

National Aviation Strategy 2040 roadmap revealed

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has unveiled its roadmap for the National Aviation Strategy 2040, aimed at boosting the aviation sector's growth and efficiency. This move is in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and seeks to address both global economic shifts and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a statement issued by Government Communication Centre (GCC), the strategy emphasises cohesion within the sector to bolster economic growth. It intends to also align with international aviation strategies while ensuring effective cooperation within the sector. Core objectives of the strategy include ensuring it remains consistent with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

One central aspect of the strategy is promoting cohesive planning to boost efficiency, qual-



ity and growth of traffic. By fostering collaboration, the strategy aims to capitalise on opportunities in the air cargo market in the

Middle East, thereby driving economic growth, GCC stated.

The plan also sets sights on optimising aviation assets and

scouting for investment opportunities in collaboration with the private sector. An overarching goal is to fortify national capabil-

ities, raising the efficiency of staff across the sector. This will pave the way for fostering partnerships and establishing a long-term roadmap for elevating the aviation sector in the sultanate.

In February, CAA initiated a tender process to bring in global expertise, seeking bids from international consultants to help shape this strategy. This 2040 blueprint follows the National Aviation Strategy 2030, introduced in February 2020.

In the 2030 strategy, the authority contemplated offering usufruct rights, allowing investors to use CAA-owned properties for aviation activities. This was thought to potentially lead to granting concessions to private entities for managing and operating local airports and related services.

A noteworthy project from the 2030 strategy was development of an airport city at Muscat International Airport.

Telecom sector attracts RO226mn investments

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has released data showing that the sector saw investments exceeding RO226.6mn in 2022.

Giving details of the data, it stated that fixed telecommunications services garnered 24.8% of the total, while mobile communications accounted for 50%. The remaining 25% was distributed among other services.

Twenty-four new postal services companies were licensed in 2022, taking the total number of approved operators in the sultanate to 48. The new firms created 144 new job opportunities.

In terms of infrastructure, Oman is rapidly advancing in 5G technology. At the end of 2022, the sultanate had 2,600 5G stations and 658,471 buildings were equipped with fibre-optic cables. Furthermore, out of 1,221 government schools that benefited from telecommunication services last year, 1,146 - or 94% - were serviced with both fibre optic and 5G networks.

Twenty-four new postal services companies were licensed in 2022, taking the total number of approved operators in the sultanate to 48

Earlier in the year, TRA announced plans to bolster the telecommunications sector, including expansion of infrastructure, improving service quality, and refinement of benchmarks for evaluating service quality and pricing. Additionally, the authority reviewed investments made over the past five years.

As part of a strategic programme, TRA aims to equip 75% of buildings in the country with fibre-optic services by 2025. The plan includes equipping 85% of buildings with fixed broadband networks and 100% stations compatible with both 4G and 5G networks.

07

French schools refuse dozens of girls wearing Muslim dress

08

Smooth transition: Charles III to mark first year as king

MTCIT begins process for alternative road to Jabal Akhdar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) is inviting bids for consultancy services for documents of design and build of an alternative route from South Batinah to Jabal Akhdar.

The new road aims to facilitate easier access to Jabal Akhdar without four-wheel drive vehicles, ultimately enhancing tourist traffic to the scenic green mountains.

MTCIT informed that the deadline for submission of bids is October 15.

Additionally, it announced that

plans are underway to lay a 32km road to Jabal Shams to improve tourism in the popular hill station.

According to the Office of Governor of Dhakhliyah, preliminary feasibility study for the project has been completed in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. 'The study has identified two

route options. Further analysis is underway to determine whether it will be implemented as an investment or development project.'

Meanwhile, MTCIT opened the Wadi al Sarmi Road in the wilayat of Khabourah, North Batinah, to vehicular traffic on Monday. Earlier a dirt road, it required

repairs necessitated by damage following adverse weather conditions.

Younis al Adawi, Project Engineer in the ministry, informed that the project included constructing a road using supporting walls and concretisation of approximately 2km, besides repairing damaged parts of the road.

LYNK&CO

03 RACING IN YOUR STYLE

- INTELLIGENT LED LIGHTS
- HARMAN INFINITY AUDIO
- INTELLIGENT ADVANCED DRIVING ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

03 RACING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

- 12.8 INCH SLIDING SCREEN
- 5.7S 0-100KM/H ACCELERATION
- CARBON FIBER SPOILERS FRONT AND REAR

MOBILITY AUTO

lynkcooman.com

@lynkcooman

Showroom: Ghala Heights, Muscat

+968-71611137

Scan to chat

Scan to know more

Omani trail runners shine in France

Endowed with breathtaking landscapes, Oman is fostering a growing community of trail runners

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani trail running champions Hamed al Harthi, Hamdan al Khatri, Mohammed al Shizawi and Issa al Abri etched their names in history as they conquered the arduous challenges of the 2023 UTMB Mont Blanc. These trailblazers embarked on a journey that needed grit and determination, and left an indelible mark on the world of trail running. Harthi, Khatri and Shizawi undertook the daunting task of conquering the UTMB Mont Blanc distance, an awe-inspiring 171km of treacherous terrain, while Abri, a force to be reckoned with, took part in the equally formidable

CCC race - a staggering 100km of relentless trails. Speaking on behalf of the group, Harthi emphasised the honour they felt in representing Oman on the global stage of the UTMB Mont Blanc. Completing the UTMB race wasn't just a personal achievement for Harthi; it was a triumphant moment for Oman's trail running community. Expressing pride in his accomplishment, Harthi stated, "Finishing the UTMB reflects the strong commitment of Oman's trail runners. This shared accomplishment underscores the resilience and dedication of our athletes on the international trail running platform." Commenting on the tough race, he added, "My UTMB journey proved incredibly demanding. I often refer to this race as 'the mother of all trail races'! The high altitude and harsh cold weather present formidable obstacles, especially given the extensive climbs involved. The final kilometres posed an immense challenge, requiring a concerted



Hamed al Harthi



Mohammed al Shizawi

focus on nutrition to persevere". Khatri faced a setback due to a recent injury prior to the race, yet his unwavering spirit stood strong. He withdrew at 11:41:51 at

Lac Combal. "My objective was to gain experience and up-skill while maintaining a steady pace without pushing beyond my limits. At a point, I had to call it off,

but the experience has been a profound learning curve and I look forward to the next challenge". The Omani athletes' determi-

nation and performances were hailed as they crossed the finish line. Harthi finished the 171km race in 46:12:01, securing a commendable 26th rank within his category. Shizawi completed the demanding course in 44:11:10. Meanwhile, Abri crossed the finish line of the CCC race with a time of 21:45:17. The journey of these athletes was accentuated by the unwavering support of the Himam Trail Run Race team, who provided crucial planning and technical assistance. Its collaboration with athletes like Ahmed al Fahdi, Ali al Balushi and Sultan al Shereiqi exemplifies the collective spirit of teamwork in propelling these trail runners to their finest potential. The 2023 UTMB Mont Blanc, the pinnacle in the world of trail running, witnessed victories for the USA's Jim Walmsley and Courtney Dauwalter, underlining the global stature of the event. Evolving into the UTMB World Series Finals this year, the event expanded beyond a mere race

into a worldwide celebration of running culture. Held from August 28 to September 3, the festival-like atmosphere captured the very essence of the endurance challenge, offering an array of races and encounters that have evolved over time, bringing together athletes from many corners of the globe. This monumental endeavour by the Omani trail running champions aligns with the surge of popularity that trail running is experiencing within Oman. The sultanate, endowed with breathtaking landscapes, is fostering a growing community of trail runners who embrace nature's challenges. The immense expanse of the Al Hajar Mountains, a majestic range that stretches over 700km across the northeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, presents an ideal playground for trail enthusiasts. As the UTMB journey culminates, the athletes turn their gaze towards the upcoming Himam Trail Run Race edition scheduled for November 23 to 25, 2023.

Recall

Recall Date: 06th September 2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
JAGUAR F-PACE	2022 – 2021	6
JAGUAR E-PACE	2021	3

Recall consequence

Clear SOTA persistency

Recall Action

JLR owners will be contacted. After inspection if required, the defective part(s) will be replaced for the concerning vehicles listed under the campaign

Contact Data

Contact us at 80062643 for more information

To check the serial numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>

Over 7mn mobile phone subscriptions in H1 2023: TRA

Muscat - Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has shared data and statistics for the second quarter of 2023, covering fixed and mobile phones, as well as fixed and mobile broadband. Oman's total mobile phone subscriptions at the end of the second quarter of 2023 exceeded 7mn, an increase of 2.61% compared to the same period of 2022, with average usage of 87.6 minutes per subscription. The total fixed phone subscriptions were over 560,000, an increase of 0.15% compared to the same period of 2022, with average usage of 23.5 minutes per subscription. Total subscriptions of mobile broadband touched the 6mn mark in the first six months of 2023, up 4.78% compared to the same period of 2022. Average usage per subscription was of 9GB. Total subscriptions of fixed broadband exceeded 540,000, an increase of 0.18%, with average usage of 531GB per subscription. Oman's total international outgoing minutes in the first half of 2023 was 188.8mn minutes, up 8.38% compared to 2022.

Our Correspondent
Salalah

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) started a survey on Tuesday the findings of which will help agriculturists engaged in the frankincense trade increase production. Oman has long been famous for its frankincense, produced by *Boswellia* trees. The frankincense trade brought prosperity

MUTTRAH FORT TO GET AN ELEVATOR

The management of Muttrah Fort has announced that the iconic structure overlooking the corniche will soon have an elevator 'so that everyone can visit the historic fort comfortably'. Doppler, a Greek company specialising in bespoke lift designs, has been contracted to provide the best option (Supplied photo)

Survey to support Omani frankincense producers

to the ancient city of Dhofar, from where ships laden with the precious commodity set sail for countries around the world. 'We would like you to participate in this survey designed for research purposes to support Omani frankincense producers,' MoCIIP said in a statement and provided a link - <https://shorturl.at/hpBFN> Meanwhile, the Environment Authority (EA) has released re-

sults of the second phase of 'Survey of Arabian Myrrh Trees in Oman. Resin of the myrrh tree has been used since ancient times for various purposes, including perfumes, incense and medicine. The resin, produced by trees of the *Commiphora* genus, is similar to frankincense. EA's survey, carried out by its Office of Conservation of Environment in Dhofar, identified the leading threats to myrrh

trees. Overgrazing emerged as the most significant challenge, accounting for 62% of the threats, followed by insect infestation - 22%, drought - 10%, and unsustainable harvesting methods - 6%. Additionally, a study conducted prior to the survey assessing the age of myrrh trees in Oman found the oldest was estimated to be around 40 years old, while the youngest was about nine months.

SEND USD WORLDWIDE FOR BUSINESS, EDUCATION, FIXED DEPOSITS & MORE

OMR 4 SERVICE FEE

SIMPLE | SECURE | SWIFT

SEND MONEY TO ANY BANK ACCOUNT IN UAE FOR CORPORATES AND INDIVIDUALS

OMR 2.5 SERVICE FEE

Five schools win national competition for reading



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Bait Al Zubair Foundation - in collaboration with the Ministry of Education - unveiled the winning entries for the third Bait Al Zubair Competition for School Reading Initiatives at an event in Muscat on Tuesday.

Launched in February, this competition lays thrust on the art of reading as a pivotal tool. Its mission is not only to imbibe love for reading but also to deploy it as a means to identify and address educational, administrative, or societal challenges.

The award ceremony, presided over by H E Dr Abdul-lah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Un-

WINNERS

- **Read to Be** initiative from Ras Madrakah School, Al Wusta, clinched the top spot with a prize of RO1,000.
- **Implementing the Nour Al-Bayan Methodology** from Hudhayfah Bin Al Yaman School, Dhahirah, was placed second to win RO700.
- **By Reading I Rise** from Kabara School, Dhahirah, secured the third position and RO600.

- **I am Skilled Reader and Author** initiative from Al Ahed School, South Batinah, was awarded RO500.
- **I Read Electronically** initiative from Al Buraimi School secured it fifth place with RO400.
- **Journey** initiative from Ma'oula bin Shams School and the **Athar** initiative by student Rahaf Al Alawi each earned a consolation prize of RO400.

dersecretary for Education, witnessed some notable moments, including a speech from Fatima al Shukri, the competition's supervisor, representing the Children's Laboratory of Bait Al Zubair.

Idris al Nabhani, assistant director of the Department of Educational Activities, also took the stage and lauded the combined efforts and stressing the role of such partnerships in aligning with Oman Vision 2040 - a pursuit of a knowledge-driven society.

Awad al Luwaihi, a member of the jury, extended gratitude to all the entrants and acknowledged the marked advancement in the strategies adopted by those behind the initiatives this year.

A visual montage detailing the competition's journey was another highlight of the ceremony.

Fatima spoke about the departure from past protocols this year. Unlike before, when regional committees in the governorates initially screened entries, all applications this year were sent directly to Bat Al Zubair. Sequential assessments culminated in a final evaluation, a day ahead of the award ceremony.

From its inception, the competition's ethos has been to uplift and champion Arabic reading initiatives. It seeks not only to recognise current efforts but also to motivate the inception of impactful initiatives in subsequent years, tapping into the latent potential of students and school staff. By doing so, it reinforces the culture of reading and cements the symbiotic relationship between schools and their local communities.



Two killed, one injured in Haima road mishap

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Two people lost their lives and another was seriously injured in a road accident in Haima, Al Wusta on Tuesday.

Road accidents have claimed several lives this year, like every year, during the khareef season when hundreds of thousands of people take the road to Dhofar from various parts of Oman and the wider Gulf.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, 581,723 visitors arrived in Dhofar via land checkpoints from June 21 to August 15.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in Al Wusta reported another accident that occurred on Sunday. Two persons were injured in that accident and were moved to Haima Hospital.

In August alone, DGHS Al Wusa reported the death of three persons and injuries of 46 people following accidents on roads leading to Dhofar.

Two people lost their lives and seven others were injured when two vehicles collided in Haima on August 12, while another died on August 22.

Despite the Royal Oman Police and Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority's elaborate arrangements every year for the safety of visitors to Dhofar during khareef, several accidents occur on road leading to the governorate. The majority of the accidents reported were due to over speeding, and in certain cases when drivers lost control owing to bad weather.

The management of Haima Hospital on Tuesday extended its thanks to the emergency department team at the hospital 'for their management of accident and emergency cases with the available resources in all professionalism and humanity during this exceptional period of the Khareef Dhofar 2023'.

MoSD to launch lab for persons with disabilities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has signed an agreement with Ominvest to launch a dedicated laboratory for developing services and programmes for persons with disabilities.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, and Waleed bin Nasser al Yarubi, Chief Risk, Strategy and Governance Officer (CRSGO) at Ominvest Group.

The ministry is keen to foster initiatives and projects that will resonate with Oman Vision 2040's strategic goals. The focus will be on enhancing the quality of services for those with disabilities. They include health, education, and employment, as well as the essential foundations like modern technology, human resources, and relevant laws.

"This initiative showcases the vital partnership between the ministry and the private sector," said H E Dr Laila, noting that "establishing such laboratories will amplify our collective efforts in the disability sector".



"We anticipate that the lab will usher in opportunities that fortify the sector's structure and amplify early intervention, empowerment, and integration for persons with disabilities across various societal facets," she added.

Abdulaziz al Balushi, CEO of Ominvest Group, stressed that their commitment to the Omani community aligns with the principles of Oman Vision 2040. "Our collaboration with the ministry is centred around enriching the lives of this essential segment of our society, ensuring they receive the necessary health, educational, and overall well-being services.

"The lab will critically assess current scenarios, paving the way for impactful initiatives and programmes that bolster sector-wide services, especially in terms of legislation and regulations."

COOL SUMMER SPECIALS

50% ONLY

HOT & COLD DISPENSER

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 30 REFILL COUPONS

20% ONLY

WHITE TAP DISPENSER OR TAP DISPENSER OR MANUAL WATER PUMP OR CRADLE WITH TAP

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 15 REFILL COUPONS

Offer valid from 1st August to 31st October 2023.

CALL TOLL-FREE 800 71 222 or GSM: 9275 5522

SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR

Birthday/Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

Tender Announcement

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

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Type of work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
10/2023/PEIE/HQ-10	Design And Build For The Interior Partitions, Decoration, Furniture And Associated Mep & Fit Out Works For Almazunah Free Zone Administration Area At Facility Building In Al Mazunah Free Zone	17-09-2023	05-10-2023	Construction and Maintenance	Excellent, First, Second	50

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

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

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

madayn.om @madaynoman

عالي البروتين و قليل السكر

GRENADE®

Distributed by

Please contact +968 22060236/237

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,727.22
Sensex	65,780.26

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian	215.69
Pakistan	799.47
Bangladesh	285.24
Philippines	148.29
Sri Lanka	839.50

*Rates as on September 05
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Russia to extend oil export cuts to end of 2023

Moscow, Russia – Russia will extend its oil export cuts of 300,000 barrels per day until the end of 2023 to "maintain stability" on markets, Moscow's top energy official said Tuesday.

The decision came as Saudi Arabia, part of the OPEC+ alliance of oil producers, announced it was extending a voluntary production cut of one million barrels per day.

"Russia will extend an additional voluntary reduction in oil supplies to world markets by 300,000 barrels per day until the end of December 2023," Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.

He said that Moscow would review the cuts on a monthly basis to consider whether they should be deepened or whether production should be increased "depending on the global market situation".

Moscow relies heavily on energy revenues and uses the price of oil to determine its budget, which has tilted towards military spending since the start of its offensive in Ukraine.

GCC central bank chiefs hold meeting in Salalah



Our Correspondent
Muscat

As Oman currently holds the presidency of the GCC Committee of Central Bank Governors, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) hosted the 81st meeting of GCC central bank governors in Salalah on Tuesday.

The meeting was chaired by H H Sayyid Taimour bin Asa'ad al Said, chairman of the board of governors of the CBO, with the participation of governors from the GCC central banks and the GCC Secretary-General.

During the meeting, a range of topics related to monetary and financial developments in the GCC states were discussed. The meeting also addressed issues related to the supervision and surveillance of the banking sector, payment systems, fintech in the GCC banking sector, and

GCC Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC).

Central banks in many countries are looking to develop digital currencies amid the growing popularity and acceptance of digital assets and cryptocurrencies.

The CBO is actively monitoring developments in various emerging areas and has established task forces dedicated to studying Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and other digital innovations, as stated in

tral Bank Governors also addressed issues related to the latest developments within the framework of anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism, cybersecurity in the banking sector, and common topics between the GCC Afaq Payment System and the Arab Regional Payment System (Buna).

Moreover, the committee reviewed the GCC Secretariat's general report on the implementation of its decisions at the previous meetings.

The committee was also briefed on updates regarding the progress of the signature and ratification of the agreement on linking GCC payment systems and other monetary and banking issues, in addition to the topics listed in the committee's agenda, on which appropriate decisions were taken.

its recently released Financial Stability Report.

'This proactive approach allows the CBO to equip itself with the expertise required to navigate the evolving landscape of digital finance and stay prepared to take appropriate action when necessary,' the CBO said.

The GCC Committee of Cen-

GCC central bank governors discussed central bank digital currency, fintech, payment systems, and monetary and financial development in the region



Saudi extends 1mn bpd oil output cut through December

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia announced on Tuesday it would extend a voluntary oil production cut of one million barrels per day until the end of the year, continuing its campaign to bolster prices.

The cut which first took effect in July will continue "for another three months until the end of December 2023", the energy ministry said in a statement.

Riyadh first announced the cut after a June meeting of the 23-nation OPEC+ alliance, which also includes Russia.

A statement in early August revealing that the cut would last through September included a warning that it could be "deepened", but Tuesday's announcement has kept it at the same level for now.

That decision "will be reviewed monthly to consider deepening the cut or increasing production", the energy ministry statement said.

The unilateral Saudi cut followed a decision in April by several OPEC+ members to slash production voluntarily by more than one million bpd -- a surprise

move that briefly buttressed prices but failed to bring about lasting recovery.

Last October, OPEC+ agreed to reduce output by two million barrels per day.

Oil prices increased in July, the first month the Saudi-only cut took effect, clearing the \$80 per barrel threshold analysts often say Riyadh needs to balance its budget, though the various production cuts could push that threshold higher.

"The additional cuts do appear to have boosted prices and the supply is looking tight in Q4 despite rising output from Iran and some other countries," said Justin Alexander, director of the consultancy Khalij Economics.

"However, the effort has come at a cost to the kingdom, with the reduction of its supply by 10% (on top of the 10% in cuts coming from the October and April OPEC+ meetings)." Daily production by the world's biggest crude exporter is approximately nine million bpd, far below its reported daily capacity of 12mn bpd.

AFF

GCC countries set for next phase of ICV

Dubai, UAE – GCC countries are set for a crucial 12 months in progressing their In-Country Value (ICV) programmes as the public and private sectors join together in increasing diversification away from oil and gas.

The ICV programmes were initially created to increase workplace nationalisation – ensuring that investment was channelled into the development of a country's own talent pool and resources.

Over time, they have evolved into total value programmes that encompass a wide range of factors to improve economic efficiency and diversity, while also being key engines to driving social development. Today, comprehensive programmes encompass strategic initiatives, such as developing local supplier capabilities, establishing



strategic supply chain partnerships with international OEMs, attracting local and foreign investments, together with developing a future proof-workforce through training and internship programmes.

Over the past 10 to 15 years, the GCC has been instrumental in highlighting the advantages offered by ICV and how the

Without question, ICV programmes in GCC have been successful in creating opportunities for new businesses and careers for nationals. The next phase is to evolve ICV policies that are a benchmark globally

DAVID MOONEY

need to increase efficiency and local value creation in their post-oil economic future will be crucial in the near, medium, and longer terms.

This is why now is a pivotal time for GCC countries when it comes to progressing their In-Country Value programmes.

Efficio – a global leader in ICV, procurement, and supply chain management – has worked for more than a decade to help establish ICV-related policies and holistic ICV devel-



National Gas opens second branch in Saudi Arabia

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In line with its expansion plans in Saudi Arabia, Oman's National Gas Company (NGC) has announced the opening of its second branch in the kingdom, located in Riyadh.

'We are delighted to announce that National Gas is taking significant steps to strengthen its presence in Saudi Arabia. As part of our expansion strategy and commitment to supporting the 2030 Saudi Vision, we are excited to open our second branch in Saudi Arabia, located in Riyadh,' National Gas stated in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Tuesday.

NGC Energy Saudi Company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of National Gas and is recognised as a premier energy company specialising in integrated gas and fuel network, LPG/SNG/fuel system projects, maintenance of gas and fuel networks, gas and fuel equipment supply, design, consultancy, and support services.

To better align with the evolving landscape and to be closer to key decision-makers in the region's growth, National Gas has also decided to relocate its Saudi head-office from Dammam to Riyadh, as the company disclosed.

'This strategic move will enable us to establish a more direct and effective presence in the heart of the kingdom,' the company added.

National Gas additionally announced its plans to establish three branches in Saudi Arabia, covering Dammam, Riyadh, and Jeddah.

'These branches will serve as essential hubs to meet the growing demands and align with Saudi Arabia's ambitious Vision 2030,' the company stated.

'We believe that this expansion will not only enhance our market position in Saudi Arabia but also contribute to our overall growth and profitability. We look forward to sharing more details about our expansion in Saudi Arabia,' National Gas added.

Huawei opens new cloud data center in Saudi Arabia

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – The Chinese tech giant Huawei announced on Monday the opening of a cloud data center in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, as part of its efforts to expand its online service offerings in the Middle East.

Huawei said in a statement that the new center will become a core data center for Huawei Cloud Services in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa, "offering innovative, reliable, secure, and sustainable cloud services."

The new data center in Riyadh will provide a range of cloud services, including infrastructure, databases, big data, and artificial intelligence, etc., the statement



said. Praising Huawei as "a proud partner" of Saudi Arabia in its technological progress, Haitham

bin Abdul Rahman al-Ohali, Saudi Vice Minister of Communications and Information Tech-

enterprises and universities in various collective efforts towards digital transformation.

"We look forward to the transformative impact the new data center will have on our digital ecosystem, creating new avenues for innovation and growth," he added.

Steven Yi, senior vice president of Huawei and president of Huawei Middle East and Central Asia Region, lauded the business environment in Saudi Arabia. "Create an inviting environment, and you'll attract the best. This is undeniably true for Saudi Arabia, a nation that consistently attracts top investors," said Yi.

Xinhua

UAE announces \$4.5bn clean energy investments in Africa

Nairobi, Kenya – The United Arab Emirates announced Tuesday \$4.5bn in clean energy investments in Africa during a landmark climate summit hosted by Kenya that is aimed at attracting funding for efforts to combat global warming.

"We will deploy \$4.5bn... to jumpstart a pipeline of bankable clean energy projects in this very important continent," said Sultan al Jaber, who heads the government-owned renewable energy firm Masdar, the UAE's national oil company ADNOC and the COP28 climate talks.

Heads of state, and government and industry leaders, are among thousands of attendees at the Nairobi summit where Africa is promoting its potential as a clean energy powerhouse.

The Africa Climate Summit will be followed by the COP28 summit later this year in Dubai, which is expected to feature competing agendas for the world's energy future.

"If Africa loses, we all lose," warned Jaber, who is also the UAE's minister for industry and advanced technology.

He said the investment aimed "to develop 15GW (gigawatts) of clean power by 2030" and "catalyse at least an additional \$12.5bn from multilateral, public and private sources".

As of 2022, the continent's renewable generation capacity



COP28 President Sultan al Jaber (left) and United Nations head Antonio Guterres (right) deliver their remarks during the Africa Climate Summit 2023 at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC) in Nairobi on Tuesday (AFP)



was 56 gigawatts, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency.

The three-day event in Nairobi, which began Monday, is billed as bringing together African leaders to define a shared vision for green development on the diverse continent of 1.4bn people.

On Tuesday, the summit offered proposals to reform global financial structures that have re-

sulted in only a tiny fraction of investments in climate solutions being directed towards Africa.

Jaber called for a "surgical intervention of the global financial architecture that was built for a different era", urging institutions to lower debt burdens.

Countries in Africa are hamstrung by mounting debt costs and a dearth of finance, and despite an abundance of natural resources just three percent of

energy investments worldwide are made in the continent.

The three-day Nairobi summit, which began Monday, has attracted heads of state, government and industry, including leaders from Mozambique and Tanzania, as well as United Nations head Antonio Guterres, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and US climate envoy John Kerry.

It is billed as bringing together African leaders to define a

shared vision for green development on the diverse continent of 1.4bn and set the tone for a flurry of international diplomacy leading up to the COP28 meeting.

A front-page headline in the Kenyan newspaper Daily Nation on Tuesday proclaimed the summit marked "Africa's moment".

But the continent faces steep challenges, particularly in the form of mounting debt costs and a dearth of finance.

Africa Climate Summit offered proposals to reform global financial structures that have resulted in only a tiny fraction of investments in climate solutions being directed towards Africa

Despite an abundance of natural resources, just three per cent of energy investments worldwide are made in the continent.

Guterres urged the international community to help "make Africa a renewable energy superpower".

"Renewable energy could be the African miracle but we must make it happen," Guterres told government and industry leaders. With the world falling far short of its global goals to limit warming, Guterres spoke directly to G20 nations, whose leaders are meeting in India at the weekend, and told them to "assume your responsibilities" in the battle to reduce planet-warming emissions.

AFP

US Fed official signals support for September rate pause

Washington, US – A senior US Federal Reserve official said Tuesday that the US central bank can afford to sit tight for now, while not ruling out another rate hike down the line to tackle inflation.

The Fed has raised interest rates 11 times since March last year to control runaway inflation, raising its key lending rate in July to its highest level for 22 years.

But despite making significant progress, inflation remains above the Fed's long-term target of two percent.

Meanwhile, the US jobs market has shown growing signs of softening in recent months, a key precondition for the Fed to contemplate an end to its cycle of monetary tightening.

"That was a helluva good week of data we got last week, and the key thing out of it is it's going to allow us to proceed carefully," Fed governor Christopher Waller said in an interview with CNBC, referring in part to last week's jobs data.

"There's nothing that is saying we need to do anything imminent any time soon, so we can just sit there, wait for the data, see if things continue," he added.

Waller's comments follow a similarly cautious view to Fed Chair Jerome Powell, who told the Jackson Hole economic symposium in Wyoming at the end of August that the Fed would proceed "carefully" from now on.

AFP

Russia tops world grain exporters

Paris, France – Russia dominates the grain export market, with only a dozen nations supplying the world market with the key commodity to produce the most basic of staples for much of the world: bread.

From the temperate climates in Mesopotamia where it was first cultivated thousands of years ago, wheat has become an essential part of the diet of most of humanity.

"Wheat, everyone in the world eats it, but not everyone can grow it," French economist Bruno Parmentier, author of the book "Feeding Humanity", said last year.

That fact, along with swings in production levels due to natural or man-made factors, has sometimes put wheat at the centre of conflicts.

The International Grain Council (IGC), which brings together the major wheat producing and importing nations, expects global wheat production to reach 784mn tonnes in the 2023-2024 season – a drop of 2.4% from the previous season.

Only a dozen countries produce enough wheat to export.

China is by far the largest producer, producing 138mn tonnes in 2022-2023. But it still imports over 10mn tonnes per year to feed its population of 1.4bn and



Farmers harvest wheat in the settlement of Nedvigovka in the southern Russian Rostov region on July 18, 2023

maintain a large reserve.

India is another large wheat producer. It had begun to export surplus production in recent years, but last year the government-imposed restrictions after drought. Russia, the United States, Australia and France are the other major producers.

Russia dominates

After a record harvest of 92 to 100mn tonnes in 2022-2023,

depending on the sources, Russia is heading for its second-best harvest ever at around 90mn tonnes, according to Sebastien Poncelet, a specialist at Agritel.

It was the top exporter in 2022-2023 at 46mn tonnes according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), and could account for a quarter of the global wheat trade this year.

Following Russia the major exporters are Canada, Australia

and the United States – whose exports are expected to fall under 20mn tonnes to their lowest level in half a century.

Next is France and Ukraine, which had been the third-largest exporter before the Russian invasion and is set to export 10mn tonnes according to the USDA.

According to Sebastien Abis, an associate researcher at the French Institute of International and Strategic Relations think

tank, Turkey has been the biggest buyer of Russian wheat since 2018, followed by Egypt.

Those two countries accounted for 40% of Russian wheat exporters.

Iran and Syria are also big buyers of Russian wheat.

But Abis noted that Russian wheat is finding more and more buyers, including in western Europe, northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the African Institute for Security Studies, Africa's trade with Russia totalled \$14bn in 2020. That compared with \$65bn with the United States, \$254bn with China and \$295bn with the European Union. The trade was dominated by energy and weapons, but agricultural goods is increasing its share, with wheat leading the way.

Wheat is not a staple in most of Africa, but it is an important source of calories in many countries, in particular in urban centres, where a bread shortage can quickly spark riots. The volumes, while not enormous, are not insignificant.

At 3.9mn tonnes in 2022-2023, Russian wheat accounted for around 20 percent of wheat imported into sub-Saharan Africa, but that was a drop from 4.5mn tonnes in 2021-2022.

AFP

Elon Musk may sue anti-defamation group for revenue

New York, US – Elon Musk, the owner of social media platform X, formerly Twitter, said the site is considering suing the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) over accusations of anti-Semitism, which he blames for falling revenue.

Musk late Monday accused the US-based Jewish organization of making unfounded complaints against him and X that have scared away advertisers.

"To clear our platform's name on the matter of anti-Semitism, it looks like we have no choice but to file a defamation lawsuit against the Anti-Defamation League... oh the irony!" Musk wrote on X on Monday.

"Based on what we've heard from advertisers, ADL seems to be responsible for most of our revenue loss," he wrote, adding that the group "would potentially be on the hook for destroying half the value of the company, so roughly \$22bn."

"Advertisers avoid controversy, so all that is needed for ADL to crush our US & European ad revenue is to make unfounded accusations," he wrote in a long thread that started with a clarifi-



Elon Musk

cation that he favors free speech but is "against anti-Semitism of any kind."

Musk, who bought Twitter last year and rebranded it as X, has recently come under fire for liking posts with the hashtag "BanTheADL," which was trending last week. The ADL has for years accused the social media site of amplifying anti-Semitic hate speech.

In a 2016 report, the group said anti-Semitic attacks against journalists had exploded on Twitter, "thanks to the rhetoric in the 2016 presidential campaign." It accused the social network of failing to control its "trolling problem."

AFP

Chipmaker ARM aims for \$52bn valuation in New York listing

New York, US – British chip maker Arm, owned by Japan's SoftBank, will target a valuation of up to \$52bn when it lists on the New York Stock Exchange later this month, the company said Tuesday.

The company is looking to raise between \$4.5 and \$5.2bn in its initial public offering (IPO), it announced in a filing, which would make it one of the largest

tech IPOs in recent years.

Arm is a world leader in designing chips that are used in smartphones across the world and aims to be a major player in artificial intelligence.

Arm's IPO comes on the heels of a surge in the share price of chipmakers like Nvidia amid a boom in interest in companies building the hardware needed for AI to flourish in the

wake of the successful launch of the chatbot ChatGPT.

Rare tech IPO

Arm's IPO is being closely watched by the financial markets, with large tech IPOs something of a rarity in recent months, as rising interest rates have pushed traders to take less risky financial decisions.

In 2022, the number of IPOs

worldwide fell by more than 60% year-on-year, while the value of these deals dropped by 45%.

Under these conditions, Arm's deal would be one of the largest IPOs in the tech sector since Alibaba's Wall Street IPO in 2014, which raised \$25bn at the time.

The valuation target announced by Arm on Tuesday is

much lower than SoftBank's earlier estimate of more than \$60bn.

However, it is still considerably more than the approximately \$32 billion Softbank paid for Arm back in 2016.

The document filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission said more than 95mn shares would initially be offered on the Nasdaq exchange

at a price of between \$47 and \$51 per share.

The number of shares listed could rise up to 102.5mn in case of strong demand.

All of the shares being sold are existing shares owned by Softbank, and all of the money from the IPO would go to the Japanese company.

Softbank will continue to own around 90 percent of the com-

pany after the listing.

Tech giants including Nvidia, Apple, Samsung Electronics and Intel are interested in investing in Arm once the company is listed, according to numerous press reports. Arm will remain headquartered in the British city of Cambridge, and may consider a second listing on the London Stock Exchange.

AFP

Bank Muscat announces winners of Green Sports

Green Sports Programme, one of Bank Muscat's leading Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, continues to record positive achievements in supporting the sports and youth sector.

Bank Muscat announced the names of the 20 winning teams for this year's 12th edition of Green Sports.

Since its inception in 2012, the programme has so far benefitted 183 teams with over 50,000 members across the Sultanate of Oman. This year too, the winning teams will benefit from the bank's support in providing natural as well as artificial turf for football pitches, lighting systems and water desalination equipment.

Twenty winners from different governorates will benefit from the bank's flagship CSR programme this year. The winners include: Suwaiq Sports Team from Suwaiq, Al Marsa Sports and Cultural Team from Sohar, al Tawun Sports and Cultural Team from Saham, Al Tadamon Sports and Cultural Team from Jalan Bani Bu Hassan, Al Wahra Sports and Cultural Team from Ibri, Al Shubaika Sports and Cultural Team from Al Rustaq, Al Falaj Sports and Cultural Team from Al Khaboora, Al Samoud Sports and Cultural Team from Bidiya, Itihad Imti Sports and Cultural Team from Izki, Al-Baz Sports Team



from Samail, Al Hazm Sports Team from Bahla, Blida Sports and Cultural Team from Shinas and Al Shati Sports Team from Al Musanaah for Lighting System. In addition, Al Itihad algharbi Sports team from Jalan Bani Bu Ali, Al Sadd Cultural and Sports Team from Wadi Bani Khalid, Al Ettifaq Sports Team from Quriyat, Wadi Al-Tayyeen Sports and Cultural Team from Dema w al taean, Al Raheeb

Sports Team from Sur, Kamazar Sport Team from Khasab and Hayy Sports Team from Mahoot who shall receive support for artificial or natural turf.

On this occasion, Talib Saif al Makhmari, manager, Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said, "Since its inception, Green Sports programme contributed immensely to the development of sports facilities for a number of local sports teams across Oman,

thereby contributing to the spread of green spaces in these governorates.

"Bank Muscat is keen to continue developing such programmes to further enhance the positive results achieved especially to the younger generation. I would like to congratulate all the winners for this year's edition and we wish them all the best."

The programme annually records excellent participation by



Green Sports programme contributed immensely to the development of sports facilities across Oman

TALIB SAIF AL MAKHMARI

sports teams from across Oman.

This year, the bank said, 124 teams competed for the programme, 'thereby asserting its success and popularity among Omani youth'. The bank ensures to strengthen cooperation and partnership with local sports teams through this leading programme and to work closely with the teams throughout the different stages of the project.

The Green Sports programme reaffirms the bank's commitment to providing ample opportunities for young Omanis to develop their talents.



Luxury meets performance in Mazda CX-9

Mazda CX-9, a 7-seater SUV meticulously crafted to elevate one's journey, has set a new benchmark by combining Japanese luxury with turbo-charged performance.

At its core lies Mazda's Kodo design philosophy, reflecting an athletic stance and elongated hood that exude strength and energy, Towell Auto Centre (TAC) said, raising interest with its statement - Prepare to be captivated by a drive that is both powerful and alluring.

With predictive i-Activ all-wheel drive, this exceptional vehicle bid farewell to uncertainties. This intelligent system continuously monitors conditions, adapting power distribution for seamless traction and stability.

Also, safety takes precedence with i-Activsense vehicle safety innovations. Equipped with features like Advanced Smart City Brake Support, Blind Spot Monitoring, and more, the CX-9 keeps you protected and aware at all times. Mazda Proactive Safety stands guard. Smart City Brake Support, Mazda Radar Cruise Control, Lane Departure Warning System, and more work seamlessly to keep one protected and in control, no matter the circumstances.

This SUV is now connected to the road like never before with G-Vectoring Control Plus and i-Activ AWD. Paired with the responsive Skyactiv-G 2.5 Turbo engine, the Mazda CX-

9 offers an exhilarating driving experience that ignites one's passion for the open road.

The 10.25-inch full-colour display keeps occupants stay connected, access directions, music, contacts, and compatible apps with ease. Apple CarPlay integration ensures smartphone experience seamlessly integrating with one's journey.

While calling people to experience the artistry of Japanese craftsmanship within, TAC noted that premium materials and meticulous attention to detail created a relaxing and inviting space, catering to all age groups. 'A journey of comfort and enchantment for everyone,' it added.

Mazda CX-9's captivating exterior showcases Titanium Gray Metallic front grill and brilliant Silver finish alloy wheels that exude elegance and sophistication.

'More than an SUV, it's a statement of luxury and performance. Elevate your driving experience and embark on unforgettable journeys. Visit your nearest Mazda showroom today and ignite your passion for driving', TAC stated.

Towell Auto is a trusted name in customer service in Oman. It has been in the automobile business since 1972 and is a group company of the W J Towell Group. TAC ensures the easy availability of high-quality motor products and the highest standard of service to its customers.

Ministry holds 'preparatory meeting' for new teachers

The Ministry of Education (MoE) on Tuesday held a preparatory meeting to implement the second phase of the induction programme for new teachers for the academic year 2023-24.

The ministry, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision - Human Sciences Supervision Department, convened the meeting for the 20 general supervisors and heads of supervision units at



MoE's General Diwan.

Headed by Dr Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Ramahi, Chairman of the Committee for Managing and Implementing the Induction Programme for New Teachers for the academic year 2023-24, the meeting discussed what was accomplished in the first phase of implementing the programme, and the mechanism for implementing the plan for the second phase. The second phase has

been planned to be implemented this month online on the Teams platform. The meeting reviewed the timeline for the implementation, by setting one day for each subject separately, while presenting topics that the new teachers need in their specialisation.

The induction programme for the new teachers was held to ignite positive attitude in the new recruits towards the teaching profession.



Ten Omani students to participate in Huawei's Seeds for the Future

Huawei - a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices - on Sunday announced the launch of this year's prestigious Seeds for the Future programme for university students across the Middle East and Central Asia.

Ten students from Oman are set to participate in this year's edition of Seeds for the Future. The participating students hail from Oman College of Management and Technology, Majan College, University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) Sohar, Sohar University, University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) Muscat, National University for Science and Technology, and Global College

of Engineering and Technology.

Huawei kicked off the first phase of the programme at an official ceremony at the Qatar National Convention Centre, Doha, Qatar - bringing together 175 students from the Middle East and Central Asia (ME & CA) for the first time ever in Qatar.

The regional event aims to develop local talent, share knowledge, increase ICT sector awareness, and foster a digital community for young ICT talents.

The 2023 edition of the competition will witness the participation of students from elite universities representing 15 countries in the region, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Oman, Uzbekistan, Jordan,

Lebanon, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, and Kyrgyzstan.

"Huawei is committed to nurturing an open, shared ICT talent ecosystem across the Middle East and Central Asia, including Oman," said Shunli Wang, vice president of Huawei Middle East and Central Asia. "The Seeds for the Future is our flagship global CSR programme that aims to inspire talent to shape the future of their respective countries. We are honoured for the unwavering support and endorsement the program continues to receive in its sixth year now. We extend our best wishes to the 2023 regional participants and look forward to an exciting edition."

Jawad Abbassi, head of GSMA, MENA, commented:

"Advanced technologies like AI, 5G, and cloud are revolutionizing how we live, learn, and work. Digital transformation across the MENA is accelerating at an unparalleled pace, and it's crucial that we narrow the ICT talent gap and arm students with 21st-century skills. Enabling students to upskill their tech knowledge while gaining crucial soft skills is of paramount importance."

Huawei's Seeds for the Future programme is the company's flagship CSR programme that aims to develop ICT talents globally. With an ever-increasing emphasis on innovation and technological advancements, this competition offers a unique platform for young minds to exchange ideas.

National Museum documents greatness of Omani navigator

The National Museum of Oman issued a special edition titled *Collection in the Science of the Sea* documenting the origin of the manuscript *Kitab al-Fawa'id fi 'Ilm al-Bahr wa al-Qawa'id*, which recorded the greatness of what Omani navigator Ahmed bin Majid as Saady wrote.

Rooting for Ahmed bin Majid as Saady's marine prowess and navigational creativity, the new *Collection in the Science of the Seas* completed documentation of manuscript loaned by Syria's al-Assad National Library to the National Museum in 2019.

The manuscript was loaned after the efforts made by the work team at the National Museum in cooperation with the National Records and Archives Authority, and with the support of the development institution of the Oman LNG Company, a release stated.

Addressing the gather on the occasion of the release of the publication, Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, said, "The display of the original manuscript *Collection in the Science of the Seas* by the author Ahmed bin Majid as Saady at the National Museum is an affirmation of the Omaniness of this unique scien-



tific and historical personality, which came in the context of the existing cooperation between the National Museum and the Ministry of Culture of the Syrian Arab Republic in the context of cultural diplomacy pursued by the National Museum."

"The manuscript had been loaned to the museum for a period of three years for the purpose of preserving before it was made available for museum display. Coordination was also made with the National Documents and Archives Authority in order to restore this document to its original condition, through the

implementation of an integrated programme for preservation, and revision," he added.

The new collection has been made from the preserved manuscripts of Ahmed bin Majid as Saady spread across the world, the oldest of which has been found preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Dr Hamad bin Muhammad al Duwayni, Chairman of the National Documents and Archives Authority, praised the "brothers in the Syrian Arab Republic" for promoting cultural, documentary and museum cooperation.

UN warns Israel that expelling Eritreans en masse unlawful

Geneva, Switzerland - The UN urged Israel on Tuesday to refrain from mass deportations of Eritreans following weekend clashes involving asylum seekers, warning it would 'contravene international law' and could have dire human consequences.

The United Nations refugee agency said it was 'deeply concerned' by the clashes that erupted on Saturday when a demonstration against an Eritrean government event turned violent, injuring over 200 people.

The clashes began when hundreds of anti-government Eritreans came to prevent the event from taking place in Tel Aviv, the commercial centre of Israel.

"UNHCR calls for calm and restraint, and on all parties to refrain from taking any steps that could aggravate the situation further," William Spindler told reporters in Geneva. While stressing that it was 'important to establish accountability' for the events, he warned Israel against taking broad measures against Eritreans in the country.

"Any decision impacting all Eritrean asylum-seekers, or instances of refoulement would contravene international law," he said.

Collective punishment is banned under international law, as is refoulment, or returning someone to a country where



Members of Israel's security forces detain Eritrean asylum-seekers in Tel Aviv on Saturday (AFP)

they could face torture, cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. His comments came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the country was considering deporting 1,000 Eritreans who took part in the clashes.

Stressing that the situation in Eritrea, considered one of the world's most authoritarian states, 'remains unchanged', Spindler warned that sending people back there 'could result in dramatic human consequences'.

He insisted that 'the vast majority of asylum-seekers living in Israel are peaceful and law-abiding'. "The incidents on September 2 are deeply regrettable, and

do not reflect the behaviour of the broader Eritrean community in Israel."

According to June statistics, there are 17,850 Eritrean asylum seekers in Israel.

UNHCR said more than 170 asylum-seekers and dozens of police officers were injured in Saturday's clashes.

The UN rights office meanwhile decried the use of force by law enforcement. "We understand that hospitals are reporting that there are people who suffered gunshot wounds, ... so live ammunition was used," rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters.

AFP

Swedish diplomat with EU held in Iran, says Borrell

Cadiz, Spain - The European Union's top diplomat confirmed on Tuesday that Johan Floderus, a Swedish diplomat working for the EU, has been held captive in Iran for more than 500 days.

Arriving at a meeting on development in the Spanish city of Cadiz, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters that Brussels was pushing 'relentlessly' for the 33-year-old's release.

On Monday, Sweden partially confirmed a *New York Times* report on the detention, announcing that a Swedish citizen in his thirties had been held in Iran since April 2022.

But Borrell went further, confirming the prisoner's name and that he works for the EU diplomatic corps.

"I want to say something about, if you allow me, a specific case, the case of Mr Floderus. He's a Swedish citizen who worked for the European Union and has been detained illegally in Iran for the last 500 days," Borrell said.

"I want to stress that I personally, all my team at all levels - European institutions in close coordination with the Swedish authorities, which

have the first responsibility of consular protection - and with his family, have been pushing the Iranian authorities to release him.

"Every time we had diplomatic meetings, at all levels, we have put the issue on the table. Relentlessly.

"We have been working for the freedom of Mr Floderus and we will continue doing that in close contact with the family, respecting their will, and for sure with the Swedish government," he said.

"This is very much in our agenda, in our heart and we will not stop until Floderus will be free."

Iran announced in July last year it had arrested a man on suspicion of espionage, two weeks after an Iranian citizen received a life jail term in Sweden for his role in the Iranian regime's 1988 mass executions of thousands of opponents. A Stockholm court found former Iranian prison head Hamid Noury guilty of 'aggravated crimes against international law' and 'murder'.

Several capitals have accused Iran of practising 'hostage diplomacy'.

AFP

French schools refuse dozens of girls wearing Muslim dress

Paris, France - French schools sent dozens of girls home for refusing to remove their abayas - an over-garment from the shoulders to the feet worn by Muslim women - on the first day of the school year, a government minister said on Tuesday.

Defying a ban on the Muslim dress, nearly 300 girls showed up on Monday morning wearing an abaya, Gabriel Attal told the BFM broadcaster.

Most agreed to change out of the dress, but 67 refused and were sent home, he said.

The government announced last month it was banning the abaya in schools, saying it broke the rules on secularism in education that have already seen Muslim headscarves banned on the grounds they constitute a display of religious affiliation. The move gladdened the political right but the hard-left argued it represented an affront to civil liberties.

Attal said the girls refused entry were given a letter addressed to their families saying that 'secularism is not a constraint, it is a liberty'. If they showed up at school again wearing the dress there would be a 'new dialogue', the minister said.

Late on Monday, President Emmanuel Macron defended the



Students gather in the schoolyard of a Lyon high school on the first day of the academic year, on Monday (AFP)

controversial measure, saying there was a 'minority' in France who 'hijack a religion and challenge the republic and secularism', leading to the 'worst consequences' such as the murder three years ago of teacher Samuel Paty for showing Mo-

hamed caricatures during a civics education class.

"We cannot act as if the terrorist attack, the murder of Samuel Paty, had not happened," he said in an interview with YouTube channel *HugoDecrypte*.

An association representing

Muslims has filed a motion with the State Council, France's highest court for complaints against state authorities, for an injunction against the ban on the abaya and the qamis, its equivalent dress for men.

The Action for the Rights of

Muslims (ADM) motion is to be examined later on Tuesday.

A law introduced in March 2004 banned 'the wearing of signs or outfits by which students ostensibly show a religious affiliation' in schools.

AFP

Niger's PM hopes for deal with ECOWAS

Niamey, Niger - Niger's military-appointed prime minister on Monday said he saw hopes of a deal 'in the coming days' with the West African bloc ECOWAS, which has threatened to use force to restore civilian rule after a coup in July.

He also said that 'contacts' were underway over a 'very swift' pullout of French forces from Niger after ties with France spiralled downwards following the military takeover. "We have not stopped contacts with ECOWAS, we are continuing contacts. We have good hopes of reaching an agreement in the coming days," Prime Minister Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine told a press conference in Niamey.

ECOWAS - the Economic Community of West African States - has slapped hefty sanctions against Niger after rebel soldiers on July 26 overthrew Mohamed Bazoum, the country's democratically-elected president. It has also warned several times of intervening militarily to reinstate Bazoum should diplomatic attempts to resolve the crisis fail.

"We are bracing to be attacked at any time. Every preparation has been taken. It would be an unjust war. We are determined to de-



Niger's Prime Minister Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine (AFP)

We have not stopped contacts with ECOWAS... We have good hopes of reaching an agreement

ALI MAHAMAN LAMINE ZEINE

fend ourselves if there is an attack," Zeine told reporters.

Timeline issue

A key question in the crisis is a timeline for returning to civilian rule. Nigerian President Bola Tinubu - who is also the current chairman of ECOWAS - last Thursday suggested a nine-month period such as his country underwent in the late 1990s.

"The president sees no reason why such cannot be replicated in

Niger, if Niger's military authorities are sincere," the Nigerian presidency said in a statement.

Algeria, Niger's influential northern neighbour, has proposed a six-month transition.

The military rulers have so far not responded to the suggestions, having previously spoken of a three-year handback period.

ECOWAS has taken a hard line with regard to Niger following a cascade of coups in its region since 2020.

The military have taken power in Mali and Burkina Faso, where like Niger, losses among the armed forces are surging in the face of a long-running militant insurgency. A putsch also took place in Guinea in 2021 after the country's octogenarian president, Alpha Conde, ran for a third term in office, a move that opponents said breached constitutional limits.

In other comments, Zeine said, without elaborating, that 'contacts' were underway 'that should enable a very swift withdrawal of French forces' from the country. But, he said, Niger wished 'to maintain cooperation with a country with which we have shared an enormous number of things.'

Tensions between Niger and its former colonial power and ally in the fight against militant insurgents ratcheted up after France stood by the ousted Bazoum.

Paris has refused to acknowledge the coup leaders as the legitimate government and ignored announcements cancelling military agreements with France and a threat to expel the French ambassador.

AFP



Mourners gather by the body of Palestinian Ayed Samih Khaled in the Nur Shams camp on Tuesday (AFP)

Israeli forces kill Palestinian in a raid in West Bank: Ministry

Tulkarem, Palestinian Territories - Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian in a raid on a West Bank refugee camp, the Palestinian health ministry said on Tuesday, as violence in the occupied territory shows no letup.

The ministry said 21-year-old Ayed Samih Khaled was 'shot by live occupation (Israeli) bullets fired to the head' in the Nur Shams camp near the northern town of Tulkarem.

The Islamic Jihad fighter

group identified him as a member of its armed wing, the Al-Quds Brigade.

The Israeli military said 'an exchange of fire with a number of suspects took place' during the raid.

A camp resident, who requested anonymity for security reasons, said clashes erupted soon after the incursion started at around midnight (2100 GMT Monday).

"The army had come with

bulldozers to destroy some roads inside the camp," the resident told AFP.

The military said Israeli forces targeted a building which 'contained several ready-to-use explosive devices' and a bomb went off during the raid.

Following the withdrawal of Israeli forces, an AFP photographer saw Palestinians gathering beside piles of rubble and gaping holes in a building.

AFP

North Korea's Kim set for arms talks with Putin in Russia: US

Washington, US - The United States said on Monday it expects North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to make a rare trip abroad to meet President Vladimir Putin in Russia, where they are likely to discuss arms for Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Ukraine is pushing a highly scrutinised counteroffensive in both the south and east that Putin dismissed on Monday as a failure, though Moscow appears eager to secure more military supplies to bolster its forces.

The Kremlin said on Tuesday it was unable to confirm a summit between Putin and Kim. "We have nothing to say on this," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The White House's National Security Council (NSC) spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said 'arms negotiations between Russia and the DPRK are actively advancing', using an acronym for North Korea.

"We have information that Kim Jong Un expects these discussions to continue, to include leader-level diplomatic engagement in Russia," she added.

The United States warned last week that Russia was already in secret talks with the North to acquire a range of munitions and supplies for Moscow's war effort.

Kim is likely to head by air



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspecting the Pukjung Machine Complex in North Pyongan Province on Saturday (AFP)

moured train later this month to Vladivostok, on Russia's Pacific coast not far from North Korea, to meet Putin, US and other officials told the *New York Times*.

Vladivostok is hosting the Eastern Economic Forum from September 10-13, which was attended by representatives from 68 countries last year.

According to the *Times*, Putin

is seeking artillery shells and anti-tank missiles from North Korea, while Kim, who could even travel to Moscow, is reportedly in search of advanced technology for satellites and nuclear-powered submarines, as well as food aid for his impoverished nation.

An official at Seoul's unification ministry, which handles

inter-Korean relations, said various developments 'indicated' the growing possibility of an arms deal between Pyongyang and Moscow.

"Any form of cooperation between North Korea and neighbouring countries must be conducted in a way that does not undermine international norms and peace," he told reporters.

Washington said last week that, despite its denials, North Korea supplied infantry rockets and missiles to Russia in 2022 for use by the privately controlled Wagner military group.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu traveled to North Korea in July seeking to acquire additional munitions for the war, Watson said on Monday.

Arms negotiations between Russia and the DPRK are actively advancing

ADRIENNE WATSON

Park Won-gon, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said both Pyongyang and Moscow needed to 'break away from diplomatic isolation', and a summit would send a message to Washington, which is ramping up defence cooperation with South Korea and Japan.

"As South Korea, the United States, and Japan have recently been strengthening cooperation, including the Camp David summit, North Korea and Russia also need to showcase their cooperation in a symbolic diplomatic sense," he told AFP.

Last week at the United Nations, the United States, Britain, South Korea and Japan said that any deal to increase cooperation between Russia and North Korea would violate Security Council resolutions forbidding arms deals with Pyongyang - resolutions Moscow itself had endorsed.

They said another group of Russian officials traveled to North Korea for follow-up talks after Shoigu's visit to Pyongyang.

AFP

Japanese man admits starting anime studio fire: Reports

Tokyo, Japan - A Japanese man allegedly angry that his ideas had been stolen admitted on Tuesday to starting a fire that killed 36 people in an animation studio in 2019, local media said.

The blaze that ripped through the studios of Kyoto Animation in July 2019 shocked Japan as well as the huge anime industry and its fans around the world.

'It's correct I've done' what is in the charges, Shinji Aoba said at the Kyoto District Court as the trial opened, according to the Jiji Press news agency. "I didn't think so many people would die and now I think I went too far," said the 45-year-old.

Aoba, who nearly died from burns he sustained and appeared in court in a wheelchair, faces five charges including murder, attempted murder and arson.

He is accused of breaking into the studio's building, spreading gasoline around the ground floor and setting it alight before reportedly shouting 'drop dead'.

Many of those killed in the blaze were young staff, including a 21-year-old woman.

AFP

Racism: Singapore rapper handed six-week jail term

Singapore - A Singapore rapper who has accused authorities of racism was handed a six-week jail term on Tuesday over his social media posts including a video criticising an actor in brownface and comments alleging unequal treatment of the city's races.

Subhas Nair, an outspoken musician of Indian descent, was found guilty of attempting to promote ill will between different ethnic and religious groups.

Singapore's government has long sought to promote racial harmony among its diverse population of 5.6mn, but some still complain that the ethnic Chinese majority enjoy greater privileges.

Nair was found guilty of four counts of attempting to promote ill will among racial and religious groups earlier this year.

One of the charges related to a 2019 rap video that criticised an advert featuring a local Chi-



This file photo shows Singaporean rapper Subhas Nair arriving at the State court in Singapore on November 1, 2021 (AFP)

nese actor who darkened his skin to portray an Indian.

During his trial, Nair testified that the video was intended to end such instances of 'brownface' in Singapore.

"Subhas has filed an appeal against both his guilty verdict, as

well as his sentence," his lawyer Suang Wijaya told AFP.

Nair has been granted bail pending appeal, he added.

Police in 2019 issued a warning over the video to Nair and his sister Preeti - a well-known local comedian, who rapped

alongside him.

Nair was charged after he re-offended by posting comments on social media over the next two years, including a post appearing to suggest a Chinese man involved in the death of an Indian received lenient treatment from authorities because of his race.

Police previously called the allegations 'baseless' and said they 'have the potential to damage religious and racial harmony in Singapore'.

Singapore, home to Muslim Malay and ethnic Indian minorities alongside the ethnic Chinese majority, has strict laws against sowing racial and religious tensions.

Anyone found guilty of attempting to promote ill will between different religious or racial groups can be jailed for up to three years, fined, or both.

AFP

MANGROVES FOR COASTAL RESILIENCE



A community member works at a mangrove rehabilitation and restoration site during the World Bank President's visit as part of the 'Mangroves for Coastal Resilience Project', an initiative of the Indonesian government supported by the World Bank, at Teluk Naga on the outskirts of Jakarta, on Monday (AFP)

A smooth transition: Charles III to mark first year as king

London, UK - Britain's Charles III reaches the milestone of his first year as king this week, with his reign so far characterised by a smooth transition from that of his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

The anniversary on Friday is expected to be marked privately, given the date is also that of his mother's death at the age of 96.

Charles, 74, has slipped into his new role with apparent ease after some 70 years waiting as her heir - the longest of any in British history.

But despite expectation of reform, he has not yet made sweeping changes to the monarchy, fuelling perceptions that his is a caretaker role before his eldest son and heir Prince William takes over.

"I think the transition has been

much smoother than was anticipated," Pauline Maclaran, a professor at Royal Holloway, University of London, told AFP.

Charles was officially crowned alongside his wife Camilla on May 6 at London's Westminster Abbey in front of royalty and global leaders.

The lavish ceremony observed centuries-old rituals but was shorter and less elaborate than his mother's in 1953 and aimed to be more representative of modern Britain.

"I think we can expect maybe small changes, but he is really paving the way for William, and I imagine William will be the real moderniser of the monarchy," Maclaran said.

Charles remains behind his late mother and 41-year-old William in the popularity stakes,



Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla (AFP)

but his approval rating has received a significant boost since his accession.

YouGov polling suggested 55 per cent of Britons have a positive opinion of their new head of

state, compared to 44 per cent a year ago.

His first televised Christmas Day broadcast - a traditional address to Britain and the Commonwealth, which he also heads

- was watched by a record 10.6mn viewers in the UK.

'More humanity'

As king, Charles has made several trips around the country, often accompanied by Camilla, and has generally appeared more open and approachable than Elizabeth II.

He is really paving the way for William... (who) will be the real moderniser of the monarchy

PAULINE MACLARAN

"Even the photos that they (the palace) released, official photos, are a lot more relaxed," said Jonathan Spangler, a history lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University.

"There is a bit more humanity," he said, adding that Charles 'is more aware that these things need to be done'.

According to Maclaran, Charles has shown himself as 'humble and accessible' at a time when Britain is grappling with the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation.

The only public image hiccup so far was his frustration with a leaky pen after the formal meeting confirming his accession, she added.

Anna Whitelock, a historian of

monarchy, said while there had been no 'major error', there also had not been 'any kind of defining moment' of his reign.

'Big questions remain: how is he going to respond to calls around an apology over colonial legacy? The whole question about exemptions from taxation?' she added.

The pro-republic movement - which wants an elected head of state - has meanwhile seized the chance to renew debate about the constitutional future of the British royal family, long muted by public respect for the ageing and infirm queen.

Charles has often been greeted on his tours by anti-monarchy banners and slogans, and even had eggs thrown in his direction.

AFP

ASEAN slams violence in Myanmar

The Southeast Asian leaders, at the ASEAN summit, urged Myanmar junta to stop attack on civilians

Jakarta, Indonesia - Southeast Asian leaders strongly condemned violence and attacks on civilians in Myanmar at a summit Tuesday, directly blaming the ruling junta, with host Indonesia saying there had been scant progress on an agreed peace plan.

Myanmar has been ravaged by deadly violence since the 2021 military coup deposed Aung San Suu Kyi's government and prompted a bloody crack-down on dissent.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) - long decried by critics as a toothless talking shop - met in the Indonesian capital Jakarta to seek a united voice on the crisis.

The leaders 'urge the Myanmar Armed Forces in particular, and all related parties concerned in Myanmar to de-escalate violence and stop targeted attacks on civilians, houses and public facilities, such as schools, hospitals, markets', they said in a 19-point statement seen by AFP. "We strongly condemned the continued acts of violence in Myanmar."

Rights groups have accused the Myanmar junta of air strikes on rebel strongholds and civilian infrastructure.

Diplomatic attempts to solve the crisis have been fruitless, with the junta ignoring the five-point peace plan agreed with ASEAN members two years ago



Indonesia's President Joko Widodo and other leaders take part in the retreat session at the 43rd ASEAN Summit in Jakarta on Tuesday (AFP)

as well as international criticism, and refusing to engage with its opponents.

An earlier draft statement seen by AFP - issued by host Indonesia with inputs from all members and thrashed out over several difficult meetings between foreign ministers - had left blank its Myanmar section.

That illustrated the lack of consensus in the 10-member bloc on dealing with a junta whose leaders remain banned

from high-level ASEAN meetings. Indonesian President Joko Widodo called for unity and co-operation 'for peace and prosperity' in the region but his top diplomat said the peace process agreed with the junta to end the violence remained stuck.

"The conclusion is that there is no significant progress in the implementation of the five-point consensus," Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi told reporters.

The conclusion is that there is no significant progress in implementation of the five-point consensus

RETNO MARSUDI

She also confirmed the Philippines would chair ASEAN instead of Myanmar in 2026, after Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said Manila was ready to step in to replace the junta

rulers earlier on Tuesday.

'Not a competition'

Myanmar previously withdrew from the ASEAN chair in 2006 over a potential boycott by the

Myanmar junta 'likely' to hold polls in 2025

Yangon, Myanmar - Myanmar's junta will likely hold elections in 2025, party officials told AFP on Tuesday, even as the military struggles to crush resistance to its rule.

The military justified its February 2021 putsch with unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud in 2020 elections won resoundingly by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD).

The coup ended a 10-year democratic experiment and plunged the country into turmoil, with the military now battling opponents across swathes of the country.

"Elections are likely to be held in 2025," a senior mem-

ber of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party told AFP, requesting anonymity. "We have a census-taking process in 2024. Because of the situation (in Myanmar) and that nationwide census process, next year is impossible," they said.

A member of a junta-approved party said it was likely 'elections will be held in early 2025', without elaborating.

Thirty-six political parties have been granted permission to take part in any future polls, the junta-stacked election commission said on Tuesday, without giving a date for when they would be held.

AFP

United States, European Union and other international powers. The chair went to the Philippines that year.

Myanmar chaired the bloc in 2014 under Thein Sein, the country's first civilian head of state in more than 50 years.

Another regional diplomat said some ASEAN members were pushing for the junta to be re-invited to the meetings.

Thailand has held its own bilateral meetings with the junta

and deposed democracy leader Suu Kyi in recent months, further dividing the bloc.

Some in the bloc fear Bangkok's different track has undermined Indonesia's 'quiet diplomacy' as ASEAN chair.

Beijing's actions in the South China Sea - which it claims almost in its entirety - were also to feature prominently in discussions, according to the earlier draft communique.

AFP

REMEMBERING MOTHER TERESA



Nuns from Missionaries of Charity attend a special prayer on the occasion of 'Feast Day' to mark the death anniversary of Mother Teresa at the Mother House in Kolkata on Tuesday (AFP)

India: SC to consider Kashmir's direct rule

New Delhi, India - India's Supreme Court concluded its hearing on Tuesday on a challenge to New Delhi's 2019 imposition of direct rule in Kashmir, a snap decision that led to protests and mass arrests.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government suspended Article 370 of the constitution that guarantees limited autonomy to the disputed region, home to a long-running insurgency against Indian rule.

The five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud will now retire to consider if the move was legal despite lacking the endorsement from parliament usually required for constitutional change.

No timeline has been give for their decision.

The Supreme Court in New Delhi heard arguments over 16 days from government lawyers,



This file photo shows Indian security personnel patrolling along a street in Srinagar on August 14, on the eve of India's Independence Day (AFP)

constitutional experts representing Kashmir's pro-India political parties, and others challenging the move.

India has for decades stationed more than half a million soldiers on its side of divided Kashmir, which is also claimed

by Pakistan. The rivals have fought three wars over control of the region, and an armed rebellion against Indian rule has killed thousands in the Muslim-majority territory since 1989.

The suspension of Kashmir's semi-autonomous status al-

lowed Indians from elsewhere to buy land and claim government jobs there, a policy denounced by critics as 'settler colonialism'.

Many residents and critics say that authorities have since curbed media freedoms and public protests in a drastic curtailment of civil liberties.

Modi's government has defended the decision in the court, saying the change had brought 'peace, progress and prosperity' to the restive territory.

Consolidating New Delhi's rule over its portion of the territory has long been a key plank of Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The frequency of armed clashes between Indian soldiers and insurgents has dropped significantly in recent years as India works to fortify its rule over the territory.

AFP

Rivals Turkey, Greece herald 'new era' in ties

Istanbul, Turkey - The top diplomats of historic rivals Turkey and Greece on Tuesday hailed a 'new era' in relations and vowed to intensify dialogue in the coming months.

The visit by Greek Foreign Minister Giorgos Gerapetritis to Ankara came with Turkey seeking to improve its testy relations with Western allies two years into a deep economic crisis. It follows a rare meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on the margins of the NATO summit in Vilnius in July.

Both leaders, coming off difficult election victories, then promised to build on the 'positive momentum' of their brief talks. "We have entered a new and positive era in our relations with Greece," Turkish Foreign

Minister Hakan Fidan told a joint news conference with his Greek counterpart.

"We are ready to continue dialogue with our neighbour Greece without any preconditions, and to develop our relations in all fields based on common interests," Fidan said.

The two NATO members have had troubled relations dating back to the creation of the modern Turkish republic out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire a century ago.

They have long-standing disputes over exploratory drilling rights in the eastern Mediterranean, the divided island of Cyprus as well as rival claims over the Aegean Sea.

Greece also frequently accuses Turkey of waving through migrants from across their joint border and at sea.

AFP

India astir over 'plans' to change country's official name

New Delhi, India - India was buzzing with speculation on Tuesday over rumoured plans to scrap official usage of the country's English name, after a state-issued invite sent to world leaders referred to it as 'Bharat'.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has worked to remove lingering symbols of British rule from India's urban landscape, political institutions and history books, but its next move could be the biggest such action yet.

Modi himself typically refers to India as 'Bharat', a word dating back to ancient Hindu scriptures written in Sanskrit, and one of two official names for the country under its constitution.

Members of his ruling party have previously campaigned against using the country's better-known moniker, India, which has its roots in Western antiquity and was imposed during the British conquest.

This weekend India hosts the



A pedestrian walks past a billboard installed along a street in New Delhi on Tuesday (AFP)

G20 summit of world leaders, capped with a state dinner that invitation cards said would be hosted by the 'President of Bharat'.

The government has called a

special session of parliament for later in the month while remaining tight-lipped about its legislative agenda.

But broadcaster News18 said unnamed government sources

had told it that BJP lawmakers would put forward a special resolution to give precedence to the name 'Bharat'.

Rumours of the plan were enough to spark a mix of opposi-

I hope the government will not be so foolish as to completely dispense with 'India'

SHASHI THAROOR

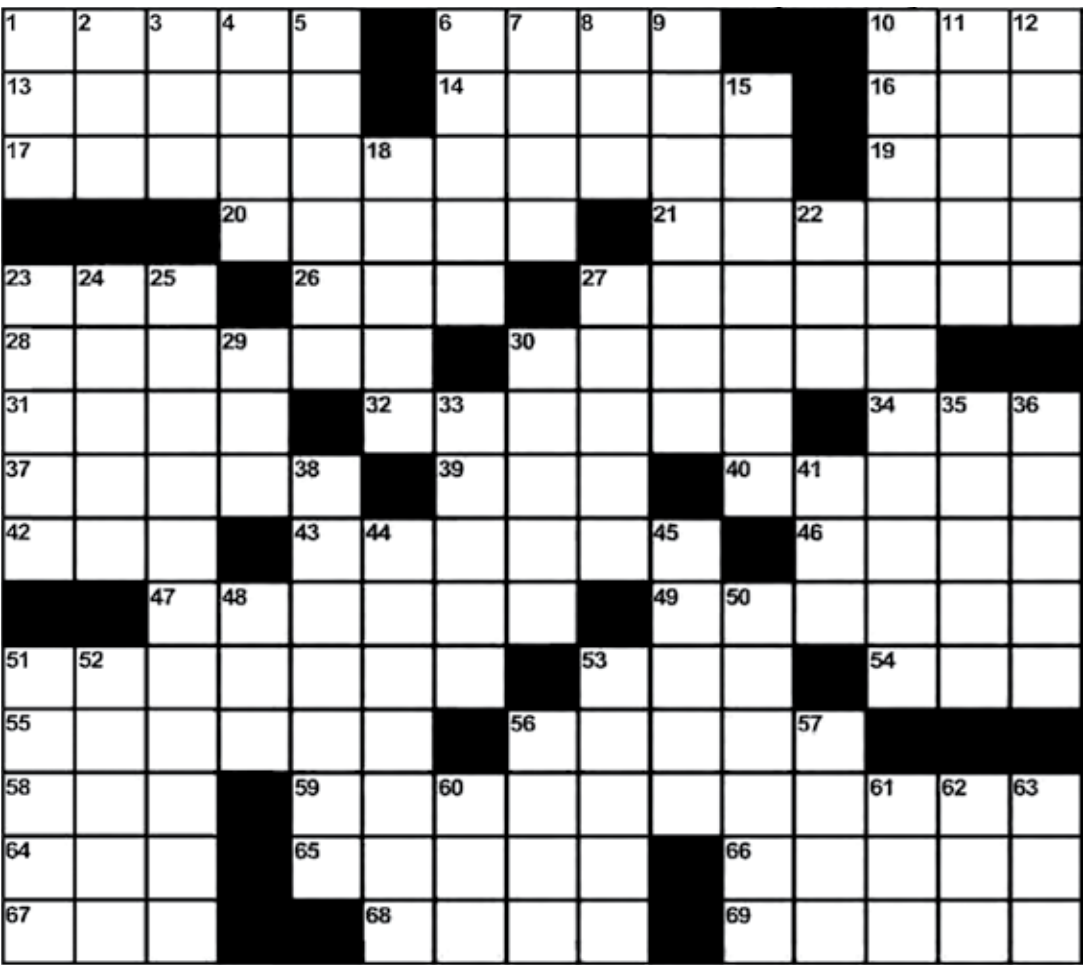
tion lawmakers and enthusiastic support from other quarters.

"I hope the government will not be so foolish as to completely dispense with 'India'," Shashi Tharoor of the opposition Congress party said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Former Test cricketer Virender Sehwag said he welcomed the prospect of a name change and urged India's cricket board to begin using 'Bharat' on team uniforms. "India is a name given by the British (and) it has been long overdue to get our original name 'Bharat' back," he wrote.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
- 1) Wide open

6) Housebroken

10) Canary's bill

13) Boston airport

14) Semester finals

16) Phrase of commitment

17) Feature of serious roller-coasters

19) Classic introduction?

20) Mountain ridge

21) Italian from Florence

23) "NCIS" network

58) 2016 Olympics city

26) Cosmetics queen Mary Kay

27) Ventilation opening

28) Summarizes, as the news

30) Name derived from a person

31) Blacksmith's metal

32) Weasel type

34) Tire-pressure letters

37) Cowboy's conquest

39) Dr. J played in it

40) Alex Haley blockbuster

42) Maple syrup base

43) Like some requests

46) Georgetown mascot

47) Damaging encroachment

49) Bustling activity

51) Some large envelopes

53) Barbecue munchie

54) "Hold on a...!"

55) Fished or schemed

56) Some museum sculptures

59) Lively festivities

64) Ostrich cousin

65) Balloon used in atmospheric probes

66) Do some waiting?

67) 6-1, in tennis

68) "No news is_ news!"

69) Rosemary's baby-daddy

DOWN

1) More than most

2) Baby's first word, sometimes

3) Long time follower?

4) Hemingway's moniker

5) Lure into danger

6) Subject of dentistry

7) Bridge toll unit

8) Longtime Chinese chair-man

9) Android's lack

10) Fools or simpletons

11) Perfection standard

12) Kentucky explorer

Daniel

15) Scornful one

18) "Siddhartha" author

22) Not outgoing

23) Baby berths

24) Yankee legend Yogi

25) Working a ladle

27) Concerning bees

29) Cape_, Mass.

30) Fix firmly in place

33) Hindu music selections

35) Do a salon job

36) "I, Robot" author Asimov

38) Large migratory shore-birds

41) "Now I see!"

44) Driver who's tough to pass

45) Show place?

48) Common soccer score

50) Be preoccupied with

51) Colts' moms

52) Japanese cartoon style

53) Caught, as a dogie

56) List type

57) Brain flash

60) Lennon's wife

61) Dinner table dropping

62) Lab eggs

63) John McCain is one, briefly
- NOTE PAD
-
- YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE
- ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Even though there are no obstacles standing in your way right now, you probably feel held back in some way. You don't have enough time, you don't have enough money, or you don't have enough support. Whatever your excuse, it's still an excuse. You have to do whatever you can and stop focusing so much on what you're missing. Get creative and fill in the blanks yourself. You can do this. You just have to believe in yourself. Everyone else does.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Pressure? What pressure?! The tension you're feeling right now will completely disappear if you just give yourself some time here and there to process what you're going through. There's no reason to panic, no reason to worry. Take a deep breath and you'll slowly feel your positive thinking building back up to effective levels. And once that happens, you'll actually start to feel some enthusiasm for what you're doing right now.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Pretending that a problem will just go away someday isn't a solution. It's only going to cause you more stress down the line. Just like removing a bandage, the faster you deal with it, the less pain you'll feel. If you need to discuss a sensitive issue with someone who's known to have a hair-trigger temper, be direct, be honest, and be prepared for questions. You can't avoid this conflict. All you can do is begin it on your terms, which is an advantage.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

If you try to explain something confusing to someone today, you might get tongue-tied. If you do, go for visuals to get your meaning across. Pie charts, pictures, hand gestures, even interpretive dance might help you drive home what you're trying to say. There are many layers to what you're dealing with right now, so be patient. In time, you'll give people such a deep understanding of your goals that they'll be dying to help you reach them.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Making choices can be tough, but today it will be delightful to examine your options and figure out the best one for you. From picking a lunch item off a menu to deciding where to go on your next big vacation, your brain is going to love weighing the pros and cons in order to come up with the perfect solution! It's a good day to take an unexpected turn too. In the midst of your usual routine, you should remember to choose to do something that no one expects.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

It's going to be simple for you to stay on top of maintenance issues right now. In fact, it might even give you a charge! Making sure that all your bills are paid, your important errands are run, and people's birthdays are remembered is something that usually gives you a great sense of accomplishment. You see the bigger picture, that by making small but consistent efforts to keep these things in line now, you'll save yourself a huge amount of headache and inconvenience later.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Displaying too much aggression will do you more harm than good right now. So try hard to be soft today, especially with friends and family members who might not realize that you're going through some stuff right now. Breathe through the frustration and get your distance from the people who just love pushing your buttons. The good news is that you'll be around a person who always puts a smile on your face, so they'll help you keep your cool.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're like a bright ray of sunshine wherever you are today. No one can be sad when you're around! Even if you aren't feeling as happy as a clam, you'll be giving off some major cheerful energy, so just go with it. It's a great day to be around other people, so try to join in on a group outing that you usually don't attend. People don't just want to spend time with you; they need to spend time with you. Go out and spread the love around.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

A person who's annoying you today doesn't realize that they're pushing one of your biggest buttons, so try not to get too angry with them. There's a lot of subliminal stuff happening right now between you two, and the communication isn't going to improve any time soon. That's why you have to walk on eggshells around them and do your best to grin and bear whatever they throw at you. They aren't trying to make you mad, and that counts for something.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You shouldn't speak or act too quickly today. Not only will others misinterpret your words, they could get annoyed that you're not taking care to make sure they're listening. Confidence can sometimes come off as arrogance if you don't focus more on the people you're talking to. Know your audience. Try to listen more to what people are saying and not saying. This extra effort will help you avoid arguments and make a better impression on some influential people.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Embracing new ideas and projects feels like a lot of fun to you right now, but not everyone else shares your hunger for innovation today. A lot of people are being extra cautious now, and they might not be willing to take a gamble the way you are. That's okay. Don't try to change their minds about it. Just do what you want without them. Pushing your agenda too hard will turn people off, and it probably won't be successful.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

People in your social circle seem to be playing a game of follow the leader today, and the leader is you! Suddenly everyone loves the music you're listening to, dresses the way you dress, and talks about the stuff you're talking about. All this imitation is probably unconscious on their part, so don't feel threatened or mocked by it. They just admire you a lot more than you realize. Now that you know they're paying attention, keep on giving them a good example to follow.
-
- TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE
01. Who wrote the music for the musical "A Chorus Line"?

A. Lionel Bart

B. Stephen Sondheim

C. Leonard Bernstein

D. Marvin Hamlisch

02. Indycar sportsman Scott Dixon, who won his first Indy championship in 2000 and whose ratio of wins to career starts is the best of all-time regular drivers in the IRL, comes from where?

A. Japan

B. New Zealand

C. Alaska

D. New Guinea

03. What word describes an open artificial water channel, in the form of a gravity chute, that leads water from a diversion dam or weir?

A. Flood

B. Flume

C. Fluke

D. Fleet

Answers: 1. D 2. B 3. B
- KIDS COLOURING
- BOGGLER

E	O	S	A
A	G	I	R
C	U	S	T
N	T	I	P

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER

A

N

R

E

S

T

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

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

'I played a really solid match'

Clinical Alcaraz moves into US Open quarter-finals

New York, United States - Carlos Alcaraz stayed firmly on course to defend his US Open title Monday as he reached the quarter-finals with a straight-sets win over Italy's Matteo Arnaldi.

Alcaraz eased past the 61st-ranked Arnaldi 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 under the roof on Arthur Ashe Stadium and will face 2020 runner-up Alexander Zverev for a place in the semi-finals.

Alcaraz has a 2-3 record against Zverev, who appears to be regaining his best form after a horror ankle injury at last year's French Open.

"Against Sascha (Zverev), the head-to-head as well is really, really close. We've played great matches."

"He's playing really, really well. This year he's finding his top level again."

Alcaraz is the first man to make the last eight or better in his first three US Open appearances since 1980.

The 20-year-old is bidding to become the first man since Roger Federer in 2008 to successfully defend the US Open after winning the title for the first time last year.

"I put out all the pressure that people put on you, on the defending champions. I just delete it and focus on my own game,"



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain plays a forehand volley against Matteo Arnaldi of Italy during their US Open round of 16 match on Monday (AFP)

Against Sascha (Zverev), the head-to-head as well is really, really close. We've played great matches.. He's playing really, really well. This year he's finding his top level again

CARLOS ALCARAZ

said Alcaraz.

He broke midway through the opening set and then twice in the second, stylishly charging into a two-set lead with a delicate forehand on the run past an outstretched Arnaldi.

Arnaldi pounced on his first opportunity to break Alcaraz

early in the third set only to see his advantage erased the following game.

Alcaraz ripped a sensational cross-court forehand to bring up three match points on Arnaldi's serve at 4-5 and closed out victory inside two hours.

"I think the intensity from the

beginning until the last ball, I played a really solid match, less mistakes," said Alcaraz.

"I'm really happy with the performance in general."

Alcaraz had strapping around his left thigh for the first time in the tournament, but the top seed allayed any fears he was struggling with injury.

"It's really tough playing in a Grand Slam. You play tough matches during two weeks. For me it's normal that some pains came to your body, and you have to take care about it," he said.

"It's nothing serious, it's just for prevention."

Zverev outduels Sinner, faces Alcaraz in quarters

New York, United States - Alexander Zverev defeated Jannik Sinner in a late-night five-set US Open marathon to line up a quarter-final with defending champion Carlos Alcaraz.

German 12th seed Zverev outlasted Sinner 6-4, 3-6, 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 in a gruelling 4hr 41min match which finished at 1.39am local time Tuesday on a muggy night in New York.

Zverev claimed his second win over the sixth-seeded Italian in three years at Flushing Meadows and advanced to a third



Alexander Zverev celebrates his win against Jannik Sinner

quarter-final here after the longest US Open match of his career.

"I guess I can say I'm back. This is what I live for, this is what I absolutely love to do," Zverev said in an on-court interview.

"Last year when I wasn't able to play this is exactly the kind of moments I missed."

Zverev, the 2020 US Open runner-up, missed last year's tournament after suffering a horror ankle injury at Roland Garros.

"I actually don't know how I managed that. I was completely

done in the fourth set. I was extremely tired. In the fifth set I somehow found it again," said Zverev.

"This is one of the best moments of my career, after my comeback and everything. I'm looking forward to what comes next."

The 26-year-old Zverev has a 3-2 record against world number one Alcaraz, winning their only Grand Slam meeting in the 2022 French Open quarter-finals, and is regaining his best form.

AFP

Sabalenka powers into quarter-finals



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus celebrates after winning the first set against Daria Kasatkina of Russia

New York, United States - Aryna Sabalenka celebrated her ascent to the pinnacle of women's tennis by powering into the quarter-finals of the US Open on Monday with a straight sets win over Russian Daria Kasatkina.

Sabalenka, who is guaranteed of becoming the new world number one next week following Iga Swiatek's fourth round exit on Sunday, cruised into the last eight with a 6-1, 6-3 victory over the 13th seed.

The Belarusian will play China's Zheng Qinwen on Wednesday for a place in the last four.

Sabalenka, who lost in the semi-finals of last year's US Open, is targeting her second Grand Slam title of the season after winning the Australian Open in January.

The 25-year-old from Minsk said after her win she was delighted to have secured the No.1 ranking - but admitted she would have preferred to have beaten Swiatek in the final in New York.

"Honestly I had no doubt she was going to make it to the final - I really wanted to have this battle with her and decide everything on court," Sabalenka said of outgoing No.1 Swiatek.

"I was sad she lost, but it means a lot to me. I've been pushing myself all this year to reach this goal. It's unbelievable, it's something crazy, I still can't believe it."

American third seed Jessica Pegula was routed in straight sets by compatriot and friend Madison Keys.

Pegula's campaign came to an abrupt halt in front of a packed Arthur Ashe Stadium as 2017 US Open finalist Keys recorded a dominant 6-1, 6-3 win in just 61 minutes.

Pegula was left with no answer as Keys unleashed a stream of 21 winners to her six.

AFP



Ons Jabeur of Tunisia congratulates Qinwen Zheng of China

China's Zheng rejoices at 'breakthrough' US Open win over Jabeur

New York, United States - Rising Chinese star Zheng Qinwen reached her first Grand Slam quarter-final Monday at the US Open after knocking out last year's runner-up Ons Jabeur, describing it as a "breakthrough" win after enduring her share of frustration this season.

The 20-year-old Zheng's blend of power and precision overwhelmed a weary Jabeur, her 6-2, 6-4 victory sending the 23rd seed through to a meeting with incoming world number one Aryna Sabalenka.

"Honestly the feeling was fan-

tastic, especially in that moment. I feel this is like important win for me. Like you say, it's a breakthrough," said Zheng.

"I always been waiting this moment to happen. Honestly, at beginning of year I'm thinking it's going to happen very fast."

"Because I'm focusing that moment too much about the result and I lost little bit the patience of myself, that's affect a lot to my tennis part."

She earned the WTA newcomer of the year award in 2022, winning her debut at all four majors.

Medvedev books US Open clash with 'godfather' Rublev

New York, United States - Daniil Medvedev will play Russian compatriot and close friend Andrey Rublev in the US Open quarter-finals after defeating Australian 13th seed Alex de Minaur in four sets on Monday.

Third seed Medvedev fought back from a set down to brush De Minaur aside 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 as he bids to add a second US Open crown following his maiden Grand Slam title in New York two years ago.

"The conditions were some of the most brutal we've ever played," Medvedev said of the hot and humid conditions in Louis Armstrong Stadium.

"There was one moment where I thought I'm not going to be able to play until the end, it's so tough."

"But I looked across the net and noticed he was slowing down too, so I thought okay, I can do this."

The 27-year-old Medvedev, a winner of four hard-court titles this season, is through to the last eight of the US Open for the fourth time in five years.



Daniil Medvedev of Russia returns a shot against Alex de Minaur of Australia

He beat Rublev in straight sets at the same stage of the tournament in 2020 and holds a 5-2 record over his friend who is the godfather of his daughter Alisa, born in October last year.

"We're really close friends," said Medvedev. "Even if on the court we're big competitors... I think nothing is going to come between us to separate us in real life."

"We're really close. I mean, we share a lot of let's call it inter-

ests and stuff like this.

"It's great to have someone like this on tour because sometimes can be not easy. You travel, travel, travel. To have a friend like this is great."

Despite their close bond, Medvedev is eager to once more thwart Rublev who lost in each of his past eight Grand Slam quarter-final appearances.

"But again, on the court we both want to win. We not going to be friends in two days."



Andre Onana

Onana recalled as Cameroon fight for Cup of Nations survival

Johannesburg, South Africa - Cameroon have recalled Manchester United goalkeeper Andre Onana for a crucial Africa Cup of Nations clash against Burundi, with the final matchday of qualifying kicking off on Wednesday.

He was suspended and sent home after playing for the Indomitable Lions in their opening 2022 World Cup match against Switzerland following a tactical disagreement with coach Rigobert Song.

But with Cameroon needing a win to be certain of qualifying for the 2023 Cup of Nations in the Ivory Coast, Song has convinced Onana to come out of self-imposed international retirement.

Title-holders Senegal are among 15 countries who have qualified for the biennial African showpiece, and nine more places are up for grabs during the seven-day final round.

Here is a look at the six groups where qualifying slots are available.

Group C

Taking only one point from two matches against Namibia has put five-time champions Cameroon in a precarious position in a section reduced to three teams after Kenya were disqualified.

"Our backs are against the wall," admits Song, a former Liverpool and West Ham United defender and two-time Cup of Nations winner as a player.

Group E

Central African Republic get a second chance to qualify for the first time, but they must defeat four-time champions Ghana in Kumasi to succeed.

Victory over Angola last June would have sealed a historic place for the Wild Beasts. However, goalkeeper Dominique Youfeigane was sent off and they conceded a late goal to lose 2-1.

A major blow for the Central Africans will be the absence of captain and midfielder Geoffrey Kondogbia, who was injured playing for new club Marseille.

bia, who was injured playing for new club Marseille.

Group F

Tanzania have a three-point advantage over Uganda in the contest to accompany already-qualified Algeria to the finals.

Home advantage should ensure Algeria beat Tanzania and Uganda would draw level on points if they beat Niger, who have moved a home fixture to Morocco as they lack a suitable venue.

Group G

Mali are among the countries to secure places, leaving the Gambia and Congo Brazzaville to battle for the other qualifying spot.

The Gambians host the Congolese in Morocco because they are among numerous African nations unable to play at home due to sub-standard stadiums.

Gambia made an impressive Cup of Nations debut in 2021, reaching the quarter-finals, and enjoy a three-point advantage over Congo, meaning a draw will seal qualification for the Scorpions.

Group I

This is the most hotly contested section with only three points separating the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritania, Gabon and Sudan, and all in contention for two places.

DR Congo and Mauritania are the likely qualifiers as they will have home advantage over Sudan and Gabon respectively.

Group L

A showdown between Mozambique and Benin in Maputo will determine who goes to the Ivory Coast with section winners Senegal.

Mozambique are two points ahead of Benin, so a draw will suffice while the visitors must win to secure a fifth appearance.

Guided by former Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr, Benin have yet to win on the field.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN EURO 2024 QUALIFYING

Paris, France - The road to Germany resumes this week as Euro 2024 qualifying kicks back into action with key games for the continent's heavyweights.

AFP Sport picks out some of the highlights with two rounds of matches spread over six days from September 7 to 12.

A new coach for Italy

Reigning European champions Italy have a new coach after Roberto Mancini's resignation, with Luciano Spalletti hired as his replacement.

Mancini resigned in mid-August, saying his decision had "nothing to do" with a possible move to Saudi Arabia. Two weeks later he was named as the new Saudi coach on a four-year deal.

Spalletti, who left Napoli after leading them to the Serie A title last season, takes over a team that is third in qualifying Group C, with three points from two games.

Italy go to Skopje on Saturday to face North Macedonia, the team that knocked them out in a World Cup qualifying play-off last year. They then host Ukraine in Milan in a potentially vital encounter.

Pressure on Spain coach

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente will hope to turn the focus back to football after he faced criticism for applauding a controversial speech by the country's federation president Luis Rubiales last month.



De la Fuente was an eyebrow-raising appointment when he replaced Luis Enrique after the World Cup. La Roja began Euro qualifying in stuttering fashion and lost to Scotland in March

Rubiales sparked worldwide outrage when he forcibly kissed Jenni Hermoso after Spain beat England in the Women's World Cup final in Sydney on August 20. He provoked further ire with a defiant speech at an emergency meeting in which he refused to resign despite mounting pressure and instead railed against "false feminism", as De la Fuente applauded.

De la Fuente was an eyebrow-

raising appointment when he replaced Luis Enrique after the World Cup. La Roja began Euro qualifying in stuttering fashion and lost to Scotland in March. However, they won the UEFA Nations League in June, beating Croatia on penalties in the final.

They will now be expected to beat Georgia in Tbilisi and Cyprus in Granada, and De la Fuente could hand a debut to 16-year-old Barcelona starlet

Italy coach Luciano Spalletti poses for a picture after a press conference at Coverciano training ground in Florence on Saturday (AFP)

Lamine Yamal.

in Ruben Neves and Otavio.

Strong Saudi-based contingent

Moving to the Saudi Pro League does not appear to have jeopardised the international prospects of European stars, not yet anyway.

Cristiano Ronaldo continues to be called up by Portugal at the age of 38 and having joined Al-Nassr in January. He has been joined in Roberto Martinez's latest Portuguese squad by two new arrivals to the Saudi league

"We will see what state the players coming from the Saudi league are in," Martinez told Portuguese media. "It is a different situation, but that doesn't mean it has to be negative. We need to adapt to these new circumstances in football without making a big deal out of it."

Jordan Henderson is in the England squad despite joining Al-Ettifaq, while there are plenty of other examples, including Al-Nassr's Aymeric Laporte featuring for Spain.

Panama international footballer Hernandez shot dead: police

Panama City, Panama - Panamanian international defender Gilberto Hernandez was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the Caribbean city of Colon, police said Monday.

Hernandez, who won two caps for Panama in March this year, including a friendly against Lionel Messi's Argentina, died Sunday after shots were fired from a passing car, police said.

Six other people were injured in the shooting.

Crime rates in Colon, around 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Panama City, have surged in what authorities attribute to fighting between rival drug gangs.

Hernandez, 26, played for Panamanian side Club Atletico Independiente (CAI).

Police said Monday a suspect had been arrested in connection with the shooting following "a series of operations and search procedures" in Colon.

The Panamanian Football Federation (FEPAFUT) mean-



Police said Monday a suspect had been arrested in connection with the shooting

while paid tribute to Hernandez in a statement on X, the social media network formerly known as Twitter.

"FEPAFUT extends its condolences to his family and loved ones, as well as to the entire CAI and Panamanian soccer family," it said. "Peace to his soul."

Sergio Ramos returns to boyhood club Sevilla

Madrid, Spain - Veteran former Spain defender Sergio Ramos on Monday returned to his hometown club Sevilla after 18 years away. "It's a very special day, returning home is always a tremendous joy," Ramos told the media.

The 37-year-old former Real Madrid and Paris Saint-Germain player signed a one-year contract after passing the traditional medical, the club announced.

"Happy to return and try to contribute as soon as possible which is the important thing," the player added.

Sevilla sit bottom of La Liga without a point after three matches but as Europa League champions have qualified for the Champions League group stage. They start their campaign on September 20.

Ramos left Sevilla at the age of 19 to join Real Madrid for a then record fee for a Spanish defender.

In 2021, Ramos signed for PSG but had been without a club since his contract with the French champions ran out in June.

According to the local press, Ramos turned down a lucrative offer from Al-Ittihad in Saudi Arabia. "I was eager to return home. It made no sense to go anywhere else without passing through here," said Ramos who was born on the outskirts of Seville.

In 16 seasons at the Bernabeu, Ramos won La Liga five times and the Champions League four times.

He played 180 games for Spain, scoring 23 goals, and was part of the team that won the European Championship twice (2008 and 2012) and the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Carrasco leaves for Saudi Arabia

Belgian international Yannick Carrasco has left Atletico Madrid



Sergio Ramos

for Al-Shabab, the Saudi Pro League club announced on Monday.

The 30-year-old made over 250 appearances for Atletico across two spells at the club, winning La Liga in 2021 and the Europa League in 2018.

He also scored in their 2016 Champions League final loss to rivals Real Madrid.

Carrasco joins the growing exodus of well-known players leaving Europe for the riches of Saudi Arabia.

Sanchez, Ndombele join Galatasaray

Colombian international de-

fender Davinson Sanchez has joined Galatasaray from Tottenham, the Premier League club confirmed on Monday as Tanguy Ndombele also signed for the Istanbul giants on loan.

Sanchez, 27, made 207 appearances for Spurs since joining from Ajax for a then club record £42 million (\$53 million) in 2017.

He was also joined at the Turkish side by another Tottenham outcast Ndombele, the two teams announced.

The French midfielder had not featured for Spurs this season after spending last term on loan at Napoli, winning the Serie A title.

RFEF sorry for Rubiales scandal, fires women's coach

Madrid, Spain - Spain's football federation on Tuesday apologised for the "totally unacceptable behaviour" of Luis Rubiales over his World Cup kiss and fired the team's controversial coach Jorge Vilda, 42, appointing a woman in his stead as part of an overhaul.

The apology came more than two weeks after the 46-year-old RFEF boss sparked worldwide outrage when he forcibly kissed Spain midfielder Jenni Hermoso during the medal ceremony after Spain defeated England in the final on August 20.



Demonstrators hold a banner reading in Catalan 'Rubiales out' as they take part in a protest in Barcelona on Friday

In a letter signed by its interim president Pedro Rocha, the RFEF offered its "most sincere apologies... for the totally unacceptable behaviour of its highest institutional representative during the final of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 and in the moments that followed".

Although the kiss drew condemnation from across the football world and beyond, prompting FIFA to suspend him, it was another eight days before the RFEF called for Rubiales to stand down as its president.

FUJI CHALLENGE FOR AL HARTHY

Oman star determined to battle for big points in penultimate race of 2023

Muscat - Omani sports star Ahmad al Harthy makes a welcome return to race action just a few days from now, with his first ever visit to the legendary Fuji Speedway in Japan for round six of the FIA World Endurance Championship season.

With more than eight weeks having passed since FIA WEC went into a lengthy mid-year break, Al Harthy and the Oman Racing with TF Sport squad are relishing being back in action for the six-hour race this coming Sunday, 10th September.

Before then, there will be the usual trio of free practice sessions ahead of qualifying - the latter getting underway on Saturday. All track time will be vital experience for Al Harthy on his maiden visit to the spectacular Far East track, situated in the foothills of Mount Fuji, and the two-time GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup Pro-Am Champion can't wait to get started.

Fuji is renowned as one of global motorsport's most exciting challenges, and this coming weekend's FIA WEC encounter around the 4.5-kilometre (2.8-mile) circuit carries great importance too as the penultimate event of Al Harthy's debut campaign in World Endurance.

Coinciding with his maiden trip to Japan, round six is also where the Omani and team-



Ahmad Al Harthy in action



mates Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood are hoping to return to the podium battle in the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS liveried No.25 Aston Mar-

tin Vantage GTE.

Having raced to excellent GTE Am podium finishes at Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps in April, third place, and in the crown jewel 24H Le Mans in France in

It's been a long break from action, so I'm more excited than ever to be racing again at the weekend and especially with my first ever visit to Fuji. It's an incredible track

AHMAD AL HARTHY

June, a season-best runner-up placing, the squad rocketed into second in the GTE Am Championship points table.

Unfortunately, the most recent event at flat-out Italian track Monza in July was compromised for Oman Racing when a disparity in top speed between the Aston Martin and the rival

Porsche and Ferrari entries prevented anything higher than a seventh place - despite some excellent driving.

With hopes the Balance of Performance gradings will be on a par with those Oman Racing had to work with at Spa and Le Mans, Al Harthy is as focused and committed as ever to delivering his absolute best at a true 'bucket list' track for any international racing driver. Going into the sixth event of the season Al Harthy and Oman Racing are third in the respective championship standings.

"It's been a long break from action, so I'm more excited than ever to be racing again at the

weekend and especially with my first ever visit to Fuji. It's an incredible track, with so much history in global motorsport, and it really is going to be a privilege to race there in FIA WEC. Even though we've not been racing for the past two months, the team has been busy working hard behind the scenes," said Al Harthy.



Antony

Brazil drop Antony over ex-girlfriend assault claim

Sao Paulo, Brazil - Manchester United winger Antony was dropped from Brazil's squad for upcoming World Cup qualifying games on Monday following allegations of assault made against him by an ex-girlfriend.

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said in a statement that Antony had been stood down in order to "preserve the alleged victim, the player, the Brazil team and the CBF."

Arsenal forward Gabriel Jesus will replace Antony in the squad for the games against Bolivia on September 8 and Peru on September 12.

Antony, 23, on Monday denied physically assaulting ex-girlfriend Gabriela Cavallin in a statement on Instagram, stating he was the "victim of false accusations."

"I can calmly affirm that the accusations are false, and that

evidence already produced and that will be produced will show that I am innocent," Antony said.

The denial came after Brazilian press reports published WhatsApp messages reputedly between Antony and Cavallin in which the player allegedly threatens his ex-partner.

In one of the conversations cited by local media, Cavallin says he must apologize for "kicks and assaults."

Antony then appears to reply "sorry" in response.

Cavallin is also shown in one photo with an apparent head wound. Antony said in his Instagram post that his relationship with Cavallin was "tumultuous, with verbal abuse on both sides."

However he denied assaulting her. "I never practiced physical aggression," he said. AFP

How the All Blacks rose to the challenge of unleashing the haka

Wellington, New Zealand - Before France take on New Zealand in the opening game of the Rugby World Cup the hosts will have to face the ferocious challenge laid down by the All Blacks in the haka.

"In a rugby game, if you want victory, you have to come and get it - it's either you or us," Dr Taku Parai, an elder from the Ngati Toa iwi Maori tribe, told AFP.

The haka is the fierce war dance which originated to prepare Maori warriors for battle and has since been adopted by the New Zealand who perform one of two versions of the haka before games.

Either, Kapa O Pango, created for the All Blacks and first performed in 2005, or the traditional Ka Mate, by far the best known.

Under New Zealand law, the Ngati Toa iwi, based in Porirua just outside Wellington, are



Wayne 'Buck' Shelford

recognised as the cultural guardians of the Ka Mate haka.

For New Zealand play-maker Beauden Barrett, the haka is an important part of his pre-match preparation. "It's about us coming together and being united," he told AFP.

"For me, it's about us. Our legacy, what has gone before us. Being in the moment - and getting ready for battle."

Ancient ancestry

Ka Mate was composed by the warrior chief Te Rauparaha around 1820 to celebrate his escape from a rival tribe's pursuing war party.

For New Zealanders, it is performed "as a token of deep respect, whether it is at funerals, birthdays, weddings," Parai explains. "It's about upholding the 'mana' (prestige) of an occasion." Yet the chest-pounding, thigh-

slapping actions accompanying the Maori chant weren't always performed by All Blacks teams with the same precision and ferocity as today.

Originally, the All Blacks only did the haka when they played overseas, sometimes with mixed results as some non-Maori players seemed unsure of the actions.

Video footage of a notoriously poor haka before a 1973 tour match in Cardiff showed few New Zealand players, aside from Maori scrum-half Sid Going, seemed to know the movements.

It wasn't until Sir Wayne 'Buck' Shelford made the All Blacks squad in the mid 1980s that the haka was practised and then performed with the fierce focus seen today.

"Until it got to 'Buck', they (the All Blacks) were still twinkling their fingers like jingle bells," joked Parai.

Serbia player loses kidney at World Cup

Manila, Philippines - Serbia's Borisa Simanic has undergone surgery to remove a kidney after being injured at the Basketball World Cup.

Simanic had an operation in a Manila hospital after being hit by a South Sudan player's elbow during a pool game on August 30.

Complications arising from the operation meant he had to have further surgery on September 3, when one of his kidneys was removed, the team said Monday.

Serbian team doctor Dragan Radovanovic said that they "expect and wish that after this operation, the postoperative course will go smoothly".

The incident occurred near the end of Serbia's first-round game against South Sudan, when Simanic was defending opposi-



Borisa Simanic

tion player Nuni Omot under the Serbia basket.

Omot caught Simanic with an elbow, causing Simanic to scream in pain and immediately wheel away.

The 25-year-old Simanic plays for Zaragoza in Spain.

Serbia play Lithuania in the World Cup quarter-finals on Tuesday. AFP

Sainz thanks police for arresting watch thieves

Paris, France - Carlos Sainz thanked Italian police on Monday for arresting thieves who stole a luxury watch from him following the Italian Grand Prix at Monza on Sunday.

According to several media reports, the Ferrari driver was the victim of a theft in Milan just hours after finishing third in the race. Two men stole his watch, worth at least an estimated 300,000 euros (\$323,835).

But Sainz chased them with his bodyguard and caught the thieves with the help of passers-by before handing them over to police. "Many thanks to all the people who helped us yesterday, to the Milan police for their quick intervention and thanks for all your messages," he said.

South Africa's De Kock has 'unfinished business' at World Cup

Bloemfontein, South Africa - South Africa coach Rob Walter said on Tuesday that Quinton de Kock has "unfinished business" after it was announced that the wicketkeeper will retire from one-day international cricket after the World Cup, which starts in India on October 5.

De Kock's pending retirement was revealed during the announcement of South Africa's 15-man squad in Bloemfontein, where South Africa start a five-match ODI series against Australia on Thursday.

"Quinn has been a magnificent player for South Africa in 50-over cricket," said Walter in backing De Kock, 30, to finish his ODI career in style.

De Kock will play in Aus-



Quinton de Kock

tralia's Big Bash League in December, which will clash with a one-day series against India.

A former captain in all three international formats, De Kock retired from Test cricket in 2022.

De Kock will remain available

for T20 internationals.

Walter said there was "still water to go under the bridge" regarding De Kock's availability for a T20I series against India, which will precede the ODI series.

AFP

RAHUL MAKES WORLD CUP SQUAD

Skipper Rohit Sharma coy about wicketkeeper-batsman's place in the XI

Kandy, Sri Lanka - Wicketkeeper KL Rahul was named in India's squad Tuesday for the one-day World Cup but skipper Rohit Sharma was coy about his place in the XI after months sidelined by injury.

Rahul will be in contention along with fellow gloveman Ishan Kishan, a left-hander who hit a defiant 82 against Pakistan at the ongoing Asia Cup.

"We have said earlier that problems like these are good, that boys are fighting for spots," Rohit told reporters in Kandy as World Cup hosts India named their squad.

"We will have to see who is in form and who is the opposition to face. All this will be calculated



KL Rahul

and the best XI will be picked."

The 31-year-old Rahul has not played any competitive cricket since he was injured during the Indian Premier League in May.

He was picked in the Asia Cup squad for Sri Lanka but missed the opening two matches with a niggle unrelated to his original

those things do matter," said Rohit. "For Ishan's confidence the last match he played was brilliant - under pressure, batting at number five for the first time, (being a) left-hander gives us another dimension."

Rahul's return is "a good headache to have", chief selector Ajit Agarkar said.

"You see KL's record in one-day cricket is fantastic. So when he comes there will be a conversation."

The 50-over World Cup takes place across 12 venues in India.

Cricket-mad India have suffered a world title drought since the 2013 Champions Trophy and last won an ODI World Cup in 2011 on home soil.

KL's record in one-day cricket is fantastic. So when he comes there will be a conversation

AJIT AGARKAR

thigh injury. The World Cup starts on October 5 and Rohit did not rule out the possibility of Rahul and Ishan - who have both topped the batting order - playing together.

"As long as everyone's available and fit to play, the selection depends on the opposition we play, current form, players who have done well under pressure,

Bangladesh's in-form Najmul out of Asia Cup with injury

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Top-order batsman Najmul Hossain Shanto was ruled out of the remainder of the Asia Cup on Tuesday with a hamstring injury and faces a race to be fit for the World Cup.

Najmul is the leading scorer at the Asia Cup with 89 and 104 against Sri Lanka and Afghanistan respectively to help Bangladesh into the last four.

Najmul felt some discomfort in his left hamstring during his innings against Afghanistan in Lahore on Sunday, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) said.



Najmul Hossain Shanto

"The player had complained of hamstring pain during batting and could not field. We had an MRI scan done confirming a muscle tear," team physio Bay-jedul Islam Khan said.

"As a precaution, Shanto will not take any further part in the tournament and will be returning home to start rehab and prepare for the World Cup."

The one-day World Cup in India starts on October 5.

Najmul is Bangladesh's top run-scorer in 2023 across all formats with 1,078 runs, including four hundreds and five fifties.

News of the star player's injury came a day after batsman Liton Das was declared fit to join the squad having recovered from a fever that forced him to miss the Asia Cup group-stage matches.

Bangladesh have also lost frontline seamer Ebadot Hos-sain while all-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz retired hurt against Afghanistan after making a career-best 112.

Bangladesh face Pakistan in Lahore on Wednesday in the Super Four.

AFP

Mendis misses hundred as Sri Lanka score 291-8

Lahore, Pakistan - Stylish batter Kusal Mendis missed a century by just eight runs but still guided Sri Lanka to 291-8 in their crucial Asia Cup match against Afghanistan in Lahore on Tuesday.

The 28-year-old hit an attractive 84-ball 92 that included three sixes and six boundaries to anchor the Sri Lankan innings after they won the toss and batted at Gaddafi Stadium.

Both teams need a win to qualify for the Super Four stage

from Group B, from where Bangladesh have already progressed.

Afghanistan, who lost to Bangladesh by 89 runs in their first game, need to reach the target in 37.1 overs to qualify for the next round on net run-rate.

Pakistan and India have already qualified for the Super Four stage from Group A.

Sri Lanka were off to a solid start of 63 for the first wicket between Pathum Nissanka (41) and Dimuth Karunaratne (32).

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

A person with ten years of Oman experience in MEP, piping, pipeline projects, business development & procurement is

looking for a suitable position.
Contact: +968-79994853

FLAT FOR RENT

A three room flat in the ground

floor in Al Mahaj area, Al Amerat, is available for rent.
Contact: +968-95320202

A five bedroom flat with 4 bath-rooms, kitchen, store, AC fitted

and balcony sea view, near the Indian School Darsait for rent at RO275 monthly only.
Contact: +968-99315986

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



SITUATION VACANT

BAHWAN METAL & GLASS ENGINEERING LLC



Required Sales Representative with minimum 2 years of work experience in sales. The candidate should have 1 year working experience in Oman. Having a driving license and a car is a must.

Please send your CV to info@bahwanmge.com
Tel: +96896666685

OPEN POSITIONS

Require qualified & experienced male

1) Multicuisine "Cook" (Chef De Parte)
2) Baker

for a high-profile family in Oman

Job requirements are:

- Should have a minimum of 5 years of culinary experience and working in a formal household would be an asset.
- Prepare and develop recipes in accordance with the family and guest's nutritional needs and dietary restrictions such as lactose and gluten intolerance.
- Prepare daily meals for the family (Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner).
- Able to cook for events and formal dinner parties.
- Able to take full responsibility for the running of the kitchen and have effective communication skills.
- Be able to work alongside a team of household staff and as kitchen assistants that provide the highest level of service for the family.
- Ensure all kitchen equipment and appliances are kept clean and in proper working condition.
- Be creative, hardworking & have exceptional standards for cleanliness, health & safety.

Role carries an excellent salary, accommodation, food, annual leave with air ticket to hometown and medical insurance as per Oman Labor law.

Kindly send a CV with a recent photo to: farmchefoman@gmail.com

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي
ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty therapy & post Delivery Care

Zaher Building ,1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280, GSM: 95371664 , 92504980 , Website:www.siddhayur.com



SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR Birthday/Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)



pH 9.1 to 9.5

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

OmanOasis OmanOasisOfficial OmanOasisWater

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- Ultra-hydrating
- Revitalizing
- Energizing
- Electrolytes



800 71 222
9275 5522

CR.No. 1395452

POLAR BEAR HABITAT

FREEZE ZONE

STUDY QUANTIFIES LINK BETWEEN GREENHOUSE GASES AND POLAR BEAR SURVIVAL

Polar bears have long symbolised the dangers posed by climate change, as rising temperatures melt away the Arctic sea ice they depend upon for survival. But quantifying the impact of a single oil well or coal power plant on the tundra predators had eluded scientists, until now.

A new report published in the journal *Science* shows it is possible to calculate how much new greenhouse gas emissions will increase the number of ice-free days in the bears' habitats, and how that, in turn, will affect the percentage of cubs that reach adulthood.

By achieving this level of granularity, the paper's two authors hope to close a loophole in US law.

Although the apex carnivores have had endangered species protections since 2008, a long-standing legal opinion prevents climate considerations from affecting decisions on whether to grant permits to new fossil fuel projects.

"We have presented the information necessary to rescind the Bernhardt Memo," first co-author Steven

Amstrup, a zoologist with Polar Bears International and the University of Wyoming, said, referring to the legal caveat which was named after an attorney in former president George W Bush's administration.

The memo stated it was beyond the scope of existing science to distinguish the impacts of a specific source of carbon emissions from the impacts of all greenhouse gasses since the beginning of the industrial age.

Cub survival imperilled

Polar bears rely heavily on the sea ice environment for hunting seals, travelling, mating and more.

When sea ice melts in summer, they retreat onto land or unproductive ice far from the shore, where they endure long stretches of fasting. These periods are growing longer as global temperatures rise.

A landmark paper published in *Nature* in 2020 was the first to calculate links between changes in the sea ice caused by climate and polar bear demographics.

Building on this work, Amstrup and Bitz established the mathematical relationships between greenhouse emissions and fasting days as well as cub survival, in 15 out of 19 of the polar bears' subpopulations, between 1979 and 2020.

The world currently emits 50 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide or equivalent gases into the atmosphere annually, and that is reducing the rate of cub survival by over three percentage points per year in the South Beaufort Sea sub-population, Amstrup pointed out.

In healthy populations, cub survival during the first year of life is around 65%.

"You don't have to knock that down very far before you don't have enough cubs entering the next generation," said Amstrup.

In addition, the paper provides US policy makers with the tools they need to quantify the impact of new fossil fuel projects slated to occur on public lands in the coming decades.

It can also be applied retrospectively to understand the emissions from specific projects, companies or even countries in the past, to inform global negotiations about climate and biodiversity.

Implications for other species

While the pair are confident in their calculations, they say their work can be further refined by more ground research, for example, better estimates of the mass of polar bears at the time they enter their fasting period.

Joel Berger, university chair of wildlife conservation at Colorado State University, praised the paper.

"Amstrup and Bitz render an incontrovertible quantitative link among greenhouse gas emissions, sea ice decline, fasting duration - a physiological response to lost hunting opportunities for seals - and subsequent polar bear demographics," said Berger, who was not involved in the research.

Beyond providing a potential policy solution to the legal loophole, the new research could have implications that reach far beyond polar bears, second co-author Cecilia Bitz, a climatologist at the University of Washington, said.

Methods laid out in the paper can be adapted for other species and habitats, such as coral reefs, or Florida's Key deer.

"I really hope this stimulates a lot of research," Bitz said, adding she was already reaching out to new collaborators.

AFP



A female polar bear and a cub look for something to eat along the shoreline of the Hudson Bay near Churchill, Manitoba, Canada

The world currently emits 50 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide or equivalent gases into the atmosphere annually, and that is reducing the rate of cub survival by over three percentage points per year in the South Beaufort Sea sub-population

AMSTRUP



VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

GLITZ
BLITZ



US director Woody Allen, Vittorio Storaro and actress Lou De Laage attend the red carpet of the movie *Coup de Chance* presented out of competition at the 80th Venice Film Festival

STRIKE-HIT
VENICE
FEST SAYS
HOLLYWOOD
MUST PRIZE
'ART OVER
CONTENT'



French actress Valérie Lemercier attends the red carpet of the movie *Coup de Chance*



Twin Damiano D'Innocenzo and Fabio D'Innocenzo, directors, pose during the red carpet of the movie *Priscilla*

Bella Thorne

The Eyes of Tammy Faye.

Apocalyptic ideas

Other entries include Coppola's *Priscilla*, about Elvis Presley's wife, and Fincher's *The Killer* starring Michael Fassbender and Tilda Swinton.

They are among 23 films competing for the top prize Golden Lion, to be awarded on September 9 by a jury that also includes directors Jane Campion, Martin McDonagh and last year's winner Laura Poitras (for Big Pharma documentary *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*).

Despite supporting the strikes, Chazelle told AFP that the threat from AI - which many fear could lead to computer-generated actors and scripts replacing humans - should not be overblown.

"People have some apocalyptic ideas about it," he said. "It will overturn a lot of things, but the art will survive."

With less star gossip, a lot of attention risks being absorbed by the inclusion of Woody Allen with *Coup de Chance* (his 50th film and first in French) and Roman Polanski with *The*



Palace, both in the out-of-competition section. Allen, 87, was investigated for an alleged assault on his adopted daughter in the 1990s. Though cleared by police, he has been effectively blackballed by Hollywood, which festival director Alberto Barbera told AFP was absolutely incomprehensible.

Barbera acknowledged it was more complex with Polanski, 90, who was convicted of raping a minor in the 1970s, although the victim has long since forgiven him.

"The history of art is full of artists who were criminals, and we nonetheless continue to admire their work," Barbera asserted. AFP

Hollywood strikes robbed the Venice Film Festival of some of its usual glitz as it launched its 80th edition on Wednesday, but jury president Damien Chazelle said it was a warning that the industry must prize 'art over content'.

The festival has a raft of big-name, and controversial, directors across its 11-day schedule, including new films from Bradley Cooper, Sofia Coppola and David Fincher. But many stars are missing due to the historic strike in Hollywood, primarily over pay and the potential impact of AI technology.

Chazelle, director of *La La Land* and *Whiplash* and head of this year's jury, wore a top showing his support for the strike.

"There's a basic idea that each work of art has value unto itself, that it's not just a piece of content - Hollywood's favourite word right now," he told reporters. "It really comes down to that idea of people being remunerated for

each piece of art that is made and can we find a way to get back that idea of art over content."

The world's longest-running film festival was due to start with *Challengers*, a tennis romance with Zendaya, one of the biggest stars of her generation, but the strike caused it to be replaced by an Italian war drama, *Comandante*.

Indie stars

The rest of the line-up was largely unaffected: the festival will see Emma Stone as a Frankenstein-like creature in *Poor Things* and Cooper as legendary conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein in *Maestro*, among several Oscar contenders. But the strikes mean those stars will not be lighting up the red carpet.

Adam Driver has an exemption to show up for *Ferrari* on Thursday because the biopic by Michael Mann (*Heat*) was made outside the studio system. The same is expected for Jessica Chastain, whose new film *Memory* marks her first outing since her Oscar-winning turn in



Hofit Golan