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Suarez leaves final World Cup in tears

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Oman-based 44.01 bags Earthshot Prize

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Founded by Talal Hasan, Oman-based 44.01, which eliminates CO₂ by turning it into rock, removing it from the atmosphere safely, efficiently and permanently, was on Friday named the winner of the 2022 Earthshot Prize, in the Fix Our Climate category. This is the latest recognition for 44.01 and its process of elimination of CO₂ via peridotite mineralisation. Unlike carbon 'storage', which involves burying CO₂ underground in disused oil wells or aquifers, mineralisation removes CO₂ forever, minimising the requirement for extensive monitoring and insurance.

Founded by Prince William



Mineralisation can offer a safe, cost-effective way of eliminating CO₂ forever

TALAL HASAN

and The Royal Foundation in 2020, The Earthshot Prize is a global environmental prize to dis-

cover, accelerate and scale groundbreaking solutions to repair and regenerate the planet. Inspired by President John F Kennedy's Moonshot which united millions of people around the goal of reaching the moon, The Earthshot Prize aims to catalyse an Earthshot challenge to urgently encourage and scale innovative solutions that can help put the world firmly on a trajectory towards a stable climate, where communities, oceans and biodiversity thrive in harmony by 2030.

Overall, mineralisation can offer a carbon removal solution that is safe, cost-effective and permanent. 44.01 has previously received recognition and support from, among others, the Musk

Foundation via XPRIZE, Shopify and Stripe.

The Earthshot Prize is judged by an international council which includes leaders from the fields of business, philanthropy, science and entertainment. The panel looks for tested, scalable solutions that can help repair the climate and prevent further harm.

The prize's other categories are Protect and Restore Nature, Clean Our Air, Revive Our Oceans, and Build a Waste-free World.

Talal, 44.01's founder and CEO, said, "We are delighted to have been recognised by the Earthshot Prize. Mineralisation can offer a safe, cost-effective way of eliminating CO₂ forever."

Continued on Page 03

SALUTING THE NATION AND HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN



To mark the 52nd National Day, Abdulmajeed Mohammed Salim al Mamari from Liwa painted a 6mX4m portrait of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on a wall in Harmul, North Batinah, to show his patriotism and respect for His Majesty the Sultan. Mamari, who has been making graffiti since childhood, started work on this portrait on November 17 and completed it in two days (Supplied photo)



Dubai receives over 1mn visitors from Oman, up 715%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With over 1mn visitors travelling to Dubai from Oman, the sultanate became the second largest source market for the emirate in the first nine months of 2022.

According to data released by the Department of Economy and

Tourism in Dubai, the emirate attracted about 1.051mn tourists from Oman during the January-September period this year, compared to 129,000 tourists during the same period last year, a growth of 715 per cent.

Compared to the same period before the pandemic in 2019, the increase was 35 per cent, as

Dubai attracted 778,000 tourists from the sultanate during the first nine months of 2019.

India leads the visitors' list with 1.24mn travelling to Dubai till September, an increase of 135 per cent from 528,000 in the first nine months of 2021.

Oman was followed by Saudi Arabia, the UK and Russia mak-

ing the top five source markets.

Data from Oman's National Centre for Statistics and Information shows that the number of visitors to the sultanate from Gulf countries during the same period also witnessed a significant growth of 780.8 per cent - from 13,512 at the end of September 2021 - to 119,010 until the end of

September 2022. The Gulf state visitors were followed by European guests whose number grew by 578.2 per cent to 203,103.

The number of American guests was 40,149, registering an increase of 200.6 per cent compared to the same period in 2021, while the number of guests from the African continent was 5,831,

a growth of 98.4 per cent.

The number of Asian guests also increased - 44.2 per cent - from 101,351 until the end of September 2021, to 146,191 during the same period of 2022.

Dubai received 10.12mn visitors till September 2022, down by almost 2mn compared to the first nine months of 2019.

Congratulations!

Kunooz Oman Holding SAOC Board of Directors, Executive Management and Staff, including its subsidiaries and associates, wish to congratulate

Sheikh Faisal Abdullah Al Rawas

On his election as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the period (2022-2026)

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FIFA WORLD CUP QATAR 2022

'Arab teams showed brilliant performance'

In Qatar, Arab fans celebrated Morocco's win, another show of Arab unity that has been a feature of the tournament. Morocco has become the only Arab nation to reach the knockout round of the first World Cup to be held in an Arab country



Morocco supporters celebrate their team's qualification for the second round of the Qatar 2022 World Cup after their victory in the Group F match against Canada, in the Souq Waqif marketplace in Doha on Thursday (AFP)

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

Oman fans were disappointed when three of the four Arab countries hit a rough patch in the 2022 FIFA World Cup, with Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Qatar being out of the tournament after the first round of the month-long sporting event.

However, the fans said all the Arab teams performed brilliantly and finally saw Morocco's qualification for the round of 16.

"The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar witnessed historic Arab participation, as four Arab football teams - Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Qatar and Morocco - se-

cured their places in the competition. However, except Morocco, others suffered heartbreaking defeats in their first round matches," Sleyyem Khalaf, a former Fanja club goalkeeper, said.

"Morocco showcased an amazing performance in the first round. Moroccan players who have been playing for European tournaments over the years contributed to this high level performance. The Saudi national team played well as their players were well organised in their matches against the teams that depend on skill and high pressure," he added.

According to sports analysts, wonderful organisation and high

spirit with which the Moroccan national team appeared were key to its qualification for the next round.

"Saudi Arabia presented a distinguished level of game in its first two matches, achieving a resounding victory in the first match against Argentina; while Moroccan players like Hakim Ziyach and Yassine Bounou as well as others played a key role in taking their team to the top in the group," Fadhel al Mazrui, Omani sports analyst said.

Khalfan al Obaidani, a staunch supporter of Arab teams emphasised that the four Arab teams presented themselves in a distinctive way that 'exceeded ex-

pectations', despite their presence amongst strong groups.

"Holding the championship in an Arab country contributed to this brilliant performance, thanks to the audience's support to the Arab teams. Saudi Arabia and Tunisia had the ability to cruise into the next round, if they had maintained their levels until the final whistle. For Qatar, it seems they were under pressure since this was the first time they took part in a world cup," he said.

Tunisians celebrated its historic but bittersweet World Cup victory against France on Wednesday as they defeated their former colonial power but still crashed out of the tourna-

ment marked by a remarkable string of Arab wins over football powerhouses.

In Qatar, Arab fans celebrated Morocco's win, another show of Arab unity that has been a feature of the tournament. Morocco has become the only Arab nation to reach the knockout round of the first World Cup to be held in an Arab country.

Morocco beat Canada 2-1 to finish top in their group in a stadium thronged with Arab supporters. In earlier matches they had tied with Croatia and registered a surprise win against Belgium, the second-ranked team in the world.

@shadadm

OCEC festival zone sees massive response: Official

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Over 45,000 visitors have so far attended the ongoing FIFA World Cup fiesta at the Football Fan Festival (FFF) in the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), an official said.

While matches of Brazil, Argentina, Portugal, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Tunisia drew the maximum crowd, other matches too generated enough excitement for the fans to gather there, said Lyutha Alhabsy, Brand and Marketing advisor at OMRAN.



This is the first time ever that we are organising such an event and we are amazed by the response

LYUTHA ALHABSY

Five giant screens - with Arabic and English commentary - have been live-streaming the matches in a 90,000sqft arena. At the FFF venue, the space has been divided into several zones, each catering to one core aspect of the celebrations, including dining facilities, fun activities and live-streaming. Lucky draws at the end of each day added more excitements to the funfair, she claimed.

Speaking about the FFF, Lyutha said, "This is a world class facility that we are having here where fans get access to all matches along with 18 free activities and great food."

"This is the first time ever that we are organising such an event and we are amazed by the response. As the event progresses, we expect the number of fans visiting the

festival to increase," she further said, adding that women fans have been equally excited and thrilled during the matches; women of all ages and nationalities can be seen in the amphitheatre.

"Many women came decked up in their favourite teams jerseys and flag paints on their faces. The FFF has also seen children's engagement to the maximum. There are games on football that have kept them excited and among the many the Virtual Reality on Heading the Ball is one of the favourites."

There are 180 volunteers working day and night to make the event a success. Ninety SMEs are directly and indirectly involved in this festival, which one can access buying a ticket (RO2) through www.footballfanfestival.om.

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MUSCAT DAILY PRESENTS



Over 23,000 attend 9-day Amad Duqm 22 youth event

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The curtains fell on Amad Duqm 22, which attracted over 23,000 visitors over nine days, on Saturday. The event included various youth activities in the fields of culture, sports, innovation, technology, entertainment and sustainability, held in cooperation between the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Amad Duqm 22 was held on an area spread over 500,000sqm designed like a village with integrated facilities. The event attracted thousands of visitors, the majority of whom were youth.

Being billed as the city of the future, the event showcased several experimental opportunities and introduced many new business ideas while highlighting Duqm as an ideal place to live, work and for entertainment.

With an eye on the future of the youth, Amad Duqm 22 included brainstorming sessions, meditation sessions, an electric bike circuit, drone racing, remote-control car racing, art laboratories, video games, comedy plays, concerts, and an astronomy camp. Many other activities attracted visitors to enjoy Duqm's picturesque nature.

Amad Duqm 22 marked an experimental laboratory to fulfil the aspirations of Omani youth for the future of Oman and the world. The design and implementation operations were assigned to a selected group of



(Supplied photos)



The event showcased opportunities and introduced business ideas while highlighting Duqm as an ideal place to live, work and for entertainment

creative Omani youth to initiate a vision that combines science, technology, art and entertainment in a modern form, which highlights challenges and oppor-

tunities alike in creating a better world.

The Sculptors Forum held in the Nufoon of Duqm was one of the largest events accompanying

Amad Duqm 22, in which a group of international sculptors from Spain, Germany, Bulgaria, Romania and Tunisia took part. In addition, three Omani scul-

tors participated who created masterpieces to complement the geology and natural terrain of Duqm.

Sporting events such as sailing and windsurfing attracted a large number of visitors, offering them a new experience combining adventure, fun and challenge. Amad Duqm 22 also provided diving enthusiasts an opportunity to experience the sport and explore marine life and sea secrets with professional trainers.

Amad Duqm 22 also offered facilities for paragliding, included training sessions and aerial tours for visitors.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities held

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman joined the rest of the world to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities which is observed on December 3 every year.

The Ministry of Social Development is working to empower, rehabilitate and care for persons with disabilities, in order to enable them to rely on themselves in managing their lives, by offering a range of care programmes and various social services through the Vocational Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre.

The centre cares for and rehabilitates people with disabilities with compatible vocational opportunities. A total of 58 individuals, including 31 male and 27 female, were enrolled in the centre's programmes until the end of 2021.

The Al Aman Rehabilitation Centre also provides its members social, health, rehabilitative, psychological and therapeutic services. Until the end of 2021, the total number of children enrolled in this centre was 315 -

204 boys and 111 girls.

Additionally, the Al Wafaa Rehabilitation Centres for Persons with Disabilities care for children with disabilities from the age of 2 to 14 years, including those who suffer from various simple to moderate mental disabilities, hearing impairment, and motor skill disabilities. A total of 2,590 children were enrolled in its 27 centres in various governorates at the end of 2021, including 1,551 male and 1,039 female.

There are special rehabilitation centres that provide services funded by the ministry for persons with disabilities. These provided services to 1,498 members - 1,077 male and 421 female - in 2021.

The Ministry of Social Development also provides prosthetic and other supportive services for persons with disabilities. In 2021, there were 2,484 individuals with disabilities, including 1,213 male and 1,271 female; the number of individuals registered in the disabled card system was 1,732, including 1,116 male and 616 female.

Oman-based 44.01 wins Earthshot Prize

Continued from Page 01

Talal added, "Our challenge is to scale our solution internationally, and the Earthshot Prize will help us to do just that."

44.01 has already conducted successful pilots of its mineralisation process in Oman. In 2023, 44.01 will begin mineralising CO₂ commercially. The company has ambitious aims to mineralise 1bn tonnes of CO₂ by 2040.

As the world transitions to clean forms of energy, 44.01 is also providing new employment opportunities for engineers and geologists working in the fossil fuel industry. Given Oman has one of the largest surficial deposits of peridotite in the world, carbon mineralisation could also be a boon for workers in the region and for the energy transition.

BEYOND WORDS



VAISHALI HAMLAI

The columnist is a certified MBTI coach and author, and writer who delves into the complexities of the mind and soul to guide and interpret social behaviour

Wear your skin! Does this phrase sound familiar to you? Do we live in a notion that teenagers, or the younger generation, struggle with being themselves. We might not be fully true to ourselves then. Age probably has nothing to do with accepting ourselves in society. This syndrome has victims far and wide, and everywhere to be seen. We might think we are high and mighty in our thirties and forties but let's break it down into some real time age-appropriate questions, as a reality check.

Do we dress to impress or dress to feel good?

Sure, they could sound similar questions to some and not to some. Though this in turn is two different questions, and not the same. Those who say yes to both are being true to themselves, but for the others, it depends on their answer. We

clearly know that dressing to impress is a flamboyant style of an extrovert, and is also a way of self-love. But if that adds up to not feeling good in what you wear that's where the challenge starts. Here then we are trying to be someone else. Here is the danger zone that we are talking about. When we slip into the mindset of dressing to make someone else feel good, then we could checkmark all the blue ticks on the checklist but in reality, it's still a red list. And the little truth bomb within us tells us that this is wrong. Here we could answer it all correct, like an examination hall, but deep inside what we really do matters to know how comfortable we are in our skin.

Do we eat to impress or eat to feel good?

This is the challenge taking over the world. What we thought was desirable a few years ago has suddenly become un-

desirable, for no fault of those foods. Rice, my beloved, has gone through a test of time. It was loved and now hated with equal vengeance. But let's not digress, we are here to talk about what we used to eat and what we eat now? Do you see a change in your food plate contents since every possible human on earth has turned into a nutritionist, certified or not certified; each one of us gives free advice on eating habits and lifestyle. Apparently, we are following each piece of tiny unsolicited advice given, we are following what has been published, we are following what's the new fad, talk about it and we are the followers. We have forgotten to

WEAR YOUR SKIN AND DRESS IT UP TOO!

enjoy our food and started to pretend to enjoy someone else's food. For some who answer yes to both the above questions great, you have found your niche, but most of us are struggling. Somewhere we must let go carbs today or not eat for 12 hours the next day, or hit the gym or hit the yoga mat; somehow in this scenario I'd rather hit my head on the wall with this one. Sure, these are superficial levels, and only scratching the tip of the skin, but we would like to improve and

in order to live a life fulfilled let's dig deeper. So here's one more thing to think about.

Do we live to impress or live to feel good?

What is the essence of our living? What's our objective? Are we living a life to make others happy or are we living it to make ourselves happy? Are we doing justice to the one life we have been awarded in order to bring out the best in us? Are we pushing ourselves to the limit to unleash our hidden talent? Are we willing to see through the darkness and do we have courage to come out in the light? Are we living a life that is making us proud of ourselves, or we are living a hallow life with hollow borrowed dreams and desires?

This is the question we all need to ask ourselves in order to elevate our experience on earth and leave it a better place than what we came into. Let's pledge to know our strengths and use it for the greater good of mankind and leave a beautiful world for our children to live. For them to live their life fullest!

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

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MSX tops GCC stock markets with highest November gain

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) was the best performing stock market in the GCC in November with a gain of nearly six per cent as the region's biggest market Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Qatar recorded declines during the month.

The main index of Oman's stock market recorded the biggest monthly rise in the GCC during November 2022. The index jumped 5.7 per cent after witnessing a decline for the past two consecutive months closing at 4,613.7 points.

Oman was the best performing market during November with a gain of 5.7 per cent followed by Kuwait and Abu Dhabi with gains of 3.6 per cent and 1.3 per cent, respectively,' Kuwait-based Kamco Investment said in its GCC Markets Report.

The reversal of the MSX performance during November improved the Omani exchange's overall year-to-date 2022 return which stood at 11.7 per cent at the end of November.

In terms of sectoral performance, all three sector indices of the MSX recorded a growth during November. Financial index recorded 7.2 per cent monthly



The reversal of the MSX performance during November improved the Omani exchange's overall year-to-date 2022 return which stood at 11.7 per cent at the end of November

growth during November. Industrial index followed witnessing a monthly rise of 2.4 per cent while services index recorded a 1.4 per cent uptick in comparison.

As per Kamco Investment's report, Al Hassan Engineering Company led the top gainers

table recording 25 per cent share price jump during the month, followed by Ominvest which registered 18.8 per cent share price increase during the similar period. Comparatively, Sohar Power Company topped the decliners table recording 20 per

cent share price fall during November while Raysut Cement witnessed 18.8 per cent fall in share price during the similar period.

Monthly trading activity on the MSX increased during November recovering from a slight dip in the previous month. Total volume of shares traded during November increased by 58.6 per cent to reach 276.2mn shares as compared to 174.1mn shares during October. Similarly, the total value traded on the MSX witnessed an increase of 23.2 per

cent to reach RO53.3mn in November.

GCC markets

The performance of the GCC equity markets once again remained mixed during November with three out of seven stock exchanges witnessing declines during the month.

Saudi Arabian stocks witnessed the biggest decline during the month with a broad-based decline in the TASI benchmark that declined by 6.6 per cent. Qatar and Dubai benchmarks also declined by low-single-digits during November that more than offset gains reported by the rest of the exchanges resulting in a 4.2 per cent decline for the MSCI GCC Index during the month.

The declines in Saudi Arabia and Qatar also affected the year-to-date 2022 performance of the GCC markets with the index closing the month in the red for the fourth time this year.

Saudi Arabia was the only market in the GCC that closed November with a year-to-date 2022 decline of 3.4 per cent. On the other hand, Abu Dhabi continued to lead in the region with a year-to-date gain of 24.3 per cent followed by Oman and Kuwait with healthy gains of 11.7 per cent and 7.7 per cent, respectively.



NBO raises \$134mn via perpetual securities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

National Bank of Oman (NBO) last week announced the issuance of US\$134.111mn worth of perpetual additional tier-1 securities.

'NBO has successfully concluded the issuance of US\$134,111,000 perpetual additional tier-1 Basel III compliant capital securities on November 29, 2022,' the bank said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

NBO said the capital securities offering will be listed on the Euronext Dublin.

The capital securities carry a coupon of 6.750 per cent representing a margin of 286.1 basis

points over the relevant benchmark US treasury rate, it added.

The bank mandated Standard Chartered Bank and NBO as joint lead managers for the capital securities issuance.

'The proceeds from the issue of capital securities will be used by NBO to manage its tier-1 capital base and overall capital adequacy, and for its general corporate purposes,' NBO said.



Sohar Port records strong growth in Q3 volumes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar Port and Freezone has announced strong results for the third quarter of 2022 as the port throughput - export and import volumes - grew by 32 per cent over the same period last year.

As the rapidly growing complex continues to transform the sultanate's burgeoning maritime and logistics industries, dry bulk volume grew by 38 per cent to almost 11.8mn tonnes, liquid bulk increased by 28 per cent to just over 5mn tonnes.

The number of handled containers increased by 4 per cent to 188,604 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units). In addition, Sohar Port also recorded robust growth of 60 per cent increase in ship-to-ship (STS) cargo given its strategic location and its reputation for delivering unmatched quality of service with quick turnaround times with port's ever-growing STS customer base.

In a press statement, Emile Hoogsteden, chief executive officer of Sohar Port said, "The year 2022 has been tumultuous when it comes to higher energy costs and soaring consumer food prices globally, which have led to higher marine bunker prices and an increase in shipping costs for all sectors. With that said, we have been pleased with our performance, as well as seeing throughput grow quarter on quarter, year versus year."

He added, "As we embark on 2023, we are optimistic about

what the year holds for us. With the continuous support of our shareholders at Asyad Group and Port of Rotterdam, we are confident that Sohar Port and Freezone will continue to grow and place Oman on the global trade and logistics map. We are also excited about the prospects of investments in the realm of green hydrogen, supported by the recently signed agreement between Oman and the Netherlands at COP27, which will contribute to building the global green hydrogen value chain, as well as boost port development opportunities."

Meanwhile, the Sohar Freezone's performance has been unrelenting in the third quarter 2022 with 11.2 per cent increase in exports, and 4.2 per cent increase in land occupancy compared with the same period last year.

With a bespoke regulatory and incentive scheme programme to attract foreign direct investment, phase one of the freezone is now occupied at over 75 per cent capacity.

Omar al Mahrizi, chief executive officer of Sohar Freezone and deputy chief executive officer of Sohar Port, said, "The growth we have achieved in 2022 to date provides a solid platform for even better results during 2023. Further expansion is planned as we continue to reach out to overseas investors about the potential of Sohar Port and Freezone to meet their logistical needs in the region."

OPEC set to stick or cut more output amid plan to cap Russian oil price

London, UK - Major oil producers are expected to stick to their current output strategy or even slash production further when they meet on Sunday in the face of falling prices, a Russian oil price cap and an embargo on Russian crude shipments.

At their last ministerial session in October the 13-nation Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries headed by Riyadh and its 10 allies led by Moscow, collectively known as OPEC+, agreed to reduce output by two million barrels per day (bpd) from November.

The OPEC+ reduction amounted to the biggest cut since the height of the Covid pandemic in 2020.

Amid fears of economic slowdown, Sunday's cartel meeting via videoconference convenes ahead of the EU enforcing an embargo on Russian crude shipments from Monday.

G7 countries, the EU and Australia have agreed a US\$60 per barrel price cap on Russian



oil. The alliance should vote for a "rollover of the previous decision" to cut two million bpd, an Iranian source told AFP Thursday, arguing that the market was "very uncertain" in light of imminent European sanctions.

"Odds are that the group will reassert its commitment to its latest output cuts," said PVM Energy analyst Stephen Bren-

nock, adding he would not rule out that they "may even potentially announce fresh cuts" to bolster prices.

Since the October meeting, oil prices have been plummeting to their level of early 2022, far from the peaks above US\$130 a barrel in March after the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Two global crude bench-

marks were hovering around US\$85 a barrel on Thursday.

Covid-related restrictions in China have raised fears about energy demand from the world's largest importer of crude oil.

Beijing defused concerns, however, by signalling a possible easing of its strict zero-Covid policy, after nationwide protests against health restrictions broke out. Soaring inflation in Europe and across the Atlantic have also fuelled fears of a recession.

Beyond the economic gloom, the big unknown in the oil equation currently is Russian oil, as Western nations seek to decouple themselves from Moscow's energy supplies as fast as possible.

The EU has decided to ban member states from buying Russian oil exported by sea from December 5, "putting at risk over two million barrels per day," according to estimates by ANZ analysts.

The EU will also join the G7 powers in imposing a US\$60-

per-barrel price cap on Russian oil, the Polish ambassador to the bloc said Friday.

Poland had delayed approving the adoption of the plan while it pushed for a lower price ceiling and tough new sanctions to punish Russia for its war against Ukraine.

Last week, President Vladimir Putin had warned that any attempt by the West to cap the price of Russian oil would have "grave consequences" for world markets.

Russia "has several options to circumvent such a cap," said UniCredit economist Edoardo Campanella, adding that "OPEC+ might feel compelled to adopt a more aggressive stance" by cutting or threatening to cut production even further.

"Russia might also retaliate by leveraging its influence within OPEC+ to push for more production cuts down the road, thus exacerbating the global energy crisis," Campanella said.

AFP

US rate hikes could slow 'as soon as' December: Powell

Washington, US - The Federal Reserve could ease its pace of interest rate hikes "as soon as" this month, chair Jerome Powell said, as the US central bank's campaign to cool prices trickles through the world's largest economy.

With American households grappling with soaring consumer costs, the Fed has waged an all-out battle to tame inflation that has hit levels not seen since the 1980s - while trying to avoid tipping the United States into a recession.

"The time for moderating the pace of rate increases may come as soon as the December meeting" of Fed policymakers, Powell said in a speech at the Brookings

Institution think tank.

He added that the full effects of the bank's moves are yet to be felt, but also warned that its policy will likely have to remain tight "for some time" to restore price stability.

Monetary policy affects the economy and inflation with "uncertain lags," he said.

"Thus, it makes sense to moderate the pace of our rate increases as we approach the level of restraint that will be sufficient to bring inflation down," he added.

He however stressed that the Fed would "stay the course until the job is done," noting that history cautions strongly against loosening policy prematurely.



US Fed chief Jerome Powell

The central bank has raised the benchmark lending rate by 0.75 percentage points four consecutive times in recent months, out of six rate hikes this year in an aggressive effort to rein in prices.

The latest increase in November took the benchmark lending rate to 3.75-4.0 per cent, the highest since January 2008.

Soft landing 'plausible'

Policymakers aim to put the brakes on spending by making it more costly to borrow, bringing demand more into balance with supply, which has been battered by global logistics problems and Russia's war in Ukraine.

For now, there are early signs that prices are cooling, but annual consumer inflation remained at 7.7 per cent in October, underscoring the heightened cost of living.

Powell said Wednesday that inflation remains "far too high," and there is still a need to raise interest rates to a "sufficiently restrictive" level.

Despite tighter policy and slower growth in the past year, there is still not "clear progress" on easing inflation, he said.

But amid fears of a downturn, Powell said he continues to "believe that there's a path to a soft or softish landing," referring to a scenario where unemployment rises but the country avoids a se-

vere recession.

"I think that's very plausible," he said.

In recent days, there has been a growing chorus of voices, including some Fed officials, advocating for smaller steps in coming months.

In separate remarks on Wednesday, Fed Governor Lisa Cook said "it would be prudent to move in smaller steps" going forward as well, as the Fed tries to bring inflation back to its longer-term target of two per cent.

"Given the tightening already in the pipeline, I am mindful that monetary policy works with long lags," she added.

AFP

EU, G7 agree \$60 Russian oil price cap

Brussels, Belgium – The G7 group of wealthy democracies and Australia on Friday officially agreed to cap the price of Russian oil at US\$60 a barrel in line with the European Union, as they seek to deny the Kremlin resources for its Ukraine war.

In a joint statement, the nations said the price cap per barrel of seaborne Russian-origin crude would come into force on December 5 or “very soon thereafter.”

They said the G7 was delivering on its vow “to prevent Russia from profiting from its war of aggression against Ukraine, to support stability in global energy markets and to minimise negative economic spillovers of Russia’s war of aggression.”

The European Union will join the G7 powers in imposing a US\$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian oil, the Polish ambassador to the bloc said Friday, three days ahead of an EU embargo on imports by sea. Poland had delayed approving the adoption of the plan while it pushed for a lower price ceiling and tough new sanctions to punish Russia for its war against Ukraine and starve its military of funds.

“We can formally agree to the decision,” Poland’s EU ambassador Andrzej Sados said, explaining that Warsaw’s fellow EU

members had agreed to push forward with a new ninth round of sanctions against Russia.

“We’re working on the next package of sanctions, which will be painful and expensive for Russia,” Sados told reporters.

The EU presidency, currently held by the Czech Republic, confirmed member state ambassadors had reached an agreement on the price cap and that the decision would enter into force when published in the EU official journal this weekend.

Painful and expensive

The oil price cap will run alongside the EU’s ban on imports of Russian oil, which comes into effect on Monday.

Member states hope it will be the most damaging hit yet against the industry fuelling President Vladimir Putin’s Russian war machine.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Twitter that the price cap would help to “stabilise global energy prices, benefitting emerging economies around the world”.

Sados told reporters that Warsaw was reassured the EU had taken on board suggestions from Poland and the Baltic states for a tough new ninth round of sanctions.

A discussion paper circulated



Ukraine welcomes Russian oil price cap

Kyiv, Ukraine – Ukraine on Saturday welcomed a US\$60 price cap on Russian oil agreed by the EU, G7 and Australia, saying it would “destroy” Russia’s economy.

The price cap, previously negotiated on a political level between the G7 group of wealthy democracies and the European Union, will come into effect with an EU embargo on Russian

crude oil from Monday.

The embargo will prevent shipments of Russian crude by tanker vessel to the EU, which account for two thirds of imports, potentially depriving Russia’s war chest of billions of euros.

“We always achieve our goal and Russia’s economy will be destroyed, and it will pay and be responsible for all its crimes,”

Ukraine’s presidential chief of staff Andriy Yermak said on Saturday on Telegram.

But a cap of “US\$30 would have destroyed it more quickly”, he added. The White House described the deal as “welcome news”, saying a price cap will help limit Russian President Vladimir Putin’s ability to fund the Kremlin’s “war machine”.

AFP

last month called for Gazprombank, which facilitates payments for Russian energy exports, to be kicked off the SWIFT international payments system.

It also proposed bans on the export of a wide range of consumer technology that could be pressed into use by the Russians and a ban on the importation of

Russian diamonds.

Monday’s oil embargo will prevent shipments of Russian crude by tanker vessel to the EU, which accounts for two thirds of

imports, the rest arriving by pipeline.

Energy experts like Phuc-Vinh Nguyen of the Jacques Delors Institute think tank estimate that Russia has earned 67bn euros (US\$71bn) selling oil to EU clients since its February invasion of Ukraine.

This alone is greater than Russia’s 60bn-euro defence budget before the war and dwarfs the financial and military aid spent by EU states to support Kyiv’s pro-Western government.

The price cap is designed to make it harder to bypass the sanctions by selling beyond the EU.

China and India, for example, will still be able to import Russian oil, but under the proposed plan European insurers would be banned from covering tankers that carry oil trading at prices above the US\$60 ceiling.

Under the European plan, which will be coordinated with the United States, the G7 and other Western allies, if the market price of Russian oil falls below US\$60 then the cap will be cut until it is five percent lower than the market. The price of Urals Crude, the main variety sold by Russia, is volatile but it was trading at around US\$65 per barrel as EU ambassadors met to discuss the level of the cap.

But Poland, a strong supporter of its neighbour Ukraine in the battle against the Kremlin’s forces, had earlier been holding out for a lower sum.

It reportedly wanted closer to just US\$30 a barrel, but Sados said that the market price was expected to rise and that US\$60 was now a reasonable starting point. Moscow has warned that it will not export oil to countries respecting a price cap.

Last week, Putin warned that any attempt by the West to cap the price of Russian oil would have “grave consequences” for world markets.

With Germany and Poland having decided to stop deliveries via a pipeline by the end of the year, Russian exports to the union will be cut by more than 90 per cent, the Europeans say.

For Phuc-Vinh Nguyen, the proposed instrument raises many questions.

“An oil price ceiling has never been seen. We are in the unknown,” he said, stressing that the reaction of OPEC producing countries, or big buyers India or China, will be crucial.

According to the analyst, a cap – even at a high tariff – would send “a strong political signal” to Putin, because, once in place, this mechanism could be tightened.

AFP

US hiring tops expectations in November as wages pick up



In this file photo a 'Now Hiring' sign is displayed in front of a Chipotle restaurant in Washington, DC (AFP)

Washington, US – US job gains were unexpectedly robust in November despite efforts to cool the economy, while unemployment held steady and wages ticked up, the government reported Friday.

The figures provide little relief to officials who have been fighting to tamp down decades-high inflation amid concerns that elevated costs could become entrenched.

The world’s biggest economy added 263,000 jobs in November, Labor Department data showed, down from a revised 284,000 figure in October.

The unemployment rate remained low at 3.7 per cent.

The US central bank has raised its benchmark interest rate multiple times this year to ease demand, with higher lending costs making it more pricey to borrow funds to buy cars and homes, or expand businesses.

While such policy tightening may ordinarily lead to job losses, economists have noted that firms are reluctant to shed workers they may have struggled to find since the Covid-19 outbreak.

Demand remains resilient as well, with recent data showing that household spending picked up in October, another reason for firms to avoid job cuts.

Average hourly earnings for private sector workers rose 18 cents to US\$32.82 last month and over the last 12 months, wages have grown 5.1 per cent, according to Friday’s data.

The report also said there were notable job gains in leisure

and hospitality, health care as well as in government.

But employment dipped in retail trade, and in transportation and warehousing.

Noting the uptick in wages, President Joe Biden told reporters Friday that things are “moving in the right direction.”

'Far too hot'

Although the interest-sensitive housing sector has slowed on the Federal Reserve’s rate hikes and there have been job cuts in tech, economic activity has generally remained resilient.

The labour market “remains far too hot for the Fed,” said ING economist James Knightley in an analysis.

Tightness in the jobs market, as firms compete to find and retain workers, has implications on rising wages – and these add to the costs of delivering services.

Meanwhile the jobless rate was steady as labor participation, which is still below pre-pandemic levels, fell once more, Knightley said.

“Overall, the data are signaling ongoing positive momentum in job growth and still-elevated wages,” said Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics in a note.

Richmond Fed President Thomas Barkin cautioned in a separate speech Friday that the US may be moving into an environment where labor supply is constrained for a longer time, adding to price pressures.

Analysts believe the latest data supports further tightening

of monetary policy by the US central bank, sending US stocks lower.

Steep rate hikes

While the Fed has signaled this week it might be time to moderate its aggressive campaign to cool the economy, there remain questions over how much higher rates have to go to bring inflation under control, said Fed Chair Jerome Powell.

The central bank has raised borrowing rates six times this year in hopes of easing demand, including four steep rate hikes, while walking a fine line to avoid tipping the economy into a recession.

A tight labour market has limited hiring ahead of the holiday season, but “employers are also hiring more cautiously” given uncertainty over the strength of consumer spending, said Sophia Koropecjy of Moody’s Analytics.

Some industries have been pulling back, though not necessarily letting go of workers, in part explaining the low jobless rate, she added.

The trend of wage increases appears stable, but analysts have been “hoping to see a clear softening,” said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics.

“Even if inflation drops faster than expected over the next few months,” he said, policymakers “will be worried about a rebound in the second half of 2023 and beyond if wage growth does not slow.”

AFP

IMF chief warns of bigger chance world growth slows below 2%

Washington, US – IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva warned Thursday that the chance of global growth dropping below two per cent – last seen during the coronavirus outbreak and the global financial crisis of 2009 – is increasing as major economies slow. Her comments come as the world’s biggest economies grapple with fallout from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which sent food and energy prices soaring, along with a surging inflation and a slowdown in China.

“The probability of growth slowing even further, falling below two per cent was one-in-four,” said Georgieva at the Reuters NEXT conference



IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva

Thursday, referring to the fund’s recent expectations for 2023.

“When we look at the most recent indicators, we are concerned that this probability may be going a bit further up,” she added. The International Monetary Fund expects more

than a third of the global economy to shrink this year or next, with the United States, European Union and China stalling.

It is also concerned about a “simultaneous slowdown in the US, in Europe and in China,” said Georgieva, adding that slowing growth in China is

particularly significant.

This is worrying given that the world has relied on China for a boost, with “some 35, 40 per cent of global growth” coming from expansion in the world’s biggest second economy.

“This is not the case now, it’s not going to be the case next year,” she said.

The IMF is set to give an update on its economic outlook in January, and it is among key global institutions to visit China next week for talks.

According to World Bank figures, the global economy slumped 3.3 per cent in 2020 and 1.3 per cent in 2009.

AFP

Key US inflation index ticks down in October

Washington, US – A closely-watched measure of US inflation edged down in October, government data showed, with costs of goods easing while incomes grew and spending remained resilient.

The latest figures are welcome news a day after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell signaled it could soon be time to moderate an aggressive campaign to cool the economy, although he maintains that inflation “remains far too high” for now.

The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index – the Fed’s preferred inflation measure – rose 6.0 per cent from a year ago in October, down from a larger jump the month before, Commerce Department figures showed.

The central bank focuses on the PCE price index as it reflects consumers’ actual spending, including shifts to less pricey items, unlike the more well-known consumer price index.

“We are seeing initial signs that we are making progress in tackling inflation,” President Joe Biden said in a statement after the data release.



This is good news for Americans, Biden added, though he cautioned that “it will take time to bring inflation back to normal” and there could be “setbacks along the way.”

On a monthly basis, the PCE index held steady at 0.3 per cent.

While there was an uptick in prices of goods like gasoline and other energy products, this was partly offset by “widespread decreases in prices for durable goods,” the Commerce Department said.

Excluding the volatile food and energy segments, the PCE price index rose 5.0 per cent in October, year over year, also easing from before.

As families struggle with surging costs, worsened by logistics problems and fallout from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Fed embarked on a forceful effort to cool demand.

It raised the benchmark lending rate six times this year, including four steep rate hikes, with effects now trickling

through the world’s biggest economy.

The latest data could lead to some reprieve, but economist Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics warned Thursday that inflation measures “remain well above target and support a move up in rates into restrictive territory.”

Compared with a year ago, food prices remained 11.6 per cent higher and energy costs were 18.4 per cent more.

AFP

MG's second generation RX5 launched in Oman

A new, second generation of MG Motor's popular MG RX5 SUV has now arrived in Oman. Launched with much fanfare by MHD ACERE the MG RX5 will be available in three trims. It will strengthen the British-born brand's increasingly popular model portfolio, offering customers even more style, technology and travelling comfort at great value prices.

Incorporating 22 stylish design enhancements, eight performance upgrades and 25 configuration upgrades, the all-new 2023 MG RX5 is designed to provide a healthy and comfortable, safe and efficient, intelligent and connected travel experience. The arrival of the MG's newest SUV is set to help the brand reinforce its position in the top six of Middle East car makers.

The all-new 2023 MG RX5 harnesses the latest technology with the introduction of a second-generation Net Blue petrol engine, offering more power and greater efficiency. This 1.5T high-pressure direct injection turbocharged unit delivers 171hp and a maximum torque of 275Nm – a significant ten per cent higher than its predecessor – powering the new model to a top speed of 190km per hour, while its fuel economy figure is 6.8litre/100km. All models are equipped with an innovative 7-speed Dual Clutch Transmission for smoother, more efficient gear



changes and optimum reliability.

A new digital computing design method was adopted for the all-new 2023 MG RX5 in order to develop its youthful, dynamic looks. This is most noticeable at the front, where the new, eye-catching and wide three-dimensional geometric grille is flanked by sleek, full crystal LED headlamps with C-shaped daytime running lights. The rear echoes

the front, with a solid and stable stance. The new designed LED taillights inspired by High-speed Quantum Energy Block brings an impressive visual effect when illuminated and the 'Twin-Aero' rear spoiler enhances the sporty image of the vehicle.

Designers of MG's newest SUV were inspired by the intelligence and originality of home design to create a truly natural

and comfortable cabin space. The aesthetically-designed cabin is padded with soft materials to ensure total comfort for occupants during their journey. The central control panel integrates a stylish, hi-tech 14.1" HD vertical touchscreen, that floats up and over the redesigned dashboard. The ergonomic gear lever wouldn't look out of place in a spacecraft, while positioning the

central armrest level with the door armrests ensures an ergonomic design more akin to that of a comfy sofa. There are plenty of storage spaces and even a wireless mobile phone charger on top-of-the-range models.

MG's designers also placed a firm emphasis on using technology to make the 2023 MG RX5's cabin a healthy place to be.



Omantel tops 5G utilisation in ME for fixed wireless access

After three years of relentless efforts across the nation, Omantel's 5G now accounts for more than 60 per cent of the total wireless access traffic on its network - making it the first operator in the sultanate to reach such figures in 5G deployment and have positioned the company as a leader among the best 5G network operators in the region. Commenting on the achievement, Omantel Chief Commercial Officer Aladdin bait Fadhil said, "Our sustained efforts are bearing fruits and I am glad that more people throughout the Sultanate of Oman are now connected through our state-of-the-art 5G network. We are keen on accelerating our progress to take 5G deployment miles ahead, and we are getting future-ready by bringing the most advanced technologies to the nation."

Omantel was the first operator in the sultanate to commercialise 5G services, after leading the commercialising of the FWA and eMBB (Enhanced Mobile Broadband) services, significantly expanding all basic 5G outdoor coverage in major cities of Oman

in 2022. 'Omantel is proud of its leadership of the 5G market in the sultanate and for being one of the leading regional 5G operators', it said in a statement.

Omantel is engaged with vertical industries and partners to expand the industry's digital transformation. During last year's GITEX, Omantel along with Hutchison Ports Sohar and Huawei collaborated to successfully launch the use case of 5G smart port in Oman. This was the first 5G application in the field of ports in the Middle East region.

Omantel is also using 5G to take cloud gaming to the next level. It recently joined hands with NVIDIA and Zain to launch the powerful cloud-based GeForce Now for its home broadband customers. Gamers can just use GeForce Now and play online by connecting to their favourite gaming stores/platforms like Steam, Ubisoft and Epic Games.

'Omantel's focus is to take the user experience to higher levels, in terms of network performance, service provisioning channels, and after-sales care that builds market competitiveness,' the statement added.

OOMCO opens Oman's 30th LubExpress in Wadi Kabeer

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) is celebrating the opening of its 30th LubExpress centre in Oman. Located in Wadi Kabeer in Muscat, the facility will offer customers premium lubricants, a 15-point checklist, and frequent promotional offers, all with high quality service and expert care, a press release said.

It is the latest addition to OOMCO's rapidly expanding range of service hubs, which revolve around providing a unique one-stop-shop experience.

OOMCO Chief Executive Officer Tariq al Junaidi said, "It is important for us to give our customers across Oman access to everyday services that complement their journeys and provide them with the best care possible. Our LubExpress centres offer excellent value and convenience with the assurance of our OOMCO branded products."

OOMCO also has ten LubExpress centres globally.

ARA reaches another milestone in Tanzania

ARA Petroleum Tanzania Limited (APT), one of the group companies of the Zubair Corporation, on November 25 signed an addendum to the Ruvuma Block Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) to provide for natural gas.

APT is a subsidiary of the Zubair Corporation of Oman and holds majority shares in the Ruvuma Block in Tanzania as well as being the operator for the block.

During the signing ceremony in Dar es Salaam, Energy Minister January Makamba said that the two countries, Tanzania and Oman are connected by historical ties and that the signing of these agreements further enhances these ties.

He added that with this agreement, the government of Tanzania is ending a twelve years of silence and this move provides confidence to investors that the oil & gas exploration in Tanzania has started again.

ARA Petroleum CEO Sultan al



Sultan al Ghaithi

Ghaithi said, "Tanzania along with the rest of East Africa has tremendous demand for energy and we are excited to be a part of this compelling growth story in the region."

This agreement becomes especially important as Tanzania's dependence on gas-fired electricity plants has been increasing as prolonged drought reducing water levels in rivers and reservoirs causing reduction in hydro power generation.

'Young Geographer of the Year' announced

The winning students of 'Young Geographer of the Year', a competition to encourage pupils to engage with geographical issues, have been awarded with citations by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) recently.

Each year, the competition receives entries from hundreds of pupils from schools in the UK and internationally. This year's competition was an opportunity for students to explore the question 'Where, how and why?' by asking young people where they want to travel to, how they want to get there, and why they want to travel there.

"We were extremely impressed by the overwhelming quality of entries to this year's competition, with hundreds of pupils taking part from across the UK and beyond," said Professor Joe Smith, Director of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

"We were looking for - and found - original entries showing how sustainability was at the forefront of our entrants' minds when thinking about travel today. Understanding environ-



mental change but also connecting to others whether near or far were consistent themes.

"Geography plays a crucial role in our understanding of place and space, and we're delighted to see so many submissions cleverly reflect how travelling with purpose can enrich our lives and help us to better understand the world by widening our geographical horizons. The standard was exceptionally high, and the work was produced in a thoughtful and knowledgeable way. Congratulations to the winners and all who

took part. We know that they all have bright geographical futures ahead."

Young Geographer of the Year recognises the best entries across four categories: Key Stage 2 (pupils aged 9-11); Key Stage 3 (11-14); Key Stage 4 or GCSE (14-16); and Key Stage 5 or A Level (16-18). Pupils in the first three categories were asked to submit an annotated diagram or poster, while A Level pupils were asked to create an Esri UK StoryMap containing a maximum of 1,500 words.

Professor Joe Smith also judged the Key Stage 5 category. On the winning entry, he said, "In a very competitive field this piece on Iceland made very smart use of the potential held in the software, including integration of the survey tool. The reader is taught concepts but by stealth. The evident enthusiasm for geography and the charisma of Iceland as a place springs from the screen."

The winning and highly commended pupils were awarded their certificates at a ceremony at the Society on November 25.

Oman Insurance Association honours 40 industry professionals

Oman Insurance Association (OIA) recently conducted its members meeting at the Inter-Continental Hotel Muscat and presented academic certificates to industry professionals for completing their Certificate in Insurance (Cert CII) qualification from the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII), UK.

This was its first large physical meeting post the pandemic. The event saw a turnout of more than 100 professionals representing insurers, brokers, regulators and other associate organisations.

The organisers also updated the audience on the activities of the OIA and to encourage for



wider industry participation.

The OIA awarded a total of 22 professionals from the industry for the completion of the Cert

CII professional qualification during the year and another group of 18 candidates were recognized for completing the rele-

vant training courses in their quest to secure this qualification. It was a moment of pride both for the professionals who suc-

cessfully completed their qualification and for the Industry as a whole to have more qualified professionals working alongside

to take Oman's insurance industry to the next level of expertise and maturity.

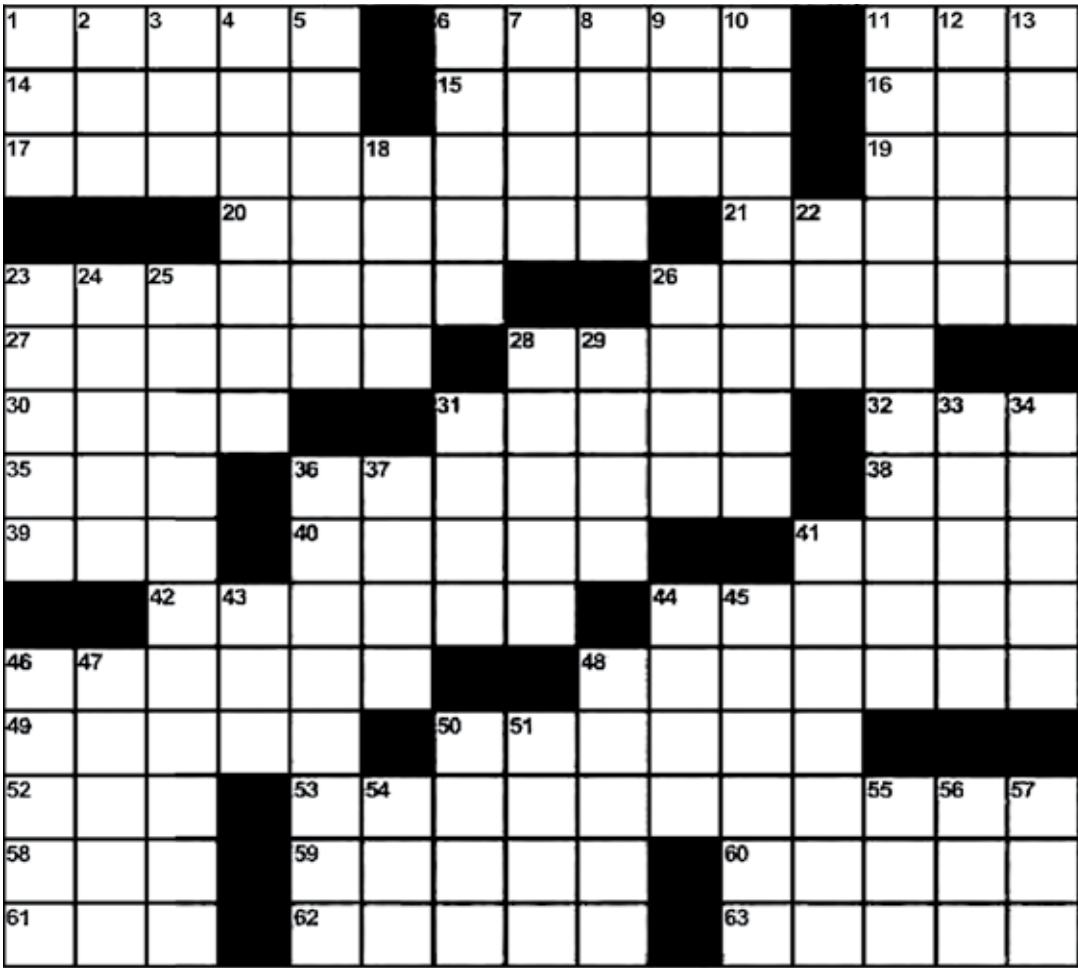
Speaking on the occasion, Husain al Ajmi - CEO of the Foundation for Insurance and Finance Education (FIFE) and guest of honour for the event said, "It is the enthusiasm of these young professionals today that makes me believe that Oman's insurance industry has a very bright future. With continuous encouragement and guidance from the esteemed Capital Markets Authority and complemented by the proactive industry association (OIA), the Omani market is poised to be the best in the re-

gion very soon and at par with leading international markets."

"This professional qualification and knowledge helps me to progress to the next stage of my career to a senior and specialist role. I thank my trainer and all my mentors who have helped me achieve this qualification", commented an excited Al Muayad al Mandhari, who passed the above qualifying certification with flying colours.

The OIA in its presentation also updated the audience on the progress made on key projects covering topics of NAT CAT study, Motor Insurance Study, eROP, etc.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Used a Jersey expres-sion?
- 6) Metal or paper waste
- 11) Hightailed it
- 14) Mindless
- 15) Evergreen-forested landscape
- 16) Nuptial agreement
- 17) Certain baseball player
- 19) Martini spirit
- 20) Simple flower arrangement
- 21) A little laughter
- 23) Gave comfort to
- 26) Break
- 27) Made the first bid
- 28) Masseuse employer
- 30) Heightening shoe de-vice
- 31) Accord maker
- 32) Apprehend
- 35) Aesop's grasshopper chider
- 36) In the middle of
- 38)_ Lanka (Ceylon)
- 39) Certain Civil War sol-dier, briefly
- 40) Darryl Strawberry, historically
- 41) Stefani of music

- 42) Offer used wares
- 44) 1997 Jennifer Lopez biopic
- 46) Longest book of the Bible
- 48) Twenty Questions choice
- 49) Futuristic genre
- 50) Immediately
- 52) "Star Wars" pilot_ Solo
- 53) They require some yielding
- 58) "We" may precede it
- 59) An Aussie outback call
- 60) One of the Allman Brothers
- 61) United in holy matri-mony
- 62) Awards for writers of
- 49- Across
- 63) Baylor of NBA fame

- 9) Biographical bit
- 10) Type of politics
- 11) Check mark recipient
- 12) "Ta-ta," in Montreal
- 13) Canonical hour
- 18) Cooled a six-pack
- 22) "The Raven" writer's monogram
- 23) Kind of battery
- 24) Express one's view
- 25) More logical?
- 26) Jekyll's alter ego
- 28) Wooden pin
- 29) Without_ (unpro- tected)
- 31)WWW!language
- 33) Big bout place
- 34) Twofold
- 36) Sully
- 37) They're broken up
- 41) Pleased as Punch
- 43) Diminutive trickster
- 44) Breaks a command- ment
- 45) Put into a cipher
- 46) Exclamation of dis- gust
- 4 7) Close call
- 48) Particles
- 50) Eagerly excited
- 51) Huxtable boy
- 54) Chit

- 55) Shake, as a dog's tail
- 56) "The Phantom Men- ace" kid
- 57) Japanese currency

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Today, when you're working in a group dynamic, experiment with holding back. Let other people work it out. They can handle things, and you could use a break from the rat race. Your influence is important, but people need to notice your absence. If you closely observe the group interaction and reflect on its inner workings, you will make quite a few connections that explain some frustrating mysteries.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Today it's time to stop working so hard to move yourself forward. You need to realize that sometimes you can get a lot further if you simply coast and let the events of the day carry you along. You have been pedaling so hard for so long that you haven't realized something crucial: the wind is at your back! Let it carry you along today. Just glide through your day without any specific direction or purpose and just experience things for a while.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

Social invitations, shameless flirts, and amazing travel opportunities are all wonderful things to encounter in your life, but now you need to try to avoid them! Keep away from anything that could lure you away from your primary focus. Whether you're trying to reach a work goal, study for an important exam, or work up the courage to ask someone out, you don't need any distractions. Isolate yourself from the parties and stick to serious subjects.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your work ethic is admirable, but keep in mind that prioritizing all your responsibilities over having any fun is going to put your personality (and your contentness) way out of balance. So, if you can, pull back on the work-related duties today. Push back some projects or even delegate them to other folks. If you can free up some of your time, you will be able to get the solitude you need. Plus, you'll be able to reappear on the social scene in full force.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Even though you are chock full of energy and positive ideas, today isn't the ideal time to keep expanding into different areas. Put away your travel brochures and postpone your appointment for that new passport photograph. It's time to stick close to home base and focus on just one or two people or projects that need you the most. Your ambition can be satisfied by perfecting your technique with everyday tasks. It doesn't always have to be pushed to discover new continents.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Your old habits have become something like a worn, fuzzy blanket, something that gives you comfort even though it might not be very good for you. You need to make sure that the blanket you cling to won't actually end up suffocating you. Today, take an objective look at the things you do in your life and ask yourself whether they're necessary or productive. If they are neither, it's time to get rid of them! Refocus on improving your health.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It might feel as if your entire world is being filmed in slow motion. Things are throttling down, but you might not be ready for it. If people aren't thinking or acting as quickly as you want them to, you're going to have to help them along. Gently nudge the slow ones and hint that they need to understand just what the heck has to happen. You are the ringleader of the day's amusing circus.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

A willingness to do what other people want is nice, but it isn't always effective. Today, take control of a situation that no one seems to want to be responsible for. Meaningless chitchat is causing everything to go nowhere, so step up and tell everyone what you think the best move should be. You won't get complaints. You will get gratitude for being confident enough to step in! In your personal life, use your self-assuredness to bring up sensitive issues and get them out of the way.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

People always say to live in the moment, but today that advice might not be the best to follow. If you have a busy day, you'll never have enough energy to fulfill that directive. And if you have a very quiet day, you might grow inappropriately preoccupied with the one or two things that are happening. Instead, look further down the road right now. Don't feel pressure to create a specific plan. This day might bring you some inspiration on which goals to tackle next.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

If your tempers (or the tempers of the people around you) is rising today, just ride it out. A lot of tumultuous energy is in the air today, likely caused by some transitions or adaptations you made a long time ago that are still sending repercussions through all areas of your life. Don't ignore the problems, but don't let them control your day either. These aren't fires you need to extinguish. They're merely facts you need to deal with.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Romantically, things are taking a new direction and there's some momentum building. Your charm has established a strong foothold in someone's mind. You've made quite an impression, and it might be time to strike while the iron is hot. If a new romance isn't on your current to-do list, then channel your charms in other contexts. It's totally appropriate to share your wit in the workplace! In fact, you'll find that a well-timed joke can make some powerful people want to be around you.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Have you been losing perspective on the most important people in your life? Sure, your boss warrants a lot of respect, but does it come at the cost of spending time with the friends and family who love you no matter what time you get to work each morning? In the long run, you are always going to remember the people who had your back, the people who share your private jokes, and the people who tell you the truth because it's good for you. Put them first today.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Who led the expedition that successfully made the first ascent of Mt Everest in 1953?

- A. Colonel H C J (John) Hunt
- B. Sir Edmund Hillary
- C. Tenzing Norgay
- D. Eric Shipton

02. A group of what is usually called a "parliament"?

- A. Owls
- B. Ravens
- C. Crows
- D. Rooks

03. What is the name of a spectacular group of six canyons in the Sierra Madre Occidental in the southwestern part of Chihuahua, northwestern Mexico, a name derived from the colour of the walls?

- A. Copper Canyon
- B. Painted Chasm
- C. Black Canyon
- D. Red Gorge

Answers: 1. A 2. A 3. A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

N	T	W	O
O	I	T	G
B	D	G	L
D	H	O	Y

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

US unveils high-tech B-21 stealth bomber

This bomber can carry nuclear and conventional weapons and fly without a crew on board

Palmdale, US - The United States on Friday unveiled the B-21 Raider, a high-tech stealth bomber that can carry nuclear and conventional weapons and is designed to be able to fly without a crew on board.

The slickly choreographed ceremony at B-21 manufacturer Northrop Grumman's facility in Palmdale, California opened with the US national anthem as older bombers roared over a crowd that included top US officials.

Dramatic music played and lights flashed as the doors of a hanger holding the new aircraft slowly opened, and the crowd applauded as the cloth covering it was pulled away to reveal a sleek grey bomber that is on



The B-21 Raider is unveiled during a ceremony at Northrop Grumman's Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, California, on Friday (AFP)

Fifty years of advances in low-observable technology have gone into this aircraft

LLOYD AUSTIN



track to cost nearly US\$700mn per plane.

"The B-21 Raider is the first strategic bomber in more than three decades. It is a testament to America's enduring advan-

tages in ingenuity and innovation," US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in remarks at the ceremony.

Many specifics of the aircraft are being kept under wraps, but the plane will offer significant advances over existing bombers in the US fleet, which Austin highlighted in his remarks.

He hailed its range - 'no other long-range bomber can match its efficiency' - and its durability, saying it is 'designed to be the most maintainable bomber ever built'.

Like the F-22 and F-35 warplanes, the B-21 features stealth

technology, which minimises an aircraft's signature through both its shape and the materials it is constructed from, making it harder for adversaries to detect.

"Fifty years of advances in low-observable technology have gone into this aircraft," Austin said. "Even the most sophisticated air defense systems will struggle to detect the B-21 in the sky."

The plane is also built with an 'open system architecture,' which allows for the incorporation of 'new weapons that haven't even been invented yet', he said. Amy Nelson, a fellow at

the Brookings Institution think tank, told AFP ahead of the unveiling that the B-21 is 'designed to evolve'.

'American air power'

"The 'open architecture' allows for the future integration of improved software (including for autonomy) so the aircraft doesn't become obsolete as quickly," she said.

"The B-21 is much fancier than its predecessors - truly modern. Not only is it dual-capable (unlike the B-2), which means it can launch nuclear or conventionally armed missiles, it

can launch long- and short-range missiles," Nelson said.

Not mentioned during the ceremony was the plane's potential for uncrewed flight. US Air Force spokesperson Ann Stefanek told AFP the aircraft is 'provisioned for the possibility, but there has been no decision to fly without a crew'.

The first flight by a B-21 - 'the backbone of our future bomber force' - is expected to take place next year, and the Air Force plans to buy at least 100 of the aircraft, Stefanek said.

Northrop Grumman said six of the planes are currently in dif-

ferent stages of assembly and testing at its facility in Palmdale.

The bomber will be a key part of the US 'nuclear triad,' which consists of weapons that can be launched from the land, air and sea.

"For nuclear deterrence, the bomber fleet provide flexibility to US nuclear posture, and redundancy should any of the other legs fail," Nelson said.

The 'Raider' portion of the aircraft's name honors the 1942 US bomber raid on Tokyo led by then-lieutenant colonel James Doolittle - the first American strike on Japan's homeland following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour the previous year.

"On a cold and rainy April morning, four months after Pearl Harbour, 16 US Army bomber planes took off from an aircraft carrier in the Pacific," Austin said.

They 'flew more than 650 miles to strike distant enemy targets, and the Doolittle Raiders, as they came to be known, showed the strength and the reach of American air power', he said.

AFP

UN says Myanmar sentences seven students to death

Bangkok, Thailand - The Myanmar junta handed out at least seven more death sentences this week, taking the tally of those on death row to 139, according to the United Nations.

A junta spokesperson did not respond to calls from outside Myanmar seeking confirmation of the latest death sentences. The United Nations accused it of using capital punishment as a 'tool to crush opposition'.

Myanmar has been in chaos since Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government was toppled in a military coup in February 2021, ending the southeast Asian nation's brief period of democracy.

At least seven male university students were sentenced to death by a military court behind closed doors on Wednesday, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said in a statement. "By resorting to use death sentences as a political tool to crush opposition, the military confirms its disdain for the efforts by ASEAN and the international community at large to end violence and create the conditions for a political dialogue to lead Myanmar out of a human



High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk (AFP)

rights crisis created by the military," Turk said.

Local media reports said the Yangon-based university students were arrested in April and accused of involvement in a bank shooting. "Imposing the death penalty on students is an act of vengeance by the military," Dagon University's student union said in a statement.

The United Nations is also investigating reports another four youth activists were also sentenced to death on Thursday.

"The military continues to hold proceedings in secretive courts in violation of basic prin-

ciples of fair trial and contrary to core judicial guarantees of independence and impartiality," Turk said. He said the secret tribunal hearings sometimes last just minutes and those detained often don't have access to lawyers or their families.

Scores of Myanmar social media users took to Facebook and Twitter to protest against the death penalties under hashtags such as 'StopExecuteOurStudents'. The latest death sentences follow July's executions of four prisoners that included former lawmaker Phyo Zeya Thaw.

AFP

Macron caps US visit with New Orleans trip, meetup with Musk

New Orleans, US - President Emmanuel Macron on Friday visited New Orleans, a city emblematic of historic Franco-American ties, to promote the French language and conclude his state visit to the United States.

The French president, on the third day of a US trip that included a lavish reception at the White House a night earlier, strolled New Orleans's historic French Quarter - and held an unannounced face-to-face meeting with Twitter owner Elon Musk.

Macron said the two had a 'clear and honest' discussion during an hour-long meeting, and that he conveyed to Musk his - and Europe's - concerns about content moderation on the influential platform.

"Transparent user policies, significant reinforcement of content moderation and protection of freedom of speech: efforts have to be made by Twitter to comply with European regulations," Macron tweeted after the meeting.

Macron arrived in the iconic Louisiana city to a colourful wel-



French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte, greet people while walking through the French Quarter in New Orleans, on Friday (AFP)

come by a jazz band on the tarmac at the airport, before walking the French Quarter's lively streets with his wife, Brigitte.

Removing his jacket, Macron strolled beside New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell, clasping the hands of well-wishers and beaming widely. He spoke briefly with women holding signs in support of protests in Iran.

During an impromptu press briefing, he praised 'a land of creolization' where 'French is loved,' and later announced a programme to broaden access to French language training.

He had said in Washington that he wanted to renovate the image of French in the United States, where it is 'sometimes seen as elitist'.

Before taking off from Washington earlier on Friday, Macron attended a breakfast with representatives of digital companies during which he, according to the Elysee, recalled 'all the efforts' made since his first term to 'make France the leading European country in tech'.

Once a French colonial city, New Orleans was sold to the United States by Napoleon as

part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, and Macron has called it 'the quintessential francophone land'. Besides celebrating French-American ties, Macron paid tribute to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, which killed more than 1,800 people in and around New Orleans and caused billions of dollars in damage in 2005.

Accompanied by French film director Claude Lelouch and dancer and choreographer Benjamin Millepied, Macron met local artists and prominent cultural figures of New Orleans, known as the birthplace of jazz.

Shortly after his arrival, Macron and European Affairs Minister Catherine Colonna met with Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards. As Macron looked on, Colonna and Edwards signed an accord to promote and carry out joint clean energy initiatives.

The visit came on the heels of a lavish dinner hosted by President Joe Biden at the White House, headlined by master jazzman Jon Batiste, who comes from a family of New Orleans musicians.

AFP

Democrats shake up 2024 primary calendar

Washington, US - Democrats voted on Friday to shake up their presidential primaries calendar in 2024 to give greater sway to African Americans in choosing the party's White House candidate.

The surprise move came one day after President Joe Biden, who has said he plans another White House run in 2024, suggested changes to the Democratic Party's presidential nominating calendar.

The eyes of the world have traditionally been focused every four years on rural, overwhelmingly white Iowa and tiny New Hampshire as the kickoff states for the monthslong process of selecting presidential candidates.

Biden, in a letter on Thursday to the Democratic National Committee's rules and bylaws committee, proposed that the first Democratic primary of 2024 be held in South Carolina, which has a large Black population.

The committee, in a voice vote, approved the move on Fri-

day with only the members from Iowa and New Hampshire opposing the change. The new calendar will be put to a vote of the full DNC in February 2023.

Biden's victory in the Democratic presidential primary in South Carolina in 2020 helped revive his flagging candidacy and propelled the former vice president to the nomination and eventually the White House.

In his letter, Biden said, "You cannot be the Democratic nominee and win a general election unless you have overwhelming support from voters of colour - and that includes Black, Brown and Asian American & Pacific Islander voters.

"For decades, Black voters in particular have been the backbone of the Democratic Party but have been pushed to the back of the early primary process," he said.

"It is time to stop taking these voters for granted, and time to give them a louder and earlier vote in the process."



President Joe Biden (AFP)

The new primary calendar calls for the first contest to be held in South Carolina on February 3, followed by Nevada and New Hampshire on February 6, Georgia on February 13 and Michigan on February 27.

Chilly reception

Biden's proposed changes received a chilly reception from Democratic leadership in Iowa and New Hampshire.

"Small rural states like Iowa must have a voice in our presidential nominating process,"

A revamped primary calendar could help Biden if he decides to run again in 2024 and is challenged for the Democratic nomination

Iowa Democratic Party chair Ross Wilburn said.

"Democrats cannot forget about entire groups of voters in the heart of the Midwest without doing significant damage to the party for a generation."

In New Hampshire, Democratic Party chair Ray Buckley insisted the northeastern state 'will be holding our primary first'.

"We have survived past attempts over the decades and we

will survive this," Buckley said.

"Our first-in-the-nation primary has been an integral part of our state's history for over 100 years, and is enshrined in state law." A revamped primary calendar could help Biden if he indeed decides to run again in 2024 and is challenged for the Democratic nomination. Giving greater early primary influence to African American voters could also provide a potential boost to Vice President Kamala Harris, who is Black, if Biden steps aside and she runs for the White House.

The Republican Party still plans to hold its first 2024 nominating contest in Iowa.

Former president Donald Trump, who has announced plans to seek the Republican nomination in 2024, accused Democrats of 'turning their backs on the good, hard-working people of Iowa'.

"I can't wait to be back in Iowa," Trump said in a statement.

AFP

Nigeria reports fresh attack on election office

Lagos, Nigeria - A local office of Nigeria's electoral body INEC has been set partially ablaze, the commission said on Friday, the latest violence less than three months ahead of next year's presidential ballot. Nigerians in February will elect a successor to President Muhammadu Buhari, who is stepping down after two terms in office.

Concerns have grown over recent attacks on the offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), particularly in the southeast.

INEC spokesman Festus Okoye said the commission's office for Orlu area in Imo state was attacked.

He said the incident occurred on Thursday when the building, which was under repair following an earlier attack, was vandalised and partially set ablaze.

Okoye said three construction workers were kidnapped but were later freed.

"The damage would have been more extensive but for the quick response of the Nigeria Police which has deployed its personnel to the site," he said in a statement.

He lamented the frequent attacks on INEC facilities less than three months to the elections. "This is one attack too many. The commission once again expresses its concern over the spate of attacks on its facilities and the negative consequences on our preparations for the 2023 general election."

Thursday's incident came less than a week after an INEC office and voting materials were torched in Ebonyi state, also in the southeast of the country.

AFP

US adds Cuba, Nicaragua, Wagner Group to religious freedom blacklist

Washington, US - The United States on Friday added Latin American adversaries Cuba and Nicaragua as well as Russia's Wagner Group to a blacklist on international religious freedom, opening the path to potential sanctions.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the Wagner Group was being designated due to involvement in abuses in the Central African Republic, where nearly a decade of bloodshed has had religious overtones. "The United States will not stand by in the face of these abuses," Blinken said in a statement.

Cuba and Nicaragua were both newly designated as 'Countries of Particular Concern' under the annual determinations, meaning that the two leftist-led states - already under US sanctions - could face further measures.

Blinken kept on the blacklist all Countries of Particular Concern from 2021 - China, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Nicaragua's increasingly authoritarian president, Daniel Ortega, has clamped down on the Catholic Church since accusing it of supporting 2018 anti-government protests, which were crushed at the cost of hundreds of lives.

A bishop critical of the government, Rolando Alvarez, was put under house arrest in August with other priests and seminarians arrested on unspecified



Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the Wagner Group was being designated due to involvement in abuses in the Central African Republic, where nearly a decade of bloodshed has had religious overtones (AFP)

charges.

The designation of Cuba is the latest sign of pressure on the island by the administration of President Joe Biden, which has largely shunned previous Democratic president Barack Obama's Vatican-blessed effort to seek an opening with the long-time US nemesis.

In its latest annual report on religious freedom issued in June, the State Department pointed to violence and arrests of Cuban religious figures over purported roles in rare public protests as well as restrictions on non-recognised Protestant churches. "These actions represented a shift to engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing egre-

gious violations of religious freedom, which is the basis for the designation," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez rejected the US blacklisting, calling it 'arbitrary' and 'dishonest'.

"It is known that in Cuba there is religious freedom," Rodriguez tweeted.

No action on India, warning to Vietnam

As expected, Blinken took no action against India, seen by the United States as a key emerging ally.

The decision ignores a recommendation by the autonomous

US Commission on International Religious Freedom, which said that treatment of minorities was 'significantly' worsening under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government.

The Commission said in a statement it was 'outraged' that Blinken did not list India or Nigeria, saying the State Department's own reporting showed 'severe religious freedom violations' in both countries.

India had already voiced anger over the State Department's annual report, which documented incendiary comments by Indian officials and accounts of discrimination against Muslims and Christians.

The report had separately

pointed to abuses of Russia's Wagner Group in the Central African Republic, citing Amnesty International in linking the mercenaries to killings and sexual violence against Muslims.

The designation comes as US senators introduced legislation to slap a terrorism designation on the Wagner Group, which has also been involved in Mali and been accused of rights violations in Libya, Syria and Ukraine.

The Central African Republic, one of the world's poorest countries, was plunged into civil war in 2013 when a Muslim-dominated rebellion overthrew the president, sparking reprisals from predominantly Christian and animist militias.

Blinken added the Central African Republic to a watchlist, meaning that it will be designated among Countries of Particular Concern without progress.

Also newly put on the watchlist was Vietnam. The State Department report said the communist authorities have harassed non-recognised religious groups, including Christian house churches, independent Buddhists and members of the century-old Cao Dai movement.

Rights activists have long pushed the United States to designate Vietnam but successive administrations have been building ties with the former US adversary.

Algeria and Comoros remained on the watchlist from 2021.

AFP

S Africa ruling party to discuss Ramaphosa's future on Sunday

Johannesburg, South Africa - South Africa's ruling party is set to resume talks on Sunday on the future of President Cyril Ramaphosa, who is embroiled in a scandal that has put his presidency at risk.

Pressure is mounting for Ramaphosa to quit or be forced from office over a cash burglary at his farm which he allegedly covered up.

The African National Congress (ANC) will hold a 'special session of its National Executive Committee' at 1200 GMT on Sunday, the party said on Saturday. The committee met briefly in Johannesburg on Friday before telling journalists it would look more closely at the facts of the case against the president.

Ramaphosa has been under fire since June, when a former spy boss filed a complaint with the police alleging that he had hidden a February 2020 burglary at his farm in northeastern South Africa from the authorities.

He allegedly organised for the robbers to be kidnapped and bribed into silence.

Ramaphosa said a vast sum of cash stashed at the farm was payment for buffaloes bought by a Sudanese businessman.

The scandal has cast a shadow over Ramaphosa's bid to portray himself as graft-free after the corruption-stained era of his predecessor Jacob Zuma.



President Cyril Ramaphosa (AFP)

An inquiry on Wednesday submitted a report to parliament, concluding Ramaphosa 'may have committed' serious violations and misconduct.

The report will be examined by parliament on Tuesday.

That debate could open the way to a vote on impeaching Ramaphosa - a term that in South Africa means to remove from office.

Ramaphosa, in his submission to the panel, denied any wrongdoing. The president has not been charged with anything at this point, and the police inquiry is ongoing.

But the scandal, complete with details of more than half a million dollars in cash hidden under sofa cushions, has come at the worst possible moment for him.

On December 16, he contests elections for the ANC presidency - a position that also holds the key to staying on as national president.

AFP

South Korea's ex-national security chief arrested over border killing

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea on Saturday arrested a former national security chief on suspicion of covering up events surrounding the 2020 murder of a fisheries official by Pyongyang.

President Yoon Suk-yeol is expanding an inquiry into the highly politicised case following accusations that his predecessor mishandled the probe to curry favour with North Korea.

Suh Hoon is the first top official from the presidential office of former leader Moon Jae-in to be arrested over the case.

He is accused of ordering that intelligence reports be destroyed to conceal the killing of fisheries



South Korea's former National Intelligence Service chief Suh Hoon (AFP)

official Lee Dae-jun, who died near the sea border separating North and South Korea.

The former top security official also faces allegations that he manipulated evidence to support the Moon government's controversial claim that the late fisheries official had sought to defect to the North.

Judge Kim Jeong-min of the Seoul Central District Court issued an arrest warrant for Suh on Saturday, citing 'the seriousness of the crime, the status of the suspect, and a risk of destroying evidence'.

In October ex-defence minister Suh Wook and former coast

guard chief Kim Hong-hee were also arrested over the same case.

President Yoon has been sharply critical of his predecessor's dovish approach towards North Korea, accusing Moon of appeasing Pyongyang.

Yoon's People Power Party on Saturday accused Suh of 'failing to protect' and 'neglecting' the late fisheries official while security chief. But the country's opposition has long claimed the investigation is 'political revenge' against Moon's administration.

On Saturday they said Suh's arrest was 'hard to understand' and they would 'defend the truth and justice' against Yoon's 'political retaliation'.

ical retaliation'.

Fisheries official Lee was shot dead and set on fire by North Korean soldiers near the rivals' sea border.

Moon's government at the time said an initial probe by the coast guard suggested Lee had tried to defect to the North, citing family problems and debts from gambling.

But Lee's brother has repeatedly slammed that idea, saying Lee would never have chosen a life in North Korea.

Yoon has also reopened inquiries into another explosive murder case in which two North Korean fishermen who con-

fessed to killing 16 crewmates at sea were deported back to Pyongyang in 2019.

Rights groups have said the transfer of the suspects back to the North was a violation of international law because of the likelihood of the men being tortured or worse.

As president, Moon championed engagement with Pyongyang, meeting North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un and then-US president Donald Trump for talks.

But his diplomacy ultimately failed, with the North now more belligerent than ever.

AFP

United States, Brazil plan Biden-Lula meeting in Washington in December

Brasilia, Brazil - Brazilian president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and US officials said on Friday he is planning to meet with President Joe Biden at the White House, likely before taking office on January 1.

"I can confirm that we are planning for a visit," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters. "We look forward to welcoming president Lula here at the appropriate time."

Another NSC spokeswoman, Adrienne Watson, said that Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, would travel to Brazil on Monday to meet with Lula, as well as with members of outgoing President Jair Bolsonaro's administration.

Veteran leftist Lula defeated far-right incumbent Bolsonaro in a hard-fought election in October, returning to power after two presidential terms served from 2003 to 2011.

Lula said he and Sullivan would 'hold talks and discuss the



Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (AFP)

date' for a visit to Washington - probably after December 12, the day his victory is formally ratified by Brazil's electoral tribunal, he told a news conference in Brasilia.

US-Brazilian relations have chilled since Biden defeated former president Donald Trump, Bolsonaro's political role model, in the 2020 US election.

But ties look set to warm under Lula.

Biden was one of the first

world leaders to congratulate him on his election win.

"I think we have a lot to say to each other," Lula said.

"The United States is facing the same problems with democracy as Brazil. The damage Trump did to American democracy is the same as what Bolsonaro did to Brazil."

Diplomatic issues on the table will include 'US-Brazilian relations, Brazil's role in the new geopolitics (and) the unnecessary Ukraine war', Lula said.

The Biden administration will also likely be keen to discuss climate policy, after four years of surging deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon under agribusiness ally Bolsonaro.

Lula vowed last month at the UN climate conference in Egypt - which Bolsonaro skipped - to fight for zero deforestation in Brazil's 60-per cent share of the world's biggest rainforest, a key resource in the fight to curb climate change.

The incoming president said

he would also begin naming his cabinet ministers after December 12 - with markets particularly anxious over his pick for finance minister, amid concerns about how his government will pay for his promised social spending.

The White House said Sullivan will be accompanied by other officials from the NSC and the State Department when he visits Brasilia on Monday.

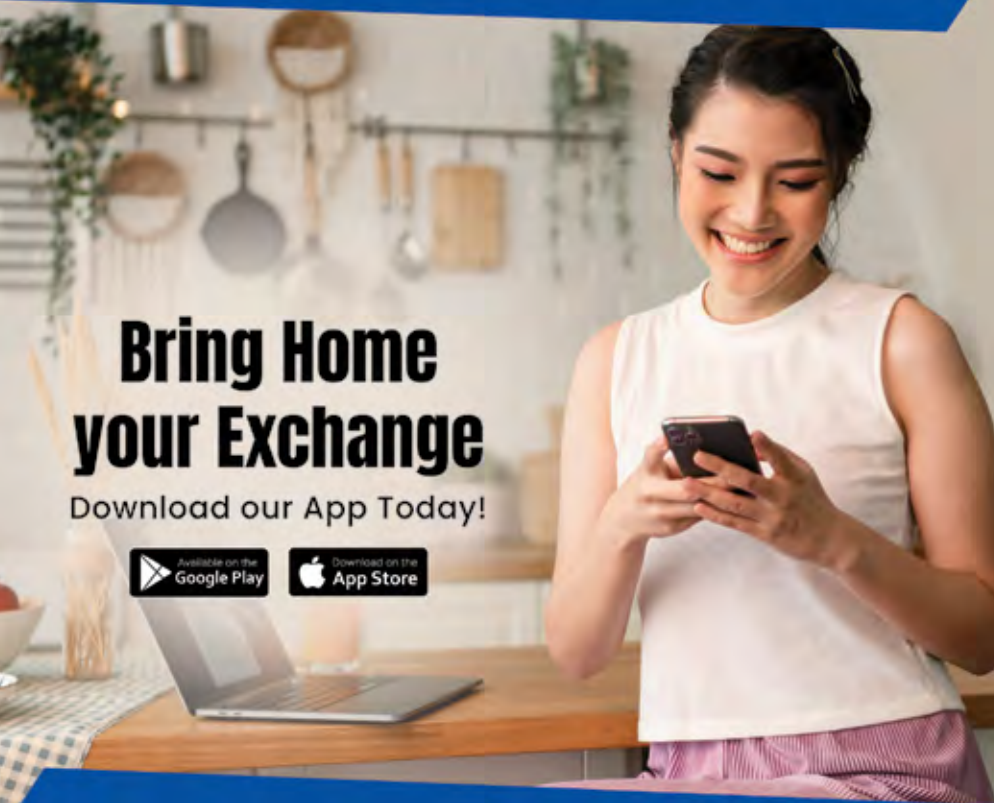
He 'will meet with Brazilian Secretary for Strategic Affairs Admiral Flavio Rocha, President-elect Lula da Silva, and Senator Jaques Wagner', NSC spokeswoman Watson said, referring to an important ally of Lula.

"During the meetings, Sullivan will discuss how the United States and Brazil can continue to work together to address common challenges, including combatting climate change, safeguarding food security, promoting inclusion and democracy, and managing regional migration."

AFP

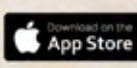


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Iran's hijab law under review by parliament, judiciary: AG

Tehran, Iran - Iran's parliament and the judiciary are reviewing a law which requires women to cover their heads, and which triggered more than two months of deadly protests, the attorney general said.

The demonstrations began after Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin, died in custody on September 16 after her arrest by Iran's morality police for an alleged breach of the dress code.

Protesters have burned their head coverings and shouted anti-government slogans. Since Amini's death a growing number of women are not observing hijab, particularly in Tehran's fashionable north.

The hijab headscarf became obligatory for all women in Iran in April 1983, four years after the 1979 revolution that overthrew the US-backed monarchy.

'Both parliament and the judiciary are working (on the issue)', of whether the law needs any changes, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri said in the holy city of Qom.

Quoted on Friday by the ISNA news agency, he did not specify what could be modified



Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said there were methods of implementing the constitution that can be flexible (AFP)

in the law.

The review team met on Wednesday with parliament's cultural commission 'and will see the results in a week or two', the attorney general said.

President Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday said Iran's republican and Islamic foundations were

constitutionally entrenched.

"But there are methods of implementing the constitution that can be flexible," he said in televised comments.

Hundreds killed

After the hijab law became mandatory, with changing cloth-

ing norms it became commonplace to see women in tight jeans and loose, colourful headscarves.

But in July this year Raisi, an ultra-conservative, called for mobilisation of 'all state institutions to enforce the headscarf law'.

Many women continued to bend the rules, however.

Iran accuses its sworn enemy the United States and its allies, including Britain, Israel, and Kurdish groups based outside the country, of fomenting the street violence which the government calls 'riots'.

A general in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps this week, for the first time, said more than 300 people have lost their lives in the unrest since Amini's death.

Iran's top security body, the Supreme National Security Council, on Saturday said the number of people killed during the protests 'exceeds 200'.

Cited by state news agency IRNA, it said the figure included security officers, civilians, armed separatists and 'rioters'.

Oslo-based non-governmental organisation Iran Human Rights on Tuesday said at least 448 people had been 'killed by security forces in the ongoing nationwide protests'.

UN rights chief Volker Turk said last week that 14,000 people, including children, had been arrested in the protest crackdown.

AFP



Israeli security forces deploy in the occupied West Bank city of Hawara, after a Palestinian man was shot dead by Israeli police, on Friday (AFP)

Israeli police shoot dead Palestinian

Huwara, Palestinian Territories

- Israeli police shot dead a Palestinian on Friday in the occupied West Bank, in an incident described by the force as a stabbing and by a Palestinian official as a quarrel.

Israeli police said its border guards were approached by several suspects in the town of Huwara when one 'pulled out a knife and stabbed one of them'.

The guards 'responded by shooting one suspect and neutralising him', police said in a statement, before confirming to AFP the Palestinian was killed.

There are regular patrols by Israeli forces through the town of Huwara, which straddles the main road south of Nablus in the northern West Bank.

A member of the Huwara municipality, Wajeh Odeh, told AFP the shooting followed 'a quarrel'. "An Israeli soldier pushed the Palestinian to the floor and shot him from zero distance," Odeh said.

Heavily-armed border guards were deployed along the street following the incident, according to an AFP journalist at the scene. The Palestinian Red Crescent told AFP its medics 'were prevented from dealing with a wounded person who was later declared dead'.

Israeli police said one of its officers suffered minor injuries.

The shooting marks the ninth Palestinian killed since Tuesday in the West Bank.

AFP

Turkey jails PKK member extradited from Sweden

Istanbul, Turkey - A Turkish court on Saturday jailed a convicted member of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) a day after Sweden extradited him, state media reported.

After Russia invaded Ukraine, Finland and Sweden sought to join NATO. That requires a consensus within the US-led defence alliance, but Turkey and Hungary have so far not ratified their membership. Turkey has demanded the Nordic countries take a tougher stance on Kurdish groups it deems 'terrorists' in exchange for its backing.

AFP

Hawaii volcano sprays fountains of lava in spectacular eruption

Los Angeles, US - Fountains of lava and rivers of molten rock were spewing from the world's biggest volcano on Friday, as the first eruption there in almost four decades showed no signs of abating.

Two fissures on Mauna Loa were venting huge volumes of viscous rock and gases from deep within the Earth, in a thunderous display of the power of nature.

Vulcanologists said they were watching lava flows heading towards a highway on Hawaii's largest island, though they still believe the eruption, which began on Sunday, posed no immediate threat to humans.

"The Northeast Rift Zone



Fissure 3 of the Northeast Rift Zone of the Mauna Loa eruption is seen with a plume of volcanic gases and fine volcanic ash (AFP)

eruption of Mauna Loa continues, with two active fissures feeding lava flows downslope," the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said on Thursday. "Fissure 3 remains the dominant source of the largest lava flow. The fissure 3 lava flows are traveling to the north toward the Daniel K. Inouye Highway (Saddle Road) but have reached relatively flatter ground and have slowed down significantly as expected."

The molten rock was traveling at around 130 feet (40 meters) per hour and was still a few miles from the road.

"Advance rates may be highly variable over the coming days and weeks due to the way lava is emplaced on flat ground,"

the USGS said.

"At the rate observed over the past 24 hours, the earliest the lava flow might be expected to reach the Daniel K. Inouye Highway (Saddle Road) in one week."

But, the agency warned, volcanoes can be unpredictable and these calculations could change.

The other fissure still producing lava is sending it northeast, while plumes of volcanic gas were lofting high into the air and Pele's Hair was falling to earth.

Pele's Hair is fine strands of volcanic glass formed when lava skeins cool quickly in the air.

Named after Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of volcanoes, the strands can be very sharp and

pose potential danger to skin and eyes.

Scientists say their seismic monitoring equipment was detecting a large number of earthquakes around the two active fissures.

"This indicates that magma is still being supplied, and activity is likely to continue as long as we see this signal," the USGS said.

Pressure has been building at Mauna Loa for years, but it has not erupted since 1984.

Fountains of lava as high as 200 feet have been observed this week, lighting up the night sky in a spectacle that could be seen from Kona, a town 45 miles away.

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A journalist takes a picture near 'The 1st of May' by Viktor Palmov in the first decades of the 20th century at the Thyssen-Bornemisza museum in Madrid



A gallery assistant stands near 'Rest' by Oleksandr Syrotenko during the press preview of 'In the Eye of the Storm' at the Thyssen-Bornemisza museum in Madrid



Marina Drogotiu (R), chief curator of the National Museum of Ukraine, stands near a painting during a preview of 'In the Eye of the Storm'

Cultural sites damaged

After weeks of intense preparation, the pieces were loaded into two trucks sometime in mid-November just before the Ukrainian capital came under intense missile fire.

As it headed to the Polish border the convoy avoided passing infrastructure likely to be attacked,

Thyssen-Bornemisza said. When the convoy reached the border, they found it shut because a missile had just landed in a Polish village killing two people.

Thyssen-Bornemisza said she then asked Ukraine's ambassador to Spain for help, who in turn contacted every politician he knew between Poland and Ukraine. "It took them 12 hours that night - they managed



Cultural heritage is very often collateral damage during wars - but sometimes it's specifically targeted

KRISTA PIKKAT

to get through," she said.

UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural agency, says over 200 cultural sites in Ukraine, including museums, have been damaged since Russia invaded Ukraine in February. Krista Pikkat, UNESCO's cultural and emergencies director, said in October that 'cultural heritage is very often collateral damage during wars - but sometimes it's specifically targeted'.

Talk about the war

The exhibition follows a chronological order. It starts with the 1910s when Ukraine was part of the Russian empire and ends in the 1930s when several artists died during purges carried out by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, said one of the show's curators Katia Denysova.

Most of the works come from the National Art Museum of Ukraine. Among the works on display is 'Composition' - a Cubist-inspired painting by Vadym Meller and a realistic portrait of a soldier by Kostiantyn Yeleva.

"It is important for us to continue to talk about the war," Denysova said. "But we also want to show with this project that Ukraine has so much more to offer."

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BAHAR
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AROMATIC

banquet

AMOUAGE GRAND CULINARY EXPERIENCE

Amouage has launched its new *Odyssey Collection: Escape* inspired by fragrances in nature that evoke unique emotions of bliss. The uniqueness of the perfumes were last week demonstrated at a fine-dining session for select invitees at Al Baleed Resort Salalah with a four-course menu infused with aromas akin to four new perfumes

Hubert Vaz

The heady, marine odours emanating from the Arabian Sea yonder seemed to fight for supremacy... But the magical whiffs of Amouage's latest *Odyssey Collection: Escape*, that surrounded a batch of al fresco diners at Al Baleed Resort Salalah (as part of the Al Baleed Food Festival by Anantara) was on an altogether different level.

It came forth in cascading bursts, each with its own unique kick and a story behind each conception. Every fragrance presented had a distinct identity, though there seemed to be an invisible chord binding the collection - one that was mystical yet earthy, out of the world yet inspired by it, subtle yet intense! And the invitees could actually 'taste' the nuances of *Escape* in what was described as a 'grand culinary experience'.

Renaud Salmon, Amouage chief experience officer, heralded the evening dinner with his frank sharing of the various concepts and considerations that went into the creation of the perfumes for *Escape*. He attributed his success in creating a new experience to the

'gillardeau oyster' with apple, ginger and fenu-greek; watermelon kefir with malossol caviar and seagrapes; and shredded crab

meat with fermented green asparagus and sea breath. Amouage *Search* was infused with citrus within burning woods with top notes of lemon, lime and mandarin,

pigeon breast' with fermented pear and hazelnut, and wagyu tenderloin with Jerusalem artichoke and herb cream.

Amouage *Purpose* was said to be 'a shamanic awakening' bringing forth a feeling of peace and contentment. The top notes were bergamot, pink pepper, frankincense and pimento berry while the heart notes were rose, sand vetiver, sandalwood and pa-



immense creative freedom that he enjoyed at Amouage.

"We are here to create the exceptional - and that's why we continue to uncover innovative routes to perfume creation, all explored through the unique lens of our ancient fragrance heritage," he said, adding, "It's a great honour to be able to take this thousand year old foundation and reimagine it in a way that resonates with discerning clients around the world."

Salmon introduced each of the four perfumes of the new collection - *Lineage*, *Search*, *Guidance* and *Purpose* - as the courses of the evening's dinner progressed, each course inspired by one of the new perfumes.

Amouage *Lineage* was inspired by the mineral winds of Masirah with top notes of ginger, sichuan pepper, schinus molle, and saffron, heart notes of frankincense, fenu-greek and myrrh and base notes blended with frankincense resinoid, myrrh resinoid, vetiver, patchouli, benzoin and labdanum. The culinary experience to match this included

heart notes of Hojari frankincense, black pepper and elemi, and base note of cade, vetiver and guaiacwood. The culinary equivalent comprised 'king crab meat' with pumpkin and gingerbread; hamachi infused with tigermilk, mandarine and menengic oil, and frozen kumquat with sea urchin.

Amouage *Guidance* reflected the 'delicate strength of femininity' with top notes of pear, incense and hazelnut, heart notes of saffron, rose, sambac, jamine and osmanthus, and base notes of cistus, sandalwood, akigalawood, ambergris and vanilla. The culinary experience comprised 'sandalwood smoked

pyrus, and the base notes were saffron, suede, mystical and akigalawood. The culinary experience involved a dessert comprising 'frozen bergamot' with pandan, Earl Grey, blueberry and pink pepper.

Painstakingly crafted by Thomas Buhner, one of Germany's top chefs, the dinner was not just a feast for the senses but also a fitting tribute to the new experience created for the *Odyssey Collection: Escape*. And as Buhner puts it, "The grand dinner was inspired by faraway lands of Oman...the majestic aroma of frankincense and the notions of finding oneself."

Buhner, who trained to cook at the Schweizer Haus in Paderborn and then worked at the Dusseldorf Hilton under Gunter Scherrer, the Landhaus Scherrer in Hamburg, has gained three Michelin stars over a two decade-long career. The first and second stars came his way in 1996 and 1998 at the *La Table Restaurant* in Dortmund. The third star came by, after a long gap, in 2011.



The grand dinner was inspired by faraway lands of Oman...the majestic aroma of frankincense and the notions of finding oneself

THOMAS BUHNER

Known for his 'Three dimensional aromatic cuisine' wherein he focuses on three key elements in the kitchen - Natural flavour (he believes there is no authentic flavour as intense as that of the original product), Preparation (characterised by a penchant for low-temperature cooking) and Extensive Range (which represents the wide variety on his menu, composed like a symphony), Chef Thomas Buhner believes that there is much potential in Oman to explore new ingredients for fine dining cuisine. In an exclusive tete-a-tete, he shares some insights about his career and the fine dining scene worldwide:

What challenges did you face while curating the menu for this grand dinner?

The most challenging part of curating this dinner was sitting in my office and thinking about the ingredients and the fragrances and how one could combine them in a dish. I did not have a test kitchen to experiment and try it out before coming to another country (Oman) to prepare these dishes. For example, the smell of lemon in Germany is quite different from the smell of lemon on Oman. You also know nothing about the quality of fish or other ingredients. So, the last four days here were quite challenging as I tested ingredients and created the menu, especially using frankincense. It was amazing for me.

You have been a guest chef in other countries over the years - what took you so long to visit this part of the world?

Wrong, wrong wrong! I have been to Dubai 5-6 times in the past. I have seriously spoken with Anantara Jabal Akhdar to open a restaurant there, but it didn't materialise. It could be a milestone for Oman to have a German Michelin star chef come to Oman - it would be great for Oman's tourism. So, I could've been here five years before. But now, I hope to come back again to explore more opportunities.

What is your opinion about Oman?

I have seen many countries and I think Oman is a wonderful country with great potential for tourism. There is much you can do here, especially in the culinary scene, there are many opportunities waiting to be explored. The problem is, when you say Amsterdam or Paris or Tokyo, you have a picture in your mind, but if you say Oman or Muscat, you have to create your own picture. So, there is need for more awareness about this beautiful country.

Over the years, has there been a change or evolution in the preferences of fine diners worldwide?

Around 10-15 years ago, if you took a French turbot and added a big spoon of caviar, people would say 'Wow!' Nowadays, you can take a potato and make it special and it would be much more 'wow'. It's harder to make a cucumber salad, and everyone will say 'this is the best cucumber salad we've had', instead of using caviar or truffle mushroom, even if you cover it with gold.

The current trend in five star hotels and resorts is to use local produce. Does it often put you in a tight spot while preparing all-time classics?

It makes sense to use local produce when you have it, but at the end of the day, you need to give your guests what is best. International guests have high expectations and that's why five star hotels have Italian kitchens, French kitchens, so that they can give their guests what they like.

Is it okay to equate fine dining with Arabian cuisine which calls for robust portions and rugged spreads?

If you go to some countries like Lebanon, Morocco, they do have a fine dining scene there. Of course, one can explore different ways of making Arabian cuisine fine dining with larger portions; but split over four courses, it can be quite a lot of food.

Have you had any weird demands from any of your private dinner clients to prepare something unusual?

Mostly, people expect something from the Michelin star experience. But sometimes, one has to explore products that are available locally - like frankincense is local and unique. But, I can, indeed, prepare anything that crawls on the earth, flies in the air or swims in the sea.

You got your first and second Michelin star in 1996 and 1998 - why did it take so long to get the third in 2011?

Because it's not a sprint, it's a marathon, and in between I changed restaurants. When you change the restaurant you work for, it takes about 5 years to reach a point of recognition, and you do need adequate support. Three Michelin stars means you are one among around 130 in the world, unlike 200 prime ministers of different countries. You also have more Formula 1 drivers and much more people visiting the moon.

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FIFA WORLD CUP

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FINISHING DUTCH!

Netherlands in last eight after handing out a lesson in finishing to US

Doha, Qatar - A clinical Netherlands ended the United States' World Cup dream on Saturday, sweeping into the quarter-finals with a ruthless 3-1 victory.

First-half goals from Memphis Depay and Daley Blind and a late strike from Denzel Dumfries sealed a deserved victory as the Dutch handed out a painful lesson in finishing to their American opponents.

The Netherlands, bidding to win their first World Cup after losing in three previous finals, will face Argentina or Australia in the last eight.

Veteran coach Louis van Gaal's men were worthy victors in Saturday's last-16 clash at the Khalifa International Stadium.

Although the USA enjoyed long periods of possession in a bright first-half display, all too often a lack of composure in the final third let them down.

Instead, it was the Dutch who calmly bided their time before carving open the Americans with foren-



Denzel Dumfries of the Netherlands celebrates with Teun Koopmeiners after scoring against the US in their round-of-16 match on Saturday (AFP)

ROUND OF 16		
	NETHERLANDS	3
	USA	1

sic precision.

USA forward Christian Pulisic squandered a golden chance to put his team 1-0 up after only three minutes, when he found himself in space only to see a scuffed shot saved by Andries Noppert.

Buoyed by that early chance, the US remained on the front foot, attacking high up the field.

But on 10 minutes the Netherlands took the lead. Superb interplay in midfield saw the ball worked to Inter Milan's Dumfries down the right.

Dumfries picked out Depay, who swept home the finish to cap a majestic 20-pass move that was in the best traditions of the Netherlands' total footballing heritage.

Again the Americans advanced purposefully into Dutch territory through Pulisic, only for the Chelsea player to deliver a cross that fell behind his US team-mates.

Tim Weah had the best American chance of the remainder of the half on 43 minutes, letting fly with a rasping shot that Noppert parried away.

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Mbappe and Lewandowski face off as France take on Poland

Doha, Qatar - There is arguably no more thrilling player at this World Cup than Kylian Mbappe, who leads France into their last-16 clash on Sunday with a Poland side whose own hopes of pulling off a famous upset will depend to a large extent on Robert Lewandowski.

It is a sobering thought that Mbappe, not 24 until later this month, may not yet be at the peak of his powers but he has already scored seven goals in 10 appearances at the World Cup.

That tally includes one in the 2018 final when he was still a teenager as France beat Croatia in Moscow.

His mission now is to help his country become the first to retain the World Cup since Brazil, with an even younger Pele, did so in 1962.

Mbappe has already scored three times in Qatar, including a brace in a 2-1 victory against Denmark that secured qualification for the last 16, and there is a belief he is thriving as the undisputed star of Didier Deschamps' side.

The situation is different to that of Paris Saint-Germain, where he shares the limelight with Lionel Messi and Neymar, and in that sense it may be that Karim Benzema's withdrawal due to injury on



France's Kylian Mbappe (L) and Poland's Robert Lewandowski



He (Kylian Mbappe) knows that the media, fans and even his teammates will be watching everything that he does but he is beyond reproach

ANTOINE GRIEZMANN

the eve of the tournament does no harm to French hopes.

It wasn't just Mbappe - who now has as many international goals as Zinedine Zidane - that France missed as a second-string team lost 1-0 to Tunisia on Wednesday, a result that did not stop them topping their group.

He will be back along with the likes of Hugo Lloris, Antoine Griezmann and Olivier Giroud as France and Poland meet at a major tournament for the first time since the 1982 World Cup.

"Kylian is not the same player or person as in 2018," said Griezmann on Friday when asked about

Mbappe's role in a squad hit by injuries to several key players.

"He is much more a part of the squad now. He speaks a lot and has fun. He knows that the media, fans and even his teammates will be watching everything that he does but he is beyond reproach."

Poland only just scraped through their group ahead of Mexico on goal difference and Lewandowski's first World Cup goal - in the win over Saudi Arabia was therefore crucial.

"I'm aware it might be my last World Cup and I wanted to be able to say that I've played and scored at World Cups," Lewandowski said.

Stones warns against complacency in Senegal clash

Doha, Qatar - John Stones has warned England to treat Senegal with respect in Sunday's World Cup last-16 clash as Gareth Southgate's side aim to avoid becoming the latest title contender to suffer a shock defeat.

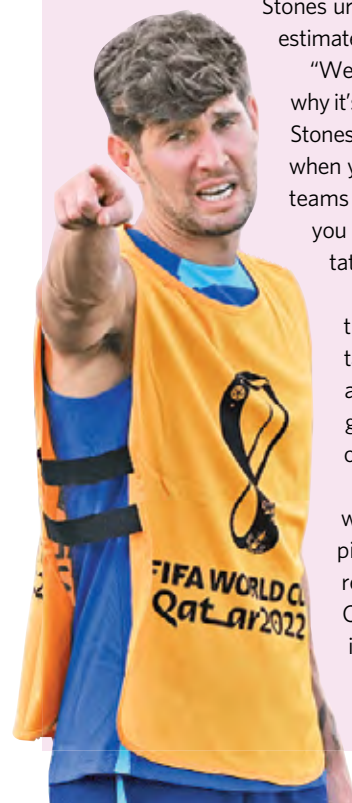
Four-time winners Germany and second-ranked Belgium were dumped out at the group stage in Qatar while Argentina, France and Spain all suffered defeats in the first round.

With England tipped to beat Senegal at the Al Bayt Stadium this weekend, Manchester City centre-back Stones urged his team-mates not to underestimate the Africa Cup of Nations holders.

"We've already seen big upsets. That's why it's the best tournament in the world," Stones said on Friday. "It's always difficult when you see big teams or big players in teams that don't have the success that you want or don't live up to the expectation of the nation."

"We don't ever want to fall into that category. You never want to take anything for granted. All we can affect is what we're doing, what games we're playing and giving it our all."

Stones is confident that England will not rest on their laurels after topping Group B with an unbeaten record. After reaching the World Cup semi-finals in 2018 and finishing as Euro 2020 runners-up, Stones believes England have the quality to lift the trophy in Doha.





Qatar2022

FIFA WORLD CUP

SWISS DELIGHT

Switzerland edge Serbia in feisty clash to reach World Cup last 16

Doha, Qatar - Switzerland booked a last-16 showdown with Portugal at the World Cup on Friday after a 3-2 win over Serbia in a bad-tempered match secured them second place in Group G.

Xherdan Shaqiri gave the Swiss an early lead but goals from Aleksandar Mitrovic and Dusan Vlahovic in a frantic first half turned the match on its head before Breel Embolo levelled just before half-time.

Remo Freuler's brilliant goal shortly after the restart proved to be the winner, sending the Swiss through to the knockout rounds for the fourth time in five World Cups.

"It was a game where a lot of emotions were involved but in general the game was fair," said Switzerland captain Granit Xhaka.

"We wanted to focus on football and win the game and we did this. Now we're in the round of 16 and we're proud."

Bad blood marred the meeting between the teams at the 2018 tournament, when Xhaka and Shaqiri celebrated goals by making pro-Kosovo gestures that enraged the Serbs.

Tempers flared in the second half in Qatar on Friday after Serbia appealed for a penalty, with the stadium announcer calling for an end to "all discriminatory chants and gestures" around 15 minutes later.

Shaqiri strikes

Shaqiri missed Switzerland's 1-0 defeat to Brazil but returned with a bang, firing his side in front on 20 minutes.

Ricardo Rodriguez speared a cross into the box which was cleared straight to Djibril Sow, who laid off for Shaqiri to sweep home via the leg of Strahinja Pavlovic in front of the Serbia fans.

Shaqiri put his finger to his lips and pointed to the name on his shirt as a handful of bottles rained down.

Serbia hit back within minutes as Switzerland lost the ball in midfield, Dusan Tadic bending in a cross for Mitrovic to meet superbly and nod into the far corner.

Shaqiri steered wide under pressure from Pavlovic after timing his run perfectly to meet Rodriguez's raking diagonal pass, but the Swiss then paid for another lapse in concentration.

They again ceded possession and Freuler watched on in dismay as his attempted interception served only to tee up Vlahovic to roll the ball beyond goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

But Switzerland equalised just before the break as Sow picked out Silvan Widmer in acres of space on the right and his driven low cross was turned in by Embolo. The Cameroon-born striker's pressure on a lumbering Pavlovic gave Switzerland their third goal right after half-time, a brilliant team effort finished by Freuler.

AFP



Switzerland's Remo Freuler (R) celebrates with team-mate Ricardo Rodriguez after scoring the winner against Serbia in their Group G match at Stadium 974 on Friday (AFP)



Brazil, who made nine changes against Cameroon including handing a start to 39-year-old Dani Alves (R), lost but they are still among the top favourites

Best still to come from favourites after shocks galore

Doha, Qatar - The World Cup in Qatar has already delivered plenty of major shocks but as it moves into the knockout phase the top contenders including Brazil and France have plenty to prove.

This is the first World Cup since the South Africa tournament in 2010 in which teams from Asia, Africa and North America have all been represented in the last 16.

Brazil remain the favourites to claim a sixth World Cup and end Europe's recent dominance on the global stage.

Tite's side surely need Neymar back from the ankle injury he suffered in the opening win over Serbia but they have a dazzling array of attacking talent beyond the world's most expensive footballer.

They are usually rock-solid defen-

sively, even though a side with nine changes to the starting line-up lost their final group game against Cameroon.

Brazil have not yet faced top opposition and will expect to cruise past South Korea on Monday, with Croatia or Japan then awaiting them in the quarter-finals.

A mouthwatering showdown with Argentina in the semi-finals remains a possibility, with Lionel Messi and his teammates recovering from their shock loss to Saudi Arabia to beat Mexico and Poland.

If Messi's team get past Australia, they could find themselves up against the Netherlands in the last eight, although the Dutch must first overcome a tough US team.

Argentina came into the World Cup unbeaten in 36 games and with

expectations high that they could win the trophy for a third time but coach Lionel Scaloni has played down their chances.

"We are not favourites," he insisted. "We are a difficult team to beat, a team that will fight, but to think that because we won (against Poland) we are going to be champions would be totally mistaken."

The other side of the draw is weighted towards Europe.

Holders France are the team to beat and in Kylian Mbappe they have the most exciting player in the competition.

Didier Deschamps' side eased through their group, even fielding an unrecognisable line-up in their final defeat by Tunisia as regulars were rested.

AFP

MOMENT IN TIME



PUSH AND SHOVE: Serbia's Nikola Milenkovic pushes Switzerland's Granit Xhaka during their Group G match at Stadium 974 in Doha

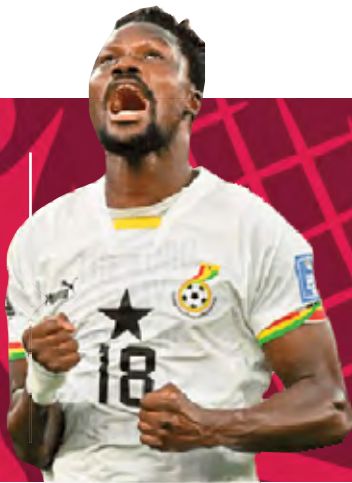
TODAY'S MATCHES



FRANCE
VS
POLAND
7 PM



ENGLAND
VS
SENEGAL
11 PM



I just told my team-mates that we need a goal now but they (Uruguay) need a goal now so we've to defend for ourselves so that if we can't go, they don't go

DANIEL AMARTEY, GHANA

SON EYES 'ANOTHER MIRACLE' AGAINST BRAZIL

Doha, Qatar - Son Heung-min wants his South Korea side to pull off "another miracle" and beat Brazil on Monday in the World Cup last 16 after their last-gasp heroics against Portugal.

The Koreans' tournament looked to be over until substitute Hwang Hee-chan popped up in injury time to score the winner in a 2-1 victory over already qualified Portugal on Friday in Qatar.

That propelled them into the knockout rounds and a daunting date with Brazil, one of the pre-tournament favourites.

But skipper Son, who has been playing in a mask following surgery last month for a fracture around his left eye, said they are not ready to go home just yet.

After what has been a tournament of surprises, the Koreans now want to pull off another one.

"This is great but our tournament is not over," Spurs attacker Son said following the emotions of the dramatic win over Portugal.

"We've always talked about reaching the round of 16 as our objective but we should now try to go beyond that," Son told Korean media in Doha.



Cameroon's Vincent Aboubakar celebrates after scoring the winner against Brazil in their Group G match on Friday (AFP)

Cameroon stun Brazil but still go out

Doha, Qatar - Vincent Aboubakar headed in a stoppage-time winner and was then sent off as Cameroon claimed a memorable 1-0 victory over favourites Brazil at the World Cup on Friday, but still failed to go through to the last 16.

Aboubakar, who had come in to captain Rigobert Song's team, connected with a cross from substitute Jerome Ngom Mbekeli to break the deadlock in the 92nd minute at Doha's Lusail Stadium.

He was booked for removing his shirt in the wild celebrations that followed and, having already been cautioned, had to leave his teammates to see out the remainder of the game.

GROUP G		
	CAMEROON	1
	BRAZIL	0

They did so to record a famous win, the first for an African side against Brazil at the World Cup, but Switzerland's 3-2 defeat of Serbia at the same time meant the Swiss advanced from Group G along with the already-qualified Brazilians.

"Despite the fact we won we are disappointed because we realise we could have done better," admitted Song. "It is a shame to stop here but we just need to see the positives and we will keep working."

Having won their first two matches in Qatar, Brazil topped the group and advance to a last-16 tie against South Korea when their many key players

who were rested for this game will return.

Coach Tite sent out a second-string side and the result was Brazil's first defeat in the group stage of a World Cup since 1998, when they were beaten by Norway.

Tite made nine changes, including handing a start to 39-year-old Dani Alves, making him Brazil's oldest ever men's international player.

"Tonight we all lost, it is a collective defeat," Tite said. "Nobody has won all group games at this World Cup and the teams who won their first two matches lost the next one. It shows how difficult these matches are."

The spine of Brazil's second-string side still featured Manchester City's Ederson in goal, Real Madrid's Eder Militao in central defence, Fabinho of Liverpool in midfield, and Gabriel Jesus of Arsenal supported by Rodrygo up front.



Uruguay's Luis Suarez is crestfallen after their Group H match against Ghana at the Al Janoub Stadium in Al Wakrah, south of Doha, on Friday (AFP)

Suarez leaves final World Cup in tears

Doha, Qatar - Luis Suarez admitted he was leaving his fourth and final World Cup feeling "sadness and disillusionment" following Uruguay's elimination on Friday despite a 2-0 win over Ghana.

Uruguay won their final Group H match in Qatar but were denied a place in the last 16 by South Korea, who beat already qualified Portugal 2-1 to join them in the knockout stages.

The Koreans qualified on goals scored.

Suarez left the field in tears while fellow veteran Edinson Cavani knocked over the VAR screen in anger as he headed back to the changing rooms.

"I feel sadness and disillusionment. I was lucky enough to play in four World Cups," Suarez, 35, told

Uruguayan TV station Teledoce.

"Before the match I was thinking about my four-year-old son who had never seen me win a World Cup match. "Today he saw me win but with an image of sadness. For a father, for a player, that's tough."

Veteran striker Suarez had been the focus of the pre-match build-up because of his infamous handball in the 2010 quarter-finals, which helped eliminate Ghana.

And after the game Ghana defender Daniel Amartey said that he wanted to make sure Uruguay also went out, but coach Otto Addo insisted he wasn't looking for revenge on Suarez for the events of 2010.

"What hurts most as that we're out, it doesn't matter who it was," said Addo.

5 BREAKOUT STARS OF THE GROUP STAGE

Doha, Qatar - Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappe grabbed plenty of the headlines as their countries sailed through the group stage of the World Cup, but many others have also risen to the occasion in Qatar.

Here are five breakout stars from the first round of the tournament.



Tyler Adams (USA)

The Leeds midfielder exuded calm both on and off the pitch as the United States booked a spot in the last 16 with a tense 1-0 win over Iran in their final match. Named captain just before the World Cup, the 23-year-old led by example at the heart of a youthful midfield - playing alongside Weston McKennie and Yunus Musah - which more than held its own against England and dominated Wales. Adams also demonstrated remarkable maturity and composure as he deftly handled being peppered with questions unrelated to football ahead of the politically charged Iran game. His performances in Qatar have reportedly caught the eye of some of Europe's biggest clubs.



Cody Gakpo (Netherlands)

The Dutch forward was the only player to score in all three group games - carrying over his red-hot form for PSV Eindhoven onto the biggest stage. Gakpo's header in the Netherlands' opening match against Senegal broke the deadlock late on in a 2-0 victory. He drilled the Dutch ahead with a fierce left-footed drive against Ecuador in a 1-1 draw and again set the Oranje on their way with another tidy finish on his right as they cantered to a 2-0 win over Qatar. "He has everything it takes to become a star," said Netherlands coach Louis Van Gaal. It is surely only a matter of time before he is prized away from his boyhood club, with Manchester United a possible destination.



Enzo Fernandez (Argentina)

Fernandez had never started a game for Argentina before the World Cup but his performances in Qatar have made him a vital part of Lionel Scaloni's side. The 21-year-old midfielder came off the bench to score a wonder strike against Mexico, then created his team's second goal after making his first start in their 2-0 win over Poland. Fernandez joined Benfica from River Plate in the summer and quickly impressed, helping his new club top their group in the Champions League. Fernandez's goal against Mexico made him Argentina's second-youngest goalscorer at the World Cup - after Lionel Messi.



Jude Bellingham (England)

Bellingham is appearing at his second international tournament after playing for England at last year's European Championship, and it is easy to forget that he is still only 19. The Borussia Dortmund player has become an integral part of Gareth Southgate's midfield in Qatar and announced himself with a well-taken goal in England's opening 6-2 win over Iran. Bellingham has racked up plenty of big-game experience with Dortmund and he looked completely at ease alongside Declan Rice as England topped Group B.



Josko Gvardiol (Croatia)

An emerging defensive star in a Croatia side in need of renewal, Gvardiol's last-ditch block on Romelu Lukaku saved the 2018 runners-up from going out to Belgium. The 20-year-old fractured his nose and suffered severe swelling around his right eye barely a week before the tournament after colliding with an RB Leipzig teammate but that hasn't affected his play. He has not only stood out as the masked man but as the bedrock of a Croatia backline breached just once so far. "He's the best defender in the world," said Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic. "Even if he's not currently number one, he will become number one."



4 in Doha on Friday (AFP)

'NO CAKEWALK'

India captain Rohit Sharma expects improved Bangladesh to pose stiff challenge in the month-long series

Dhaka, Bangladesh - India skipper Rohit Sharma said on Saturday his side's month-long tour of Bangladesh will be "no cake-walk", with several veterans returning to bolster the tourists' ranks after a lacklustre run abroad.

The three-match ODI series begins in Dhaka on Sunday, with India also playing two Tests during their month-long visit.

All-format captain Rohit, 35, is returning after being rested for last month's 50-over series in

They are playing in their own backyard so we expect them to challenge us in every bit

ROHIT SHARMA

New Zealand, which they lost 1-0.

"It's going to be an exciting series," Rohit told reporters in Dhaka.

"They are playing in their own backyard so we expect them to challenge us in every bit - batting, bowling and fielding," he said.

"So we have to be at our best."

India have a lifetime 30-5 lead over the hosts in 50-overs matches but lost their last series tour of Bangladesh 2-1 in 2015.

Rohit said Bangladesh have evolved into a "different team"



India captain Rohit Sharma (L) and his Bangladesh counterpart Liton Das pose with the tournament trophy, ahead of their first ODI in Dhaka, on Saturday (AFP)

since then and could be expected to put up a strong fight.

"They are a very challenging team and we have not had easy wins against them," he said. "By

no means do we come here thinking it's going to be a cake-walk for us."

Injuries have taken a toll on the hosts, with regular skipper

Tamim Iqbal and in-form fast bowler Taskin Ahmed both out.

Opening batsman Liton Das will make his debut as ODI captain and said he was looking for-

ward to giving India a tough battle.

"India is a good side, they have both fame and form," he told reporters.

"But we are playing good cricket against them these days. The big thing is that they don't consider us the underdog anymore."

'Best you can get'

India's big guns Virat Kohli and KL Rahul are also returning after taking time off from the New Zealand tour.

Rohit and Kohli, 34, have recently taken regular breaks to manage their workload.

"It's impossible in this day and age that you will play with your best 15, it's not going to happen," Rohit said. "You will always need to rotate and see the best you can get from your players."

With India hosting the ODI

India have both fame and form. But we are playing good cricket against them these days

LITON DAS

World Cup next year, every 50-over match will be seen as preparation for the showpiece event but Rohit said the tournament is not on their minds.

"We can't think so far ahead but we will keep an eye on where we can improve as a team and see how it comes along for us," he said.

He and coach Rahul Dravid "have a fair idea of what we need to do and we will narrow it down once we get closer to the World Cup," he said.

AFP



Pakistan captain Babar Azam prays after scoring a century on the third day of the first Test against England in Rawalpindi on Saturday (AFP)

England eye lead despite three Pakistan centurions

Rawalpindi, Pakistan - England found ways to take wickets and sensed a good lead despite hundreds from three Pakistan players on the third day of the opening Test in Rawalpindi Saturday.

Pakistan were 499-7 at stumps with Agha Salman (10) and Zahid Mahmood (yet to score) at the crease - still trailing England's mammoth 657 first innings total by 158 runs, with three wickets in hand.

On a see-saw day, Pakistan were lifted by centuries from skipper Babar Azam (136), and openers Imam-ul-Haq (121) and Abdullah Shafique (114).

But England took three wickets in the first session, none in the second and three again before the close to put themselves in a better position.

If the tourists can force a 100-plus lead and score like they did in the first innings, they can still force a win on a Rawalpindi Stadium pitch which has given little help to the bowlers.

Spinners Will Jacks (3-132) and Jack Leach (2-160) shared the early spoils, while the pace duo of James Anderson and Ollie Robinson took a wicket each.

Jacks said Azam's wicket gave England an edge.

"That wicket was almost the game-changing moment," he

It was a great day for us - seven wickets in the day - and as the match goes on, the pitch will get more turn

WILL JACKS

said.

"It was a great day for us - seven wickets in the day - and as the match goes on, the pitch will get more turn."

Saturday's final session belonged to home skipper Azam, who hit 19 boundaries and a six

for his first Test hundred against England.

He cracked a boundary towards cover off opposition skipper Ben Stokes to reach his eighth career Test century, this coming off 126 balls and studded with 13 boundaries.

Jacks forced a miscued drive off Azam to get him caught at point, and in the next over Mohammad Rizwan played straight in to the hands of mid-wicket off Anderson.

Debutant Saud Shakil, who added 123 for the fourth wicket with Azam, was caught behind off Robinson soon after the tea interval.

Haq admitted Pakistan can still come under pressure.

"There is wear and tear in the pitch, it's keeping slightly low and will definitely change on the last two days," he said.

"But we have encountered such situations before so a lot will depend on the first session tomorrow."

AFP

Pele has respiratory infection, but doing 'better': doctors

Sao Paulo, Brazil - Brazilian football legend Pele, who was hospitalized this week amid ongoing cancer treatments, has developed a respiratory infection, but is in stable condition and "showing general improvement," his doctors said Friday.

The 82-year-old icon, who has been in fragile health in recent years, was hospitalized Tuesday in Sao Paulo for what doctors said was a "reevaluation" of the chemotherapy he has been undergoing since surgery to remove a colon tumor in September 2021.

"The medical team diagnosed him with a respiratory infection, which is being treated with antibiotics," the hospital said in a statement.

"The patient's response has been adequate, and he remains in a standard room," not intensive care, it said.

"He is stable and his health is showing general improvement. (He) will remain in the hospital in the coming days to continue treatment."

Pele's public appearances have grown increasingly rare, but he maintains an active

presence on social media.

On Thursday, he took to Instagram to thank well-wishers for their messages, posting a photo from World Cup host country Qatar, where his picture was projected in lights on a skyscraper.

"It's always nice to receive positive messages like this. Thanks to Qatar for this tribute, and to everyone who sends me good vibes!" he wrote, describing his hospital stay as a routine visit.

Pele got more messages of support ahead of five-time champions Brazil's World Cup match against Cameroon Friday.

Fans at Lusail stadium held up a giant green-and-yellow banner with a picture of Pele in his iconic number 10 jersey and the message, "Get well soon." The same message was displayed on the avenue outside the stadium.

Considered by many the greatest footballer of all time, Edson Arantes do Nascimento - Pele's real name - is the only player in history to win three World Cups (1958, 1962 and 1970).



Pele



Kraigg Brathwaite (R) of the West Indies celebrates his century with team-mate Jermaine Blackwood in Perth on Saturday (AFP)

West Indies' Brathwaite hits ton after Labuschagne makes history in 1st Test

Perth, Australia - Dogged skipper Kraigg Brathwaite scored an unbeaten 101 Saturday to lead West Indies resistance as they chase 498 to win the first Test against Australia after Marnus Labuschagne joined rare company in making a double and single century.

The home side declared at lunch on day four in Perth after reaching 182-2 to go with their first innings 598-4, having bowled out the Caribbean nation for 283.

The in-form Labuschagne belted 104 not out to go with his first innings 204 - only the eighth player to achieve the 200-100 feat in the same Test, joining the likes of Sunil Gavaskar, Brian Lara and Kumar Sangakkara.

In reply, the West Indies battled to 192-3 at stumps, still 306 runs behind, with Kyle Mayers yet to score alongside Brathwaite. Tagenarine Chanderpaul (45), Shamarh Brooks (11) and Jermaine Blackwood (24) were the wickets to fall.

Brathwaite said the team believed they could hang on for a draw or even a win.

"It all starts from the first over (on Sunday). We don't want to think too far ahead, just take it over by over, session by session," he said.

"We've got to believe. It was good to get through today obviously and that first over tomorrow is very, very crucial. Australia are going to come hard and it's important that we start extremely well."

In a blow for Australia, skipper and pace spearhead Pat Cummins did not bowl after experiencing thigh soreness.

The experienced Brathwaite brought up his 5,000th Test run with a boundary off Cameron Green before completing a second successive 50 after his first innings 64.

Chanderpaul was dropped on 42 with the ball slipping out of Mitchell Starc's fingers at full stretch in the deep after he hooked Green.

But the speedster quickly made amends when he bowled the son of West Indies great Shivanine Chanderpaul to snap a dangerous 116-run stand.

AFP