

NEWS BRIEF

OMAN SENDS 80 TONNES OF AID TO LIBYA

Muscat - Following the floods in Libya, Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) joined hands with Royal Air Force of Oman to dispatch the first batch of 80 tonnes of relief material on Monday.

Those wishing to contribute can donate through Bank Muscat A/C No 0423010700010017, Bank Dhofar A/C No 01040609090001, Bank Nizwa A/C No 00122200222001 or www.donate.om, OCO stated.



Oman's GDP growth expected to moderate to 2.5% in 2023



Monster trucks and levity lift London Fashion Week

'Oman committed to SDGs'

Our Correspondent Muscat

Under the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, headed the sultanate's delegation at the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, which began at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Monday.

In a speech, Sayyid Badr conveyed the greetings of His Majesty the Sultan and his appreciation for the efforts made in organising the summit.

The Foreign Minister said that the summit was being held at a time of increasing importance of joint efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

"Oman is making tangible efforts towards achieving the sustainable development goals, as it has made technology, science and digital transformation an es-



(ONA)

sential part of its national strategy and legislation."

He noted that Oman hopes to submit its second voluntary national report in 2024, which will highlight its strong commitment to achieving the sustainable development goals and to continuing progress in social, economic, scientific, environmental and renewable energy fields.

Sayyid Badr added that Oman's path towards achieving the goals, as set out in Oman Vision 2040, reflects the sultanate's strong commitment to science, technology and innovation. "Oman is also supporting international cooperation to transfer knowledge and technology and to facilitate investment and job opportunities to ensure a

Oman is making tangible efforts towards achieving the SDGs, as it has made technology, science and digital transformation an essential part of its national strategy and legislation

SAYYID BADR AL BUSAIDI

safe and prosperous future for all."

Gulf, UK meet

Oman chaired a joint ministerial meeting between the foreign ministers of the GCC member states and James Cleverly, Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, on Monday.

At the meeting, which took

place in New York on the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Oman was represented by Sayyid Badr, Chairman of the current session of the Gulf Ministerial Council, with participation of Jassem Mohamed al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of GCC.

The meeting reviewed the strong relations between the GCC countries and the UK and discussed expanding areas of cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, renewable energy, education, sustainable development and transfer of scientific knowledge.

The ministers praised the ongoing progress in GCC-UK relations and agreed on working continuously to expand and diversify common interests in various fields. They also exchanged views on current international and regional issues and agreed on the importance of encouraging dialogue and respecting the rule

of international law and the United Nations Charter in order to strengthen global peace and stability.

Gulf, Caribbean ties

Oman chaired a meeting of the foreign ministers of the GCC and the foreign ministers of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) on Monday.

At the meeting, the two groups signed a memorandum of cooperation and adopted a joint action plan between the GCC and the ACS, which identifies key goals and sets out mechanisms for political dialogue, facilitation of trade and promotion of investment and tourism cooperation.

The GCC and ACS foreign ministers agreed on their common desire to activate cooperation between the two groups, especially in the economic, commercial and tourism fields.

See also Page 08

Karwa Motors unveils school buses for enhanced student safety

Our Correspondent Muscat

Karwa Motors has unveiled new Karwa School Buses set to be available in the local market by the beginning of 2024.

Designed with advanced safety features, these buses aim to redefine student transportation standards in Oman.

Dr Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi,

CEO of Karwa Motors, said the new buses are a testament to the company's dedication to addressing the needs of Oman's school transportation sector.

He highlighted the fact that the bus design was finalised after thorough analysis of existing challenges, particularly concerning public safety.

"The Karwa School Bus is fitted with state-of-the-art safety

equipment aligned with the Ministry of Education's 'Safety Journey' system," Balushi said, and emphasised the company's unwavering commitment to student safety and educational institution requirements.

The bus's standout features include capacity to seat 23, compatibility to Gulf Cooperation Council standards, internal and external surveillance cameras,



(Supplied photo)

strategically arranged passenger seats, an emergency exit, clear visibility for the driver and passengers, an automatic fire-extinguishing system, high-performance air conditioning, safety locks, and innovative side doors equipped with sensors.

Additionally, the buses come with engine sensors, GPS-based location tracking and a system to monitor driver performance.

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Municipality clamps down on illegal vendors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has launched an extensive inspection campaign to tackle illegal street fish vending in various areas of Muscat.

Muscat Daily on September 17 reported unfazed running of unauthorised fish vending in various parts of the city.

Prioritising the health and safety of its residents and visitors, the municipality has significantly increased inspection of food establishments and products, particularly those involving the sale of fish.

Fish is a vital part of the food sector, and its quality directly affects the consumers' health.

Recent statistics revealed focused inspections in several regions: 129 in Seeb, 95 in Bausher, 28 in Quriyat, 156 in Muttrah, and 48 in Amerat. These inspections resulted in recording viola-



tions and disposal of spoiled fish. Specifically, Seeb recorded four violations with 74kg of fish disposed, Bausher recorded two violations with 14kg disposed, and Amerat had one violation with 9kg of fish disposed.

To standardise the sale of fish, the municipality has set stringent guidelines requiring fish shops to be no smaller than 20sqm and equipped with specialised refrigeration units with temperature monitors.

Fresh fish should be stored between 1 and 4°C, while frozen fish should not exceed -18°C. The facilities should also have appropriate infrastructure including stainless steel tables, sinks, fans, and a specific electric saw for frozen fish.

Additionally, shops should ensure daily cleanliness, use of stainless steel tools, provide distinct customer areas, and use insect repellents and fire-resistant trash cans.

Health control departments in the Muscat governorate monitor fish sales across various platforms, from markets to restaurants.

They have augmented their field visits, confiscated non-com-

pliant fish, and continuously train inspectors and food sector workers on health standards.

The municipality has cited an administrative decision (No 55/2017), which states penalties for non-compliance of specified norms for ensuring food safety.

As per that decision, failing to refrigerate fresh meat, poultry, or fish can result in a fine of RO50 with a grace period of three days for rectification. Not using adequate ice or proper refrigeration will call for a fine of RO20, requiring immediate correction.

The ban on street vending of fish has been put in place due to its rapid spoilage. Engaging in such unlicensed activities can lead to a hefty RO300 fine and work suspension until a proper licence is acquired, the municipal authority underscored.

Muscat Municipality urged everyone to strictly adhere to the established regulations and laws for the well-being of all.

Nafad platform empowers over 2,000 SMEs in telecom and postal sectors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Nafad (Access) platform, adopted by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) to create a talent pool, has attracted more than 2,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and over 4,000 registered individuals.

Launched by the authority in February 2022, Nafad is a virtual incubator that attracts spe-

cialised national talents in the telecommunications and postal services sectors.

Its aim is to enhance the local added value for these sectors by providing contractual projects, creating a database for companies and national talents, and offering training programmes.

As of now, Nafad has supported around 60 projects and offered five training programmes for various segments of society.

This platform is built upon the

idea of creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurial work, empowering SMEs, freelancers, and connecting small and medium-sized businesses with opportunities in the telecommunications and postal services sectors.

Its target audience includes tech companies, freelancers, training institutions, small and medium-sized enterprises, and licence holders in the telecommunications and postal sectors.

Oman gets national framework to engage patients in policy issues

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday unveiled a national framework to engage patients and their family members in policy making processes for improved healthcare safety.

The National Patient Engagement Framework - launched during the 5th National and 4th World Patient Safety Day conference - seeks active participation of patients in policy-making, governance, and safety strategy design.

It advocates for patients to be collaborative partners in the healthcare they receive.

The ministry stressed the importance of creating avenues for patients, families, and communities to voice their thoughts, concerns, and expectations about healthcare safety.

This year's World Patient

This year's World Patient Safety Day theme highlights the pivotal role of patients, families, and caregivers in healthcare safety

Safety Day theme was 'engaging patients for patient safety', highlighting the pivotal role of patients, families, and caregivers in healthcare safety.

Celebrated annually on September 17, this day draws attention to the significance of patient involvement at all healthcare levels.

H E Dr Saeed al Lamki, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in MoH, presided over the opening ceremony. Key virtual attendees included Dr Ahmed al

Mandhari, WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Director, and Dr Jean Jabbour, WHO Representative in Oman. Senior officials from the ministry were also present.

Organised by the Directorate General of Quality Assurance Centre in partnership with the WHO Office in Oman, the conference featured a mix of in-person and online lectures from distinguished local, regional, and international speakers.

A panel discussion, moderated by MoH spokesperson Dr Al Mutasim al Mamari, incorporated insights from prominent figures such as H E Hilal al Sarmi, member of Majlis A'Shura, and several healthcare officials.

The objective of the World Patient Safety Day is to enhance global awareness of the essential involvement of patients and their caregivers across healthcare settings.

No injuries in Rusayl fire accident: CDAA

Muscat - The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) dealt with a fire accident involving four trucks in the wilayat of Seeb.

'Firefighting teams at the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in Muscat governorate were able to extinguish a fire that broke out in four trucks in Rusayl Industrial area in the wilayat of Seeb, without any injuries,' CDAA said in a statement issued on Tuesday.

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Tender Notice

Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following E-Tender for 2023:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tenders bids	Tender Price
21/2023	Renewal of On Site AMC Service for Huawei Network Equipment in PASI HQ and Branches for one year	28 Sep 2023	12 Oct 2023	25 RO

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E-Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. The Vendors must provide electronic proposal valid for (90) days and addressed to Public Authority for Social Insurance on mentioned website.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at E-Tendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: Tel : +968 24402200 , E-mail : etenderhd@ita.gov.om
PASI is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other tender that may be received

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Tender Announcement

مدائن madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Type of work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
11/2023/PEIE/HQ-11	Consultancy Services for Detailed Design and Construction Supervision for industrial units (Plug and play) in Rusayl Industrial City	03-10-2023	29-10-2023	Consulting Offices	First	75

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and +968 24402200 Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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*Rates as on September 19

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Russia's GDP growth set to slow down

Russia's economic growth will slow in the second half of 2023, central bank governor Elvira Nabiullina warned, as Moscow grapples with labour shortages, sanctions and lower export revenues.

Russian officials have largely shrugged off the economic effects of Moscow's dragging offensive in Ukraine, despite persistently high inflation and a weaker ruble.

"We expect growth rates to be more moderate in the second half of the year," Nabiullina said at a press conference after the bank raised its key rate for the third time in two months.

"This is natural after a period of rapid recovery growth. The rate of economic growth is limited by the availability of resources, primarily labour," she said.

She said the bank was keeping its growth forecast between 1.5-2.5% in 2023, but lowering it for 2024 to 0.5-1.5% maximum.

Oman's GDP growth expected to moderate to 2.5% in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's economy is expected to expand moderately in 2023, according to a new report commissioned by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and compiled by Oxford Economics, a leading economic research and consulting firm.

While Oman's non-oil economic activities are forecasted to grow by 2.9%, up from 1.6% last year, headwinds in the oil sector, driven by OPEC+ policy changes, will cause the sultanate's 2023 GDP growth to slow to 2.5% year-on-year compared to the 4.3% growth in 2022.

Oman's economy entered this year on a positive note, expanding at a growth rate of 4.7% in the first quarter of 2023, outpacing the average growth rate of the previous year and driven by non-oil output, which expanded by 4.6%, the report noted.

According to the ICAEW report, in alignment with the OPEC+ agreement, Oman is expected to reduce oil output to 1.042mn barrels per day (bpd) this year, down 2.1% from last year, with further adjustments anticipated in the coming year. Meanwhile, gas production increased by 3.4% in 2022 and will continue to rise as more



Oman's economy entered this year on a positive note, expanding by 4.7% in the first quarter of 2023

projects come online, shifting the composition of energy trade further in favor of gas. Despite hotel occupancy rates hovering slightly below 2019 levels, tourism is expected to be among the key sectors boosting the sultanate's non-oil economic recovery, with indicators such as visitor numbers showing promising signs of improvement, the report noted.

Economic diversification
Oman is capitalizing on growth

Despite last year's growth being primarily bolstered by elevated oil prices, Oman is demonstrating its ability to sustain economic expansion by diversifying and fostering growth within its non-oil sector

HANADI KHALIFE

and diversification plans in the region, such as the UAE's Etihad Rail, which will connect Oman, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia, according to the report. It added

that Oman is also advancing renewable wind and solar energy projects, aiming to raise the share of renewable energy to 30% by 2030, up from the cur-

rent 5.5%.

However, with energy sector trends being unfavorable, a small budget deficit is anticipated both this year and next, as estimated by the ICAEW.

"Fiscal data for January to July shows a positive balance due to lower spending. Still, the decline is expected to exert pressure on the budget for the rest of the year," the report said.

In 2022, Oman achieved a budget surplus of 2.7% of GDP, driven by a commodity price boom, marking a significant shift

from prior budget and trade deficits into surpluses and repayment of external debt. The ICAEW estimates that this lowered the public debt-to-GDP ratio to 40% last year, down from a peak of over 65% in 2020.

Hanadi Khalife, Head of Middle East at ICAEW, said, "Despite last year's growth being primarily bolstered by elevated oil prices, Oman is demonstrating its ability to sustain economic expansion by diversifying and fostering growth within its non-oil sector. The marked expansion in renewable energy, tourism, and the pursuit of sustainable finance initiatives underscores Oman's unwavering commitment to maintaining its upward growth trajectory amid global economic challenges."

Scott Livermore, Chief Economist and Managing Director of Oxford Economics Middle East, said, "While Oman confronts challenges in its oil sector, the nation's strategic emphasis on non-oil sectors and renewable energy is positioning it for sustained economic expansion. The government continues to unveil plans to support its medium-term growth with a \$5.2bn Future Fund to boost investment, the expansion of Muscat's outskirts, and several other mega projects."

OQGN plans eight IPO roadshows across Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), which is set to open its initial public offering (IPO) for public subscription on September 26, will organise eight roadshows to support the launch of the IPO.

OQGN holds a natural monopoly over essential gas transportation in Oman as the exclusive operator and owner of the sultanate's Natural Gas Transportation Network (NGTN).

The company's IPO is expected to raise up to RO297mn at the top of the offered price range (131bz-140bz per share).

The roadshows will be carried out in collaboration with the Capital Market Authority (CMA), the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), and the offices of Governors and Walis in several governorates across Oman.

The roadshows, starting on September 20 and ending on October 3, aim to educate investors, both nationals and residents,



about the system of subscription in issued shares and the targeted categories.

OQGN plans to float up to 49% of its shares in the offering that will provide investors with access to the company's growth as the exclusive owner and operator of the gas transportation network in the sultanate.

The first roadshow will be held on Wednesday in collaboration with the OCCI branch in Sohar. The chamber's branch in the Wilayat of Khasab will host the second roadshow in Musandam Governorate on Thursday.

Following this, another roadshow will be held in Al Dhahirah Governorate in the OCCI branch in Ibra on September 24. The fourth roadshow will be hosted in the OCCI branch in Al Buraimi Governorate on September 25.

The Wilayat of Nizwa will host the fifth IPO roadshow on September 26, while the sixth roadshow will be held in the OCCI branch in Dhofar on September 28.

The last two roadshows will be held in the Wilayat of Ibra on October 2 and in Muscat Governorate on October 3, respectively.

OABC hosts business networking event

Muscat - The Oman American Business Council (AmCham Oman), in collaboration with Better Medical Solutions (BMS), successfully hosted its annual Back to Business Networking Evening on September 12, at the Sheraton Hotel Muscat.

The networking event provided a platform for Omani and international businesses to reconnect, network, and prioritise their well-being while promoting the utilisation of the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The Back to Business Networking Evening brought together 180 esteemed members of the Oman business community after the summer break. Attendees enjoyed a delightful evening of culinary delights and engaging conversations, fostering new connections and strengthening existing relationships.

Each attendee was given a gift voucher for use at BMS' various medical centers and clinics, and was offered a 5-10 minute health consultation in areas such as skin care, allergies, weight loss and physical therapy. As part of the



event, Better Medical Solutions showcased their example of utilising the US-Oman FTA by importing high-quality US medical devices, further highlighting the benefits of this trade agreement for Omani businesses.

"AmCham Oman takes great pride in being the primary organisation hosting networking events of this magnitude. The Back to Business Networking Evening exemplifies our commitment to fostering a vibrant business ecosystem in Oman. We are dedicated to providing platforms that enable Omani busi-

nesses to connect, collaborate, and thrive," stated Ali Daud, President and Chairman Emeritus of OABC.

OABC was honoured to welcome the new Chargé d'affaires at the US Embassy in Muscat, Leslie Ordeman, as the evening's guest of honor. He highlighted the strong economic ties between the United States and Oman and the shared commitment to fostering business relations.

"The US-Oman economic partnership has never been stronger, with trade last year

soaring to record high of \$4.2bn in 2022, a 30% increase from the prior year," he said. "I'm proud the Embassy can support OABC's efforts to build the relationships between US and Omani companies that serve as the bedrock of that partnership."

Khaled Kassar, CEO of Better Medical Solutions, said, "We are thrilled to have partnered with OABC for the Back to Business Networking Evening. It was an impactful evening for all attendees, enabling each executive to strengthen relationships and explore new opportunities."

Asyad Group wins ECI award for energy transition and sustainability

Muscat - Asyad Group, Oman's leading global integrated logistics provider, has been named the recipient of the Energy Industries Council's (EIC) Survive & Thrive Awards 2023 in the Middle East, Africa and CIS region for energy transition and sustainability category.

The EIC is a global trade association for the energy supply chain with a worldwide membership of over 900 companies covering all energy sectors.

EIC's Survive & Thrive Awards recognise the exceptional contributions and innovations within the global energy supply chain. Asyad Group's



Ryan McPherson

commitment to advancing sustainability and catalysing transformative change within the industry perfectly aligns with the

core principles of the awards.

The ceremony was held at Queen Elizabeth 2 in Dubai, and the award was received by

Ahmed al Rawahi, Asyad Group's quality, health, safety, security and environment manager.

In a press release, Ryan McPherson, EIC's regional director for Middle East, Africa and CIS, commended Asyad's achievements, stating, "Asyad's remarkable dedication to promoting sustainable practices throughout the energy supply chain has rightfully earned them this prestigious recognition. Their commitment to excellence serves as a beacon of inspiration for the entire industry. We take immense pride in presenting Asyad Group with the Survive &

Thrive Award in the energy transition and sustainability category."

Asyad Group also received nominations in the transformation and culture categories. The awards underwent rigorous evaluation by a panel of international judges of distinguished repute.

To celebrate excellence within the energy supply chain, EIC has expanded its annual awards program to encompass multiple regions. This expansion complements the flagship event, the EIC National Awards Dinner, scheduled for October 19, 2023, in London.

China retail sales surge in August, boost hopes for economy

Beijing, China - Chinese retail sales jumped last month, data showed Friday, beating expectations and fuelling hopes that consumers are helping kickstart the world's second-biggest economy.

Sluggish domestic consumption, an embattled property sector and soft overseas demand for China's exports have complicated the country's post-Covid recovery after restrictions were lifted last year.

The retail data, which also revealed a better-than-expected rise in industrial output, is the latest pointing to a stabilisation and

follows a number of stimulus measures by the government.

Retail sales - the main indicator of household consumption that is closely followed by markets - jumped 4.6% on-year in August, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said. That marked a big improvement on July's 2.5% and was higher than the three percent forecast in a Bloomberg survey of economists.

Meanwhile, industrial production climbed 4.5% on-year, which was also a significant increase from July and more than estimated.

AFF

OECD sees 'sub-par' global growth as high rates bite

Paris, France – The OECD raised its global economic outlook for 2023 on Tuesday but cut the growth forecast for next year as "painful" interest-rate hikes aimed at curbing inflation take their toll.

The world economy is now expected to grow 3.0% this year, up from the 2.7% forecast in the June outlook of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

But it said global growth was projected to remain "sub-par", slowing to 2.7% next year – down from 2.9% in the previous forecast.

"After a stronger-than-expected start to 2023, helped by lower energy prices and the re-opening of China, global growth is expected to moderate," the OECD said in its report.

"The impact of tighter monetary policy is becoming increasingly visible, business and consumer confidence have turned down, and the rebound in China has faded," it added.

Central banks worldwide have sharply increased borrowing costs in an effort to tame consumer prices which soared in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

"We are all seeing the tightening of monetary policy working its way through our economies. This



OECD noted that US growth would slow from 2.2% in 2023 to 1.3% next year

is necessary to reduce inflation, but it is painful," OECD chief economist Clare Lombardelli said at a press conference.

The European Central Bank raised a key interest rate to a record high last week but hinted this might be its last hike, while the US Federal Reserve is expected to pause its own campaign on Wednesday.

"Inflation is projected to moderate gradually over 2023 and 2024 but to remain above central bank objectives in most economies," the OECD said.

Rising credit card delinquencies

Inflation remains well above the two-per cent targets of the Fed and ECB, and oil prices have re-

bounded in recent weeks. EU data on Tuesday showed eurozone inflation slowed slightly to 5.2% in August from 5.3% the previous month. The Bank of England and its peers in Norway, Sweden and Switzerland are also making interest rate decisions on Thursday.

"Even if policy rates are not raised further, the effects of past rises will continue to work their

way through economies for some time," the OECD said.

Borrowing costs for companies and households have risen, while credit conditions have tightened, it said. "Some countries are already seeing rising loan and credit card delinquency rates and increases in corporate insolvencies," the OECD said.

AFF

Musk considers charging all X users monthly fee

Paris, France – Elon Musk has sparked outrage among fans of his social media platform X by suggesting he might introduce a monthly fee for all users, in what would be the biggest shake-up since he took over the site then known as Twitter last October.

During a talk with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday, Musk said that introducing a small monthly payment for X would combat the "armies of bots" on the site.

Musk bought Twitter for \$44bn but has since admitted its value has plunged after he gutted its workforce and allowed right-wing conspiracy theorists back on the site, sending advertisers fleeing.

X users united in dismay at his latest plan, suggesting it could finally put an end to the site, and analysts questioned the logic of a move that would make the platform even less appealing to advertisers.

Musk said in July the platform had lost roughly half its advertising revenue, though he has also claimed that almost all advertisers had returned.

Bots – accounts run by computer programs rather than humans – are common on X, where they can be used to amplify political messages or racial hatred.

Netanyahu asked Musk about anti-Semitism, and how X could "prevent the use of bots – armies of bots – to replicate and amplify it".

Musk replied that the company was "moving to having a small monthly payment for use of the X system". "It's the only way I can think of to combat vast armies of bots," he said, explaining that even a small fee would make it expensive to run bots.

'Network effect'

The conversation, which was broadcast on X, came as the Tesla tycoon is mired in a row with the Anti-Defamation League, a US-based Jewish or-



Elon Musk

ganisation.

Musk has threatened to sue the ADL for making unfounded accusations of anti-Semitism that have scared away advertisers and hurt his company's revenue.

During a talk with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Musk said introducing a small monthly payment for X would combat the 'armies of bots' on the site

Musk has long been accused of promoting anti-Semitic tropes.

Just a day before meeting Netanyahu, Musk responded to a post blaming Jewish billionaire George Soros for encouraging immigration to Europe, saying: "The Soros organization appears to want nothing less than the destruction of western civilization."

His move to make users pay sparked thousands of critical messages and memes on Tuesday.

"RIP X/Twitter! It's been REAL and it's been FUN but since you took over, it ain't been REAL FUN," a user called Jesi T wrote.

AFF

Global debt still stuck above 2019 levels: IMF

Washington, US – The global debt burden remains well above its pre-pandemic levels despite declining as a proportion of economic output last year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Total debt, which includes both public and private debt, stood at 238% of global gross domestic product (GDP) last

year, 9 percentage points higher than it was in 2019, the IMF said in a statement.

The IMF blamed the slow progress on high public debt, which is declining at a slower rate than private debt.

"Fiscal deficits kept public debt levels elevated, as many governments spent more to boost growth and respond to

food and energy price spikes even as they ended pandemic-related fiscal support," the IMF said.

It called on governments to take "urgent steps" to reduce debt vulnerabilities through "vigilant monitoring" of private debt and the creation of "credible" fiscal frameworks to manage public debt sustainability.

Although debt levels surged during the pandemic, public and private has been growing for decades.

China is responsible for a large part of this increase, the IMF said, with its debt as a percentage of GDP rising sharply in recent years to reach a similar level to that of the United States.

Debt in low income countries

has also been rising, creating "challenges and vulnerabilities" including a high risk of debt distress in more than half of low-income developing countries.

"Reducing debt burdens will create fiscal space and allow new investments, helping foster economic growth in coming years," the IMF said.

AFF

US jobs market solid but Fed risks pushing too far

Washington, US – The US labour market is remarkably solid despite aggressive interest rate hikes to fight inflation and a recent rise in unemployment, but analysts warn that the central bank risks pushing too far.

The Federal Reserve has lifted the benchmark lending rate 11 times since March last year, with consumer inflation cooling from a peak of 9.1% in mid-2022 to below four percent.

And Fed officials are gathering Tuesday for a two-day meeting that could see them raise rates again to lower inflation sustainably back to a two percent target – potentially adding pressure on employment – or hold them at current levels.

The Fed has a dual mandate that involves promoting stable prices and maximum employment, and walks a tightrope between lifting rates to cool the economy while averting a damaging labor market downturn.

While a rise in interest rates typically comes with an uptick in joblessness as borrowing becomes more expensive, unemployment has held at historically low levels below four percent since early 2022.

And job creation is relatively high, said Moody's Investors Service senior vice president Madhavi Bokil.

"Usually when (the) unem-



US Fed headquarters in Washington, DC

ployment rate is so low, we don't get repeatedly 200,000-plus jobs," she said, referring to the hiring pace until May this year.

High employment

In another sign of resilience, the employment-population ratio among 25-54 year-olds is close to record levels, according to economist Elise Gould of think-tank the Economic Policy Institute.

At 80.9%, the figure is higher than it was pre-pandemic, above the level right before the Great Recession around 2008, and just slightly below the record level in 2000.

"I think that is showing a lot of

strength," she said.

While in general falling inflation is linked to rising unemployment, Bokil noted that a key factor in recent years was how households came out of the pandemic in a better economic position than before – between forced savings and government support.

The effects of monetary policy are linked to credit, and higher interest rates raise borrowing costs, Bokil added.

Given that this in turn affects new borrowers or those trying to refinance their loans, "it's not surprising" to see a bigger lag between policy moves and effects on the economy.

AFF

US and EU business lobbies warn working in China harder than ever

Shanghai, China – Foreign business confidence in China has reached its lowest in years, US and European enterprise lobbies warned Tuesday, as slowing growth and geopolitical tensions hit investment prospects.

There was a burst of consumer exuberance after China lifted its strict zero-Covid policies late last year.

But weak consumption, a crisis in the massive property sector and soft demand for China's exports has complicated the recovery.

US firms in China now report "record-low" optimism and are increasingly looking to move investment away from the country, the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) Shanghai said.

"2023 was supposed to be the year investor confidence and optimism bounced back after years of Covid disruptions and restrictions," AmCham said in a report released Tuesday.

"According to our 2023 survey of US businesses in China, however, the rebound has not materialized and business sentiment has continued to deteriorate," it added.

A report released the same day by the Chamber of Commerce of the European Union expressed similar concerns.

"European companies' perception of the Chinese market as



US firms in China now report 'record-low' optimism

predictable, reliable and efficient has been steadily eroded," the Chamber – which represents some 1,700 EU companies based in China – said.

"For decades, European companies thrived in China," the Chamber's president Jens Eskelund said.

But, after three "turbulent" years, he said, "many have re-evaluated their basic assumptions about the Chinese market".

At a separate media event on Tuesday in Beijing, the European Commission's digital chief said opaque Chinese laws were fuelling concerns among foreign firms in the country after holding talks with Chinese officials about

critical areas such as AI and data governance.

Among the concerns Vera Jourova said she had heard about from European businesses in China was the "unpredictability of the decisions and interpretation of the laws by the regulators".

Rising uncertainty

Foreign entrepreneurs have long complained about vague and arbitrary regulations in China – as well as preferential treatment afforded to local companies.

And one in two European companies reported "obstacles" to their activities in China and 62% said they missed opportu-

nities.

"What kind of relationship does China want to have with foreign enterprises?" the Chamber asked.

Respondents' optimism about the next five years was the lowest ever recorded in the survey, AmCham Shanghai said, with just 52% saying they had an optimistic outlook, down three percentage points from the year before. Asked to pick the top three challenges to their company, 60% of the 325 businesses who responded to the survey chose US-China relations, while the same amount pointed to the economic slowdown.

AFF

Mazda's legacy in Oman shaped by 50 years of partnership with Towell

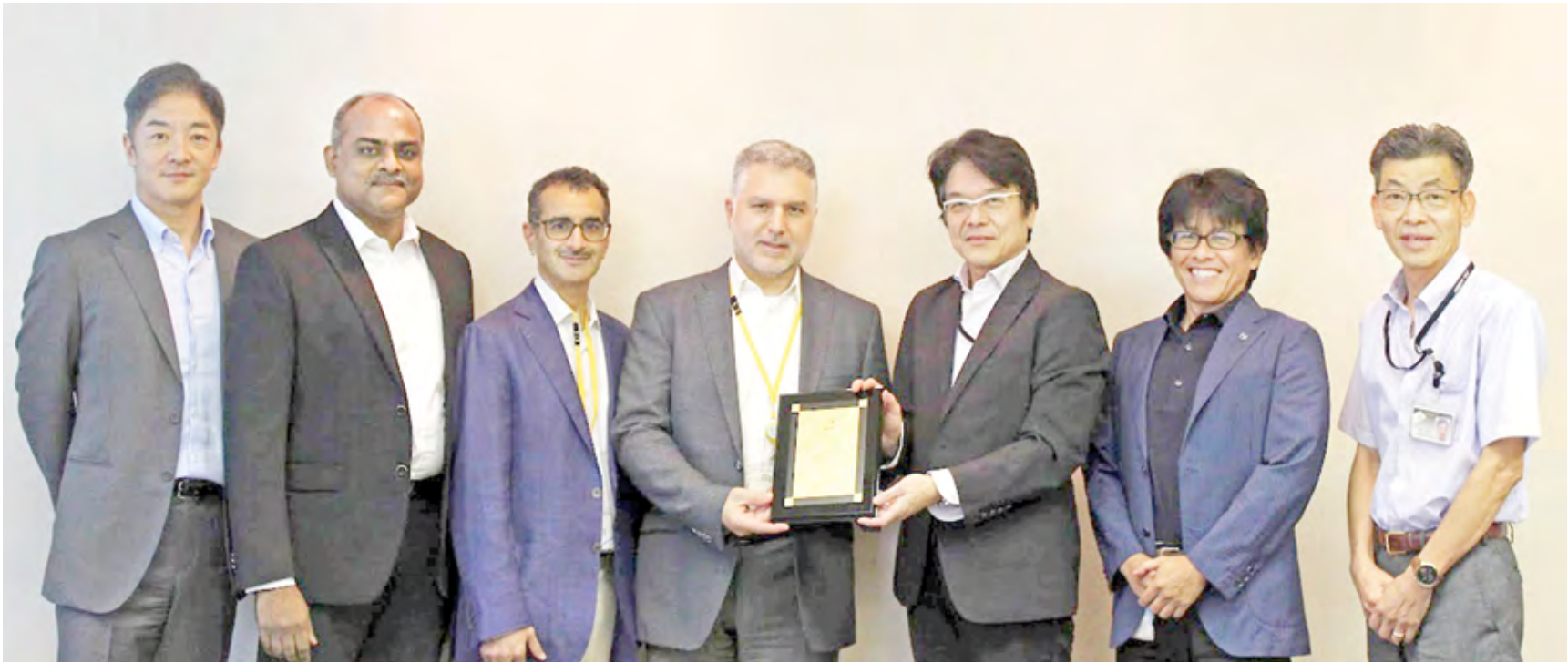
Towell Auto Centre (TAC), one of Oman's oldest automotive distributors, recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of its robust, growth-centric and enduring partnership with renowned Japanese automaker Mazda - a milestone that also has special resonance with the brand's countless customers in Oman.

To commemorate this momentous jubilee, Masashi Otsuka, General Manager (Global Sales & Marketing Div), Mazda Motor Corporation, presented a distinguished plaque to the senior executives representing Towell Auto Center.

Inscribed on the plaque was the succinct but eloquent message: 'In Gratitude for a Successful and Fruitful Partnership of Fifty Years (1973 -2023)'.

The 50th anniversary signifies more than a mere observance of another chapter in their long-standing relationship; it symbolises a testament to Mazda's cherished heritage, deeply rooted in visionary leadership, resilience in the face of adversity, and an indomitable spirit.

Mazda, having endured the devastation of Hiroshima in the atomic bombing of August 1945 and emerged from the ashes Phoenix-like as a beacon of hope



and inspiration for Japan's automotive industry.

Within just four months and fueled by founder Jujiro Matsuda's 'never give up' philosophy, Mazda resumed production with an array of models that attested to its engineering prowess, innovative spirit, and passion for exceptional success.

Halfway across the world, Towell Group - one of Oman's foremost business houses with a

rich 150-year history - had opened what was then the nation's first car showroom at Dar-sait - Muscat. The launch marked the birth of Towell's Auto business with Mazda as its flagship automotive franchise in 1973, marking the start of a relationship that has continued to blossom and thrive over the ensuing decades.

Oman's unbreakable bond with the Mazda brand, as many

older generations of Omanis and expatriates will fondly recall, began with the Mazda 323 and Mazda 808 series of sedans in the early 1970s, followed by the Mazda 616 and Mazda 929, and Mazda Cronos models a decade or so later.

The models embodied much of what still distinguishes the brand today: stylish design, high functionality, innovative spirit, and technical competence. An-

other notable highpoint was the launch of the Mazda 6, pushing boundaries in performance, fuel efficiency, and design.

Indeed, the automotive landscape in Oman buzzed with excitement every year with the latest offerings from Mazda's innovative line-up. They included everything from the fun-loving MX-5 Miata sports car to the luxurious family Crossover CX-60 and the compact Mazda 3.

Over the past half a century, Mazda has cultivated a loyal and rapidly expanding customer base, drawn by the brand's core attributes like effortless joyful driving, artful design, and human centric engineering.

In trend with the brand's rapid growth trajectory, TAC has also expanded its footprint to cover all parts of the Sultanate of Oman. Impressive showrooms, complemented by professionally



manned service and parts centre, now span the length and breadth of the country.

Reflecting on this highly fruitful partnership with Mazda, Riyadh Ali Sultan, General Manager of Towell Auto Centre, commented: "It's has been an unparalleled privilege and honour to represent Mazda in the Sultanate of Oman these past 50 years, based on a relationship that continues to be shaped and sustained by our respective heritage, values, and most importantly, a mutual commitment to excellence and perseverance."

He further added: "As we look ahead to the next half a century of Mazda's growth in Oman, powered by its world-class passenger cars, we also thank our expansive customer base that has stayed true to the brand ever since it debuted here in the Sultanate."

Meethaq opens Al Wusta's first Islamic bank branch

Continuing the expansion of its branch network across the Sultanate of Oman, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat celebrated the official opening of a new branch in the wilayat of Duqm in the Governorate of Al Wusta.

The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of Sheikh Badar bin Nasser al Farsi, wali of Duqm, and attended by a number of customers and officials from Meethaq Islamic Banking. Meethaq is the first to provide Islamic Banking services in the governorate. This came in line with its strategy to enhance financial inclusion and provide easy access to banking and financial services to Meethaq Customers, including individuals, corporates or government institutions, in Al Wusta.

During the ceremony, the Wali of Duqm was introduced to the different Islamic Banking



services and facilities, Meethaq's strategy to uphold its leadership role in the sector, as well as, the future steps taken to further expand Meethaq branch network to new locations. The new branch adds to Meethaq's already excellent network of

branches amounting to 27 branches across different governorates. It will enhance Meethaq's pioneering position in providing Islamic banking services considering it's the largest Islamic window with branch network in Oman.

GlobNet, Phoenix mark ACCA graduation



Global Business Network (GlobNet), a leading training, human resources, information technology services and consultancy company in Oman, and their partners Phoenix Financial Training, the longest-standing platinum provider for ACCA in the Middle East, announced the graduation ceremony of their latest batch of ACCA graduates.

This milestone marks a significant achievement in the field of

finance and accountancy training in Oman and the region.

The graduation ceremony, held at Radisson Blu Muscat showcased the accomplishments of the ACCA graduates and highlighted the collaborative efforts of GlobNet and Phoenix Financial Training in promoting finance and accountancy training solutions in Oman.

"We are immensely proud of our ACCA graduates and their

exceptional performance. Our partnership with GlobNet has allowed us to provide world-class financial training to aspiring professionals in Oman," said Nikhil Vachani, Managing Director of Phoenix Financial Training.

"This success demonstrates the commitment of both GlobNet and Phoenix in developing finance and accountancy talent and leadership in Oman, in particular; ultimately contributing to

the nation's socio-economic growth and progress, in general."

Established in 2004, an ISO 9001:2015 certified company, GlobNet under the capable leadership of CEO Masoud al Esry has earned a reputation for excellence in various service industry verticals.

The company's global reach and expertise have made it a trusted partner across various sectors worldwide.

Mall of Muscat hosts Oman's first indoor 5,000m race

Mall of Muscat, Oman's premier shopping destination, played host to the historic Muscat Refresh Race 2023, sultanate's first indoor running marathon that brought together passionate runners spanning all age groups.

The race featured four distinct categories, including a 5,000-metre challenge for men, a 5,000-metre run for women, a 1,000-metre contest for children aged 10-12, and an exciting 300-metre fun run tailored for children aged three to nine.

There were a total of 186 participants in the men's and women's categories combined, while the children's category had 120 participants. While the men's race started at 7:00am, the women's race began at 8:00am, and the children's race took place at 4:00pm.

Abdullah Salim al Qarini claimed victory with a time of 15:27.11, closely followed by Ab-



dellah Hassan Ousghir at 15:30.78 and Muhssen Suleiman al Hatmi, who secured third place with a time of 15:34.00.

"The Refresh Race 2023

Marathon served as a resounding testament to our unwavering dedication to fostering an active and healthy lifestyle among the community," said a spokesper-

son for Mall of Muscat, adding that "we were truly elated to witness the remarkable turnout of individuals spanning all age groups, united by their passion

for fitness and the sheer joy of running".

"Our sincerest gratitude goes out to every participant, invaluable sponsors, dedicated volunteers, and the supportive local community for their enthusiastic involvement. We also wish to express our heartfelt thanks to the local authorities whose steadfast support played an instrumental role in bringing this event to life. The collective efforts and commitment of all involved were instrumental in making this race a resonant success, furthering our shared mission of promoting a healthier way of life," the spokesperson further said.

Mall of Muscat served as the venue sponsor, while Dr Nutrition provided support as the nutrition and energy drink sponsor.

The prize money for the winners was sponsored by Janaab Sayyid Muhallab Mundhir Majid al Said.

ISC conducts Sisterhood Week with creative women

The Indian Social Club Oman conducted Sisterhood Week for the ladies of the club and guests from September 7 to 13.

The concept of Sisterhood was adopted to give an opportunity and platform to creative women to come forward and share their talents with fellow sisters in the true spirit of sisterhood.

"We organised workshops for various art forms in the premises of the Indian Social Club," the club stated.

Hansika Gagnani, a homemaker and creator of home decor items with a YouTube channel to her credit who gives regular classes, conducted workshop in Decoupage with mixed media.

Veena Naveen whose journey as an artist started long

time back and still evolving as an artist works with oils, watercolours and acrylics says that her style of work lies somewhere between realism and semi realism. She conducted her workshop on acrylics on canvas.

Arpita Chaudhuri, a folk artist practicing Madhubani painting, Gond & Mandala conducted Madhubani workshop. "I am passionate about spreading the essence of rich Indian heritage in both art and culture through my artistic skills," she said.

Radha Bachu, who has always had passion in Indian traditional art forms is specialized in 3D murals and Kerala murals. She has participated in many art exhibitions in Oman and India.

Thousands of children feared to be dying in Sudan: UN

Geneva, Switzerland - Thousands of children are feared to be dying in Sudan as violence, disease and severe malnutrition rip through the conflict-torn country, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

The UN refugee agency said more than 1,200 children in refugee camps had died since May due in part to a measles outbreak. Thousands more were dying due to malnutrition and

lack of health care, the UN's children's agency UNICEF said.

"UNICEF fears Sudan's youngest citizens are entering a period of unprecedented mortality," spokesman James Elder told reporters in Geneva. "We are really on the precipice."

Sudan is being ripped apart by a violent conflict that erupted on April 15 between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Ham-

dan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The violence has killed at least 7,500 people across the country, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

The war has also decimated already fragile infrastructure, shattered 80 per cent of the country's hospitals, displaced millions and plunged millions

into acute hunger. The crisis is taking a particularly harsh toll on Sudan's youngest residents.

The fighting has killed 435 children, according to official casualty numbers, but Elder said the true number of deaths was likely far higher.

UNICEF fears that 'many thousands of children ... will die in the next few months', he said.

"We fear many thousands died in the last few months. And

as long as this crisis continues, many, many thousands of children will continue to die."

"It's hard to quite understand what the world is waiting for," he said. Among other things, he said the 'cruel disregard for civilians and the relentless attacks on health and nutrition services' meant that many thousands of newborns risked dying by the end of the year.

AFP



Youths play football near a date tree plantation in the beginning of the harvest season in Barkal, in northern Sudan, on May 15 (AFP)

Ukraine to receive M1 Abrams tanks soon: US defence chief

Ramstein Air Base, Germany - Ukraine will soon receive M1 Abrams tanks from the United States as Kyiv's forces steadily advance in their counter-offensive against Moscow's troops, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Tuesday.

Representatives of dozens of countries that support Kyiv are meeting in Germany to discuss new aid for Ukraine ahead of an address to the UN General Assembly by the country's president, Volodymyr Zelensky.

Washington had promised the 31 tanks to Kyiv at the start of the year, part of more than US\$43bn in security assistance pledged by the United States since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

"I'm... pleased to announce that the M1 Abrams tanks that the United States had previously committed to will be entering Ukraine soon," Austin said at the opening of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group.

A senior US military official said the first tanks will be sent in the coming days and the process completed within weeks.

The tanks will be paired with 120mm armour-piercing depleted uranium rounds.

Such munitions are controversial due to their association with health problems, such as cancer and birth defects, in areas where they were used in past conflicts, although they have not been definitively proven to have caused them.

The decision to provide



Lloyd Austin talks with Ukraine's Defence Minister Rustem Umerov during a Ukraine Defence Contact Group meeting in Germany, on Tuesday (AFP)

I'm... pleased to announce that the M1 Abrams tanks that the United States had previously committed to will be entering Ukraine soon

LYLOYD AUSTIN

Abrams tanks to Ukraine represented a U-turn as American defence officials had repeatedly said they were ill-suited for Kyiv's forces due to their complexity.

Zelensky arrived in the United

States on Monday, visiting wounded Ukrainian troops at a hospital ahead of his UN address, which he will make as the country's forces push ahead with a slow-moving, high-stakes

counter-offensive to wrest back territory from Russian forces.

'Steady forward progress'

Ukraine's limited progress against entrenched Russian positions has spurred debate among Kyiv's Western allies over its military strategy. But on Monday, Ukraine's defence ministry said it had recaptured a total of seven square kilometres last week near the eastern town of Bakhmut and also along the southern front.

Austin said on Tuesday that the counter-offensive 'continues to make steady forward progress'. "And brave Ukrainian troops are breaking through the heavily fortified lines of Russia's army of aggression."

The US defence chief also welcomed new Ukrainian defence minister Rustem Umerov, who was appointed earlier this month in a significant change for Kyiv, following corruption scandals at the ministry.

AFP

Russia must make 'reparations', Ukraine tells ICJ

The Hague, Netherlands - Ukraine on Tuesday said the International Court of Justice should impose reparations on Russia for its 'war of annihilation', arguing that international law itself was at stake.

"Russia is not above the law. It must be held accountable," Ukraine's lead speaker, Anton Korynevych, told the court, sitting just a few metres from his Russian opponents in the Peace Palace in The Hague.

"You have the power to

Russia is not above the law. It must be held accountable

ANTON KORYNEVYCH

declare that Russia's actions are unlawful, that its continued abuses must stop, that your orders must be followed and that Russia must make reparations," he told the judges.

He later told reporters the exact amount of reparations Ukraine would demand needs to be worked out at a later date, but that Kyiv would use every opportunity in international courts to 'prove that the Russian Federation is the biggest violator of international law in the 21st century'.

Ukraine dragged Russia before the ICJ only a few days

after the February 24, 2022, invasion, seeking to battle its belligerent neighbour on all fronts, legal as well as diplomatic and military.

Kyiv's argument is that Russian President Vladimir Putin invoked a supposed 'genocide' against pro-Russian people in eastern Ukraine as one of the reasons for Moscow invading its neighbour. This, according to Ukraine, is a misuse of the United Nations Genocide Convention, set up in 1948 and signed by both Kyiv and Moscow.

"At our moment of greatest peril, Ukraine turned to this court. Your court has broad jurisdiction over disputes relating to the Genocide Convention," argued Korynevych. "Can it truly be the case that a state can abuse the Genocide Convention to justify a war of conquest?" asked Korynevych.

"It must be 'no' for the sake of the world, to prevent international law from being twisted into a tool for human right abuses and destruction," he added.

In a preliminary ruling in March last year, the ICJ sided with Ukraine and ordered Russia to halt its invasion immediately. But Russia objected to this judgement, saying the ICJ had no legal right to decide in this case.

AFP

Iraq president condemns 'repeated Turkish attacks'

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraq's President Abdel Latif Rashid condemned on Tuesday 'repeated Turkish attacks', a day after a drone strike on a northern airfield killed three Kurdish counterterrorism officers.

"The Turkish ambassador will be called in to receive a letter of protest addressed to the Turkish president", Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Rashid's office said in a statement.

"Mercy be on the martyrs of Iraq, the civilian and military heroes killed by repeated Turkish attacks."

Turkish authorities have not commented on Monday's strike which killed three members of the counterterrorism forces of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region and wounded three others at Arbat airfield, southeast of the city of Sulaimaniyah.

While such attacks against the Iraqi Kurdish security services are extremely rare, Ankara is leading a quickening campaign in northern Iraq and neighbouring Syria, targeting Kurdish fighters.

A senior military official in Baghdad said that the drone which killed the counterterrorism officers had originated in Turkey.



A woman mourns by the grave of one of three Kurdish counterterrorism officers killed the previous day, in city of Sulaimaniyah on Tuesday (AFP)

Around 5pm (1400 GMT) on Monday, 'the drone entered Iraqi airspace, crossing the border from Turkey, and bombarded the Arbat airfield', which is mainly used by crop-spraying aircraft, said General Yehya Rassoul, spokesman of the federal armed forces commander in chief. "This attack constitutes a violation of Iraq's sovereignty," he said, adding: "Iraq reserves the right to put a stop to these violations."

"These repeated attacks are incompatible with the principle

of good neighbourliness between states.

"They threaten to undermine Iraq's efforts to build positive and balanced political, economic and security relations with its neighbours," Rassoul said.

On Sunday, a Turkish drone strike killed a senior official and three fighters of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in the Sinjar Mountains of northwestern Iraq, Iraqi Kurdish authorities said.

AFP

Communications cut to flood-hit Libya city of Derna after protests

Derna, Libya - Telephone and internet links were severed on Tuesday to Libya's flood-hit city of Derna, a day after hundreds protested there against local authorities they blamed for the thousands of deaths.

A tsunami-sized flash flood broke through two ageing river dams upstream from the city on the night of September 10 and razed entire neighbourhoods, sweeping untold thousands into the Mediterranean Sea.

Protesters massed on Monday at the city's grand mosque, venting their anger at local and regional authorities they blamed for failing to maintain the dams or to provide early warning of the disaster. "Thieves and traitors must hang," they shouted, before some protesters torched the house of the town's unpopular mayor.

On Tuesday, phone and online links to Derna were severed, an outage the national telecom company LPTIC blamed on 'a rupture in the optical fibre' link to Derna, in a statement on its Facebook page.

The telecom company said the outage, which also affected



People gather for a demonstration outside the surviving Al-Sahaba mosque in Derna on Monday (AFP)

other areas in eastern Libya, 'could be the result of a deliberate act of sabotage' and pledged that 'our teams are working to repair it as quickly as possible'.

Rescue workers have kept digging for bodies, with the official death toll at around 3,300 but many thousands more missing since the flood sparked by torrential rains from Mediterranean Storm Daniel.

The huge wall of water that smashed into Derna completely destroyed 891 buildings and damaged over 600 more, according to a Libyan government report based on satellite images.

Oil-rich Libya was torn by more than a decade of war and chaos after a 2011 NATO-backed uprising led to the ouster and killing of dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

Myriad militias, mercenary forces and militants battled for power, while basic services and the upkeep of infrastructure were badly neglected.

Libya remains split between a UN-backed and nominally interim government in Tripoli in the west, and another in the disaster-hit east backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

AFP



This file photo shows Vacharaesorn Vivacharawongse praying during a merit-making ceremony at a Buddhist temple in Bangkok on August 10 (AFP)

Thai king’s son urges debate on royal insult law

Bangkok, Thailand - The Thai king’s son has called for open discussion of the country’s tough laws against insulting the royal family, a sensitive topic that has seen hundreds of people prosecuted in recent years.

Vacharaesorn Vivacharawongse, the second son of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, made the comments after visiting an exhibition in New York highlighting people prosecuted under the strict Thai royal defamation legislation. The law - often referred to as 112 after the relevant section of the criminal code - shields the king and his close family from almost all criticism and can carry heavy jail sentences.

“I attended as a Thai national who loves and respects the monarchy but I believe that ‘knowing’ is better than ‘not knowing’”, Vacharaesorn posted in Thai on Facebook. “Everyone should share their opinions based on different experiences.”

He wrote that ignoring opinions does not make them disap-

pear. “Because of that, I believe that listening to them is a good thing,” the 42-year-old wrote.

Critics have long maintained the laws have been weaponised to silence dissent.

Huge protests in 2020 saw thousands urging reform of the laws, a call championed by the progressive Move Forward Party (MFP) that won the most seats in a national election in May.

MFP’s determination to revamp the laws eventually saw it blocked from taking power by conservative pro-royalist forces in parliament.

The ‘Faces of Victims of 112’ show at Columbia University was organised by exiled Thai royal academic Pavin Chachavalponpun, who confirmed to AFP that Vacharaesorn had attended as a guest. “He is interested in the issue and he said that, despite differences of opinion on this issue, there should be a way that we must communicate,” he said from New York.

AFP

Push at UN for reform to meet sustainable development goals

United Nations, US - Developing countries on Monday urged a shake-up in the global order to help the world’s poorest, at a United Nations summit on ambitious anti-poverty promises that remain far off track.

Hoping to show a focus on more than the war in Ukraine, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres convened the development summit on the eve of the annual General Assembly, where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is set to take centre-stage.

In 2015, UN member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, 17 targets to transform the world by 2030 including by completely ending extreme poverty and making sure not a single of the planet’s eight billion people goes hungry.

Guterres called for a ‘global rescue plan’ on the targets, as he acknowledged that only about 15 per cent were on track to be met and that metrics on some were heading in reverse.

“The SDGs aren’t just a list of goals. They carry the hopes, dreams, rights and expectations of people everywhere,” Guterres told the summit.

“In our world of plenty, hunger is a shocking stain on humanity, and an epic human rights violation. It is an indictment of every one of us that millions of people are starving in this day and age.”

Addressing the summit, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said: “Ultimately, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals de-



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaks at the opening session of the second Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit on Monday ahead of the 78th UN General Assembly (AFP)

pends on the fundamental reform of global social, economic and political relations.”

Ambitions sidetracked

In a declaration adopted by consensus on Monday, UN member-states reaffirmed their commitment to the goals and to eradicating extreme poverty, defined as living on less than US\$2.15 a day. The nations agreed to ‘act with urgency’ to implement the ‘plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, leaving no one behind’, the declaration said.

But efforts to devote money and attention to the goals have

been repeatedly set back, including by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and other tumult, worsening climate catastrophes and sharp increases in the cost of living.

The declaration also backed in general terms reform of international financial institutions, weeks after a G20 summit in New Delhi focused on increasing representation in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

But Mia Mottley, prime minister of Barbados, told the summit that the issue went deeper.

“The calls for international reform of the financial system really are not just about

governance, but they are for us about longer money, cheaper money, and being able to use it for the purposes for which we need to reduce all of our inequalities and achieve the elements of the SDGs,” she said.

Poorest ‘counting’ on momentum

French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, addressing the summit, said that Paris was increasing its development assistance despite an era of tight budgets, with special attention on climate. “We need to demonstrate an electroshock of solidarity,” she said.

The United States, which has

In our world of plenty, hunger is a shocking stain on humanity, and an epic human rights violation. It is an indictment of every one of us that millions of people are starving in this day and age

ANTONIO GUTERRES

pumped US\$43bn in military aid into Ukraine to help defend against Russian invasion, has hoped to show it is also interested in development.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US ambassador to the United Nations, called the declaration on Monday ‘historic’.

“This is an important step, but it must be followed by accelerated action,” she said.

“All member-states must continue to drive progress forward. The world’s most vulnerable are counting on us, and we must leave no one behind.”

But one senior European diplomat warned the gap was growing between the developing and developed worlds.

One goal for the summit is ‘making sure that that rift doesn’t grow further’, the diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

AFP

Neo-Nazi group banned in Germany

Berlin, Germany - Germany has banned a local chapter of the US-based Hammerskins neo-Nazi group known for its white supremacist rock concerts, the interior ministry said on Tuesday.

Hammerskins Deutschland, a group of around 130 people, aimed to spread ‘a racial doctrine based on Nazi ideology’, a statement said.

Police raided the homes of 28 group members across several regions on Tuesday morning, it said. Some sub-chapters of the group and a spin-off known as Crew 28 were also banned.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said it was ‘a hard blow against organised right-wing extremism’ that would send ‘a clear signal against racism and anti-Semitism’.

The group played a ‘prominent’ role in the right-wing extremist scene in Europe, according to the ministry.

It is the 20th right-wing extremist group to be banned in Germany.

The group’s purpose was ‘to live out and consolidate their right-wing extremist ideology, especially through concerts’, the ministry said.

The US-based group was founded in 1988.

There were some 38,800 people in the right-wing extremist spectrum in Germany in 2022, - up from 33,900 in 2021.

AFP

A PLUNGE INTO DEATH



This photo released by the Municipality of Anco shows rescue teams working at the site where a bus plunged into a 200-metre-deep ravine in a remote rural mountain road in southeastern Peru, on Monday, leaving at least 24 people dead (AFP)

Philippine military accused of kidnapping two activists

Manila, Philippines - Two detained environmental activists accused the Philippine military of kidnapping them as they appeared at a government news conference on Tuesday, fuelling demands by rights groups for the pair to be released.

Jonila Castro, 21, and Jhed Tamano, 22, had been working with coastal communities opposed to reclamation activities in Manila Bay when they disappeared on September 2 in Bataan province, near the capital Manila.

The Philippines is one of the

most dangerous countries in the world for land and environmental defenders, with 11 killed in 2022, according to watchdog Global Witness.

Rights groups launched an investigation in the days after Castro and Tamano’s disappearance. They alleged the women had been violently abducted, possibly by ‘state actors’, apparently in relation to their activism.

On September 15, nearly two weeks after the pair’s disappearance, the National Security Council (NSC) and police announced a news

conference that Castro and Tamano were being held in a safe house after they sought help from authorities.

They denied the women were activists and said allegations by ‘leftist organisations’ that they had been abducted was ‘fake news’ and an ‘elaborate hoax’.

“They were portrayed as environmentalists. They are not environmentalists but leftist organisers. They left the movement of their own free will,” NSC spokesman Jonathan Malaya told reporters at the time.

AFP

Australia warns of worse fires, heat as El Nino settles into Pacific

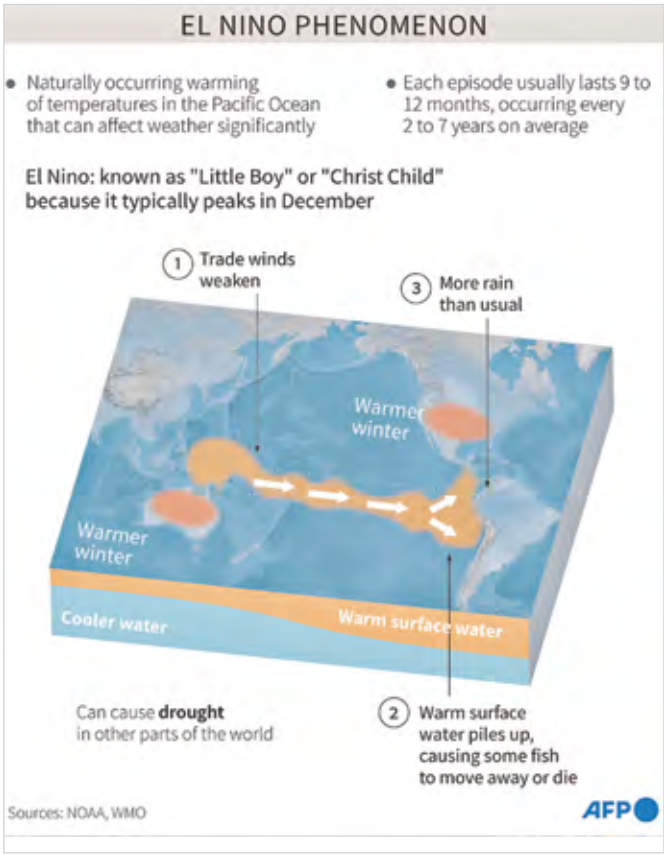
Sydney, Australia - Australia’s weather bureau confirmed on Tuesday that an El Nino weather pattern is under way, bringing hot and dry conditions that risk a severe wildfire season and drought.

The announcement, which follows similar confirmations from other weather agencies, came as the country bakes in unseasonal heat, with the weather agency warning of more to come.

Government forecaster Karl Braganza said elevated surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean could impact the country until early next year.

“This summer will be hotter than average, and certainly hotter than the last three years,” he said.

“Importantly with the El Nino now settling into that pattern in the Pacific Ocean, that increases our confidence that this pattern is going to last until the end of



summer,” he added.

The El Nino climate pattern occurs on average every two to seven years and usually lasts between nine to 12 months.

In July, the UN’s World Meteorological Organization declared El Nino was already under way

and said there was a 90 per cent chance that it would continue during the second half of 2023.

El Nino is typically associated with warming ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

It can bring severe droughts to

Australia, Indonesia and other parts of southern Asia, coupled with increased rainfall in parts of southern South America, the southern United States, the Horn of Africa and central Asia.

The relationship between El Nino and climate change is not

well understood. But Australia’s government science agency earlier this year concluded that climbing global temperatures may increase both the likelihood of the pattern forming, and the severity of its impacts.

Record-high global sea sur-

face temperatures played a major role in stoking soaring temperatures throughout the Northern Hemisphere summer, with marine heatwaves hitting the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea.

Braganza said the onset of El Nino in the Pacific would continue to inject heat into the planet’s oceans.

Australian climate researcher Nandini Ramesh said this year’s El Nino was ‘developing during some of the warmest global average temperatures in history’.

Worldwide, temperature records have tumbled in recent years, as climate change makes meteorological conditions more volatile. July 2023, marked by heatwaves and fires around the world, was the hottest month ever registered on Earth, according to the European Union’s climate observatory Copernicus.

AFP

The announcement, which follows similar confirmations from other weather agencies, came as the country bakes in unseasonal heat, with weather agency warning of more to come

INDIA

Canada's allegations rejected as absurd

Justin Trudeau had alleged that India's agents were behind the killing of a Sikh leader in Canada

New Delhi - India on Tuesday rejected the 'absurd' allegation that its agents were behind the killing of a Sikh leader in Canada, after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's bombshell accusation sent already sour diplomatic relations to a new low.

Ottawa also expelled a diplomat it described as the head of India's foreign intelligence service in Canada, prompting a tit-for-tat order from New Delhi for a Canadian diplomat to leave.

Trudeau said on Monday that 'credible allegations' linked Indian agents to the June slaying of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was accused by New Delhi of carrying out terrorist attacks in India - a charge he denied before his death.

New Delhi insisted it had nothing to do with the killing, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had 'completely rejected' the accusation when earlier raised privately by Trudeau. "Allegations of Government of India's involvement in any act of violence in Canada are absurd," the foreign ministry



This file photo shows PM Narendra Modi welcoming Canada's PM Justin Trudeau to the G20 Summit in New Delhi on September 9 (AFP)

said in a statement.

"We are a democratic polity with a strong commitment to rule of law."

Nijjar, whom India had declared a wanted terrorist, was gunned down on June 18 in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver

home to a large Sikh community. Canada has the largest population of Sikhs globally outside of India, and New Delhi has

long been unhappy with Canada's handling of Sikh separatist activists. Nijjar was part of a move-

ment that advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state to be carved out of part of northern India and perhaps part of Pakistan.

Trudeau made the allegations public before an emergency session of parliament, calling in the 'strongest possible terms' for the Indian govern-

agency. India responded by summoning Canada's High Commissioner to the foreign ministry on Tuesday before announcing a reciprocal expulsion of an unnamed top Canadian diplomat.

That decision reflected the 'growing concern at the interference of Canadian diplomats in

Allegations of India's involvement in any act of violence in Canada are absurd. We are a democratic polity with a strong commitment to rule of law

INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY

ment to cooperate in clearing up the matter.

"The involvement of any foreign government in the murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is an unacceptable violation of our sovereignty," he said.

Foreign Minister Melanie Joly then announced the expulsion of the local head of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's foreign intelligence

our internal matters and their involvement in anti-India activities," the ministry said.

The Canadian High Commission in New Delhi declined to comment when contacted by AFP. Tensions between India and Canada have been simmering over the unsolved slaying, and Indian unhappiness over how Ottawa has handled Sikh separatists. AFP

MPs leave colonial-era parliament for new chambers

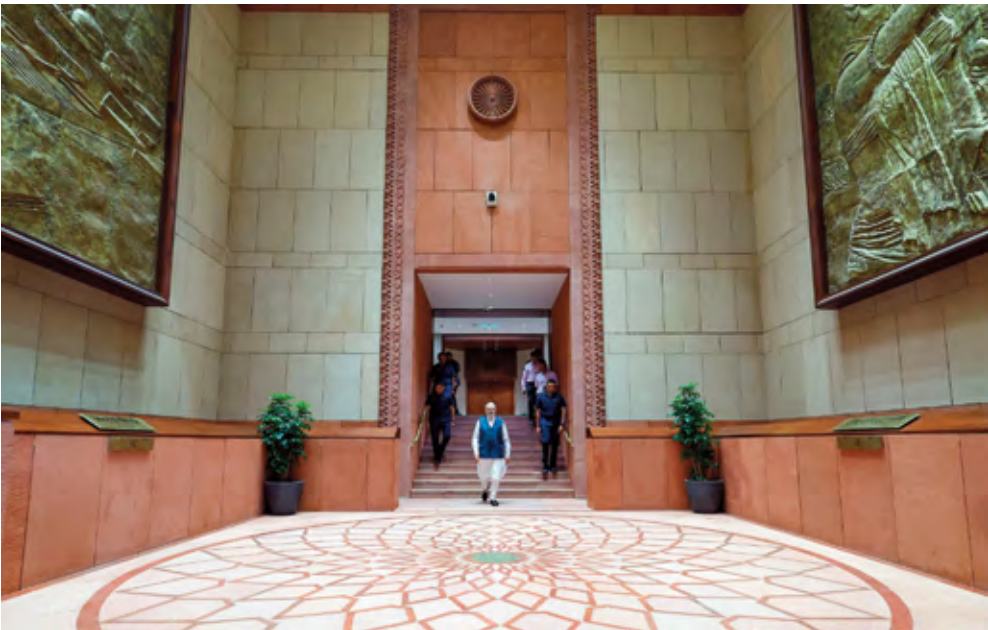
New Delhi - Indian lawmakers walked to the country's new parliament on Tuesday to symbolise the legislature's departure from its former home in chambers built during British rule.

The triangular building that will now seat nearly 800 representatives from across India is the centrepiece of a remodelling of the heart of New Delhi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

His government has worked to rid the Indian capital of the vestiges of the colonial era, which itself saw a wholesale transformation of the megacity by British planners at the beginning of the last century.

"Today India has awakened with a new consciousness," Modi said in the central hall of the old parliament building before leading fellow legislators by foot across to the new complex.

Modi's Hindu-nationalist government called a special



PM Narendra Modi arrives at the new Parliament building for the Special Session, in New Delhi on Tuesday (ANI)

session of parliament to match the relocation, which coincides with the beginning of a festival celebrating deity Ganesh.

India's lower house held a

brief first session in its new home to introduce a bill setting a 33 per cent quota on female representation among lawmakers. If passed, the proposed law

would dramatically lift the number of women in parliament.

Just 104 of 788 MPs were women after the last national election, according to govern-

ment figures - a little over 13 per cent. The parliament has grown considerably over the decades, with more than 100 additional lawmakers in total across both houses since its first post-independence elections in 1952.

The new, larger building has extra room to accommodate parliament's expanded ranks along with updated technology.

It stands next to the ageing and cramped colonial-era building from where India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru made his landmark 'tryst with destiny' speech to signal the beginning of the country's independence in 1947.

Modi has stressed in public speeches the need for India to abandon traces of a 'colonial mindset'. His government has worked to excise traces of the British era from the country's urban landscape.

AFP

Restrictions relaxed in Nipah-hit Kerala district

Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala - The Disaster Management Department in Kerala's Kozhikode has relaxed the restrictions in the district as no new cases of Nipah virus infection were reported in the state, the officials informed on Tuesday.

The relaxations have been announced in the containment zones in nine panchayats - Ayancherry, Maruthonkara, Tiruvallur, Kuttyadi, Kayakodi, Kavil Para, Vilyapally, Pumari and Changaroth. District Collector A Geetha informed that shops and establishments in the containment zones can operate till 8pm, while all banks can function till 2pm as per the Nipah protocol. Masks and sanitisers

must be used, social distancing must be followed and gatherings must be strictly controlled, the district collector said.

As per the officials, other restrictions will continue till further order. The district collector also informed that those who are on the contact list and under observation should follow strict restrictions and remain in quarantine till the period prescribed by the Health Department.

Health Minister Veena George on Monday said no fresh cases of the Nipah virus were reported in the state as 61 samples taken of 'high-risk' contacts including healthcare workers tested negative. ANI



The Fedora hat that belonged to Michael Jackson (AFP)

Michael Jackson's moonwalk hat up for auction in Paris

Paris, France - Just before performing his famous moonwalk dance for the first time, Michael Jackson tossed his hat to the side of the stage. Four decades later, it's up for auction in Paris.

The sale at the Hotel Drouot in Paris takes place on September 26. The black fedora is expected to fetch between €60,000 and €100,000 (US\$64,000-US\$107,000).

Though it is the star among some 200 items of rock memorabilia, organiser Arthur Per-

ault of the Artpeges gallery admitted that valuations for Jackson items had fallen lately due to 'the sale of fakes and the accusations against him'.

The King of Pop whipped off the hat while breaking into his hit 'Billie Jean' during a televised Motown concert in 1983, at the height of his fame. Moments later, Jackson showed off what would become his trademark move - the moonwalk - an effortless backwards glide while appearing to walk forwards.

AFP

Belgium opens memorial on site of 'horror house'

Charleroi, Belgium - Belgium on Tuesday opened a memorial garden on the site where notorious serial killer Marc Dutroux imprisoned his young victims, more than a quarter of a century after his crimes shocked Europe.

Authorities in the city of Charleroi last year tore down the 'house of horrors', in which Dutroux tortured and raped children in a soundproofed dungeon.

The fathers of two eight-year-old victims, Julie Lejeune and Melissa Russo, were there to formally inaugurate the tree-filled garden decorated with a mural of a child watching a kite soar into the sky.

"Thank you for preserving the memory of our little ones with this superb work," said Julie's father, Jean-Denis Lejeune, after a minute's silence.

He said it was important to remember that paedophilia 'existed and that it still exists'.

Sentenced in 2004 to life imprisonment, Dutroux, today aged 66, was found guilty on charges including kidnapping and raping six girls and young women from 1995-1996, and the murder of two of the teenagers.

The modest red-brick building



People observe a minute of silence during the inauguration of the Memorial garden in Charleroi on Tuesday (AFP)

in the Marcinelle suburb of Charleroi became infamous when in August 1996 Dutroux led police to two kidnapped girls, aged 14 and 12, cowering in the basement.

The investigation into Belgium's worst paedophile crimes established that Julie and

Melissa had also been held at the property for months.

Their bodies were found buried at another property. A postmortem showed they had been starved to death.

'Marked for eternity' Public shock turned to fury as it

emerged not only that police had missed a string of clues, but that Dutroux had been released from jail in 1992 after serving just three years of a 13-year sentence for the abduction and rape of five girls.

"There isn't anyone in Belgium who hasn't heard of these disap-

There isn't anyone in Belgium who hasn't heard of the disappearances. It was a tragedy of universal scope that it must be marked for eternity

PAUL MAGNETTE

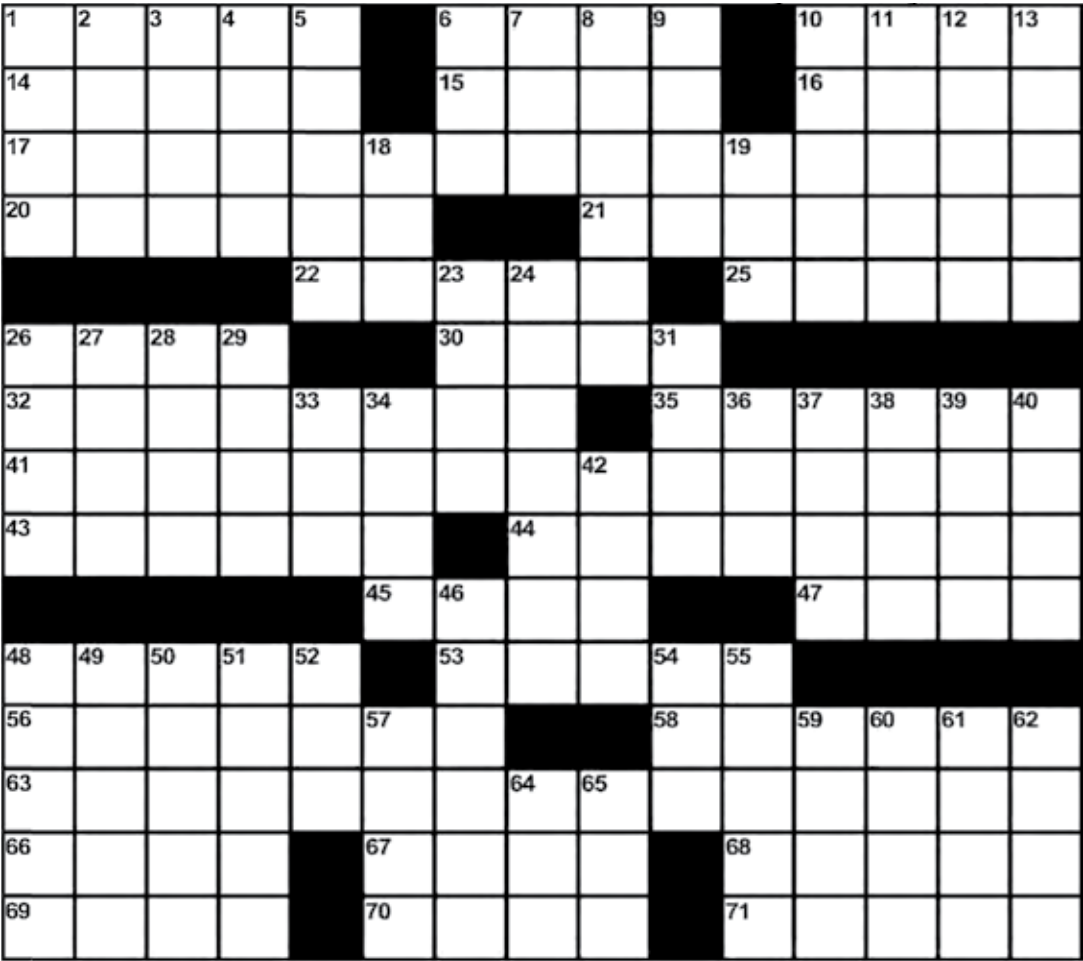
pearances," said Charleroi mayor Paul Magnette.

"It was a tragedy of sufficiently universal scope that it must be marked for eternity."

Gino Russo, the father of victim Melissa, thanked the city for agreeing to his 'express demand' that the underground dungeon be preserved beneath the monument. Russo believes that important questions in the case remain unanswered and asked the basement be left intact for potential future investigations.

He told AFP it was 'impossible' Melissa and Julie could have survived in the cramped cellar of just a few square metres for over 100 days without outside care. AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
- 1) Eight ball's rebound
6) Shower with affection (with "on")
10) Dillon on "Gunsmoke"
14) Long way from slim
15) Dress, as in one's Sunday best
16) Miscellaneous collection
17) Cope
20) Nice leisurely walk
21) Like some positions
22) "To your health!"
25) Took a stab at
26) Common '70s hairstyle
30) Common one of ancient Rome
32) Type of trial or diagnosis
35) Rub the wrong way
41) Coroner
43) Resurrection Day
44) Makes larger in stature
45) "Normal" starter
47) Ushers do it
48) Papas' counterparts
53) Aquatic South American rodent
56) Paper-folding art
- 58) Like a proper marching band
63) Certain crime solver
66) Features
67) Brother of La Toya
68) Laptop instruments of yore
69) Saucy or spirited
70) Dental woe
71) Exercise, as influence
- DOWN
- 1) Oft-filleted fishes
2) Help in the wrong way
3) Caboose place
4) Norway's biggest city
5) Cries weakly
6) Banned insecticide's letters
7) Sound of admiration
8) Aquarium reptile
9) Certain sword
10) Wisdom tooth, e.g.
11) It can keep you out of jail
12) What every film has
13) Monkeyed around (with)
18) Sort or type
19) Red, carpenter or velvet
23) Certain gem
24) Quickly, musically
- 26) Cartoon coyote's favorite company
27) Circus bug
28) Frees (of)
29) Tending to a problem
31) Hillside, to the Scottish
3 3) Rocks in a glass
34) Bellyache
36) Anti-smoking org.
37) Picky criticisms
38) You can get down on one
39) Chanteuse Home
40) Formerly, in days of yore
42) Revealing photo?
46) Like vinegar
48) Finish a wet, messy job
49) Ceased lying?
50) Athlete running 5,280 feet
51) Feed livestock
52) _ fly (RBI source)
54) A la mode item, some-times
55) Family man
57) Prefix with "physical"
59) Underworld river
60) Spare item

NOTE PAD

ARIA ISLE DWELL
LARS NEAR DARBY
PLATINUM BLONDE
WRAP INK
SAMOAN ORCS CRY
APART AMAH SLOE
GOLDEN DELICIOUS
ARTS A ONE IMAGE
STS HISS EVOKES
GOV EVIL
SILVER BRACELET
VENUE ARID OATH
EATER RACE NINE
GROSS EGAD SCAN

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You're feeling quite magnanimous today, ready to forgive anyone who's wronged you and eager to rise above petty squabbles. This means it's a great day to reach out to those people who are always cold or rude to you. Show them that you're the bigger person. You'll be able to do it without making them feel like you're making fun of them or putting them on the spot. It's important to show them that you're not playing along with their games any more.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
To say that the past few days have been tricky, if not downright demanding, doesn't quite capture the spirit of the times. In fact, you've had it with just about everyone and everything. Fortunately, you have some time now to separate yourself from whatever or whoever has just pushed your buttons, for what you've determined will be the very last time. Make the most of it, and don't be afraid to take a friend along to enjoy the ride. And the show.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Press the pause button on any travel plans you've been making today. Something is still up in the air, and you need to wait for it to come down before finalizing anything. You should definitely not sign any paperwork or make any deposits, no matter how much time seems to be an issue. But don't worry. At some point today, key information will come to light that lets you know where to go from here. You'll still be able to do what you want to do, but be ready for some compromises.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
You might think that when you're in the midst of a power struggle you need to be full of bravado and aggressive energy, and some of the time that's wise. But today, if you're stuck trying to negotiate getting your way, the worst thing you could do is be too pompous or confident. Let this person know that you want to find a solution that makes both of you happy. You have no interest in bulldozing over them. With true collaboration, you can find an answer.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You like to root for the underdog as much as anyone, but that might not be as rewarding as following the leader today! There's something very attractive about a person who really knows what they're doing, so nobody would blame you if you suddenly don't feel sympathy for the person who's struggling to catch up. Align yourself closely with the winners today. Some of their competitive spirit might rub off on you and inspire you to plan your next big goal.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
It could feel like your eyes are playing tricks on you today when they're trained on someone whose opinions you value highly. This person is saying things you never thought you'd hear come out of their mouth! It looks like they're turning into someone you don't recognize. This person is trying to be someone they are not, and they're acting like that in order to try to impress someone else. Let them know that you like their real persona better.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Today you might be dealing with a hot-headed person who has a very short fuse. But the best way to defuse an angry bomb of a person is to toss them a task that keeps them busy and makes them feel more useful. Otherwise, if you entertain their arguments and listen to their complaints, you'll only end up encouraging an ugly power struggle. This person just wants attention and is using their emotions to get it. You don't have to play by those rules.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Making tough decisions will be easy as pie for you today because there will be plenty of obvious signs pointing you in the right direction. Relax and feel free to turn off your intuition. It's exhausting for you to try to sense things and read between the lines all the time, so give yourself a break. Accept what you see and what you hear as the truth because they probably are. Don't get too intellectual or analytical about information you get today.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
A coworker could be looking to you for answers today, yet again. If you haven't already talked to them about sharing responsibilities, do it now. And if you have had the "do your fair share" conversation, then it might be time to go over their heads. It isn't about tattling on a colleague. They aren't carrying their weight, and that fact has to be made known before you get blamed for their lack of productivity. Look out for yourself and tell yourself it's okay to stop carrying someone.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Make yourself your priority today. That means if you haven't been to a doctor or dentist recently, make an appointment! You need to take care of yourself, and keeping your physical self in good shape is critical. But make sure you're taking care of your emotional needs too. If you crave more affection or attention from your partner, let them know. They may have been busy lately, but things are slowing down now and it's easier to make time together.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Why hide what you have to offer from others? Being shy and coy can be cute, but these aren't effective tactics for showing the world what you offer, especially if you're looking to create a romantic connection. Today, you need to take a bigger risk. Reveal your inner thoughts and ideas and you won't be disappointed. You're a lot more intriguing than you realize. Providing a clue to solving the mystery will attract a lot of people to you.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
It is a wonderful day to coast along life's path. Your recent accomplishments have set you up nicely for a period of calm, so why not sit back, relax, and enjoy it? Go ahead and rest on your laurels. You deserve a break after all the hard work you've done. Just enjoy the view from this mountain you've climbed. You'll have plenty of time to scan for the next peak later. Right now, sit down and pat yourself on the back.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is the country of origin of the cheese called "Monterey Jack"?
- A. USA
B. Netherlands
C. Wales
D. Greece
02. Once it is harvested, spelt is usually ...?
- A. Pulped and made into wine
B. Used for sandpaper
C. Added to a glass-making process
D. Eaten
03. What was the profession of the person who invented the mechanism of the door lock for London toilets operated by payment of a coin, initially one penny?
- A. Fairground operator
B. Engineer
C. Clockmaker
D. Stage magician

Answers: 1. A 2. D 3. D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

N	T	E	U
R	E	R	O
P	A	E	R
S	E	K	S

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

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

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

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

'OPPORTUNITY HAS ARISEN'

Declan Rice ready for first taste of Champions League as Arsenal take on Dutch side PSV Eindhoven

London, United Kingdom - Mikel Arteta expects Declan Rice to play a pivotal role in Arsenal's return to the Champions League as the England midfielder prepares to make his debut in the tournament against PSV Eindhoven on Wednesday.

The Gunners are back in the Champions League for the first time since 2016/17, giving Rice his first taste of Europe's elite club competition after his close-season move from West Ham.

Arteta splashed out £100 million (\$124 million) on the midfielder precisely for occasions such as PSV's visit to the Emirates Stadium in Arsenal's opening Group B fixture.

The 24-year-old has made a confident start to life with Arsenal, scoring his first goal for the club in dramatic fashion against Manchester United on September 3.

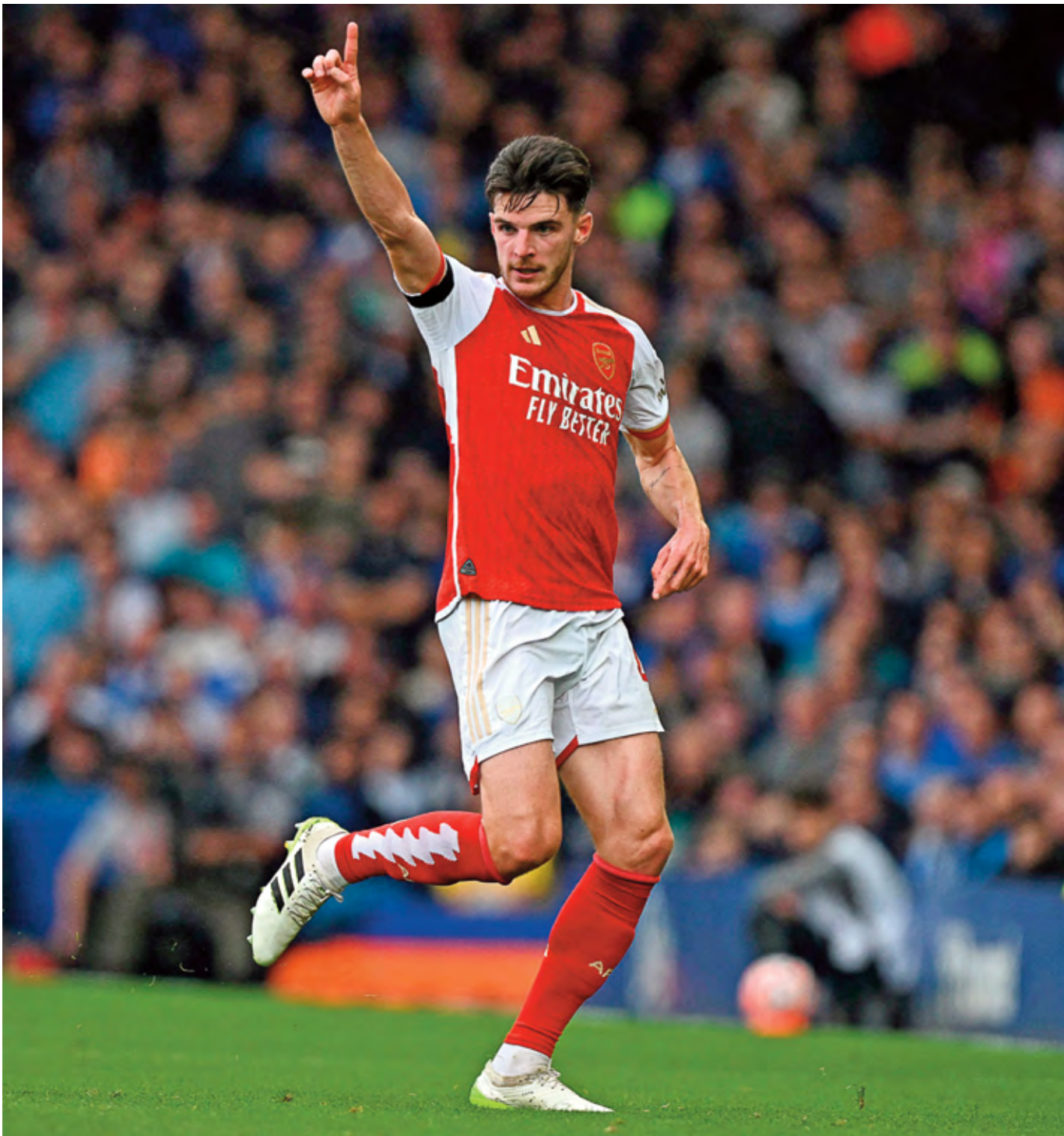
Rice's finish deep into stoppage time put Arsenal on course for a 3-1 win in their first meeting with a top-four rival this season.

It was a perfectly timed reminder of the quality Rice brings to Arteta's side as they try to make amends for last season's late collapse in the Premier League title race.

Arsenal squandered an eight-point lead in the final weeks of the season as Manchester City ended the Gunners' bid for a first title since 2004.

Arteta believes Rice's astute reading of the game and unflappable demeanour strengthens his team, praising him after the win against United.

"How he breaks up play, how he glues the team together in



Declan Rice has had an impressive start to his Arsenal career (AFP)

many moments when it was stretched a little bit," he said. "He was really dominant and then produced a magic moment to win the game."

And the Arsenal boss said his new signing can also be a regular goal threat.

"For sure and when you see the technical ability that he has and how he executed it in this moment, his range when he's shooting from range, his accuracy, the power that he generates with no space, with both legs, he can do it with both feet. He's got the timing to arrive in

wanted to play in the Champions League," Rice said. "I've wanted to push myself at the biggest level. This opportunity at Arsenal has arisen. It's a great club."

Rice has already made his mark in continental action, captaining West Ham to their first major trophy since 1980 last season when they won the Europa Conference League.

He has made his mark for England as well, featuring as the fulcrum of Gareth Southgate's midfield in their run to the European Championship final in 2021 and impressing at last year's

I've said for many years now that I've wanted to play in the Champions League. I've wanted to push myself at the biggest level. This opportunity at Arsenal has arisen

DECLAN RICE

the box."

'So excited'

Along with helping Arsenal challenge for the title - the north Londoners are two points behind leaders Manchester City after Sunday's 1-0 win at Everton - Rice will be firmly in the spotlight in the Champions League.

Having played his entire career with West Ham until this season, he has never experienced the thrill of lining up while the Champions League anthem booms out before kick-off. But he will finally be able to tick that off his bucket list on Wednesday.

"I'm so excited for that. I've said for many years now that I've

World Cup.

Despite their lengthy absence from the Champions League, the Gunners are expected to progress from a relatively undemanding group featuring Sevilla and Lens as well as PSV.

But Rice knows he must use Arsenal's opening group fixtures to show he can dominate at the highest level, with his sights already set on inspiring his side to a maiden Champions League triumph. "At the end of the day you get one career, and I want to be as successful as I can with Arsenal, make as many Champions League appearances as possible and hopefully one day get my hands on that trophy," he said.

Pressure on as Bayern, Kane set out for only trophy that truly matters

Munich, Germany - Harry Kane's Bayern Munich host Manchester United on Wednesday, kick-starting their campaign in the competition which matters most to them this season.

Despite domestic dominance which has seen Bayern win the past 11 Bundesliga titles, the club judges itself on its performances in the Champions League.

Since winning in Lisbon in 2020, Bayern have been eliminated at the quarter-final stage of the Champions League for three straight years.

These early eliminations led to the exits of former managers Hansi Flick and Julian Nagelsmann.

Current Bayern boss Thomas Tuchel, who took over from a sacked Nagelsmann who had won eight from eight in the



Harry Kane

Champions League, is aware that making it at least to the semis is considered par for the course in Munich.

While this understanding is not new for Bayern or indeed any of the handful of modern super-clubs where domestic success is

assured, the big money addition of Kane makes winning now a necessity.

100 million reasons

Bayern broke their transfer record to lure Kane from Totten-

ham in the summer, paying 100 million euros (\$108 million) for the 30-year-old England captain.

With Bundesliga titles and German Cups finding their way to Munich more often than not, Kane's move to Bayern has clearly boosted his chances of capturing that elusive first trophy.

But only by winning the Champions League will his decision to leave England be seen as an unqualified success.

The England captain said as much when unveiled in Munich, explaining "I want to play for the Champions League title, that's why I came to Bayern."

Kane has shown few difficulties adjusting to life in Germany, having scored four goals in his first four league matches.

AFP



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham had a superb start to life in the Spanish capital

Bellingham ready for Real debut in Champions League

Barcelona, Spain - Jude Bellingham scored for Real Madrid on his debut, and in four of the five matches which have followed, in a superb start to life in the Spanish capital for the former Birmingham boy.

The England midfielder has five goals in five games in La Liga, taking the Spanish top flight by storm after his 103 million euro (\$110 million) move from Borussia Dortmund this summer.

Real Madrid boast a 100 per cent record from their opening raft of domestic games, but their season begins in earnest with the start of the Champions League this week.

Bellingham, 20, is set to make his 'second' debut for Los Blancos against Union Berlin on Wednesday at the Santiago Bernabeu, in the competition they value above all others.

The record 14-time European champions were thrashed 4-0 by Manchester City in the second leg of last season's semi-

final, 5-1 on aggregate, with Bellingham's purchase in part a response to that stinging defeat.

Madrid have started reducing minutes for their veteran players in midfield - Luka Modric and Toni Kroos - while allowing

Facing a Bundesliga side in Europe, Bellingham should feel comfortable - although it has become clear that he has already made himself at home.

In his first appearance at the hallowed Bernabeu the England international nearly blew the stadium's new roof off with a last gasp 95th minute strike to earn Madrid a narrow win over Getafe in a derby on September 2.

Wearing the No 5 on his back in tribute to Zinedine Zidane, Bellingham has quickly become a fan favourite at Madrid.

Celebrating his goals with his arms open wide, as if to share his joy with the supporters, they have instantly taken to him in a way which never happened with Welsh winger Gareth Bale.

Bellingham has been serenaded with the chorus of Beatles song "Hey Jude", which he said was a special moment.

"When they sang 'Hey Jude' at the end, I got goosebumps," he told Real Madrid TV.

The England midfielder has five goals in five games in La Liga, taking the Spanish top flight by storm

Manchester United boss Ten Hag under growing scrutiny before Bayern clash

Manchester, United Kingdom - Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag is starting to feel the heat from frustrated fans of the Red Devils after a disastrous start to the season has left hopes of Premier League glory already looking forlorn.

For the first time in the Premier League era United have lost three of their opening five games and face a daunting task to open their Champions League campaign away to Bayern Munich on Wednesday.

Ten Hag had been sheltered from criticism in the early weeks of the campaign as supporters concentrated their anger towards a series of off-field issues.

Despite the fans' desire to see them gone, the Glazer family ap-



Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag (R) with Bruno Fernandes

pear to have put a process to sell the club on hold.

Brazilian winger Antony has been given a leave of absence to fight domestic abuse allegations made by his ex-girlfriend.

Meanwhile, United decided Mason Greenwood had no future at Old Trafford last month despite abuse charges against the 21-year-old being dropped.

Ten Hag was credited for re-

turning United to the Champions League by finishing third in the Premier League last season and ending the club's six-year trophy drought by winning the League Cup. However, he was the target for a chorus of boos when he substituted new signing Rasmus Hojlund midway through the second-half of Saturday's 3-1 home defeat to Brighton.

The Dutch coach tried to spin that moment into a positive show of support for Hojlund, who was making his home debut after a £64 million (\$79 million) move from Atalanta.

The Dane has only recently returned to fitness and Ten Hag could ill afford to lose another key player by forcing him to play 90 minutes too soon.

Morocco to begin World Cup qualifying against Eritrea

Johannesburg, South Africa - World Cup history makers Morocco will host minnows Eritrea - 181 places lower in the FIFA rankings - when they start their quest for a place at the 2026 tournament. The first two of 10 matchdays in Africa are scheduled for November 13-21 and, after Eritrea, the first semi-finalists from Africa face a potentially tricky visit to improving Tanzania.

Last December in Qatar, Morocco became only the third country outside of Europe and South America to reach the World Cup semi-finals, emulating the United States and South Korea.

They shocked Belgium and held Croatia in the group stage, then eliminated Spain and Portugal in knockout matches before falling to France.

In 16 pre-Qatar World Cup matches spanning five tournaments, the north Africans had won only two and suffered nine defeats.

But Yassine Bounou, Achraf Hakimi, Sofyan Amrabat, Hakim Ziyech and Youssef en-Nesyri inspired their teammates to defy the odds. Apart from Eritrea and Tanzania, Morocco will face Zambia, Congo Brazzaville and Niger in Group E.

LAST GASP ESCAPE



Al Hilal's Neymar vies for the ball against Navbahor's Igor Golban during their AFC Champions League match

Neymar and Al Hilal suffer huge scare in Asian Champions League

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - Brazil star Neymar endured an Asian Champions League debut to forget as Al Hilal had to score deep into injury-time to salvage a 1-1 at home to Uzbekistan's Navbahor in Riyadh on Monday. Neymar, signed last month from Paris Saint-Germain for a reported €90 million, was making his first start for the record Asian champions having debuted on Friday as a substitute in the Saudi Pro League victory at home to Al Riyadh.

Runners-up in last year's Champions League, Hilal were fortunate not to lose their Group B opener having gone behind on 52 minutes at King Fahd International Stadium to Toma Tabatadze's expert finish. Navbahor, the 2022 Uzbekistan Super League runners-up, were competing in the Champions League for the first time. However, Hilal defender Ali Al Bulaihi rescued a point for the four-time champions in the 100th minute, rising unmarked in the Navbahor area to head home Michael's corner.

Neymar, who earlier this month became Brazil's all-time lead goalscorer, had largely a night to forget. The forward was subjected to some particularly robust treatment from Navbahor, and was incensed just before the hour when he was trod on after being dragged to the ground.

Moments later, Neymar was booked for pushing over an opponent and then angrily kicking the ball at the player as he lay on the pitch.

Neymar did have a chance get Hilal back into the game three minutes from time, but his close-range header was straight at Navbahor goalkeeper Utkir Yusupov. Yusupov then made a spectacular save in injury-time to deny Serbia striker Aleksandar Mitrovic, although he could do nothing to prevent Al Bulaihi's leveller.

Also in Group D, Iranian debutant

Faisal Stadium on 10 minutes before Romarinho soon doubled the hosts' advantage.

The Brazilian got his second of the night four minutes before half-time, as Nuno Espirito-Santo's side eased to the three points.

In the group's other fixture, Iraq's Air Force Club held 2007 runners-up Sepahan, of Iran, to a 2-2 draw in Erbil.

In Group B, two-time Asian champions Al Sadd drew 0-0 at home with UAE side Sharjah -

Runners-up in last year's Champions League, Hilal were fortunate not to lose their Group B opener having gone behind on 52 minutes at King Fahd International Stadium to Toma Tabatadze's expert finish

tants Nassaji Mazandaran won 2-0 away to India's Mumbai City.

Meanwhile, Saudi champions Al Ittihad began their quest for a third Champions League title with a comfortable 3-0 victory at home to Uzbekistan's AGMK in Jeddah. Ittihad, back-to-back winners in 2004 and 2005, went into the Group C opener without Ballon d'Or holder Karim Benzema, who was injured, but struck twice in six minutes early in the first half.

Haroune Camara, starting in Benzema's absence, opened the scoring at the Prince Abdullah Al

Algeria's Baghdad Bounedjah missed a second-half penalty for the hosts - while Jordan's Al Faisaly sunk to a 1-0 defeat in injury-time to Uzbekistan's Nasaf in Amman.

The group stage, which this year returned to a home-and-away format for the first time since early 2020, runs until mid-December, with the 10 pool winners and the six best second-placed teams advancing to the knockout rounds. That begins in February. The final takes place, across two legs, in May. AFP

Spain women players reiterate strike intention despite national team call-up

Barcelona, Spain - Striking Spanish internationals called up to the women's team reiterated their desire not to form part of the squad in a new blow for the shaken Spanish football federation (RFEF).

New coach Montse Tome called up 15 of the Women's World Cup winners earlier Monday for Nations League matches, most of whom had said they did not want to play for their country until wider changes had been made at the federation.

Former president Luis Rubiales resigned three weeks after he forcibly kissed midfielder Jenni Hermoso following Spain's triumph in Sydney on August 20, after receiving an unprecedented worldwide backlash.

Over 80 Spain players went on strike after the incident and despite Rubiales' resignation and controversial coach Jorge Vilda being sacked, 39 players maintained their stance in a statement late Monday, demanding more structural change.



Jenni Hermoso

Tome did not select Hermoso, 33, in the squad, saying it was to protect her. "Protect me from what? And from whom?" Hermoso posted on X, formerly Twitter.

She accused the Spanish federation of seeking to "intimidate and threaten" the World Cup champion players by calling them up against their will for the upcoming matches.

The players called up by

Tome who were in the 39 all published a statement on social media, including two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas.

"(We made) clear ... our firm will not to be summoned for justified reasons. These statements

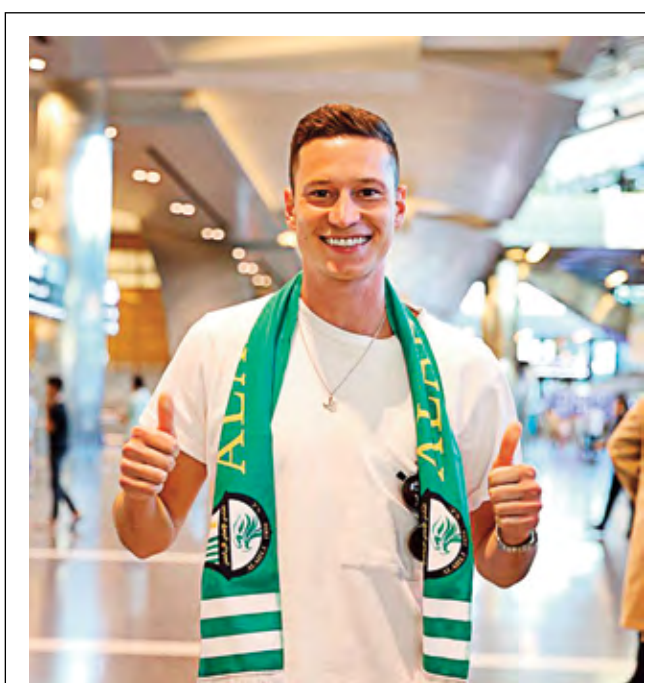
are still fully valid," said the Spain players in their statement.

The players said they would study the potential legal actions they would be exposed to because of the RFEF selecting them - Spanish media reports say players could lose their licenses to play for multiple years if they do not obey the call-up.

Players arrive for national team camp

Six Spain players arrived at a Madrid hotel to join their women's national team camp on Tuesday, five of whom are currently striking over changes they want made in the Spanish football federation (RFEF).

Spain's women's World Cup final-winning goalscorer Olga Carmona and four others presented themselves, along with Athenea del Castillo, who is not on strike, while other players are expected to join up later for the camp in Oliva according to Spanish media reports.



Julian Draxler

German midfielder Julian Draxler leaves PSG for Qatar club Al Ahli

Paris, France - German international midfielder Julian Draxler has left Paris Saint-Germain to sign for Al Ahli of Qatar, the French club announced on Monday.

Qatar-owned PSG said Draxler, 29, had joined the Doha-based side on a permanent deal without revealing any details about the fee for a player whose contract in the French capital still had a year to run.

Ahli, who came eighth in the 12-team Qatar Stars League last season, said Draxler had signed a deal until 2025 after completing his medical on Sunday.

Draxler's move to Qatar from PSG follows that of Italy midfielder Marco Verratti, who joined Al Arabi last week for a fee of close to 50 million

Draxler's move to Qatar follows that of Marco Verratti, who joined Al Arabi

euros (\$53.3m) according to French media reports.

Senegal defender Abdou Diallo also left PSG for Al Arabi last month.

Draxler, who was in Germany's squad for their triumphant 2014 World Cup campaign, played for Schalke and Wolfsburg before joining PSG in January 2017 for a reported 36 million euros plus bonuses.

AFP



Nottingham Forest's Callum Hudson-Odoi (R) celebrates with Nuno Tavares after scoring against Burnley on Monday (AFP)

Hudson-Odoi saves Forest from defeat to Burnley

Nottingham, United Kingdom - Callum Hudson-Odoi's stunning strike salvaged a 1-1 draw for Nottingham Forest as Burnley were denied a first Premier League win of the season on Monday.

Zeki Amdouni scored the only goal when the sides met in the League Cup last month and the Swiss international put Vincent Kompany's men in front four minutes before half-time.

Luca Koleosho was the creative spark for the Clarets as he

got to the by-line before Amdouni's sweet strike from the edge of the box arrowed into the bottom corner.

Hudson-Odoi's career has drifted since he broke into the England team as a teenager.

But the former Chelsea winger showed what he is capable of to level on the hour mark with a curling effort that clipped the inside of the post on its way into the top corner.

Burnley still thought they had claimed all three points when

Lyle Foster found the net 13 minutes from time.

But a VAR check ruled Sander Berge had handled before teeing up the South African.

Foster's frustration was then compounded in stoppage time when he was shown a red card in stoppage time for lashing out at Ryan Yates. The 10 men held on to at least register Burnley's first point back in the Premier League.

A draw is enough to edge Forest up to eighth.

AFP



Rassie Erasmus

Erasmus, the Springboks puppet master, divides opinion

Paris, France - South African director of rugby Rassie Erasmus describes himself in his biography as “a quiet, uncomplicated person” and he is far from the extrovert many perceive him to be.

The 50-year-old is certainly someone who divides opinion, his supporters as forthright in their defence of him as those

the Springboks first black captain, Siya Kolisi, was lifting the World Cup trophy.

Erasmus and Nienaber - who moved up to become head coach after the 2019 World Cup - appear polar opposites, the latter like the straight man in a comedy double act, the former the charismatic wise-cracking scene stealer.

I may come across as a loudmouth, opinionated, arrogant, unrepentant

RASSIE ERASMUS

in the opposing camp are in venting their spleen.

The critics will be especially watchful this week.

They will assess with a fine tooth comb how he talks about referee Ben O’Keefe in both the lead-up and after Saturday’s Rugby World Cup pool game between defending champions South Africa and Ireland, the world’s number one ranked team.

His rants against referees, allied with sarcastic remarks in tweets about them, has landed him in trouble. World Rugby banned him for 12 months after he savaged referee Nic Berry in the first Test with the British and Irish Lions in 2021.

However, Erasmus’ defenders would point out his brilliance in turning round a shambolic Springboks side when he and faithful assistant Jacques Nienaber took over in early 2018. Within two years the man Erasmus picked as

TEST OF BENCH STRENGTH

India rest Kohli, Sharma for Australia one-dayers

New Delhi, India - Indian selectors on Monday rested captain Rohit Sharma and batting superstar Virat Kohli from the 15-member squad for the first two ODIs against visitors Australia.

Veteran R Ashwin and Washington Sundar, both off-spinners and handy lower-order batters, have been included in the squad in a sign that they may be back in contention for the home World Cup in October.

India have also rested left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav and all-rounder Axar Patel, who is recovering after an injury scare in the recently concluded Asia Cup tournament in Sri Lanka.

Both Patel and Yadav, who are part of the Indian squad for the World Cup, will return along with all other regulars for the third and final ODI against Australia.

Sharma told journalists that it was important to test their bench strength in the bilateral series starting this Friday before the all-important World Cup when they will have to travel extensively across India.

KL Rahul, who recently re-



India captain Rohit Sharma (R) and Virat Kohli (AFP)

turned from a long injury layoff, will lead the Indian side against Australia in Sharma’s absence.

INDIA SQUAD
First two ODIs
KL Rahul (captain), Shubman Gill, Rituraj Gaikwad, Shreyas Iyer, Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar

Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Mohammed Shami, Tilak Varma, Prasidh Krishna, R Ashwin, Washington Sundar

Third ODI
Rohit Sharma (captain), Shub-

man Gill, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Mohammed Shami, Hardik Pandya, Virat Kohli, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel (subject to fitness), R Ashwin, Washington Sundar



Rafa Nadal

Nadal still aiming to finish career in 2024

Barcelona, Spain - Spanish tennis star Rafa Nadal reiterated Monday that finishing his career in 2024 remains his goal, while admitting he has taken two operations to try and heal his hip injury.

“I said that possibly 2024 was my last year, I maintain that, but I can not confirm it 100 percent because I do not know,” Nadal told Movistar.

The 37-year-old announced in May that the hip injury he suffered at the Australian Open in January meant he had to step away from the sport to try and come back stronger.

Nadal, a 22-time Grand Slam winner, reiterated on Monday that he “would like to play again and be competitive again”.

“My hope is not to return to win Roland Garros or win (in) Australia, so that people are not confused, all that is a long way off,” he said.

“I am well aware of the difficulties that I face, one is insurmountable, that is age, and the other are physical problems.

“What makes me hopeful is to play again, to be competitive again.”

New Zealand’s De Groot gets two match ban

Bordeaux, France - All Blacks prop Ethan de Groot will not play again until the quarter-finals of the Rugby World Cup after being suspended on Monday for two matches following his red card against Namibia.

De Groot was yellow carded for a no-arms tackle attempt on Friday but it was later upgraded to red by the bunker review system.

The disciplinary committee ruled that, contrary to De Groot’s defence, the tackle was “always illegal” and that the prop “was not sufficiently bent at the waist”.

“Head contact... occurred and the degree of danger was high,” the committee said in a statement. The lack of an attempt to wrap his arms around the ball-carrier meant there was no scope for mitigation to reduce the sanction down from a red card.

New Zealand coach Ian Foster said he was disappointed and “a little bit surprised” by the decision, against which De Groot can appeal, but “we’ll have to suck



Ethan de Groot

that up and take it”. “There’s a process, you’ve got to respect that. There’s lots of layers in the judiciary now between referees and TMOs, and we’ve got the bunker. Even those three weren’t totally aligned on it.”

Foster, however, questioned

the level of danger in the tackle.

“I’m not sure ours was a significant shoulder to head contact,” he said.

“It’s frustrating but it’s just one of those things. You’ve got to deal with it and, as frustrated as we are, we’ve got to keep moving on.

De Groot was handed a three-match suspension but this was reduced to two “subject to the completion of the coaching intervention programme”.

“He’s going to miss the next two games but he’s got a job to do in the meantime,” said Foster.

New Zealand lost their Pool A opener to France before bouncing back with a 71-3 victory over Namibia.

They have a weekend off now before facing Italy in Lyon on September 29.

“This is an inevitable part of the game and it’s happened for

You’ve got to deal with it and, as frustrated as we are, we’ve got to keep moving on

IAN FOSTER

Ethan,” said Foster.

“We’ve got to make sure there’s no excuses. We’ve got to go and do what we need to do this week in Bordeaux and make sure we’re ready for a pretty big game in Lyon.”

AFP

Super Rugby franchise Drua firing Fiji’s progress at Rugby World Cup

Lyon, France - Fiji ended a 69-year hoodoo by securing a crucial World Cup win over Australia on Sunday, confirming their status as many people’s dark horses for the tournament in France.

In beating England in a pre-tournament warm-up and now putting in back-to-back dominant performances against Tier 1 nations Wales and Australia in their World Cup pool, Fiji have demonstrated an ability to add forward steel to their traditional backline flair.

And one major reason for that improvement is their Super Rugby franchise, the Fijian Drua.

Having a fully-professional club side taking part in top level

competition to complement the star players playing overseas has removed one of the team’s historic weaknesses in which their domestic-based players were essentially amateurs.

“With Drua, you see not only do they try and educate them around being professional, they also give them quality game time at the Super (Rugby) level,” said Fiji’s kicking coach Seremaia Bai after Sunday’s emotional 22-15 victory over the Wallabies.

“I think it’s massively positive for the development of rugby and you can see the way most of the boys who played in the Drua, it’s really improved the performance of the team.”

That was something not lost of Australia’s head coach Eddie Jones, who described the creation of the Drua as “really positive.”

Fiji have always had talented stars that have played in Australia, New Zealand or Europe, but they never had back-up players of a similar level, meaning their performance would inevitably tail off deep into matches against Tier 1 nations.

In 2019 they led Australia 14-12 at half-time in their World Cup pool stage match in Japan, only to be swept aside after the break to lose 39-21.

But not this time. Leading 12-8 after 40 minutes, Fiji had



Tevita Ikanivere celebrates Fiji’s victory against Australia on Sunday (AFP)

stretched their lead from four to seven points by full-time.

Jones pointed to Fiji’s replacement hooker Tevita Ikanivere as an example of how the Super Rugby franchise is benefitting the national team.

“He’s a quality player and he’s become a quality player through training full-time with the Drua and also playing with the Drua at a high level,” said Jones after his side’s defeat to Fiji.

“I think that’s the real benefit for Fiji Rugby and if they can keep growing that and keep growing that system, there’s no reason why they can’t be in the Rugby Championship.”

That is a dream for Fiji’s New

Zealand-born coach Simon Raiwalui, who insisted after the match that the only way to keep improving is for Fiji to play more matches against Tier 1 nations.

“I’m always about being included in those sort of competitions,” he said. “If those matches become available to us, we’ve got our hand up, we’re ready to play those games.”

A lack of games is a major issue for Fiji, who have played fewer than half the number of international since the last World Cup than Tier 1 nations.

“I’ll give you an example, I played for Fiji for probably 14 years but I only played 53 Test matches,” said Bai.

Four Oman Sail athletes to compete in Asian Games

Muscat - Four Oman Sail athletes have been selected for the Oman national squad to travel to Hangzhou, China, for the 2022 Asian Games.

Competing across three events in the sailing competition, the Asian Games represent a chance to push for qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and gain valuable international experience.

Waleed al Kindi and Musab al Hadi will compete in the 49er class, AbdulMajeed al Hadhrami will test his mettle in the iQFOiL men's windsurfing event and AbdulLatif al Qasmi will join the most talented juniors from across the continent in the ILCA 4.

Leading the delegation will be Hashim al Rashdi, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, and he will be assisted by Munther al Kindi, specialist coach for the ILCA 4.

Hashim al Rashdi, Oman Sail's Head Coach Performance, said,



Oman Sail athletes with Finance and Administration Director Saif Al Barwani in Hangzhou

"The Asian Games is a prime opportunity to test ourselves against nations from the Asian continent and place as high as possible in all three events. Olympic qualification in Men's Windsurfing is a clear goal for Oman Sail, and a long-term objective of ours, but we are also confident of a strong performance in the 49er and ILCA 4."

He added, "We are very proud to represent the nation in international competition and look forward to supporting our national athletes across all sports throughout the Games."

The competition takes place from September 21 to 27 at the Ningbo Sailing Centre. A route to Olympic qualification for the Olympic Games is open for AbdulMajeed al Hadhrami in the iQ-FOiL competition who will be looking to improve on his performance at the 2023 Allianz Sailing World Championships.

ICC charges eight in Abu Dhabi T10 match-fixing probe

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates - Eight cricket players and officials have been charged with breaching anti-corruption rules in an investigation into match fixing in the Abu Dhabi T10 event, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Tuesday.

"The ICC, on behalf of the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB), has charged eight players and officials for breaching different counts of the ECB anti-corruption code for participants for the T10 League," cricket's governing body said.

"The charges relate to the 2021 Abu Dhabi T10 Cricket League and attempts to corrupt matches in that tournament - these attempts were disrupted," it added. Among those charged were Bangladesh player Nasir Hossain and team co-owners Krishnan Kumar Chaudhary and Parag Sanghvi.

The multiple charges against the group include match fixing, offering sums of money to players to engage in corruption and failing to cooperate with the ICC investigation.

Six of those charged, including Chaudhary and Sanghvi, have been provisionally suspended.

Mongolia cricketers out for 15 to start Asian Games action

Hangzhou, China - Mongolia's women's cricket team were in tears after being bowled out for 15 runs in a thrashing by Indonesia on the opening day of action at the Asian Games on Tuesday.

The Games in the Chinese city of Hangzhou officially open on Saturday but sports including cricket, volleyball, beach volleyball and football begin before that.

Mongolia's women were making their debut at an international tournament and were given a harsh lesson as Indonesia made 187-4 in the Twenty20 preliminary-round match.

Indonesia's total included 49 extras, 38 of them wides by the

Mongolian bowlers.

In reply, an outclassed Mongolia were out for 15 in 10 overs.

Mongolia's coach David Talalla said he was proud of his young team - their average age is just 19 - given their very limited resources and experience of the sport.

More than half of his players

had never even left Mongolia before and this was their first experience of a grass wicket, having been used to an artificial pitch at home.

Mongolia's kit is second-hand from Australia, and their four bats donated by a French ambassador whose wife is English and a cricket fan, said Talalla, who is

working for free.

"I know we've only made 15 runs but none of our girls have played the game for longer than two years and we know what a technical game it is," said Talalla.

"We've only got a squad of 12 - that's all we could afford to bring," added Talalla, saying all of his players were in tears after

wards. "The whole idea is the longer picture - cricket in Mongolia, who would have thought it?" he said.

"Even myself, I've only been in the job here for five weeks as a high-performance coach but six months ago, I didn't even know they played cricket in Mongolia." AFP

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We Arun Moodahadu Ramakrishna (name of father as per the passport, holder of Indian passport No R2397628) Smitha Gundmi, (name of mother as per the passport, holder of Indian passport No V 2616934) having permanent address in 536, 3rd , 8th main, Vidyaranyapura, Bengaluru , B'lare-97 (complete postal address in India), and presently residing at the following address in P.B. No 175 P.C. 117, Sultanate of Oman, hereby solemnly affirm and declare to change the name of our child Miss SHARVANI (name as per passport), holder of Indian Passport No T0693804) date of issue 6/2/2019 , issued at Muscat . The name of our child will be henceforth known as SHARVANI ARUN (new name) for all purposes. Any objection towards change of name of our minor child may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, Po Box No 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

BIRTHDAY WISHES



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LONDON FASHION WEEK

MONSTER TRUCKS AND LEVITY LIFT LONDON FASHION WEEK WITH A VARIETY OF FASHION OUTFITS ON DISPLAY, FROM SOBER DENIMS TO BRIGHT CHIFFONS

EXPLICIT & EARTHY



Designers can find sources of inspiration in unexpected places - as evidenced by the runways of London Fashion Week on Sunday. Ukrainian designer Masha Popova turned to monster truck shows while China's Susan Fang showcased a collection of ethereal dresses.

Engines roaring

Best known for her work with denim, Ukrainian-born designer Popova continued what she called her 'obsession with denim manipulation' in her new collection. Models walked the runway in denim mini-skirts and hip-hugging low-rise jeans.

Popova, based in London, treated her signature fabric in a variety of ways - including over-dyeing, flocking, scratching and patchwork - to produce a rugged effect.

The collection was inspired by monster truck shows and featured an 'electrifying' colour palette for the outfits. The models walked to the beat of techno music, with the sound of engines roaring in the background.

Popova counted social media influencers among her guests, including the sisters Abby and Charlotte Roberts, both with millions of followers on TikTok.

Fashion content creator and model Emma Winder told AFP after the show that she liked the 'earthy tones' of the collection, even if she was not really a double denim fan.

Floating with Fang

Susan Fang, originally from China, launched her brand in 2017 after graduating from the Central Saint Martins arts university in London. Since then she has created futuristic designs with a weightless, floating appearance.

For her spring and summer 2024 collection, models walked beneath large wings made of



white kites said to represent 'human civilisation and emotions', hanging next to the figure of a 'cold robot' also made of white kites.

Below-the-knee skirts, from black to pale pink, were paired with crop tops in the collection, which also featured dresses with tulle ruffles and sandals worn with socks.

Fang also showcased a dress made from protruding wire trees adorned with beads, handcrafted primarily by women from Chinese minority groups, a centrepiece of the collection.

Fang said that with the design she wanted to create an ensemble resembling the Tree of Life, radiating the pure energy of human life.

Union Jack and English palace

Montreal-born designer Erdem Moralioglu staged his show under the colonnade of the British Museum, creating a majestic atmosphere from the outset.

For his spring-summer 2024 collection, he delved into the archives of Chatsworth Palace, the home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire in the north of England. Erdem created a poetic collection, with prints based on engravings and Chatsworth tapestries.

The organza and satin skirts and dresses were long, the shoulders bare, like those of a fairytale princess. However some of the looks were much more modern, with large biker jackets, one of them petrol blue, partly covering a long pink transparent skirt.

Sinead Gorey, one of the last to showcase her works on the London runways, paid homage to the 'British summer of love' with a collection that put the Union Jack front and centre.

The flag was featured on the designs that included thigh-high, high-heeled boots harking to the 1990s Spice Girls, with inscriptions like 'London Swings Again!'

AFP



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BURBERRY
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LONDON SHOW

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British model
Adwoa Aboah



Nigerian actor
Temi Otedola



(From R) British singer Mike Skinner from *The Streets*, his wife Claire Le Marquand, Missy Albarn and her father British musician Damon Albarn, British rapper Kano, British actor Michael Ward and Irish actor Barry Keoghan attend the catwalk

British designer Daniel Lee presented his second collection for Burberry at a star-studded show in London on Monday, unveiling summer versions of the famous trench coat and a range of new accessories. Burberry, the iconic British brand founded in 1856, was, as usual, the most eagerly awaited show at London Fashion Week.

In a sign of its cultural power, Bond Street underground station in central London has been renamed 'Burberry Street' for the duration of Fashion Week. For his first show in February, Lee welcomed his hundreds of guests under a huge tent pitched in a London park in a nod to the British taste for outdoor activities - whatever the weather - an integral part of Burberry's identity. Among the VIP guests at Monday's show included Australian singer Kylie Minogue, British actresses Jodie Comer and Rachel Weisz, British athlete and four-time Olympic champion Mo Farah, Arsenal midfielder Bukayo Saka and rappers Kano and Skepta.

Lee described the men's and women's collections as 'an exploration of lightness, sensuality, beauty and elegance'.

"Brand codes evolve," explained the designer, with its famous tartan becoming less prominent and "jewellery and hardware becoming hand-painted artworks and repeated prints" on shorts, dresses, shirts and trench coats.

Adapting a classic

For summer 2024, Burberry's undisputed star - the trench coat - was worn wide and belted low on the hips. Lee dared to present a bright orange trench coat with printed jewels, a far cry from the classic beige.

Royal blue strawberries and cherries appeared on a white jumpsuit and a dress while huge flowers, evoking English meadows, decorated long dresses.

Lee, who designed bags that were a big hit at Bottega Veneta, where he worked before Burberry, showed off his prowess with a series of eye-catching accessories. He also experimented with shoes, displaying moccasins with chunky heels and high mules with the brand's logo on the side for women, and loafers with square toes for men.

After the show, guests gathered to celebrate the arrival of Lee's first collection - the one presented in February - at the label's flagship store on New Bond Street, offering a chance to see how well its creations are selling.

Before the summer, the brand posted strong growth on the back of soaring sales in China. Before the Burberry event, British and Nigerian designer Tolu Coker, who benefits from the 'NewGen' initiative to support young talent, presented a collection strongly influenced by her twin identities.

The show began with a video of a family ceremony in London following her birth, followed by a catwalk display featuring only black male and female models.

For the women, her collection featured feminine and elegant outfits with well-crafted, body-hugging cuts that oozed creativity while remaining easy to wear. For men, the Dr. Martens boots signalled a more street-wear style.

London Fashion Week came to an end on Tuesday, with shows by Ukrainian designers welcomed to the British capital because of the war in their country.

The fashion world will then move on to Milan, and finally Paris.

AFP

