



Oman highlights Palestinian issue at Global South Summit

Muscat - Oman highlighted the plight of Palestinians during the 3rd Voice of the Global South Summit, which took place on Saturday under the chairmanship of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The summit saw the participation of several heads of state and government leaders.

Representing Oman, H H Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, called on the Global South to adopt "a just and fair stance" in support of the Palestinian people's rights. He also urged the international community to prioritise the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state as essential steps towards peace and stability in the region.

H H Sayyid Asaad, who was assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to participate in the summit, conveyed His Majesty the Sultan's greetings and best wishes to the Indian government and people. He congratulated India on the occasion of its Independence Day and acknowledged the significance of the summit's theme, 'An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future'.



Sustainable solutions to these challenges can only come through dialogue, cooperation and joint action to consolidate the pillars of international peace and security

H H SAYYID ASAAD



In his speech, H H Sayyid Asaad highlighted the urgency of cooperation in the face of global challenges that threaten security and stability. "Recent years have witnessed political and economic turmoil and armed conflicts, which have increased regional tensions," he said. "We believe that sustainable solutions to these challenges can only come

through dialogue, cooperation and joint action to consolidate the pillars of international peace and security."

Turning to the Palestinian issue, H H Sayyid Asaad emphasised the long-standing suffering of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, which began in 1967. He criticised Israel's violations of United Nations resolu-

tions, international law and human rights standards.

On domestic matters, H H Sayyid Asaad reiterated Oman's commitment to a diversified and sustainable economy as outlined in Oman Vision 2040. He noted that the sultanate is investing in sectors such as the blue economy, renewable energy and modern technology. Oman aims

to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 through integrated renewable energy strategies and improved energy efficiency.

H H Sayyid Asaad also affirmed Oman's support for the principles of the Global South Summit, stressing the importance of constructive collaboration with partner countries to achieve shared goals of develop-

ment, security and stability.

The summit addressed a wide range of issues affecting developing countries, with particular focus on the disproportionate impact of climate change on these nations. Discussions centred on developing collaborative solutions for sustainable development, promoting inclusive and environmentally friendly economic growth, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The summit also explored the need for a more equitable global governance structure, one that offers greater representation to developing countries. Additionally, it emphasised the importance of international cooperation in tackling shared challenges such as health crises, economic instability and food security.

The virtual summit was attended by several Omani officials, including Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Political Affairs at Foreign Ministry; Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al Badi, Secretary-General of Office of Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs; and Ahmed bin Hashel al Maskari, Head of Department of Gulf Cooperation Council and Neighbouring Countries at Foreign Ministry.

MoH confirms there are no cases of mpox in Oman

Muscat - Ministry of Health (MoH) has confirmed that no cases of mpox (monkeypox) have been recorded in Oman so far, urging citizens and residents to follow news from official sources.

Represented by Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the Emergency Management Centre, MoH is closely monitoring developments regarding the mpox virus after World Health Organization declared it a global health emergency.

MoH also confirmed the availability of necessary laboratory tests to diagnose the disease and highlighted its ongoing coordination with WHO and regional and international organisations involved in monitoring infectious diseases.

Mpox cases have now been detected outside Africa with one reported in Sweden and two in Pakistan amid fears that the virus would continue to spread. However, WHO and International Federation of the Red Cross have advised against travel restrictions to stop the spread of mpox.

For the second time since 2022, mpox has been declared a global health emergency as the virus has spread rapidly across the African continent and risks entering other continents.

On Wednesday, WHO issued its highest level of alert for the viral disease, noting that more than 14,000 cases and 524 deaths in Africa this year have already exceeded last year's figures.

Economic growth led by manufacturing in 2024

Muscat - Ministry of Economy has announced that Oman's manufacturing sector showed the highest performance among key sectors targeted for economic diversification during the first quarter of this year.

The sector's strong growth marks a significant achievement within the framework of the 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).

According to the ministry, the manufacturing sector recorded a real growth rate of 9.2% in the first quarter of 2024, a sharp recovery from a 2.2% decline during the same period in 2023. The contribution of manufacturing to gross domestic product (GDP) rose to 10% at constant prices and 10.5% at current prices.

Looking ahead, the 10th Five-Year Plan aims to increase the manufacturing sector's contribution to the GDP to 12.2% by the end of the plan.

Dr Salem bin Abdullah al Sheikh, spokesman for Ministry of Economy, attributed this growth to success of economic diversification efforts. He highlighted the fact that these initiatives have boosted the performance of industrial sectors, increased industrial exports, and attracted investments in industrial, free and private zones.



The robust growth in the manufacturing sector can be attributed to several key factors including large investments in new and expanding industrial projects, which have enhanced production capacities

DR SALEM AL SHEIKH

Notably, the launch of new strategic projects, such as Duqm Refinery, have played a crucial role in driving this progress.

"The GDP growth data reflects the positive impact of these developments, with significant growth recorded across all

manufacturing activities," Sheikh said.

He noted the remarkable growth rates in the refined petroleum products industry (67.6%), basic chemicals industry (67.6%) and other manufacturing industries (6.3%) during the first quarter.

Sheikh attributed the robust growth in the manufacturing sector to several key factors. These include large investments in new and expanding industrial projects, which have enhanced production capacities and increased both local and foreign demand for Omani industrial products. Development of industrial infrastructure, supported by government investments in roads, electricity and ports, has also consolidated the sector's capabilities.

In addition, incentives and facilities provided to investors, such as tax breaks, have encouraged further industrial investment. Adoption of modern technologies in manufacturing and programmes to improve productivity have also contributed to the sector's success.

Sheikh added that stability of Oman's security and economy has played a vital role in enhancing the business environment and building investor confidence.

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MoL achieves 54% of 2024 employment target

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has achieved 54% of its employment plan of this year during the first half of the year.

The ministry stated that altogether 14,074 Omanis secured jobs in both the public and private sectors, and these positions were filled either through direct employment or by replacing expatriate workers.



As per the ministry's report, 6,963 Omanis were employed in the public sector out of the targeted 10,000 positions, while 7,111 Omanis secured jobs in the private sector against the 16,000 positions targeted for the year.

Providing further details, the ministry noted that 305 Omanis completed the employment-linked training programme in the government sector, out of the target of 2,000.

In the private sector, 1,107

Omanis completed a similar programme, against the target of 7,000.

Additionally, on-the-job training and employment programme achieved 44.25% completion figure, benefiting 15,486 Omanis out of the plan's target of 35,000.

The Ministry of Labour highlighted the importance of continued collaboration between the public and private sectors. This partnership, it stated, is based on a strategic approach and a well-

planned workflow, aligned with the Royal Directives of His Majesty the Sultan, which emphasise employment as a cornerstone of the national economy.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to advancing its plan to create job opportunities for citizens across various sectors, regulate the labour market, and increase the proportion of the national workforce in both the public and private sectors.



OMAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY (S.A.O.G) Chairman's Report and Unaudited Condensed Consolidated Financial Results for the Period Ended 30 June 2024

Respected Shareholders,

We are pleased to present to you a summary of the results of the operations for the 6 months' period ended 30th June 2024.

Operating performance:

REVENUE: Group Revenue for the six months ended June 2024 is RO 1469.6 million compared to RO 1439.2 million for the corresponding period 2023, an increase of 2.1%.

EXPENSES Group's total Operating expenses (including depreciation and cost of sale) is RO 1,273.8 million compared to RO 1,199.9 Mn for the corresponding period 2023, an increase of 6.2%.

NET PROFIT: The Group Net Profit after tax has decreased by 46.8% touching RO 110.2 Mn compared to RO 207.1 Mn in 2023. After adjusting for minority interest the net profit for the period is RO 27.8 Mn compared to RO 41.6 Mn in 2023, a decrease of 33.2%.

The decrease in H1-2024 net profit compared to the restated H1-2023 net profit is mainly due to a one-time gain on sale and lease back of Zain KSA tower transaction.

The restatement of H1-2023 Net profit was due to the accounting of the KSA Tower sale transaction which was revisited in Q4-2023. Excluding the impact of the restated KSA tower gains, the drop in net profit (before minority interest) is RO 15.3 Mn (12.2%) which is primarily on account of the ongoing crisis in Sudan. The negative impact from Sudan is partially mitigated by increase in profit from Iraq and Kuwait. Sudan recovery plan and new data center in Sudan helped in ensuring that around 5 million customers return to the network and improved the performance in Q2-2024 compared to Q1-2024.

Earnings per Share (EPS) attributable to parent shareholder for the six months' period ended 30th June 2024 is RO 0.037 compared to RO 0.055 for the corresponding period of year 2023.

Omantel Domestic operations (Domestic performance)

Revenues for the six months ended June 2024 is RO 297.7 million compared to RO 305.4 million in 2023 representing a decrease of 2.5%.

EBITDA for the six months ended June 2024 is RO 82.0 compared to RO 81.7 million in 2023 representing an increase of 0.4%.

Net Profit for the six months ended June 2024 is RO 38.8 Mn compared to RO 42.7 Mn in 2023 representing a decrease of 9.1%. This is attributed to the continued investments in capex mainly in the area of network expansion resulting in an increase in depreciation and amortization by 8.9% YoY.

The reduction in topline performance is attributed to reduction in Device revenue and Transit voice revenue which reduced by RO 7.4 Mn and RO 2.8 Mn respectively. Excluding Device and transit voice revenues the revenue for year 2024 stands at RO 217.7 Mn compared to RO 215.3 Mn representing an increase of 1.1%.

The topline performance was supported by growth in Fixed line revenue (incl FBB) which grew by 3.6% while Mobile revenue registered a marginal decrease of 1% in an intense competitive market. EBITDA levels were maintained on account of stable margins at retail level and reduction in impairment provision.

SUBSCRIBER BASE: The total domestic subscriber base as of 30 June 2024 (including mobile and fixed businesses but excluding Mobile Resellers) was 2.984 Mn compared to 3.163 Mn in 2023, representing a decrease of 5.6%. The decrease is primarily attributed to reduction in Mobile prepaid subscribers which was partially offset by increase in Postpaid Mobile subscribers and Fixed Broadband subscribers. Total subscriber base with mobile resellers reached 3,525 Mn.

Domestic Market Share: Omantel's Mobile market share as of 30 June 2024 (excluding Mobile Resellers) is 37.1%. The fixed broadband market share as of 30 June 2024 is 55.2%.

Subsidiary Companies:

Mobile Telecommunication Company (Zain) in OMR:

Zain Group revenue for the six months ended June 2024 was RO 1179.2 Mn compared to RO 1149.4 Mn in 2023 representing an increase of 2.6%. EBITDA stands at RO 405.8 Mn, compared to RO 428.2 Mn in 2023 representing a decrease of 5.2%. Net profit (after minority interest) stands at RO 101.6 Mn compared to RO 159.2 Mn in 2023, a decrease of 36.2%. Zain's total subscriber base as of 30 June 2024 was 47.795 Mn.

The Board of Directors of Zain Group in their meeting held on 7 August 2024 declared distribution of 10 FIs per share of Interim dividend in cash.

Key Developments

In this quarter, our unwavering commitment to advancing digital infrastructure and pioneering technologies continues to establish Omantel as a leader in innovation and growth. Proudly recognized among the 25 strongest brands in the Middle East, we remain dedicated to propelling the Sultanate's digital economy forward. Aligned with Vision 2040, Omantel is poised to foster a knowledge-based, technology-driven economy and reinforce Oman's position as a global innovator.

A key highlight this quarter was our participation in COMEX 2024, where we solidified our commitment to Oman's digital transformation by signing over 12 agreements with top global technology companies and distinguished local institutions. These strategic partnerships are designed to enhance cybersecurity, expand cloud services, and foster AI-driven solutions, significantly strengthening Oman's digital infrastructure and innovation ecosystem.

Our Innovation Labs made a notable impact in COMEX, with a dedicated booth in the startup zone showcasing 12 dynamic startups. Through startup clinics, we actively supported the local startup ecosystem, demonstrating our commitment to nurturing new talent and fostering innovative ideas.

Our relentless pursuit of excellence was honored with the prestigious Excellence Award in AI at COMEX, highlighting our leadership in leveraging advanced technologies to deliver exceptional solutions. This accolade underscores our commitment to pushing the boundaries of technological innovation and achieving new milestones.

Equally significant is our steadfast commitment to sustainability. We are honored to have received the Silver Award for Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Practices at Oman Sustainability Week. This prestigious accolade underscores our dedicated efforts to embed sustainability into our core operations and positively impact both society and the environment.

As part of our efforts and social responsibility strategy, we contributed RO 150,000 to help families affected by the "AlMataar" depression that hit a number of governorates of the Sultanate last April. Furthermore, our continued support for small and medium-sized enterprises is demonstrated by the OMR 2.3 million in contracts awarded up to June 2024, reflecting our commitment to enhancing in-country value.

Thanks and Appreciation

We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to our shareholders and loyal customers for their continued support, which enabled us to achieve these excellent results. We also wholeheartedly appreciate the sincere contribution of executive management and employees to the company's performance in the market's challenging situation. With your support, we are confident that Omantel will continue its good performance and will be able to reach new heights of excellence.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff, we are honored to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his visionary leadership. We pray to Almighty Allah to grant him long life, health, and welfare so that Oman and its people can achieve more progress, prosperity, and welfare.

Chairman

Note:
1. This Line Item represents the consolidated financial statements of the company and the consolidated financial statements of the company's subsidiaries.
2. The consolidated financial statements of the company and the consolidated financial statements of the company's subsidiaries are prepared on an accrual basis.
3. Figures may differ slightly from the audited financial statements due to rounding.

Condensed Consolidated Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024 (Unaudited)			
	30 Jun 2024	31 Dec 2023	
	Unaudited	Audited	
	RO '000	RO '000	
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Cash and bank balances	304,018	428,535	
Bank balances held in customers account	19,857	15,935	
Trade receivables and other current assets	1,401,874	1,276,006	
Contract assets	130,814	125,754	
Intangible assets	88,325	81,006	
Investment securities at fair value through profit or loss	52,713	49,040	
Assets of disposal group classified as held for sale	1,998,603	1,976,416	
Other non-current assets	8,345	6,254	
Total Current assets	2,004,946	1,982,670	
Non-current assets			
Contract assets	72,807	70,037	
Investment securities at fair value through profit or loss	24,861	25,357	
Investment securities at FVOCI	14,662	14,412	
Investment securities at amortized cost	1,000	1,000	
Investments in associates and joint venture	246,219	239,848	
Other non-current assets	142,258	75,454	
Deferred tax asset	28,313	98,428	
Right of use of assets	281,510	257,787	
Property and equipment	1,740,642	1,808,373	
Intangible assets and goodwill	3,200,513	3,232,476	
Total Non-current assets	5,753,714	5,773,172	
Total Assets	7,758,660	7,755,842	
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	1,556,369	1,566,444	
Contract liabilities	125,000	130,235	
Income tax payables	24,915	42,182	
Borrowings	327,310	487,100	
Lease liabilities	45,613	45,833	
Assets of disposal group classified as held for sale	2,090,312	2,251,614	
Liabilities of disposal group classified as held for sale	1,138	1,244	
Total Current liabilities	2,081,450	2,252,858	
Non-current liabilities			
Borrowings	2,177,052	1,800,040	
Lease liabilities	325,565	308,574	
Other non-current liabilities	380,347	406,716	
Total Non-current liabilities	2,883,004	2,505,836	
Total liabilities	4,964,454	4,758,694	
Equity			
Share capital	75,000	75,000	
Legal reserve	25,000	25,000	
Voluntary reserve	49,875	49,875	
Capital contribution	7,288	7,288	
Capital reserve	35,893	36,893	
Foreign currency translation reserve	(115,341)	(103,843)	
Investment fair valuation reserve	(5,466)	(4,842)	
Other reserves	825	822	
Retained earnings	545,768	560,200	
Attributable to the Company's shareholders	620,842	646,303	
Non-controlling interest	2,173,304	2,107,845	
Total equity	2,794,146	2,607,148	
Total Liabilities and Equity	7,758,660	7,755,842	

Condensed Consolidated Statement of Profit or Loss – 30 June 2024 (Unaudited)				
	Three months ended 30 June		Six months ended 30 June	
	2024	2023 (Restated)	2024	2023 (Restated)
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
Continuing operations				
Revenue	741,546	706,311	1,409,630	1,410,180
Cost of sales	(258,801)	(227,368)	(515,703)	(486,798)
Gross profit	482,745	478,943	893,927	923,381
Operating and administrative expenses	(296,782)	(200,585)	(440,429)	(412,358)
Depreciation and amortization	(151,570)	(138,542)	(291,542)	(270,708)
Allowance for expected credit loss on financial assets	(154,405)	(15,785)	(26,142)	(28,085)
Operating profit	108,953	123,081	195,814	239,231
Interest income	3,009	4,114	7,111	9,914
Investment income	(154)	1,635	2,086	3,116
Share of results of associates and joint venture	2,859	929	3,272	1,265
Other income (expense)	3,535	(1,930)	(522)	(181,882)
Gain on sale and lease back transaction	-	-	-	81,803
Finance costs	(51,568)	(67,342)	(101,844)	(94,940)
Gain (loss) from currency revaluation	7,304	400	13,048	(431)
Net monetary gain	1,721	-	1,721	-
Profit before income taxes	75,658	80,977	122,586	221,006
Income tax expenses	(5,997)	(7,035)	(12,358)	(14,478)
Profit for the period	69,661	73,942	110,228	206,527
Attributable to:				
Shareholders of the Company	14,946	16,310	27,818	41,380
Non-controlling interests	54,715	57,632	82,410	165,147
Profit for the period	69,661	73,942	110,228	206,527
Earnings per share				
Basic and diluted – RO	0.020	0.028	0.037	0.055

Rains, strong winds expected across Oman from Monday



Muscat - The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued a weather alert forecasting rainfall, strong winds, and rough sea conditions from Monday to Wednesday.

The warning follows the latest analysis from the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre, which indicates that Oman will be affected by an upper-level low-pressure system from the Arabian Sea from Monday.

According to the CAA bulletin, cloud advection is expected over most of the governorates, with isolated rain of varying intensity and occasional thunderstorms likely. The regions to get mostly affected are North and South Sharqiyah, Dakhliyah, Al Wusta, Dhofar, parts of Muscat, and South Batinah, besides Dhahirah and the Al Hajar mountains.

The expected impact of the weather includes anticipated rainfall of 15-45 mm for Monday and Tuesday, which may lead to

the flow of wadis in some areas.

Fresh downdraft winds with speeds ranging between 15-35 knots (28-65 km/h) could lead to the movement of unstable objects and reduced visibility during thunderstorms due to rising dust.

The Arabian Sea and Oman Sea coasts are expected to experience rough seas, with wave heights reaching up to 4m.

On Wednesday, rainfall is expected to be between 10-25 mm with isolated rain and occasional thunderstorms over the Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates. The Al Hajar mountains and surrounding areas may also see cloud formation during the afternoon and evening.

Authorities have urged residents and visitors to exercise caution, particularly in areas prone to flooding and strong winds. The CAA advises following updates from official sources to stay informed about the evolving weather conditions.



Omani students visit China for language bridge camp

Muscat - The Ministry of Education (MoE), through its Department of Educational Studies and International Cooperation, is participating in the Chinese Language Bridge Camp, which is underway in Tianjin city - one of the nine national central cities in Mainland China.

A group of 18 students - 16 students from the governorates of Muscat and Dakhliyah, and two from My Private School at the Tianjin Foreign Studies University in that Chinese city - is taking part in the camp, officials said.

The ministry's involvement in the camp includes facilitation of a variety of cultural, educational,

and entertainment activities.

These include visits to museums that explore the rich history of Chinese culture, and an Omani night. The Omani night programme was chalked out to introduce Omani culture to the Chinese participants through a video showcasing the customs and traditions of the sultanate.

Omani sweets were distributed, and publications on Omani culture and tourism were shared with the participating members.

The students also visited the Tianjin Public Library Museum and the Tianjin City Plan Exhibition. The camp will run until August 21.

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Scenic Al Bustan route misses out on public bus network

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Buses are a vital part of public transport in any city, offering an affordable and accessible means of commuting. In Muscat, buses serve as a crucial link for many, especially those without cars or facing financial challenges. However, a picturesque and culturally significant part of the city remains disconnected from the bus network, leaving both residents and tourists at a loss.

Currently, Bus No 4 operates from Ruwi Bus Stand to Al Alam Palace, passing through Darsait, Muscat, Old Muttrah and Corniche before reaching the palace, while Bus No 2 connects Ruwi Bus Stand and Wadi Kabir.

With these services, the scenic 6km stretch from Al Alam Palace to Al Bustan, which includes the charming village of Sidab, lush green parks, sunset viewpoints and the Council of Oman, remains inaccessible by public bus. This gap in the network deprives visitors the chance of exploring one of Muscat's most beautiful and culturally rich areas.

Salim Balushi, a local businessman, highlighted the economic potential of this route. "The stretch from Al Alam Palace to Al Bustan is full of attractions,



A bus service on this route would not only boost tourism but also support local businesses by bringing in more visitors

SALIM BALUSHI

including Marina Bander al Rowdah, known for its karaoke nights, yacht parties and dolphin watching. A bus service would not only boost tourism but also support local businesses by bringing in more visitors," he said.

This gap in service is more

than just an inconvenience; it's a missed opportunity for tourists to experience the full charm of Muscat.

Sarah James, a local teacher, shared her disappointment saying, "It's sad that tourists miss out on this stretch. The views are stunning and it would be a fantastic addition to any visitor's itinerary. If an open bus plies this route, it will offer a relaxing experience while enjoying the evening breeze."

Advertising professional Vinod Raghavan suggested merging bus routes 2 and 4 into a single service, which would be both economical and effective. "This could encourage the younger generation and allow ev-

eryone to see the grand parliament building."

Local taxi drivers, who often bridge this gap, have also expressed their concerns. "We get many requests from tourists to cover this route, but it can be expensive compared to bus fare. A bus service would be much more affordable, especially for those on a budget. The absence of a bus connection means tourists and locals must rely on more costly alternatives to explore this area, including the fishermen villages of Sidab and Haramal," said Mohammad Abri.

The missing bus link not only affects daily commuters but also deprives visitors a complete experience of exploring Muscat.



ISM CELEBRATES GOLDEN JUBILEE

H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman, unveiled a plaque commemorating the golden jubilee of Indian School Muscat (ISM) on Saturday. Started in 1975, ISM has stood out as a community school imparting quality education to the Indian community and anchoring it in Oman. From 325 students in 1975 to over 7,000 today, ISM is a symbol of an excellent community owned and run educational system (Supplied photo)

First Islamic coin mint of Arabian Peninsula was set up in Oman

Salalah - The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism inaugurated 'Omani Coins Exhibition' at Land of Frankincense Museum in Salalah on Thursday.

Opened by Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the exhibition will run till September 15 displaying Omani coins and currency, featuring images of Oman's sultans who played a significant role in shaping the nation's modern currency.

The exhibition traces the history of Omani currency, showcasing pieces from the reign of Sultan Faisal bin Turki to the pre-



sent era under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Visitors can view a range of historical items, including 19th-century coins and the Indian Gulf Rupee.

Osama bin Mohammed al Rawas, Director of Land of Frank-

incense Museum, informed that the exhibition is part of the ministry's efforts to enrich Dhofar Khareef 2024 with engaging activities and events. He highlighted the fact that the exhibition aims to raise public awareness of Oman's monetary history and its evolution over the centuries.

Historical records indicate that the oldest Islamic mint in the Arabian Peninsula was established in Oman, where silver dirhams were produced during the era of Umayyad Caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan. These dirhams bore the Hijri year 81, corresponding to 700 AD.

RAM launches programme of future leaders to empower Omani youth

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Royal Academy of Management (RAM) has launched 'Future Leaders Programme' to develop leadership skills of young Omani professionals from various sectors. The programme, which began on Saturday, is being conducted in collaboration with Hamad bin Khalifa University, GLOBIS Europe, Matterz Business Group and KAOSPLOT.

The programme aligns with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's vision, as outlined in Oman Vision 2040, to equip the nation's current and future leaders with the skills needed to make meaningful contributions within their organisations and the country.

The six-month programme is a significant step towards empowering the next generation of

This programme embodies our vision of developing young national leaders capable of innovation and positively impacting their communities

DR FATHIYA AL RASHDI

leaders in Oman. It aims to inspire innovation within institutions and prepare participants to navigate rapidly changing environments in both the public and private sectors.

The programme includes three in-person modules and three talent labs, beginning with a module called 'Discover', which will focus on enhancing leadership skills, strategic thinking and work ethics. This will be followed by 'Foresee', where participants explore successful international practices and rapid technological changes. The final module - 'Pioneer' - will emphasise leadership

in the workplace, influence and a results-oriented mindset.

Participants will also visit Japan to engage with educational and entrepreneurial institutions and interact with Japanese leaders. The visit will cover topics such as technological advancements, change management, and fostering creativity and innovation in the workplace. This experience is designed to broaden participants' global perspectives and immerse them in diverse cultures and practices.

Dr Fathiya al Rashdi, Vice-President for Programme Affairs at RAM, stated, "The Future

Leaders Programme embodies our vision of developing young national leaders capable of innovation and positively impacting their communities. Empowering today's youth is an investment in Oman's bright future."

She added that the programme is part of the academy's broader efforts to create a comprehensive system of executive education that aligns with national requirements and global trends.

The programme targets 50 young Omani professionals aged 25 to 34 from both public and private sectors, including those from small and medium-sized enterprises, startups and freelancers. It will offer a comprehensive learning experience, including intensive sessions, interactive workshops and practical training that addresses real-world challenges.



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Oman Business Platform records over 487,000 transactions in H1 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Business Platform of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), facilitated a record 487,300 commercial transactions during the first half of 2024.

During the first six months of the year, 195,556 automatic license approvals were granted, while 6,061 non-automatic licenses were issued. Additionally, 2,747 e-commerce licenses were issued by the ministry in the same period, according to an Oman News Agency report.

The Oman Business Platform is designed to improve and simplify the business process for investors by offering a single access point to all e-government services, ensuring they can apply best international practices.

MoCIIP aims, through the Oman Business Platform, to streamline business startup procedures and encourage investment in various projects that support the national economy and enhance economic activity.

Mubarak bin Mohammed al Duhani, Director General of Commerce and Head of the Digital Transformation Team at MoCIIP, informed that the Oman Business Platform offers numerous facilities and services to investors. Currently, about 50 electronic services are available through the platform, contributing to an improved business environment.

The ministry's statistics showed an increase in the num-



Currently, about 50 electronic services are available through the Oman Business Platform, contributing to an improved business environment in the sultanate

ber of downloads of the Oman Business Platform app, with 7,245 downloads recorded – 3,209 on the Android version and 4,036 on the iOS version.

In his statement to the Oman News Agency, Duhani highlighted that the platform offers various essential services that allow investors to complete transactions easily and smoothly. These services provide ample information to facilitate the process of starting businesses, thereby encouraging investment in projects that bol-

ster the national economy and stimulate economic activity.

The platform offers reduced fees for the foreign investment register, treating foreign investors on par with Omani investors. Recently, a service for changing the legal form from a sole proprietorship to a commercial company was launched, along with a service for evaluating user satisfaction with self-services on the platform.

Duhani noted that the Oman Business Platform contributes to a more efficient business envi-

ronment, achieving faster results for investors. He said, “The platform directs investors to a single portal for business activities and provides self-service options for those looking to start businesses from outside Oman.”

MoCIIP recently introduced new improvements and facilities to several services on the platform to further simplify and accelerate commercial transactions. These enhancements aim to make business sector services more accessible, saving time and effort for investors and business owners, thereby allowing transactions to be completed more quickly and efficiently.

These improvements are also intended to strengthen the business environment and attract more local and foreign investments to Oman.

MSX posts weekly gains as investors flock to stocks

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose by 48 points last week, closing at 4,693 points, resuming its upward trend after a week of decline.

Last week's trading reflected investor interest in shares of several leading companies listed on the main index and sectoral indices, including the National Bank of Oman, Bank Muscat, BankDhofar, ahlibank, Renaissance Services, Abraj Energy Services, Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles, Al Anwar Investments, and Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing.

The financial sector index recorded the highest increase, rising by 95 points. The industry sector index increased by 19 points, the services sector index rose by 15 points, while the Sharia index declined by three points, according to an Oman News Agency report.

The prices of 22 securities increased last week, compared to 15 securities that gained in the previous week. Meanwhile, the number of declining stocks fell to 22, compared to 39 in the previous week. This positive performance came as the Muscat Stock Exchange absorbed global political and economic conditions that had impacted most regional and global stock exchanges over the preceding two weeks.

The trading value last week saw an increase of 2.4%, reaching RO8.506mn, compared to RO8.301mn in the previous week. However, the number of executed deals decreased to 2,463 last week, compared to 2,744 deals in the previous week.

The market value of the Mus-



Total trading value last week increased by 2.4% to RO8.506mn, compared to RO8.301mn in the previous week. However, the number of executed deals decreased to 2,463, compared to 2,744 deals in the previous week

fecting the total market value of the Muscat Stock Exchange, with the market value of the closed market falling to RO10.792bn at the end of last week's trading, recording weekly losses of about RO49mn.

Gulf International Chemicals was the top gainer on the MSX, rising by 6%. Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles rose by 5.9%, closing at 179 baisas, while Al Anwar Investments recorded a weekly gain of 5.5%.

Dhofar Generating Company was the top loser, down 7.1%. Muscat Finance Company fell by 4.2% and Muscat Gases Company declined by 3.9%.

Bank Muscat led the most traded companies, with trades worth RO2.041mn, accounting for 24% of the total trading value. Sohar International Bank came in second, with trades worth RO1.177mn, followed by Omantel in third place with trades worth RO885,000, representing 10.4% of the total trading value.

ONA

UAE IPOs raise \$890mn

Abu Dhabi, UAE – The Initial public offerings (IPOs) in the UAE markets raised \$890mn in the second quarter of this year, according to a recent economic report.

The PwC Middle East's latest IPO+ Watch said that notable IPOs in the second quarter included Alef Education on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) with \$515mn and Spinneys on the Dubai Financial Market (DFM) with \$375mn, two of the largest IPOs in the UAE.

Saudi Arabia led IPO activity in the GCC region, raising \$1.6bn or 61% of the total IPO activity recorded in the region in the second quarter of 2024.

According to the report, notable IPOs on the Saudi stock market during the quarter included the IPO of Dr Soliman Abdel Kader Fakeeh Hospital Company, which raised \$763mn on the Tadawul Stock Exchange, while this quarter witnessed the first IPO on the Boursa Kuwait in



two years, in which Beyout Investment Group Holding Company raised \$147mn.

The report shows that IPO activity was seen across a diverse range of sectors this quarter, including health industries (\$774mn), consumer markets (\$530mn), financial services (\$256mn), energy, utilities and resources (\$148mn), industrials, manufacturing and automobile

(\$407mn), and technology, media and telecommunication (\$515mn).

The report noted that there was a large number of sukuk issuances during the quarter, which raised more than \$10bn compared to \$2.6bn in the same period last year, indicating a strong appetite for Sharia-compliant financial products.

WAM

Al Tamimi & Company signs deal for legal services at China-Oman Industrial Park

Muscat – Al Tamimi & Company, the leading law firm in the Middle East and North Africa, and Beijing Tiantai Law Firm, one of China's largest full-service law firms, have announced a new co-operation agreement. The signing ceremony signifies a strategic partnership aimed at supporting Chinese enterprises in their global expansion efforts within the China-Oman (Duqm) Industrial Park.

This landmark agreement establishes a framework for providing comprehensive legal services to Chinese businesses operating in the expansive industrial park in Duqm, which spans a massive 13mn sqm, divided into an 8mn-sqm heavy industrial zone and a 5mn-sqm light industrial zone.

The China-Oman (Duqm) Industrial Park is strategically designed to enhance production capacity and foster investment



collaboration between Oman and China, two key players in the global trade and investment landscape.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was formalised through the signatures of Yaping Liu, Senior Partner at Beijing Tiantai Law Firm, and Ahmed al Barwani, Partner and Head of the Oman office at Al Tamimi & Company.

The MoU outlines the collabora-

tion's objectives, including the provision of legal support for projects and investments, and aims to facilitate smoother operational and regulatory processes for Chinese enterprises entering or expanding within the Duqm Industrial Park.

In a press release, Barwani said, “Our partnership with Beijing Tiantai Law Firm represents a significant step forward in supporting the growth and success

of Chinese enterprises at the Duqm Industrial Park. By combining our regional expertise with Beijing Tiantai's extensive experience, we are well-positioned to enhance investment flows and drive further cooperation between Oman and China.

“This agreement will play a crucial role in facilitating a more seamless business environment and fostering stronger economic ties between our two countries.”

The cooperation is expected to streamline legal processes for Chinese companies, providing them with expert guidance on navigating Omani regulations, establishing operations, and achieving their strategic goals within the industrial park.

The partnership also underscores the commitment of both firms to fostering international business collaboration and contributing to the economic development of the region.

Russia extends its gasoline export ban until end of December 2024

Moscow, Russia – Russia is extending its ban on gasoline exports from October to the end of December 2024, as it seeks to keep domestic supply stable amid seasonal demand and scheduled repairs at refineries, the Russian government said.

In the autumn of 2023, Russia banned exports of diesel and gasoline in an effort to stabilise domestic fuel prices in the face of soaring prices and shortages

as crude oil rallied and the Russian ruble weakened. Prior to implementing the ban, Russia had raised mandatory supply volumes for motor gasoline and diesel fuel to deal with a supply crunch.

These bans lasted only a few weeks.

This year, Russia reinstated a ban on gasoline shipments from March 1 but lifted the restriction on May 20 as more refineries



Alexander Novak

completed planned seasonal maintenance or emergency repairs after Ukrainian drone hits in the winter and early spring.

In terms of gasoline exports, the ban will be renewed on August 1, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said last month.

“We have the embargo approved until September 1. An exception has been currently made for the month of July. The excep-

tion ends from August 1. The tacit ban on exports of petroleum products and gasoline will be restored. In other words, the ban will be reenacted from August 1,” Russian news agency TASS quoted Novak as saying.

Then at the end of July, Moscow announced it would extend its ban on gasoline exports from August to October, to meet the growth in domestic demand

in the spring and summer.

“In order to avoid any problems in these months, there will be no lifting of the (gasoline) export ban in August. It was also a fundamental decision for September-October that exports will be limited in order to be insured,” Russian Deputy Energy Minister Pavel Sorokin was quoted by the TASS news agency as saying.

(Source: Oilprice.com)

Etihad Rail launches sustainable finance framework for green investments

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of the UAE National Rail Network, has launched its Sustainable Finance Framework, a comprehensive guide designed to link the company's future financing to its ESG Strategy in relation to clean transportation, green buildings and pollution prevention and control.

The framework, which was developed in collaboration with various industry experts, as well as First Abu Dhabi Bank and Standard Chartered Bank, who served as co-ESG advisors, providing expertise and insights to ensure the framework's robustness and alignment to the Green Loan and Bond Principles. Furthermore, the framework was validated through a Second Party Opinion (SPO) from Det Norske Veritas (DNV).

The framework establishes a structured approach for Etihad Rail to evaluate parameters in the financing of sustainable projects, detailing four main components: green loan and bond principles that ensure alignment with international sustainability standards, use of proceeds to define clear criteria for the allocation of funds towards sustainable projects, project evaluation and selection that implements a



rigorous process to identify impactful projects, and management of proceeds and reporting to ensure transparency and accountability in fund utilisation.

Commenting on the launch, Ali Tabbal, Chief Financial Officer at Etihad Rail, said, "The introduction of our Sustainable

Finance Framework is a testament to Etihad Rail's commitment to integrate and uphold sustainable practices in all our operations. Through responsible financial practices, we are further underscoring this dedication by driving positive environmental and social impact in the region

only fostering a transition to a low-carbon, resilient economy but also supporting the UAE's Net Zero 2050 Strategy and contributing to the nation's vision for a sustainable future."

As part of Etihad Rail's ESG strategy, the framework encompasses mechanisms for environmental risk assessment and promotion of transparency in implementing ESG initiatives. By integrating environmental considerations into investment decisions, companies can mitigate environmental risks, capitalise on emerging sustainable markets, and solidify their commitment to environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

The framework not only guides investment decisions but also fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing among industry peers, regulators, and investors, thereby accelerating the transition to a more sustainable financial system.

The introduction of our Sustainable Finance Framework is a testament to Etihad Rail's commitment to integrate and uphold sustainable practices in all our operations

ALI TABBAL



Saudi Arabia's reserves grow 6% to \$453bn

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia's official reserve assets increased to SAR1.7tn (\$452.8bn) in July, marking a 6.06% year-on-year rise, according to recent data.

According to Arab News, data from the Saudi Central Bank, known as SAMA, revealed that international currency holdings – comprising currency and deposits abroad and investments in foreign securities – accounted for 94.53% of the total, amounting to SAR1.61tn in July. This category saw a 6.54% increase during the period.

Official reserve assets also include monetary gold, Special Drawing Rights (SDR), the International Monetary Fund's reserve position, and foreign reserves.

July data showed that SDRs, making up 4.6% of the total at SAR78.03bn, decreased by 0.44%.

WAM

JPMorgan sees greater chance of US recession this year

New York, US – JPMorgan Chase analysts now see a greater chance that the US economy will enter a recession by the end of the year.

In an analyst note, JPMorgan economists led by Bruce Kasman raised the odds of an economic downturn this year to 35%, up from their previous 25% estimate, citing easing labour market pressures.

"US wage inflation is now slowing in a manner not seen in other DM [developed market] economies," they wrote. "Easing labor market conditions increase confidence both that service price inflation will move lower and that the Fed's current policy stance is restrictive."

They still see a 45% chance of a recession in the second half of 2025.

The economists also lowered the odds that the Federal Reserve keeps interest rates higher for longer to just 30%. With inflation easing, JPMorgan expects the central bank to cut rates twice this year, in September and November.

"This modest increase in our assessment of recession risk contrasts with a more substantial reassessment we are making to the interest rate outlook," they



wrote.

The analyst note comes on the heels of the disappointing July jobs report, which showed that total nonfarm payrolls grew by just 114,000 in July, while the jobless rate unexpectedly jumped to 4.3%. The report reignited fears of a slowing economy, because it triggered the so-called Sahm Rule, an indicator that is used to provide an early recession signal.

The rule stipulates that a recession is likely when the three-month moving average of the jobless rate is at least a half-percentage point higher than the 12-month low.

Over the past three months, the unemployment rate has averaged 4.13%, which is 0.63 percentage points higher than the

3.5% rate recorded in July 2023. The Sahm Rule has successfully predicted every recession since 1970.

Still, Claudia Sahm – a former Fed economist and the creator of the rule – has suggested that the rise in unemployment this time around may not be indicative of an impending recession.

She noted the rise in the jobless rate is not the result of layoffs and negative monthly payroll numbers, but rather an increase in the number of available workers, including immigrants.

"What we're seeing, even if the Sahm Rule is overstating it some, it is picking up on something that is very worrisome," Sahm told FOX Business' Charles Payne.

(Source: Fox Business)

Global oil and gas contracts value surges 47% during second quarter

Muscat – Global oil and gas contract activity received a boost from Petrobras' key upstream contracts in the second quarter of 2024. The industry witnessed a notable 47% quarter-on-quarter increase in total disclosed value to reach \$54.91bn in Q2 2024 from \$37.3bn in Q1, according to GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.

GlobalData's latest report, 'Oil and Gas Industry Contracts Review by Sector, Region, Terrain and Top Contractors and Issuers, Q2 2024', reveals that the overall oil and gas contracts volume decreased marginally from 1,473 in Q1 2024 to 1,377 in Q2 2024.

Pritam Kad, Oil and Gas Analyst at GlobalData, said, "Petrobras' monumental



awards, including the \$8.15bn P-84 and P-85 FPSO construction contract to Seatrium, the \$1.8bn contract for subsea engineering to the Sapura consortium, and an additional \$2.5bn for pipelay vessels, rigid risers, and flowlines contracts to Subsea 7, were the driving forces behind the surge in the overall oil and gas contracts value."

Operation and maintenance

(O&M) scope reported 681 contracts, accounting for 49% of the total contracts in Q2 2024, followed by procurement with 400 contracts, representing a 29% share.

Contracts with multiple scopes, such as construction, design and engineering, installation, O&M, and procurement, accounted for 9% of the contracts.

The \$8.15bn P-84 and P-85 FPSO construction contract awarded by Petrobras to Seatrium are for the Atapu and Sepia fields, offshore Brazil, while the scope of work for the Seagems and Sapura consortium consists of subsea engineering, installation, and other services utilising six multi-purpose pipe-laying support vessels (PLSV).



Gulf International Chemicals SAOG

(An ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company)
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Gulf International Chemicals SAOG (GIC), I am pleased to present you a brief report on the company's activities for the second quarter of 2024.

The Group's total revenue for the period under review was RO 889,742. The net profit after taxation amounted to RO 61,280 and the net asset per share stood at 126 Baiza.

During the second quarter of 2024, regional construction markets continued the slow pace. Both Oman and UAE markets are in oversupply and less demand situation for construction chemicals due to sharp reduction in construction projects which is mainly attributable to limited government spending on construction and infrastructure projects.

However, several mega construction projects have been announced lately in Oman and it is likely that this will improve the local construction market once the construction of these projects starts in 2025-2028. The outlook for the remaining of year 2024 is very conservative due to unlikely immediate recovery and slow improvement in the purchasing power in the construction sector as it is mainly linked to the improvement of regional circumstances and improvement in the local investment climate and real estate market. Moreover, it is very likely that the competition will be fierce in the future as the dominant multinational companies (after the global mergers and acquisitions in the construction chemicals industry) seek greater market share in our markets.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty's Government for its generous support and for paving the way for growth and prosperity.

Best Regards,
Board of Directors

CONSOLIDATED UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

	Group 2024	Group 2023
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	72,898	101,165
Right-of-use assets	10,347	11,787
Intangible asset	55,339	63,251
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	362,367	210,892
Deferred tax asset	91,239	74,017
Total non-current assets	592,191	461,112
Current assets		
Inventories	249,181	294,082
Trade and other receivables	1,001,613	1,217,901
Term deposits	700,000	650,000
Cash and bank balances	363,026	391,094
Total current assets	2,313,820	2,553,077
Total assets	2,906,011	3,014,189
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	2,100,000	2,100,000
Legal reserve	608,689	599,722
Fair value reserve	(202,297)	(191,066)
Revaluation reserve	50,112	50,112
Retained earnings	89,806	64,588
Total capital and reserves	2,646,310	2,623,356
Non-current liabilities		
Lease liabilities	10,618	12,251
Employees' benefit liabilities	91,731	89,702
Total non-current liabilities	102,349	101,953
Current liabilities		
Lease liabilities	967	967
Trade and other payables	156,245	284,959
Income tax payable	140	2,954
Total current liabilities	157,352	288,880
Total liabilities	259,701	390,833
Total equity and liabilities	2,906,011	3,014,189
Net assets per share (OMR)	0.126	0.125

CONSOLIDATED UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Group 2024	Group 2023
Revenue from contracts with customers	889,742	930,509
Cost of sales	(594,647)	(631,727)
Gross profit	295,096	298,782
Other income	25,307	24,466
	320,403	323,248
Expenses		
General and administrative expenses	(199,082)	(199,291)
Selling and distribution expenses	(81,059)	(82,060)
Profit from operations	40,261	41,897
Finance income	21,525	13,552
Finance cost	(362)	(362)
Profit before tax for the period	61,424	55,087
Taxation	(144)	(10,247)
Net profit after tax for the period	61,280	44,840
Earnings per share	0.003	0.002

INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY



Grand celebration at embassy marks 78th Independence Day

The Indian Embassy in Muscat celebrated the 78th Independence Day of its country with great enthusiasm and patriotic fervour on Thursday morning.

The event witnessed the participation of more than 1,000 people, including members of the Indian community, friends of India in Oman, and distinguished guests.

H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, commenced the celebrations by paying a floral tribute to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, a global icon of peace and non-violence, in the embassy. Soon after, the ambassador raised the National Flag of India, as his country's national anthem was being sung.

In his address on the occasion, H E Narang read out excerpts from the speech delivered on the eve of Independence Day by India's President Droupadi Murmu, emphasising the progress India has made over the past decades and the vision for a prosperous future.

H E Narang acknowledged the presence of some of the victims and the families of those affected by the recent shooting incident in Wadi Kabir. He expressed his condolences to the family of Basha Jan Ali Hussain who unfortunately lost his life and applauded the courage and fortitude of those who went through unbearable physical and mental trauma in this incident.

H E Narang also paid rich tributes to ROP brave heart



Youssef al Nadabi who made the supreme sacrifice of his life to save others and appreciated the efforts by Omani authorities in dealing with the incident and protecting the lives of innocent civilians. The ambassador said India stands with Oman against all forms of violence.

The students of the Indian School Darsait gave a soulful touch to the celebration with their rendition of patriotic songs, filling the atmosphere with pride and joy.

The event also featured the *Har Ghar Tiranga* (The tricolour in every house) campaign, with attendees eagerly taking photographs at the specially designed photo booth that celebrated this nationwide initiative.

A special presentation on the 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day' was also displayed, reflecting on the tragic events of the partition and the resilience of the Indian spirit. This presentation, which was inaugurated by the ambassador the previous day, highlights the importance of remembering history to build a peaceful future.

Later in the day, Ambassador Narang presided over the Independence Day celebration at the Indian School Mabela as the chief guest.

He joined the dignitaries and the children for the *Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam* (one tree in the name of the mother) campaign, launched by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Environment Day.

National fervour dominates celebration at Indian School

Indian School Al Ghubra celebrated the 78th Independence Day of India on Thursday with a spirit of national fervour.

Ahmed Rayees - President, School Management Committee and Sunil K A - Convenor, SMC graced the event with their presence.

The programme began with the school band playing the national anthem of India. The band continued with the patriotic songs such as *Aye Mere Watan Ke Logom* and the marching tune titled *Bharat Ke Jawan*.

The students of classes 7, 8 and 9 presented a choral rendition titled *Apne Maati Hain*, which translates into 'This is our soil', the school authorities said.

The song narrates the mesmerising beauty of India. This was followed by a video presentation on what the youngsters of today think about the freedom struggle of India.



The ISG students of classes 7, 8 and 9 presented the song 'Apne Maati Hain', which roughly translates into 'This is our soil'

In keeping with the theme of 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India),

the western choir enthralled the audience with a soulful rendition of *Rise up, Rise up India!* A captivating semi-classical dance performance by the students of class 8 brought to life the diverse beauty of the nation.

Sarah Pranav G of class 7, Srihari K Syam and Adhithya Rajesh of class 9 entertained the audience by playing instrumental music.

Aqeedath Khanum and Aarushi Manikandan of class 11

were the comperes of the event.

The celebrations concluded with Principal Papri Ghosh saying a prayer seeking the blessings of the Almighty for a progressive and inclusive nation where every citizen enjoys freedom.

Indian School Bousher celebrates the day with great deal of patriotism, enthusiasm

Indian School Bousher marked the 78th Independence Day of India with great patriotism and enthusiasm. The event was a vibrant display of the school's commitment to fostering national pride and unity among its students and staff.

The celebration began with the arrival of the chief guest Ashwini Sawrikar, chairperson, Academic Committee, board of directors, Indian Schools in Oman and Director in charge, Indian School Bousher; and the school Management committee members - Dr Sayed Fazlur Rehman, convenor, chairperson - sports and co-curricular sub-committee; Piyush Agarwal, treasurer, chairperson - finance sub-committee; Shanmugam Purushottaman, chairperson - building and infrastructure sub-



committee; Dr Vinod Patchigalla, chairperson - HR sub-committee; Sowmiya Parameswaran, chairperson - staff welfare and grievance redressal sub-committee; Remya Damodaran - member, building and infrastructure sub-committee.

The event commenced with the soulful rendition of India's national anthem. The entire assembly stood in unison, reflecting their respect and love for the motherland.

The deputy head girl (Middle School) delivered a heartfelt wel-

come address, setting the tone for the event.

The march past by the students was based on the central theme of the event, 'Lead with Valour, Inspiring Patriotism: Marching to Viksit Bharat (Developed India)'.

It was not just a display of synchronised movements; it was a powerful demonstration of our commitment to the ideals of our nation -courage, integrity, and perseverance.

Each step the students took represented the collective march of our country toward a brighter and more prosperous future, a Viksit Bharat. Let us remember the valiant heroes who fought for our freedom, and let their sacrifices inspire us to lead with valour in all that we do. A captivating dance performance titled 'Freedom's Rhythms: The Dance of Independent India' enthralled the audience. The chief guest delivered an inspiring address, emphasising the importance of freedom, patriotism and unity. The speech was well-received, leaving a lasting impact on the attendees.

78TH INDEPENDENCE DAY WITH A 78KM RIDE



Close to 20 Indian cyclists united in Muscat to celebrate their country's 78th Independence Day with a 78km 'Ride of Unity and Pride' around the capital city on Thursday

Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir displays grandeur in its programme

Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (ISWK) and Indian School Wadi Kabir Cambridge celebrated India's 78th Independence Day on August 15 on the primary school ground.

Yusuf Nalwala, chairman of Al Yusr International LLC and former chairman of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman graced the occasion as the chief guest. He was accompanied by his son, Murtaza, Managing Director of Al Yusr International LLC.

Other distinguished dignitaries who witnessed the programme were Kiran Asher, founder and group managing director of Al Ansari Group; Harshendu Shah, former presi-



dent of the school management committee of ISWK; Rajendra Ved, executive director of the school management committees of ISWK and ISWK Cambridge; Alkesh Joshi, assistant executive director; Sachin Toprani, hon-

orary president of the school management committee of ISWK, other distinguished dignitaries of the education cell; principal D N Rao; vice principals, teachers, parents, students and special invitees.

The programme began with a warm welcome to all attendees. The tone for the day was set with a stirring reflection on India's journey from colonial rule to a thriving democracy, by reminding everyone of the sacrifices

made by countless individuals in the fight for India's freedom. Celebrations were aligned with the theme of the year - 'Viksit Bharat' - the government's vision of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047.

The release of tricoloured balloons was followed by the soulful rendition of the national anthem by the senior school Hindustani Choir symbolising freedom and unity that India cherishes. The march past featuring contingents from ISWK and ISWK Cambridge, was a display of discipline and pride, showcasing the values of leadership and teamwork.

In his address, chief guest Yusuf Nalwala inspired the gathering with his words of wisdom that resonated deeply with the audience. He spoke about the importance of education, leadership, and community service.

Furthermore, he emphasised on implementing key reforms in a number of state-of-the-art in-

stitutions. Kiran Asher felicitated the chief guest with a memento.

The programme also featured a variety of performances that captured the essence of India's rich cultural heritage. The senior school choir's rendition of *Hamara Pyara Hindustan* was a soul stirring performance.

The kindergarten and primary students charmed the audience with their dance moves along the song *Hamara Watan, Hamari Shaan*. The primary school choir continued the momentum with their motivational song, *Badhte Chalo*. The mime performance by the students of ISWK Cambridge titled *Aadhe Adhoore Sapne*, poignantly depicted the dreams and struggles of ordinary citizens.

Lynk & Co 09 offers luxury, adventure in every drive

Lynk & Co, renowned for its cutting-edge European technology and innovative designs, is committed to revolutionising the driving experience in Oman.

The Lynk & Co 09 SUV, a range model that has shaken up the market, is built for both safety and unparalleled thrill. It has made its mark on Oman's automotive scene, ushering in a new era of driving excellence, advanced technology and unwavering safety standards.

A luxury voyage

Lynk & Co 09, is an exquisite MHEV seven-seat full-size SUV that marks a significant milestone in the automobile industry. Combining progressive tech, a head-turning design and comfort, it redefines urban style in Oman. Conquer family adventures and elevate your city experience - the 09 is perfect for every drive.

Perfect SUV companion

The Lynk & Co 09 presents striking exterior shades of gray, black and white. The design transitions from the bold front grille to the meticulously crafted interior, prioritising spacious comfort for extended travels.

The Drive-E 2.0TD T5 turbo engine and BSG system with an 8-speed automatic transmission combine for a responsive and exciting driving experience, without sacrificing efficiency on your journeys.

Beyond the performance, it is the ideal companion for family adventures, the company stated.

'The spacious interior provides ample legroom for everyone to stretch out, while a user-friendly rear-seat infotainment system keeps passengers entertained on long journeys,' it added.

Safety is paramount and the



23 advanced driver-assistance systems, including lane change assistance, emergency lane keeping assistance with rear car detection and blind spot detection, provide peace of mind on every mile. This tech-forward

SUV equips a cutting-edge smart connectivity and infotainment system, featuring a user-friendly interface that caters to the most discerning driver. The expansive 12-inch+6-inch centre touchscreen and crystal-clear Head-

Up Display put information at your fingertips, while the premium 14-speaker BOSE audio system elevates every journey with immersive sound.

It prioritises your comfort with plush, spacious seating crafted

with luxurious NAPPA leather.

The genuine leather steering wheel and 6-way power seat adjustment with lumbar support ensure a first-class experience for both driver and passengers.

The Lynk & Co 09 person-

alises every driving experience with its five distinct drive modes for ultimate versatility: 'Eco' prioritises fuel efficiency, 'Comfort' delivers a smooth ride, 'Sports' dials up the excitement, 'Off-Road' tackles tough terrain and 'Individual' lets you personalise everything.

As a mild hybrid electric vehicle (MHEV), it strikes a perfect balance between efficiency and performance. This technology allows one to enjoy the benefits of electrification, making it a convenient and fuel-saving option.

LYNK & CO, brings together cutting-edge technology and automotive innovation. In Oman, Lynk & Co operates under the new auto business line, 'Mobility Auto', from the Towell Group.

These exceptional vehicles are designed to redefine a car offering premium features as their standard and a focus on mobility as passion.



شركة عمان والإمارات للاستثمار القابضة (ش.م.ع.)
OMAN & EMIRATES INVESTMENT HOLDING CO. SAOG

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Board of Directors’ Report – 30th June 2024

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board, I take this opportunity to present the financial performance of Oman & Emirates Investment Holding Co SAOG for the six months period ended 30th June 2024.

Financial Results:

The Company (Group & Parent) achieved Net Profits of RO 1,083,163 and RO 1,159,405 respectively during the period January to June 2024, compared to (Group & Parent) RO 295,676 and RO 322,774 respectively during the same period in 2023. The details are shown below:

Particulars	Equity Holding %	Jan– Jun 2024 RO	Jan – Jun 2023 RO
Profit/(Loss) before share of results of Subsidiaries and Associates		375,255	(10,951)
FINCORP SAOG	51.2	88,788	151,600
Oman Hotels and Tourism Co. SAOC	31.72	47,033	2,010
Oman Fiber Optic Co. SAOC	20.97	648,329	180,115
Net Profit/ (Loss) - Parent		1,159,405	322,774
Oman Euro Food Industries Co. SAOG	80.84	(76,242)	(27,098)
Net Profit/ (Loss) - Group		1,083,163	295,676

Stock Market Indices:

During the period January to June 2024, MSX increased by 3.83% while ADX and DFM declined by 5.4% and 0.73% respectively (January to June 2023: MSM and ADX declined by 1.84% and 6.47% respectively, while DFM had increased by 13.67%).

Net Equity, Investments and Borrowing:

The Net Equity of the Group and the Parent Company increased by 4.83% and 4.90% respectively during the first half of the year. The Net Equity of the Group increased from RO 22.421 Million at 31.12.2023 to RO 23.504 Million at 30.6.2024 (30.06.2023: RO 22.536 Million). The Net Equity of the Parent increased from RO 23.650 at 31.12.2023 to RO 24.809 Million at 30.6.2024 (30.06.2023: RO 23.627 Million).

The total value of investments of the Group and the Parent Company reduced to RO 30.982 Million and RO 29.030 Million respectively as at 30.6.2024 (30.6.2023: Group RO 31.932 Million and Parent Company RO 29.724 Million).

The total borrowing of the Group and the Parent Company reduced to RO 11.185 Million and RO 7.463 Million respectively as at 30.06.2024 (30.06.2023: Group RO 13.082 Million and Parent Company RO 9.361 Million).

Acknowledgement:

I take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Governments of the Sultanate of Oman and United Arab Emirates for their support to our Company, the stock market authorities for their guidance, banks for their cooperation, shareholders for their trust and employees their unwavering efforts.

DR. ABDULLAH MASOUD AL HARTHY
VICE CHAIRMAN
13th August 2024

Consolidated and separate condensed interim statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024						
	30 June 2024 (Un-audited)	Group 30 June 2023 (Un-audited)	31 December2023 (Audited)	30 June 2024 (Un-audited)	Parent Company 30 June 2023 (Un-audited)	31 December2023 (Audited)
ASSETS						
Cash and bank balances	,123,609	1,684,050	1,419,372	762,370	846,360	266,746
Trade and other receivables	1,599,351	1,665,218	1,307,712	352,706	55,122	74,976
Inventories	244,614	487,349	446,409	-	-	-
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	14,380,971	13,977,659	14,731,511	10,311,871	9,771,607	10,375,967
Investment in associates	16,600,477	15,860,042	16,444,544	14,777,232	14,111,182	14,611,372
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	-	3,941,019	3,747,635	3,852,231
Financial assets at amortised cost	-	2,093,971	-	2,093,971	-	-
Investment property	2,764,350	2,888,550	2,826,450	2,494,350	2,618,550	2,556,450
Property, plant and equipment	1,860,932	2,121,627	21,993,075	285,727	366,095	326,283
Right-of-use assets	372,269	385,565	372,270	-	-	-
Deferred tax assets	61,069	39,274	61,071	-	-	-
	40,007,642	41,203,305	39,602,414	32,925,275	33,610,522	32,064,025
TOTAL ASSETS	40,007,642	41,203,305	39,602,414	32,925,275	33,610,522	32,064,025
EQUITY AND RESERVES						
Share capital	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500
Legal reserve	5,062,733	4,991,892	5,062,733	4,062,500	4,062,500	4,062,500
Retained earnings	6,253,652	5,357,073	5,170,489	8,559,446	7,376,481	7,400,041
Total capital and reserves of the Parent Company	23,503,885	22,536,465	22,420,722	24,809,446	23,626,481	23,650,041
Non-controlling interest	3,447,050	3,313,811	3,380,490	-	-	-
TOTAL EQUITY AND RESERVES	26,950,935	25,850,276	25,801,212	24,809,446	23,626,481	23,650,041
LIABILITIES						
Lease liabilities	400,616	399,715	400,615	-	-	-
Bank borrowings	68,308	68,007	94,144	-	-	25,836
Term loan	2,463,314	1,860,657	,629,917	2,463,314	1,860,657	2,629,917
Trade and other payables	1,471,469	1,871,650	2,023,526	652,515	623,384	758,231
Loan from Government	8,653,000	11,153,000	8,653,000	5,000,000	7,500,000	5,000,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	13,056,707	15,353,029	13,801,202	8,115,829	9,984,041	8,413,984
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	40,007,642	41,203,305	39,602,414	32,925,275	33,610,522	32,064,025
Net assets per share	0.193	0.185	0.184	0.204	0.194	0.194

Consolidated and separate condensed interim statement of changes in shareholders' equity for the six-month period ended 30 June 2024								
	Group				Parent Company			
	Period from 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024 (Un-audited)	Period from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023 (Un-audited)	Period from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024 (Un-audited)	Period from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 (Un-audited)	Period from 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024 (Un-audited)	Period from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023 (Un-audited)	Period from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024 (Un-audited)	Period from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 (Un-audited)
Net profit before tax for the period	1,149,723	472,850	180,430	267,235	1,159,405	322,774	161,247	180,020
Share of profit from investment in associates	812,788	363,844	509,567	203,351	695,362	182,125	391,304	118,250
Share of profit from investment in subsidiaries	-	-	-	-	88,789	151,600	16,428	108,090
Gross profit on sale of food products	109,372	167,730	33,220	69,569	-	-	-	-
Other income	102,858	28,283	2,016	11,206	68,000	-	-	-
Total income	2,033,198	1,310,233	617,495	672,455	1,605,614	749,772	379,330	381,125
Expenses								
Staff costs	(376,411)	(365,897)	(184,663)	(180,969)	(165,237)	(152,776)	(80,511)	(75,276)
Administrative expenses	(359,134)	(352,351)	(179,839)	(165,584)	(188,149)	(209,492)	(92,249)	(94,265)
Finance costs	(147,930)	(119,135)	(72,563)	(58,667)	(92,823)	(64,730)	(45,323)	(31,564)
Total expenses	(883,475)	(837,383)	(437,065)	(405,220)	(446,209)	(426,998)	(218,083)	(201,105)
Net profit before tax for the period	1,149,723	472,850	180,430	267,235	1,159,405	322,774	161,247	180,020
Income tax	-	(39,093)	-	(15,998)	-	-	-	-
Net profit after tax and total comprehensive income for the period	1,149,723	433,757	180,430	251,237	1,159,405	322,774	161,247	180,020
Net profit after tax attributable to:								
Parent Company	1,083,163	295,676	177,962	154,304	1,159,405	322,774	161,247	180,020
Non-controlling interest	66,560	138,081	2,468	96,933	-	-	-	-
	1,149,723	433,757	180,430	251,237	1,159,405	322,774	161,247	180,020
Earnings per share - basic and diluted	0.009	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.010	0.003	0.001	0.001

Woman charged over scheme to steal Elvis Presley’s mansion

Tennessee, US - A woman has been arrested over a 'brazen scheme' to steal the Graceland mansion that once belonged to Elvis Presley.

A 53-year-old woman from Missouri faces federal mail fraud and identity theft charges after she allegedly tried to extort the Presley family over the property, the US Justice Department said on Friday.

"The defendant orchestrated a scheme to conduct a fraudulent sale of Graceland, falsely claiming that Elvis Presley's daughter had pledged the his-

toric landmark as collateral for a loan that she failed to repay before her death," Nicole Argenti, head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, said in a statement.

"As part of the brazen scheme, we allege that the defendant created numerous false documents and sought to extort a settlement from the Presley family."

According to court documents, Findley claimed that the rock 'n' roll legend's daughter Lisa Marie Presley borrowed US\$3.8mn from a bogus private



Graceland, once the home of Elvis Presley, is now a tourist attraction

lender and had pledged Graceland as collateral before she died last year. "Findley allegedly fabricated loan documents on which Findley forged the signatures of Elvis Presley's daughter and a Florida State notary public," the Justice Department said.

The woman allegedly threatened to sell Graceland to the highest bidder if Presley's family didn't pay a US\$2.85mn settlement. A foreclosure sale had been scheduled for May but a Tennessee judge ultimately blocked the auction after the singer's granddaughter who cur-

rently owns the mansion, actor Riley Keough, filed a lawsuit claiming the documents were forged.

"Ms. Findley allegedly took advantage of the very public and tragic occurrences in the Presley family as an opportunity to prey on the name and financial status of the heirs to the Graceland estate, attempting to steal what rightfully belongs to the Presley family for her personal gain," said Eric Shen, inspector in charge of the US Postal Inspection Service Criminal Investigations Group. DW

US poll: Democrats all set for massive political event

Washington, D.C., US - With November's US presidential election looming large, the Democratic Party is gearing up for a massive political event: the Democratic National Convention (DNC), set to start on Monday, August 19, and conclude on Thursday, August 22, in Chicago.

Who is coming to the DNC?

The organisers expect to host over 5,000 Democratic delegates, high-profile guests and party officials from various parts of the US. The convention will also have 12,000 volunteers, some 50,000 visitors and thousands of reporters covering the event.

The Democratic Party is yet to release a full list of speakers, but reports indicate that current President Joe Biden, former President Barack Obama, former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would be giving speeches. Kamala Harris is set to give an address on the last day of the party conference.

The conference will be held at two main locations. The United Centre will host official proceedings, speeches and high-profile televised events. McCormick Place will be the site of daytime party meetings, consultations and briefings.

The purpose of the DNC

For both Republicans and Democrats, national conventions symbolise the party uniting behind a single candidate for the final stage of the presidential race. Traditionally, delegates from every US state are expected



Kamala Harris is expected to give an address on the last day of the party conference

to attend the DNC and publicly proclaim their support in a lengthy roll call, culminating with the candidate accepting the nomination and giving a speech.

This is also how the Republican candidate Donald Trump secured his nomination at his own party's event, the RNC, a month earlier in Milwaukee.

But this year's campaign has been anything but traditional for the Democrats. Due to Biden dropping out of the race last

As per reports, President Joe Biden, former President Barack Obama, former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would be giving speeches

month and some legal concerns regarding the ballot in Ohio, the party has already held a virtual roll call to confirm Harris as its presidential nominee.

Harris secured the support of 99 per cent of the delegates during the virtual roll call in early August, which saw 4,615 delegates cast their vote. Harris and her running mate, Tim Walz, have already accepted the Democratic nomination. Therefore, any further display of support from the

delegates - which may also include the ceremonial vote count - will be purely symbolic. Harris is still expected to give a formal acceptance speech and close the nomination process on Thursday. More importantly, the conference will give her and Walz a chance to boost their public profile and define their policies while the party puts the final touches on its 2024 platform.

The party platform serves as a mostly symbolic declaration of party priorities, hammered out through interactions between the party, the public and interest groups. The 80-page draft of the platform was published before Biden dropped out of the race last month, and the final version of the platform will be adopted at the convention.

The draft included raising income tax for billionaires, reducing the cost of child care for poor families, pledges to invest in clean energy and ban assault weapons. It also promised support to a 'negotiated two-state solution that ensures Israel's future' and an 'immediate and lasting ceasefire' in Gaza while steering clear of suggestions by some factions within the party to cut military aid to Israel.

The conference is also an opportunity to showcase celebrity endorsements. At the rival Republican convention in July, musicians Kid Rock, comedian Russell Brand and wrestling entertainment star Hulk Hogan made appearances.

The DNC, held once every four years, is the culmination of a complex process to select the presidential nominee within the Democratic Party. DW



China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi

China: No party should interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs

Chiang Mai, Thailand - China's top diplomat Wang Yi warned that no party should interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs and called it a bottom line, state-run media reported on Saturday.

Wang made these remarks during an informal discussion between the foreign ministers of China, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar in Thailand's city of Chiang Mai on Friday, Xinhua News reported.

"The current situation in Myanmar remains a cause for concern, and there are three bottom lines to be adhered to - Myanmar should not be subject to civil strife, should not be detached from the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) family, and should not be allowed to be infiltrated and interfered with by external forces," Wang said.

He added that China, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar live next to each other and they better understand special national condition in Myanmar

than other countries.

The meeting was attended by Wang Yi, Laos Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Saleunxay Kommasith, Myanmar's Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Than Swe, and Eksiri Pintaruchi, Thai permanent secretary of foreign affairs.

"No one wants Myanmar to restore stability and development more than its neighbours," Wang said.

He also proposed to jointly support Myanmar to bring domestic peace, and enable Myanmar people to overcome current situation

On Thursday, China's foreign minister after a meeting with senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the junta chief in Myanmar, also backed the junta's efforts towards early political reconciliation and said Beijing is willing to deepen bilateral ties with its Southeast Asian neighbour.

Anadolu Agency

Who is Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Thailand's new premier?

Bangkok, Thailand - Paetongtarn Shinawatra is the latest political heir from one of Thailand's most powerful, albeit divisive, political dynasties to lead the country.

The 37-year-old, who has never served in government, is the daughter of billionaire tycoon and former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, whose populist appeal has dominated Thai politics for the past two decades.

"If Paetongtarn were not Thaksin's daughter, it would have been impossible for her to become Thailand's prime minister," Puangthong Pawakapan, an associate professor of political science at Thailand's Chulalongkorn University, told DW.

Her appointment came two days after a Thai court removed her predecessor Srettha Thavisin, from the same Pheu Thai party, after less than a year in power over charges of ethics violation -

a move that surprised many.

"Staying in power as head of the government is the only way for Pheu Thai," said Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee, a political scientist at Chulalongkorn University. "They still hope to make a comeback in the next election, and they need to be in a position to realise their policies," she added.

Pheu Thai's waning popularity

After dominating at the ballots for the past 20 years, the elections in May 2023 underlined how Thailand has moved on and how the 'Thaksin factor' has somewhat lost its appeal.

Parties linked to Thaksin won every election in Thailand for the past two decades, but last year Pheu Thai was eclipsed by Move Forward, which rode to success on bold promises of reforming the monarchy and military.



Thailand's new premier Paetongtarn Shinawatra

"The middle class and young voters do not care about Thaksin," according to Panchada Sirivunnabod, an associate professor of political science at Thailand's Mahidol University.

And one of Paetongtarn's main challenges is securing the same levels of popularity once enjoyed

by her father - a scenario political experts say is unlikely to happen.

"For Pheu Thai to redeem itself, the economy would have to prosper, like double-digit growth rates, and the party also needs to materialise not just one but a few of the policies it promised," Panchada told DW.

Dynastic politics

Paetongtarn will become Thailand's second female prime minister and the fourth member of the Shinawatra clan to take the top job after her aunt Yingluck,

uncle-in-law Somchai Wongsawat, and father Thaksin.

The 37-year-old is perceived by many as another Thaksin 'proxy'.

"(Getting rid of that image) will be extremely difficult," said Panchada.

Political experts have also cast doubt on Paetongtarn's

leadership qualities and ability to get Pheu Thai back on its feet.

"Back then it was 'Thaksin thinks, Yingluck acts', and now it will be 'Thaksin thinks, Paetongtarn acts'. But that is no longer

The 37-year-old, who has never served in government, is the daughter of billionaire tycoon and former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, whose populist appeal dominated Thai politics for the past 2 decades

enough because there is now the People's Party - the successor to the dissolved Move Forward," said analyst Puangthong.

Lacking political experience?

"As prime minister, you'll have to deal with many problems. It will be increasingly highlighted

that Paetongtarn has little knowledge, and more people will say she is only taking office because her father is Thaksin," she added.

Known in Thailand by her nickname 'Ung Ing', Paetongtarn was one of the three prime ministerial candidates for the party in last year's election, playing a prominent role in campaigning as the party looked to secure backing from Thaksin's supporters.

Paetongtarn studied hotel management at the University of Surrey in England and worked for the hotel arm of the family's business empire before entering politics.

She began working for Pheu Thai as chief adviser for participation and innovation in 2021 and became party leader last October. DW



US President Joe Biden

Biden ‘optimistic’ about a ceasefire deal in Gaza Strip

Washington, D.C., US - US President Joe Biden said on Friday he is ‘optimistic’ about a ceasefire deal in the Gaza Strip.

“As of an hour ago, it’s still in play. I’m optimistic. Not - it’s far from over. Just a couple more issues. I think we’ve got a shot,” Biden told reporters when asked about the talks.

“That remains to be seen,” Biden said after he was asked a question about when would a ceasefire would start.

Biden said earlier that no one in the Middle East ‘should take actions to undermine this process’.

“I am sending Secretary (of State Antony) Blinken to Israel to reaffirm my iron-clad support for Israel’s security, continue our intensive efforts to conclude this agreement and to underscore that with the comprehensive ceasefire and hostage release deal now in sight,” Biden said in a statement.

The statement came after the US, Egypt and Qatar announced they had presented Israel and Hamas with what they called a ‘bridging proposal’ to further narrow ‘remaining gaps in the manner that allows for a swift implementation of the deal’.

Biden said he received an update from his negotiating team on the ground in the Qatari capital, Doha, and directed it to put forward the comprehensive bridging proposal presented on Friday, which offers the basis for coming to a final agreement on a ceasefire and hostage release deal.

“I spoke separately with (Qatari) Amir Sheikh Tamim and (Egyptian) President Sisi to review the significant progress made in Doha over the past two days of talks, and they expressed the

strong support of Qatar and Egypt for the US proposal as co-mediators in this process,” he said.

The teams will remain on the ground to continue technical work in the coming days, and senior officials will again convene in Cairo before the end of the week, he added.

Meanwhile, the US has rejected an Israeli proposal to establish an inspection mechanism at the Netzarim Junction in central Gaza, according to an Israeli media report on Saturday.

The US has rejected an Israeli proposal to establish an inspection mechanism at the Netzarim Junction in central Gaza

The mechanism was intended to screen individuals returning to northern Gaza as part of a potential ceasefire and prisoner exchange deal.

The report, aired by Israel’s Channel 12, stated that ‘significant obstacles’ still stand in the way of reaching an agreement.

The report noted that Israel remains adamant about maintaining a presence in the Philadelphia Corridor on the Gaza-Egypt border and at the Netzarim Junction near Gaza City, which separates the northern and southern parts of the strip.

The report said: “The Americans sent a clear message to Israel that they would not accept this condition and that this option is off the table.”

Anadolu Agency

Israel reduced ‘humanitarian zone’ to 11% of Gaza: UNRWA

The new evacuation orders have caused widespread panic among displaced people

Gaza City, Palestine - The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said on Saturday that Israel has reduced the so-called ‘humanitarian zone’ in Gaza to just 11 per cent of the territory, causing widespread panic and fear among displaced people.

In a statement, UNRWA said: “Thousands of families continue to be displaced in Gaza as Israeli authorities issue new evacuation orders.”

“The so-called ‘humanitarian zone’ has shrunk to just 11 per cent of the Gaza Strip, causing chaos and fear among the displaced,” it added.

The UN agency reiterated its call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

On Saturday and Friday, the Israeli military ordered immediate evacuation of residents in central and southern Gaza Strip.

Separately, UNRWA Communications Officer Louise Wateridge stated on X: “Once again new evacuation orders: many of the thousands of families affected only recently arrived in the area, after other displacement orders in Khan Younis.”

She noted: “Through shattered windows, nothing but shattered



The Israeli military, on Friday and Saturday, ordered immediate evacuation of residents in central and southern Gaza Strip

homes and shattered lives. People trapped in this endless nightmare.” On Tuesday, UNRWA reported that approximately 84 per cent of Gaza’s territory has been under evacuation orders since October 7.

Polio cases in Gaza

Meanwhile, Palestinian Health Minister Majed Abu Ramadan said on Saturday that the confirmation of a single polio case in Gaza indicates the possible existence of hundreds of undetected cases. Addressing a press conference at the Health Ministry in Ramallah, Ramadan stated: “It is scientifically known that for every 200 virus infections, only one will show the full symptoms of polio, while the remaining cases may present mild symptoms such as

a cold or a slight fever.”

The Palestinian Health Ministry on Friday reported the first confirmed case of polio, involving a 10-month-old child from Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, who had not received any polio vaccination. On Friday, UN chief Antonio Guterres called for a critical ‘polio pause’ to facilitate a vaccination campaign in Gaza.

Polio is a viral infection that can lead to paralysis, breathing difficulties, and death, primarily affecting children. It spreads through contaminated food or water. While there is no cure for polio, vaccination is highly effective in preventing the disease and reducing its prevalence.

Besides, the new Israeli evacuation orders for areas in eastern Gaza have resulted in the shut-

down of 10 water wells, Deir al-Balah Municipality in the central Gaza Strip announced on Saturday. Ismail Sarsour, head of the municipality’s Emergency Committee, told Anadolu: “The new Israeli evacuation orders for eastern Deir al-Balah have effectively taken 10 out of 19 wells out of service.”

“Access to three other wells west of Salah al-Din Street has become hazardous,” Sarsour stated.

He emphasised that the water situation in Deir al-Balah will become extremely dire in the coming days, especially with the shutdown of the eastern wells, which serve as a critical water supply for areas west of Salah al-Din Street, including the city centre. Deir al-Balah is currently

home to hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians, particularly in the city centre and its western areas.

Residents in the Gaza Strip are already facing significant challenges in accessing potable water, often traveling long distances to secure just a few litres. In various parts of the strip, displaced people are rationing drinking water in fear of future shortages.

The Israeli army killed 69 more Palestinians in attacks in the Gaza Strip, taking the overall death toll to 40,074 since last October 7, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Saturday.

A ministry statement added that some 92,537 other people have been injured in the ongoing deadly attacks.

Anadolu Agency

10 Syrians killed in Israeli airstrike on Lebanese towns

Ankara, Turkey - At least 10 Syrians were killed and five more civilians injured in an overnight Israeli airstrike on southern Lebanese towns.

According to the Lebanese National News Agency, the Lebanese Health Ministry reported on Saturday that a recent Israeli air raid on the Wadi al-Kfour area in Nabatieh killed 10 civilians, including a woman and her two children.

The ministry stated that the fatalities were Syrian nationals, adding that five others were injured, three of them are Syrian nationals, one Sudanese man and a Lebanese woman.

Separately, the Israeli army confirmed the strikes, stating that its fighter jets targeted several military buildings associ-



Five others were injured in the strike, three of them Syrian nationals, one Sudanese man and a Lebanese woman

ated with Hezbollah in the areas of Hanin and Maroun al-Ras. It also reported an attack in

the Nabatieh region claiming to have targeted a Hezbollah military site.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, announced on Saturday that it had launched Katyusha rockets at

the Ayelet HaShahar illegal settlement in northern Israel.

In a statement, Hezbollah said it added Ayelet HaShahar to its ‘firing schedule’ and struck the illegal settlement with Katyusha rockets for the first time. The group stated that the attack was in response to ‘the Israeli enemy’s assaults on the steadfast southern villages and safe homes, particularly in the town of Wadi al-Kfour, which resulted in the martyrdom and injury of Syrian civilians’.

Fears have grown of a full-fledged war between Israel and Hezbollah amid an exchange of cross-border attacks especially after the July 30 assassination of Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut.

Anadolu Agency

Recent mobilisation of forces: Is Libya on the brink of a new civil war?

Tripoli, Libya - Over the past week, various international bodies have sent out the alarm.

In a statement, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya said it was monitoring ‘with concern the recent mobilisation of forces in various parts of Libya’.

The organisation, known as UNSMIL, urged ‘all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid any provocative military actions that could be perceived as offensive’.

On Thursday, the Delegation of the European Union to Libya expressed similar concerns. “The use of force would harm stability in Libya and lead to human suffering. It should be avoided at all cost,” it said in a statement.

Longtime Libya watchers were more direct, suggesting that, after

around four years of relative calm in the country, civil war might be about to break out once again. The warnings came in response to last week’s large mobilisation of militias affiliated with one of Libya’s two rival administrations.

Since 2014, Libya has been split in two, with opposing governments located in the east and west of the country. A UN-backed administration known as the Government of National Unity, or GNU, is based in Tripoli in the west, and its rival, known as the House of Representatives, is based in the east, in Tobruk.

At various times over the last decade, each government has tried - and failed - to wrest control from the other.

The government in eastern Libya is supported by former



warlord-turned-politician Khalifa Haftar, who controls various armed groups in his area. It was Haftar’s forces that appeared to be moving toward Tripoli late last week. In 2019, Haftar attacked the city but was eventually forced

to sign a ceasefire in 2020.

Haftar said troops under the command of his son, Saddam, were marching in order to secure Libyan borders, to fight drug and human trafficking and to combat terrorism. However, military an-

alysts suspected other plans.

Haftar’s forces have wanted control of Ghadames airport and its surroundings for some time, Jalel Harchaoui, a North Africa expert with UK-based think tank the Royal United Services Institute, told French newspaper Le Monde. Controlling Ghadames

mark the collapse of the 2020 ceasefire’, Tarek Megerisi, a Libya expert at the European Council on Foreign Relations, wrote in a post on social media platform X.

In response to the troop movements, a range of other militias that support the Tripoli government in the west were told to in-

crease their combat readiness.

The day after Haftar’s mobilisation was sighted, a clash between two militias in Tajoura, on the coastal outskirts of Tripoli, left at least nine dead. However, local media later reported this had

The warnings came in response to last week’s large mobilisation of militias affiliated with one of Libya’s two rival administrations

‘would significantly enhance his territorial stature in relation to Algeria, Tunisia and Niger’, said Harchaoui, and would also block access for the rival GNU.

If Haftar’s troops seize Ghadames, it ‘would officially

crease their combat readiness.

The day after Haftar’s mobilisation was sighted, a clash between two militias in Tajoura, on the coastal outskirts of Tripoli, left at least nine dead. However, local media later reported this had

been motivated by an assassination attempt on one of the militia leaders.

And this week, the situation in Libya seems to have calmed again. But the danger remains, experts told DW.

Emadeddin Badi, a non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council who focuses on Libya, sees Haftar’s latest moves as a kind of ongoing ‘brinkmanship’.

“Many of the actors (in Libya) are engaging in this, to see how far they could go in kind of taunting, or sidelining, or undermining their opponents,” he said. “A zero-sum mentality still prevails,” he added, referring to the fact that opposing factions in Libya believe that one of them must eventually run the country.

DW

INDIA

Doctors strike nationwide, disrupt services

Protests were held across the country against the rape and murder of a female trainee-PG doctor

New Delhi - Medical professionals on Saturday began a 24-hour shutdown of non-essential medical services across the country, as protests against the rape and murder of a fellow medic - a female trainee-PG doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata - intensified.

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi registered more than 90 per cent reduction in admissions, OPDs and operation theatres.

According to an official status report signed by Dr Nirupam Madaan, the medical superintendent of AIIMS, Delhi, the emergency services and ICUs were functioning normally as of Saturday.

However, OPDs, admissions, operation theatres, radiological investigations and nuclear medicine registered more than 90 per cent reduction while laboratory services have been affected by more than 80 per cent.

Following the announcement of the nationwide strike by the Indian Medical Association (IMA), doctors at AIIMS in Delhi staged a protest march inside the campus on Saturday.

The doctors were seen holding posters and raising slogans of 'We want justice'.

IMA National President Dr



Doctors of Ruban Hospital hold a protest march against the sexual assault and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at R G Kar Hospital, in Patna on Saturday (ANI)

Asokan said that the time was ripe for PM Narendra Modi's intervention into the rape and murder of the trainee doctor, adding that they will be writing to the Prime Minister.

The shutdown began at 6am cutting off access to elective

medical procedures and out-patient consultations in the world's most populous nation, according to a statement by the IMA.

"Doctors, especially women, are vulnerable to violence because of the nature of the profession. It is for authorities to

provide for the safety of doctors inside hospitals and campuses. Both physical assaults and crimes are a result of indifference and insensitivity of the authorities concerned to the needs of doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers," IMA said

in a statement on Friday.

Thousands of people marched through various Indian cities on Friday to ask for better security for doctors at work as well as demand accountability for the woman's killing.

West Bengal Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee led a rally in the state's capital city, Kolkata, on Friday, after students, doctors and residents took to the streets on the eve of India's Independence Day.

Protests have generally been peaceful, but a mob on Wednesday

night vandalised the hospital where the medic was killed, with protests having picked up more steam following the incident. Demonstrators also gathered near Parliament in New Delhi, and people assembled in various other cities like Mumbai and Hyderabad. Suvrankar Datta, a resident doctor at one of India's top government hospitals in New Delhi, said protests would continue and that hospital services could be hampered in the capital in the following days to come.

Multiple medical unions in both government and private hospitals have backed the protests.

The 31-year-old medic had settled down for a short nap after working for nearly 20 hours of a 36-hour shift before she was killed, local media reported. A police volunteer has been detained in connection with the crime.

But state government officers who first began investigating the case have been accused of mishandling it. The case has been transferred to a federal agency.

Doctors have repeatedly cited threats to their lives while on the job, with many calling for measures like cameras on university campuses to ensure safety.

Agencies

26/11 attack accused Tahawwur Rana 'extraditable to India', rules US Court

Washington, D.C., US - In a major development, the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has ruled that Tahawwur Rana, the Pakistan-origin Canadian businessman involved in the 26/11 attack is 'extraditable to India' under the extradition treaty between the two countries.

The panel affirmed the district court's denial of Tahawwur Hussain Rana's habeas corpus petition challenging a magistrate judge's certification of Rana as extraditable to India for his alleged participation in terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

The panel also held that India provided sufficient competent evidence to support the magistrate judge's finding of probable cause that Rana committed the charged crimes.

Mumbai Police in its chargesheet has named Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana in the



Tahawwur Rana

405-page chargesheet in connection with the 26/11 attacks. Rana is accused of being an operative of ISI and Lashkar-e-Taiba.

In the chargesheet, Rana is accused of supporting the 26/11 attacks' mastermind David Coleman Headley, who conducted the recce of the Mumbai attacks.

Under the limited scope of habeas review of an extradition order, the US panel held that Rana's alleged offence fell within the terms of the extradition treaty between the United States and India, which in-

cluded a Non-Bis in Idem (double jeopardy) exception to extraditability 'when the person sought has been convicted or acquitted in the Requested State for the offence for which extradition is requested'.

Relying on the plain text of the treaty, the State Department's technical analysis, and persuasive case law of other circuits, the panel held that the word 'offence' refers to a charged crime, rather than underlying acts, and requires an analysis of the elements of each crime.

The panel concluded that a co-conspirator's plea agreement did not compel a different result, and further held that the Non Bis in Idem exception did not apply because the Indian charges contained distinct elements from the crimes for which Rana was acquitted in the US.

ANI

Karnataka Governor Gehlot gives nod to prosecute Siddaramaiah in MUDA scam

Bengaluru, Karnataka - In what could spell trouble for Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, State Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot on Saturday granted permission to prosecute Siddaramaiah in the alleged Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam, according to the Raj Bhavan sources on Saturday.

Challenging the move, the Karnataka government said it will move the High Court against the governor's permission for prosecution.

An order issued by the Karnataka Governor's Secretariat on August 17 read: "As directed by the Hon'ble Governor, I am enclosing herewith the copy of the decision of the Competent Authority on the request of sanction for prosecution against the Chief Minister Shri. Siddaramaiah, under section 17 of the Prevention of Corruption Act,



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah

1988 and section 218 of the Bharathiya Nagarika Suraksha Samhitha, 2023 for the commission of the alleged offences mentioned in the petitions."

Earlier, a complaint was filed by social activist Snehamayi Krishna against Siddaramaiah and nine others for allegedly forging documents to claim compensation from MUDA.

Earlier in the month, refuting

the allegations, CM Siddaramaiah said: "In the case of MUDA, everything was done according to law. I have not exerted any kind of influence on the allotment of the plot. My wife has been given a replacement plot in 2021 during the government period of the BJP government as per the law."

"In 2014, when I was the chief minister, my wife applied

The Karnataka government said it will move the High Court against the governor's permission for prosecution

for a replacement site as MUDA had illegally acquired our land. At that time I did not take any action in this regard. BJP and JDS parties are making allegations against me intending to destabilise the government."

CM Siddaramaiah had also attacked the former Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa. "There are more than 20 cases against Yeddyurappa, who has no morals to talk about me. He should retire from public life if he has morals."

ANI

Thailand: Former PM Thaksin Shinawatra gets royal pardon

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has received a royal pardon and his parole will end on Sunday, his lawyer Winyat Chartmontri said.

"Thaksin is among the prisoners that received the royal pardon for prisoners in honour of King Maha Vajiralongkorn's birthday last month, Winyat said. "He will later receive a document from the prison saying he is a free man."

The move means Thaksin's parole, due to end at the end of the month, ends earlier than planned. The announcement came a day after Thaksin's daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra, 37, was elected as Thailand's second female prime minister and the third Shinawatra to hold the office.

Paetongtarn was elected by nearly two-thirds of members of the Thai parliament.

The vote for a new PM was prompted by a Constitutional Court ruling on Wednesday removing Thaksin ally Srettha Thavisin as prime minister for ethics violations.

Thaksin has been one of Thailand's most prominent politicians for decades as well as one of the most polarising figures.

To the rural voters, Thaksin was the first leader to have paid attention to the needs of the millions living beyond Bangkok's bright lights. But to many in the urban middle class and the royalist elite, Thaksin was a crony capitalist who plundered the economy.

DW

Pakistan: Two more cases of mpox virus detected

Karachi, Pakistan - Two more cases of monkeypox virus have been detected in Pakistan, raising further concerns following which the Pakistan government ordered strict surveillance and precautionary measures at all entry points, including airports, Express Tribune reported citing officials.

The Border Health Services Pakistan issued a letter to the relevant officials for strict monitoring and precautionary measures to check the spread of monkeypox. The virus also known as mpox, has killed hundreds of people in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and its neighbouring countries in Africa.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared mpox a global health emergency.

The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) health department confirmed two mpox cases in the province.



The WHO has declared mpox a global health emergency

On Thursday the federal health ministry confirmed the country's first mpox case - also a resident of K-P, who had recently returned from Saudi Arabia, Express Tribune reported.

Following the confirmation of the first mpox case, the National

Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) issued an advisory on the measures to deal with the disease.

Salim Khan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa director-general of health services, said that the viral infection was detected in pas-

sengers upon their arrival from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Samples of a third patient had been sent to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Islamabad for confirmation, he added.

The border authorities have been instructed to improve screening of passengers at all entry points, including airports, and also isolate and report passengers with suspected injuries or related symptoms.

According to a Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) spokesperson, the screening process was going on at airports across the country, including Karachi.

"The airport administration is ensuring the implementation of the NCOC instructions. The Border Health Services has established an isolation room for suspected travellers. In case of symptoms, the sample is sent for

lab test," Express Tribune quoted him as saying.

Over 27,000 cases and more than 1,100 deaths, mainly among children have been reported in DR Congo since the current outbreak began in January 2023.

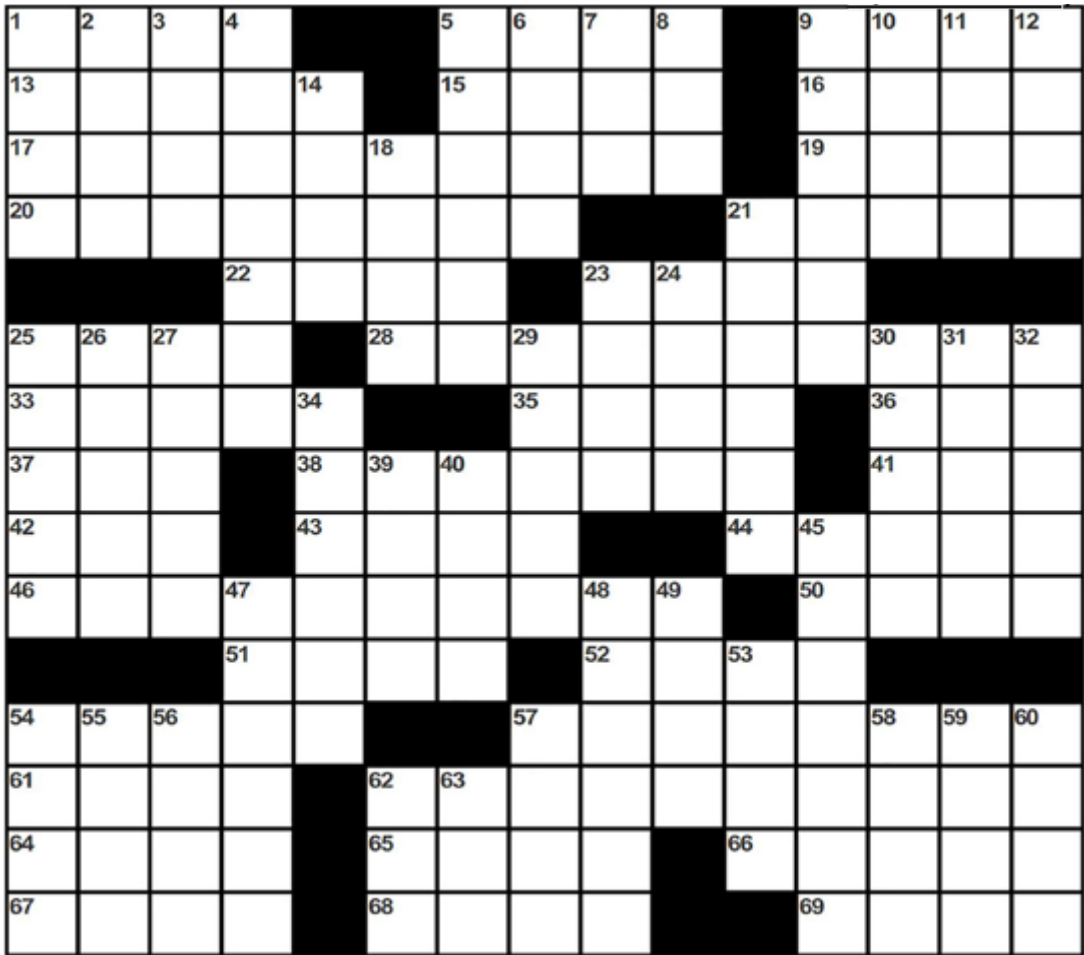
Recently, Sweden also confirmed the first case of a more contagious strain of mpox, which was the first case of the strain outside Africa.

Following this, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged affected countries to work together to tackle the monkeypox outbreak and called on all nations to address the current outbreak.

The WHO Director-General emphasised the need for enhanced surveillance, data sharing, and collaboration to combat the transmission of the mpox virus.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Do a laundry chore
5) Like the Sahara
9) Rush job initials
13) "Das Boot" vessel
15) Movie pal of Stitch
16) Oblong tomato
17) Dunkin' Donuts Munchkins, essentially
19) "At which point ... "
20) Uncage
21) Picked out
22) "How are you?" reply
23) Rights org.
25) "Follow me!"
28) "What'd I Say" singer
33) Didn't despair
35) Miners' take
36) Peron of Argentina
37) Dismiss summarily
38) Newspaper publishers, e.g.
41) Suffix with "fact"
42) Galahad's address
43) "Giant" star James
44) Meddlesome type
46) 1932 Spencer Tracy movie
50) Do lunch together, say
51) Yalies
52) Classic toon Betty_
54) Short-tempered

- 57) Sources of nacre
61) Assist nefariously
62) Just about everywhere
64) Like a griot's stories
65) Many a DeMille movie
66) Cathartic-yielding plant
67) Cobbler's piece
68) Heavy cart
69) Enlarge, with "out"
DOWN
1) Brewskies
2) Bassoon's cousin
3) Win in a walk
4) "Just do it" for Nike
5) Denali's state
6) Really rankle
7) Not up to par
8) Windows forerunner
9) Dudley Moore title role
10) Area of London or Manhattan
11) Iowa home of the Cy-clones
12) French door part
14)_ McAn shoes
18) Crude sort
21) Well-bred
23) Yard size, maybe
24) "Moonstruck" actress
25) Bottomless pit

- 26) Spunk
27) "Aida" or "Carmen"
29) In one's salad days
30) Sierra_ (African nation)
31) Digital party notice
32) Co-Nobelists with Begin
34) Nothing, slangily
39) Weigh station user
40) Comes out with
45) Give authority to
47) Prickly plant
48) Head monk's jurisdiction
49) Usurer's offering
53) GM make until 2004
54) Pueblo town
55) Zaragoza's river
56) Jesse Ventura was one
57) Met highlight
58) Mudville_ (Casey's team)
59) Charlotte's "Diffrent Strokes" role
60) Baseball feature
62) Paid, as a parking meter
63) Auto loan abbr.

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

The stars are gently reminding you that there's more than one point of view, and you need to take a certain party's perspective into account before you move ahead. You're moving with brisk progress toward what you desire and you're about to get it, but it's important that you don't trample or shove anyone out of the way, especially if you want them to stick around for the next phase of the journey. Stop and inquire about someone's feelings.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Giving up something you love just to please someone you love just doesn't make any sense. You and a good friend or sweetheart might be locking horns over an activity that you see as necessary but they view as a frivolous self-indulgence. Agree to disagree, or better yet, invite them along to experience the joys of something that you know firsthand. Who knows? You might just make a convert out of them yet!



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

When it comes to making sure you perform your best, what really counts is how much time you spend preparing. You have a series of hurdles to clear, but it won't be a problem if you do all the groundwork with diligence and attention. You've also got the ability to ask for help from people who are in a great position to lend you the resources you need, so take advantage of their offers. They want you to succeed too.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The opening of the 2012 Summer Olympics had echoes of what event at the 1984 Olympic Games opening?

- A. The US Army Band formed the Olympic rings
B. A flight over the stadium by someone in a one-man jetpack
C. Children held balloons that burst simultaneously
D. Balloons were released, to carry a set of Olympic rings and a camera up to the mid-stratosphere

2. What is the name for a mixture of clay, sand and silt?

- A. Peat
B. Loam
C. Gravel
D. Sludge

3. Who wrote the poem "O Captain! My Captain!"?

- A. Alan Ginsberg
B. Walt Whitman
C. Robert Frost
D. Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Answers: 1. B 2. B 3. B



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

If anyone is entitled to have some fun, it's you, and it's about darn time too. You've turned down all kinds of wonderful temptations lately in just about every category. But just as you start to wonder why, the Universe will arrange to deliver your reward: a one-of-a-kind reward designed especially for you. Don't question it and don't worry about why it's there. Entice an appropriate playmate to join you and enjoy!



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your best self is currently on display and drawing plenty of admirers, so make sure you're not inadvertently pushing them away by donning a cool facade. The time is ripe to work out the finer details in terms of negotiations for contracts at work, especially if you have a partner that you usually work with. In fact, any interactions and relationships with others are highlighted right now, so make the most of these easy influences regarding them.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Put aside those loose ends for now and concentrate on initiating something that's near and dear to your heart. It's a fantastic time to lay the foundation for a project that needs lots of time and TLC. So start drawing up plans, brainstorming, and building those castles in the air. Make sure to give yourself plenty of freedom. Think of the sky not as the limit but more like a guideline.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You excel at beginnings, but when it comes to seeing things through to the end, you may need a little help. Team up with a like-minded buddy or coworker, one who shares a similar outlook but a different skill set would be perfect, and see if the two of you can't combine forces to make things come out just right. What's most important is that at the end of this day's hard work, you make sure that you both get the credit.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Today brims with romantic potential. If you're already involved, your relationship could take a delightful turn. Singles can expect that their crush will pick up on their unspoken signals and, even better, reciprocate those feelings. In addition to this love jackpot, you can expect some enticing career prospects to present themselves too. If some friends feel left out in the cold by your good fortune, woo them back with your genuine affection.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You excel at solving puzzles on your own, but right now, holding your problems in won't make you stronger -- on the contrary, it might deprive you of the help that's well within your reach if you could only make the smallest gesture toward it. Remember that asking for aid doesn't make you weak -- it makes you smart. So if something's been on your mind, grab a friend and pour out your troubles to their sympathetic ears.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

It seems like everyone in your immediate vicinity has been given an impossible mission, and they've all chosen to accept it without informing you. Meanwhile, here you sit feeling like you might get knocked over in the ensuing fracas. Even if you're not in the middle of the action, you're really the only one getting things done right now, most of all because you understand the value of hard work over putting on a good show.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're about to embark on an extraordinary opportunity or relationship. Be receptive and open to the influences that are intent on presenting you with experiences that will shape your mind, body, and soul if only you are willing to relax your sense of control and deal with what comes your way. There's no need to decide one way or the other what your course of action will be. Instead, watch, wait, and listen for your golden chance.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

How long has it been since you made a real effort to get away from it all? Okay, you might not be able to get away to Aruba on the spur of the moment (though if you can, you definitely should), but you can find a few moments to spend some TLC on yourself. How about a walk in the park before work? Maybe a few hours after work with the phone unplugged and your favorite book? It's amazing how refreshing even a brief respite can be.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

R	L	L	S
A	I	U	I
I	M	G	M
A	T	Y	M

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.

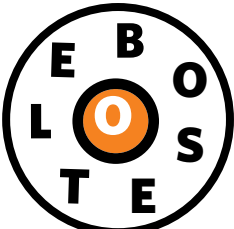
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Julian Alvarez during an Atletico Madrid training session

Alvarez wants to ‘try and achieve my best version’ at Atletico

Madrid, Spain - Argentine forward Julian Alvarez wanted a change in his career after a short but trophy-laden spell at Premier League club Manchester City and the 24-year-old said on Friday he was excited about starting a new challenge at Atletico Madrid.

Alvarez joined Atletico on a six-year contract on Monday. His exit marked a record sale for City, eclipsing the 50 million pounds (\$64.50 million) Chelsea paid for England winger Raheem Sterling in 2022.

Alvarez won the Premier League twice during his two-year stay at City, having joined from Argentine side River Plate in 2022, as well as the Champions League, Club World Cup, Super Cup and FA Cup all once. He is also a World Cup winner and twice Copa America champion with Argentina.

"I felt I needed a change in my career, looking for a new challenge and I feel this is a club that gives me the space to have my best version as a footballer," Alvarez told reporters at his presentation ceremony as a new Atletico player.

Alvarez, who scored 36 goals in 103 appearances for City, said he was prepared to give it his all for compatriot Diego Simeone's side.

"I'd like to play, I'm always available in any position and as long as I'm on the pitch to help the team I'll be happy," he said. "You always dream of winning; you like to win and compete. I don't feel like a superhero for winning the World Cup... I'm here to do my bit and to fight for all the competitions."

"My objectives are to try to achieve my best version and to grow as a person as well as to help win."



Boulaye Dia

Lazio sign Senegal’s Dia fom Salernitana

Rome, Italy - Italian side Lazio have signed Senegal international Boulaye Dia from relegated Salernitana on an initial two-year loan with an option to buy, the Serie A club announced late on Friday.

While the financial details were not disclosed by either club, Italian media reported the deal to be valued at 12 million euros (\$13.23 million) for the 27-year-old striker.

"Dia will wear the number 19 shirt," Lazio said in a statement. Dia started playing for Salernitana in 2022 and has scored 22 goals in 52 outings. He struggled with injury last season, scoring four goals from 17 appearances.

Lazio's new head coach Marco Baroni, who replaced Igor Tudor, has been tasked with rebuilding the squad after the club lost several key players, particularly in attack.

Italian striker Ciro Immobile left last month after eight years with the club, and Lazio will also be without Luis Alberto, Daichi Kamada, and Felipe Anderson this season.

PSG start with big win

Late flurry of goals helps French champions beat Le Havre in opener

Le Havre, France - French champions Paris St Germain won 4-1 at Le Havre on Friday, capitalising on a late collapse by the hosts to get their Ligue 1 season off to an excellent start.

The Parisians have dominated French football with 10 league titles in the last 12 seasons but they are rebuilding after Kylian Mbappé left to join Real Madrid in the summer.

They have one of the youngest squads in the league this season and are betting on a new generation that can take on more responsibility in Mbappé's absence.

PSG started Friday's match with home-grown 16-year-old Ibrahim Mbaye on the left wing and took the lead after only three minutes when Goncalo Ramos found Lee Kang-in inside the box and he sent a left-foot shot into the net.

The visitors' joy was short-lived, however, as Ramos was hurt in a challenge and the Portuguese international had to be replaced by Randal Kolo Muani.

The hosts shocked PSG after the break as Gautier Lloris, brother of France's World Cup winning goalkeeper Hugo, equalised after 48 minutes and only a video review stopped the host from taking the lead after Josué Casimir hit the net five minutes later. PSG piled on the pressure as the match continued, but Le Havre held on and looked resolute.

Five minutes before the end of the game, however, Le Havre defence went missing and Ousmane Dembélé headed the visitors in front again.

The 21-year-old Bradley Barcola got the third a minute later and Kolo Muani added a fourth from the penalty spot in the final minute of the match. Another youngster, 19-year-old João Neves, claimed two assists.

PSG coach Luis Enrique was pleased with his team's performance.



Paris St Germain's Ousmane Dembélé scores against Le Havre on Friday

It wasn't easy at all. Maybe we started too calmly. We scored a goal very quickly and that relaxed us a bit too much

LUIS ENRIQUE

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PSG coach Luis Enrique was pleased with his team's performance.

"It wasn't easy at all," he told reporters. "Maybe we started too calmly. We scored a goal very quickly and that relaxed us a bit too much."

The injury to Ramos was, however, a serious blow to PSG.

"I'm not a doctor but I think it looks like a serious injury. I don't know how many weeks he will be out," Luis Enrique said.

Ligue 1's decreasing TV rights

While France basks in the glow of the dazzling Paris Olympics, French football is trying to shake off a hangover from its own disastrous summer as the first Ligue 1 season of the post-Mbappé era began this weekend.

A year after the departures of Lionel Messi and Neymar, Mbappé signed for Real Madrid after eight and a half years in Ligue 1. Nobody was surprised to see Mbappé finally move on, and he has left behind a league in disarray after the fiasco surrounding the sale of its broadcast rights.

The French league (LFP) only confirmed a couple of weeks ahead of the season starting that it had agreed to a new domestic television deal for the next five years.

Its negotiating power was weakened by the collapse of the relationship with its long-time partner, pay-TV giant Canal Plus, the LFP finally signed a contract with British streaming platform DAZN and Qatar's beIN Sports for the knockdown price of 500 million (\$548m) euros annually.

International rights have increased to a reported 160 million euros annually, but the domestic deal is a considerable drop from the 624 million euros previously.

Milan need to offload players, says new manager Fonseca

Milan, Italy - Manager Paulo Fonseca is happy with AC Milan's acquisitions before the season but warns that players will be leaving Serie A the club as they begin their campaign at home to Torino on Saturday.

The new Portuguese coach confirmed that the signing of French midfielder Youssouf Fofana from AS Monaco is nearly complete, with no other recruitment planned.

Milan have signed striker Alvaro Morata, and defenders Emerson Royal and Strahinja Pavlovic.

"After his (Fofana) arrival, our incomings will be completed, we will need to focus on outgoings," Fonseca told reporters on Friday.

"Some players must leave now. We have many, and it's not easy to work with a lot of players."

"We work and play to aim for the top, we cannot say that we are ahead of everyone to win the league but we want to be fighting for the Scudetto," Fonseca said.

"Inter are reigning champions, we know their level, Juventus, Napoli and Atalanta, apart from ourselves, also have the right things to compete."

Fonseca has only been Milan coach for two months but is pleased with how his players have adapted to his methods.

"I came to Milan at the right moment in my career. The feeling is very positive, right from the first day, we have already improved more than I expected," he said.

"We are expecting a different and more complex game than those we have played in pre-season. We want to show our identity from the very first game."



Paulo Fonseca

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Netherlands drop Memphis Depay for next month’s Nations League clashes

Amsterdam, Netherlands - Memphis Depay has been left out of a preliminary squad named by the Netherlands for their opening two matches in the Nations League next month, but there are first call-ups for two English-based players.

Dutch coach Ronald Koeman on Friday named a preliminary list of 35 players that he will cut in two weeks' time ahead of the League A Group Three games against Bosnia & Herzegovina in Eindhoven on Sept. 7 and Germany in Amsterdam three days later.

Called up for the first time is winger Crysencio Summerville, who moved to Premier League side West Ham United from Leeds United earlier this month, and Jan Paul van Hecke from Brighton & Hove Albion.

Another notable call-up is 18-year-old defender Jorrel Hato from Ajax Amsterdam.

Hato won a cap last November but was not included in the squad for this year's European Championship in Germany where the Dutch reached the semi-finals.

Depay, who has not yet found a new club after leaving Atletico Madrid, is dropped, along with Georginio Wijnaldum and Daley Blind, who announced his retirement from the Dutch team earlier this week.

Frenkie de Jong has still not recovered from the ankle injury that caused him to miss the European Championship.



Memphis Depay

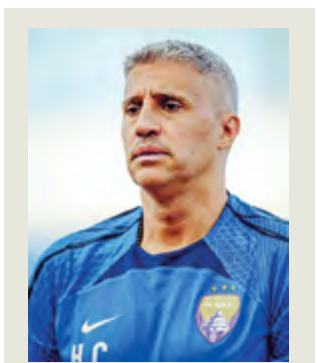
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Hernan Crespo

Tough challenge awaits title holders Al Ain in Asian Champions League

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates will face Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr and fellow Saudi Arabian sides Al Hilal and Al Ahli when Hernan Crespo's side kick off the defence of their continental title next month.

Al Ain, who won the club's second Asian title in May, will also meet Qatar's Al Sadd, Al Rayyan and Al Gharafa plus Al Shorta from Iraq and Uzbekistan champions Pakhtakor following the group-phase draw in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.

The competition, which starts on September 16, has been reconfigured with the number of teams reduced from 40 to 24 while the Swiss League format will be used in the group phase.

The 24 participants have been split into two groups of 12 - one covering west Asia and the other the eastern side of the continent - with teams playing eight matches in the group phase against opponents determined by a computer-assisted draw.



Erik ten Hag

We have to be composed, says Ten Hag

Manchester, England - Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said wasted chances remain a major concern after his side laboured to a 1-0 win over Fulham in their Premier League opener on Friday.

An optimistic Old Trafford crowd fell flat for much of the first game of the English top-flight season after watching their team struggle to create openings.

When they did present themselves, they were mostly squandered, until substitute Joshua Zirkzee netted a late winner on his debut.

"I think one area we have to get right is how to kill (games) in the box," Ten Hag told reporters. "We saw it in the friendlies and last week against (Manchester) City (in United's Community Shield loss).

"We created enough chances and should not to have wait for a late winner. We have to be more composed and kill teams.

"Maybe it is because it is the start of the season, players have to come into full speed."

ZIRKZEE'S DREAM START

New signing Joshua strikes late as Man United beat Fulham in Premier League opener

Manchester, England - A late goal by new signing Joshua Zirkzee earned Manchester United a nervy 1-0 victory over Fulham in their Premier League season opener at Old Trafford on Friday.

Home supporters were in buoyant mood ahead of the first game of the English top-flight campaign, with four players unveiled on the pitch and new faces in the United boardroom also in attendance.

Just as they did at home for much of last season, however, United struggled to break down their opponents in the first half, with captain Bruno Fernandes going closest to scoring the opener.

Frustrations grew after the break, only for Dutch substitute Zirkzee to arrive right on cue three minutes from time to earn United victory.

"To win here in my first home game and to grab a goal, it couldn't be better," Zirkzee told Sky Sports.

"I've been told (scoring at the Stretford End) is one of the best feelings at Man United. I'm so thankful and blessed I could experience it in my first game. It's an amazing feeling.

"Manchester United is a huge club. You should always strive for the best. It's all good vibes."

Without a Premier League title since 2013 and having addressed key problem areas in the transfer market, United supporters are expecting better than their eighth-placed finish last term.

When the action started on a



Manchester United's Joshua Zirkzee celebrates after scoring against Fulham on Friday

I've been told (scoring at the Stretford End) is one of the best feelings. I'm so thankful I could experience it in my first game

JOSHUA ZIRKZEE

fine evening, however, the mood around the stadium was less enthusiastic as United again looked short of ideas in attack.

A smart save from goalkeeper Andre Onana kept an early curl-

ing Kenny Tete effort out while Fernandes was presented with two golden opportunities but was denied by Fulham keeper Bernd Leno. Midfielder Mason Mount, handed a starting spot after an injury-ravaged first season in Manchester, went close early in the second half.

More wayward passing led to groans from supporters, however, before despair turned to ju-

bilation at the death when substitutes Alejandro Garnacho and Zirkzee combined to create the winner.

United have more wins and more points from their opening games of Premier League campaigns than any other team, but this performance suggested there is still much to be done for manager Erik ten Hag.

"Subs are always important

and it was good to see in the first game that you bring a sub on and he scores the winner," Ten Hag said.

"Against Fulham it is always a difficult game, but we defended and pressed very well. After 10 minutes we found our spell in the game and we kept them under pressure. We created a lot of chances and we should have scored earlier and that is the only

criticism of the team - kill in the box."

Fulham manager Marco Silva was disappointed to take nothing from the match.

"It is really tough for us to lose this game the way we lost," he said. "We started really well, after 20 minutes good reaction from Man United. We adjusted at half-time and the second half was much better."

Man City's Bobb out for up to four months with broken leg

Manchester, England - Manchester City will kick off their quest for a fifth consecutive Premier League title on Sunday without Oscar Bobb, who could miss up to four months after breaking his leg in training, and Rodri, who is recovering from an injury sustained at Euro 2024.

City open their season against Chelsea and, with key Euro players rejoining the squad only this week, manager Pep Guardiola acknowledged the squad might not be at full strength. "We have to (be ready), we have to," Guardiola said on Friday. "I don't know what's going to happen. Everybody knows we are not in the best condition but it doesn't matter, we have a desire to do well. I think there are a lot of teams right now that aren't perfect.

"What I have learned is that the season is so long. You have to be ready physically and mentally. For that, you need rest. We try to do our best in the condition we were in. The players that are here will have to do their best."



Oscar Bobb

Guardiola said he was very sad for Norwegian forward Bobb, who is expected to be out for three or four months after undergoing surgery for a leg fracture.

Rodri was injured just before halftime of Spain's Euro 2024 clash with England in the final.

"He is in training, I don't know, I haven't seen him yet. He feels

Everybody knows we are not in the best condition but it doesn't matter, we have a desire to do well. I think there are a lot of teams right now that aren't perfect

PEP GUARDIOLA

good. We'll have to see how he feels after training," Guardiola said, then added: "No chance (that he will play on Sunday)."

Rodri, plus England's Kyle Walker, John Stones and Phil Foden returned to training only at the start of the week after their 2023-24 season stretched through to the Euro final on July

14. "We prioritise the rest," Guardiola said. "I would love to give more time but it is what it is. I demand the best on Sunday against Chelsea. When the players are fitter and better, they have to be better."

The manager wished England international Calvin Phillips well in his move to newly promoted

Guardiola: Maresca will be a hit, he just needs time

Manchester, England - Man City manager Pep Guardiola has said that Enzo Maresca can succeed as head coach at Chelsea but his former assistant needs to be given time.

Maresca worked under Guardiola at Manchester City before achieving success guiding Leicester City back in to the Premier League last season. That won him the job at Chelsea, who face Man City on Sunday.

Guardiola said he could claim no part in Maresca's success, adding that it would continue at Stamford Bridge if Chelsea showed patience with the Italian. In the last two seasons, Chelsea have had four different man-

agers. "The job Enzo did at Leicester belongs to him and his staff," Guardiola said. "My influence is zero on Leicester getting promoted again. I didn't score a goal or make any saves. I give info and they learn. It's on both sides and the success of the people together belongs absolutely to them.

"My advice is to give him time and it will work. All managers need time. I don't know if Chelsea is the place to do this, but it will work if they give him time. This is my feeling."

Maresca calls for patience

Maresca asked for patience



Pep Guardiola (L) with Enzo Maresca

ahead of their opener against reigning champions City, as the Italian tries to turn around the west London side's fortunes after a series of underwhelming seasons. Chelsea, who finished sixth last campaign and 12th in the 2022-23 season, hired the 44-year-old Maresca in June after he guided Leicester City to the English Championship title in his first season in charge.

Chelsea have gone big again in the transfer window, splashing out around 160 million pounds (\$206.50 million) on signing players such as winger Pedro Neto, midfielder Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall and goalkeeper Filip Jorgensen.

Bournemouth sign Evanilson

London, England - Bournemouth have signed striker Evanilson from Portugal's Porto for a record fee, the Premier League club said on Friday.

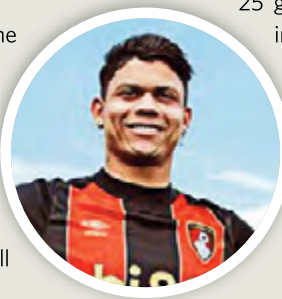
Details of the deal for the 24-year-old Brazilian were not disclosed, but British media reported that Bournemouth will pay a club record 40.2 million pounds (\$52 million) for him.

"Evanilson is a hugely sought-after striker and for us

to bring him to the club in a record-breaking deal shows our ambition and intent," club chief executive Neill Blake said in a statement. "Having scored

25 goals last season, including goals in the Champions League, we feel that his experience and ability despite only being 24 will help us to match our ambitions moving forward."

Evanilson will take over the number nine jersey from Dominic Solanke, who joined Tottenham.



Evanilson

Sri Lanka's Dickwella suspended indefinitely for doping violation

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka wicketkeeper-batsman Niroshan Dickwella has been suspended indefinitely due to an alleged doping violation, the national governing body Sri Lanka Cricket said.

Dickwella failed a doping test conducted by the Sri Lanka Anti-Doping Agency under World Anti-Doping Agency guidelines during the Lanka Premier League.

"The suspension is effective immediately and will remain in place until further notice," the SLC said in a statement on Friday.

"The test, conducted by the Sri Lanka Anti-Doping Agency (SLADA) during the Lanka Premier League (LPL) 2024, is part of SLC's ongoing commitment to

maintaining the integrity of the sport. This initiative, undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports and in accordance with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) guidelines, is aimed at ensuring that cricket remains free

from the influence of prohibited substances.

"SLC, together with the Ministry of Sports and SLADA, conducts these tests during domestic tournaments randomly to safeguard the sport against anti-doping violations."

Dickwella captains the Galle Marvels in the Lanka Premier League. The 31-year-old has served as Sri Lanka's wicket-keeper in all formats, last playing for the national team in a Test series against New Zealand at Christchurch in March last year.



Niroshan Dickwella

SALAH ON TARGET

Egyptian star’s goal helps manager Slot get off to winning start at Liverpool

Ipswich, England - Second-half goals from Diogo Jota and Mohamed Salah allowed new Liverpool coach Arne Slot to get off to a 2-0 winning start at newly-promoted Ipswich Town in the Premier League on Saturday.

Ipswich, cheered on by new minority shareholder and singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran from the Portman Road stands, went toe-to-toe with Liverpool in the first half but failed to take their chances when they presented themselves. Slot’s new side improved markedly after the break, taking the lead on the hour mark through Jota, before a fine move was finished off by Egyptian forward Salah five minutes later to effectively kill off the Ipswich challenge.

Liverpool had a host of chances to make the result even more emphatic, but two goals were enough to navigate Liverpool and Slot past a tricky first game of the campaign.

"Hopefully I keep going like this for the whole season," Salah told TNT Sports. "I always try to help the team all the time, I'm always happy to score goals or assist. It's quite different for all of us (playing under Slot), we need to adapt. We just need to know his way of playing and enjoy the football. We don't need to put more pressure on him, we just need to play football and enjoy our games."

In January, Juergen Klopp shocked the world when he announced he would step down as Liverpool manager at the end of last season, with the German saying his goodbyes to an emo-



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Ipswich Town on Saturday

tional Anfield on the final day of the campaign.

The man with the formidable task of replacing Klopp, who won a Champions League and ended Liverpool's 30-year wait for a league title during his time in England, is former Feyenoord boss Slot.

Arsenal win

Arsenal eased to a 2-0 home win over Wolverhampton Wanderers as goals by Kai Havertz and Bukayo Saka got their Premier League title challenge up and running on Saturday.

It was far from a fluent display in the summer sunshine but Mikel Arteta's side, once again regarded as the team most likely to halt Manchester City's domination, deserved the points.

Havertz headed in from Saka's cross in the 25th minute but the hosts never looked completely comfortable until Saka's clinical finish doubled their advantage in the closing stages.

Joelinton's goal earned Newcastle a 1-0 win over promoted Southampton at St James' Park despite going down to 10 men in the first half.

Danny Welbeck scored one goal and set up another as Brighton & Hove Albion eased to a 3-0 victory at 10-man Everton in a perfect start for Fabian Huerzeler, 31, the Premier League's youngest ever permanent manager.

Kaoru Mitoma scored at the back post after excellent work from debutant winger Yankuba Minteh, while Simon Adingra added a late third.

Real Madrid players could get breaks during season, says Ancelotti

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid are considering allowing players to go on short holidays during the season because of concerns about the congested fixtures schedule, manager Carlo Ancelotti said on Saturday.

On the eve of their LaLiga season debut at Mallorca, Ancelotti said that the steady increase in regional and international games on the calendar was taking its toll on players.

"The players need rest, they need holidays and we are thinking about giving individual holidays to the players during the season," Ancelotti told a news conference on Saturday.

"We are thinking about giving in-season breaks, give a week off for a player so he can go and stay with his family, especially international players, who have very little rest because they usually don't get even a day's holiday in international breaks.

"We are assessing it with the medical staff and the physical preparation..."

After winning the LaLiga and Champions League double last season and now bidding for up to seven titles in the 2024-25 campaign, Ancelotti believes the club need to make sacrifices to preserve the health and fitness of their players. He said his staff were already looking at the 2025-26 season, with the 2026 World Cup in June and July in Canada, Mexico and the United States putting extra demands on international players.

After winning the UEFA Super Cup against Atalanta on Wednesday, Real Madrid will be competing in LaLiga, the Cham-



The players need rest, they need holidays and we are thinking about giving individual holidays to the players during the season

CARLO ANCELOTTI

pions League, Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia, plus the FIFA Intercontinental Cup and the new FIFA Club World Cup in the US.

"At the moment we still don't even know the date (of the Club World Cup), same with the Intercontinental. We are bidding for seven titles but we still don't know when or how," Ancelotti said. "The 2025-26 season might start earlier because of the World Cup, so we have to plan accordingly starting this season.

"For example, when Vinicius Jr comes back after playing with Brazil, instead of playing in LaLiga, he rests for three or four days, he goes on holiday and then he comes back.

"That's the only way. Normally those players train, even if they don't play. But we're going to take that away, let them do what they want on those days."

Bagnaia wins Austrian Grand Prix sprint

Spielberg, Austria - Twice MotoGP champion Francesco Bagnaia won the Austrian Grand Prix sprint on Saturday to go level on points with Prima Pramac Racing's Jorge Martin at the top of the world championship, as six-times MotoGP champion Marc Marquez crashed.

The Italian Ducati rider's victory at the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg moved him up to 250 points, alongside Martin ahead of Sunday's race.

Having clinched pole with a

lap record after going fastest in qualifying, Martin was slow getting away when the lights went out while Bagnaia turned on the aggression as soon as he shot off the line.

Martin received a long-lap penalty for failing to lose one second after cutting the chicane at turn two and finished second. He had looked on course to finish third until Marquez crashed out with four laps remaining.

There was no stopping Bagnaia once Martin's penalty had been served and he opened up a

sizeable gap over the Spaniard and crossed the finish line well ahead of the chasing pack.

"Incredible, but the most incredible thing is the best lap time we did during battle, a 28.7, that's two-tenths lower than the pole position time last year," Bagnaia said.

"I'm very happy. The fight was intense but then I saw Jorge going wide and I said, okay, be calm there could be a problem for the front tyre.

"But then everything went perfectly, I'm very happy and

let's continue like this."

Aleix Espargaro made up a

Incredible, but the most incredible thing is the best lap time we did during battle, a 28.7, that's two-tenths lower than the pole position time last year. I'm very happy.

FRANCESCO BAGNAIA

place to finish third and take his second sprint podium. Espargaro, 35, announced in May that



Francesco Bagnaia

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LADIES LOUNGE

The Ladies Lounge, enclosed in green silk curtains contains precious antiques and priceless modernist works, including two paintings that spectacularly demonstrate Picasso's genius, according to Kaechele

She added this is why the Ladies Lounge was needed as 'a peaceful space women can retreat to; a haven in which to think clearly, and relish the pure company of women - to escape the invisible story woven through history'.

Kaechele in an earlier interview with ABC's The Project, told the programme she was 'grateful' for Lau's complaint, as it gave her the chance to test out the argument legally, but warned that a ruling in Lau's favour would mean the Ladies Lounge would have to close.

"Because the requirement is that it will have to open to men, and that's not happening," she said.

After Tuesday's ruling, MONA's official spokesperson told CNN that the institution was deeply disappointed by the tribunal's decision.

"We will take some time to absorb the result and consider our options," they said, adding: "We request that the artist's privacy is respected at this time."

The museum's official Instagram account posted a more explicit response: a provocative photo of a velvet-clad hand, adorned with the initials KK. One user commented, "I visited in 2021 with my husband and loved the novelty of being able to go into a space that no man was allowed into. It was beautiful, the room, the art installation, the meaning of it all."

(Courtesy: cnn.com)

Out of bounds art

AN ART EXHIBIT ABOUT MISOGYNY IN AUSTRALIA WAS ONLY OPEN TO WOMEN, UNTIL A MAN COMPLAINED ABOUT ITS 'DISCRIMINATORY' NATURE

through history.

Kaechele said she believed that women deserve both, equal rights and special privileges in the form of unequal rights, as a means of restitution for historical injustices, for a minimum of 300 years.

In its judgment, the tribunal recognised that the art exhibition had 'a pointedly participatory component that is intentionally discriminatory, for a good faith artistic purpose that many might not only appreciate but sympathise with or endorse'. It also asserted that Australia's 1998 anti-discrimination act does not permit discrimination for good faith artistic purpose per se.

An extension of her art

Throughout the proceedings Kaechele and her supporters treated the tribunal as an extension of her art, wearing matching dark blue suits and synchronising their movements.

In her witness statement to the tribunal, the artist said, "We are so deeply embedded in the dominion of man that we do not even see the myriad ways in which we adhere to and multiply his reign."

We are so deeply embedded in the dominion of man that we do not even see the myriad ways in which we adhere to and multiply his reign

Kirsha Kaechele



A museum in Australia was being forced to allow men into an art exhibit originally conceived for women only, after a tribunal ruled it 'discriminatory', following a complaint by a disgruntled man who was denied entry.

Tasmania's Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) has been ordered to stop refusing entry to 'persons who do not identify as ladies', to its Ladies Lounge exhibit within 28 days, after a ruling was made by the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal on Tuesday.

The experiential artwork by artist and museum curator Kirsha Kaechele is billed by the museum as a 'tremendously lavish space' where women can indulge in 'decadent nibbles, fancy tipples, and other lady-like pleasures - hosted and entertained by the fabulous butler'.

Jason Lau, a visitor from New South Wales, who had paid the museum's \$35 AUD (US\$23) entry fee, was barred from entering the exhibit on April 1 last year. According to tribunal documents, Lau believed he experienced direct gender discrimination. 'He felt strongly enough about this to file a complaint with Equal Opportunities Tasmania', read the notes.

During proceedings, Kaechele told the tribunal that denying men entry to the mysterious room is indeed part of the art - giving them a taste of the discrimination and exclusion many women have experienced



Kaechele and her navy-clad entourage outside the tribunal

BORN OF SAND AND SUN

Slovakian photographer Petra Basnakova made a series of remarkable and personally transformative discoveries during her three-year-long journey among Palestinian Bedouin families.

"This photography journey was a wakeup call for me because it completely transformed my personality," Basnakova told CNN. "I've grown up and found my inner peace, and I started to appreciate things I didn't before."

The resulting photobook, 'Born of Sand and Sun', was born of pure chance. On a trip with friends to the Nabi Musa shrine east of Jerusalem - part of her first trip outside of Europe - Basnakova diverged onto her own excursion deeper into the Judean Desert, known as El Bariyah to her hosts, who prefer the desert's Arabic name. Blanketed by an unfamiliar heat, she remembered sitting to rest her head on an oil stone, only to be awakened by a 'miracle' - a Bedouin boy on a white donkey herding two black goats, signalling for her to follow him.

Basnakova did so instinctively. In mere minutes, the initial gulf of differences between her and her desert guide - complexion, culture and language among them - was diminished by a mutual recognition of humanity, and an innate sense of wonder and adventure.

"We embarked on a journey of trust, two strangers from different worlds, which led us to the most precious thing - family," Basnakova wrote in her book.

The familiarity with which Basnakova was embraced is a vibrant throughline in her monograph which shows shepherds gazing with pride at their flocks, fretting children clinging to the safety of their mothers' garments, and mothers kneading dough with their daughters, passing onto them practices of an evanescent Bedouin lifestyle.

"With time, they became like my sisters or mothers, and I found them to be very brave and strong," Basnakova said of the Bedouin women she spent time with. "To me, they were like superheroes." They confided in her some of their most intimate secrets and desires, and found solace in her lent ear - and camera - which they hoped would preserve their aspirations for a better and just life.

Restrictions and aggression

Palestinian Bedouin are semi nomadic people - their current population totals nearly 300,000 - who have lived in the Negev/Naqab region, stretching from Gaza to the Dead Sea, now a part of southern Israel, since around the fifth century.

Traditionally engaged in agriculture, herding and dairy production, their historical attachment to the area dispels any notion that they are rootless nomads, or that their home is a 'land without a people', as Israel's early founders would often claim.

Due to their relatively unprotected status under Israeli law, and their lifestyle and livelihood facing alarming erosion, the United Nations Development Programme stated in a 2017 report that Palestinian Bedouin - specifically those now residing

in the West Bank, where Basnakova spent most of her time - suffer 'the brunt of the occupation', citing restrictions on their freedom of movement, forced displacement due to the expansion of settlements considered illegal by most of the international community, and settler violence.

Basnakova prefaces her book by writing that it is not intended to be a political statement. In fact, her dislike for political labels goes as far as a stylistic decision to drop the names Israel and Palestine entirely for an all-embracing term, 'Holy Land'. But she is unapologetic about the unjust realities captured in her photographs, and detailed

BEDOUIN SUPERHEROES

Photographer **Petra Basnakova** was let into the lives of Bedouin women in the El Bariyar desert and said that in time, 'the women became like my sisters or mothers, and I found them to be very brave and strong... To me, they were like superheroes'



Nawal is part of the Rashayda Bedouin community near Jericho



The generosity of Nadia, a Bedouin matron, sparked the idea behind 'Born of Sand and Sun'



A donkey is pictured on a Bedouin homestead between Jericho and the Dead Sea



Intisar, a woman from the Jabal Al Baba community

firsthand accounts of Israeli forces and settlers' attacks and aggression, violence which has increased in the wake of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

"I asked them: Why are you doing this? Who gave you the right to do this?" Basnakova said, recalling a confrontation with settlers attacking a group of Bedouin women herding. "They told me, 'Because we can'."

Visual metaphors

According to Basnakova, the settlers mocked her for her protest, before killing several goats in the Bedouin herd and leaving.

Basnakova's book bursts with all sorts of ironies she describes as 'visual metaphors' - donkeys lazing next to decrepit cars, satellite dishes installed on the desert sand and goats grazing sandy, parched expanses.

In their makeshift villages, Basnakova admired the Palestinian Bedouin's ability to turn scrap into a 'kingdom', and anointed them as 'desert architects'. But the starkest juxtapositions are the ones captured in the contrasts between impromptu Bedouin encampments, often erected/demolished at the arbitrary whims of displacement, sitting in front of modern Israeli settlement housing, luxuriating in what Bedouins could only dream of. (Courtesy: cnn.com)

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