

Muscat up 8 places in Smart City Index

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat is ranked 88th out of 142 cities in the 2024 Smart City Index (SCI), reflecting a significant improvement from its 96th position last year. The index, developed by International Institute for Management Development, assesses residents' perceptions of the infrastructure and technology applications in their cities.

Muscat residents identified unemployment, affordable housing and public transport as the top priority areas needing attention. Additionally, better basic amenities, health services and security measures were highlighted as essential improvements.

A significant majority of residents expressed a willingness to share personal data to improve traffic congestion and showed high trust in online information from authorities. The prevalent

TOP 10 SMART CITIES

1 Zurich	3 Canberra	5 Singapore	7 Lausanne	9 Helsinki
2 Oslo	4 Geneva	6 Copenhagen	8 London	10 Abu Dhabi

use of online transactions reflected growing digital integration in the city.

Among cities in the GCC countries, Abu Dhabi is ranked highest at tenth, followed by Dubai (12th), Riyadh (25th), Doha (48th), Mecca (52nd), Jeddah (55th) and Medina (74th).

The SCI evaluates cities based on two main criteria: Structures and Technology, each further assessed across five areas - health and safety, mobility, activities, opportunities, and governance.

Muscat scored well in health and safety, with notable performance in basic sanitation, recycling services and public safety. Residents reported satisfaction

with medical services and the effectiveness of air pollution controls. Technologically, the city's online maintenance reporting, public Wi-Fi and CCTV systems received positive feedback, reflecting robust infrastructure in maintaining health and safety standards.

Mobility in Muscat demonstrated a need for improvement, with average scores highlighting issues with traffic congestion. Public transport was rated as satisfactory. Technological initiatives such as car-sharing apps and online parking space information needs improvement, with further advancements needed to significantly improve mobility.

Availability of green spaces and cultural activities scored well, showing that Muscat provides satisfactory recreational options for its residents. The ability to purchase tickets for shows and museums online has made cultural activities more accessible, indicating good use of technology in enhancing resident experiences.

Opportunities for work and education showed mixed results. While employment finding services and local learning opportunities were rated as satisfactory, there is room for improvement. The availability of online resources and IT skills training were areas where residents felt enhancements could be made. Despite this, the current Internet speed and reliability were appreciated, scoring above average.

Governance in Muscat received moderate scores. While business transparency and ease of public access to city finances were rated positively, there is potential for greater public participation. Online voting and public engagement platforms were noted, though the overall effectiveness of these initiatives needs improvement.

RO4 mn investment programme to develop Seeb fishing port

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In ongoing efforts to support the fisheries sector, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) is implementing a RO4mn investment programme to develop the fishing port in Seeb in collaboration with the private sector.

An official from the ministry informed that work is underway in partnership with the private sector to implement a comprehensive investment plan for an additional 18,904sqm of Seeb port. The RO4mn project is set to be awarded in December 2024.

The port covers an area of 1,278,868sqm and includes various government and service facilities, such as the Fish Quality Control Department of MAFWR, maintenance workshops for boat and ship engines, three 35m floating docks, and a 145m fixed dock to unload fish. Additionally, the port features a fish farming project with floating cages, covering 152.15 hectares, aiming to



produce 5,000 tonnes in its first phase.

The market within the port is 7,052sqm and includes a wholesale sales hall, a retail fish sales hall with 60 display and 33 cutting tables, a café, a sea-view restaurant, 12 shops, an ice storage room, a cold storage room, a fish freezing room, administrative offices, a brokerage office, and a multi-purpose hall.

The port is designed to provide services to fishermen and visitors, boost investment, enhance revenue, and improve infrastructure for the fisheries sector. It aims to increase fish production and ensure high-quality fish products.

Investments in the port has reached RO17.6mn, while revenue from its projects exceeds RO126,000.

H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, recently visited Seeb fishing port when he emphasised the importance of the ongoing development and operational efforts to enhance the growth of the fisheries sector.

National identity project moves to final stage with global consultation

Our Correspondent
Nizwa

The National Promotional Identity Project is now in its final stages. An international consultant has been engaged to support and enhance this initiative, according to Mohannad Jumaa al Futaisi, Project Manager of Nazdaher programme at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The announcement was made during a meeting of representatives of Nazdaher - National Programme for Investment and Exports Development - held in Nizwa on Tuesday. The meeting focused on the unified national identity project, which is being developed across various parts of the sultanate.

Futaisi outlined four main strategic objectives of the National Promotional Identity Project - expanding direct foreign investments; facilitating access of Omani goods; developing services for Omani markets; and building economic capabilities and talents.



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Futaisi explained that the project aims to enhance the global perception of the sultanate, thereby influencing individuals' decisions to visit, invest in or relocate to the country. It is designed to strengthen Oman's position on the international stage and address global awareness gaps.

To support this effort, a global consultant has been hired, and extensive research has been conducted, including 5,500 global questionnaires and 128 interviews with prominent Omani figures, Omani youth, university students and children. Additionally, 11 field surveys and 500 local questionnaires have been carried out to provide a comprehensive and scientific analysis of the national identity and global perceptions of the sultanate.

According to Salma Ali al Hashmi, head of Technical Team of the National Promotional Identity Project, the questionnaires, surveys and interviews aim to "extend bridges of communication and encourage the engagement of various segments of society in discussions with those directly entrusted with the implementation of the national project".

Final draft of Oman's carbon reduction policy unveiled

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Represented by Environment Authority, the sultanate has completed the final draft of the general policy framework for registering and issuing carbon reduction certificates in accordance with Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

The final document consists of 52 pages in which the sultanate charts its path towards a carbon-free future. Through the document, Oman seeks to become a

prominent carbon trading centre in the Middle East.

The authority has affirmed that the draft received the commendation of international institutions and organisations specialised in this field.

According to the authority, the draft framework will be reviewed by all stakeholders at a technical workshop to be held in mid-September in Muscat.

The framework will be launched at the 29th Conference of the Parties in November in Baku, Azerbaijan.



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Mpox must be nipped in the bud: WHO



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Ruwi Clock Tower gets facelift for National Day

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Oman, UNICEF collaborate for children's brighter future



Muscat - Under the leadership of Ministry of Social Development, UNICEF Oman has presented a draft study on establishing Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) Centres.

In a statement, UNICEF Oman said the draft report, developed through a consultative process involving key stakeholders and partners, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, Sultan Qaboos University, representatives of Oman Vision 2040 and others, envisions that these IECD centres will meet the critical needs of children in their earliest stages of development and also offer services for children with disabilities, including early detection, appropriate rehabilitation.

Discussions were held centred on ensuring that the IECD Centres align with global good



Our strategic goals align with Oman's dedication to ensuring that every child receives the highest quality care and education

SUMAIRA CHOWDHURY

practices, as well as the development of a robust strategy guiding the operationalisation of these

centres.

Further underscoring Oman's commitment to early childhood, a workshop was organised by the Ministry of Education this week, in collaboration with UNICEF Oman, to present the final costing and financing scenarios of its comprehensive Early Childhood Education study. This workshop brought together key partners from the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Health, amongst other partners, providing insights into the financial aspects and strategic pathways necessary for implementing effective early childhood education programmes across the sultanate.

Reflecting on these developments, Sumaira Chowdhury, UNICEF Representative in Oman, said, "The first 1,000 days of a child's life are crucial for their

development, and our strategic goals align with Oman's dedication to ensuring that every child, including those with disabilities, receives the highest quality care and education during these formative years."

Deliberations on the IECD Centres and Early Childhood Education study emphasised the alignment of these initiatives with Oman Vision 2040 and the 2023 Education Law, affirming early childhood development as a right for every child in Oman. These efforts reflect the nation's commitment to inclusive education, lifelong learning and a knowledge-based society. The collaboration between UNICEF Oman, the government and stakeholders is paving the way for a brighter future, ensuring every child in Oman can thrive from the earliest stages of life.

Dhofar Municipality launches Taqah waterfront project

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Dhofar Municipality has announced the launch of a project aimed at developing the Taqah waterfront as part of a broader effort to boost tourism and improve the aesthetic appeal of the wilayat.

The waterfront project will cover an area of 92,650sqm, featuring a 2,973m stretch along the coastline. It will include a variety of amenities designed to cater to both locals and tourists. Among the planned facilities are restaurants with sea views, an administrative office, a walkway and a dedicated bicycle path.

In addition, the development will feature seating areas, playgrounds for children, sports equipment and green spaces with 350 trees, all of which will contribute to creating a vibrant and welcoming environment.

The waterfront will also include public squares equipped with fountains and sculptures, along with shaded seating areas to ensure comfort for visitors. The project will provide essential services for both men and women, including restrooms and



The project will cover an area of 92,650sqm, featuring a 2,973m stretch along the coastline, and include a variety of amenities designed to cater to both locals and tourists

prayer areas.

The construction and maintenance tender for the project was floated on July 30 and is open to local contractors, with vendor grades specified as Excellent and First. The deadline for bid submission ended on August 27.

The development is expected to transform Taqah waterfront into a major attraction, contributing to the local economy and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. The project aligns with the broader goals of Dhofar Municipality to improve infrastructure and promote sustainable tourism in the governorate.

2023/2024 INJAZ OMAN STUDENT COMPANY PROGRAMME CONCLUDES



Injaz Oman concluded its student company programme and competition for the 2023/2024 cycle with an event at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat. The programme aimed at enhancing creative and leadership skills of young Omanis. The event was held under the auspices of H E Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance. This year's competition featured 2,309 participants from 72 educational institutions



MTCIT to host Green Mobility Forum in Salalah on Sept 19

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) will host Green Mobility Forum in Salalah on September 19. The event aims to promote awareness on achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and highlight the importance of electric vehicles (EVs) in Oman. Additionally, it will

showcase the latest advancements and solutions in sustainable mobility.

The ministry is also organising a four-day exhibition of EVs in Salalah, designed to boost awareness about green mobility and advocate the use of these cars across the country. Cutting-edge EVs are being showcased, ranging from new models to the latest EV technology, at the exhibition. Continuing till August 30,

it features an area where children can test-drive miniature electric cars, a drawing and colouring circle for creative expression, and an interactive theatre with performances that educate and inspire about sustainable transportation.

Additionally, sponsoring companies have the opportunity to display their latest products and services in a special showcase area.



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Extreme heat, humidity affected turtle hatchings on Oman's coast

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Extreme heat and humidity this summer adversely affected the hatching of critically endangered Hawksbill and endangered Green turtles along the coast of Oman.

These species, which nest on the beaches of Al Husn, Al Bandar, and Al Waha - maintained by Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah - are facing significant challenges as a result of the extreme weather conditions, a conservationist said.

This season, nearly 1,500 turtle eggs failed to survive, marking the second-highest casualty rate since Cyclone Gonu, which devastated 3,000 eggs. This was informed by Mohammad al Hasani, who oversees turtle conservation at Shangri-La.

This year Hawksbill turtles accounted for 70 nests with 1,993 hatchlings, while Green turtles had 59 nests with 1,170 hatchlings, taking the total number of nests to 129 and 3,193 hatchlings in all witnessed in the sultanate.

These figures are concerning, especially when compared to last year's 154 nests and 4,369 hatchlings. Hasani expressed concern over the decline. "This year, we saw a noticeable drop in the number of nests and hatchlings compared to last year. The figures speak for themselves. This loss is due to the extreme heat this summer," he said.

The peak hatching was observed on June 17, with the birth of 49 hatchlings. The rising tem-



In a bid to save the vulnerable eggs, we relocated 2,000 eggs from the beaches to a nearby cave, known as the 'cooler,' to provide a more stable environment... once hatched, the baby turtles were promptly released into the sea

MOHAMMAD AL HASANI

peratures and humidity have posed a significant threat to the eggs, leading to high mortality rates. In a bid to save the vulnerable eggs, Hasani and his team relocated 2,000 eggs from the beaches to a nearby cave, known as the 'cooler,' to provide a more stable environment.

"The challenge was immense," Hasani noted. "We had to move the eggs within 24 hours to ensure their survival. The eggs are incredibly sensitive, and any delay could have resulted in a complete loss." The team carefully created 23 nests within the 'cooler' to accommodate the eggs, and once hatched, the baby turtles were promptly released into the sea.

The situation underscores the vulnerability of these creatures in the face of environmental changes. "The young turtles are born with an innate sense of the sea," Hasani explained. "As soon as they hatch, they are naturally tuned to the smell and the sound of the ocean, and they instinctively make their way towards it." Once they reach the sea, these baby turtles feed on plankton, jellyfish and corals, beginning their long journey through life.

To protect the nests, the resort has erected small fences and markers around them to prevent damage by beachgoers. However, the eggs remain under constant threat from predators. "Crows pose a significant threat

to the eggs on the beach, and in more inland areas like Sur, foxes are a major concern," Hasani added.

The nesting season for turtles in Oman runs from January to August, with the optimal hatching period in March and April. Mother turtles typically come ashore at night to lay their eggs, creating nests as deep as half a metre. The eggs take approximately 90 days to hatch, with the gender of the hatchlings being determined by temperature - cooler temperatures produce male turtles, while warmer temperatures result in females.

Turtles are known for their incredible longevity, with lifespans reaching up to 200 years.

MoL launches 'Beneficiary Journey Experience' initiative

Our Correspondent
Salalah

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has on Wednesday launched the 'Beneficiary Journey Experience' initiative, a new administrative methodology designed to elevate beneficiary satisfaction and enhance the quality of services that the ministry provides.

The initiative was announced at the Career Guidance and Counseling Symposium hosted by the Ministry of Labour on Wednesday in Salalah. The symposium, which will run for two days, focuses on exploring how career guidance can contribute to achieving the 'sustainable development goals'.

The opening ceremony of the symposium was led by H E Dr Mahad bin Saeed Baowain, Minister of Labour. During the event, he recognised and honoured



both the speakers and the supporters of the Labour Forum's activities.

Nasser bin Salem al Hadhrami, Director General of Labour Department in Dhofar Governorate, said that the symposium marks the final stage of the Labour Forum, held under the theme 'Together We Work... Together We Innovate and Prosper'. He emphasised the Ministry of Labour's commitment to training and developing national talent through vocational guidance

and counselling."

An official from the ministry said, "This initiative aims to transform the way government services are delivered by focusing on a comprehensive evaluation and improvement strategy."

He added that the key objectives of the initiative include evaluation and improvement of the government unit services; raising of the performance of the institutional proficiency indicators of the government units; beside others.

Arabian Oryx reserve attracts over 1,000 visitors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

More than 1,300 tourists have visited the Arabian Oryx Reserve in the wilayat of Haima, Al Wusta governorate since the beginning of 2024, significantly contributing to Oman's ecotourism.

Sultan bin Mohammed al Balushi, Director of the Arabian

Oryx Department, highlighted that the reserve serves as a vital centre for wildlife conservation and a driver of economic development. It promotes ecotourism and helps visitors connect with Oman's natural history.

The reserve is undertaking several projects, including the planting of 80,000 wild trees to increase vegetation cover and rehabilitate

natural habitats, aiming to sustain local ecosystems. Infrastructure improvements are also underway to enhance the reserve's appeal.

Covering 2,824sqkm, the reserve is home to approximately 900 Arabian oryx, 1,240 sand gazelles, and 160 Arabian gazelles. It also hosts Nubian ibex, sand foxes, wild rabbits, and honey badgers, enriching the visitor experience and deepening their understanding of Oman's natural heritage.



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*Rates as on August 28

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Hyundai Motor targets 30% hike in sales by 2030

Hyundai Motor targets to reach 5.55mn annual global sales by 2030, a surge of 30% from 2023, the company said in its 2024 CEO Investor Day on Wednesday.

The South Korean automaker also aims to sell 2mn electric vehicles (EVs) per year globally by 2030. Hyundai plans to offer a full lineup of 21 EV models and expand hybrid offerings to 14 models by then.

The company will invest 120.5tn won (\$90.3mn) through 2033 to support these initiatives.

OQ Salalah unveils new brand identity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Salalah, a company under the OQ Group based in Dhofar Governorate, announced its new brand identity, OQ Basic Industries (OQBi), on Wednesday. The rebranding is part of OQ Group's strategy to maximise investment returns in the region and establish a distinct corporate identity for its subsidiaries both domestically and internationally.

The launch ceremony was attended by Ashraf Hamed al Mamari, CEO of OQ Group; Hilal Ali al Kharousi, Chief Executive – Commercial and Downstream at OQ Group; along with other officials and employees of the company.

The new identity for OQ Basic Industries represents the operational plants of OQ in the Salalah Free Zone, which include three major facilities: Salalah Ammonia Plant, Salalah LPG Plant, and Salalah Methanol Plant. These facilities play a crucial role in Oman's industrial sector, particularly in advancing clean manufacturing processes and boosting exports.



Launch of OQ Basic Industries brand marks a pivotal step in solidifying company's economic presence in Dhofar region and empowering industrial sector

Notably, all products from the methanol and ammonia plants, along with 90% of the LPG plant's output, are exported. The ammonia plant has a daily operational capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes, producing ammonia used in various industries, including fertilisers, industrial chemicals, urea, cleaning products, and refrigerants.

With a daily capacity of 3,000 metric tonnes, the methanol plant supplies methanol for a wide array of industrial applications, such as the production of plastics, synthetic fibers, and medical and chemical products.

The Salalah LPG Plant, one of Oman's most significant fuel processing projects, is enhancing the gas value chain. It operates at a capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes per day, producing propane, butane, and condensates. Locally, LPG is used to supply cooking gas to Dhofar and Al Wusta governorates, thus increasing added value within Oman. Additionally, 90% of the plant's production is destined for export.

The launch of the OQ Basic Industries brand marks a pivotal step in solidifying the company's economic presence in the Dhofar region and empowering the industrial sector. The brand's vision, 'Leadership through global solutions and exceptional talent,' reflects the company's ambition and commitment to driving growth, implementing best practices, and maintaining a competitive edge in global markets.

The new OQ Basic Industries identity aligns with OQ Group's ambition to support Oman Vision 2040 by pursuing sustainable growth and operational excellence, fostering a people-centric culture, advancing decarbonisation initiatives, enhancing energy efficiency, and promoting local development.

This new brand identity underscores the company's dedication to continuous improvement, the advancement of clean energy industries, and the pursuit of carbon neutrality, contributing to sustainability, economic diversification, and future investment opportunities.

In a press statement, Eng Khalid Khalfan al Asmi, Managing Director of OQ Basic Industries, said that as the energy investment arm of the OQ Group in Dhofar Governorate, the company's new identity reflects its commitment to economic diversification and maximising returns, making it easier to measure progress in industrial initiatives and projects.

Asmi added, "We are proud to unveil our new brand identity, which represents the significant contributions of our industrial sectors to the economic and investment growth of Dhofar Governorate."

He emphasised the company's dedication to fostering innovation through various initiatives while maintaining a strong commitment to sustainability, preserving Omani identity, and continuously seeking growth opportunities that drive progress and align with global and local economic trends.

Oman, Belarus seek to enhance economic and trade relations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omani-Belarusian Business Forum, held in Muscat on Wednesday, discussed ways to enhance economic and trade relations between the two countries, promote trade exchange, and address challenges faced by investors.

The forum was organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and was attended by H E Qais Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, along with several officials from both sides.

The event focused on various economic sectors, including tourism, industry, logistics, import and export, food security, and information and communication technology (ICT).

Eng Hamoud Salim al Saadi, Acting Chairman of OCCI, explained that the chamber has



been working to strengthen economic and trade relations with the Republic of Belarus in recent years by organising numerous high-level visits and meetings, which have resulted in tangible positive outcomes.

In his remarks, Bogdanov Alexei, Minister of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade of Belarus and Head of the Belarusian delegation, emphasised that the forum reflects his country's desire to boost relations with Oman. He added that Oman has

many advantages that could make it a gateway for Belarusian products to promising markets in the GCC and Asia.

He further explained that the forum explored ways to stimulate bilateral cooperation, particularly in the fields of industrial production, agriculture, and information technology.

Alexei noted that Belarus aims to support cooperation in various fields, especially in information technology, as the country hosts an incubator with

thousands of companies working in diverse areas of IT.

During the forum, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between OCCI and the Belarusian National Centre for Marketing and Price Study. The MoU covers the exchange of information related to external trade, the business environment, production and import opportunities, as well as investment and market trends.

Additionally, an MoU was signed between Oman National Engineering and Investment Company (ONEIC) and Belarus Hi Tech Park Company. This MoU pertains to the field of ICT and advanced technologies.

Another MoU was also signed between Omani Euro Food Industries Company and Minsk Dairy Factory, focusing on cooperation in the retail business sector in Oman, with the potential for expansion into neighboring countries and markets.

PPP regulators from GCC countries to convene at PPP MENA Forum in Dubai

Dubai, UAE - The fourth edition of the PPP MENA Forum will take place on September 10-11, 2024, at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers in Dubai. This premier event will bring together senior Public-Private Partnership (PPP) regulators from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman under one roof for the first time, marking a historic moment in the advancement of PPP frameworks across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

This high-profile gathering will feature policymakers, investors, business leaders, and other influential stakeholders dedicated to advancing PPP initiatives across the MENA region. The forum's strategic importance is underscored by its role in facilitating meaningful dialogues and fostering impactful collaborations. The forum aims to showcase and announce groundbreaking projects from these key regions.

The forum will be attended by a diverse group of participants, including policymakers, investors, business leaders, and other influential stakeholders dedicated to fostering sustainable development through PPPs. These attendees represent a range of sectors, underscoring the forum's broad relevance and its role in facilitating strategic collaborations.

Nasser Massoud, Founder and Managing Director of Concept Realisation and WAPPP Chair for the Social Sector PPPs Chapter in the UAE, said, "The fourth PPP MENA Forum is more than just an event; it's a crucible for transformative ideas and



partnerships that drive the social and economic progress of our region. Bringing together such a high caliber of leaders and decision-makers under one roof not only amplifies the impact of our discussions but also accelerates the implementation of innovative PPP projects that can benefit millions."

The 4th PPP MENA forum will also feature a dynamic agenda delivered by a distinguished lineup of subject expert speakers who will provide valuable insights into the latest developments and strategic trends in PPPs.

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Saudi Arabia to convene global minerals sector at 4th Future Minerals Forum in January

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Under the patronage of King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Saudi Arabia is set to host the fourth edition of the world's leading platform on minerals, the Future Minerals Forum (FMF), during January 14 - 16, 2025, at the King Abdulaziz International Conference Center in Riyadh.

The FMF, convened by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, is a unique government-led platform and an inclusive multi-stakeholder conference where the world's top decision-makers come together to drive action on tough challenges, where minerals are placed at the top of the global agenda as key to development, global prosperity, and the energy transition.

Since 2022, FMF has focused on fostering collaboration amongst minerals-producing nations, promoting sustainability initiatives to build trust, and creating a resilient supply chain of critical minerals that the world needs. Building on these suc-



cesses, FMF 2025 will focus on 'Delivering Impact,' the theme of the fourth edition.

Saudi Arabia's Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, Bandar Alkhorayef, disclosed that next year's FMF is focused on creating and driving investment opportunities in the mining and mineral sector.

Alkhorayef stated that FMF has become a prominent global forum for all stakeholders in the mineral sector, from governments to mining companies, financial institutions, service companies, research centers, and academic institutions.

He further pointed out that the conference provides a platform to discuss the challenges facing the mining and minerals sector, with opportunities to proffer concrete solutions at the regional and international levels to tackle these challenges.

"The upcoming Ministerial Roundtable will engage participation from 100 countries. This extensive collaboration will include working groups comprising government bodies and 40 or-

ganisations, including international organisations, NGOs and trade associations. These groups will collaborate to implement the initiatives and strategies established during the last MRT, driving forward the shared goals of sustainable development and innovation in the global mineral sector," the minister said.

The FMF will kick off on January 14, 2025, with the government-led Ministerial Roundtable, and will be followed by the conference and exhibition on January 15 and 16, where participants will be privileged to learn from experts who will take turns speaking on important topics. The conference will also feature exhibitions of the latest mineral innovations and applications.

The event this year will focus on new voices on critical minerals, highlighting downstream perspectives and new regional perspectives, including the Super Region spanning Africa, Western and Central Asia, and Latin America.

Why gold is outperforming nearly everything

Jared Blikre

The yellow metal has forged meteoric gains this year, emerging as the world's second-best-performing asset next to crypto. Its 23% year-to-date gain edges out the megacap-loaded Nasdaq Composite Index – itself up a healthy 18%.

According to BofA Global Research, gold funds just absorbed the largest inflows in four weeks, attracting \$1.1bn. Yet, the broader trend has actually seen \$2.5bn in outflows year to date, suggesting that underlying strength is coming from outside traditional fund flows.

Central banks – especially those of developing countries – have been buying the barbarous relic at a record clip. According to the World Gold Council, central banks have purchased 290 tonnes in the first quarter alone, beating out the prior Q1 record from 2023 and setting central banks on a path to record gold purchases in 2024 that are estimated to easily eclipse 1,000 tonnes.

"Not only is the long-standing trend in central bank gold buying firmly intact, it also continues to be dominated by banks from emerging markets," wrote the



World Gold Council.

In that regard, Turkey tops the buy list this year with 30 tonnes purchased in the first quarter – lifting its gold reserves to 570 tonnes. China bought 27 tonnes

in Q1, making it the 17th consecutive quarter of purchases and also bringing its holdings to 2,262 tonnes. Other notable purchasers include India, Kazakhstan, the Czech Republic, Oman, and Singapore.

gapore.

The central bank buying spree has solidified gold's status as a reserve asset. According to Bank of America (BoFA), gold has now surpassed the euro to become the

world's largest reserve asset second only to the US dollar, representing 16% of the reserve pool.

The precious metal's performance can be attributed to its unique position as a real asset

with one of the lowest correlations to stocks across asset classes, making it a safe haven from market swings and inflation.

According to Tom Bruni, head of market research at StockTwits, in a recent episode of Stocks in Translation, "We're seeing gold being used as an uncertainty hedge."

mining stocks," said Bruni.

BoFA separately highlighted how this latest gold rally isn't like the other advances this century, offering a tantalising glimpse of future bullish potential.

The bank noted this is the third major gold advance in two decades, yet "households have missed this rally." The first two

According to Bank of America, gold has now surpassed the euro to become the world's largest reserve asset second only to the US dollar, representing 16% of the global reserve pool

Bruni also emphasised gold's appeal to traders due to its price action. "With gold breaking out above its 2011 highs, it's drawing significant attention from trend followers and technical analysts alike."

Investors looking for deep, liquid gold markets have a robust choice of futures markets, exchange traded funds (ETFs), and gold miner stocks and ETFs, which tend to be even more volatile than the underlying metal.

"The volatility in gold prices has made it a prime trading vehicle, whether through gold ETFs or

rallies – from 2004 to 2011, and from 2015 to 2020 – attracted big fund flows into gold ETFs. But over the last year, gold bullion and gold miner ETFs have shed \$6.4bn in assets, according to Bloomberg data and Yahoo Finance calculations.

But if last week's large gold inflows were to gain momentum, that trend could signal a perfect storm of retail, institutional, and central bank gold buying is brewing. Why?

Bruni said it best: "Gold is kind of one of these things that operates on vibes."

(Source: Yahoo Finance)



Major oil discovery announced in Egypt

Cairo, Egypt – Khalda Petroleum Company, operating in the Kalabsha Development Area of the Egyptian Western Desert, announced a new oil discovery in the West Fewebs-1 area.

The well was tested by drilling 270 feet into the Paleozoic sands, and the recovery on a 1-inch production opening was 7,165 barrels of oil per day with a quality of 44 degrees and 23mn cubic feet of associated gas.

Electrical logs of the well confirmed the presence of hydrocarbon indications in the Paleozoic component with a total net thickness of 462 feet.

In the meantime, Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Karim Badawi

has announced a new set of incentives aimed at increasing oil and gas production during an extensive meeting with important partners in the sector.

These incentives include new mechanisms that are associated with achieving an increase in production beyond the current rates, as well as an increase in exploratory, developmental drilling activities and production operations.

This will result in allocating the revenue generated from the increased production to settle part of the dues owed to the petroleum sector's partners and provide additional petroleum to narrow the gap between local production and consumption.

WAM

Apple's iPhone revenue falls to \$85.2bn in H1

Cupertino, US – After taking first place in the smartphone market in the last quarter of 2023, Apple's iPhone sales have declined, leading to a significant revenue drop in the first half of the year.

According to data presented by Stocklytics.com, Apple's iPhone sales revenue dropped by \$2.7bn year-over-year, totaling \$85.2bn in H1 2024.

Thanks to Apple's ability to keep its smartphone competitive with new releases and updates, the iPhone has been the tech giant's most successful product since its introduction to the market in 2007, delivering users with the right combination of user experience and status symbol appeal.

Although it remains one of the most heavyweight players in the smartphone market, the rising Chinese competition from brands like Xiaomi, Vivo, and Oppo, known for their aggressive pricing and offering high-specification phones at lower prices, had a significant impact on iPhone sales, causing it a considerable decline in revenue and shipments.

According to IDC Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker, the iPhone maker shipped 50.1mn of its smartphones in Q1 2024, five million less than in the same period last year, while iPhone sales



dropped by almost 10% to \$45.9bn.

The dowsing trend continued in the second quarter of the year. Although iPhone shipments rose by a modest 1.5% year-over-year to 45.2mn, quarterly revenue dropped by \$400mn, totaling \$39.2bn, according to Apple's of-

ficial data.

The aftermath of two straight quarters of decline was a considerable \$2.7bn revenue drop. Statistics show the tech giant grossed \$85.2bn from iPhone sales in H1 2024, down from almost \$88bn in the same period last year.

iPhone unit shipments as a share of global smartphone shipments also declined. The IDC data show Apple claimed a 15.8% market share in the second quarter of 2024, down from 16% in the same period last year. Apple's biggest competitor, Samsung, also saw its market

share decline, falling from 20% in Q2 2023 to 18.9% in Q2 2024.

With the last two quarters bringing a revenue decline, iPhone's revenue share in Apple's total revenue also dropped. According to the company's official data, iPhone sales made up close to 46% of Apple's total revenue in the third quarter of the company's fiscal year 2024 or 2% less than in the same period last year.

This also represents a significant decline compared to a pe-

Apple shipped 50.1mn iPhones in Q1 2024, five million less than in the same period last year, while iPhone sales dropped by almost 10% to \$45.9bn

riod between 2017 and 2020, when iPhone revenue share stood between 55% and 60%. The tech giant's other businesses, such as the iTunes Store and Apple Watch, have seen their revenue shares rise, growing from roughly 5% in 2017 to nearly 30% in Q3 2024.

Europe's rival to Visa and Mastercard soon to roll out in Belgium

Brussels, Belgium – US payment giants Visa, Mastercard, PayPal, Apple and Google Pay are getting a new rival in Europe: it's called Wero and it's already available to some consumers in Germany and by the end of July in Belgium.

Wero is the result of years of work by the European Payments Initiative (EPI), a network of 16 European banks and financial institutions set up in 2021 to provide a single digital payment service for all businesses and citizens.

Based on systems such as the existing Payconiq and iDEAL, the digital wallet allows customers to transfer money with just a phone number, no IBAN required – with the novelty of grad-

ually offering them the option to send money to other users in Europe.

"One of the main advantages of Wero – besides the ability to make international payments – is the speed with which you can easily send and receive money," said a spokesperson for Belgium's KBC, which is introducing the 24/7 system to its customers free of charge from the end of July.

The initiative responds not only to the need to make digital payments easier and instantaneous in the eurozone (which comprises 20 of the 27 EU member states), but above all to the bloc's long-standing desire to achieve strategic autonomy in financial services.



To date, there is no pan-European digital payments solution. 13 of 20 eurozone countries don't have a national card

scheme and rely on international providers, which account for 64% of all electronically initiated transactions with euro area

cards, according to European Central Bank estimates.

"The launch of an entirely European payment service like this has great potential to diversify the banking and payments systems which can bring benefits to consumers and those that are financially excluded," a Brussels spokesperson for the campaigning organisation Positive Money told Euronews.

However, the organisation also stresses that the EPI remains a private initiative launched by private banking institutions and that it should not be seen as a replacement for public money, such as the European Central Bank's forthcoming digital euro – designed as an alternative means of payment that can be used

freely throughout the eurozone.

The European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC) has also welcomed the initiative, while underlining that there is still work to be done to make it available to all consumers.

"For example, by providing payment cards, making sure that consumers are safe when shopping online by offering a charge-back mechanism and being able to use it in all EU countries, or at least the Eurozone," Anna Martin, its financial services policy officer told Euronews.

In 2025 and 2026, Wero's services will be enhanced with new features, including the ability to pay merchants online and on invoices via QR codes and other features such as buy now-

pay later.

"We're starting with person-to-person transactions, but Wero's goal is to offer all types of payments through a single wallet, combining the simplicity, immediacy and security of banks," said Martina Weimert, CEO of EPI, following the launch of Wero in Germany.

BNP Paribas, ING and Société Générale are among EPI's 16 banks and financial institutions that will integrate this service into their banking applications in the second half of the year.

France will follow in the footsteps of Germany and Belgium this autumn, with the Netherlands and Luxembourg joining later in 2024.

(Source: Euronews.com)

Al Mouj Golf strengthens with new leadership

Al Mouj Golf, one of the Middle East's premier golf destinations, has bolstered its management team with three industry-leading appointments, set to add to the club's continued success.

These strategic appointments see Scott McCaw join as General Manager, Ryan Smith as Golf Operations Manager, and Mahmood al Zadjali take up the post of Associate Manager Sales and Marketing, all based at the stunning coastal club in Muscat.

The trio bring almost 50 years of professional knowledge in golf and their specialist fields, underscoring Al Mouj Golf's commitment to delivering world-class experiences to its members and guests, furthering its reputation on the world stage.

McCaw, who will play a crucial role in the ongoing successes of Al Mouj Golf, joins the organization with over 15 years of experience in managing Troon Golf facilities, including The Grange Golf Club in Australia and two Troon facilities in the neighbouring United Arab Emirates.

"Joining Al Mouj Golf, one of the most prestigious golf destinations in the Middle East, is an amazing opportunity," said Scott McCaw, the newly appointed General Manager.

"I'm thrilled to work with such a talented team to build on the success here and provide outstanding experiences for our members and guests. The aim is to elevate Al Mouj Golf's reputation even further, making it a



leading destination in the across the world." Ryan Smith, originally from

South Africa, takes up the role of Golf Operations Manager, having amassed 14 years of experience

at Troon Golf facilities in Dubai, The Montgomerie Golf Club Dubai and more recently Arabian

Ranches Golf Club. Smith brings extensive operational expertise and a passion for golf to Al Mouj,

looking to deliver unforgettable experiences for all golfers. Mahmood al Zadjali, an

Omani native, has been named Associate Manager of Sales and Marketing. With eight years of experience in the media industry, Mahmood's strong background in sales, marketing, and creative strategy will be key in driving Al Mouj Golf's marketing efforts and strengthening community ties.

"These key appointments reflect Al Mouj Golf's ongoing dedication to excellence and its vision to further solidify its position as a leading golf destination in the region," said D J Flanders, Executive Vice President of

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D J FLANDERS

Troon International, the international division of the world's largest golf and golf-related hospitality management company, Troon. "The combined global expertise and local knowledge of Scott, Ryan, and Mahmood, are set to drive the next phase of growth, promising the type of wonderful experience expected at both Al Mouj Golf and a Troon Golf facility," Flanders added.

Indian School Bousher organises award ceremony

Indian School Bousher hosted its annual award ceremony with great enthusiasm, celebrating the outstanding achievements of its students.

The event was honoured by the presence of chief guest Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors for Indian Schools in Oman; and guest of honour Ashwini Sawrikar from the Academic Committee of the Board of Directors for Indian Schools in Oman, along with Dr Sayed Fazlur Rehman, convener and chairperson of the sports and co-curricular sub-committee, Piyush Agarwal, treasurer and chairperson of the finance sub-committee, Shanmugam Purushottaman, chairperson of the building and infrastructure sub-committee, Dr Vinod Patchigalla, chairperson, HR sub-committee, Sowmiya Parameswaran, chairperson, staff welfare and grievance redressal sub-committee; and

Remya Damodaran, member of the building and infrastructure sub-committee.

Chief guest Dr Manickam and guest of honour Ashwini Sawrikar inaugurated the 'Hall of Fame', a new initiative created to highlight the international achievements of the school's young talents. The event commenced with graceful melodies of faith, followed by the welcome address and the prelude of Annual Awards by Prabhakaran P, Principal of Indian School Bousher.

Sampriti Anand, a student of Grade XI in Indian School Bousher was recognised for becoming the youngest paragliding pilot in Oman. This was followed by the felicitation of awardees across various categories by the chief guest, the guest of honour and the members of School Management Committee. Over 500 students were recognised for their academic excellence.

Fuso Oman's new showroom in Azaiba opens with Canter Euro 5 deliveries

General Automotive Company (GAC) the authorised distributor of Fuso in Oman marked a significant milestone with the inaugural delivery of the Made in Japan Fuso Canter 3-Ton Euro 5 Double Cabin Cargo model from its new showroom in Azaiba, Muscat to Al Fayafy Trading & Contracting Establishment.

This delivery signals the beginning of a new chapter for Fuso Oman and a strategic partnership between GAC, and Al Fayafy, showcasing the Fuso brand as a key operational asset for small and medium enterprises in Oman.

The delivery of Fuso Canter Euro 5 to Al Fayafy is a testament to the trust and confidence placed on the Fuso brand by SMEs in Oman. As a fast-growing SME in Oman, Al Fayafy has recognised the exceptional value offered by Fuso commercial vehicles and has chosen the Canter to enhance its operational capabilities and productivity.

Over the years, Fuso has solidified its position as a trusted companion for SMEs, with many emerging companies relying on



Fuso commercial vehicles for their everyday business needs. By consistently providing high-quality, reliable products & services and a nation-wide network covering major Oil and Gas areas across Oman, Fuso is empowering SMEs to overcome challenges and achieve their business goals.

Equipped with advanced technology and safety features, the Fuso Canter Euro 5 is designed to meet the rigorous demands of any industry. Its spacious double

cabin configuration provides comfortable space for both the driver and passengers, while its strong Japanese build ensures reliable performance even in the harshest working conditions.

The truck's upgraded Euro 5 engine and fuel-efficient technology not only reduces operating costs but also minimises environmental impact which is a major achievement. Additionally, the Fuso Canter's robust chassis and suspension system ensure superior handling and load-car-

rying capacity.

It is noteworthy that the new Fuso showroom in Azaiba, Muscat perfectly underscores the brand's commitment to providing businesses with an endearing ownership experience. The showroom offers a modern and welcoming environment where customers across all industry sectors can explore the latest Fuso models, avail themselves of expert advice, and experience the brand's renowned quality and durability.

Welcoming Al Fayafy Trading & Contracting Establishment to the Fuso family, Kamil Abdullah al Balushi, Sales Manager of the New Showroom, said, "Our new facility in Azaiba is designed to showcase the best of what Fuso has to offer, and the Japanese Canter Euro 5 exemplifies the advanced technology and reliability that Fuso stands for. We are committed to ensuring that our customers receive top-quality products and services that meet their needs."

Abdullah Khamis al Hasani, proprietor of Al Fayafy Trading & Contracting Est, expressed his enthusiasm about the new acquisition.

"The Fuso Canter is more than just a truck; it's a strategic investment for our company's future. Its innovative features and fuel efficiency make it an ideal choice for us, aligning perfectly with our vision for growth and excellence," he stated.

"We are confident that this truck will play a key role in our success ahead, and we look forward to a strong partnership with GAC and the Fuso brand."

Olive Harvest Festival returns to Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar for 3rd year

Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort announces the return of the much-anticipated Al Jabal Al Akhdar Olive Harvest Festival, set to take place from September 26 to 28. The third celebration of the region's bountiful olive harvest promises an unforgettable experience, featuring storytelling, olive oil pressing, fun-filled competitions, kids activities and culinary demonstrations led by renowned chefs Martin Aristondo and Riccardo Passoni.

Located on the Green Mountain, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort offers a unique Mediterranean-style climate, a rarity in Oman and the Middle East, which allows for the cultivation

of a rich variety of fruits and vegetables. This unique environment nurtures the humble olive, giving rise to a thriving local olive oil industry. Local farmers began growing the crop after the former King of Spain brought olives as a gift on a visit to the country.

The annual festival celebrates this precious crop, with a series of events highlighting the quality and variety of olives that grow in the area.

Guests will have the opportunity to engage in olive harvesting, a rewarding activity that connects participants with the local area of Al Jabal Al Akhdar and its traditions. Additionally, visitors can explore the journey of olive



oil production at a local factory, witnessing the meticulous process from pressing to packaging.

The Local Guru will provide guests with a deeper insight into olive farming in the area through

immersive storytelling encounters. These experiences provide an enriching glimpse into the

heritage and craftsmanship that define this cherished tradition.

Culinary aficionados can look forward to a series of live cooking demonstrations, where chefs Martin Aristondo and Riccardo Passoni will showcase their expertise using freshly harvested olives. Chef Aristondo, visiting from NH Collection San Sebastian Aranzazu in his native town, is known for his innovative approach to traditional Basque cuisine. Chef Aristondo will be showcasing an exquisite three-course set menu at Al Qalaa, while Chef Passoni, Executive Chef at NH Collection Milano President, brings a refined Italian flair at the award-winning Bella

Vista Restaurant. Their presentations will highlight the versatility and richness of the olive, transforming this humble ingredient into gourmet masterpieces.

The mountain resort is honoured to host Jorge Marcelo Robles, a renowned Italian expert in olive oil production. Robles will share the rich traditions of Italian extra virgin olive oil production and offer insights on preserving its superior quality. To celebrate the season with an Italian twist, Bella Vista will feature his exceptional olive oil in their exclusive set-menu by Chef Passoni, offering guests a unique culinary experience infused with authentic Italian flavours.

Israeli army launches major operation in the occupied northern West Bank

Jerusalem - The Israeli army launched a major military operation in the occupied northern West Bank early on Wednesday, the largest of its kind in two decades.

A military statement said the operation aims to counter what it called 'terrorism' in the northern West Bank.

The military operation, the largest in two decades since a major offensive in Jenin in 2002, involves two army brigades, helicopters, drones and bulldozers, Israeli daily *Yedioth Ahronoth* said.

Army forces raided the Jenin refugee camp and cordoned off two hospitals in the city as part of the large-scale operation, the Israeli public broadcaster KAN said.

Israel Hayom newspaper said the attack, which involves the army, Border Police and the Shin Bet domestic security service, aims to thwart 'the threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs)'.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said early on Wednesday that the army operation includes the 'temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents' from areas in the northern West Bank.

In a statement on X, Israel Katz said the country's army was working in Jenin and Tulkarem to thwart what he called 'terrorist infrastructure against Israel in the West Bank'.

He added that the army's operation includes 'temporary evac-



The military operation is the largest in two decades since a major offensive in Jenin in 2002

uation of Palestinian residents' in areas in the northern West Bank in measures similar to those that the Israeli army has taken in the Gaza Strip.

Plan to storm hospital
Meanwhile, a Palestinian official

said on Wednesday that the Israeli army was planning to break into the Jenin Governmental in the northern occupied West Bank. Speaking to Anadolu, Jenin Governor Kamal Abu al-Rub said the Israeli army notified the Palestinian Civil Liaison, a contact

point with Israel, of its intention to storm the facility.

"The Israeli army may storm the hospital at any moment," he said, calling for international action to stop the Israeli war against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The hospital is located near the Jenin refugee camp around which the Israeli army has slapped a tight siege since early morning.

11 killed in West Bank
The Israeli army killed 11 Pales-

Army forces raided the Jenin refugee camp and cordoned off two hospitals in the city as part of the large-scale operation, the Israeli public broadcaster KAN said

tinians in early Wednesday raids in the northern occupied West Bank.

In a brief statement, the Palestinian Health Ministry said six people in the city of Jenin and five others in Tubas were killed in separate Israeli army

incursions.

The Israeli army has confirmed it was carrying out military raids in several areas in northern West Bank, including in Jenin, Tubas and Tulkarem.

In separate statements, Palestinian groups, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, said their fighters were engaged in clashes with Israeli forces in Jenin and Tulkarem.

In the course of the Israeli army's devastating onslaught against the Gaza Strip, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been displaced from their homes and areas under evacuation orders by the Israeli army.

Over the past few years, Israeli forces have conducted regular raids in the West Bank that have escalated since the war on Gaza began last October.

Palestinians in the West Bank have also been violently attacked by illegal Israeli settlers.

The new deaths bring toll in the West Bank since October 7 to at least 662 Palestinians and nearly 5,400 others injured by Israeli army fire, according to the Health Ministry.

Anadolu Agency

US: Joe Biden overrode internal warnings to build Gaza aid pier

Washington, D.C., US - US President Joe Biden overrode warnings from his staffers in order to approve a floating pier off the Gaza coast that was meant to facilitate aid deliveries but which was repeatedly met with disaster, according to a watchdog report published Tuesday.

Multiple officials within the United State's humanitarian aid agency, USAID, raised concerns that using the temporary pier would distract from diplomatic efforts to push Israel to lift its restrictions on overland aid deliveries, USAID's Office of the Inspector General said in a scathing report.

It said 'multiple USAID staff expressed concerns' that focusing on the pier, known as Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS), 'would detract from



US President Joe Biden

the Agency's advocacy to open land crossings in Israel and Egypt', which were deemed to be 'more efficient and proven avenues for delivering aid to Gaza'.

Biden announced during his State of the Union address in March that he ordered the con-

The US military announced the end of the pier's mission on July 17, after a series of disasters that led to the pier being repeatedly towed to an Israeli port for repairs

struction of JLOTS. The announcement came after months of diplomatic wrangling failed to convince Israel to loosen its restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza via its border crossings with Gaza.

"Once the President issued

the directive, the Agency's focus was to use JLOTS as effectively as possible," the inspector general's office said.

The US military announced the end of the pier's mission on July 17, declaring it 'complete' after a series of disasters that led to the pier being repeatedly towed to an Israeli port for repairs.

The report blamed what it called 'external factors' on impairing USAID's ability to distribute aid to Gaza via the temporary pier once it was constructed in May.

The report said Pentagon and Israeli military 'security requirements took precedence' over the agency's efforts to get food and other aid into Gaza via the pier.

Anadolu Agency

EU urges to address violations of status quo in Jerusalem

London, UK - The EU foreign policy chief on Wednesday called on the international community to address concerns on repeated violations of the status quo of holy sites in Jerusalem.

Josep Borrell wrote on X that he shares Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi's concerns about the repeated violations of the status quo of the Holy Sites that are 'under continued threat including from (Israel's National Security) Minister (Itamar) Ben Gvir'.

"They are fully legitimate and must be addressed by the international community," he said, quoting Safadi's remarks that urged the UN Security Council and all members of the international community to take 'immediate effective action to stop the illegal Israeli measures' that vio-



EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell

late the historical and legal status quo at occupied Jerusalem's Holy Sites. "Regional stability is at stake," Borrell warned.

On Tuesday, the Jordanian minister said that the Security Council must adopt a binding resolution preventing Israel from further violations and escalation

at Al Aqsa Mosque, adding: "It must do so before it is too late, the situation is already explosive."

Ben-Gvir claimed on Monday that Jews have the right to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying he would build a synagogue at the flashpoint site.

The status quo, in place since before the 1967 Israeli occupation, designates the Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem, under the Jordanian minister of Awqaf and Islamic affairs, as responsible for managing Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is a place of worship for Muslims only.

However, since 2003, Israeli police have unilaterally allowed illegal settlers to enter Al-Aqsa Mosque on weekdays, excluding Fridays and Saturdays, without the approval of the Islamic Waqf.

Anadolu Agency

UN calls for humanitarian pause in Gaza to administer polio vaccines

Geneva, Switzerland - UN agencies and their partners have urgently called for a humanitarian pause in the war in Gaza to ensure that more than 640,000 children can receive polio vaccinations.

The request underscores the dire need for an immediate halt in hostilities to prevent the spread of the disease among vulnerable populations in the region. According to a statement from the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), the agencies are prepared to administer the vaccines, but the deteriorating security situation necessitates a temporary ceasefire on humanitarian grounds.

The agencies warn that delaying the vaccination campaign

could significantly increase the risk of a polio outbreak among children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNRWA and other partners, has already delivered 1.2mn doses of type 2 polio vaccine to Gaza.

They plan to vaccinate over 640,000 children in the region. The critical shipment of vaccines was supported by Qatar Charity, which donated US\$3mn to aid UNRWA's efforts in Gaza.

Sam Rose, UNRWA's senior deputy field director, highlighted the challenging conditions in Gaza, where displaced families and frequent relocations due to Israeli evacuation orders have created an environment con-



UNICEF in coordination with WHO and UNRWA plans to vaccinate over 640,000 children in the region

ducive to the spread of the polio virus. He emphasised that the lack of access to basic necessities like food, water and health

care exacerbates the situation, making the rapid spread of the virus a real threat.

The situation in Gaza has

been further complicated by reports of the first polio case detected in the region in 25 years on August 16.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health raised concerns that this could indicate the presence of numerous undetected cases. The discovery of this polio case is coupled with ongoing issues such as poor sanitation and water access.

UN officials have expressed deep concern about the health crisis unfolding in Gaza, especially since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7 last year. Since then, approximately 50,000 babies have been born in Gaza, many of whom have not received any vaccinations due to the ongoing crisis.

The UN and its partners are now calling on the international community to pressure Israel to

allow the safe passage of polio vaccines into Gaza, emphasising that without immediate action, the health of hundreds of thousands of children hangs in the balance.

More than one million polio vaccines have arrived in Gaza, but WHO spokesperson Margaret Harris told Anadolu that the vaccination campaign can only commence once the safety of healthcare workers and access to all parts of the region is ensured.

Harris explained that the re-emergence of polio in Gaza, the first case in 25 years, is primarily due to the collapse of the health system and widespread environmental destruction.

Anadolu Agency

Japan issues emergency alert, braces for Typhoon Shanshan

Tokyo, Japan - Japan issued an emergency warning as it braced for a powerful typhoon as it slowly approached the southwest of the country, threatening to bring heavy rain and strong winds.

Typhoon Shanshan was about 120km (75 miles) south of the southern island of Yakushima on Wednesday morning as it headed north towards Japan's southwestern island of Kyushu with winds of up to 180km per hour, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said.

The agency said the typhoon is expected to reach the southern part of Kyushu and make landfall on Thursday. JMA issued a high-level warning for the Kagoshima prefecture of strong winds, high waves and tides as well as heavy rain.

Southern Kyushu is expected to receive 500mm (19.6 inches) of rain in the 24 hours through Thursday morning and 600mm in the 24 hours through Friday morning, the JMA added.

Over 800,000 ordered to evacuate

Authorities issued evacuation



orders for more than 800,000 residents in the Kagoshima prefecture of Kyushu and in the central prefectures of Aichi and Shizuoka.

In Aichi, two presumed occupants of a house that collapsed in a landslide during heavy rains were missing. Three residents of the house were res-

cued, public broadcaster NHK reported.

Shanshan is expected to approach the central and eastern regions, including the capital Tokyo, around the weekend, the JMA said.

Airlines cancel some flights

Airlines and rail operators cancelled some services over the next few days. Kyushu Railway said it would suspend some Shinkansen bullet train services between Kumamoto and Kagoshima Chuo from Wednesday night and warned

of further possible disruptions.

ANA Holdings said it would cancel a total of more than 210 domestic flights scheduled to depart or arrive in southwestern Japan between Wednesday and Friday, affecting about 18,400 passengers.

Japan Airlines said it would cancel 170 domestic flights through Thursday. A total of 10 international flights operated by both airlines will also be suspended.

Toyota shuts factories

Automaker Toyota said it is

suspending production at all of its plants in Japan because of an approaching typhoon.

Some 28 production lines at 14 group companies will cease operations from Wednesday afternoon. One line at truck maker Hino Motors will resume operations on Thursday morning, the company's spokesman added.

Typhoon Shanshan is the latest severe weather to hit Japan, following last week's Typhoon Ampil, which also caused power outages and evacuations.

DW

Mpox must be nipped in the bud: WHO

Cases have recently been confirmed in Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and Sweden

London, UK - The announcement that a more deadly strain of mpox had been discovered in Sweden earlier this month was the first warning that the virus had spread outside of Africa, where it has caused a deadly outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) have declared mpox a public health emergency of international and continental concern, respectively.

As of Monday, the Africa CDC had recorded a total of 22,863 mpox cases - 3,641 confirmed and 19,222 suspected - and 622 deaths across 13 African Union member states this year, with DR Congo accounting for a vast majority of all cases and fatalities.

Cases have recently been confirmed in countries around the world, including Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and Sweden.

However, the WHO has stressed that the mpox virus



As of Monday, the Africa CDC had recorded a total of 22,863 mpox cases - 3,641 confirmed and 19,222 suspected

What it means is that there's something that we need to nip in the bud as soon as possible. And that's really what it means, rather than meaning that we're in a COVID situation

MARC-ALAIN WIDDOWSON

strain, known as Clade 1, is 'not the new COVID', despite this being the second emergency alert relating to the virus from the global health agency in two years. "What it means is that there's something that we need to nip in the bud as soon as possible. And that's really what it means, rather than meaning that we're in a COVID situation," Dr Marc-Alain Widdowson, who is leading the mpox response at WHO Europe, told Anadolu.

The outbreak requires a collaborative international effort to deal with it, but 'I think it doesn't mean that we're in a COVID situation at all, or even likely to be', he said.

While there are similarities between mpox and COVID-19, as both are zoonotic diseases, meaning they are transmitted from animals to humans, there are also major differences.

Largely a respiratory disease, COVID transmits mainly by droplets and air, and less via direct contact, while the mpox virus transmits mainly via direct skin to skin contact and less, if any, via droplets and air.

Just like COVID, the mpox dis-

ease manifests as a flu-like illness but also as swollen adenoids, and the hallmark of the disease, virus-containing rash-like blisters that can be very painful, Niklas Arnberg, a Swedish professor at the Department of Clinical Microbiology at Umea University, told Anadolu.

Widdowson warned that the world should brace itself for more pandemics in the future and that infectious diseases are a threat to human health which need to be understood as global issues.

"These are global problems, and we can't just look at our own

Polaris Dawn mission delayed again

Florida, US - The launch of Elon Musk-led company's private charted spaceflight to launch four civilians into Earth's orbit for a historic walk in space, the first of its kind, has been delayed again, SpaceX announced on Wednesday.

The launch of 'Polaris Dawn' mission initially scheduled to launch from NASA's Kennedy Space Centre on Tuesday was delayed for Wednesday due to a helium leak. The mission is now delayed again due to predictions of bad weather off the coast of Florida where the crew capsule will splash down in the ocean at the end of the flight, the company said.

"Due to unfavourable weather forecasted in Dragon's splashdown areas off the coast of Florida, we are now standing down from tonight and tomorrow's Falcon 9 launch opportunities of Polaris Dawn," SpaceX said.

Teams will continue to monitor weather for favourable launch and return conditions, the company said.

"Our launch criteria are heavily constrained by forecasted splashdown weather conditions," billionaire entrepreneur and mission commander Jared Isaacman said in a post on X.

ANI

Nigeria's flooding claims 170 lives

Lagos, Nigeria - At least 170 people were killed and nearly 2,000 injured in rain-and-flood-related incidents across Nigeria during two weeks of flooding, which displaced over 205,000 people, according to Flood National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) data released by the country's national emergency department on Tuesday.

According to the latest NEOC figures updated on Tuesday and released by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), so far, 170 people have been killed, 1,941 injured, and 205,338 displaced from their homes in nearly all states.

Eight states in the country's northern region have been hit hard, with rain continuing in several regions and meteorological authorities forecasting the downpour to last for the next month.

Floods have also washed away standing crops on tens of thousands of hectares of land, raising concerns about food availability in the West African nation this year.

Ahmad Saleh, a grain farmer in



Eight states in the country's northern region have been hit hard, with rain continuing in several regions

northeast Yobe State, told Anadolu that the majority of farmers are worried that the impact of the flood on farms will exacerbate the country's food crisis.

Ezekiel Manzo, a spokesperson for the National Emergency Agency, told Anadolu that the agency has activated its monitoring system to tackle and manage flood incidents in collaboration

with emergency officials from all states.

Floods have caused significant damage in West African countries such as Nigeria's neighbours Niger and Chad, as well as Burkina Faso, which are struggling economically and facing food insecurity.

Niger is experiencing its worst floods since 2020, according to

the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Niamey, the country's capital. Over 4,000 people have been displaced since flooding caused by torrential rains began in mid-June. Following a massive flood, thousands of Chadians fled their homes in the plain south in search of refuge.

Anadolu Agency

Pacific Island leaders agree to regional policing plan: Australia

Canberra, Australia - Pacific Island leaders agreed to a regional policing plan on Wednesday, said Australia. The plan was agreed upon during a meeting of Pacific Islands leaders in Tonga.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said leaders had agreed to the Pacific Policing Initiative, a controversial move seen as trying to limit China's role in the region. Member states will maintain the freedom to determine their level of participation.

"The first task of an international leader is to look after the security and safety of our residents, and that is what this is about. Making sure that by working together, the security of the entire region will be much stronger and will be looked after by ourselves," the Australian PM told reporters.

The plan proposes creating up to four training centres and establishing a crisis reaction force of about 200 officers to be dispatched across the region as needed.



The first task of an international leader is to look after security and safety of our residents, and that is what this is about

ANTHONY ALBANESE

"The entire Pacific is the biggest unpoliced space in planet Earth," Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape told the media.

Australia is a close ally of the US and other Western countries and also a member of the Quad group, which also includes the US, India and Japan.

Australia has been the leader in terms of regional security so far and has also led peacekeeping missions in the Solomon Islands and training in Nauru, Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

China's influence in the region

However, some Pacific nations

such as Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands have close ties to China and expressed concerns that the regional policing plan represents a 'geo-strategic denial security doctrine' designed to box out China.

"We are basically reviewing our national security strategy and everything, so it will be part of the conversation. The matter is still going on. The forum is not yet done," Solomon Islands' top diplomatic official Colin Beck told the AFP news agency.

Apart from infrastructure, China is trying to grow its presence in military and policing in the region.

DW



Ukrainian drones attack oil depot in Russia’s Rostov

Moscow, Russia - An oil depot in Russia’s Kamensky district in the Rostov region was attacked by a Ukrainian drone, local authorities said on Wednesday.

The drone sparked a fire, setting ablaze several fuel tanks, according to reports. Videos shared on social media showed large tanks burning in the night. “There are no casualties. Firefighters are extinguishing the fire,” Rostov’s governor, Vasily Golubev, said on the Telegram app.

The attack was confirmed by the Baza Telegram channel, which is close to Russian security services. It said three tanks were burning at the Kamensky oil depot after two drones fell on the area. Russia’s Defence Ministry also said they destroyed four other drones over the region overnight.

Another oil depot at Rostov’s Proletarsk district was attacked about 10 days ago. The tanks there are still on fire, Russian authorities said.

Meanwhile, Russia said it wanted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to take what Moscow called a ‘more objective and clearer’ stance on nuclear safety on Wednesday.

A day prior, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi visited Russia’s Kursk plant and warned of a serious nuclear threat at the site. The plant had been damaged from a drone strike, he said without clarifying who was responsible.

“Pointing fingers is something that I, as director general of the IAEA, must take extremely seriously. But it is obvious that you cannot separate what we have seen here from the recent military activity that we have seen,” he said.

Grossi said the structure did not have a containment dome that might have offered some protection in the event of a strike.

The IAEA has urged both Moscow and Kyiv to keep fighting away from nuclear sites due to the risk of a catastrophe. Russian authorities have accused Ukraine of the attack. Ukraine has not yet responded to this accusation.

“We see both the assessments and the work of this structure (the IAEA), but each

Another oil depot at Rostov’s Proletarsk district was attacked about 10 days ago. The tanks there are still on fire, Russian authorities said.

time we want a more objective and clearer expression of the position of this structure,” Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a radio interview, as per Russian state news agency RIA.

“Not in favour of our country, not in favour of confirming Moscow’s position, but in favour of facts with one specific goal: ensuring safety and preventing the development of a scenario along a catastrophic path, to which the Kyiv regime is pushing everyone,” she added.

On August 6, Ukrainian forces attacked close to the Kursk region, about 40km (25 miles) from the plant. Russia is still trying to repel the strike.

DW

Visiting Berlin, UK’s Starmer vows relations ‘reset’ with EU

Starmer’s visit comes in the wake of a recent wave of unrest in the UK after a knife attack

Berlin, Germany - UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer arrived in Germany on Wednesday, his first bilateral visit since taking office seven weeks ago.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier welcomed Starmer before talks with Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who received him with military honours in Berlin. Scholz and Starmer have already met a couple of times since Starmer became the British prime minister. In early July, they both attended the NATO summit in Washington and the European Political Community Summit in England.

Starmer’s Labour Party won the July 4 general election with a large majority in Parliament, which propelled him to the premiership. But Starmer’s visit comes in the wake of a recent wave of unrest in the UK after a knife attack led to anti-immigration riots, which officials say were stoked by far-right elements and false information, in the community of Southport and elsewhere last month.



Scholz and Starmer have already met a couple of times since Starmer became the British prime minister

Rebuilding ties to EU, Germany

The UK formally left the European Union in 2020, but it still remains a member of NATO, the G7 group of industrial democracies and the G20 group of the world’s biggest economic powers. Starmer has pledged to rebuild trust with European allies that was damaged by Brexit. His timing may be symbolic, as his Conservative predecessor, Rishi Sunak, waited 18 months before visiting Berlin.

However, despite vowing to ‘reset’ the UK’s relations with the EU, he ruled out rejoining the bloc. “That does not mean reversing

Brexit or re-entering the single market or the customs union, but it does mean a closer relationship on a number of fronts,” the prime minister said at a press conference after talks with Scholz.

His government said ahead of the trip that strengthening ties with Germany is ‘crucial’ for tackling illegal migration and ‘boosting economic growth across the continent and crucially in the UK’.

At the press conference alongside Scholz, Starmer announced a new treaty between the UK and Germany, calling it a ‘once-in-a-generation chance to deliver for working people in Britain and Germany’.

Saying that the treaty would foster ‘deeper links on science, technology, development, people, business (and) culture’, Starmer said he believed the treaty would bring ‘that most precious of goods for both of our countries: economic growth’.

A new defence agreement would build on the ‘already formidable’ cooperation between the two countries, Starmer said.

The treaty is expected to be finalised before the end of the year.

Military support for Ukraine

Scholz and Starmer also discussed military support for

Ukraine. Both countries have come under pressure over their aid for Kyiv to help it fight off Russia’s invasion.

At the press conference, Starmer said that ‘no new or different decisions had been made’ on the use of either British or German weapons sent to Ukraine, but that his government was following the strategy of the former UK government in supporting Kyiv ‘consistent with the approach of other key allies, including Germany’.

He said the UK had a ‘commitment to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes’.

DW

IT outage: Eindhoven Airport grounds flights

Amsterdam, The Netherlands - A problem with IT networks in the Netherlands on Wednesday affected an Eindhoven Airport and several public services, including the coast guard and military police.

“Due to problems with IT-networks at the Ministry of Defence there is no air traffic possible at Eindhoven Airport at this moment,” the second largest airport in the Netherlands wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

The Dutch Defence Ministry also reported its own disruption on Wednesday, citing an IT problem. “Employees are experiencing login problems and in some cases there is an impact on



service provision because telephone numbers are not reachable,” the ministry said in a statement.

Eindhoven Airport did not say what caused the problem, but in

sterdam, appeared to be operating normally.

Airlines were trying to get passengers from Eindhoven to Düsseldorf airport in Germany to continue their journeys, local media reported.

Several other public services in the Netherlands appear to have been affected by the outage. Several government agencies, including the coast guard and the military police, which is responsible for border protection, reported computer failures.

The coast guard said in a statement that it was ‘not reachable’ by phone or radio due to the outage. It urged people in an emergency situation to call 112.

The military police’s contact centre was also unavailable, authorities said.

Dutch emergency services also experienced a nationwide outage that disrupted their usual alarm and communication system. However, they said national emergency numbers were still working.

It was not immediately clear if there was a connection between the disruptions.

Sources at the National Cybersecurity Centre told local media outlet AD that there is no evidence yet of a cyberattack, but added that one outage could be contributing to the other.

DW

Malawi seeks to reduce infant mortality through nutrition project

Lilongwe, Malawi - Esther Chimwere vividly recalls her two miscarriages. The 35-year-old mother of four lives in Phalombe District in Malawi, situated along the border with Mozambique.

Chimwere - who dropped out of school due to early marriage - admitted that she did not value the importance of attending prenatal sessions and adherence to good nutrition while she was pregnant.

In these classes, known as Under-Five clinic sessions, health officials teach pregnant women about family planning, good hygiene practices and what foods they should eat to improve their health and that of the unborn baby.

“I should have had six children had it not that I miscarried on two occasions. I did not take advice from health workers to eat a balanced diet meal,” Chimwere said.

Her four children suffered from malnutrition and waterborne disease, which caused her to spend more time at a nearby

health centre than in farming fields.

Surveys conducted in Blantyre and Nsanje districts show that malnutrition was a major challenge even though many farming families had enough food.

Lonely Issah, 29, a mother of four from Traditional Authority Kapeni in Blantyre, told DW that her children showed signs of malnutrition due to poor knowledge of how to prepare and eat a balanced diet.

“When one of my children got sick, and taken to the hospital that is where I was told about the significance of preparing and eating a balanced diet meal, including importance of attending Under-Five clinics as a mother,” Issah said.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Malawi has one of the highest rates of malnutrition in Southern Africa. Nearly 36% of Malawian children have stunted growth. The root cause lies in a poor diet, driven by poverty and food insecurity and



According to WHO, Malawi has one of the highest rates of malnutrition in Southern Africa

Malawi is still grappling with the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Freddy in March this year. Nearly 659,000 people are currently internally displaced, including many children

worsened by climate change.

The UN children’s agency UNICEF recently warned that at least 573,000 children under five are at risk of suffering from malnutrition in Malawi. UNICEF warned that food insecurity due to the effects of climate change

threatens to reverse past gains in reducing chronic malnutrition.

The German state-owned investment and development bank, KfW, funded UNICEF to implement a five-year plan to champion nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, early childhood development and farming programmes.

The Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM), The Hunger Project, and the Government of Malawi are implementing the project.

“We teach women how to cook a balanced diet meal, observe good sanitation, hygiene and how to breastfeed,” Jenipher Kaliati, who works with Hunger Project, told DW. She said the project also encourages families to have a garden in their backyards.

Esther Chimwere, who participates in the project, spoke highly of it.

“This is the sixth pregnancy, and with counselling, I now attend antenatal services,” Chimwere said, adding that she

was looking forward to having a bouncing baby. “I also have a garden and do poultry farming. This now enables me to have a well-prepared balanced diet meal,” Chimwere said.

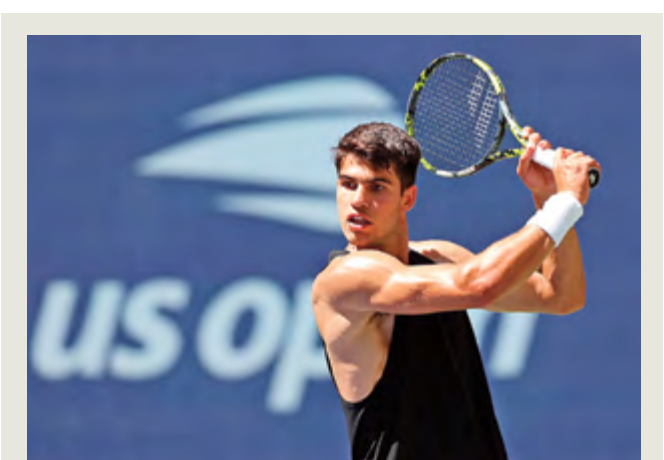
“My children are healthy than before. I also feel much healthier.”

Mary Namaya, a nutrition coordinator for the Farmers Union of Malawi based in Traditional Authority Lundu in Blantyre rural, told DW that they also advocate for early childhood development programmes in various communities.

“We also noted that many children are malnourished, we decided to start providing porridge to children so that they grow healthier,” Namaya said.

Malawi is still grappling with the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Freddy in March this year. Nearly 659,000 people are currently internally displaced, including many children. The Malawian government promotes healthy diets through the project.

DW



Carlos Alcaraz

Alcaraz relishes intense rivalry with good friend Djokovic

New York, US - Carlos Alcaraz said he enjoys a good friendship with Novak Djokovic away from the court but the Spaniard also relishes the intense rivalry he has with the Serbian great as the pair move towards a possible final match-up at the U.S. Open.

The Spaniard's improvisational style stands in stark contrast to Djokovic's cold-blooded efficiency and despite the 16-year age gap between them Alcaraz says they bring out the best in each other's games.

"Every time that we step on the court, we play really high (level) tennis," Alcaraz told reporters after his first round win at the U.S. Open on Tuesday.

"Every time that we face each other, it has been a really good and intense match."

A changing of the guard appeared complete earlier this year when the 21-year-old Alcaraz thrashed 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic in the Wimbledon final in July to de-

fend his crown and capture his fourth major title. But fortunes can change quickly in tennis.

Alcaraz was almost inconsolable after falling to Djokovic in the Olympic final at Roland Garros earlier this month, saying he felt that he had let down Spain.

Djokovic described winning the Olympic gold medal as his "biggest sporting achievement".

"We have a really good friendship off the court," Alcaraz said. "We talk a lot in the lockers every time that we see each other around."

"Once we step on the court, there are no friends here on tour, but after that, after the court, I have a really good relationship with a lot of players, and one of them is Novak."

With Djokovic seeded second and Alcaraz third, the pair could be on a collision course to meet in the final in the frenzied atmosphere of New York.

"New York, it's crazy," Alcaraz said.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Sinner and Alcaraz reach second round at US Open

New York, US - Top seed Jannik Sinner left the doping controversy that marred his US Open preparations in the rearview mirror on Tuesday with a largely drama-free start to his campaign while fellow title contender Carlos Alcaraz also advanced after a minor blip.

Women's top seed Iga Swiatek overcame Kamilla Rakhimova 6-4 7-6(6) to reach the second round before two-times champion Naomi Osaka stunned 10th seed Jelena Ostapenko 6-3 6-2 on her return to New York after a maternity break.

The spotlight was firmly on Sinner in the day session as the Italian overcame a slow start to seal a 2-6 6-2 6-1 6-2 win over American Mackenzie McDonald a week after he was cleared of any wrongdoing over two failed tests in March for a banned drug.

Sinner, who has maintained his innocence, has been under intense scrutiny after escaping a doping ban but the 23-year-old was pleased to have the backing of fans on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"The response from fans, I feel it has been great, also throughout when the news came out, in the practice sessions, there was a lot of support, which I'm very glad and happy about," Sinner said.

"It is still a little bit, you know, not easy. You have to go day by day ... I was curious to see how



Jannik Sinner

the reaction of the fans has been, but it has been very positive."

Alcaraz, another Flushing Meadows crowd favourite, gifted Australian qualifier Li Tu a set but the 2022 champion steadied the ship before closing out a 6-2 4-6 6-3 6-1 victory inside three hours.

Former champion Emma Raducanu was unable to avoid the exit door as the Briton fell 6-13-6

The response from fans, I feel it has been great, also throughout when the news came out, in the practice sessions, there was a lot of support, which I'm very happy about

JANNIK SINNER

6-4 to Sofia Kenin, while fourth seed Elena Rybakina overcame a late fightback to beat Destanee Aiava 6-1 7-6(1).

French Open and Wimbledon runner-up Jasmine Paolini was made to work hard by 2019 New York champion Bianca An-

dreescu but went through 6-7(5) 6-2 6-4.

Playing in her final Grand Slam before retiring at the end of the season, Danielle Collins was beaten 1-6 7-5 6-4 by fellow American Caroline Dolehide.

"Everybody has been so en-

couraging and it's a compliment that people want to see me play more," Collins said.

"But at the same time, I'm just kind of ready for that next chapter. The journey has been great."

Fifth Daniil Medvedev fought off a spirited challenge from Dusan Lajovic to win 6-3 3-6 6-3 6-1, but 11th seed Stefanos Tsitsipas was not so lucky, losing 7-6(5) 4-6 6-3 7-5 to Thanasi Kokkinakis.



Britain's Dan Evans celebrates his victory against Russian Karen Khachanov

Evans stuns Khachanov in longest match at US Open

New York, US - Britain's Dan Evans beat Russian Karen Khachanov 6-7(6) 7-6(2) 7-6(4) 4-6 6-4 in the longest ever U.S. Open match of the professional era on Tuesday, moving to the second round after an extraordinary fight back from four games down in the final set.

The 184th-ranked Evans, once the British number one, beat world number 22 Khachanov in five hours and 35 minutes, exceeding the previous record of 5:26, when Sweden's Stefan Edberg beat American Michael Chang in the 1992 semi-final.

Evans put up 14 aces across the gruelling affair that dragged on so long the Briton said he had to look at the monitor at one point to remember what set he was in. "When you're a kid, you're just told to fight until the end. I mean, that's sort of rule one," said Evans.

"I've done that pretty consistently for my career. It sort of paid off a bit today."

Court 6 rarely draws much of a crowd at the sprawling Billie Jean King National Tennis Center but droves of fans had assembled by the time the match crossed the five-hour mark, overwhelming the stands despite the sweltering conditions.

It looked as though Khachanov had the Briton on the ropes when he went 4-0 up in the final set, but Evans found a bit of fight left in him to fend off four break points in the fifth game before converting a break point chance in the sixth.

Fans jumped to their feet as Evans fended off another break point in the seventh game and broke into thunderous applause as Khachanov dropped his serve in the eighth.

The Russian shouted with

frustration as he let another break point chance slip through his fingers in the ninth but the 2022 semi-finalist refused to go down without a fight as he saved two match points in the final game.

Evans braced himself on the net in apparent exhaustion briefly after sending over an unreturnable forehand to win a 22-shot rally on the final point, setting up a meeting with Argentine Mariano Navone.

The 34-year-old Briton has made it as far as the fourth round in Flushing but tumbled down the rankings this year as he struggled to find his best form and said the win on Tuesday was an obvious boost.

Evans said he was "immensely proud" after the match.

"I think that's the overriding feeling more than anything," he told reporters.

Osaka turns heads in tutu 'super suit' in US open return

New York, US - Twice U.S. Open winner Naomi Osaka played like a tennis superhero on Tuesday, but instead of a cape, her super suit had bows.

She set the tennis world and the internet ablaze as she stepped out on Louis Armstrong Stadium donning a custom-made Nike kit designed by Yoon Ahn featuring a ruffled skirt and a jacket, shoes and headphones adorned in matching bows.

"I think for me when I put on the outfit it's almost like a super suit, so I try to channel that," the former world number one said.

The green-and-white outfit, one of two colour schemes Osaka will showcase in Flushing Meadows this year, drew inspiration from Japan's colourful, playful and self-expressive Harajuku style, she said. "I chose the colour like at least a year ago. I definitely love to be involved in everything I do, whether it's fashion or anything else," she told reporters after dispatching 10th seed Jelena Ostapenko in her opening match on Tuesday.

Like tennis style icon Serena



Naomi Osaka

I feel like everyone was staring at me funny. And then I put the headphones on. That was a real killer

NAOMI OSAKA

Williams before her, Osaka said she channels strength from expression. But she did take pause before stepping out on the hard court.

"When I was putting on my outfit today, I was like, 'ah, I hope this isn't too much'. Because I had the tutu and then I had the bow jacket and it was green."

"I feel like everyone was staring at me funny. And then I put the headphones on. That was a real killer."

Once on the court, Osaka's killer focus and devastating serve prevailed as she held serve throughout and blasted nine aces past Ostapenko en route to a straight-sets victory.

Former Poland goalkeeper Szczesny hangs up gloves

Turin, Italy - Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny has retired from professional football, the 34-year-old said on Tuesday, weeks after leaving Serie A club Juventus by mutual agreement.

Szczesny spent seven seasons at Juve and had one year left on his contract. He had been linked with a move to fellow Italian side Monza and Saudi Pro League club Al Nassr.

Having started his career at Premier League club Arsenal, Szczesny won the Serie A title



Wojciech Szczesny

three times with Juventus as well as the Coppa Italia on three occasions. He also had spells at Brentford and Roma. He played 84 times for Poland.

"I left Warsaw, my hometown, in June of 2006 to join Arsenal with one dream — to make a living out of football," Szczesny posted on Instagram. "Little did I know it would be a start of a journey of a lifetime."

"Everything that I have and everything that I am I owe to the beautiful game of football."

'IRREPARABLE LOSS'

Uruguayan defender Izquierdo, 27, dies after collapsing during Copa Libertadores match

São Paulo, Brazil - South American football was in mourning on Tuesday following the death of Uruguayan defender Juan Izquierdo, who collapsed on the pitch after suffering an irregular heartbeat during a Copa Libertadores game last week.

The 27-year-old had been undergoing medical treatment since collapsing during Nacional's game against Brazilian side Sao Paulo on Aug. 22. Izquierdo fell to the ground

death of our beloved player Juan Izquierdo," Uruguay's Nacional wrote on X.

"We express our most sincere condolences to his family, friends, colleagues and loved ones. All of Nacional is in mourning for his irreparable loss."

The Uruguayan Football Association said the news was deeply painful, while the national governing bodies of Argentina, Peru, Paraguay and Colombia extended their condolences to

Izquierdo fell to the ground unconscious in the 84th minute without coming into contact with another player. He was taken off the pitch in an ambulance before being treated at the Albert Einstein Hospital.

unconscious in the 84th minute without coming into contact with another player.

He was taken off the pitch in an ambulance before being treated at the intensive care unit of Albert Einstein Hospital.

The hospital said in a statement Izquierdo had died as a result of brain death following a cardiopulmonary arrest associated with cardiac arrhythmia.

"It is with the deepest sorrow and shock in our hearts that the Club Nacional announces the

Izquierdo's family and friends.

"South American football is in mourning," said Alejandro Dominguez, the president of South American soccer's governing body CONMEBOL.

Brazilian Football Federation President Ednaldo Rodrigues said a minute's silence would be observed in every match organised by the federation on Wednesday.

Brazilian side Sao Paulo said they were deeply saddened by the news, calling it a "sad day for football".



Juan Izquierdo

Saud joins Roma to make Saudi history

Rome, Italy - Saud Abdulhamid made history as the first Saudi footballer to complete a permanent move to a club in one of Europe's top five leagues when he joined Italian side Roma from Saudi Pro League Champions Al Hilal on Tuesday.

Italian media reported the deal for the 25-year-old defender was worth 3 million euros (\$3.35 million).

"Roma is pleased to announce the signing of Saud Abdulhamid on a permanent deal from Al Hilal," the club said in a statement.

The Saudi International was a key player for Jorge Jesus's side last season, netting four times and providing nine assists in all competitions to help Al Hilal win a domestic treble.

In his first interview with the club, Abdulhamid discussed his decision to move to Italy.

"I thank God for being here, I thank the club, the Friedkin family and the fans for the trust they have shown in me and for giving me this opportunity."

"Roma is a great club, I received this offer and I couldn't

turn down such an important club, I thank God for letting me get here and being able to find this agreement with the club."

"Serie A is a big change for me, both as a footballer and as a person, a great personal success, God willing I will make all the Saudi people proud."

"In my time at Al Hilal I played with great players and I learned a lot from them, professionalism and above all I acquired a great mentality from them."

"Roberto Mancini is a great coach, he advised me to choose Roma, God willing I will do my best with Roma."

"I will do my best as a footballer, my characteristics are speed, I like to play across the right wing, I like to fight with my heart for every ball and never give up."

"Daniele de Rossi is a legend of the club, I spoke to him a bit, he explained to me what job awaits me and if God willing I will do what the coach expects of me."

"There are many players I admire, but my idol is a former Roma player, a very strong footballer, Maicon."



Saud Abdulhamid

Manchester City's Joao Cancelo joins Al Hilal



Joao Cancelo

Manchester, England - Manchester City's Portugal defender Joao Cancelo has joined Saudi Arabian club Al Hilal, both sides said on Tuesday.

Cancelo joins Al Hilal in a deal worth an initial £21 million (\$28m), with the 30-year-old set to earn £15m a year, according to media reports.

Cancelo, who made 154 appearances for City, scoring nine

goals joined Pep Guardiola's side from Juventus in the summer of 2019 and won the Premier League title and Carabao Cup in each of his first two seasons at the Club.

He also made 26 appearances in the 2022/23 season before switching to Bayern Munich on loan in the January transfer window.

The 30-year-old then spent

I would like to thank my teammates, the coaches, all the staff at City and the fans for everything during my time here

JOAO CANCELO

the entire 2023/24 campaign on loan in Spain with Barcelona.

Before completing his move, Cancelo said: "I would like to wish everyone at City continued success in the future."

"I had many very special moments during my time here at this great Club."

"I would like to thank my teammates, the coaches, all the staff at City and the fans for ev-

erything during my time here."

Director of Football, Txiki Begiristain, added: "I would like to thank Joao for his contribution during a remarkable period at City."

"He made a big impact in title-winning campaigns and was a huge influence on the pitch."

"I would also like to give him my best wishes for the future and the rest of his career."

Arsenal sign Mikel Merino from Real Sociedad

London, England - Arsenal have signed Spain midfielder Mikel Merino from LaLiga side Real Sociedad on a long-term contract, the Premier League club said on Tuesday.

No transfer details about the 28-year-old midfielder were disclosed, but British media reported that the London club will pay about 31 million pounds (\$41 million) for him. "Mikel is a player who will bring us huge quality with his experience and versatil-

ity," said manager Mikel Arteta.

Merino was part of the Spain squad who won Euro 2024, featuring in all seven matches in the tournament and scoring a late winner in extra time against Germany in the quarter-final.

He becomes Arsenal's third signing of the transfer window, after the arrival of Italy defender Riccardo Calafiori and Spain goalkeeper David Raya, with the club activating an option to buy him from Brentford following his loan



Mikel Merino

move a year ago.

"Mikel will make our squad significantly stronger, with his technical ability, together with his strong and positive character and personality. As we all saw in the summer, Mikel is also a winner, with his strong performances throughout the Euros helping Spain win the tournament."

Merino can operate as a deeper-lying midfielder and it is thought he will complement Declan Rice, who played a 'box-to-

box' role at times last season.

He also provides Arsenal boss Arteta with another option to compete with Rice, Jorginho, Thomas Partey and Martin Odegaard in midfield.

Merino has previous experience of the Premier League, having spent a year at Newcastle before moving to Real Sociedad in 2018, where he played alongside Odegaard in 2019-20 when the Norwegian was on loan from Real Madrid.



Rui Patricio

Atalanta sign Portuguese goalkeeper Patricio

Bergamo, Italy - Portuguese goalkeeper Rui Patricio has signed for Atalanta on a one-year deal as a free transfer, the Serie A club said on Tuesday.

The 36-year-old left AS Roma after the expiry of his contract, being replaced as first-choice keeper by Mile Svilar when Daniele De Rossi took over as manager.

Patricio has earned 108 caps for Portugal and was part of the team that won the 2016 European Championship.

Europa League champions Atalanta announced the signing hours after goalkeeper Juan Musso moved to Atletico Madrid on loan until the end of the season.

Tessmann joins Ligue 1 side Lyon

Olympique Lyonnais have signed U.S. international Tanner Tessmann from Venezia, the Ligue 1 club said in a statement on Tuesday.

Tessmann signed a contract until June 30, 2029 in a deal worth 6 million euros (\$6.70 million).

Tessmann, 22, spent the last three seasons at Italian side Venezia, in Serie A and then Serie B.

"Olympique Lyonnais is delighted to welcome Tanner Tessmann, who becomes the first American in history to wear the club's jersey," the club said in a statement.

Brighton sign Turkey defender Kadioglu from Fenerbahce

Brighton, England - Brighton & Hove Albion have signed left back Ferdi Kadioglu from Turkish side Fenerbahce, the two clubs said on Tuesday.

The Premier League club will pay 30 million euros (\$33.56 million) in guaranteed payments with an additional 5 million euros in performance-related add-ons, Fenerbahce said on Public Disclosure Platform (KAP), while Brighton also confirmed the deal on social media platform X.

The 24-year-old defender, who joined Fenerbahce in 2018, has a Turkish father and a Dutch-Canadian mother and played up



Ferdi Kadioglu

to under-21 level for the Netherlands before switching his allegiance to Turkey in 2022.

He was a stand-out player for Turkey in their 2-1 win over Austria in the last 16 of this year's European Championship. Jose Mourinho-coached Fenerbahce, who were runners-up in last season's Turkish Super Lig, added that they would receive 10% of any future transfer fee that Brighton received for the player.

Kadioglu's transfer equals the Super Lig record held by French defender Sacha Boey, who moved from champions Galatasaray to Bayern Munich

for 30 million euros (\$32.85 million) in January.

Liverpool agree deal for Mamardashvili

Liverpool have agreed a deal to sign Valencia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili, with the player set to move to Anfield ahead of next season, the Premier League club said on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old, whose transfer is subject to a work permit and international clearance, will spend the remainder of the current campaign with the LaLiga club, where he has made 102 appearances.

DANI'S DREAM DEBUT

New signing Olmo's goal hands Barcelona comeback win at Rayo Vallecano

Madrid, Spain - A late goal by new signing Dani Olmo gave Barcelona a nervy 2-1 comeback victory at Rayo Vallecano on Tuesday, as the LaLiga leaders continued their perfect start to the season with a third consecutive win.

After missing Barca's first two games as he was unregistered due to the club's struggles to comply with LaLiga's Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules, Olmo came off the bench in the second half to give Barca the spark they needed on his debut after signing from RB Leipzig. He struck the winner in the 82nd minute after Pedri's goal on a counter-attack in the 60th minute had cancelled out Unai Lopez's early opener for Rayo.

The win put Barcelona top of the standings with nine points from three games, two ahead of second-placed Villarreal. Rayo are eighth on four points.

Vallecas has not been a happy hunting ground for Barcelona in recent years and the Catalan giants have failed to win a league game at the raucous stadium on the outskirts of Madrid since November 2018.

Rayo dominated proceedings in the first half and took the lead from a quick counter started by Jorge de Frutos who set up Lopez to score in the ninth minute.

Alvaro Garcia and Isi Palazon had great chances as Rayo started the game aggressively, pressuring Barca high and bursting forward on counter attacks.

But Barca were livelier after



Barcelona's Dani Olmo celebrates with Lamine Yamal after scoring against Rayo Vallecano on Tuesday

the break, with manager Hansi Flick bringing Olmo off the bench.

Olmo's electric performances were central to Spain's Euro 2024 triumph and he finished as the tournament's joint top scorer with three goals and was one of

six Spain players in UEFA's team of the tournament.

He fired a thunderous strike from long range in the 57th minute that cannoned off the crossbar and was a constant menace for Rayo's defence.

Barca levelled in the 60th minute thanks to a quick counter attack started by Pedri, who passed to Raphinha in the left channel and burst forward to receive the ball back from his teammate before guiding his finish into

the bottom right corner.

Barca thought they had scored a second through Robert Lewandowski in the 71st minute, but referee Cesar Soto Grado ruled out his effort due to a foul in the build up after a VAR review.

Olmo's electric performances were central to Spain's Euro 2024 triumph and he finished as the tournament's joint top scorer with three goals

However, Olmo gave Barca a deserved win after a fine combination with Lamine Yamal, who drove to the byline before cutting the ball back for Olmo.

Olmo delighted with his start

Madrid, Spain - Barcelona's attacking midfielder Dani Olmo said on Tuesday he was delighted with his dream debut for the Spanish giants, coming off the bench to score the winner in a hard-fought 2-1 comeback victory at Rayo Vallecano.

Signed earlier in the summer from RB Leipzig after playing a central role in Spain's Euro 2024 triumph, the 26-year-old Olmo had to wait two games until Barca could register him due to LaLiga's strict financial control rules.

But Olmo said it was worth the wait, as his return to the club where he spent seven years in the youth academy before joining Dinamo Zagreb aged 16 was better than expected.

"I've been looking forward to my debut for a long time and it couldn't have been in a better way," Olmo told DAZN on Tuesday.

"It's been many years since Barcelona won here, it's such a tough place to play so the end result is just unparalleled.

"I've felt very good, I was really looking forward to it."

Young Boys stun Galatasaray to qualify for new-look Champions League

Istanbul, Turkey - Switzerland's Young Boys beat Galatasaray 1-0 in the second leg of their Champions League playoff on Tuesday to qualify for the league phase of the refreshed competition following a 4-2 aggregate win.

Czech champions Sparta Prague beat Sweden's Malmo 2-0 for a 4-0 aggregate win as they also reached the Champions League's new league phase while RB Salzburg drew 1-1 at home with Dynamo Kyiv to advance after their 2-0 first-leg win.

Young Boys forward Alan Virginus scored in the 87th minute after the Swiss champions defeated Galatasaray 3-2 in their home leg last week thanks to Joel Monteiro's first-half brace and a late penalty converted by Filip Ugrinic.

Young Boys went close to in-



Alan Virginus of Young Boys scores against Galatasaray on Tuesday

creasing their advantage in the first half of the second leg when Silvere Ganvoula hit the post and forward Ebrima Colley was flagged for offside when he headed home in the 31st minute.

Galatasaray, UEFA Cup winners in 2000, missed out on the Champions League for the second time in three years. Regulars in the Champions League group stage, they have not reached the knockout rounds since 2013-14, when they made it to the last 16.

Sparta Prague doubled their 2-0 first-leg advantage over Malmo to qualify for Europe's elite club competition for the first time since 2005.

Lukas Haraslin opened the scoring for the Czech league leaders in the 80th minute from the spot before setting up Albion Brahmani for the second.



Carlo Ancelotti with Kylian Mbappe

Ancelotti not worried about Mbappe's damp start at Real Madrid

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti is not worried about Kylian Mbappe's start at the club after the France striker failed to score in his opening two league games.

Mbappe, 25, joined the LaLiga and Champions League winners as a free agent from Paris St Ger-

with Real and struggled in a draw at Mallorca and in a four home win against Real Valladolid.

"His last goal was on August 14th. It has only been two weeks since, that is no reason to worry. Neither we are not worried as a club, nor him," Ancelotti told a press conference on Wednesday, ahead of Thursday's LaLiga match at Las Palmas.

"He is very happy here, delighted, sure he wants to score in the next game. So does Vinicius, who has yet to score this season and I don't see him worried either.

"(Mbappe) is progressing really well, I see him doing better every day, excited, motivated, training well. He is very humble. I think his adaptation is going really well."

Ancelotti said a slow start was to be expected after key midfielder Toni Kroos retired, while they are also trying to fit Mbappe into a new centre-forward role.

"Every year has its own challenge because there are changes in the structure of a team, the system that is implemented," Ancelotti said.

Brighton thrash Crawley in League Cup but O'Riley injured

London, England - Matt O'Riley hobbled off minutes into his Brighton & Hove Albion debut before the high-flying hosts swept aside third-tier Crawley Town 4-0 in the second round of the League Cup on Tuesday.

The Denmark midfielder went straight into the starting lineup a day after completing his 25 million pound (\$33.15 million) move from Celtic to the Premier League but lasted only nine minutes.

He was helped off after treatment for an apparent left ankle injury following a heavy tackle.

Simon Adingra slotted the Seagulls ahead in the 31st and Brighton, second in the Premier League after two games, finished with a flourish as Jeremy Sarmiento, Adam Webster and Mark O'Mahony scored in the



Brighton's debutant Matt O'Riley suffered an ankle injury following a heavy tackle and had to leave the field after just nine minutes

second half. Their third win in three games was another boost for Brighton ahead of a tough trip to Arsenal in the league next Saturday.

There were no upsets for any of the Premier League sides in action with Fulham, Crystal Palace and Leicester City all seeing off lower-ranked opponents without drama. Struggling Everton were made to sweat at home against fourth tier Doncaster Rovers, who could even feel unfortunate to go in goalless at the break, before Sean Dyche's side ran out as 3-0 winners.

After shipping seven goals without reply in the Premier League, Everton finally found the net through Tim Iroegbunam in the 53rd, new signing Iliman Ndiaye in the 74th and Beto in the 83rd after missing an earlier

chance. Fulham were 2-0 away winners at League One Birmingham City, Palace swept past Norwich City 4-0 and promoted Leicester also walloped League Two Tranmere Rovers 4-0 for their first win of the season.

The second round is the start of the competition for those Premier League clubs not playing in Europe this season, with the likes of Manchester City, Chelsea and Arsenal joining in the third round.

Stoke City were among the night's high scorers, the Championship side winning 5-0 at second tier rivals Middlesbrough.

Dutch winger Million Manhoef scored two of those goals within seven minutes of coming on as a second half substitute.

Sheffield Wednesday won 5-1 at Grimsby Town while Preston North End beat Harrogate 5-0.

Mbappe is very happy here, sure he wants to score in the next game. So does Vinicius, who has yet to score this season

CARLO ANCELOTTI

main in June, bringing an end to a transfer saga that had rumbled on for years.

Despite making a promising start by scoring on his debut to help Real earn a 2-0 win over Europa League champions Atalanta in the UEFA Super Cup final two weeks ago, Mbappe has yet to find the net in two LaLiga games



14

GROUND REALITY

Give an interesting spin to your mince and enjoy a delicious protein



15

IN TOWN

Indian Social Club celebrates the 78th Independence Day of India



16

ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town, in Hollywood and Bollywood

RUWI CLOCK TOWER

TICK-TOCK TALK

Hubert Vaz

The most recognisable icon of downtown Muscat - the Ruwi Clock Tower - is currently undergoing a facelift after faithfully telling the time to people in the capital for the past 33 years. In fact, the clock is yet going strong.

Installed during the fleeting years of the last century of the second millennium, in 1991, this towering edifice had been the focal point of all socialising activity in the evenings during the early 90s when families as well as bachelors flocked to this spruced up precinct to unwind and spend a few hours of leisure.

Locals as well as old-time expatriates, who had started their journey in Muscat as youngsters then, will remember the host of cultural programmes conducted at this location as well as the weekend film shows screened on the walls of the main edifice of the clock tower to offer people some entertainment since only few had satellite television to their disposal.

50m high, four clocks

Over the years, this modern clock tower, opposite Muscat's Chamber of Commerce, has become one of the key landmarks of Ruwi, providing great photo opportunities for tourists as well as citizens/residents. It is surrounded by a pleasing spread of lawns as well as tiled sections, accompanied by fountains, that provide a soothing ambience and ample space for people to relax.

The eight beautiful mo-

saic tile scenes on the four sides of this clock tower - four on the outer walls and four on the inner walls are considered masterpieces, depicting scenes from Oman's dynamic and colourful history. The 50m tall tower has four clocks on all sides, adorned with magnificent motifs and mosaics.

Fountain repairs in city

Sources at Al Hajiry Trading Co, which is carrying out the renovation works, informed that refurbishment/repairs of fountains have been undertaken at eight locations in Muscat, under the supervision of Muscat Municipality. These include one each at Bait al Baraka roundabout, Seeb Palace roundabout, the dancing fountains at Riyam, two Khanjar fountains at the Ministries district, one at Al Sarooj (Qurm), one at Al Bustan roundabout as well as those at the three horse installations at the entrance leading to Al Bustan palace hotel.

As for the clock tower precinct, besides repairing and retiling the fountains, the project includes civil works like plastering of the tower structure as well as enhancing the lighting (for all fountains). The clock tower as well as the fountain repairs at all the mentioned locations will

be ready before the upcoming National Day in November, the sources said.

Malik al Hinaï, a prominent citizen and former director of Bait al Baranda, said, "Iconic structures are essential in any city, as it sets the tone of the area and era. The Ruwi clock tower is such, as it was erected during the modern time. It's piazza, is just across the Central Business District, where bank head offices and commercial offices were once located.

"In the 70s & 80s, roundabouts and intersections defined the town, and placing structures was required to denote where you were. Oman didn't have road markings nor proper addresses. Hence, one described where they were or where to go by stating landmarks. This particular piazza hosted events such as Ramadan iftars as well as outdoor events for the community, a place to relax.

"Clock towers in any city not only mark a time and beautification of the area, but it defines progress and future. Renovating and refurbishment of this tower is a welcome gesture, suggesting continuity."

Need improved facilities

Muneer Manubhai Toprani, businessman residing at Old Muscat and hailing from one of the oldest 'Banyan Family' in Oman, suggested that the facilities at the clock tower need to be improved with better seating, more lighting, reviving the old TV screens to air cultural/ sports pro-

OVER THREE DECADES AFTER ITS INSTALLATION, THE RUWI CLOCK TOWER AND ITS PRECINCT IS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING A FACE-LIFT. THE RENOVATION WORKS ARE EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETE WELL BEFORE THE UPCOMING 55TH NATIONAL DAY (NOVEMBER 18)

grammes, besides bringing the old CBD area, which now appears dead in the evenings, back to life. He also felt there was need to give a face lift to Muttrah corniche, Muttrah Souq, Riyam Park, Al Inshrah Bay and Kalbooh Park

Some members of a Transformation Forum for intellectual professionals in Oman also suggested that the entire clock tower precinct needs to be spruced up to beckon visitors as it appears deserted every evening for many reasons. Others suggested providing flowerbeds and more trees, benches with shade, cafes, kid's play area as well as providing a bus-stop to ferry people to and from here.

Enhancing its appeal

Ali al Barwani, a prominent businessman and former chief of the Oman Road Safety Association, said, "Considering the memories that many visitors carry along the years, it's clear for me that the Ruwi Clock Tower is valued for its space and the opportunities it provides for relaxation and family time. However, I shall also highlight a few areas where improvements could enhance the experience further.

"One suggestion is the addition of shaded areas or cooling stations to make the space around the tower more comfortable during the daytime. Another potential enhancement could be the development of more facilities for children, such as play areas or interactive installations that align with the historical and cultural significance of the tower. Lastly, improving accessibility and providing a variety of amenities like cafes/eateries, could encourage longer stays and make the location a more appealing destination for both locals and tourists.

"Overall, the renovation of the Ruwi Clock Tower presents a wonderful opportunity to not only restore this beloved landmark but also to enhance its appeal and functionality, ensuring it remains a vibrant and integral part of Muscat's community life."

The clock tower area is now cordoned off for the renovation but come November 18, and people can enjoy the new look there.

It's clear for me that the Ruwi Clock Tower is valued for its space and the opportunities it provides for relaxation and family time

Ali al Barwani



cook-up

GROUND REALITY

Mince spins

Ground Beef and Broccoli Stir Fry

Ingredients

½ cup reduced sodium soy sauce

1tbsp honey

4 cloves garlic – minced

2cm piece fresh ginger - peeled and grated

1tbsp cornstarch

½tbsp sesame oil

400g ground beef

½ medium yellow onion - chopped

1 large head broccoli - cut into florets and blanched

1tbsp toasted sesame seeds

3 medium scallions - sliced

Cooked rice, or cauliflower rice - for serving (optional)

Method

In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, honey, garlic, ginger, and cornstarch. Set aside. Add the sesame oil to a large deep skillet over medium-high heat. Add the beef and onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until the meat is just about cooked through, about 5 minutes.

Pour in the reserved sauce, stir to combine, and cook for 1 minute. Add the broccoli and cook for 1 more minute. Divide mixture evenly among 4 plates or shallow bowls, layering rice first, if using.

Top each with sesame seeds and scallions.

WHEN YOU WANT SOME DELICIOUS PROTEIN ON YOUR PLATE, AND YOU WANT IT SOON, JUST GRAB SOME MINCE AND GIVE IT AN INTERESTING SPIN

Mediterranean Ground Beef Stir Fry

Ingredients

1tbsp olive oil

1 red bell pepper - deseeded and diced

12-15 cherry tomatoes - sliced in half

250g baby spinach leaves

4 garlic cloves - minced

2 green onion - thinly sliced, white and green parts separated

400g ground beef

½tsp dried oregano

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper - to taste

2tbsp crumbled feta

Method

Heat the oil in a large pan on medium-high heat. Add the bell pepper and cherry tomatoes and saute for 4-5 minutes, until the tomatoes are blistered, and saucy. Add the garlic and stir another minute.

Add the spinach and white parts of the green onion. Note that the spinach will take up most of the pan, but it will wilt down. Stir for another 2-3 minutes, until the spinach has wilted. Remove these veggies to a plate.

Add the ground beef, oregano, salt, and pepper to the pan, and use a spatula to break up the meat. Cook the ground beef until it's browned, then drain off any excess grease.

Transfer the veggies back to the pan, add the green parts of the green onion, and stir until warmed through. Garnish with crumbled feta before serving.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Sri Lankan Male - (CGMA ACMA+CPA+BBA+MAAT) Looking for Asst. Finance Manager/Chief Accountant role. 12 years of experience in various industries, looking for a suitable placement. Key areas: MIS, VAT, Audit, Fin Reporting, Cashflow Mgt, Budgeting, ERP etc) Available to join. Contact: +968 78773250 & 92095240 Email : ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

Indian male over 15 years experience in a leading MNC for civil project, fitout project and planning engineer with valid Oman driving licence is looking for a suitable placement. Contact: +968-96568922

An experienced teacher with master's in Food Science & Nutrition, seeking roles in elementary school teaching/food quality department in hotels or food companies. Contact: +968-79115006 92781722 email: abreezaanees60401@gmail.com

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take a break

IN TOWN

ISC Independence Day celebration



The Indian Social Club hosted a cultural programme to mark India's 78th Independence Day last weekend



Photos: V K Shaleer

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
If people came with warning labels, yours would say something like "Do not test me." Heaven help anyone who decides that it might be fun to see just how far you can be verbally pushed, because right about now it won't be very far at all. Of course, as fiery as you are, this situation isn't all that rare.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Making a new friend isn't easy for you, especially now. You're feeling even more secretive lately, so if you do decide to let someone in on what you're feeling and how you've arrived at your decision, they'd better understand just how special that makes them. Then again, if they didn't, would you have let them this close to start with?



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Making a new friend isn't easy for you, especially now. You're feeling even more secretive lately, so if you do decide to let someone in on what you're feeling and how you've arrived at your decision, they'd better understand just how special that makes them. Then again, if they didn't, would you have let them this close to start with?



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You've always had a great relationship with your superiors. In fact, they often treat you as if you're a peer; and most of the time you feel as if you're part of a family. That's exactly how you'll feel now when the higher-ups actually come to you for some advice. If coworkers' tongues start to wag, don't be too stressed about it.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
When you're happy, everyone is happy. There's no way around it. Your lively nature just won't allow anyone to be depressed in your immediate vicinity, not if you can do anything about it. At the moment, you're feeling pretty darned fine, which means you can and will do your very best to make everyone around you as happy as humanly possible. Stop short of interfering with the celebration.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
If you're not sure about how to handle a certain situation that's far too delicate for prime time, don't mention it to anyone, not just yet. You know as well as they do that there are still issues to be resolved, and until then, keeping quiet is best. You're in charge and you know it too.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Relationships are always your number one priority, but at the moment, that's going to go double. Your lucky other half, or prospective other half, will enjoy all kinds of wonderful attention, all aimed at ensuring that they know not only how deeply you care but also that those feelings aren't going anywhere. It's a given that your feelings will be returned, but it will be nice to have that conversation.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Relationships are always your number one priority, but at the moment, that's going to go double. Your lucky other half, or prospective other half, will enjoy all kinds of wonderful attention, all aimed at ensuring that they know not only how deeply you care but also that those feelings aren't going anywhere.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Generosity and excess is a dangerous pair of qualities to tote around, and it takes a special kind of person to do it. Those are your burdens. For the most part, you're up for the challenge and happy about it. Still, you really should ensure that everyone you're so very kind to appreciates what you're doing, and that they're not just taking you for granted.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You've never been shy, no matter what the subject or where you happen to be when it's broached. You won't be shy now, but if you start to feel a bit of shyness coming on, remind yourself that if anyone has the right to be confident, it's you, especially since you've been so diligent and hardworking for so long. Relax. Let the rest of the world worry about your feelings for a change.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
If you're at all worried that you might say or do something to offend someone, especially if you're pretty darned sure about who it is and what the situation might be, take someone along for the ride who's equipped to mediate in situations such as this. You know who to ask because you've probably had to call on them in the past for just such a reason. And remember that it's not you they'll be watching out for.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You're not much in the mood to shop at the moment, but that doesn't mean there isn't something out there that will appeal to you so much that you won't go through hell or high water to have it delivered to your door within 24 hours. If you're not sure that you can afford it, call the one person you know who will talk you out of it without making you feel like you've cheated yourself.

BOGGLER

M	A	D	E
R	R	S	T
C	B	P	D
A	U	O	T

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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. What is the capital of Qatar



- A. Manama
- B. Cairo
- C. Doha
- D. Dammam

2. What is arugula?

- A. Fish oil
- B. Salad leaf
- C. Brass nail
- D. Holy book

3. Who was Sigmund Freud?

- A. Badminton champion
- B. Aeronautical scientist
- C. Founder of psychoanalysis
- D. British playwright

Answers
1. C
2. B
3. C

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

entertainment



81ST VENICE FILM FEST KICKS OFF

The 81st edition of the Venice Film Festival officially kicked off on Wednesday with the eyes of the film world focused on the Lido.

Long-running festival director Alberto Barbera and his team have unveiled a star-studded lineup, including possible awards season contenders. But which premieres can't be missed amid the busy programme? THR's chief movie critic David Rooney looked through the selection of the big Italian festival to pick some of the most intriguing prospects - *The Brutalist*, *Cloud*, *I'm Still Here*, *Queer*, and *The Room Next Door*. See here, Lily Rose Depp, daughter of Johnny Depp, arrives on the red carpet.

It's Kookie's birthday! Dreamer JungKook turns 27. Golden 'Maknae' of *BTS* Jeon Jungkook will be celebrating his 27th birthday on September 1 and fans can't keep calm.

With a debut at the tender age of 17, JK showcases love for his fans in an 'Euphoric' manner. The 3D star has tattoos saying 'ARMY' on his knuckles for crying out loud! His campaign for Calvin Klein has broken records as one of the most successful ads ever.

ARMY are sharing their excitement by turning S Korea into 'Kookie Land'. Chinese fans will set up advertisement billboards as part of their '2024 Jungkook Birthday Project' in Olive Young stores across the country. Korean fan club, too, is planning a sculpture depicting purple flowers in Yeouido, western Seoul, and advertisements in various locations across Seoul.

As a part of *SEVEN*, JK has always had a 'shot glass full of tears' handy when he went live in the middle of the night to chat with ARMY on Weverse app. Afterall, JK is a poster child of 'being delulu is the only solulu'.

The *Please Don't Change* star is currently undergoing mandatory military service and will be free by June '25.



Shraddha Kapoor to rent Hrithik Roshan's apartment

Shraddha Kapoor, who is basking in the success of *Stree 2*, is all set to become Akshay Kumar's neighbour in Mumbai. According to reports, Shraddha Kapoor will be renting Hrithik Roshan's current sea-facing apartment in Juhu. Akshay Kumar lives in a luxurious duplex apartment in the same building. The news was reported by *Hindustan Times*. Previously, there were reports of Varun Dhawan, who recently became a father to a baby girl, moving to Hrithik Roshan's apartment with his wife Natasha Dalal.



JEREMY ALLEN WHITE GOES SHIRTLESS FOR CK CAMPAIGN

Jeremy Allen White is back for his second Calvin Klein campaign — and this one is arguably more sizzling than his first. The 33-year-old star of *The Bear* stripped down for another photo shoot with the brand, showing off his ripped six pack. Calvin Klein unveiled the snapshots and a video from the campaign on August 27. According to an X post, the brand described Jeremy as a 'sundrenched daydream'. In one image, the Hulu actor was dressed in only a pair of grey Calvin Klein underwear while lounging on a chair that was covered by a white sheet.

Adam Sandler's warns his daughters as they take on Hollywood

Adam Sandler's two teenage daughters are getting a big warning from the legendary Hollywood star they call dad. On Tuesday, the actor's Adam Sandler: Love You debuted on Netflix, and Sandler advised Sadie, 18, and Sunny, 15, not to watch the special due to his foul language.

"I do curse a lot," he said at the premiere of his comedy special. "I apologise to many, many people out there, especially my family. They don't need to know those words exist. They can see a couple parts of it. I don't throw it on for them too quickly. But I said, 'You don't need to see this one.'"

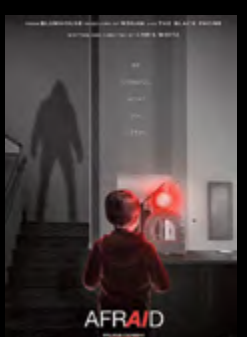


WHATS ON

Genre
Thriller

Starring:
John Cho, Havana Rose Liu, Katherine Waterston

Language:
English



AFRAID

In *AFRAID*, Curtis (John Cho) and his family are selected to test a revolutionary new home device: a digital family assistant called AIA.

Taking smart home to the next level, once the unit and all its sensors and cameras are installed in their home, AIA seems able to do it all.

SELENA'S STARS ON HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME VANDALISED

The Hollywood Walk of Fame stars of Selena Quintanilla, known as the Queen of Tejano music, and fellow Mexican American icon Jenni Rivera were vandalised twice this week with black paint, sparking outrage as well as loving support from fans, who even helped clean the defaced stars. Both singers are recognised for their contributions to Latin music during careers that were tragically cut short - Selena was killed by a fan, and Rivera died in a plane crash.

Giving back...with more punch



BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: VEDAA

Genre: Action, Drama **Starring:** John Abraham, Sharvari, Abhishek Bannerjee

Some topics are so repetitive that it feels a sin to sit and watch a film for even a minute. *Vedaa* is one of the many whose USP is nothing but repetitive action sequences, slowmo bullets, desaturated colour tone, veined biceps and a damsel in distress.

Released on the Indian Independence Day, *Vedaa* tells the tale of a young Dalit woman Vedaa (Sharvari Wagh) who fights against the upper caste for her rights, untouchability, and respect, finally being rescued by an ex-army man.

It is interesting to find BR Ambedkar's photo inside a home and Vedaa is the Dalit student of

law, who wants to fight caste and joins a boxing club despite resistance from everyone. She finds support from Abhimanyu (John), an ex-army officer nursing a personal tragedy.

As John helps her find strength within and protect herself, Vedaa grows from strength to strength, giving the bad boys a run for their money. John plays Major Abhimanyu Kanwar, a soldier at the Gorkha rifles, whose rebellious streak and refusal to follow orders blindly leads to him getting court-martialled. Sharvari



is Vedaa Berwa, a young girl who is exploited but wants to give it back to the men who are trampling on her rights.

The regular Bollywood masala ingredients and way too much action kills the narrative. It would have been nice if the movie had a bit more depth, less action sequences and more in depth characters. A hero's tale without strong dialogues, the movie is packed with furious fighting, bicep flexing and gunshots.

John maintains a stoic face throughout and it gets pretty annoying at times though Sharvari Wagh is brilliant and so are Abhishek Banerjee and Ashish Vidyarthi. Abhishek's bloodshot

eyes and deadpan expression, coupled with ruthless antics will remind of his role in Paatal Lok. It is a disappointment to see John not like his earlier avatars, as in *Jism*, *Madras Café*, *No Smoking*, *Kaal* and *Parmanu*. People would love to see John in more of a script-based role than his repetitive punches.

The editing could have been compact and there have been scenes that were dragging. The first half of the movie goes in a slow pace with some situations of atrocities done upon the central character and her family. *Vedaa* is cruel sans romance.

Rating ★★☆☆☆



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