as a SPD’s stronghold, the SPD was first with 26.2% in 2019, while the AfD followed with 23.5%.

In Brandenburg, the newly founded left-populist Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) party is gaining ground, projected to finish fourth with 13%.



Opinion polls indicate that the far-right, anti-immigrant AfD is projected to lead with 28% of the vote

The BSW is expected to play a crucial role in upcoming coalition talks, while other parties continue to reject any alliance with the AfD because of its anti-democratic stance.

Worrying possibility

Burhan Kesici, president of the Islamic Federation of Germany, told Anadolu that group saw AfD was the first and second party in Thuringia and Saxony in elections in September and said

it is a possibility that the far-right party would be the first party in the state.

He described it as a ‘worrying’ possibility.

Pointing out that not only the far-right party, but other parties have changed their ideas and discourse, Burhan Kesici said: “We see that politics is a little harsher, especially on Muslims and foreigners.”

Even if the AfD becomes the first party in Brandenburg, it will most likely not be able to form

Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats party is expected to follow closely with 27%, while centre-right Christian Democratic is forecast to place third with 14%

the government, said Kesici.

“But the current government parties will have a harsher policy against foreigners and more restrictions on asylum and Muslims,” he said, adding it might cause further issues.

Kesici noted that the exclusion of Muslims, immigrants and Islamophobia have increased in everyday life in Germany.

He said if the AfD becomes the first party in Brandenburg, the ideas it presents will be more accepted in society, and the

party would be able to express its ideas more openly.

“Even if there is not much change at first, we expect changes in the medium and long term,” he noted.

“Friedrich Merz, the chairman of the CDU, became a candidate for prime minister. It is likely that he will now pursue a much tougher and more right-wing politics,” said Kesici. “Other parties are likely to incorporate right-wing views into their party programmes.”

‘Devastating for image of state’

Benjamin Lassiwe, president of the Brandenburg Press Conference, said the AfD has been strong in the state in recent years and has been the first party in opinion polls.

“This would be devastating for the image of the state of Brandenburg,” Lassiwe said about the possibility of the AfD coming first in the elections.

Pointing out that the far-right party feeds on latent xenophobia in the state, he stressed: “The AfD has gained strength due to the attack in Solingen last month and the wave of refugees in recent years.”

Lassiwe said people should not want a radical right-wing party to come to power in a state like Brandenburg, which is the centre of the economy: “The fact that many small parties cannot enter the state parliament also poses a danger.”

Ercan Yasaroglu, who has lived in Germany for 42 years and fought against racism in various non-governmental organisations, pointed out if the AfD comes to power at the federal level, immigrants will have to migrate to avoid becoming victims.

“If the AfD comes to power, the European Union will fall apart, the danger of war will increase and we immigrants will have to migrate in order not to be victimised,” he said. “But I am in favour of taking a stand in this development process.”

Anadolu Agency

DR Congo: Tuluka’s first 100 days of challenges

Kinshasa, DRC - One hundred days ago, the first female-led government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) took office. Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka’s team consists of 54 members, including 18 women.

The basis of the new government’s work is a programme based on six pillars: national economy, security, spatial planning, social well-being, responsible ecosystem management and helping the population to develop and strengthen necessary skills, processes and resources.

Investment programme worth billions

“It is still very early to really talk about their record at the head of government,” said Tresor Kibangula, political analyst at the Congolese research institute Ebuteli. “Concrete results often need more time to materialise.”

Nevertheless, a lot has already happened in just over three months. The government has taken a series of measures, particularly in the economic sphere -

The basis of the new government’s work is a programme based on national economy, security, spatial planning, social well-being and responsible ecosystem management

‘especially to reduce import taxes, boost purchasing power and lower food prices’, Kibangula told DW.

The analyst also considers it a good step that 11 members of the government were selected as so-called technocrats purely on the basis of their expertise.

Suminwa Tuluka has announced an extremely ambitious investment programme, estimating the scope at almost US\$93bn over the next five years.

The prime minister is trying to



Tuluka Suminwa is originally from Central Congo

‘translate the president’s promises and commitments into concrete action’, said Kibangula. President Felix Tshisekedi ‘has promised more jobs, more security and more purchasing power. Also a more inclusive economy and better efficiency of public services,’ he added.

On September 16, Suminwa Tuluka introduced three bills in the National Assembly: for the Budget Act 2025, for the Accounts Act 2024 and for the Amending Budget Act 2024.

Opposition dissatisfied: “The fish stinks from the head down’

As expected, the government has found words of praise for its programme, but observers have been less enthusiastic.

That includes - also as expected - the opposition, with Moise Katumbi’s Together for the Republic party saying Congolese authorities are primarily dividing up resources among themselves and leaving the population to live in misery.

“The fish stinks from the head

down,” party spokesman Herve Diakiese told DW. “If you look at the social situation and the economic hardship of our population, the persistent corruption, lack and decay of infrastructure - the balance is largely negative.”

“This government has shone with words and promises,” said Jonas Tshiombela, national coordinator of the New Congolese Civil Society, a platform of civil society organisations, adding that the people in charge had so far done little more than speak in front of cameras and travel.

“The only record we have from this government is speeches and this kind of helplessness in the face of diplomatic questions about the war in the east. There is nothing consistent to record that has been done for the benefit of the people,” he said.

At the end of June, just a few days after her inauguration, Suminwa Tuluka visited the restive east of Congo, where Congolese forces have been fighting Rwanda-backed rebels.

DW

US: South Carolina state carries out first execution in 13 years

South Carolina, US - A man convicted of a 1997 murder was killed by lethal injection on Friday in the southeastern US state of South Carolina.

This is the state’s first execution of a death row inmate in 13 years. US media reported that Freddie Owens, 46, was pronounced dead at 6:55pm local time (2255 GMT) after he was given a lethal injection.

South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster rejected Owens’ appeal for clemency and the Supreme Court denied a stay of the execution.

Owens was convicted in 1999 of the murder of convenience store clerk Irene Graves during a robbery in Greenville, South Carolina in 1997.

He and another man entered the store and stole US\$37 from a cash register and led Graves to the back of the store, where she was shot in the head after she was unable to open a safe.

Codefendant Steven Golden had testified that Owens was the one who shot Graves and received a lesser sentence.

He has since recanted his testimony.

While on trial in 1999, Owens killed a person incarcerated at a county jail. His confession to that killing was read to two different juries and a judge who all sentenced him to death.

Owens made no final statement on Friday.

South Carolina’s last execution was in May 2011.

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DW



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Erdogan condemns Israel’s attacks in Lebanon

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday condemned Israel’s attacks in Lebanon, asserting that these attacks have proven Turkey’s concerns about Israel’s ambitions to extend conflict throughout the region.

Speaking to the media in Istanbul ahead of his departure to New York, where he will address the UN General Assembly, Erdogan said that Israel is carrying out attacks like a terrorist group.

“With this attack (pager explosions in Lebanon), Israel demonstrated it has no civilian sensitivities, it can use any means to achieve its hateful ambitions,” he said.

This attack also indicates that Israel is extending its attacks throughout Lebanon and the region, with the support of some Western countries, Erdogan added.

The region is now facing an ‘inexplicably huge crisis’, the Turkish president said.

The president called on the international community, especially Western countries, to ‘stop watching Israel’s heinous actions and take deterrent steps’.

Anadolu Agency

Death toll from Israel airstrike on Beirut’s suburb rises to 37

Beirut, Lebanon - The death toll from an Israeli airstrike on Friday on Beirut’s Southern Suburb region has climbed to 37, the Lebanese health ministry stated on Saturday.

In a statement, the ministry said debris removal was ‘underway continuously’.

“Lebanon is witnessing a war crime, as was evident in the Israeli raid on the southern suburb,” Firas Al-Abiad, Lebanese health minister, said earlier in a news conference.

He confirmed that among the victims were seven women, three children aged four, six, and 10, and three Syrian nationals.

Al-Abiad said that there are a significant number of unidentified body parts at the scene, complicating the identification of some victims. “The war on Lebanon continues, and we are preparing to confront its repercussions,” the minister added.

The health minister reported that 68 individuals injured in the attack were transferred to 12 hospitals across Beirut. Of these, 53 have since been discharged, while 15 remain under medical care, including two individuals in critical condition.

The Israeli army said on Friday it assassinated Hezbollah’s top military commander Ibrahim Aqil, along with senior commanders from the group’s elite Radwan Force during its airstrike on the southern suburb.

The strike marks the third attack by Israel on the southern suburb since an ongoing wave of hostilities began nearly a year ago. The airstrike occurred amid a new wave of Israeli escalation in Lebanon, with Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant announcing Thursday that the conflict with Hezbollah has entered ‘a new phase’.

Meanwhile, Hamas on Saturday condemned the Israeli killing



The strike marks the third attack by Israel on Beirut’s southern suburb since an ongoing wave of hostilities began nearly a year ago

The Israeli army said on Friday it assassinated Hezbollah’s top military commander Ibrahim Aqil, along with senior commanders from the group’s elite Radwan Force

of Hezbollah military commander Ibrahim Aqil, calling it a ‘foolish act that will have consequences’.

Hezbollah confirmed the death of Aqil as well as of its military commander Ahmed Wahbi and 14 other fighters.

On Saturday, the Israeli army conducted a series of airstrikes on southern Lebanon and the Bekaa region, according to an Anadolu correspondent.

Air raid sirens have also been activated in Kiryat Shmona and

miles) from the border.

A rocket fired from Lebanon reportedly struck the Biryia area in Upper Galilee, prompting the Israeli army to close off roads and routes in the northern Golan Heights.

Israel has closed its airspace in the northern region due to security concerns, local media reported on Saturday. According to the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, the airspace has been closed from the city of Hadera to the Lebanese border for 24 hours due to escalating tension in the region.

UN Security Council meeting

The UN Security Council met on Friday in an emergency ses-

sion on Lebanon, following an uptick in cross-border fire between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, and deadly wireless device explosions.

Rosemary DiCarlo, UN under-secretary-general for political and peacebuilding affairs, said alarming developments in Lebanon and the region have come after nearly one year of hostilities on an almost daily basis across the Blue Line, a buffer zone separating Israel and Lebanon.

“These exchanges have been a repeated breach of the cessation of hostilities and in violation of (Security Council) resolution 1701,” she said.

Abdallah Bou Habib, Lebanon’s foreign minister, said: “Israel, through this terrorist ag-

gression, has violated the basic principles of international humanitarian law ... and indiscriminately targeted civilians.”

Denouncing Israel as ‘a rogue state’, he called on the council to condemn the recent attacks, implement resolution 1701 and stand on the right side of history.

“Isn’t this terrorism when you target a whole population while they tend to their daily life and not fighting on the front?” he asked.

Speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, Syria’s permanent representative to the United Nations Koussay Aldahhak said the devastating recent attacks were deployed without any regard to international law or to humanity.

Agencies



More than 1,379 people were killed or injured in Haiti, and 428 kidnapped from April to June, according to the UN

Gang violence spreading across Haiti: Rights expert

Bogota, Colombia - Gang violence is still spreading across Haiti, while the UN-backed mission to combat crime in the Caribbean country continues to lack sufficient funds to act, UN human rights expert William O’Neill warned on Friday.

O’Neill, who concluded a visit to Haiti this week, said gangs are invading new territories as weapons and ammunition enter the country despite an international embargo.

“Areas previously not impacted by gang violence are now directly impacted, with galloping inflation, lack of basic goods and flows of internally displaced people,” O’Neill warned at a news conference in

Port-au-Prince. “The human rights and humanitarian consequences are dramatic.”

He warned that the UN-backed mission, led by 400 Kenyan police officers who arrived in Haiti at the end of June, has deployed less than one-quarter of the promised contingent and has less than two weeks left in their initial one-year mandate.

“The equipment it has received is inadequate, and its resources are insufficient,” he said.

At least 2,900 troops were promised by countries including Antigua, Barbados, Bangladesh, Belize, Benin, Chad, Bahamas and Jamaica to help Haitian police.

More than 1,379 people were killed or injured in Haiti, and 428

kidnapped from April to June, according to the UN.

“The solutions are there, and they already exist. But efforts must be redoubled immediately,” said O’Neill.

He pointed out that the population continues to suffer from sexual violence, displacement and children are being forcibly recruited into gangs. The children, he said, are ‘being used to carry out attacks against public institutions and police operations’.

“Youth are losing hope of a better future,” he said.

Less than one-third of Haiti’s health services are functioning normally, and almost five million people are suffering from hunger.

Anadolu Agency

13 children among 21 killed in Israeli airstrike on Gaza school

Gaza City, Palestine - At least 21 Palestinians, including 13 children, were killed and several others injured on Saturday in an Israeli airstrike on a school sheltering displaced people in the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza City, according to the Gaza government media office.

In a statement, the government media office stated that 21 Palestinians, including 13 children, six women, and an unborn child, were killed in the airstrike.

It added that 30 others, including nine children, were also injured in the attack. The media office said that 181 centres for displaced individuals have been targeted by Israeli forces since the beginning of the war on Gaza.

Separately, a medical source at the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza City told Anadolu that the victims were brought to the hospital following the strike on the school, which was housing hundreds of displaced families.

Witnesses reported that the Israeli airstrike hit the Asqoula area in the Zeitoun neighbourhood, causing significant casualties among those seeking refuge in the school. The Israeli army has acknowledged that it targeted the school, claiming it was being used by Hamas as a ‘command and control centre’.

Gaza death toll rises to 41,391

Israeli army attacks killed 119



The victims were brought to Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital following the strike on the school housing displaced families

Witnesses reported that the Israeli airstrike hit Asqoula area in the Zeitoun neighbourhood, causing significant casualties among those seeking refuge in the school. 30 others, including nine children, were also injured in the attack

more Palestinians and injured 209 others in the Gaza Strip over the last 72 hours, bringing the death toll to 41,391 since last October 7, the Health Ministry in the Palestinian enclave said on Saturday.

A ministry statement added that a total of 95,760 people have been injured in Israeli attacks since last October.

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

Meanwhile, five employees of the Health Ministry in Gaza were killed in an Israeli airstrike on the ministry’s storage facilities in the Musbah area of Rafah, southern Gaza, the ministry said on Saturday.

In a statement, the ministry said that ambulances have been unable to reach the site to recover the bodies or assist the injured and called on international organisations to intervene to protect and rescue those trapped.

Since the start of the war on Gaza on October 7, the Israeli army has targeted Gaza’s hospitals and medical facilities, rendering most out of service, and putting the lives of doctors, workers, and patients at risk, according to Palestinian and international reports.

The Gaza government media office reported that 986 medical staff have been killed in the ongoing war.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA

PM Modi begins US-visit, to hold talks with Biden

Modi will also attend a summit being hosted by UN General Assembly



Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi

AAP leader Atishi sworn in as Chief Minister of Delhi

New Delhi - Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi took oath as Delhi Chief Minister on Saturday at Raj Niwas. Other AAP leaders, including Saurabh Bharadwaj, Gopal Rai, Kailash Gahlot, Imran Hussain and Mukesh Ahlawat also took oath as council of ministers in the Atishi-led Delhi cabinet.

At 43, Atishi has become the third woman Chief Minister of Delhi, following in the footsteps of Sushma Swaraj and Sheila Dikshit. A prominent leader of AAP, Atishi has played a key role in improving education in Delhi's government-run schools during her time as an advisor to the former Education Minister, Manish Sisodia.

Atishi expressed mixed feelings about the change in leadership. She said that she is happy about the trust placed in her by outgoing CM Arvind Kejriwal but is also sad that he has resigned from his post. Speaking to the media, she added that she would work hard to bring Kejriwal back as Chief Minister after the upcoming assembly elections.

sembly elections.

"First of all, I would like to thank the popular CM of Delhi, AAP national convener, and my guru - Arvind Kejriwal. He gave me such a huge responsibility and trusted me for it. This can be done only in AAP, only under the leadership of Arvind Kejriwal, that a first-time politician becomes the CM of a state. I come from an ordinary family. Had I been in any other party, perhaps I would not have been given even an election ticket," Atishi said.

After taking oath as Delhi Minister, AAP MLA Mukesh Ahlawat said: "It's all because of Arvind Kejriwal and Baba Saheb that people like me become the minister. We will work as much as possible - the priorities will be to work for the people of Dalit and backward communities."

AAP leader and Delhi minister Kailash Gahlot said: "Arvind Kejriwal's guidance as party's national convener will remain. Our only goal is to continue to work for the people of Delhi."

ANI

New Delhi - Prime Minister Narendra Modi who commenced his three-day visit to the US on Saturday said he will take part in various programmes and will have a bilateral meeting with President Biden.

Highlighting his schedule, PM Modi informed that he will also attend the Summit of the Future, an event hosted by the United Nations General Assembly and will address a community programme in New York.

In a social media post on X, Modi wrote: "I will be on a visit to USA, where I will take part in various programmes. I will attend the Quad Summit being hosted by President Biden at his hometown Wilmington. I look forward to the deliberations at the Summit. I will also be having a bilateral meeting with President Biden. In New York, I will be attending the Summit of the Future. I will also be addressing a community programme in the city."

In his departure statement ahead of the US visit, PM Modi said: "I look forward joining my colleagues President Biden, Prime Minister Albanese and Prime Minister Kishida for the Quad Summit. The forum has emerged as a key group of the like-minded countries to work for peace, progress and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region."

Modi will take part in the sixth Quad Leaders' Summit in Wilmington, Delaware, which is being hosted by Biden in his hometown on September 21.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi emplanes for US to participate in the Quad Summit hosted by US President Joe Biden, on Saturday (ANI)

I will attend the Quad Summit being hosted by President Biden. I look forward to the deliberations at the Summit. I will also be having a bilateral meeting with President Biden

NARENDRA MODI

Quad brings together four countries - India, Australia, Japan, and the United States. India will be hosting the Quad Leaders' Summit in 2025.

During his visit, Modi will also interact with the Indian diaspora and American business leaders.

"I am eagerly looking forward to engaging with the Indian diaspora and important American business leaders, who are the key stakeholders and provide vibrancy to the unique partnership between the largest and the oldest democracies of the world," he stated.

Modi called the UN General Assembly's 'The Summit of the Future' an opportunity for the international community to chart the road ahead for the betterment of humanity.

The Prime Minister stated: "The Summit of the Future is an opportunity for the global community to chart the road ahead for the betterment of humanity. I will share views of the one sixth of humanity, as their stakes in a peaceful and secure future are among the highest in the world."

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called the Summit a 'once in a generation UN Summit'. 'Summit of the Future' is an important milestone

in the history of the UN as it enters the 80th year of its establishment in 2025.

Earlier, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal informed on X: "PM @narendramodi emplanes for USA to participate in the 6th Quad Leaders' Summit and to address the UN 'Summit of the Future'."

India and United States enjoy a comprehensive global strategic partnership covering almost all areas of human endeavour, driven by shared democratic values, convergence of interests on a range of issues, and vibrant people-to-people contacts.

ANI

J-K: 'Our priority is to restore statehood', says Congress President Kharge

Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir - Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge stated on Saturday that the priority of Congress is to restore statehood of Jammu and Kashmir, adding that the State has never been changed to Union Territory before.

"The state has never been changed to Union Territory. We are asking, why have you not given statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, you have all the power, then why are they doing it?" congress president Kharge asked BJP, while addressing a

press conference in Jammu.

"...We have declared seven guarantees. Our priority is to restore statehood to J&K. The second guarantee is to provide a health insurance scheme that will provide coverage of Rs 25 lakh to every family in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Further describing Congress Party's promises for Jammu and Kashmir, he said: "A monthly benefit of Rs 3,000 will be given to women heads of families. An interest-free loan of Rs 5 lakh



Mallikarjun Kharge at a press conference in Jammu on Saturday (ANI)

will also be given to women...OBCs to get their rights as enshrined in the Constitution... 1 lakh jobs are vacant when we come into power will notify them immediately..."

He accused BJP of not doing anything for Union Territory.

"BJP said they would give 5 lakh jobs but they have been here for 5 years but they have not done anything," Kharge said.

On being asked about BJP leader Devinder Rana's statement of NC leader Omar Abdullah meeting BJP he said 'that

was past now, we are in alliance'.

Meanwhile, a voter turnout of 61.13% was registered in the first phase polling in Jammu and Kashmir assembly polls, which were held on 24 constituencies in seven districts.

According to Election Commission data, the voting percentage was 61.13% till 11.30pm.

Kishtwar district recorded the highest turnout at 80.14% followed by Ramban at 70.55%, Doda at 71.34%, Kulgam at 62.60%, Anantnag at 57.84%

and Shopian at 55.96%.

Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing an interesting contest with several political parties and independents in the fray. National Congress and Congress have allied, though they are also in friendly contest on some seats.

This is the first election in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. Leaders have held hectic campaigns to boost the prospects of their party candidates.

ANI

Bangladesh Army urges peace, harmony amid deadly violence in hilly regions

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Amidst tensions and violence in Bangladesh's hilly regions, which claimed four lives, the Bangladesh Army has issued an appeal to the public, urging them to maintain peace and harmony.

"The ongoing tension may turn into violent riots in the three hill districts. Leading individuals are urgently requested to assist the law enforcement agencies in de-escalating the ongoing tension," the Inter-Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR) said in a statement.

"Necessary legal action will be taken after identifying the real culprits by conducting a proper investigation. The people are specially requested to maintain peace and harmony in the three



hill districts," it said.

Notably, Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) has long history of conflicts. In 1997, the Bangladesh government signed a peace accord with Parbatta Chattagram Jana Sanghatti Samiti, the largest tribal group that controlled the Santibahini, a militia. After the accord, some smaller groups in-

cluding United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) rejected it.

On September 18, one Md. Mamun (30), the father of deceased Noor Nabi, was killed in a mass thrashing by some people in Khagrachari district headquarters over the theft of a motorcycle, the statement said.

Later, Sadar police station re-

covered the body of the deceased and handed it over to the family after post-mortem, the statement added.

"A protest march was taken out from Dighinala College on the next day (September 19) afternoon based on this incident. While the procession was crossing Boalkhali Bazar in Dighinala, some terrorists of UPDF (original) attacked the procession and fired 20-30 rounds. In view of this, the angry mob set fire to some shops in Boalkhali Bazar," the statement said.

"It is to be noted that six people from both sides were injured during the clash and they were sent to hospitals for treatment," the statement said.

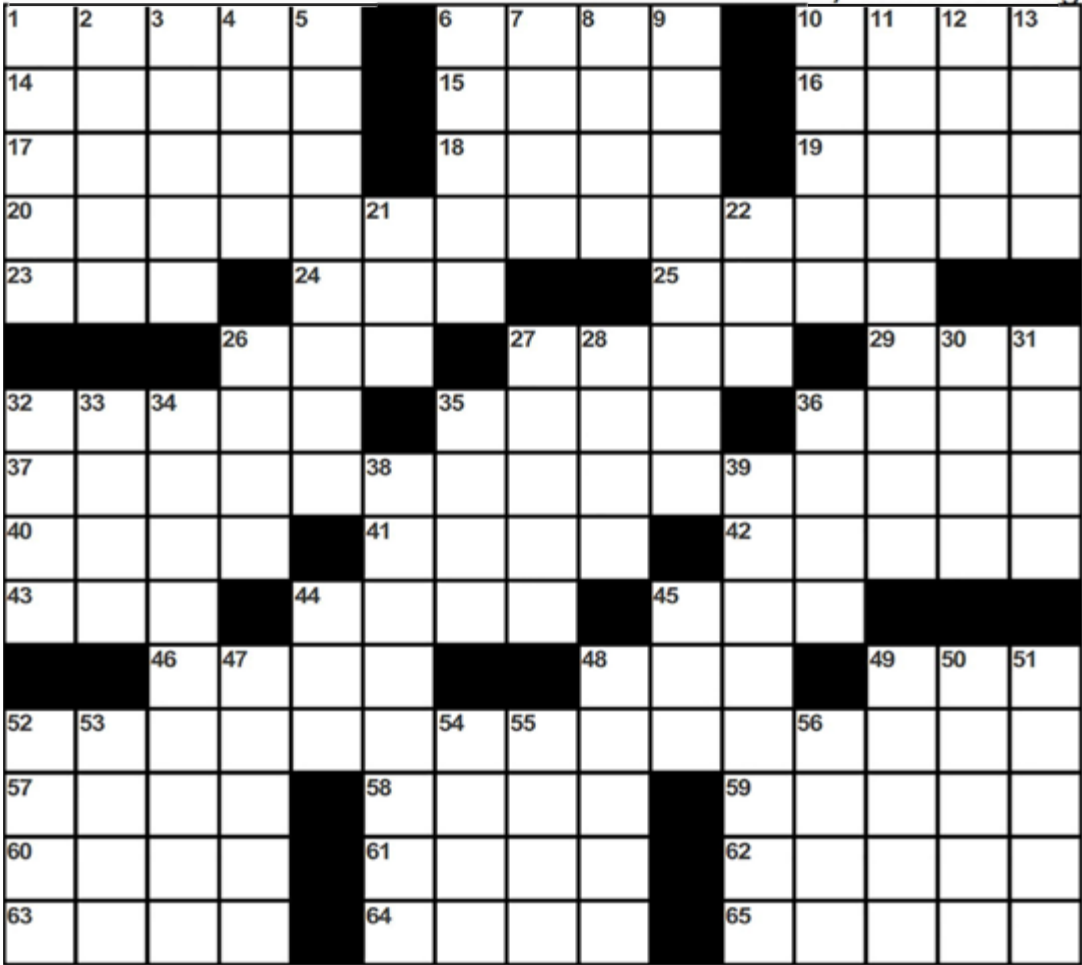
ANI

PRESIDENTIAL POLL IN SRI LANKA



People arrive at a polling station to cast votes for presidential poll in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Saturday (Xinhua)

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Diner seating area
- 6) Freudian topics
- 10) Wet blanket?
- 14) Lapis lazuli color
- 15) Church area
- 16) Brightly colored parrot
- 17) Ice cream shop stock
- 18) Fertile Crescent nation
- 19) Wilson of "Wedding Crashers"
- 20) Very rarely
- 23) Born, in bios
- 24) With 48-Across, Al-toids alternative
- 25) Lab assistant of film
- 26) Wrestler's surface
- 27) Lemony taste
- 29) Mythical flier
- 32) Assailed
- 35) Poor, as excuses go
- 36) Like some conse-quences
- 37) Zwieback, e.g.
- 40) Olden times
- 41) Sign for a fortune-teller
- 42) Airline seat selection
- 43) Classic Jaguar model
- 44) Colorful equine

- 45) Econ. yardstick
 - 46) As follows
 - 48) See 24-Across
 - 49) Was in session
 - 52) 1978 Commodores hit
 - 57) Loaf end
 - 58) Leprechaun land
 - 59) Hoops two-pointer
 - 60) Russian range
 - 61) Capital on the Tiber
 - 62) Strong thread
 - 63) Dummy
 - 64) Fit of pique
 - 65) McGregor, Connery et al, by birth
- DOWN**
- 1) A breadwinner brings it home
 - 2) Bluish 45-Down
 - 3) Scale unit
 - 4) Walnut, but not peanut
 - 5) Pause
 - 6) Computer of the '40s
 - 7) Attire
 - 8) Track shape
 - 9) Glittery, as a gown
 - 10) Replay effect, briefly
 - 11) "Sure thing!"
 - 42) Lunch box treat since 1912
 - 13) Pitcher Early in Coop-

- erstown
- 21) Tiny criticism
- 22) Omelet need
- 26) Medieval war club
- 27) No longer available
- 28) Revival shout
- 30) Like the Sabin vaccine
- 31) Hand over
- 32) River of Hades
- 33) Furry "Star Wars" crit-ter
- 34) Its depth is measured in auto inspections
- 35) Dalai _
- 36) Plumbing problem
- 38) Fan club members
- 39) Booed decisions in sports
- 44) Feel regret for
- 45) One state of matter
- 47) Chat-starting word
- 48) Basic principle
- 49) Final authority
- 50) Of legal age
- 51) Pounds the keys
- 52) Sound of heavy im-pact
- 53) Medal awardee
- 54) Links choice
- 55) Classic Chevalier song
- 56) Not of the cloth

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

A rude or insensitive person could cause you some complications this morning, but at the same time they will help give you a fresh perspective on your life. They'll show you who you don't want to be! Take notes on their behavior. You are doing perfectly fine with your choices lately, so don't listen if this person criticizes you or gives you unsolicited advice. Smile sweetly and then ignore them.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

The past is coming back not to haunt you but to thrill you! Whether it's an old flame returning to town to see what you're up to, an old photo you find that stirs up some hilarious memories, or even just an old song that reminds you of summer camp, your past is suddenly very present. This is a wonderful day to travel down memory lane and let yourself remember the person you used to be and, of course, marvel at the person you have become.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Even without trying you're going to be a source of inspiration for someone today, and they won't be shy about letting you know it. You might feel embarrassed at first by the fawning attention, but you'll get used to it eventually. Don't miss your chance to soak up the spotlight that they're shining on you. This is your time at center stage and it won't last long. Enjoy it as much as you can, and believe in your heart that you deserve every single accolade you get.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 01. Who wrote the music for the musical "A Chorus Line"?**
- A. Lionel Bart
 - B. Stephen Sondheim
 - C. Leonard Bernstein
 - D. Marvin Hamlisch
- 02. Indycar sportsman Scott Dixon, who won his first Indy championship in 2000 and whose ratio of wins to career starts is the best of all-time regular drivers in the IRL, comes from where?**
- A. Japan
 - B. New Zealand
 - C. Alaska
 - D. New Guinea
- 03. What word describes an open artificial water channel, in the form of a gravity chute, that leads water from a diversion dam or weir?**
- A. Flood
 - B. Flume
 - C. Fluke
 - D. Fleet

Answers: 1. D 2. B 3. B



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Be careful of other people who seem too good to be true today, because they probably are. Your instincts about people are usually right, so if you fear that someone who is making big claims is full of hot air, alert those in power about your reservations. There is nothing wrong with demanding proof before you buy into anyone's story. Your skepticism might make waves today, but in the end it will save everyone a lot of stress and regret. They'll thank you for it.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Running around at a frantic pace is not going to help you get more stuff done. It will only give you stress and increase your blood pressure. Today, you need to move away from multitasking and just try to focus on one thing at a time. When you talk on the phone, just talk and listen. Don't force yourself to deal with working on a project or grocery shopping at the same time. Toward the end of the day you will start to finally find a nice rhythm.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Are you being too idealistic about a new person in your life? If there's someone in your social group everyone dislikes but you, then maybe you should give this person another, more objective review. Your tendency to see the good side in people is charming and generous, but it's not always useful for keeping yourself protected against those who might not be healthy for your life goals. Do not accept negative habits.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Right now it's your emotional nature that is going to be your driving force in life, but that needs to start changing. You need to think more with your brain and less with your heart. It isn't steering you wrong, but it could be sending you in circles. Think things through and get some alone time if you feel that you need it. Being practical might not feel very sexy, but it's definitely the intelligent way to go. Temptations soon disappear when you look at them with a critical eye.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Try to make finding out about people from other cultures your new hobby today. Different beliefs and customs can offer you some fresh new ideas and inspire you to find a way around a problem that's been plaguing you. New ways of thinking and a foreign perspective will give your creativity a boost. They will give you the drive you've been lacking for a while now. It's an ideal day to step out of your comfort zone and into someone else's world.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Checking in with the people you like spending time with is what you need right now to stay grounded. Your friends might know what is best for you, so listen to their feedback and follow their advice as closely as possible. Your pace may get you where you want to go more quickly, but it could also be leaving a few people behind. So slow down and spend more time with the people you care about. Make time to share a meal, long phone conversation, or a short road trip to somewhere fun.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You will be doing yourself a service by taking your time today, especially in terms of any decisions you have to make. From what kind of coffee drink you want to order to what investment fund to buy into, you need to think things through. Your instincts seldom let you down, but they could be tied up in some distracting (albeit exciting) emotional stuff right now. Get help thinking things through.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Try to avoid making any impulse buys right now, especially on big-ticket items. Throwing your money around without thinking it through could chip away at the careful balance you've been working so hard to achieve. Shift from relying on credit cards to using cash to pay for things. That way you'll always understand that you are giving something up every time you make a purchase.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Why do you have to take at face value the rules of someone who is in authority? Dissent is not only acceptable in this situation, it is wise. If you have an issue with what they are decreeing, then step up to this person and say so. Of course, make sure you communicate in the most respectful and diplomatic way possible! Compromise is feasible, and the act of standing up for what you think is a powerful way to make a great impression on influential people. They will respect it.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

C	V	E	T
R	G	O	R
K	S	A	E
O	G	A	H

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

SOLUTION

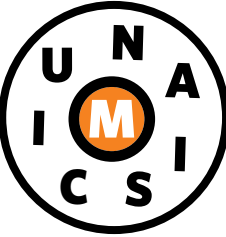
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

DIAZ AT THE DOUBLE

Colombian forward dazzles for Liverpool; Chelsea, Fulham win

Liverpool, England - A quick-fire double from Luis Diaz set Liverpool on course for a comprehensive 3-0 Premier League home win against Bournemouth on Saturday as the Reds bounced back from last week's embarrassing 1-0 loss to Nottingham Forest.

Diaz was electric in the first half, papering over Liverpool's defensive frailties with a brilliant attacking display from the left wing that overpowered the visitors, with the game effectively over as a contest by halftime.

Arne Slot's side had the VAR to thank for chalking off an early Bournemouth goal from Antoine Semenyo due to offside, with the groans of the home fans who feared another shock defeat turning to whoops of joy as the goal was overturned.

Diaz then went to work, forcing keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga into a fine save in the eighth minute, and he threatened several more times before finally beating Kepa to a long ball and rattling it home in the 26th minute.

Less than three minutes later Diaz had his second goal as Bournemouth were sliced open by a five-on-four break, the Colombian using his left foot to



Liverpool's Luis Diaz celebrates with teammates after scoring against Bournemouth on Saturday

drive the ball between the legs of the advancing Kepa for his fifth goal in five league games.

Darwin Nunez then added a brilliant third, attacking down the right and slowing down before suddenly accelerating again to cut inside and curl home a left-foot shot to make it 3-0.

With the game out of the visitors' reach, there was little of note

in the second half save for the Premier League debut of Liverpool's Enrico Chiesa, who came off the bench and provided a glimpse of the talent that prompted the Merseysiders to pay Juventus a reputed 10 million pounds (\$13.32 million) for him.

Despite their offensive dominance, Liverpool still looked occasionally vulnerable at the back

and keeper Caoimhin Kelleher had to claw away the ball after it hit the bar from a late corner, but Bournemouth could not find a way back into the game and the hosts ran out easy winners.

Earlier, Nicolas Jackson scored twice to help Chelsea to a third straight away win with a 3-0 victory at London rivals West Ham United that suggested new coach

Enzo Maresca is getting his huge squad to gel.

Jackson capitalised on poor defending to find the net in the fourth minute when he sprinted down the wing, cut inside unchallenged and beat Alphonse Areola with a low shot.

Fourteen minutes later the Senegal striker was left in space by West Ham's defenders to re-

ceive a pass from Moises Caicedo and double Chelsea's lead.

West Ham were 3-0 down little more than a minute into the second half when Jackson, on the break, teed up Cole Palmer and the England striker fired home from the edge of the box.

Striker Dominic Solanke scored his first goal for Tottenham Hotspur as Ange

Postecoglou's team recovered from conceding inside the opening minute to beat Brentford 3-1.

Bryan Mbeumo's acrobatic volley stunned the home crowd but 65-million-pound (\$86.59-million) signing Solanke calmed the jitters when he tapped in a rebound in the eighth minute.

Brennan Johnson fired Tottenham ahead after 28 minutes but Tottenham's lead looked vulnerable in the second half until James

Fulham's Raul Jimenez, Emile Smith Rowe and Reiss Nelson all scored in a 3-1 victory over Newcastle United at Craven Cottage on Saturday, giving Eddie Howe's team their first defeat of the Premier League season.

Maddison was set up Son Heung-min to make it 3-1.

Meanwhile, Fulham's Raul Jimenez, Emile Smith Rowe and Reiss Nelson all scored in a 3-1 victory over Newcastle United at Craven Cottage on Saturday, giving Eddie Howe's team their first defeat of the Premier League season.

Newcastle, whose solid start to the campaign came to a screeching halt, are sixth in the table on 10 points after five games, while Marco Silva's Fulham are eighth with eight points after their second victory this season.

Aston Villa denied Wolverhampton Wanderers their first victory in the Premier League this season after they came from behind to win their West Midlands derby 3-1 at Villa Park with two late goals on Saturday.



Mikel Arteta

'We have been preparing for Man City since pre-season'

London, England - Arsenal wrap up a gruelling week on the road with a third straight away game when they face champions Manchester City in the Premier League on Sunday and manager Mikel Arteta said his squad had been preparing for the clash since pre-season.

After beating Tottenham Hotspur away in a north London derby last weekend, Arsenal flew to Bergamo and got a goalless draw at Atalanta in the Champions League on Thursday. They

have little time to rest, however, with City next up at the weekend.

Pep Guardiola's side have edged Arsenal to win the title in the last two seasons and once again the two clubs are first and second in the league after four games, with City two points clear at the top.

"We've been preparing for this since pre-season. Obviously, we knew the schedule and we know that it's extremely rare to play in these conditions with three massive away games in six

We're making sure that everyone is ready for it because we're going to need them especially with the injuries that we had

MIKEL ARTETA

days," Arteta said. "But it was what it was so we have prepared

for that, both physically, mentally and tactically. We're making sure that everyone is ready for it because we're going to need them, especially with the injuries that we had from the international break."

Arsenal skipper Martin Odegaard remains sidelined with an ankle injury sustained on duty with Norway and Arteta is unsure of his return date.

"We need to see the development in the next week or so, how the ankle reacts first of all and

then the staff will give me an update on the time frame and how long he'll be out for."

Arteta added that there were no fresh injuries after the draw at Atalanta but had hoped for an extra day of rest after City drew at home to Inter Milan on Wednesday. "We wanted the same as them, we're not getting it, so we have to adapt and make the most of the time that we have today and tomorrow and on the morning of the match to prepare in the best way."

Push for better schedule must come from players, says Guardiola

Manchester, England - The push for a more favourable match schedule must come from the players, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said on Friday, three days after his midfielder Rodri warned that players could be close to strike action over their increased workload.

Guardiola's comments on Friday came ahead of his side's clash with Arsenal on Sunday and amid a tough stretch of seven games in three weeks for the reigning Premier League champions.

"Many, many voices are talking about it," Guardiola told reporters. "If something is going to change, it must come from the players. The business can be without managers, without sporting directors, without media, without owners, but without the players - cannot be played."

"It is not just Rodri (speaking out), it is many, many players, and not just in this country, but around the world people are starting to talk, so we will see."

Guardiola was non-committal



Pep Guardiola with Rodri

about whether Kevin de Bruyne will play on Sunday after his captain limped off at halftime of their 0-0 draw with Inter Milan in the Champions League on Wednesday, and did not play the second half. "He feels a bit better today. Tomorrow we're training and we'll see. He could be (involved)," the manager said.

Sunday's mouth-watering

clash features the league champions and the runners-up from the past two seasons. Both are unbeaten so far and coming off the midweek Champions League draws. City top the league after four games as the only team with a 100% record.

"Every season they (Arsenal) get stronger, the depth of the squad. Even season is even better

Real Madrid to play new club tournament final in Qatar

Zurich, Switzerland - The first edition of the annual FIFA Intercontinental Cup for club teams from around the world will have five matches, with European Champions League winners Real Madrid to play in the final on Dec. 18 in Doha.

The tournament, which was announced in December last year, replaces the annual Club World Cup which will now be played every four years with 32 teams from 2025.

AFC Champions League winners Al Ain will first host OFC Champions League winners Auckland City on Sept. 22 in the African-Asian-Pacific Cup playoff, with the winners set to face CAF Champions League winners Al Ahly in Cairo on Oct. 29.

The first two games will be on the home turf of the higher-ranked team.

Leverkusen keen to continue momentum, says Alonso

Leverkusen, Germany - After a resounding Champions League win over Dutch side Feyenoord in midweek, Bayer Leverkusen are determined to keep the momentum rolling when they face VfL Wolfsburg in the Bundesliga on Sunday, coach Xabi Alonso said.

Fifth-placed Leverkusen, who became the first team to finish a Bundesliga season unbeaten as they clinched the title, began their league campaign with an unconvincing win over Borussia Moenchengladbach before losing to RB Leipzig.

Since then, they have recorded a 4-1 victory at Hoffenheim and were by far the better side in their 4-0 away win over Feyenoord on Thursday, with Alonso calling for more of the same in their home game against 12th-placed Wolfsburg.

"We don't have much time to prepare for Wolfsburg but that's nothing new for us," the Spaniard told reporters on Friday.

"Today the focus is on regeneration and then tomorrow it's match preparation. We have to make the best use of the time we



Xabi Alonso

have. "It's important that we do the things that we did against Feyenoord and bring them onto the pitch on Sunday as well. We expect everyone to be available. We have a deep squad, everyone's ready."

Alonso also highlighted the improvement shown in recent weeks by striker Victor Boniface, who netted twice and recorded

an assist in the win over Hoffenheim, adding: "We see a development with Boni from week to week."

"He's very important for us and has a big influence on our play. His influence off the pitch is also positive, he brings fun to the dressing room and is a good character. We have to help him to play well."

STAGE ALL SET FOR A BLOCKBUSTER CLASH

Norris beats Verstappen to pole for Singapore Grand Prix

Singapore - Lando Norris put McLaren on pole position for the Singapore Grand Prix on Saturday with Red Bull's Formula One championship leader Max Verstappen joining his closest title rival on the front row in a dramatic session under the floodlights.

Seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton qualified third with Mercedes team mate George Russell fourth and McLaren's Oscar Piastri fifth in a top 10 shootout briefly halted by last year's winner Carlos Sainz crashing his Ferrari.

The pole was Norris's fifth of the season, sixth of his career and third in the last four races.

"The car's been feeling good and when you have a good feeling car and you're confident, you can go out and push and get the lap time," said Norris, who was fastest in practice on Friday and Saturday.

"So I did the job I had to do today and excited to see what we can do tomorrow."



Max Verstappen (L) with Lando Norris

Verstappen leads Norris by 59 points with seven rounds remaining and the start will be crucial, with overtaking tricky on the Marina Bay circuit.

"I don't know if it was cold tyres, dirty air or I was... big snap," said the Spaniard over the team radio.

The crash meant Verstappen had his flying lap deleted under yellow flag rules and left seven drivers without a time on the board and only eight minutes remaining in which to set one.

The clock then ticked below four minutes before the two McLarens made the first move.

Norris went top with a lap of one minute 29.525 seconds, with Hamilton second before Verstappen went faster but still

When you have a good feeling car and you're confident, you can go out and push and get the lap time. I did the job today and excited to see what we can do tomorrow.

LANDO NORRIS

0.203 off the McLaren's pace.

"I'm happy to be on the front row if you look at where we came from yesterday," said Verstappen who was only 15th in second practice and has yet to win in Singapore.

"I'll take second. I'm happy with that...in Singapore a lot of things can happen, but at least we have a shot at it like this."



LIV Golf's Brooks Koepka was part of last year's U.S. Ryder Cup team

'LIV Golf players eligible for US Ryder Cup team'

Texas, US - LIV Golf players have been deemed eligible to compete in the PGA Championship and for U.S. Ryder Cup teams going forward, the PGA of America said on Thursday. The PGA of America said its board made the decision to ensure the year's second major can have a strong field while future US Ryder Cup teams will have access to the best US players.

LIV Golf's Brooks Koepka was part of last year's U.S. Ryder Cup team due to a grace period that allowed him to remain a PGA of America member through 2024. That same grace period also applied to LIV Golf players competing in the PGA Championship.

"Going forward, all LIV Golf players are eligible for the PGA Championship and any American player who qualifies for the Ryder Cup on points or is added to the U.S. team as a captain's pick is eligible to compete," the PGA of America said.



Youssef Moukoko of Nice celebrates with Dante after scoring against Saint-Etienne

We should be ashamed, says Petrot of Saint-Etienne after 8-0 thrashing at Nice

Nice, France - Saint-Etienne defender Leo Petrot said Friday's 8-0 loss at Nice was a "disgrace" for the newly promoted Ligue 1 club.

Dylan Batubinsika's fourth-minute own goal started a debacle for the visitors as Nice doubled their lead three minutes later, with Youssef Moukoko's brace making the hosts this century's first team to score six goals in the first half of a French top-flight game.

"There's no analysis. It's a disgrace what we did. We should be ashamed for ourselves, for our supporters and for all the work we put in," Petrot told DAZN after Saint-Etienne suffered their fourth loss in five league games this season.

"To concede eight goals, to be

nonexistent in our state of mind and in duels. I don't know what to say."

The win coincided with Nice's 120th anniversary celebrations, with head coach Franck Haise saying the result would remain engraved in his mind forever.

"Matches with such scores do not happen often, if ever," Haise said amid a festive atmosphere at Stade de Nice, with the hosts claiming their second win in five Ligue 1 matches.

Petrot said Saint-Etienne would try to put this result behind them as soon as possible, with their next match at Nantes coming up on Sept. 29. "We've got 10 days to work really hard... We'll be looking ahead to the next game very quickly," Petrot said.

McLaren to 'make minor adjustments' to rear wing after talks with FIA

Singapore - Formula One leaders McLaren will modify the rear wings on their cars after talks with the governing FIA at the Singapore Grand Prix following concern from rival teams.

The British-based team went top of the standings in Azerbaijan last weekend but drew scrutiny of how the rear wing functioned at speed, with talk of a 'mini-DRS' drag reduction effect.

"Whilst our Baku rear wing complies with the regulations and passes all FIA deflection tests, McLaren have proactively offered to make some minor adjustments to the wing following our conversations with the FIA," the team said in a statement on Friday.

"We would also expect the FIA to have similar conversations with other teams in relation to the compliance of their rear wings."

McLaren are 20 points clear of champions Red Bull in the constructors' standings with seven grands prix and three sprints remaining.

Red Bull boss Christian



McLaren are ahead of Red Bull in the race for the constructors' title after finishing first and fourth in Baku

Horner earlier told Sky Sports television that he expected the FIA to ban the McLaren rear wing. "I'd be surprised if we saw it again," he said. "It sets a precedent... we don't want to rush to design wings that deform like that. If it's deemed okay, then everybody will do the same."

McLaren boss Zak Brown emphasised that the car had passed every test.

"Good on our team for coming up with something that is high performance," he said.

"I think it's great for the championship. We're running at the front, so there are going to be

things that are clearly working well on our race car.

"Everyone else is going to try to speed up and slow us down at the same time. Welcome to Formula One."

The flexing feature offers maximum effect on low down-force tracks like Baku and would

We would also expect the FIA to have similar conversations with other teams in relation to the compliance of their rear wings

McLAREN

be of far less benefit on a circuit like Singapore.

"I think it's more than borderline. We all saw the video and the picture of this," said Ferrari boss Fred Vasseur, who had Charles Leclerc finish second in Baku, of the flexing.

"And it's a bit frustrating when, if you remember perfectly the situation in Monza, we had five cars in 200th of a second. And you move from P1, P2 to P5, P6 for 200th of a second," added the Frenchman.

"In Baku, we arrive 10 laps in a row, side by side, at turn One. You can imagine that we have a bit of frustration."

New Champions League format forces clubs to win, says Atletico's Simeone

Madrid, Spain - The new Champions League format forces teams to go for the win, Atletico Madrid head coach Diego Simeone said after his side fought back from a deficit to grab a late 2-1 victory over RB Leipzig on Thursday.

The European top-flight has switched from a group stage to a league phase where 36 teams play eight matches each, with the top eight in the table pro-

gressing directly to the next round, while the next 16 teams enter a two-legged playoff.

"This format forces us to win. Today a draw is of little use... if we can't (win), we will have to get something out of it," Simeone told Movistar after the 2-1 home win in their campaign opener.

"I'm totally satisfied, the match was very good. I'd have said the same with a draw. We played the game in different

ways and with different players.

"The players interpreted it well and we won a necessary game... what we imagined happened. We controlled 80% of the game."

Atletico, who are unbeaten this season in all competitions, will travel to Portugal's Benfica for their next Champions League match on Oct. 2.

"It'll be another battle," Simeone said.



Diego Simeone (R) celebrates José María Giménez's 90th-minute winner against RB Leipzig with Atletico Madrid players



Afghanistan's Rashid Khan celebrates after taking a South African wicket

Afghanistan thrash South Africa to seal one-day series

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates - Afghanistan registered another emphatic victory over South Africa on Friday, beating them by 177 runs in the second one-day international to take an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series in Sharjah.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz hit a record-setting century as Afghanistan reached 311-4 off their 50 overs and then Rashid Khan, celebrating his 26th birthday, took five wickets to skittle out South Africa for 134.

The win sealed the series for Afghanistan, who had registered a first ever triumph over South Africa when they won the opening ODI on Wednesday by six wickets.

Afghanistan were always on top in Friday's contest after winning the toss and electing to bat, putting the South African attack to the sword from the start as the flat track offered little for the bowlers to work with.

Gurbaz became Afghanistan's most prolific ODI centurion, with seven to his name, as he scored 105 off 110 balls while an unbeaten 86 from Azmatullah Omarzai ensured they posted an imposing target.

Opener Gurbaz kept the scoreboard consistently ticking over, taking 56 balls to reach his half century, before spending a couple of overs nervously approaching his ton, finally sweep-

Gurbaz became Afghanistan's most prolific ODI centurion, with seven to his name, as he scored 105 off 110 balls while Omarzai made an unbeaten 86

ing behind square leg to go to three figures.

Omarzai's runs came off 50 balls and included six sixes at the end of the innings as South Africa's bowlers wilted in the heat and were hit to all corners. There was also 50 for Rahmat Shah before he was stumped off the bowling of debutant spinner Nqabayomzi Peter.

South Africa made a positive start to their reply as captain Temba Bavuma, back after illness kept him out of the first game, and Tony de Zorzi put on 73 for the first wicket.

But after Bavuma skyed a bouncer and was caught by Mohammad Nabi off Omarzai, wickets tumbled in quick succession.

Khan, who had struggled with a hamstring injury while batting, was destroyer-in-chief with 5-19 in nine overs while left arm spinner Nangeyala Kharote cleaned up the tail with 4-26.

INDIA TIGHTEN GRIP

Ashwin takes three wickets after Pant and Gill tons as hosts close in on big win against Bangladesh

Chennai, India - India set Bangladesh a mammoth victory target of 515 and then reduced them to 158-4 to close in on a comprehensive victory on day three of the opening Test between the neighbouring countries on Saturday.

Bangladesh began well but some smart catching by the Indians and three wickets for home hero Ravichandran Ashwin rattled the tourists.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (51) and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (five) were in the middle when bad light forced early stumps with Bangladesh still needing a hefty 357 runs to win.

Earlier, Shubman Gill struck an unbeaten 119 and Rishabh Pant (109) smashed a hundred in his comeback Test before India declared their second innings on 287-4. The hosts were already in the ascendancy since routing Bangladesh for 149 in their first innings and claiming a lead of 227 at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. Gill signalled their positive intent when the elegant right-hander clobbered off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz for two sixes in an over to reach his fifty.

Pant took a more conventional approach, a single off the spinner, to bring up his half-century in his first Test since a horrific car accident in late 2022.

Bangladesh squandered a chance to break the stand when Shanto dropped Pant on 72.



Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant hit centuries to put India in the box seat in the first Test against Bangladesh

The mind can play tricks because I am a bowler who plays on 12, 18, 24 balls ahead when I am sequencing it. As a batter, I shouldn't do that.

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN

Rubbing salt into the wound, Pant hit Shakib for back-to-back fours in the left-arm spinner's next over and beat Gill to the 100 mark.

Pant smashed 13 fours and four sixes in his sixth Test hundred before giving a return catch to Mehidy.

Gill, whose fifth Test hundred included 10 fours and four sixes, could not be dislodged though.

Faced with an onerous task in their second innings, Bangladesh openers Zakir Hasan (33) and Shadman Islam (35) decided to counter-attack in their 62-run stand.

Yashvi Jaiswal took a stunning left-handed catch in the slips to remove Zakir before Ashwin, who smashed a match-defining century in the first innings, produced a three-wicket burst.

"Bowling and batting are very separate sports in the same game," Ashwin said after the second day of the Chennai Test between India and Bangladesh. "One is done consciously. The other one is done subconsciously. So, for me, to compartmentalise both has taken its own due."

Ashwin walked in at 144 for 6 in India's first innings and immediately put what he has learned over a long career into practice: that with the bat in hand, he needs to be an entirely different person from the one who has gone on to become one of the greatest spinners in history. "At this stage, I am able to se-

quence that and split both of them and see as a cricketer. So, when I walked there [to bat] the only thing I wanted to do was to settle down my game. The mind can play tricks because I am a bowler who plays on 12, 18, 24 balls ahead when I am sequencing it. As a batter, I shouldn't do that. I just use my experience when I get in."

He was India's main threat with the ball in Bangladesh's second innings. Gill and KL Rahul took diving catches to dismiss Shadman and Mushfiqur Rahim respectively, while Mominul Haque lost his middle stump to the wily off-spinner.

Kasatkina, Haddad Maia enter Korea Open final

Seoul, South Korea - A foot injury forced Emma Raducanu to retire from the Korea Open quarter-finals on Saturday, while third seed Beatriz Haddad Maia beat sisters Polina and Veronika Kudermetova on the same day to set up a Korea Open final clash with top seed Daria Kasatkina.

Former U.S. Open champion Raducanu struggled to serve with her injured left foot, as she played on after a medical timeout, committing a double fault and not chasing returns across the court.



Haddad Maia

The 21-year-old Briton retired after losing the first set 6-1 to Kasatkina.

The foot injury had also surfaced during Raducanu's round of 16 clash with Yuan Yue of China.

Kasatkina took to the court again later on Saturday, playing twice due to rain washing out Friday's play in Seoul.

She beat fellow Russian and fourth seed Diana Shnaider 6-3 6-4 in the semis, as an exhausted Shnaider struggled with an injury. Shnaider, who beat Ukrainian

fifth seed Marta Kostyuk in the quarter-finals hours earlier, took a medical timeout in the second set of the semi before losing three games in a row as Kasatkina progressed to the final, where she will meet Brazil's Haddad Maia.

Haddad Maia, who brushed aside lucky loser Polina 6-2 6-1 in the last eight earlier in the day, defeated the elder Kudermetova sister and former French Open quarter-finalist Veronika 6-4 6-4 in the semis.

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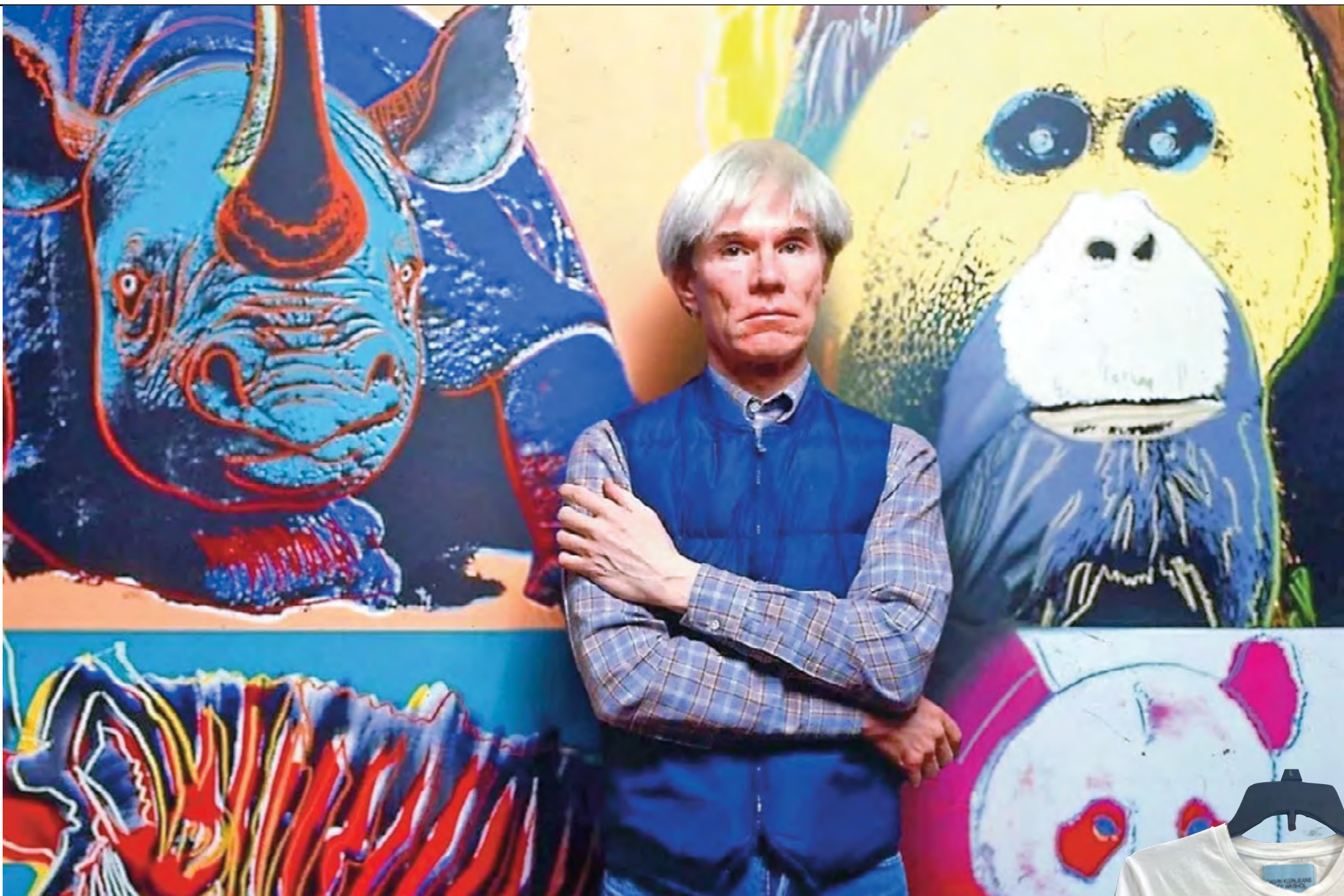
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WARHOL'S WORK AN EXHIBITION OF OVER 100 ORIGINAL MASTERPIECES BY LEGENDARY POP ARTIST ANDY WARHOL COMES TO THE UAE FOR THE FIRST TIME



Art For All brings 'Andy Warhol, The Glam Factory' exhibition to Dubai, featuring over 100 original pieces from the king of Pop Art.

Taking place at Foundry from September 20 - October 31, and curated by Nada Ghandour, the exhibition features famed pieces including a screenprint portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor.

On display for the first time in the UAE, the collection of over 100 original pieces on display includes screenprints, photos, and magazines that illustrate his career and provide a portrait of American society from the 1960s to the 1980s, a period of artistic, technological, and societal renewal.

Designed by renowned New York-based architect Ibrahim Kombarji, the exhibition harmoniously blends Warhol's avant-garde spirit with cutting-edge architectural design, creating an environment that both reflects and enhances the experience of Warhol's work.

"We are thrilled to bring Andy Warhol's groundbreaking works to Dubai for the very first time. 'Andy Warhol, The Glam Factory' is not just an exhibition; it's an immersive journey into the mind of a genius who forever changed the landscape of contemporary art. This exhibition is a testament to Dubai's growing status as a global cultural hub, and we are honoured to share Warhol's legacy with our community," said Rania Ashur, Founder of Art For All.

A multi-talented creative - painter, advertiser, filmmaker, actor, music and television producer - Warhol redefined the stature and power of the artist. Even today, his work continues

to inspire and provoke. His innovative use of screen printing, fascination with consumer culture, and talent as a portraitist of the global elite made him one of the most revolutionary artists of the 20th century.

The exhibition is organised into two sections, one dedicated to the artist and the other to his places of creation and preference.

Andy Warhol: From Shadows to Light

This section highlights the significant milestones of Warhol's career, from his early days as an illustrator to his status as a 'business artist' with a prestigious clientele. It embodies his aesthetic evolution, from his advertising drawings in Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, and The New Yorker to the Campbell's Soup Cans, showcasing his exceptional technical mastery in illustration, photography, and semi-industrial series production.

The Glam Factory: Art Meets Business

Warhol's genius was to bring the



Marilyn Monroe

painted portrait back into vogue, which became his hallmark and fortune. The famous screenprint portraits of the 'Rich and Famous' began with his iconic celebrity portraits including Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and Mao Zedong, propelling Warhol to the forefront of the art world.

This section also includes por-

traits of various political, fashion, arts, sports, and business personalities, blending commission and collaboration with Edward Kennedy, Paloma Picasso, and Keith Haring. Additionally, it features stars who shared Warhol's extravagant social life and those who sometimes collaborated artistically with him, such as fashion designers Calvin Klein and Giorgio Armani, as well as rock star elite Mick Jagger.

Two immersive spaces recreate the experimental and glamorous environment of New York that Warhol frequented, alongside its vibrant nightlife during this period of extravagance and excitement. These include The Silver Factory - a multidisciplinary creation space designed by Warhol for himself and the artists he invited to collaborate, and Studio 54 - where jet-setters, businessmen, top models, and personalities from around the world gathered to party.

Commenting on the exhibition, curator of the exhibition, Nada Ghandour said, "Curating 'Andy Warhol, The Glam Fac-



Liz Taylor

tory' has been a remarkable experience, as Warhol's art continues to resonate deeply with audiences around the world. This exhibition offers a remarkable opportunity to explore Warhol's innovative approach to art and his profound commentary on consumerism and celebrity culture. I believe, visitors will leave with a newfound appreciation for Warhol's work and its enduring relevance."

'Andy Warhol, The Glam Factory' is an exhibition by Art for All, hosted at Foundry, a pioneering hybrid art space nestled in the heart of Downtown Dubai's Boulevard.



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The temple walls' reliefs were restored to reveal colorful paint that decorated carvings of Egyptian gods

Traces of gold leaf remained on depictions of Egyptian deities.

TEMPLE ART

HOUSE OF HORUS

The temple walls' reliefs were restored to reveal colorful paint that decorated carvings of Egyptian gods



Egypt's second-largest ancient temple is getting a facelift. For three years, experts have been carefully cleaning and restoring parts of the 2,000-year-old Temple of Edfu - and shedding new light on what the richly decorated house of worship looked like in its prime.

Built between 237 and 57 B C, the temple is dedicated to the Egyptian god Horus. It measures about 450 feet long and 115 feet tall, and is famous for its stone walls covered in carved reliefs, which were once painted in vibrant colours.

Researchers from Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Ger-

many's University of Wurzburg have been carefully bringing these colours back to life. During these efforts, they've also discovered that the reliefs were partially covered in gold leaf, according to a statement from the university.

Experts began the restoration by removing dust, bird droppings, soot and other deposits from the monument's sandstone reliefs. Beneath this detritus, they found the reliefs' original painted colouring - varied hues of red and blue, per Artnet's Vittoria Benzine.

Prayers to Horus

The paint has helped researchers identify details of the scenes depicted

Experts are carefully uncovering traces of the original paint and fragments of gold leaf that once adorned the 2,000-year-old Egyptian Temple of Edfu

on the reliefs that weren't previously clear. They've also formed a more comprehensive understanding of the carved hieroglyphs, which Egyptian craftsmen would sometimes use paint to correct or refine.

"In the painting, we are capturing an ancient quality management," says researcher Martin A Stadler, an Egyptologist at the University of Wurzburg, in the statement.

The reliefs' striking colours weren't the only paints that researchers found in the temple. The walls also sport dipinti, or graffiti painted in ink. Written in Demotic script (a type of cursive hieroglyphics), the messages are prayers to Horus and testimonies of priests who entered the temple.

"It is a very important discovery that will reveal more of the ancient Egyptians' religious beliefs," says Sherif Fathy, Egypt's tourism minister, per Ahram Online's Nevine El-Aref.

Discovering preserved paint in ancient Egyptian temples is rare, but finding gold leaf is even less common. The Egyptians began covering columns, gates and obelisks with gold

at the beginning of the pharaonic period (around 3000 BC), and historians know from ancient texts that some buildings were also gilded, according to the statement. But many of those structures were covered in thicker overlays made of copper, rather than gold.

'Gods have golden flesh'

Examples of gold leaf decorations are also quite fragile, so they rarely survive the passage of time. But as the researchers have discovered, the Temple of Edfu's higher reliefs, which depict deities, still contain traces of thin gold leaf.

Why did the Egyptians choose to depict their deities this way? Victoria Altmann-Wendling, an Egyptologist at the German university, says in the statement that this choice is 'particularly interesting', adding that some ancient Egyptian texts mention that the gods have golden flesh.

"The gilding of the figures presumably not only served to symbolically immortalise and deify them but also contributed to the mystical aura of the



room," she adds. "It must have been very impressive, especially when the sunlight was shining in."

The experts are planning to conduct an analysis of the pigments and gilding. They will also carefully document the site and publish their findings, which will provide other researchers with more accurate information about the ornate decorations inside the temple.

(Courtesy: smithsonianmag.com)

Researchers have been working on the restoration since 2021

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