

FARSI BAGS BRONZE IN 800M AT ASIAN GAMES



Husain bin Mohsen al Farsi fetched the second medal for Oman at the 2023 Asian Games on Tuesday by winning bronze in the 800m race in Hangzhou, China. Farsi clocked 1min 48.51sec to finish behind India's silver medallist Mohammed Afsal and Saudi Arabia's gold medallist Essa Ali Kzwani. Earlier, Omani sailors Musab al Hadi and Waleed al Kindi won a silver in men's 49er event (Supplied Photo)

SAI report reveals irregularities in mosque utility bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

State Audit Institution's (SAI) annual report for 2022 has highlighted financial and administrative irregularities relating to electricity and water bills of mosques. Analysing and auditing electricity and water bills and dues of mosques under the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs (MERA), SAI found unauthorised connections, breaches in regulations and escalating utility costs.

SAI's annual report offers a comprehensive insight into discrepancies in financial and administrative declarations of government sector departments. The report underscores SAI's persistent efforts in identifying, rectifying and championing transparency and accountability.

MERA's delay in rolling out the Endowment Fund for Caretaking of Mosques regulation led to an accumulation of electricity and water dues to utility companies for 2021 and 2022, SAI reported. It also failed to benefit from the deposited money in the fund.

As a corrective measure, Ministerial Decision No 169/2023 has been put into effect, introducing the Reconstitution of the

Board of Directors for the Fund. An investment strategy for the fund is also set to roll out.

Illegal connections

A revelation that has raised eyebrows is the multitude of unauthorised electricity and water connections from mosques, which have been traced back to private residences of citizens.

Some mosques' monthly electricity bills were over RO2,000, while water bills touched RO500

This left MERA to foot bills for these illegal connections. As a remedial step, immediate action has been initiated. Individuals benefitting from these unauthorised connections are now being back-charged for the services they unfairly availed.

Overstepping regulation

The SAI report also pointed out regulatory breaches where some mosques, built on land owned by other government bodies or private citizens, had their electricity

costs covered by MERA, flouting the Regulation of Masjid Mosques and Jami Mosque. Additionally, amenities linked to mosques, like residential quarters or shops, failed to have separate utility meters - another oversight against the established norms. As a resolution, involved parties are being billed for the utilities, and efforts are underway to rectify the identified anomalies.

Exorbitant utility bills

Another alarming discovery by SAI has been the unusually high utility bills of several mosques, especially in the governorates of Dhofar, North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah. Some mosques' monthly electricity bills were over RO2,000, while water bills in certain mosques in South Sharqiyah touched RO500 in violation of Ministry of Finance guidelines.

Investment delays

Another snag in the process was MERA's failure to invest a mandatory 20% of its total funds allocated to electricity and water. This investment was envisioned to cover utilities expenses of mosques. In response to this lapse, the funds are now scheduled for investment, following a recent ministerial decision.

Hotel revenues up 26.3% to RO138.38mn in Aug

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The latest data from National Centre for Statistics and Information indicates a 26.3% increase in revenues of 3- to 5-star hotels in the sultanate to RO138.380mn at the end of August

compared to RO109.535mn in the same period of 2022.

This revenue growth aligns with a notable 26.7% increase in the number of guests - totalling 1,284,640 - till August this year, compared to 1,138,760 in the corresponding

period of 2022. Occupancy rate rose 10.4%.

Breaking down the figures, the data showed Omani guests accounted for 499,840 of the total. The number of GCC guests rose 25.1% to 137,367, while European guests increased 44.1% to 275,672.

There were 36,970 American guests, up 2.8%, while those from the African continent increased 39.5% to 7,336. The number of Asian guests increased 44.2% to 187,486, and guests from Oceania surged dramatically by 228.7% to 27,110.

Oman to develop national system to track GHGs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) is set to launch a system to track greenhouse gases (GHGs) emissions across Oman, advancing the sultanate's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality.

Speaking to Muscat Daily, an EA official said, "Zero neutrality, in essence, is the equilibrium achieved when emitted greenhouse gases equate to the emissions actively reduced or offset, culminating in a net-zero carbon footprint."

She added that Oman has emerged as a forerunner in this global initiative.

EA has extended invitations to environmental consulting firms to collaborate on this national



project, aiming to ensure that the system aligns with international standards and global agreements. "This system will meticulously audit greenhouse gas emissions data, ensuring mitigation targets are met yearly."

The new system will be part of the National Zero Neutrality Programme, which intends to support Oman's overarching strategy for carbon neutrality. It will concentrate on several sectors

including electricity, urban development, transportation, industry, and oil and gas.

Regarding the authority's efforts, the official said that Oman has devised a meticulous plan targeting five sectors responsible for the vast majority of its greenhouse gas emissions: industry, oil and gas, electricity generation, transportation, and construction.

"In September, we organised workshops to refine these sectoral strategies, addressing challenges and leveraging resources. Our objective remains clear: achieving zero emissions by 2050," the official stated.

Oman's 2021 carbon emissions have been assessed at 90mtCO2e. The five sectors account for 95% of these emissions.



14-year-old boy arrested for Bangkok mall shooting



All Things Go indie music festival thrives

Yemen economy tanks as talks fail to restore truce

Dubai, UAE - Food shortages, power cuts and a collapsing currency are upending daily life in Yemen as peace talks make no headway in restoring a ceasefire that lapsed one year ago, around 50 NGOs said late on Monday.

"While economic challenges are rife across the country, rising inflation and the deterioration of public services are making life unbearable," said a statement signed by 35 Yemeni groups and 13 international aid organisations including the Danish Refugee Council and Save the Children.

That is especially true "for hundreds of thousands of families" in territory controlled by the internationally recognised government based in the main southern city of Aden, the state-

ment said.

Power cuts in Aden can last 17 hours a day and more than 50% of households in government-held areas cannot meet basic food requirements because of skyrocketing prices, the statement said.

Iran-backed Huthis overran the Yemeni capital Sanaa in 2014, prompting neighbouring Saudi Arabia to spearhead a military intervention the following year to shore up the government.

The ensuing war has left hundreds of thousands dead through direct and indirect causes and displaced millions in what the United Nations has called one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

AFP

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The 'Top Three' most interesting entries will be published in Muscat Daily, on October 10, and will win a One-night Stay for two persons each at Barceló Mussanah Resort

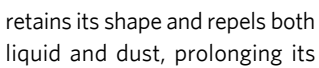
Our Correspondent

Muscat

Hafed Humaid al Badi, the 21-year-old CEO of Uniti, explained the origins and mission of their project. The team noticed a glaring issue in the silicon market concerning the material's long-term durability, particularly in the construction field. To address this, they de-



HAFED HUMAID AL BADI



lifespan to an impressive 30 years.

Discussing the obstacles UniTEC faced, he said, "Our central mission is to leverage nanotechnology for crafting self-cleaning products, primarily for the construction industry. We initially faced product development challenges, especially financial constraints as students and slow government response, an issue we still confront."

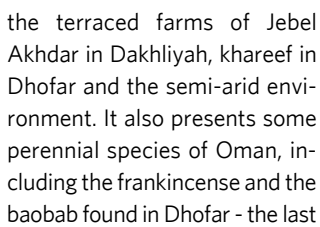
Badi and his team are grateful to the Nanotechnology Research Centre and Youssef al Hadrami at Sultan Qaboos University for their unwavering support. While hopeful of a smoother facilitation processes and continued support, they affirmed their commitment to enhancing Oman's industry, market size and innovation by manufacturing within Oman, thereby contributing to the nation's economy.

The meeting showcased the range of services extended by the Omani Embassy in Turkey, particularly those benefiting business owners. Additionally, a promotional strategy for the forum was presented.

Our Correspondent

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The pavilion presents different types of Omani environments. It offers a simulation of



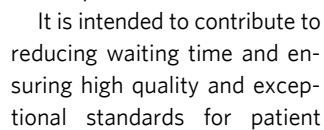
The pavilion allows visitors to learn about the engineering heritage of the centuries-old Omani aflaj irrigation system, which reflects the values of cooperation

The exhibition, in which 68 countries and international organisations are participating, focuses on several themes, including sustainability, environmental awareness, technology, innovation and modern farming.

Our Correspondent

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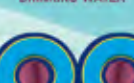
This expansion project aims to improve patient services and



The focus on establishing services and developmental projects, including those dedicated to improving healthcare services and inclusivity, aligns with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. It reflects the government's commitment to prioritising Omani citizens as the focal point of development, aiming to achieve ambitious goals and developmental objectives outlined in the national strategy of the sultanate, as embodied in Oman Vision 2040.

ONA

The acrobatic ballet, especially the 'en pointe' performance atop another dancer's head, is bound to enchant audiences. 'Attend on October 26 or 28 with options for evening or matinee shows.'



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'Juvenile delinquency a growing threat to society'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Juvenile delinquency, a worrisome issue impacting society's stability and family structure, took centre stage at a forum titled 'Non-custodial Provisions and Measures in Juvenile Justice' on Tuesday.

Fahd bin Zahir al Fahdi, Director of Juvenile Affairs in the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), informed that 398 juvenile offenders were registered in Oman in 2022.

The forum, held under the auspices of H E Salem bin Muslim al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Human Resources Development in the Ministry of Labour, aimed to address juvenile delinquency by focusing on non-custodial rulings, ensuring the rehabilitation and reform of young offenders.

Fahdi emphasised the multifaceted nature of the problem, highlighting its biological, psychological and social dimensions. "The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency constitutes a grow-



(Supplied photo)

Juveniles are among the most vulnerable groups and are most in need of empowerment and integration into society so that they become productive individuals, contributing to the country's development

FAHD BIN ZAHIR AL FAHDI

ing threat to society's security, stability and family structure," he said.

The collaborative efforts of various government and civil entities play a crucial role in reinforcing national pride and preserving family unity, Fahdi added.

The forum's objectives included highlighting alternative

non-custodial rulings in juvenile justice, recognising the roles of different Omani agencies and fostering collaborations to mitigate juvenile delinquency. Insights were also sought on mechanisms for implementing non-custodial provisions, drawing from developments in the Arab world.

According to Fahdi, MoSD's social work strategy for 2016-2025 is designed to extend essential social care, focusing on juveniles as they are among the most vulnerable groups. "They are most in need of empowerment and integration into society so that they become productive individuals, contributing to the country's development."

The forum saw the presentation of five papers. Suleiman bin Saif al Nabhani, President of Muscat Court of First Instance, delved into the subject of 'Non-custodial judicial rulings and their effect on juvenile behaviour.' The talk covered the Juvenile Accountability Law and alternative provisions for juvenile care and reform.

Dr Rashid bin Obaid al Kaabi, Assistant Public Prosecutor, presented insights on 'Alternative punishments in Omani legislation', exploring the rationale behind such penalties and their implications on a psychological, economic and social front.

The third paper, by Dr

Mashael al Mubarak from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development in Saudi Arabia, examined 'Community service as an alternative to punishments' emphasising its role in ensuring behavioural reform outside prison confines.

Masoud bin Saeed al Mahrezi, a legal researcher in the Ministry of Labour, discussed 'Legislation related to juvenile employment', highlighting provisions in the Labour Law that protect young workers.

Rounding off the day, Dr Mona bint Saeed al Shukaily, Psychiatry Consultant at Al Masarra Hospital, provided a psychological viewpoint on 'Alternative punishments for juveniles', shedding light on the mental effects of traditional punishments and the positive impacts of alternative methods.

The forum underscored Oman's commitment to addressing and understanding juvenile delinquency, ensuring a brighter future for its younger generation.

MoE sustainable development awareness workshop opens

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A workshop titled 'Educational Labs for Sustainable Development' started on Tuesday.

The three-day event has been organised by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in co-operation with the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO).

The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of Dr Abdullah Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority, in the presence of H E Dr Abdullah Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary for Education in the Ministry of Education.

The workshop aims to shed light on the importance of education in sustainable development and raise social awareness in this regard.

The workshop's sessions and work papers are on the role of teachers in achieving the goals of sustainable development through education. It will also highlight the role of



Amna Saim al Balushi

'Educational Labs for Sustainable Development' aims to shed light on the importance of education in sustainable development and raise social awareness in this regard

youth in building a sustainable society.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Amna Saim al Balushi, Secretary of Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, said MoE accords great importance to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education and restructured the commission to follow up on achieving its goals in August 2021.

She informed that the national commission includes active members from various stakeholders, such as government agencies, research institutions and civil society organisations, besides youth.

The commission has implemented several national initiatives and projects, including handing over the country initiative on education for sustainable development to Unesco, joining the global network for education for sustainable development, and setting national reference standards for SDG4 for the years 2025 and 2030.

Preserving Dhofar: EA takes action to safeguard natural treasures

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In response to growing concerns over violations, particularly during serb - spring season - in Dhofar, Environment Authority (EA) has conducted several campaigns and arrested offenders.

The season, continuing till December 21, transforms the coastal regions from Dhalkut to Mirbat into verdant landscapes. Recognised as pivotal for economic returns, serb season supports local farmers, fishermen and livestock breeders.

In September, EA's Environmental Guardians in Dhofar logged 74 complaints and 174 violations related to the encroachment on green spaces.

"The Environmental Guardians initiative, now in its second year, aims to bolster environmental consciousness and safeguard Dhofar's natural wonders during the khareef and serb seasons," an EA official informed.

Teams from this initiative keep a watchful eye on tourist destinations to prevent activities like littering, cutting trees and causing any damage to natural greenery.



(Supplied photo)

The Environmental Guardians initiative, now in its second year, aims to bolster environmental consciousness and safeguard Dhofar's natural wonders during the khareef and serb seasons

EA OFFICIAL

"The initiative seeks to educate visitors on the value of these sites. We're striving to foster a community-wide responsibility to protect Dhofar's environmental gems," the official added.

In line with its efforts to preserve Dhofar's greenery, EA recently launched another initiative called 'Desert Shadows', the official informed.

This initiative focuses on developing a comprehensive action plan to optimise the utilisation of tourist sites, revitalise the

tourism and economic aspects of these site, and introduce suitable indigenous tree species like ghaf, sidr and cactus. These trees offer multiple environmental benefits.

The Desert Shadows initiative aligns with a national initiative to plant 10mn trees of indigenous species across the sultanate in a ten-year period.

The authority called on residents and citizens to preserve the natural and tourist sites in Dhofar to avoid any legal issues.

LEBANESE MINISTER VISITS GRAND MOSQUE, SQU



Ziad Makary, Minister of Information of the Republic of Lebanon, and his accompanying delegation visited Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque and Sultan Qaboos University on Tuesday. The guest was briefed on the mosque's history and its Omani and Islamic architecture. Makary also toured the mosque's facilities, its library and lecture hall, and the Institute of Islamic Sciences. At SQU, Makary met H H Sayyid Dr Fahd al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor, and H H Sayyida Dr Mona Fahad al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation (ONA)

Experts from 16 nations attend engineering, aviation meet

Muscat - Military Technological College is organising an international conference on aerospace sciences, engineering and technology, which started on Tuesday. Speakers from 16 countries are participating in the three-day conference, held under the auspices of Naif Ali al Abri, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority.

Participants discussed research papers on aerodynamics, and reviewed experiments and developments in avionic systems and innovations in emerging technologies. On the sidelines of the meet, an exhibition is being held on innovations in the field of aviation, engineering, technology and electronic applications.

The event aims to highlight technological updates and innovation and serve as a platform to display new technologies, while allowing interaction between researchers, academics and other parties operating in the aviation sector.

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BRIEFS

Ukraine moves toward flexible currency to improve economy

Ukraine's central bank said it would allow controlled currency fluctuations starting Tuesday, easing wartime restrictions to boost the economy.

At the beginning of the war Kyiv suspended all currency trading, and set a fixed exchange rate to defend its currency – the hryvnia – and stabilise the markets.

"The National Bank of Ukraine is implementing managed exchange rate flexibility, which will strengthen the stability of the foreign exchange market and the economy," the central bank said in Tuesday's statement.

With inflation slowing down and international reserves "sufficiently high for a long time" it said the time was now right to act.

Islamic banking set to continue outpacing conventional banks

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Islamic banking industry in Oman is poised to maintain its growth momentum ahead of conventional banks in Oman. This trend is expected to persist over the next 12 to 18 months, thanks to supportive oil prices and ambitious economic diversification agendas across the GCC countries, according to Moody's Investor Service.

The profitability of Islamic banks in the GCC is projected to remain robust in 2024, surpassing that of their conventional counterparts. This is due to Islamic banks' controlled provisioning needs and sustained net profit margin advantage over conventional banks, despite a slight decline.

Moody's in a report pointed out that Islamic banks are currently benefiting from elevated oil prices. The economic growth across the Gulf region is accelerating in 2023 and is anticipated to remain strong in 2024, driven by high oil prices, economic diversification plans, and bolstered business confidence.

Looking ahead, Moody's predicts that Islamic banks in the GCC will continue to gain from ongoing economic diversification



Moody's said Islamic banks' market penetration was highest in Saudi Arabia (83%) and Bahrain (69%), while there is significant room for growth in the UAE (28%), Qatar (31%), and Oman (19%)

agendas aimed at enhancing private sector employment among citizens. This, in turn, will create avenues for retail lending growth.

The rating agency emphasised that the growth in Islamic bank-

ing assets in the GCC will continue to outpace that of conventional peers. This is attributed to government support for the Islamic finance industry, increasing demand for Shariah-compliant

products in the region, and ample funding.

As of March 2023, Moody's reports that Islamic banks' market penetration was highest in Saudi Arabia (83%) and Bahrain (69%), while there is significant room for growth in the UAE (28%), Qatar (31%), and Oman (19%).

Moody's further said that continued economic growth will maintain stable asset quality for GCC Islamic banks, supported by strong capital and liquidity, enabling them to meet the growing

demand for Islamic financial services in the region.

Regarding non-performing financing ratios, Moody's noted that Islamic banks have remained broadly stable since the onset of the pandemic, similar to their conventional peers. Although some customers faced difficulties due to pandemic-related issues, the impact on asset quality was limited, thanks to a post-pandemic economic rebound.

With pandemic-related debt relief measures being lifted, Moody's anticipates that most customers who benefited from these programmes will have recovered financially. 'This is attributed to the robust economic recovery in 2022 and the sustained solid operating conditions in 2023.'

Ample capital and liquidity

Moody's believes that Islamic banks in Oman and GCC countries have ample capital and liquidity to support further growth. The rating agency underscored that these banks will maintain strong capital and liquidity buffers, allowing them to cater to the strong demand for Shariah-compliant financial services.

Islamic banks in the region enjoy substantial liquidity, driven

by strong deposit inflows and digital initiatives that promote Islamic deposits. This appeal is further bolstered by the cultural affinity of Muslim-majority populations for Islamic banking products, Moody's said.

Moody's acknowledged that GCC Islamic banks navigated the pandemic with capital ratios well above regulatory requirements, on par with conventional lenders. It noted that the Common Equity Tier 1 capital, at an average of 14%-15% of risk-weighted assets, will continue to safeguard GCC Islamic banks against unexpected losses. The core capital position is expected to remain stable as profits are retained, keeping pace with asset financing growth.

Furthermore, Moody's stressed that core capital for GCC Islamic banks is resilient even under low-probability, high-stress scenario analysis, remaining comparable to conventional peers.

In terms of problem loans, Moody's revealed that these do not exceed 13.5% of tangible common equity and loan-loss reserves as of June 2023 on average across the region for Islamic banks. This is lower than the 17.9% reported for conventional banks during the same period.

CMA announces 2nd edition of GCC Smart Investor Award

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Tuesday announced the launch of the GCC Investment Awareness Program, Mulim, which includes the second edition of the GCC Smart Investor Awards with prizes worth more than RO100,000.

The GCC Investment Awareness Program was launched under the umbrella of the Secretariat General of the GCC, with the participation of the regulators of the GCC capital markets. It aims to raise awareness of the culture of financial transactions and investment in the capital markets through various awareness activities and campaigns.

In its 2nd edition, the GCC Smart Investor Award is divided into four categories: videography, drawing, photography, and



writing. The writing category has been added to the original three approved categories. Participants can be individuals, higher education students, or school students. Notably, the number of winners in the 2nd edition is 36, which is four times higher than the nine winners in the 1st edition.

The award aims to motivate citizens and residents in the GCC countries to produce awareness content and present creative ideas related to saving and investment. It seeks to raise financial awareness to enhance the ability to plan for the future properly and make sound financial decisions for financial stability.

Qatar begins work on mega gas field

Ras Laffan, Qatar – Qatar's state-owned energy giant began construction Tuesday on a project to expand production from the world's biggest natural gas field through an export terminal on the Gulf emirate's northeast coast.

There has been mounting demand for Qatari gas as European consumer nations have scrambled to replace lost Russian deliveries since President Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale war on Ukraine early last year.

The emir presided over a glitzy ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the North Field expansion at Ras Laffan, QatarEnergy's onshore gas processing base 80km north of Doha.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that the project "falls within our strategy towards strengthening Qatar's position as a global producer of liquefied natural gas (LNG)".

Qatari Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi called the project a "leap towards our country's leadership in the field of energy".

By increasing production at



the field, which extends under the Gulf into Iranian territory, Qatar is set to raise its output of LNG by 60% or more to 126mn tonnes a year by 2027.

LNG from the expansion is expected to start coming on line in 2026.

Asian countries led by China, Japan and South Korea have been the main market for Qatari gas, but it has also been increasingly sought by European countries since Russia's invasion of Ukraine early last year.

Chairman of France's TotalEnergies, Patrick Pouyanne told reporters the North Field Expansion was a "huge project", coming as demand for LNG from Europe increases.

"We need more supply. That's clear. Still the market is fragile," Pouyanne said. "This project is a major one and will give some relief to this market," he added.

Total signed a \$1.5bn deal with QatarEnergy in September last

year giving it a 9.3% stake in Qatar's North Field South project, the second phase of the field's expansion.

In June 2022, the French energy giant became the first partner in the first phase of the expansion, North Field East, investing more than \$2bn for a 25% share.

In June, Doha announced a 27-year deal to supply four million tonnes of gas a year to the China National Petroleum Corporation. The agreement matches the terms of a 2022 deal with China's Sinopec that was the longest ever seen in the industry.

Britain's Shell, Italy's ENI and US giants ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil have also signed deals to partner in the expansion.

Qatar is one of the world's top LNG producers, alongside the United States, Australia and Russia.

Qatar Energy estimates the North Field holds about 10% of the world's known natural gas reserves.

AFP

Oil falls as investors await OPEC meeting

London, UK – Oil prices decreased on Tuesday over the rising value of the US dollar, despite supply woes ahead of a highly anticipated meeting of OPEC countries on Wednesday.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$90.25 per barrel in morning trade in London, a 0.51% loss from the closing price of \$90.71 a barrel in the previous trading session on Monday.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at the same time at \$88.22 per barrel, down 0.67% from Monday's close of \$88.82 per barrel.

The dollar strengthened earlier on Monday as a result of the

US government's decision to avert a shutdown over the weekend, driving up oil costs for holders of foreign currencies and driving down prices for many others.

Investors are now monitoring the Fed's formal announcements to look for clues about the US central bank's upcoming interest rate moves.

US Federal Reserve Governor Michelle Bowman said Monday that high energy prices could reverse recent progress seen in inflation.

"Most recently, the latest inflation reading based on the

personal consumption expenditure (PCE) index showed that overall inflation rose, responding in part to higher oil prices," Bowman said during her speeches at the Mississippi Bankers Association and the Tennessee Bankers Association held in Banff, Canada.

Both crude benchmarks reached their highest levels since November 2022 in September, with Brent reaching over \$97 per barrel after Saudi Arabia and Russia announced plans to reduce output for the following three months, fuelling concerns that the sup-

ply-demand gap was closing.

Market players are now focused on the upcoming OPEC group's Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) on Wednesday amid expectations of a rollover of the group's ongoing supply cuts.

Easing supply concerns, Turkey on Monday announced its decision to restart oil flow on a pipeline that transports Iraqi crude from Kirkuk to export facilities in Ceyhan on the Turkish Mediterranean coast.

Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said 500,000 barrels of oil per day would be supplied to global markets this week.

Anadolu Agency



ADNOC eyes major carbon capture project

Dubai, UAE – Emirati oil company ADNOC said Tuesday it would partner with a US firm to study the feasibility of a major project to extract carbon dioxide from the air.

The "preliminary engineering study" by the state-owned firm and Occidental Petroleum is the product of a deal signed earlier this year to explore carbon capture and storage (CCS) and direct air capture (DAC) projects in the United Arab Emirates and the United States, a statement said.

The proposed project would capture one million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year and store it in "saline reservoirs not used for oil and gas production", the statement said.

That would make it "the first megaton-scale direct air capture



(DAC) facility outside the United States," the statement said.

The UN's International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) considers capturing carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere one of the methods necessary to combat global warming.

But the sector is still marginal – there are just 27 existing carbon capture sites commissioned worldwide, according to the In-

ternational Energy Agency, though at least 130 projects are under development.

And some experts worry that use of the technology will be a pretext for continuing to emit greenhouse gases, rather than switching more quickly to clean energy.

ADNOC is trying to broadcast its commitment to fighting climate change ahead of COP28 talks set to kick off next month in Dubai. In a separate announcement on Tuesday, the firm's gas subsidiary said it had awarded a \$615mn contract for a project announced last month to build "carbon capture units, pipeline infrastructure and a network of wells for carbon dioxide injection".

AFP

Global stock markets drop as rate fears take hold

London, UK - Stock markets slumped across the board Tuesday on growing worries that high interest rates will take a toll on economic growth, as central bankers pursue their efforts to rein in inflation.

Investors are focusing in particular on US Treasury bond yields that have surged to levels not seen in over a decade, suggesting doubts about prospects for growth and corporate earnings.

"Concerns are spreading that if higher borrowing costs bed in they will weigh heavily on companies and consumers, at a time when the effect of previous rate hikes has yet to be felt," said Susanah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown. The wary outlook was heightened by comments from a senior Federal Reserve official suggesting no easing of monetary policy anytime soon.

"The most important question at this point is not whether an additional rate increase is needed this year or not, but rather how long we will need to hold rates at a sufficiently restrictive level to achieve our goals," Fed Vice Chair for Supervision Michael Barr said Monday.

"I expect it will take some time," he added, with analysts noting he did not rule out another rate hike on top of the 11 made



Since September, stock indices on both sides of the Atlantic have erased much of the gains seen since the beginning of 2023

Yield on benchmark 10-year Treasury bond has reached highest level since 2007, while 30-year bond yield was at its highest since 2010

since March 2022.

The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury bond has reached the highest level since 2007, while the 30-year bond yield was at its highest since 2010.

For investors, that raises the prospect of high inflation and high borrowing rates that could

dent corporate earnings and push up unemployment -- lowering the chances for the "soft landing" sought by Fed officials.

Since September, stock indices on both sides of the Atlantic have erased much of the gains seen since the beginning of the year - in Paris, the CAC 40 fell below 7,000 points at one

point for the first time since March.

"Sentiment remains cagey with investors showing no desire to hold onto any gains," said Fawad Razaqada, a market analyst at StoneX.

He noted that oil prices were recovering from a recent bout of profit-taking, as investors awaited an OPEC ministerial meeting on Wednesday to see if prices will resume their run of gains despite the prospect of sluggish growth.

"Rising oil prices could make stagflation even worse for oil-im-

porting countries in the euro-zone, Japan and China, among others," he said.

Asian indices also ended mostly lower with Hong Kong leading the decline, falling nearly 2.7% as the market reopened after a holiday weekend.

Going against the flow, heavily indebted Chinese property giant Evergrande saw its share price surge more than a quarter as it resumed trading in Hong Kong days after announcing that its boss was under criminal investigation.

AFP



India economy robust despite headwinds: WB

New Delhi, India - India will stay one of the world's fastest-growing economies thanks to strong domestic demand and investment helping it weather inflation and challenging global conditions, the World Bank said Tuesday.

Like other countries, India has been buffeted by global headwinds including tightening financial conditions and the effects of the war in Ukraine on global food and oil markets.

Its economy nonetheless grew 7.2% in the last financial year, the second-highest among G20 countries.

The World Bank said in a regular report that growth would taper slightly to 6.3% for the current fiscal year because of "challenging external conditions and waning pent-up demand".

Inflation spiked to 7.8% in July after a surge in prices for food staples, including wheat and rice, caused in part by bad weather

and pest attacks in production belts. India's central bank warned the following month that higher food costs were expected to get worse, and the government put curbs on some rice exports to put downward pressure on prices.

"While the spike in headline inflation may temporarily constrain consumption, we project a moderation," said Dhruv Sharma, senior economist at the World Bank and lead author of Tuesday's report.

"Overall conditions will remain conducive for private investment," he said.

The World Bank forecast the government's fiscal deficit to decline from 6.4% to 5.9% of GDP in the current financial year, with debt stabilising at 83% of GDP.

India overtook Britain last year to become the world's fifth-largest economy and recently surpassed China to become the most populous country.

AFP



Ruble slumps again on Russia's economic woes

Moscow, Russia - Russia's currency fell against the dollar on Tuesday, weakening further on signs the country's economy is facing slower growth and stubborn inflation as the fighting in Ukraine drags on.

The ruble crossed the psychological threshold of 100 to the dollar on the Moscow financial exchange - having already done so briefly in August - raising the prospect of weaker spending power for Russians forced to pay more for imported goods.

The currency had plunged to 150 against the dollar at the beginning of Moscow's assault on Ukraine in February 2022, before recovering on government efforts to limit the impact of Western sanctions and put the economy on a war footing.

But the value has again been sliding in recent months as the country imports more and exports less, with central bank governor Elvira Nabilulina warning in September of slowing growth this year and next.

On Tuesday, the ruble stood at 100.11 against the dollar and 104.65 against the

euro.

The government downplayed concerns, saying the authorities were taking measures to ensure the soundness of the country's financial system.

"There is still no reason to worry," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"There are certain fluctuations. But we live in the ruble zone, so excessive attention to the dollar exchange rate is a vestige of the past," he said.

The central bank has hiked its benchmark interest rate to 13 percent in a bid to shore up the currency and fight inflation, which is still above its target of four per cent. Prices were up 5.15% in August.

Plans announced last week for a massive increase in defence spending have also heightened worries over government finances, as oil and gas revenues continue to be impacted by sanctions.

President Vladimir Putin recently ordered the government and the central bank to take measures to stabilise the currency, saying its weakness was the main cause of rising consumer prices.

AFP

World's energy transition at risk, IMF warns

Washington, US - Growing geopolitical fragmentation since the invasion of Ukraine has hit commodity markets, threatening to slow the transition to renewable energy as the world looks to combat climate change, the International Monetary Fund said Tuesday.

The fractures have led to a doubling in new trade restrictions on commodities since 2021, with low-income countries bearing the brunt of the costs, the IMF announced Tuesday.

"To achieve net-zero-carbon emission targets, demand for minerals is set to rise severalfold in the coming years," IMF economists wrote in a blog post accompanying a chapter from the fund's upcoming World Economic Outlook (WEO) report.

But they warned that economically viable deposits are concentrated in just a few countries, and that "fragmented markets could complicate matters."

"Commodities, particularly minerals critical for the green transition and some highly



traded agricultural goods, are especially vulnerable in the event of more severe geo-economic fragmentation," they said.

The IMF's flagship report on the world's economy will be published in full next week at the fund and the World Bank's annual meetings, which take place this year in the Moroccan city of

Marrakesh.

The IMF said further geopolitical fragmentation could lead to "turmoil" in the commodity markets, causing long-term economic losses of around 0.3% of global economic outlook.

Losses in low-income and vulnerable countries would be even higher, reaching around 1.2% of

gross domestic product, on average.

The impact largely stems "from disruptions in agricultural imports," IMF economists said.

"This would exacerbate food security concerns, as low-income countries are particularly reliant on food imports to feed their population," they wrote.

The IMF economists estimated that severe trade disruptions could lower investment in renewable energy and electric vehicles by as much as 30 percent by the year 2030, leading to "slower mitigation of climate change."

The IMF called for greater cooperation to negate the risks of commodity market fragmentation on the energy transition.

"If full cooperation remains elusive, pragmatic solutions must be explored to tackle the most pressing challenges: mitigating the risk of food insecurity and supporting the green energy transition," they said.

They called for "urgent efforts" to be made to ensure "the unhindered flow of food and minimize the threat of food insecurity in low-income countries."

They also called for multilateral efforts to establish a "green corridor," to maintain the flow of critical minerals.

"This would help avert climate change," they added.

AFP

Microsoft CEO hits out at 'dominant' Google in US trial

Washington, US - Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella told a US court on Monday that Google's dominance of the search engine market made it very hard for rivals to emerge, hitting out sharply at the business practices of his company's archrival.

Nadella spoke to a courtroom in Washington DC, where lawyers from the US Department of Justice are attempting to persuade a federal judge that Google has illegally paid billions to Apple and others to preserve its monopoly.

Microsoft's Bing has been trying since 2009 to build market share against Google, but Nadella said it could never compete against the search engine behemoth, largely due to its arrangements with Apple.

"You can call it popular, but to me it's dominant," Nadella told a Google lawyer during tense cross examination.

The three-month trial is the biggest US antitrust case against a big tech company since the same department took on Microsoft more than two decades ago over the dominance of its Windows operating system.

Nadella broadly backed the government's contention that Google's intake of data from being the world's preeminent search engine created a network effect that only made Google a more powerful tool to advertisers and users.

"It becomes even harder to break through when you don't have (market) share," Nadella said.



Satya Nadella

Nadella said distribution was key to a successful search engine and that his company was prepared to pay Apple dearly to give Bing the default status on the iPhone.

"Defaults are the only thing that matters" and arguments by Google that users will easily switch to another app were "bogus," Nadella said.

"It would be a game changer (for Bing) to be a default on Safari," he added.

Apple instead stuck with Google and receives billions of dollars every year from the search engine giant with a generous revenue sharing deal, earlier testimony has revealed.

With his approaches rebuffed by Apple, Nadella said that Bing has remained a very small player.

The company has continued to invest in Bing, Nadella said, awaiting a possible "paradigm shift" or some sort of government intervention to restructure the business.

The CEO also testified that despite some early "exuberance," he no longer believed the emergence of ChatGPT would reshape Google's dominance of the search business.

Microsoft earlier this year moved aggressively to integrate the AI technology into its Bing search engine, creating some expectation that Google's singular position was under threat.

Nadella said he was now worried that Google would be able to use its dominance in search to strongarm content providers that are key to training generative AI models.

"I worry a lot in spite of my enthusiasm that this vicious cycle can become even more vicious," Nadella said.

AFP

Oman to host COSMO Big Brands Exhibition

Muscat Jumeirah Bay recently hosted the prestigious press conference of COSMO BIG Brands Exhibition 2023, graced by H H Thuraya bint Thuwaini al Said, and attended by a select group of distinguished entrepreneurs and business leaders.

COSMO Big Brands Expo 2023 is a groundbreaking event, marking the first of its kind to focus exclusively on cosmetics and the world of health and beauty. Scheduled to take place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center from October 17 to 19, this exhibition promises to be a remarkable gathering of the latest technologies, beauty products, health programmes, and esteemed industry partners and investors from across the globe.

The primary objective of this exhibition is to shine a spotlight on the remarkable cosmetics and beauty industries, particularly in



the realm of women's and men's health. By bringing together experts and innovators from various countries, the exhibition aims to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing, ultimately driving progress in the beauty and health sectors, with its focus on cutting-edge technologies and groundbreaking products, the COSMO Big Brands Expo 2023 is set to redefine the industry's landscape. This event presents an unparalleled opportunity for industry professionals to explore the latest trends, forge valuable partnerships, and gain insights into the future of the beauty and health sectors.

Razia Elahi, CEO and founder of the renowned Pioneer Idea House expressed her enthusiasm for an upcoming exhibition. She emphasised that this event would serve as a platform to unite cutting-edge technologies,

beauty products, health programmes, and esteemed industry partners, customers, and investors from various countries worldwide. The exhibition's primary objective is to highlight remarkable advancements in the field of health for both women and men.

Sabra bint Sulaiman al Busaidiyah, co-founder and chief operating officer of Pioneer Idea House, the leading company organising the exhibition, has expressed her excitement regarding the upcoming Cosmetics and Major Brands Exhibition. She said the exhibition's opening date, which coincides with Omani Women's Day on October 17, serves as an initiative to highlight the invaluable role of Omani women in driving development and progress in Oman.

(Muscat Daily is the media partner for the event)

Indian School Al Maabela holds STAI'23

Indian School Al Maabela organised Science, Technology, And Innovation (STAI 2023) under the aegis of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman on September 8 and 9. The event was aimed at showcasing the talents of young minds in the areas of Science, Technology and Innovation.

The inaugural function was graced by Dr Khadeeja Ali Mohammad al Salami, acting director general of Private Schools, Ministry of Education as the Chief Guest. Mahmood Yahya al Husaini, director general assistant for Administrative and Financial Affairs, Directorate General of Private Schools, Ministry of Education, was the Guest of Honour. The function was presided over by Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman.

Suborno Isaac Bari, Global Child Prodigy and CMT Scholar at New York University, delivered the keynote address on the occasion, a press release said.

Dr Khadeeja congratulated



the Indian schools on their active participation in such events and expressed her delight in the Indian schooling system that gives each student the impression that he/she is a significant individual with responsibility in life.

Dr Manickam added, "Indian Schools in Oman provide holistic education to the students. The

themes of STAI are selected meticulously to encourage creativity, innovation, critical thinking and problem solving skills."

P Prabakaran, principal of Indian School Al Maabela, presented the objectives and highlights of the event and said that STAI 2023 is not merely a celebration but an academic pur-

suit in alignment with NEP 2020 enabling each participant to be an active contributor in the world of science and innovation.

Other events included in STAI 2023 were Super Spellers, Tell Me Why, Web Design, Robo Race, Codex, Consentia, Young Scientist, Skidamu, Hack With Ethics and Science Wizard.

OAB organises 'Roots of Oman' tree planting

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced its 'Roots of Oman' campaign, which aims to plant 5,000 trees across the sultanate by the end of the year, coinciding with the bank's 50th anniversary.

The bank is also inviting the public to participate giving them an opportunity to join OAB's efforts and contribute to making Oman greener, a press release said.

Sulaiman al Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, said, "Coinciding with OAB's 50th anniversary celebrations, Roots of Oman is part of the bank's ongoing efforts to give back to our beloved nation. The initiative was conceived to make the sultanate greener and to inspire environmental efforts across the country. Together, we can help reduce our carbon footprint as we continue the journey towards achieving net zero in our nation."

Sayyid Salim bin Musallam bin Ali al Busaidi, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Labour, and Su-



laiman al Harthi recently set the Roots of Oman in motion when they jointly planted a symbolic

tree at the bank's Awqad branch, located in the Dhofar Governorate.



Bank Muscat offers finance for OQGN IPO

Bank Muscat has offered financing solutions to individual and non-individual (institutional) investors interested in subscribing to the Initial Public Offering (IPO) of OQ Gas Network.

The subscription period for the individual investors commenced on September 26 and would end on October 5, whereas the subscription period for non-individual investors spans from September 26 to October 9. Each investor will require an investor folio number with Muscat Clearing & Depository (MCD) to subscribe to the IPO, a press release said.

Being the largest IPO in Oman, the offering is expected to receive positive response from retail and institutional investors based in Oman and outside of Oman and therefore financing

solutions offered by Bank Muscat exclusively for this IPO are expected to help the investors uniquely position themselves for their participation in the IPO.

For individual investors, Bank Muscat is providing instant access to IPO financing securely and conveniently through the Bank's Internet Banking and Mobile Banking platforms. The bank is offering competitive financing terms to its individual customers starting with one-time upfront charge as low as OMR 10 (excluding VAT) per investor based on the financed amount.

In addition, there is no interest or prepayment charges payable by individual customers when the financing amount is fully repaid to the Bank at the time of processing of refund of excess amount of subscription.

Ahli Islamic offers finance options for OQGN IPO

In an industry-first move, Ahli Islamic has announced a 1:1 profit-free financing (Al-Qardh Al-Hassan) option, accessible through its mobile banking app, for the historic OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) IPO in the Sultanate of Oman.

Customers can use the mobile banking app to subscribe to the IPO at their convenience. Ahli Islamic will provide 1:1

profit-free financing (Al-Qardh Al-Hassan) option service digitally at competitive rates. In addition, Ahli Islamic has become the first Islamic financial institution in Oman to provide 1:1 profit-free financing (Al-Qardh Al-Hassan) through a user-friendly digital platform. Its unwavering commitment to innovation and customer convenience underscores this

transformative offering, a press release said.

Noora Sultan, AGM - head of Retail Banking at Ahli Islamic, said, "This prominent step is a milestone in Ahli Islamic's promising success journey. By offering 1:1 profit-free financing (Al-Qardh Al-Hassan) through our mobile banking app, we are making Islamic finance more accessible and convenient than

ever before. Customers will be delighted by the ease of the subscription process, which exemplifies ahli islamic's dedication to making financial transactions hassle-free."

Hassan al Zaabi, head - Digital & Alternative Channels, Ahlibank, added, "Ahli Islamic's 1:1 profit-free financing (Al-Qardh Al-Hassan) option is designed to enhance the overall

banking experience for its customers, ensuring simplicity, accessibility, and unmatched convenience. We are proud to lead the way in digitalizing Islamic banking services."

The Bank's customers can download the mobile banking app linked to their Ahli Islamic account, and invest in the OQGN shares following a few easy-to-navigate steps.

MHA completes cabin crew training for 2023 batch

Muscat Hospitality Academy (MHA) announced the graduation of its Cabin Crew batch for the year 2023. The graduation ceremony took place at the state-of-the-art MHA campus in Muscat last month.

This event marks a significant milestone for the academy, which has been dedicated to providing high-quality vocational education for Omani students since 2020. The graduation ceremony not only celebrated the achievements of the students but also highlighted the success of MHA's highly specialised, industry-recognised training programmes.

The graduates underwent comprehensive training that equipped them with the essential skills and knowledge required for



a successful career as cabin crew. Covering safety procedures and customer service, the curriculum was meticulously de-

signed to meet the highest industry standards and is delivered by experienced industry professionals.

Ameena al Zadjali, founder and chairperson of MHA, said, "We take immense pride in the accomplishments of our Cabin

Crew graduates. Their dedication is a testament to the quality education we offer with British School of Excellence."

One dead in Bangkok mall shooting, 14-year-old boy arrested

Bangkok, Thailand - One person was killed and six wounded in a shooting in a packed Bangkok shopping mall on Tuesday, a Thai medical official said in revising down an earlier toll, with police arresting a 14-year-old suspect.

Hundreds of people fled the upmarket Siam Paragon mall in the heart of the Thai capital as shots rang out around 4:30pm (0930 GMT), witnesses told AFP. The Metropolitan Investigation Bureau of the Royal Thai Police said on its official Facebook page that officers had arrested a 14-year-old boy over the shooting. Video footage

showed a long-haired boy wearing a black shirt, glasses and a cap with a US flag motif being taken into custody by police.

Yuthana Srettanan, director of the Erawan Emergency Centre, told reporters that one woman had been killed, correcting his initial report of three deaths. "The deceased is a Chinese national, according to the preliminary examination," Yuthana told reporters.

Six people were wounded, he said, with five in critical condition. All but one of those who were shot were women.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin said he was monitoring the



Thai police officers and rescue workers are seen outside Siam Paragon shopping centre in Bangkok on Tuesday (AFP)

situation closely.

"What I care about most right now is the safety of all citizens," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "I ask all workers to monitor the situation, and may everyone be safe."

'Multiple gunshots'

Witnesses described chaotic scenes as the attack unfolded at Siam Paragon, one of Bangkok's top shopping destinations, hugely popular with tourists and Thais alike. "At around 4.30pm, I heard loud gun noises, continuously, about 10 times," Thanpawasi Singthongkham, 31, who works at a Japanese restaurant in the mall, told AFP.

"Then the department store announced that there was a shooting. The emergency sign was turned on and everyone ran to get out."

In footage shared with AFP, he recorded a scrum of terrified shoppers scrambling under metal security gates blocking shop entrances, before they fled down emergency stairwells as sirens blared.

In another video, shared on Facebook and verified by AFP, scores of people can be seen in the mall's basement car park being directed by loudspeakers. AFP

Niger begins mourning for killed soldiers

Niamey, Niger - Niger began three days of national mourning on Tuesday after 29 soldiers were killed in a suspected militant attack, the deadliest since the military took power in July.

The latest violence comes as the country's coup leaders indicated they were considering neighbouring Algeria's offer to mediate talks for a transition back to civilian rule.

Niger is battling two militant insurgencies - a spillover in its southeast from a long-running conflict in neighbouring Nigeria, and an offensive in the west by militants crossing from Mali and Burkina Faso.

When military leaders overthrew democratically elected president Mohamed Bazoum on July 26, they cited the deterioration of the security situation in the country as justification.

Monday's attack in western Niger involved 'improvised explosive devices and kamikaze vehicles by more than a hundred terrorists', the Ministry of Defence said in a televised statement. It added that two soldiers were seriously wounded and 'several dozen terrorists' were also killed.

The attack took place northwest of Tabatol near the border with Mali, which is plagued by fighting with mili-

tants affiliated with the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda.

Violence in the 'three borders' area between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso has fuelled military takeovers in all three countries since 2021.

Algeria, Niger's influential neighbour, said on Monday that Niamey has accepted its offer to mediate talks on a transition to civilian rule.

Hours later, Niger's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it had 'indicated the availability of the Nigerien authorities to examine Algeria's offer of mediation'.

Niger's military leader, General Abdourahmane Tiani, has previously said he wants a transition of no more than three years.

In August, Algeria proposed a six-month transition plan under the supervision of a 'civilian authority led by a consensual figure accepted by all sides of the political class'.

AFP

Monday's attack involved explosive devices and kamikaze vehicles by more than a hundred terrorists

Egypt's Sisi to run for third term to 'complete the dream'

Cairo, Egypt - Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced on Monday his candidacy for a third term in office, ahead of December elections he is widely expected to win.

"As I have responded to the people's call before, I heed the call now and announce my intention to run and complete the dream in a new presidential term," Sisi, 68, told a cheering crowd in Egypt's new capital - the crowning jewel of a megaproject in the desert east of Cairo.

State-aligned television showed thousands of people celebrating the announcement in ready-built stages across the country. Earlier on Monday, rallies were held in Cairo calling for Sisi to declare his candidacy.

"There is no one better for the future," said Hassan Afifi, a teacher who escorted a bus full of his students to a rally in western Cairo.

Sisi urged Egyptians to head to the polls on December 10-12 'even if not to vote for me'.

The president, whose security forces have been accused of harassing and detaining opponents, applauded other candidates and hailed 'a real beginning to vibrant political life full of pluralism'.

A year after deposing Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, Sisi won 96 per cent of the vote in 2014. Four years later, he scored a 97 per cent victory against one



Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi giving a speech during a conference in Cairo where he announced his candidacy to run for a third term in the upcoming 2024 presidential elections on Monday (AFP)

of his own supporters, after more prominent candidates were sidelined or arrested.

This time, as Egyptians grow increasingly frustrated with an unrelenting economic crisis, presidential hopefuls have emerged from the woodwork of an opposition decimated by Sisi's decade-long crackdown on dissent. A handful of party leaders have said they had already gathered the necessary 20 nominations from parliament.

Another challenger, former parliamentarian Ahmed al-Tantawi, has been trying to rally popular support on the campaign trail. Without parliamentary backing, the 44-year-old will need to collect 25,000 nominations from Egyptians across at least 15 governorates by October 14 to be eligible.

'Stability'

If elected, Sisi's third term would be his last, according to a consti-

tutional amendment he pushed through in 2019.

It also lengthened presidential terms from four to six years.

In the hours leading up to Sisi's announcement, patriotic music blared from speakers across the capital, where convoys of buses shrink-wrapped with campaign slogans blocked major streets, AFP correspondents said. The sails of boats on the Nile river were emblazoned with Sisi's photo and slogans including 'yes to stability', the correspondents added.

Presidential hopeful Tantawi has repeatedly accused the regime of harassing and detaining his supporters, preventing them from filing nominations and tapping his phone.

Tantawi has branded himself the 'rule of law' candidate, as his campaign posts videos of him accompanying supporters to registry offices.

"In the end, they will not be able to say 'sorry, you don't have enough nominations'," he told supporters on Sunday.

In a video shared by Tantawi's campaign, dozens chanted 'bread, freedom, social justice' - the popular rallying cry of the 2011 revolution that ousted long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak.

Under Sisi, a former army chief who has overseen a crackdown jailing tens of thousands of dissidents, protests have been banned.

Sisi announced his candidacy at the end of a three-day conference entitled 'Story of a Nation', where remarks he made earlier ruffled feathers among Egyptians, buckling under the weight of record-breaking 39.7 per cent inflation. "If construction, development and progress come at the cost of hunger and deprivation, never say 'we would rather eat'," Sisi said on Sunday.

AFP

South Sudan refugees at risk of hunger: UN

Nairobi, Kenya - Hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese refugees fleeing Sudan's brutal war are facing 'a hunger emergency', the United Nations warned on Tuesday, with 90 per cent of families going multiple days without meals.

The fighting between forces loyal to Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo has forced nearly 300,000 South Sudanese to return home in the last five months, the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) said.

The crisis was taking a particularly harsh toll on its youngest victims, with 20 per cent of children under five malnourished, the WFP said.

"We are seeing families leave one disaster for another as they flee danger in Sudan only to find despair in South Sudan," said Mary-Ellen McGroarty, WFP's country director in Juba.

Since fighting erupted in Sudan in mid-April, at least 7,500 people have lost their lives, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.



Mary-Ellen McGroarty, WFP's country director in Juba

We are seeing families leave one disaster for another as they flee danger in Sudan only to find despair in South Sudan

MARY-ELLEN MCGROARTY

Multiple truces have failed to stop the violence that has driven tens of thousands over Sudan's borders and raised fears of a humanitarian crisis engulfing the wider region.

WFP said that South Sudanese, who account for almost

all the refugees arriving in South Sudan, 'are returning to a country already facing unprecedented humanitarian needs'.

"Those arriving today are in an even more vulnerable condition than families that fled in the early weeks of the conflict."

AFP

Torrential rains pummeling crowded camps and border crossings have worsened living conditions and exacerbated the spread of diseases, WFP said.

One of the world's poorest nations, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 but was immediately plunged into a brutal conflict that left the young nation divided and traumatised.

Some 380,000 people died in five years of bloodshed before the civil war formally ended in 2018, with a ceasefire between warring leaders who remain in power today.

The nation of more than 60 ethnic groups and 12mn people continues to grapple with deadly violence, natural disasters and relentless political infighting.

The UN has repeatedly criticised South Sudan's leadership for its role in stoking bloodshed, cracking down on political freedoms and plundering public coffers.

Four out of five South Sudanese live in 'absolute poverty' despite large oil reserves, according to World Bank figures for 2018.

AFP

Turkey arrests dozens after Sunday's attack in Ankara

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey on Tuesday arrested dozens of suspected Kurdish militants and their supporters after an attack on the government district in the capital Ankara injured two policemen.

The raids across a swathe of Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast came two days after a branch of the PKK - listed as a terror group by Turkey and its Western allies - claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack.

Turkish police shot dead one of the attackers while the other died in an apparent suicide blast outside Turkey's interior ministry.

The attack came hours before President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended an opening session of parliament.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said security services had detained 67 'terrorist organisation members' across 16 provinces.

Turkey on Sunday also launched air strikes against suspected PKK rear bases in the mountains of northern Iraq.

The PKK has been waging an insurgency since 1984 that has



Turkish riot police are seen in front of a pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) office in Istanbul on Monday (AFP)

claimed tens of thousands of lives in Turkey. A series of successive Turkish military operations has pushed the group back into neighbouring Iraq.

The PKK attack coincided with the opening of a Turkish session of parliament during which lawmakers will be asked to ratify Sweden's membership of the NATO defence alliance.

Turkey's ratification has been held up by anger over the refusal by the Swedish police to ban

marches by the PKK and their supporters in Stockholm.

Some analysts believe the PKK may be trying to block Turkey's ratification because it would herald an improvement in Ankara's tense ties with Washington.

Turkey is also trying to get the United States to drop its support for Kurdish fighters from the YPG group in Syria - a policy shift Ankara may expect in return for its ratification.

AFP

UN Security Council approves Haiti force after year of pleas

Kenyan-led mission is initially approved for one year, with a review after nine months

United Nations, US - The United Nations Security Council on Monday approved a Kenyan-led mission aiming to bring stability to Haiti, a year after leaders in the violence-ravaged Caribbean nation first pleaded for help.

The Western Hemisphere's poorest nation has been in turmoil, with armed gangs taking over parts of the country and unleashing brutal violence, and the economy and public health system also in tatters.

Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres have been calling since late 2022 for international support to back the police force, but much of the global community had been jaded by the failure of earlier interventions in Haiti.

Monday's resolution passed with 13 votes in favour, with China and Russia abstaining. It was hailed by Haitian foreign minister Jean Victor Geneus as bringing a 'glimmer of hope for people who have been suffering the consequences of a difficult political, socio-economic, security and humanitarian situation for too long'.

A breakthrough in plans for the force came in July, when Kenya volunteered to lead it and send 1,000 personnel.



This file photo shows police officers throwing tear gas to demonstrators during a protest against insecurity in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on August 14 (AFP)

This mandate is not only about Peace and Security, but also about the rebuilding of Haiti

ALFRED N MUTUA

The East African nation said the resolution was 'the beginning of a new chapter for the fathers, mothers and children of Haiti'.

"This mandate is not only about Peace and Security, but also about the rebuilding of Haiti - its politics, its economic development, and social stability," Foreign Minister Alfred N. Mutua said.

The resolution calls for the deployment of a 'multinational security support mission' - not officially a UN force - with a 'lead

country' coordinating with the Haitian government.

The mission is initially approved for one year, with a review after nine months.

The force aims to provide 'operational support to the Haitian National Police, including building its capacity through the planning and conduct of joint security support operations', the resolution says. The mission will also aim to create conditions to hold elections, which have not taken place in Haiti since 2016.

Guterres in a recent report said that the security situation in Haiti has only grown worse, with gang members both more numerous and better armed than the police.

Nearly 2,800 homicides were recorded in Haiti between October 2022 and June 2023, with 80 minors among the dead, the UN report said.

The United States has been advocating a multinational force. On Monday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said his department would continue working with Congress to provide US\$100mn in foreign assistance, and that the Pentagon is prepared to provide up to US\$100mn in enabling support. But President Joe Biden has

made clear he will not put American troops in harm's way.

On Monday, the White House voiced its 'gratitude' to Kenya for taking on leadership of the force, and to nations such as Jamaica, the Bahamas and Antigua for adding manpower.

"It is now crucial that we focus on making progress in mobilising the international support necessary to deploy this mission," US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in a statement.

For the resolution to pass, China had to choose not to apply its veto. Haiti is one of a dwindling number of nations that recognises Taiwan, which Beijing claims and has been seeking to isolate on the international stage. AFP



Thailand's Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin (AFP)

Thai PM launches committee to amend constitution

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand's prime minister launched on Tuesday a committee to look at amending the military-drafted constitution, but ruled out any changes to contentious sections related to the monarchy.

Premier Srettha Thavisin's new government came into office in August after months of political wrangling, having promised constitutional reform in the run-up to May's general election.

The current charter was drafted in 2017 following a 2014 military coup, and heavily weights power towards unelected officials and the armed forces.

Srettha's Pheu Thai party had pledged to hold a referendum on changing the constitution, telling voters it had been used to extend the rule of the then-junta.

On Tuesday, Srettha appointed a 35-member committee to conduct a feasibility study on holding a referendum to amend the constitution.

"We have a timeframe of three to four months, or at least before the new year, for a conclusion on the referendum," Deputy Prime Minister Phumtham

The committee will contain representatives from government and opposition, as well as academics, political activists and legal experts

Wechayachai said. The committee will contain representatives from the government and opposition, as well as academics, political activists and legal experts, he told a press conference.

Phumtham said the process could take more than three years, but that it would be open to public discussion. He said the cabinet will approve and submit the committee's recommendations to the Election Commission before a referendum.

But the new charter will not change anything related to the monarchy. "We will not touch Chapter I and Chapter II including the Royal prerogatives in other articles," Phumtham said. AFP

Japan condemns lawmaker Suzuki's surprise Russia visit

Tokyo, Japan - Tokyo on Tuesday condemned a surprise visit to Moscow by a Japanese lawmaker who met with Russia's deputy foreign minister.

Muneo Suzuki's trip, the first known visit by a Japanese lawmaker since Russia invaded Ukraine last year, comes after Japan joined Western allies in sanctioning Moscow over the conflict. "The government wasn't briefed by Suzuki on the Russia visit this time, before or after," spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno said.

"We're issuing a warning... of cancelling travels to Russia and no matter what the purpose is, we're urging all citizens to refrain from travelling to Russia," Matsuno told reporters. Russia's foreign ministry said Suzuki met



Muneo Suzuki (AFP)

with deputy foreign minister Andrey Rudenko on Monday.

"The Russian side noted a significant contribution by the Japanese MP to the development of the bilateral ties," the ministry statement said on Tuesday. "We regretfully state that the legacy of two countries' cooperation, accumulated over

decades, is being purposefully destroyed by the sanctions policy implemented by Tokyo in order to please the United States and the anti-Russian course of the 'collective West'," it said.

Suzuki, a member of the centre-right opposition Japan Innovation Party, is a longtime advocate of close Japan-Russia ties. He was deeply involved in the foreign ministry's programmes aimed at solving territorial disputes with Russia after World War II.

The upper house member departed for Moscow on Sunday 'for an inspection tour', his secretary Shinji Akamatsu told AFP. Suzuki 'is visiting from the viewpoint of national interest based on his own belief', he said. AFP

MEN FROM ABOVE



Airmen from Indonesian military units jump from transport planes during a rehearsal for the 78th anniversary of the Indonesian military in Jakarta on Tuesday (AFP)

Australian Indigenous rights referendum triggers racist slurs and abuse

Sydney, Australia - A referendum aimed at elevating the rights of Indigenous Australians has instead triggered a torrent of racist slurs and abuse, with toxic debate spreading online and in the media.

The October 14 vote will decide whether to finally recognise First Nations peoples in the constitution. Their ancestors were in Australia for 60,000 years before British colonial rule began in the late 1700s.

The reform would give Indigenous communities the right to advise parliament - a so-called 'Voice' - to help address en-



A volunteer hands out voting brochures outside a voting centre in central Sydney on Tuesday (AFP)

trenched inequalities including poorer health, weaker education, and higher rates of incarceration.

But recent surveys indicate support for the referendum has plummeted over the past year and will likely fail.

The debate has stirred uncertainty about the reform's scope and impact. It has also stoked racial tensions.

"It has involved personal attacks, labelling of people as 'un-Australian' and perpetuating racially based stereotypes," Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner Chin Tan told AFP. "I am disappointed that the

way some people have engaged in the debate has stoked racial tensions and caused harm to First Nations peoples."

Racist conduct had gone largely unchallenged in the public domain, he said.

"Racism should never be accepted as part of the exchange of ideas in public debate."

Voters have to choose one way or the other, and recent surveys indicate the 'yes' camp is at just over 40 per cent and the 'no' side at nearly 60 per cent.

It is a near reversal of the situation a year ago.

Opponents have criticised the

proposal for a lack of detail and for creating unnecessary bureaucracy. But opposition leader Peter Dutton, one of the leading campaigners against the Voice, also warned it would 're-racialise' Australia.

Referendum supporters accused Dutton of disinformation and scare-mongering.

Indigenous-related racism reports have spiked since July, according to University of Technology Sydney criminology professor Chris Cunneen, who leads a project that documents such incidents. AFP

Study of electrons: Trio wins physics Nobel

The three physicists won the prize for research using ultra quick light flashes that enable the study of electrons

Stockholm, Sweden - France's Pierre Agostini, Hungarian-Austrian Ferenc Krausz and French-Swedish Anne L'Huillier won the Nobel prize in physics on Tuesday for research using ultra quick light flashes that enable the study of electrons inside atoms and molecules.

Their technique employs pulses measured in attoseconds, a unit so short that there are as many in one second as there have been seconds since the universe's birth over 13bn years ago, the jury said.

The laureates' research has made it possible to examine moves or changes so rapid that they were previously impossible to follow, with potential applications in both electronics and medical diagnostics.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences likened the process to how the flapping wings of a humming bird turn into a blur for the human eye, but can be slowed and examined using high-speed photography.

"We can now open the door to the world of electrons. Attosecond physics gives us the opportunity to understand mechanisms that are governed by electrons," Eva Olsson, chair of the Nobel Committee for Physics, said in a statement.

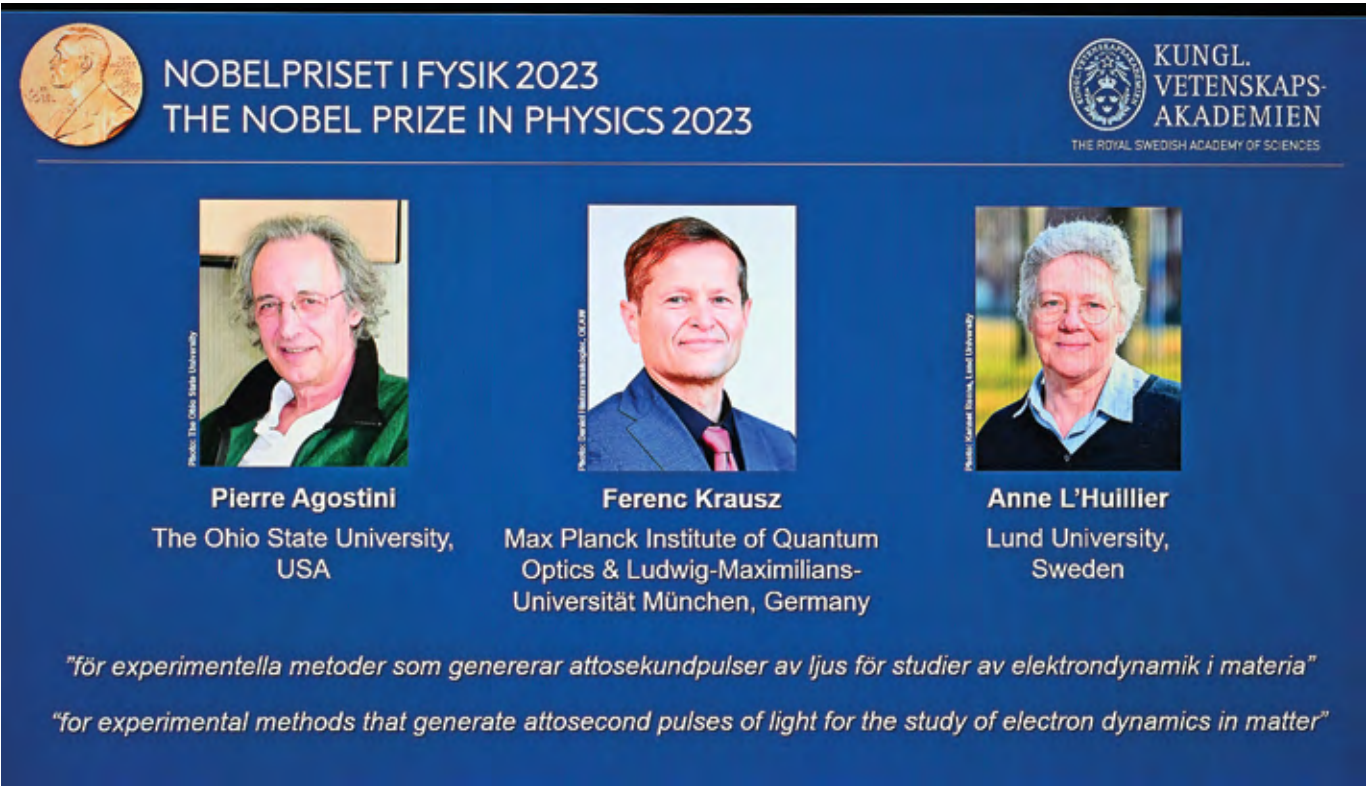
‘Not so many women’

In 1987, L'Huillier 'discovered that many different overtones of light arose when she transmitted infrared laser light through a noble gas', the Nobel Committee noted, adding that she has continued to explore this phenomenon, 'laying the ground for subsequent breakthroughs'.

In the early 2000s, Agostini and Krausz worked on experiments that made it possible to isolate light pulses that lasted only a few hundred attoseconds.

Agostini is a professor at Ohio State University in the United States, while Krausz is a director at the Max Planck Institute in Germany.

L'Huillier, only the fifth woman



(L-R) A tablet shows US-based physicist Pierre Agostini, Hungarian-Austrian physicist Ferenc Krausz and French physicist Anne L'Huillier during the announcement of the winners of the 2023 Nobel Prize in Physics at Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm on Tuesday (AFP)

to be awarded the Physics Prize since 1901, is a professor at Lund University in Sweden.

L'Huillier told reporters she was in the middle of teaching a class when she received the call from the Academy, making it 'difficult' to finish the class, to whom she told nothing. "I am very touched ... There are not so many

women that get this prize so it's very, very special," she said.

Before L'Huillier, Marie Curie (1903), Maria Goeppert Mayer (1963), Donna Strickland (2018) and Andrea Ghez (2020) are the only women to have won the award.

Speaking later at a press conference, she encouraged young

women interested in a career in science to 'go for it'.

The laureate, who is married and has two sons, stressed it was possible to combine a research career with an 'ordinary life, with a family and children'. L'Huillier and Krausz had been seen as contenders for the honour, having been awarded the prestigious

Wolf Prize last year together with Canadian physicist Paul Corkum.

Fellow Hungarian

However, Krausz said he had not been expecting a call.

"I was not sure whether I was dreaming or whether it was reality," he told the Nobel Foundation in an interview.

The physicist said he had been preparing for an open day at the institute where he worked, where he was meant to hold a few lectures for interested visitors.

"It remains to be seen whether this is going to work out, but this is at least the plan," Krausz said.

The physics award is the second Nobel of the season after the Medicine Prize on Monday, awarded to messenger RNA researchers Katalin Kariko, a Hungarian like Krausz, and Drew Weissman for their groundbreaking technology that paved the way for mRNA COVID-19 vaccines.

Krausz said he had been pleased to hear of the award for his compatriot.

"I'm a great admirer of her, not just for her achievements, but also for the way she actually achieved what she achieved," he said, referring to the years Kariko toiled away at her research despite struggling to achieve recognition and even secure funding for it.

The Physics Prize will be followed by the Chemistry Prize on Wednesday, with the highly watched Literature and Peace Prizes to be announced on Thursday and Friday.

AFP

Indian police launch raids on journalists and activists

New Delhi, India - Indian police raided the homes of at least eight journalists and activists on Tuesday, local media reported, deepening concerns over a crackdown in a country where media freedom has nosedived.

Those raided are reported to be connected to the English-language news website NewsClick, with Indian authorities filing a case in 2021 alleging the organisation was receiving foreign funding.

The New York Times in August reported that NewsClick was financed by US millionaire Neville Roy Singham, who it said 'sprinkled its coverage with Chinese government talking points' - claims Singham rejected.

NewsClick journalist Arity Das said police 'barged into my home' at dawn, questioned her about her reporting and seized her laptop, phone and computer hard disks, she wrote on social media.

Das also said the raid was linked to a case against NewsClick under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), a stringent anti-terror law which makes it virtually impossible to get bail.

The Mumbai Press Club ex-



NewsClick writer Paranjay Guha Thakurta being taken to the special cell offices by the Delhi Police in New Delhi on Tuesday (ANI)

From the warrant that they reluctantly showed me, the raid at my residence was related to an investigation into NewsClick

SOHAIL HASHMI

pressed its 'deep concern' at the raids in a statement, reporting that 'multiple journalists affiliated with NewsClick have been subjected to raids'.

It demanded the police stop 'from what is perceived as a targeted harassment campaign against these journalists'.

Also raided in connection to

NewsClick was historian and activist Sohail Hashmi.

"From the warrant that they reluctantly showed me, the raid at my residence was related to an investigation into NewsClick," Hashmi told AFP.

Hashmi had to hand over his laptop, phone and hard disks containing more than a decade

of his writing, calling the raid a 'combination of intimidation and a crackdown on freedom of press and speech'.

‘Voices of dissent’

There was no immediate response from the police, with raids carried out in both the capital New Delhi and Mumbai.

"I don't need to justify," India's minister for information and broadcasting Anurag Thakur told reporters asking about the raids. "If anyone has committed anything wrong, search agencies are free to carry out investigations," broadcaster NDTV quoted him as saying.

Press freedom in India has plummeted since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, rights activists and opposition lawmakers say.

Reporters Without Borders warns 'press freedom is in crisis' in India. Since 2014, India dropped from 140 to 161 on its rankings of media freedom, including 11 places since last year.

Journalists critical of the government complain of increased harassment, including on social media - where Modi's ruling party has a powerful presence.

AFP

Maldives pro-China winner Muizzu to eject Indian troops

Malé, Maldives - The president-elect of the Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu, has marked his victory with a pledge to end the foreign military presence in his small but strategically placed atoll nation.

Muizzu, 45, addressing his first public rally after winning Saturday's runoff election stopped short of naming India, the only foreign power with a military deployment in the archipelago. He won an 'India-out' campaign after New Delhi placed a small unit of security personnel to operate four reconnaissance aircraft gifted to the Maldives to patrol its vast maritime territory.

"We will be sending back military forces based in the Maldives according to law, and for sure we will do that accordingly," Muizzu said at the rally in the capital Male on Monday night.

"The people who brought... military forces don't want to send them back, but the people of the Maldives decided," he said.

Outgoing President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih had realigned the nation's relations with traditional benefactor India, after his predecessor Abdulla Yameen moved the Maldives into Beijing's orbit, borrowing heavily from China for infrastructure projects.

Muizzu is a proxy of Yameen



Maldives' President-elect Mohamed Muizzu (AFP)

who was barred from last month's election because of his criminal conviction for corruption. Within hours of his victory, Muizzu secured the release of Yameen, who was serving an 11-year jail sentence at the high-security Maafushi prison, and transferred him to house arrest in Male. Muizzu, who is also the current Mayor of Male, brushed aside media descriptions of him as a pro-China leader and said he will be 'pro-Maldives'.

"My top priority will be the Maldives and its situation," Muizzu said. "We will be choos-

ing to be pro-Maldives. Any country who respects and obeys our pro-Maldives policy is considered a close friend of the Maldives."

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first leaders to congratulate Muizzu on Sunday.

New Delhi is 'committed to strengthening the time-tested India-Maldives bilateral relationship', Modi posted on social media platform X.

China congratulated Muizzu on Monday, saying it 'respects the choice of the Maldivian people'. "China is willing to work with the Maldives to consolidate the traditional friendship, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation and push for continuous new progress," Beijing's foreign ministry said in a statement to AFP.

The Maldives, a chain of atolls scattered 800km (500 miles) across the equator and known for its upmarket beach resorts, straddles one of the world's busiest east-west shipping lanes.

Muizzu told a meeting with Chinese Communist Party officials last year that his party's return to office would 'script a further chapter of strong ties between our two countries'.

AFP

Armenia ratifies ICC founding treaty, angering traditional ally Russia

Yerevan, Armenia - Armenian lawmakers approved a key step towards joining the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Tuesday, a move that is set to escalate tensions with the ex-Soviet country's traditional ally Moscow.

Russia said it was 'wrong' to ratify the treaty to join the international court, which in March issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin over the war in Ukraine and the illegal deportation of children to Russia. ICC members are expected to make the arrest if the Russian leader sets foot on their territory.

The vote illustrated a growing

chasm between Moscow and Yerevan, which has grown angry with the Kremlin over its perceived inaction over Armenia's long-standing confrontation with Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani forces last month swept through the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh - where Russian peacekeepers are deployed - and secured the surrender of Armenian separatist forces that had controlled the mountainous region for decades.

An online broadcast from the Armenian parliamentary session showed a majority of 60 deputies voting in favour of the proposal, with 22 - mainly opposition lawmakers - voting



Armenian lawmakers attend a plenary session at the parliament in Yerevan on Tuesday (AFP)

against joining the ICC.

The Kremlin immediately criticised Armenia's decision. "We are doubtful that, from the point of view of bilateral relations, Armenia's accession to the Rome Statute is correct," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"We still believe that it is the wrong decision," he added.

‘Not against Russia’

Tensions have also been rising between Yerevan and Moscow over the role of Russian peacekeepers in the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, which announced its dissolution last week following the lightning

military operation by Baku.

The territory lies within the internationally recognised border of Azerbaijan.

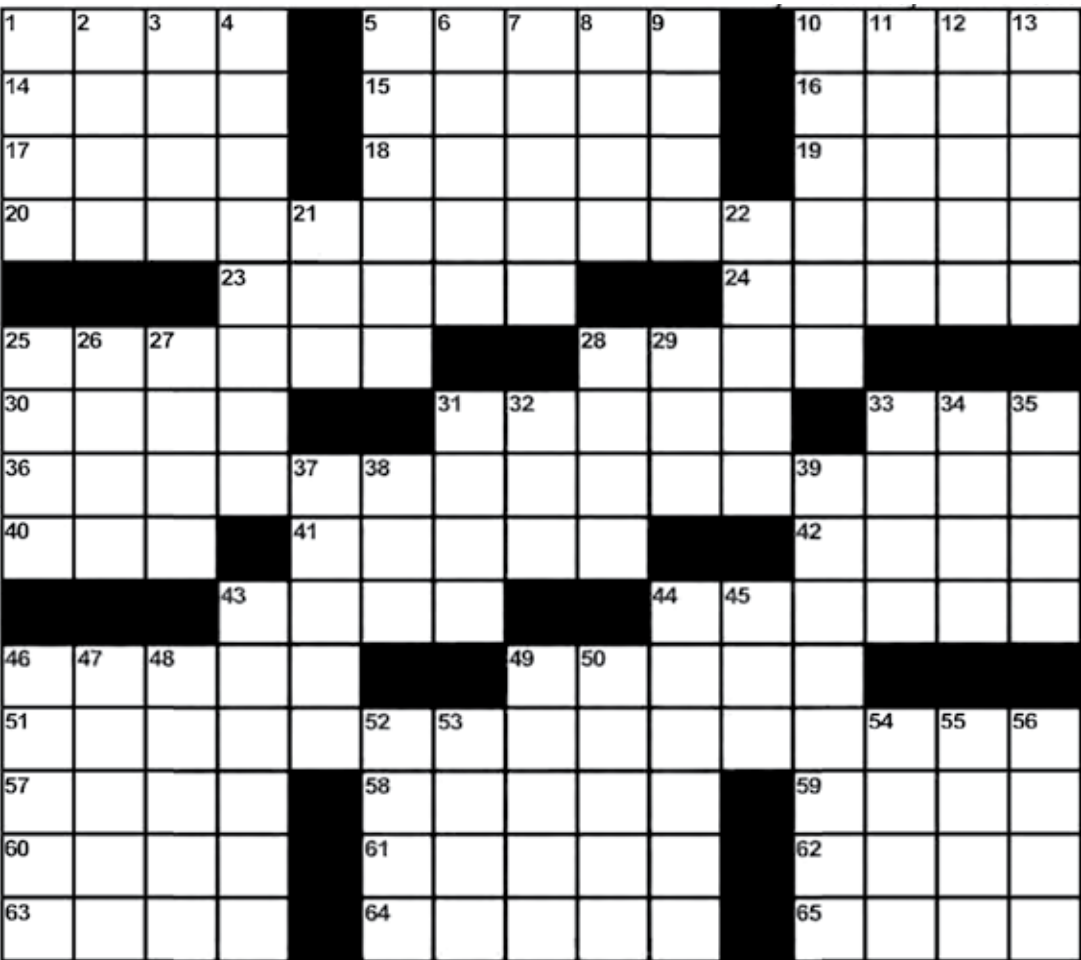
Armenian's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan last week sought to assuage Kremlin fears, saying the initiative was not 'directed against' Russia.

"It comes from the interests of the country's external security, and taking such a decision is our sovereign right," he said.

Pashinyan has been critical of Moscow's refusal to intervene during Azerbaijan's offensive, and previously said his country's foreign security alliance with Moscow was 'ineffective'.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Be volcanic
5) People in Toyland
10) Prolific Roman love poet
14) Spelling of TV
15) Cut short, as a flight
16) "Give that, cigar!"
17) Fleshy seed covering
18) Word with "tire" or "fuel"
19) Flamboyant flair
20) School of fish
23) Give a false impression of
24) Before the deadline
25) Annuls
28) Catty sounds
30) Gilbert of "Roseanne"
31) Positive thinker Norman Vincent
33) West, the vamp of old Hollywood
36) School of fish
40) Noisy disturbance
41) Throat projection
42) Do-others tie
43) Iowa State University location
44) Doing a lousy job
46) Lip-puckering
49) Earthshaking event

51) School of fish
57) Detective's discovery
58) Emulate a ghost
59) Simple
60) National League base-ball team
61) Daddy Warbucks' charge
62) Trade jabs or barbs
63) Aid a felon
64) Singer Frampton
65) Overdo it in a bar

DOWN

1) "Make a new plan" guy, according to Paul Simon
2) Epidermal opening
3) Pennsylvania city
4) Tusked beast
5) Rolls with holes
6) Calculator with no batteries
7) Ancient Greek legislature
8) Cogito, _ sum
9) Burgeo, for one
10) Some fraternity men
11) Courage under fire
12) Counting everything
13) Fine's partner
21) Jerry_ Lewis of music
22) Handrail post

25) Pre-1991 world power
26) Military alliance gp. since 1949
27) Sketch
28) Poet Angelou
29) Santa subordinate
31) Added bonus
32) Wing of a mansion, sometimes
33) Revealing skirt
34) Pismires and others
35) Bruised or inflated items
37) Egg size
38) Forbidden-fruit eater
39) Most pleasing to the palate
43) Police action
44) Civil disturbance participant
45) Mind reader's specialty, for short
46) African coastal capital
47) Moses' spy in Canaan
48) Piano piece
49) Knievel specialty
50) Bert's "Sesame Street" buddy
52) "Old" British buddy
53) Batman co-creator Bob
54) It tightens around

the neck
55) "Now!" to an exec.
56) Early stringed instrument

NOTE PAD

B	E	A	D		A	P	P	L	E		C	A	P	E	
L	U	L			C	L	U	E	D		I	D	E	A	
I	R	I	S		C	A	L	V	E		T	I	N	S	
P	O	T	T	E	R	S	P	I	N		F	R	O	N	T
					P	L	U	M	S		L	O	S	E	S
A	F	L	A	M	E		S	H	I	N					
C	L	A	N		P	A	P	E	R		P	E	P		
H	A	M	S	T	E	R	C	A	R	T	M	I	L	L	
E	K	E		A	D	I	T	S		A	L	S	O		
				A	G	O	G		P	E	L	L	E	T	
S	T	E	N	O		U	V	U	L	A					
W	A	G	O	N		C	O	L	O	R	F	I	F	T	H
A	B	E	D		U	N	C	L	E		S	L	O	E	
R	O	S	E		S	I	E	G	E		E	A	R	L	
D	O	T	S		S	T	R	A	D		S	T	E	M	

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

 **ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your curiosity might be getting the better of you right now. Your quest to know all answers all the time has led you down a path that might be a dead end. Today, why ask why? Probing into every little mystery will only give the mystery power over you. Don't try to figure out why things are happening the way they are. Don't try to get to the bottom of all the juicy gossip. Just roll with the punches and try to get comfortable with life's ambiguities.

 **LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You need to get things done today, and you might have to swallow your pride to finish it all. It's necessary for you to ask for the help you need, as long as you don't make it a habit. If someone already knows what you're going to ask for before you ask, you should move on to a different person who isn't always your first stop when you're in need. Be open about what you want to do, and share your excitement. It will go a long way toward convincing someone to help you.

 **SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

The way you interact with strangers could impact your day in a big way. If you choose to ignore everyone you don't know, your day will be uneventful and routine. But if you engage with other people as often as possible, you'll find a huge shift in your energy and creativity. You don't have to make any new friends, but why not smile a bit more? Make silly small talk with someone as you ride the elevator together. Interaction is invigorating.

 **TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

Someone is back on the scene, and they might have a hard time adjusting to the fact that you have much more power than you did when they first worked with you. This could create a power struggle, but only if they start first. You need to remember your position and have confidence in your leadership. They are the one who has to get used to a new situation, not you. Just keep doing what you've been doing and treat them like you'd treat anyone else.

 **VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your regular way of doing things might not be different today, but it's probably going to feel different. Something has changed in you, and it's giving you a fresh perspective on your daily life. You're seeing things that need to change, and you're eager to start making the transitions. This is all well and good, but you have to be mindful that nothing can happen overnight. Start that long journey with one step. Make your goals easily attainable for now.

 **CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Your old habits are holding you back in your career more than you realize. They're dying hard, and you have got to try harder to kill them! Luckily, your focus is growing much stronger, and you're finally beginning to understand the value of sacrifice in your life. The next time the urge to do something negative pops up as you go about your day, take a detour. Changing your plans today will go a long way toward helping you resist bad behavior tomorrow.

 **GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

Start exploring the places, people, and things that are foreign to you, from food to music to politics. What other countries have to offer will suddenly be fascinating to you. Things have settled down a bit in your life, so you'll need something to stimulate your mind and get you thinking about new things. A trip to an ethnic restaurant or a few minutes spent listening to another country's music could do just that. You're open-minded and eager for something different.

 **LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

A friend could offer you some unsolicited advice today, and while that's your least favorite kind of advice, it's still advice you should take. It could hold the key to a new romance or the acceleration of a current romance. They've been through this all before, and their experience has taught them a lesson that they think you should learn, and they're right! Make sure you're all ears when this friend starts to get serious. They're trying to help.

 **AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You truly value the people in your life right now, so you should set aside some time to get to know them even better. Take someone out to lunch or accompany a new friend while they run some errands. Inserting yourself into someone else's life is easy right now, especially because so many folks are eager to welcome you in. You're entering a phase when your ambition is going to take a back seat to your desire to get along well with others.

 **CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

An unexpected influx of money could be coming your way, but it won't be enough to make a huge difference in your life. Consider donating it to a charity, a needy person you encounter during your day, or an efficient server at your favorite restaurant. It will make a bigger impact on their life than on yours, and it will make you feel good to brighten someone's life that way. Random acts of kindness always feel good. If you don't do one today, at least do one soon.

 **SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

If your favorite authority figure has ceased to inspire or motivate you, it's time to find a new mentor! There's a good chance that they've gotten a bit lazy about exploring new ideas, and if so, how are they going to inspire you to do it? Find someone who intimidates you a bit, whose way of thinking or working is new to you. Observe them for a while and see whether or not they have new things to teach you. They'll be flattered by your attention.

 **PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Sometimes dreams are just dreams. If you're still scratching your head over a recent series of confusing nighttime visions, stop worrying. These odd images might hold valuable clues about what to do with your life or they might just be exercises your brain does while your body sleeps. Trying to gain insight from your dreams will only be a waste of time. Instead, if you want to figure things out, look at your life realistically.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which landmass has a feature often referred to as The Horn?

- A. The Sinai Peninsula
- B. Australia
- C. Africa
- D. Antarctica

02. Which of these was a boxer born in 1958 and known as "The Hit Man"?

- A. Thomas Hearns
- B. Mike Tyson
- C. Joe Frazier
- D. Marvin Hagler

03. What is "emf"?

- A. Electric and magnetic fields
- B. An alternative spelling of "oomph"
- C. An electrical frequency
- D. External major force

Answers: 1. C 2. A 3. A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	T	R	N
J	O	A	S
K	E	R	E
S	C	R	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

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

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

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

ADEKOYA WINS GOLD

Bahrain athlete bounces back from doping ban to shine in hurdles, India's Annu Rani takes javelin gold

Hangzhou, China - Bahrain's Kemi Adekoya, who was stripped of the 2018 title for doping, won Asian Games 400m hurdles gold on Tuesday while Olympic champion Liu Shiyang crashed in the javelin in a shock.

On a bumper night in Hangzhou, 10 titles were decided with six nations tasting victory, including Chinese Olympic silver medallist Zhu Yaming in the men's triple jump.

But veteran Svetlana Radzivil was dethroned in the women's high jump, with her Uzbek teammate Safina Sadullayeva denying

4x400m relay golds after testing positive for the prohibited steroid stanozolol. She was banned for four years.

A former world indoor champion, she claimed at the time her food was spiked.

"I just wanted to fight and get the gold medal, and fight for a new record," she said on Tuesday.

"Last Asian Games I broke it (the record), but what happened, happened," she added, alluding to her ban.

"I just focus on my mental health and keep it very strong. I

I just wanted to fight and get the gold medal, and fight for a new record. Last Asian Games I broke it (the record), but what happened, happened

KEMI ADEKOYA

her a fourth straight title.

Adekoya thrust herself back into the spotlight by crossing first in a Games-record 54.45sec to consolidate her strong showing at the Budapest World championships, where she finished fourth.

China's Mo Jiadie (55.01) took silver and India's Vithya Ramraj (55.68) bronze.

The 30-year-old Adekoya won at the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon after switching allegiance from Nigeria, and again came first at Jakarta four years later.

But she was stripped of her 2018 hurdles and mixed

believe in myself and work very hard." Adekoya only recently returned to action and pipped fellow Nigerian-born Bahraini Salwa Eid Naser -- who is also on the comeback from a doping ban -- to claim the 400m title on Saturday.

Really special

Qatar's defending champion and Asian record holder Abderrahman Alsaleck won the men's 400m hurdles in 48.04, ahead of teammate Bassem Hemeida and China's Xie Zhiyu.

"That makes it really special," he said of Hemeida taking silver.



Women's 400m hurdles gold medallist Bahrain's Kemi Adekoya (C), silver medallist China's Mo Jiadie and bronze medallist India's Vithya Ramraj celebrate on the podium

"Now we have two medals in 400m hurdles, that is really difficult at a world level."

China's javelin star Liu was the hot favourite to defend her title, particularly in the absence of Japanese world champion Haruka Kitaguchi.

Liu threw 66.34m to win Tokyo Olympic gold, but she

could only manage 57.62m and retired before her final throw.

It allowed India's Annu Rani to take the title with a 62.92 effort, ahead of Sri Lanka's Dilhani Lekamge and China's Lyu Huihui.

Liu came fifth.

In other action, Tokyo Olympic runner-up Zhu soared to 17.13m in claiming the triple

jump honours, making up for narrowly missing the medals in Budapest.

Teammate Fang Yaoqing won silver and India's Praveen Chithravel bronze.

"To win Asian Games gold is a milestone for me," said Zhu. "I hope to work with my teammates and do greater things at

the Paris 2024 Olympic Games."

Radzivil, at her fifth Asian Games, couldn't repeat her exploits at the last three Asiad in the high jump, settling for silver behind Sadullayeva, who cleared 1.86m.

Parul Chaudhary took home the women's 5,000m gold in 15:14.75, catching Japan's fast-

fading Ririka Hironaka in the last 10 metres, adding to the silver she won in the 3,000m steeplechase on Monday behind world champion Winfred Yavi.

Saudi Arabia's Essa AliKzwani clinched the men's 800m title in 1:48.05 while China's Sun Qihao became decathlon champion.

AFP



Russia's Daniil Medvedev celebrates after defeating Germany's Alexander Zverev in their semifinal match at the China Open on Tuesday (AFP)

Medvedev eases into China Open final, Sabalenka goes through

Beijing, China - Daniil Medvedev hailed his "perfect" serve as he eased into the men's final of the China Open with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Alexander Zverev in Beijing on Tuesday.

The world number three faces a showdown on Wednesday with Italy's Jannik Sinner.

The semi-final got off to a close-fought start but Medvedev then notched a crucial break of serve and managed to see out the first set.

It was a similar story in the second set, with the Russian breaking for 5-3 and serving out the match with a pair of fierce aces.

World number two Alcaraz slumped out, collapsing in the second set to hand Italy's Jannik Sinner a place in the final against Medvedev.

Both players traded several breaks of serve in a breathless first set that tipped Sinner's way when he cracked a blistering return off the Spaniard's second serve to take the all-important

tie-break.

But Alcaraz - the tournament favourite in Novak Djokovic's absence - then fell apart, gifting Sinner three service games before crowning an error-laden second set with a tame backhand into the net to give the world number seven a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 victory.

The top-ranked women's player Aryna Sabalenka said her performances in "key moments" were crucial to surviving a major scare in the second round, after she defeated unseeded Katie Boulter 7-5, 7-6 (7/2) in Beijing.

Sabalenka saved seven break points at 5-5 and then forced the stubborn Briton, ranked 56th in the world, into a rare backhand error to clinch the opening set.

The Belarusian notched another must-win break in the second set to again draw level at 5-5 before triumphing in a tie-break by slamming down an unreturned serve.

She will battle Italy's Jasmine Paolini in the next round for a place in the quarter-finals.

'Still in a daze' after Shanti Pereira ends Singapore athletics gold drought

Hangzhou, China - When Shanti Pereira sprinted to Singapore's first athletics Asian Games gold in 49 years no one was prouder than her parents watching from the stands in Hangzhou.

Pereira draped herself in the Singapore flag after her 200m triumph and ran towards mum, dad and boyfriend Tan Zong Yang, a former athlete, in the crowd.

The 27-year-old Pereira quit her job as a copywriter this year to become a full-time athlete, a leap of faith that has clearly paid off.

"So proud, so proud to see that. I just got emotional," dad Clarence said after her gold, according to Channel News Asia.

"What we hoped for her to do, she did. I'm still in a daze."

It was Singapore's first athletics gold since the Tehran Asiad in



Singapore's Shanti Pereira celebrates winning the women's 200m final on Monday (AFP)

1974, when Chee Swee Lee won the women's 400m, and only the third in history.

Mum Jeet said the tension before Monday night's race - which Pereira won in 23.03sec, well clear of China's Li Yuting in sec-

ond - was unbearable.

"Waiting for the event to take place was really nerve-racking, prayers were really important," she said.

Of the recent move to become a professional sprinter, Pereira

said: "When I had the chance, I jumped right in."

The move enabled her to lower her own national record four times in 2023, from 23.46sec to the 22.57sec she ran in August's World Championships in Budapest.

"I knew I crossed the line first, and I was like 'Oh my God'," said Pereira of her Hangzhou heroics.

"What a season. It's been so crazy, it means a lot to me. I can't really describe this."

Pereira was a whisker away from double gold at the Games, pipped by just 0.04sec to 100m gold by China's Ge Manqi.

Pereira said she never dreamed of two medals.

"I wanted to do this, I loved to do this, but this exact position, I never thought it was possible," she said.

Japan women set up North Korea final in football

Hangzhou, China - Japan held off a furious second-half fightback from hosts China in the Asian Games women's football semi-finals on Tuesday to win 4-3 and set up a gold-medal showdown with North Korea.

China were looking to win the title for the first time since 1998 but four first-half goals from defending champions Japan gave them a mountain to climb in Hangzhou.

Two quickfire replies after the break reduced the deficit to one but the host nation were unable to find another goal to keep their hopes alive.

North Korea thrashed Uzbekistan 8-0 in the day's other semi-final to set up a repeat of the 2014 final.

China had their strongest women's football squad at the Asian Games and all but one of their starting line-up appeared at this summer's World Cup.

Japan fielded an inexperienced line-up but it didn't stop them from taking the lead in the 12th minute.

Yuzuki Yamamoto cut through the Chinese defence on the right and squared the ball for Yoshino Nakashima to meet with a sliding finish.

China equalised less than 10 minutes later when Wang Linlin scored from a rebound after the ball had rattled Japan's crossbar.

Jaiswal ton leads India's men to debut win in cricket

Hangzhou, China - Explosive opener Yashasvi Jaiswal smashed seven sixes in a sublime maiden T20 century as India's men opened their first Asian Games campaign with a 23-run defeat of gutsy Nepal on Tuesday.

With superstars such as Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli at home for the one-day World Cup beginning on Thursday, the world's top-ranked Twenty20 team has a second-string squad in Hangzhou. But it is still formidable, packed with promising youngsters who have excelled in the Indian Premier League and a host of players with international experience.

After winning the toss and opting to bat, Jaiswal's masterful 100, from 49 balls, plus late fireworks from Rinku Singh (37 not



India's Yashasvi Jaiswal plays a shot during their quarter-final match against Nepal at the Asian Games in Hangzhou on Monday (AFP)

out) and Shivam Dube (25 not out) helped India to 202-4.

Nepal had bludgeoned a record 314-3 against minnows Mongolia in the qualifying

rounds, but they could only manage 179-9 in reply, with Avesh Khan and Ravi Bishnoi taking three wickets each.

"They are a good side so we're

not surprised at how they came at us," said India skipper Rituraj Gaikwad. "It wasn't our best day but we still managed to get a win."

Cricket has been played at the Asian Games twice before, at Guangzhou 2010 and Incheon 2014, but India did not take part.

Bangladesh won the men's title in 2010 while Sri Lanka are defending champions, with Afghanistan runners-up both times.

Along with Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, India entered the Hangzhou Games at the quarter-final stage.

Jaiswal got them off to a scorching start and they were cruising at 103 without loss at an overcast Zhejiang University of Technology Pingfeng Cricket Field.

QUEST FOR GLORY

Are the new-look PSG serious Champions League contenders?

Paris, France - A summer of change has left Paris Saint-Germain with a radically revamped squad, shorn of some of its biggest stars, and for now they remain a work in progress in what could be Kylian Mbappe's final season in the French capital.

They face Newcastle United in the Champions League on Wednesday in a tie that captures the imagination beyond its significance as the first meeting of the clubs backed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia respectively.

PSG already have the upper hand in a tough Group F after beating Borussia Dortmund 2-0 a fortnight ago while Newcastle drew 0-0 with AC Milan.

Avoid defeat at St James' Park and Luis Enrique's team will be well on course to qualify for the knockout stages.

Yet PSG's revenue, far greater than that of their group rivals, means they shouldn't be struggling to reach the last 16 and getting beyond this stage has never been the problem anyway in recent years.

The problem has been after that, with the Parisians losing in the last 16 five times in seven seasons.

Appointed in July, Luis Enrique won the Champions



Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe (C) warms up with teammates (AFP)

We are in the middle of building a new identity, our own style and way of playing, and a new culture. That is what we wanted to do, and results will follow

NASSER AL KHELAIFI



League with Barcelona in 2015 and his remit is to at least take PSG back into the latter stages while continuing their domestic dominance.

However, winning the compe-

tition "is not something we are obsessed with at all, that's finished," insisted president Nasser al-Khelaifi recently.

"We are in the middle of building a new identity, our own

style and way of playing, and a new culture.

"That is what we wanted to do, and results will follow."

Lionel Messi, Neymar, Marco Verratti and Sergio Ramos were the headline names to leave a club that previously put too much focus on superstar signings.

While Mbappe stayed going into the final year of his deal after a contract dispute that overshadowed the summer, PSG spent huge sums on new faces who should help make for a better-

balanced squad around him.

Randal Kolo Muani and Ousmane Dembele, signed for a combined 140 million euros (\$147m), are French international forwards who are close to Mbappe.

Uruguayan Manuel Ugarte looks like the sort of combative midfielder they have desperately lacked in recent years.

Luis Enrique has set his side up in a 4-3-3, putting the focus on dominating the ball and aggressive counter-pressing.

AFF



Leipzig held Bayern Munich to a 2-2 draw on Saturday (AFP)

Rebuilt Leipzig ready for Man City test in Champions League

Berlin, Germany - RB Leipzig face Champions League title holders Manchester City on Wednesday, having emerged strongly from a summer rebuild which could have derailed the young club.

Champions League regulars who had just won their second German Cup in succession, Leipzig lost four first-team players to big money deals in the summer, underlining their place in the European football hierarchy - still viewed as a small-club outsider.

Centre-back Josko Gvardiol moved to Wednesday's opponents City, midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai to Liverpool and top scorer Christopher Nkunku to Chelsea all for large transfer fees, while Konrad Laimer went to domestic rivals Bayern Munich on a free.

But continuing their remarkable ability to identify and develop young talent, RB brought in several new players from across Europe, many of

whom have already shone in a Leipzig uniform.

Leipzig's record so far this season - seven wins and just one loss from nine matches in all competitions while having faced Bayern twice - shows Marco Rose's rebuilt side is ahead of schedule and likely to be a real challenge for Man City.

Leipzig took in more than 240 million euros (\$250 million) in the summer, much of which was promptly re-invested in new arrivals.

Lois Openda, who scored 21 goals to help Lens finish just one point behind champions Paris Saint-Germain in Ligue 1 last season, joined the club, as did 20-year-old PSG loanee Xavi Simons.

Leipzig brought in Castello Lukeba, 20, from Lyon to replace Gvardiol at centre-back, while Slovenian striking prodigy Benjamin Sesko, also 20, joined from sister club Red Bull Salzburg.

Celtic aim to end Champions League drought against Lazio

Glasgow, United Kingdom - Once feared as a fortress of European football, Celtic are aiming to end a 10-year wait for a Champions League win at home when Lazio visit Parkhead on Wednesday.

Brendan Rodgers wasted no time on his return as the Hoops' manager in revealing his ambition is to finally make a mark on the Champions League.

In domestic football, Celtic remain in a class of their own having won 11 of the last 12 Scottish Premiership titles and four domestic trebles in the past six seasons.

But Rodgers was in charge during his first spell at the club the last time the Hoops won a game in Europe's elite competition in 2017 away to Anderlecht.

After failing to qualify for the next four seasons, Celtic collected just two points from

six games on their return to the Champions League last season under Ange Postecoglou despite some impressive performances.

The reality facing Rodgers was laid bare in a 2-0 defeat to Feyenoord two weeks ago.

After a bright start, the visitors were undone by red cards to new signings Gustaf Lagerbielke and Odin Thiago Holm, whose inexperience showed on their Champions League debuts.

Celtic's business model of hoovering up young talent from around the globe at bargain prices to be developed and sold on at big profits has been highly successful for the club's bank balance.

Financial results for last season revealed a club record pre-tax profit of £40.7 million (\$50 million) for the 2022/23 season and £72 million of cash in the bank.

Porto chance for Barcelona to prove progress in Xavi's 100th game in charge

Barcelona, Spain - After consecutive premature and humiliating Champions League exits, Barcelona visit Porto on Wednesday aiming to make a statement in their trickiest group stage fixture.

Xavi Hernandez's side, five-time winners of the competition, have set their sights on returning to Europe's elite, with that goal informing their transfer strategy last summer.

President Joan Laporta sold off various parts of the club and a percentage of future television rights to fund a spending spree but the Catalans were left with egg on their faces after failing to make it past the group stage.

This summer the spending was far more restrained by necessity but Barcelona still managed to bring in Portuguese duo Joao Cancelo and Joao Felix on loan, as well as Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan to round out an impressive squad.

Xavi has a group of players which should be strong enough



Barcelona players celebrate a goal (AFP)

to battle with the continent's top sides, at least on paper.

The coach said Barcelona were concentrating on making it into the knockout rounds for the first time in three years, before setting any loftier goals.

After two consecutive tough group stage draws, this season Barcelona had more fortune.

They waltzed past Belgian champions Royal Antwerp with a 5-0 triumph in their opener but Xavi was quick to acknowledge it

means little in terms of their overall chances, given they also thrashed Viktoria Plzen 5-1 in their first match last year.

"It's too soon (to say we can win it), last year we were in the same situation and it didn't go

well, we have to be cautious," Xavi told reporters.

"We have to continue like this, we're on a good path... next up we have the most complicated match of the group, in Porto.

"We have the capacity, the confidence, but in the next game we have what I would say is the hardest game."

The clash at the Estadio Do Dragao against Porto, who did make it through the group in both of the last two seasons, will be a useful barometer of whether Barcelona are close to the level they want to be.

Veteran Porto defender Pepe, an old enemy of Barcelona with plenty of Clasico battle scars from his years at Real Madrid, is racing against time to be fit for the clash.

The clash in the north of Portugal will be Xavi's 100th game as Barcelona's coach, during which time he has won La Liga and the Spanish Super Cup, but come up short in Europe.

AFF

Chelsea stun Fulham with quickfire double

London, United Kingdom - Goal-shy Chelsea finally found their cutting edge on Monday, striking twice in 82 seconds to earn a morale-boosting 2-0 win against Fulham as Mykhailo Mudryk finally got off the mark.

Mauricio Pochettino's injury-ravaged team travelled to the home of their near-neighbours just two points above the relegation zone and with only five goals to their name.

Wasted early opportunities hinted at familiar failings but Ukrainian winger Mudryk scored his first goal in a Chelsea shirt in

the 18th minute and Armando Broja doubled the lead in the blink of an eye.

The win lifts Chelsea to mid-table and eases the pressure on beleaguered new manager Pochettino, whose team had failed to score in their previous three Premier League games.

The former Tottenham and Paris Saint-Germain boss had pleaded for ruthlessness in front of goal and his nerves were settled by his team's quickfire first-half double.

"It's important for us to build our confidence and trust in our-

The win lifts Chelsea to mid-table and eases the pressure on beleaguered new manager Pochettino

selves," Pochettino told Sky Sports. "The performance was very good, I'm so happy for the players and in the end we got what we deserved."

Chelsea started brightly at

Craven Cottage but failed to take advantage.

Albania forward Broja, making his first start since November 2022, blazed over from an offside position shortly after kick-off and the lively Mudryk also wasted a chance.

But the visitors got their reward in the 18th minute when a long ball from the back found Levi Colwill on the left.

Colwill passed to Mudryk, who controlled the ball on his chest before producing a composed finish for his first goal for the club since his big-money move from

Shakhtar Donetsk in January.

Chelsea doubled their lead when Broja capitalised on a defensive mistake from Fulham centre-half Tim Ream, who gifted the ball to new signing Cole Palmer.

The ex-Manchester City man played the ball forward only for Ream to kick it against Broja and watch in horror as it rebounded into the net.

Chelsea, playing with zest, could have extended their lead further but Enzo Fernandez's strike flew narrowly wide.

AFF



Chelsea's Mykhailo Mudryk celebrates after scoring against Fulham



AT A CROSSROADS

As the World Cup begins, the 50-Over game seeks to reassert relevance amidst T20 dominance

London, United Kingdom - The World Cup which gets underway on Thursday will provide a sharp focus for one-day international cricket and a chance to show how the 50-over game has evolved since India last staged the tournament in 2011.

One of the criticisms of ODIs, once the economic driving force of the global game, is that they are too often reduced to 'meaningless' bilateral series.

The format is also viewed as too pedestrian in the slipstream of the high velocity, smash-and-grab Twenty20 format.

"The ODI has been reduced to virtually depending on a World Cup year for its importance," wrote former Australia captain Ian Chappell in a recent ESPNcricinfo column.

Meanwhile, India great Sachin Tendulkar, a 2011 World Cup winner, believes the format is now too formulaic.

"The game is becoming too predictable," he said.

"From the 15th to the 40 over, it's losing its momentum. It's getting boring."

And yet the ODI remains a key plank of the International



Mehidy Hasan and Mushfiquur Rahim leave the field after helping Bangladesh's to victory against Sri Lanka in a warm-up match in Guwahati (AFP)

Cricket Council's schedule, with the 50-over format still capable of providing an entertaining spectacle.

Perhaps the biggest on-field development since 2011 has been the change in what consti-

tutes a big total.

There have been 24 occasions on which 400 has been passed in ODI cricket and 15 of those have come since the 2011 World Cup

The 2011 final saw India reach

a target of 275 with just 10 balls to spare.

But in an age where World Cup-holders England have lifted the world record for an ODI total to 444 in 2016, 481 in 2018 and 498, against the Netherlands,

last year, 275 rarely represents a challenging target.

'Not filling grounds'

Yet for all the prevalence of shorter boundaries and the impact of the wider range of shot-

making developed by T20 cricket on all other formats, ODIs are not always run-fests.

The very length of a 50-over game allows for the possibilities of both bowlers getting on top and teams recovering from a top-order collapse.

England were 55-5 in an ODI against New Zealand at

an earlier age, although the sheer pressure of a World Cup gives ODIs an edge lacking in bi-lateral series.

Indeed the greatest off-field change since 2011 is the number of people questioning whether the ODI has much of a future outside of a World Cup.

Incoming MCC president

We think it's difficult bilaterally now to justify them (ODIs). They're not filling grounds in a lot of countries. And there is a power at the moment to T20 cricket that is almost supernatural

MARK NICHOLAS

Southampton last month but still managed to post a total of 226-7 in a match reduced by rain to 34 overs per side.

And they won by the large margin of 79 runs after dismissing New Zealand for 147, with left-arm quicks David Willey and Reece Topley taking three wickets apiece.

Even so the days when 300 was considered a significant ODI total do seem to belong to

Mark Nicholas believes all other ODIs ought to be on the way out. "We believe strongly that ODIs should be World Cups only," Nicholas told ESPN-cricinfo.

"We think it's difficult bilaterally now to justify them. They're not filling grounds in a lot of countries. And there is a power at the moment to T20 cricket that is almost supernatural."

AFP

'Dangerous' England face New Zealand in World Cup opener

Ahmedabad, India - Defending champions England take on New Zealand in Thursday's opening match of the World Cup in a re-match of their epic showdown in the 2019 final at Lord's.

Jos Buttler's men come into the 10-team tournament with the depth to live up to their billing as one of the title favourites. They will also benefit from the return of star all-rounder Ben Stokes when their campaign begins at the world's biggest cricket arena, the 130,000-capacity Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar believes England are comfortably placed to become the first back-to-back champions since Australia claimed three-in-a-row in 2007.

"Because of the kind of talent that they have at the top of the order... they have got two or three world-class all-rounders who can change the game with both bat and ball," Gavaskar told Indian broadcaster Star Sports.



England's Reece Topley (C) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Najmul Hossain

England's fast bowling line-up has Reece Topley, David Willey, Mark Wood and Chris Woakes alongside Stokes, who came out of one-day retirement ahead of the World Cup although he will play only as a batsman.

England have eight members from the squad that triumphed on home soil in the last World Cup in 2019 under Eoin Morgan.

Buttler has slipped into the role of England's white-ball captain with relative ease since

Morgan's retirement, leading them to the Twenty20 World Cup crown in Australia last year.

"We're going to try to win a World Cup - we don't see ourselves as defending champions," said Buttler.



New Zealand defeated South Africa by seven runs in their warm-up match in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday

England, New Zealand warm-up for World Cup opener with rain-hit wins

Guwahati, India - England and New Zealand clinched rain-hit victories on Monday in their final World Cup warm-up matches before they clash on Thursday in the tournament opener.

Defending champions England edged out Bangladesh by four wickets in Guwahati while New Zealand claimed a seven-run win over South Africa at Thiruvananthapuram.

Both matches were decided by rain-adjusted targets.

Worryingly for teams and officials, only two of the seven

warm-up games so far played have escaped the rain. Two were abandoned without a ball being bowled.

Chasing a revised target of 197 in 37 overs after Bangladesh made 188-9, England comfortably knocked off the runs with 77 balls to spare.

Moeen Ali top scored with 56 in a 39-ball innings peppered with six sixes.

For Bangladesh, who won the toss, Mehidy Hasan Miraz and opener Tanzid Hasan were in the runs for the second consec-

utive game.

Mehidy, who made an undefeated 67 in the seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka, cracked 74 with 10 fours off 89 balls.

At Thiruvananthapuram, New Zealand piled up 321-6 in their 50 overs against South Africa.

Opener Devon Conway made 78 off 73 balls with 11 fours and a six while wicket-keeper Tom Latham also passed the half century mark, his 52 runs coming from 56 balls.

'Team with best bowlers' will win World Cup, says Pakistan's Shadab

Hyderabad, India - Pakistan's spin bowling all-rounder Shadab Khan Sunday said the team with the strongest bowling unit, capable of stemming the runs on India's batting-friendly pitches will win the World Cup.

The 24-year-old is leading Pakistan's spin attack that has come under severe criticism for not taking wickets in the middle overs.

Shadab himself managed just six wickets in five Asia Cup games last month with four coming against outsiders Nepal

in a tournament where Pakistan crashed out in Super Four stage.

But Shadab hoped Pakistan's bowling can stage a comeback at the World Cup which gets underway on Thursday.

"I think the team that has the best bowling will win the World Cup because the pitches will produce high totals," Shadab told a news conference.

Pakistan suffered a five-wicket loss to New Zealand in their first warm-up match of the tournament on Friday.

They face Australia in their



Shadab Khan

second warm-up game - also in Hyderabad - on Tuesday before opening their World Cup campaign against the Netherlands at the same venue three days later.

Despite losing frontline pacer Naseem Shah to a shoulder injury, Shadab insists Pakistan still boast a world class attack.

"Of course Naseem will be missed, but our bowlers are world class so if we perform well in bowling then we can achieve the best results."

Leg-break bowler Shadab,

who has 88 wickets from 64 ODI matches, vowed to lift his own game in the seven-week World Cup.

"Maybe there was a mental barrier and I think that will not be there now because of the rest I have had. The past is past and when the World Cup matches come I will be playing with a fresh mindset."

Shadab also backed out-of-form Fakhar Zaman who was not asked to bat in Friday's warm-up game.

"Fakhar is an impact player,

we all know that," said Shadab of the left-hander who managed just 65 runs in four Asia Cup innings.

"We have given him mental space and we need to back an impact player like him."

Shadab also said the players were overwhelmed by the hospitality since their arrival in Hyderabad under tight security on Wednesday. "It's been a superb welcome. People coming to the hotel and their hospitality has been fantastic."

AFP



Japan's coach Jamie Joseph attends a training session (AFP)

Joseph's evolution sparked transformation of Japan

Toulouse, France - Head coach Jamie Joseph's evolution in delegating and becoming a better communicator is a major reason why the Japanese are a win away from reaching the Rugby World Cup quarter-finals, forwards coach Shin Hasegawa said on Monday.

The Brave Blossoms will qualify for the last eight for the second successive time under Joseph if they beat Argentina in Nantes on Sunday in their winner-takes-all final Pool D match.

Both Japan and the Argentinians are level on nine points with England already guaranteed of topping the pool.

Former New Zealand and Japan international Joseph, 53, became head coach in 2016 and Hasegawa said it took a while for him to settle into the role.

"For Jamie, I think he has changed a lot in the last eight years," said Hasegawa at the Japanese press conference.

"Early on, we had times where he would start training without explaining anything to the coaches and players.

"For the Japanese players, they react well when they are given reasons, but otherwise questions come in first."

The personal journey of discovery taken by Joseph has completely altered the dynamic within the squad, Hasegawa said.

"Nowadays, the players make more decisions than the coaches," said Hasegawa.

"Jamie still makes the big calls but in terms of role clarity and spreading responsibilities, I feel

we are becoming better as a team."

Hasegawa and Joseph go back a long way as they played together in the Japan national team. "After eight years, I can tell what he is thinking and I think some of the other coaches do too," said Hasegawa of Joseph.

"I can also say that whether it's between me and him or him and the players, we understand each other really well.

"If there are any misunderstandings, we have honest conversations about it. I think we have relationships that are good and fair amongst all of us."

Despite the Pumas being renowned for their scrummaging, former prop Hasegawa believes the Japanese can get the better of them.

"I think they are a completely different team every time we play them," said Hasegawa, who played against Argentina in the 1999 World Cup.

"I think with the current Japan team, we can eliminate their power, skill and weight.

"So we get rid of their strength, and play the game in our way which is something we are working on."

Argentina's lack of discipline could well be their Achilles heel and if they do lapse then Japan has a super reliable kicker in Rikiya Matsuda to punish them.

Matsuda has accrued 37 points in the tournament and had converted 13 straight kicks at goal until he missed a conversion for Japan's third try in the 28-22 win over Samoa last Thursday.

Biles in complete control at gymnastic worlds

Antwerp, Belgium - Simone Biles enjoyed a virtual sweep in qualifying at the gymnastics world championships on Monday, further burying the nightmare of her Tokyo Olympics.

The US superstar took top spot in the all-around, vault, beam and floor and appears certain to comfortably add to her 25 world medals made up of 19 gold, three silver and three bronze.

The only athlete to get the better of her on Monday was 16-year-old Qiu Qiyuan of China on the uneven bars.

In total, Biles has 58.865 points for a two-point lead over compatriot Shilese Jones (56.932) and Jessica Gadirova of Britain (56.766).

Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, the revelation of the Tokyo Olympics two years ago, took fourth place with 56.599 points.

Biles' only disappointment came on the uneven bars where she was fifth after being penalised for a fall.

"I don't know, it happens in gymnastics," she said. "You have to think quickly so as not to forget the sequences.

"I recovered well and that's the most important thing."

On Sunday, 26-year-old Biles made history by becoming the first female gymnast to execute a "Yurchenko double pike vault" now renamed "Biles II" during women's team qualifying.

A four-time Olympic champion, Biles arrived in Japan for the 2021 Olympics as the huge favourite thanks to her four titles won five years earlier in Rio. However, she broke down in full view of a global audience, withdrawing from most of the events.

She then explained that she was fighting against "twisties", a temporary mental block whereby gymnasts lose their sense of where they are in the air, with the risk of injury when they land.

She returned to action at the beginning of August and demonstrated that she had lost none of her incredible level.



Simone Biles of the US competes in the vault at the 52nd FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Antwerp (AFP)



LeBron James

LeBron dedicating 21st NBA season to son

El Segundo, United States - LeBron James said Monday he will dedicate his 21st season in the NBA to his eldest son Bronny, who continues to make a successful recovery from a cardiac arrest.

The 38-year-old James briefly contemplated walking away from basketball at the end of last season following the Los Angeles Lakers loss to the Denver Nuggets in the Western Conference finals.

But James' thoughts of retirement were short-lived and he is now gearing up for another campaign that he hopes will culminate in a fifth NBA championship ring.

James said the health scare involving Bronny, who collapsed suddenly during training with his college basketball team in Los Angeles in July, had given him a renewed sense of perspective.

"Nothing else matters besides my family," James told reporters at the Lakers training base in El Segundo.

"Obviously I'm going to dedicate this season to Bronny because of the incident that happened. Understanding that just puts everything into perspective.

"No matter what's going on, the only thing that matters is your family."

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PARIS FASHION WEEK

TISSUES & ISSUES

PARIS FASHION WEEK MARKS SOME FLAMBOUYANT DESIGNS FOR
INNERWEAR, OUTERWEAR FOR SPRING SUMMER 2024

From flaunting innerwear to very muted colour schemes, some trends stood out from the spring-summer 2024 womenswear collections at Paris Fashion Week, which ended on Tuesday, as did mounting concerns over the industry's environmental impact.

Here are some highs and lows from the French capital, the climax of a hectic month of fashion weeks in London, New York and Milan.

INNERWEAR IS OUTERWEAR

Get used to walking around in your 'underpants' if you want to stay trendy next spring. Already a popular look for celebs like Hailey Bieber and Kendall Jenner, it was everywhere in Paris this week.

Stella McCartney's billowing silk tops were worn over crystal-encrusted undies, Victoria Beckham had outfits that were little more than nightdresses, or swimsuits and socks, while Dries Van Noten had leopard-skin swimsuits under trench coats.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

French YouTube star Jeremstar was briefly arrested outside Louis Vuitton's show for dressing like a 'dis-membered snake' to protest against the brand's use of animal skin.

Activists spray-painted LV's nearby boutique and said the fashion house had climate deaths on its conscience.

Stella McCartney offered a more positive example, setting up market stalls alongside her runway to showcase 'cruelty-free' innovations such as vegan leather and seaweed-based

yarn (while her show was partly a homage to her parents' rock band Wings).

Hermes had one of the prettiest stage designs, with guests nestled in a prairie of wildflowers and tall grasses. But animal rights group PETA was unimpressed and briefly interrupted the show, objecting to its use of crocodile skin.

SOMBRE SUMMER

A lot of designers were keen to drain the colour from spring and summer.

Christian Dior, Saint Laurent, Victoria Beckham, Mugler and hyped newcomer Peter Do were among the many brands with muted, often monochrome palettes. Some observers were dismayed and also felt there was a lack of innovation.

"Where are your colours? Where

are your ideas, except those that come from archives?" chided veteran fashion watcher Cathy Horyn, now of New York Magazine's The Cut.

BALMAIN'S FLOWERY RECOVERY

Balmain bucked the colourless trend with a shiny and exuberant show that it managed to pull together despite a dramatic robbery - dozens of its outfits were stolen on their way from the airport just 10 days earlier.

There were lots of roses. A woman seemingly lost in an entire red bush of them, another with a swoosh of golden feathers with roses on the tips, and a range of rose-print tops, dresses and mini-skirts. There were also some ultra-bling, glittering flower concoctions that verged on haute couture ex-

travagance.

"Florals for spring? Groundbreaking..." designer Olivier Rousteing wrote with apparent irony on Instagram.

BALenciAGA UNPOLISHED

Balenciaga's Demna was humbled last year after the fashion house produced highly controversial ads that appeared to reference child abuse.

But after one low-key show earlier this year, he was back to his rebellious ways this week with surreal looks such as giant-shouldered suits and dresses made from retro tablecloths.

"March was very polished and I realised that I don't like it when it's polished. I like it when it's rough," Demna told Vogue.

It was also a very personal show, featuring his mother, husband and members of his staff as models.

"It was about me. It was about my story. I needed to do it... because I had a horrible year," he said.

BYE-BYES

Naomi Campbell was the star of the catwalk in a shimmering silver dress at Alexander McQueen where Sarah Burton gave her final show as creative director after more than a decade in charge.

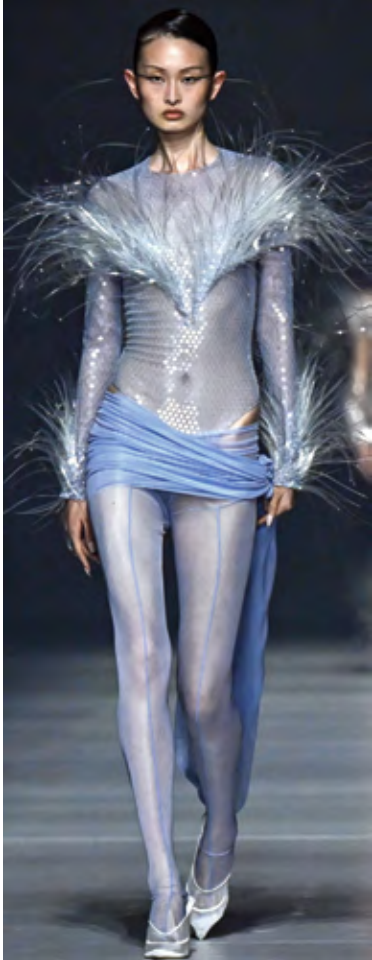
Business of Fashion called it a 'typically fearless final flourish from Burton', leaving a tall order for her yet-to-be-named successor to meet.

It was also the last hurrah for designer Gabriella Hearst at Chloe.

Her sustainability agenda brought acclaim but apparently not enough sales to keep her at the fabled French house and she is leaving after less than three years.

AFP

Models present creations for the Louis Vuitton fashion show as part of the Paris Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2024 in Paris



INDIE ROCK



People enjoy as US indie pop band Muna performs onstage during the All Things Go music festival at Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia, Maryland



Phoebe Bridgers of US Indie group Boygenius



US singer Maggie Rogers

ALL THINGS GO

IN THE FACE OF CORPORATE BEHEMOTHS, AN INDIE MUSIC FESTIVAL THRIVES

Back in 2006, Spotify was a nascent start-up, your average stateside concert tickets went for US\$40 and many fans learned about the best new music from blogs like All Things Go.

Nearly twenty years later, most people find new artists via algorithms and the average US concert ticket costs US\$250 - double of what it was just five years ago.

All Things Go, however, has grown into a thriving indie music festival in a world where live events are increasingly owned by a handful of companies. Now in its ninth year, the festival - whose name derives from a Sufjan Stevens lyric - embodies the same ethos as that of music blogging's turn-of-the-millennium heyday.

It focuses on emerging artists while prioritising the experience of live performance over creating viral moments or appealing to social media influencers, both now dominant forces at more corporatised festivals.

The event kicked off its 2023 edition on Saturday at Maryland's historic Merriweather Post Pavilion amphitheatre, spanning two days for the first time, with a women-led bill and headliners including Lana Del Rey, boygenius, Carly Rae Jepsen and Maggie Rogers.

The festival's founders first began transitioning from their corner of the internet to live venues by holding monthly club nights in Washington DC, hosting artists who were popular on their blog. They held their inaugural festival at Washington's Union Market in 2014, later expanding to the Capitol Waterfront in 2016 before moving in 2021 to Merriweather, which can host up to 20,000

people per day.

"I think for us it really is about the music," co-founder Stephen Vallimarescu told AFP. "It's about creating the experience where you want to see the artist at noon as much as you want to see the headliner at 10pm." And with two stages, "we basically set it up so that you can see every single band on the bill."

That's a far cry from the experience fans get at festivals like Coachella, where hundreds of thousands of people gather annually in the California desert for two three-day weekends featuring dozens of artists and six stages, with overlapping set times.

At that event, music is not the only draw: there are giant Instagrammable sculptures, a Ferris wheel, special food and drink attractions, celebrity and influencer-filled VIP tents and after-parties.

All Things Go's organisers are going for a more boutique vibe, said Vallimarescu.

"It is pretty unique to look at our community - like these are music fans who go to 10, 20, 30 shows a year, and they come to the festival early," he said. "They're there for the music, they're not there for Ferris wheels, or Instagram posts."

Consolidating festival market

It's no small feat to host an independent music festival these days. All Things Go certainly isn't the only event of its kind, but the landscape is increasingly dominated by giant live performance promoters like AEG and Live Nation, the two largest in the world.

In 2018, a group of indie festivals in Britain decried Live Nation's dominance of the industry there, accusing the California-based behemoth of practices including exclusivity deals with venues that stifle competition.

In 2022, Live Nation - which in addition to controlling significant swaths of the touring industry also owns Ticketmaster, the American ticketing titan - recorded US\$16.7bn in revenue, promoting 43,644 events including concerts and festivals worldwide, according to data compiled by Statista.

Most major music festivals are under the

umbrella of Live Nation - Bonnaroo, Lollapalooza and Isle of Wight among them - or AEG, which owns the company behind Coachella.

Vallimarescu noted that many indie festivals folded as the performance industry took a major hit, especially post-pandemic.

"The reality is that the larger festival ecosystem is very much being consolidated," said fellow co-founder Will Suter. "Globally it's the reason you see kind of the same headliners across most of festival lineups these days."

All Things Go has lasered in on indie rock, a strategy Suter said works to help it stay competitive in the corporate-dominated festival scene.

"Doubling down on our genre, and really offering value to the consumer that justifies the ticket price" is a goal, he said, with the hope that fans are interested in 12 to 16 artists on the lineup, can actually manage to see them all, and are enticed to come back.

Tickets to All Things Go this year ranged from US\$105 to US\$500, the pricier end being heavy on perks.

The festival has also stood out by booking mostly women and non-binary artists - from the headliners down the bill - in an industry that's still heavily biased towards men.

Suter praised fellow indie festivals across the United States that are working day in and day out to keep live music accessible and eclectic.

"It's a community, including with shoulders to cry on," he said. "It's cool to see different indie festivals still working."

AFP



English singer-songwriter Arlo Park



US singer-songwriter Ethel Cain

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