

ISRAEL MINISTER SAYS NUKING GAZA AN OPTION

Tel Aviv, Israel - Israel's Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu said in an interview on Sunday that dropping a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip was "one of the possibilities".

A member of the ultra-nationalist Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) party, Eliyahu claimed in a radio interview that since there were "no non-combatants in Gaza", using an atomic weapon on the Palestinian enclave was "one of the possibilities".

Eliyahu was suspended from government meetings 'until further notice', PM Benjamin Netanyahu's office stated.

See also [Page 07](#)



Al Wusta Wetlands designated Ramsar Site

'Bangladesh visa ban temporary, apolitical'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's decision last week to suspend issuing new visas to Bangladeshi nationals is 'temporary in nature' and the relevant authorities are reviewing the process for quick resumption, the Embassy of Oman in Dhaka, Bangladesh has informed.

In a statement, the embassy said that in light of media reports in Bangladesh on the announcement made by Royal Police Oman to suspend issuing visas to Bangladeshi nationals, it would provide clarification to ensure that the decision is viewed in the right context and perspective.

It added that the decision was taken after a comprehensive periodical review conducted by relevant Omani authorities of existing laws regulating the expatriate labour market 'to ensure that it meets the current demands, maintain its stability and to protect the rights of expatriate



'Oman affirms, beyond an iota of doubt, that the decision is absolutely apolitical in nature'

workers and their employers in accordance with the law'.

According to the embassy statement, the decision is temporary in nature. 'The relevant authorities are exerting all possible efforts to complete the review process as quickly as possible, after which they will resume issuing visas in accordance with the guidelines and instructions that will be concluded from the review process.'

One of the reasons for the temporary suspension, the embassy stated, is to resolve the issue of an increasing number of laid-off workers in the market who resort to working illegally without having full legal protection and rights. 'The review will ensure that workers and employers' rights are fully protected.'

Another objective is to ensure that companies and citizens who apply for work visas for foreign

nationals actually employ them in licensed jobs and not exploit them by engaging them in illegal activities. 'The focus ultimately is on protecting workers' legal and human rights.'

The review will address the growing practice of some nations in imposing cumbersome, lengthy and costly conditions and procedures in the recruitment process, a practise which is counterproductive for both workers and employers, the embassy said.

It stated that Oman highly values and appreciates the contributions of the expatriate Bangladeshi labour force in the development and economic growth of the sultanate and is keen on maintaining and enhancing its close bilateral relations with Bangladesh in a way that serves the mutual interests of both countries.

'Oman affirms, beyond an iota of doubt, that the decision is absolutely apolitical in nature.'

H M decrees oath taking, mutual visa waiver with Slovakia

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued two Royal Decrees on Sunday.

Royal Decree No 78/2023 deals with oath taking.

Article 1 states that - with the exception of the oath to be taken before the Sultan, the oath to be taken by members of the State Council, Majlis A'Shura and judges - oath taking stipulated by laws will be performed by signing an oath to be written in the following words: 'In the name of Allah, the Almighty, I swear to respect the Basic Law of the State and enforced laws and legislations, to carry out my duties truthfully, honourably and honestly and to safeguard public funds, as well as the dignity and integrity of my profession and its secrets'.

Prior to assuming their tasks, all employees of the state's Administrative Apparatus and other public legal persons will pledge to sign the

oath stated in the first article of this decree.

Article 2 cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article 3 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publication.

Royal Decree No 79/2023 ratifies an agreement between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the government of the Slovak Republic on mutual visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports, signed in New York on September 21, 2023.

Article 1 ratifies the above-mentioned agreement as per the version attached to this decree.

Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its data of issue.

ONA

Sayyid Badr, Iran and Jordan FM's review efforts to end Gaza war

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received phone calls from Dr Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Ayman al Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, on Sunday.

H E Sayyid Badr exchanged views on the continuation of Israeli military aggression in the Gaza Strip, causing more civilian casualties and the destruction of public facilities, hospitals and schools.

They also discussed regional and international efforts to achieve a humanitarian truce and



H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi

allow relief organisations to carry out their work, to treat the injured and deliver life-saving supplies to the population in Gaza Strip, and repair demolished vital utilities.

The two ministers stressed the need to give priority to diplomatic and political action to activate the international law for restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

They laid emphasis on the importance of ending Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The ministers also touched on the danger of continued military escalation and the worsening humanitarian situation, in addition to the grave regional challenges that are expected to be discussed at the extraordinary Arab Summit that will be hosted by Saudi Arabia later this month.

"Spoke with my Jordanian counterpart Ayman al Safadi to share views on the very serious consequences of the Israeli military escalation in Gaza and the tragic loss of thousands of children and civilians. Humanitarian action is imperative. Stop the war now," H E Sayyid Badr posted on 'X'.

EV charging points mandatory at fuel stations within 6 months

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has mandated all fuel stations to provide charging points for electric vehicles (EVs) within six months.

H E Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, has issued ministerial decision No 615/2023 amending some provisions of the regulations regarding the 'Conditions and Controls for Issuing Licences for Establishing and Operating Fuel Filling Stations'.

The decision stipulates that owners of commercial fuel stations are obligated to provide an electric charging point for vehicles in accordance with the requirements and controls issued by the Authority for Public Services Regulation.

The decision also states that the marketing company is obli-



gated to provide basic public facilities at all fuel filling stations, such as bathrooms and other services required by the station's location. 'It is also obligated to ensure the cleanliness of these facilities.'

The decision stipulates penalties for those violating the provisions of these regulations, ranging from a written warning on first violation and an administrative fine of RO1,000 in the

event of a repeat violation.

The decision was issued on November 2 and will come into effect 180 days after publication in the Official Gazette.

In a statement last week, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology stated that there are 100 EV charging stations across the sultanate and that it is working on increasing the number to 300 in the next two years.

MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE

YOUR OPINION MATTERS

Heavy rains to hit several governorates today: CAA



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Heavy rains are expected in some parts of Oman starting Monday, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) announced.

The latest weather maps and analysis of the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre show that heavy rains are expected from afternoon until late evening in South Batinah, Muscat, Dakhliyah, North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah.

Thunderstorms are expected to be concentrated on the Hajar Mountains and neighbouring areas as these extend to the coasts of the Sea of Oman.

'Isolated rain from 15-30mm may cause wadis to overflow, while the Arabian Sea along the coast will be moderate to rough with waves of a maximum height of 3m,' CAA stated.

Following forecast of rains on Sunday evening, the governorates of Musandam and North Batinah witnessed moderate to heavy rains that led to the overflow of many wadis.

In North Batinah, varying levels of rain was witnessed in Shinas, Liwa, Sohar and Saham.

The Directorate General of Meteorology has advised people to avoid low-lying areas and wadis, urging them not to engage in swimming or attempt to cross these in order to ensure personal safety. It also called for children not to be left alone when it rains and to stop them from entering ponds and wadis.



Oman to showcase tourism potential at WTM London

Muscat - In a move to position itself as a key player on the global tourism stage, the sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, is set to participate in World Travel Market (WTM) London 2023 starting Monday. The three-day event is a premier international tourism gathering.



H E Azzan al Busaidi

Led by H E Azzan al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Omani delegation is gearing up to promote the sultanate's unique tourism offerings. Oman's pavilion will host an array of government and private stakeholders, reflecting the synergy in efforts to drive tourism.

WTM London is a platform for Oman to spotlight its diverse and alluring tourism features, engaging with global tourism leaders to address sectoral progress and foster strategic alliances.

Oman's pavilion will feature 26 tourism and hotel entities, including Oman Botanical Garden,

Omran Group, Oman Airports Company, National Travel Operator (Visit Oman), various hoteliers, travel enterprises, and small and medium-sized enterprises, besides the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

H E Busaidi outlined the ministry's mission to enhance the tourism sector's GDP contribution, create jobs and investment opportunities, while also showcasing Oman's rich cultural heritage. "To attain these objectives, our strategy includes expanding international engagement to showcase our tourism sector's strengths and offer prominent tourism and hospitality entities

prospects to secure global partnerships," H E Busaidi informed.

This year's extensive presentation at WTM highlights the unified efforts to meet the sultanate's participation goals in global forums, ensuring even small and medium-sized enterprises have a role in bolstering the economic sector.

Dr Hashel bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, emphasised the significance of such exhibitions in advancing Oman's tourism industry and exploring new investment avenues. "Our participation underscores our commitment to propel the sultanate's tourism infrastructure and attract international investments to diversify and enhance our tourism products," he stated.

WTM London 2023 will see over 35,000 professionals from 4,000 entities from more than 155 countries. It will host 75 conferences and discussions, alongside direct networking opportunities.

TRAFFIC WOES

Expansion of urban cities comes with many challenges, an important one being transportation and growing traffic congestion. Muscat has been grappling with traffic snarls in many areas. Which areas do you find most congested and what can be done immediately to alleviate traffic woes? Here's what *Muscat Daily* readers said



Vinnet Verma
Private sector employee

The best solution is more car pooling. This will reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. Muscat's traffic congestion is a daily struggle for many residents, and one of the most congested areas is Al Khuwair. Immediate solutions can include creating alternative routes.

Mohammad Balushi
HR executive

The Seeb area in Muscat often has traffic jams. Other places include Al Khuwair and Ghubra. Authorities could invest in constructing more flyovers or underpasses, and promote remote working options to reduce rush hour traffic.

Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

There are many ways through which traffic problems can be tackled. During peak time, traffic management teams need to monitor traffic and create diversion where it is heavy. Another option is to have car pooling to reduce the number of cars on the road, which is also good for the environment.

Ishmam Islam
Student

Al Mouj roundabout has the worst traffic during peak hours. Building a bridge over it may reduce the intersecting points for traffic in all three directions.

Taher Sher
Private sector employee

Al Sarooj area is where one can always find traffic and the reason for this is every-

one is changing lane from third to first and second to first. I have observed this very carefully.

Khalid Sultan
Driver

Muttrah is notorious for traffic jams. A quick remedy could be enforcing strict traffic regulations and introducing incentives for off-peak travel to ease bottlenecks in this historic part of the city. Also there must be more basement parking facilities.

Shaikh Shafiullah
Private sector employee

I feel the traffic congestion in Mabela is the worst in the city. One solution can be by making it one-way. It will be ease traffic.

Wad Nasser said al Alawi
Intern

The Mawaleh traffics lights - between Al Bahja and Muscat City Centre to the main road - is horrible. It literally takes an entire hour to cross this point. The roundabout in front of the Zanzibari restaurant in North Al Hail is also very bad.

Floyd Joel D'mello
Muscat International Airport staff

The road from the airport to Al Mouj desperately needs a third lane, and Al Mouj roundabout needs to go. We need a four-way signal system there.

Khalid Amin
Electrical engineer

The roundabout adjacent to Makkah Hypermarket in Amerat is very congested. You will find this spot busy all the time. A flyover in this area will prevent traffic jams and accidents.

Syed Sohail
Private sector employee

There should be multiple transportation options available to reduce traffic, such as buses and taxis. Another option that could be considered is a metro system. The introduction of a metro service would greatly benefit Oman by boosting tourism and helping to alleviate traffic congestion.

Zeenath Chowdhury
Student

Make more roads. Put signals where there are none. Please put a speed breaker in Hamriya opposite Muscat Pharmacy. I have been living here since my childhood. There are too many accidents.

Haya Aljeto
Private sector employee

Sahwa Roundabout is a monumental roundabout but it is time to turn into a more functional diversion road. Make it an intersection like Qurum and develop a flyover linking Sultan Qaboos road to go to Nizwa so private cars have the option of a direct route.

Maanoj Agarwala
General manager

Al Khuwair has the heaviest traffic. Immediate solutions include one-way roads/by-lanes aligned to peak hours, flexible office hours spread over different times, preventing parking on roads which reduce area, encouraging car pooling, encouraging use of public transport and encouraging work from home, at least 2-3 days a week.

Kumar Selvi
Homemaker

Al Khuwair - near Radisson Blu and Al Khuwair Square - is really congested. Proper arrangements can be made by installing signals.

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) would like to invite competent and experienced companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender No.	47/2023
Tender Title	Conducting Commercial and Market Feasibility Study for Tourism Experiences Across OMRAN Group Portfolio
Tender Submission Closing Date	11.12.2023
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders/



omran.om/tenders/

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group)
Tel: +968 24 39 11 11
info@omran.om
[@omrangroupom](https://www.omrangroup.om)



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Advertisement No.(34 / 2023)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
PRE/23/061 Re-call	Construction of Side Protection For Internal Road in Bousher	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/187	Maintenance of Track Roads at Quriyyat	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/188	Maintenance of Track Roads at Al Amerat	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/207	Road construction at Umq Rubakh	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/234	Demolition of Building at Muscat	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/244	Supply, replacement of Computers – Unit Rate	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/245	Construction of Box Culvert and Road in Mabellah South	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/246	Supply, installation & Upgrade of IT Infrastructure	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/253	Beautification Works in Al Daqal at Al Amerat	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/258	Post QS Services for Construction of Dualization of Al Ansab- Al Jifnain	25/11/2023	17/12/2023

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
- Clarification and Support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
 - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Consumer Protection Authority statistics indicate an increase in e-commerce complaints. What measures should be taken to reduce e-commerce violations?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram

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Oman sends relief to cyclone-hit Yemen



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is providing necessary humanitarian supplies and relief to Yemen, which was ravaged by Cyclone Tej last month. In a statement, Oman Charitable Organization (OCO) said that the local authorities in Al Mahra Governorate in Yemen received its convoy of about 20 trucks carrying aid and food supplies for those affected by the

tropical cyclone, which affected the districts of Huswain and Al Ghaydah. OCO stated that it is continuing to transport items of essential need within the framework of its relief programme to Yemen. People can send donations through Bank Muscat account number 0423010700010017, Bank Dhofar 01040609090001, Bank Nizwa 00122200222001 or via www.donate.om, OCO informed.

Al Wusta Wetlands: Haven for birds designated Ramsar Site

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Al Wusta Wetlands Reserve, a crucial winter habitat for migratory waterbirds on the Asian-East African Flyway, has been recognised as the sultanate's third Ramsar Site, which marks suitable wetlands for designation by referring to the criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance.

The Environment Authority on Sunday announced that the Secretariat of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has endorsed the reserve. Prior to this, Qurm Nature Reserve and Al Ansab Wetland were designated as Ramsar Sites in 2013 and 2020 respectively.

Situated in Mahout in Al Wusta governorate, the reserve is a vibrant mosaic of ecosystems,



boasting rare biological diversity both regionally and globally. This makes it a unique site for biodiversity studies and sustainable wetland utilisation, especially in the intertidal zone.

Recent surveys conducted by EA, in conjunction with international experts, have revealed a

surge in migratory bird visits, with numbers soaring over half a million during winters.

Remarkably, 23 bird species documented during those surveys were identified to exceed 1% of the total migratory bird population on the Asian-East African Flyway.

Spread over an area of about 214mn hectares, the reserve houses a plethora of ecosystems exhibiting high environmental sensitivity. From natural marine islands, bays, creeks, and coastal dunes to expansive landfills, salt flats, gravel plains, and wild grasses, the reserve is a repository of ecological riches.

The marine life too is diverse, inclusive of rare entities like the Arabian Sea humpback whale, along with other whales and dolphins. Moreover, the area along the coast of Mahout Island in Ghubbat Hashish showcases the largest undisturbed concentration of mangrove trees in Oman, covering about 162 hectares. The reserve's natural allure has the potential to draw nature enthusiasts, bird watchers, and wildlife admirers, which can directly boost eco-tourism - a conduit to bolster the national economy through environmentally sustainable projects and investment opportunities, abiding by the local and international laws to ensure the preservation and efficient utilisation of natural resources.

Govt holds meeting to review digital transformation journey

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology on Sunday held a meeting of the leaders from government digital transformation teams and experts from the information and communication technology sector to assess the sultanate's journey towards digitalisation so far.

This is the second meeting of this nature that drew over 120 government employees, besides several experts from relevant fields. Over two days, the congregation will focus on assessing the strides made under the National Digital Economy Programme and the actionable strategies of the Government Digital Transformation Programme adopted for the period between 2021 and 2025.

The objective of this meeting is to harmonise the efforts of various government entities for streamlining the digital transformation journey through shared insights and consolidated efforts to realise Oman Vision 2040.

"This vision is dedicated to cultivating a dynamic and innovative governmental landscape, expediting the digital transformation initiatives," the



organisers said. The meeting provides a forum for addressing the hurdles encountered by institutions in the midst of digital change, and deliberate on tangible solutions to circumvent project implementation issues within this domain, they added.

The highlight of the first day was the Ministry of Interior's presentation on its digital experience in executing the Majlis A'Shura elections via the 'Intakhib' application - a significant milestone in Oman's electoral process.

Additionally, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority reviewed its experiences with the 'Nafath' platform.

Since its launch in February 2022, Nafath has served as a virtual incubator, drawing in Omani

professionals skilled in technical areas, telecommunications and postal services. It aspires to enhance the domestic value of these sectors and embarked on some initiatives such as contract project provisions, compilation of databases of local companies and expertise, and facilitation of training endeavours.

Nafath seeks to open avenues for additional income, foster competition and transparency, and enable access to projects within its targeted domains.

Key topics discussed at the meeting included future objectives within the Government Digital Transformation Programme, effective management of budgets in digital projects across government units, and central and collaborative initiatives.

Mwasalat transported 3mn passengers in Q3

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman National Transport Company - Mwasalat - transported more than 3mn passengers in the third quarter of 2023, according to the latest company figures.

With over 115,000 daily passengers, the government-owned company transported 3,145,545 passengers within cities of the sultanate, compared to 2.1mn during the same period in 2022.

Mwasalat's ferry service transported over 177,973 passengers compared to 163,7000

during the same period in 2022. Omanis made up 34.98 % of the passengers availing its bus services, while on ferries they accounted for 80.68 % of the total passengers. Female passengers availing buses accounted for 12.34% and 21.34% for ferries.

The ferry services played a crucial role with Mwasalat transporting over 456,000 vehicles, while buses transported more than 18 tonnes of goods.

'These numbers reflect the economic and social significance of Mwasalat,' the company stated.

Dr Rashid al Balushi elected Oman's rights panel chief

Muscat - The Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) on Sunday elected Dr Rashid bin Hamad al Balushi as its chairman and Saud bin Saleh al Mawali as his deputy in accordance with Article 3 of its bylaws and Royal Decree No 57/2022.

Balushi said that the committee will work on developing a na-

tional human rights strategy and establish an institutional identity for the committee that can adequately reflect the mission and vision of the panel.

Dr Balushi added that the committee will work hard to raise Oman's rating to level A of the International Foundation of Human Rights.

Embassy of India Muscat Advertisement for recruitment of Clerk (01 post)

Applications are invited for the post of Clerk in the Embassy of India, Muscat.

Essential qualification:

- Graduate degree from recognized university/institution
- Proficient in reading, writing and speaking English
- Conversant with computer applications viz. handling of MS office, knowledge of IT networking and Social Media platforms.
- Valid residence visa of Oman

Age criteria: Between 25-35 years

Desired qualifications:

- Knowledge of Arabic and Hindi languages is desirable.

Pay/allowances/other benefits: The pay scale of Clerk is 335-10-485-15-635-19-825 with starting salary of OMR 335.000 per month.

Work experience: Candidate with two years prior working in Oman would be preferred.

Interested candidate may fill out an application online at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd3QJs3aMULHtnEOpUBB6zZuoYw2eXJTq4v6DriuXTccB4z8w/viewform?usp=pp_url and sent their detailed CV along with scanned copies of educational degree/experience certificates, Oman residence visa and copies of reference provided by previous employer(s), (if any) at secondsecadm@gmail.com latest by 20 November 2023.

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إعلان مناقصات

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers to the following tenders

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصات أدناه

No. رقم	Tender Ref. الترقيم المناقصي	Tender Title عنوان المناقصة	Tender Fee OMR الترقيم
1	SIPC 2023 -140	Update of IT Policy and Procedures.	26.250
2	SIPC 2023 -151	Road Re-Surfacing of Damaged Road Surface at SOHAR Port Exit.	26.250

- The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%.
- Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Monday, 6/11/2023 until 4:00 pm on Thursday 16/11/2023.
- Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

الخطوة الأولى: يجب على مقدمي العطاءات سداد رسوم المناقصات وفقاً للتفاصيل المبكدة أدناه،

الخطوة الثانية: يتعين على مقدمي العطاءات تقديم المستندات التالية:

- طلب الحصول على النسخة الإلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة
- رخصة من إمارات الحصول التجاري
- نموذج السجل التجاري المرفقة على أن يتم إرسالها إلى: info.purshottamkanjiexchange@gmail.com

الخطوة الثالثة: يتعين على مقدمي العطاءات إرفاق نسخة إلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة عبر البريد الإلكتروني:

- يقدم نموذج ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة قبول أو رفض أي مورد من إمارات صحر أو المنطقة الحرة
- يطلب على جميع المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة تقديم بطاقة إيداع إلى جانب مستندات المناقصة
- في حال وجود أي أسئلة أو استفسارات تتعلق بالمناقصات يرجى التواصل معنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني: info.purshottamkanjiexchange@gmail.com

الخطوة الرابعة: Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted. ملاحظة: التحويل البنكي هي الطريقة الوحيدة المقبولة للدفع

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents
- All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address: info.purshottamkanjiexchange@gmail.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic Tender Document by e-mail.

- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons
- All SMEs are requested to provide their RIYADAH Card along with the required documents
- For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to: info.purshottamkanjiexchange@gmail.com

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MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,523.97
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Pakistan	729.96
Bangladesh	288.02
Philippines	146.18
Sri Lanka	855.60

*Rates as on November 05
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

World food prices fall at softer pace in October

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that global food prices have dropped for the third consecutive month in October, although at a slower pace.

The FAO Food Price Index averaged 120.3 points in October, reflecting a decrease of 0.5% from the previous month. The slight decline in October is attributed to lower price indices for sugar, cereals, vegetable oils, and meat, while the index for dairy products experienced a rebound.

The FAO food price index is a trade-weighted index that tracks international market prices of five major food commodity groups. The cereal price index went down by 1% from the previous month due to lower rice and wheat prices.

The vegetable oil price index decreased for the third month in a row, falling 0.7%.

Investments in digital services, ICT to drive growth of telecom firms

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Investments in digital services and information and communication technology (ICT) are driving diversification and growth for telecom operators in Oman and other GCC countries, while the sale of non-core assets supports the efficient use of capital, according to Moody's Investor Service.

In its new telecommunications sector report, Moody's noted that GCC operators are investing in digital consumer services and technology enterprise solutions in parallel with their expansion into new markets. It said, 'These are complementary to operators' core connectivity offerings and leverage the existing customer base while diversifying from their traditional telecom businesses.'

As stated by Moody's, Saudi Telecom Company (STC) and Omantel are actively building their ICT capabilities, with a focus on corporate and government customers and the wholesale business. The companies are developing these businesses through organic growth, new startup ventures, and small bolt-on acquisitions, the rating agency said.

'As a result, Omantel's revenue share of ICT, wholesale, and other services increased to 39%



Moody's said GCC telecom operators are following the global trend of divesting tower infrastructure

Telecom operators in Oman and other GCC countries are investing in digital consumer services and technology enterprise solutions in parallel with their expansion into new markets

MOODY'S INVESTOR SERVICE

in 2022 from 22% in 2018', Moody's noted.

This expansion of products and services should support further business growth. Moody's

expects the GCC telecom operators' annual revenue to increase by an average of 3% during 2023-2024.

'However, UAE's e& will experience

much higher growth in 2024 due to the consolidation of the PPF Telecom assets. In contrast, Omantel's revenue growth will be low because expansion in its other businesses is offset by lacklustre performance in its core market, where it faces fierce competition,' the rating agency said.

Tower infrastructure divestment

The GCC telecom operators, as

noted by Moody's, are following the global trend of divesting tower infrastructure. The rating agency said that the sale of tower infrastructure has the potential to help the companies unlock monetary value and provide cash for deleveraging or capital spending, maximising shareholder value and improving return on capital employed.

'Tower sales will also help the GCC telecom operators optimise operating costs and capital spending thanks to the sharing of infrastructure. Additionally, as the GCC operators progress with their 5G rollout, collocation arrangements should be strongly beneficial because of the high density of towers on the surface required for this technology. However, depending on tower lease arrangements, increased inflation may temporarily curtail the expected benefits due to higher indexation of lease costs,' Moody's said.

In December 2022, Omantel completed the sale of its 2,519 towers to Helios Towers for a total cash consideration of \$494mn. Omantel subsequently entered into a long-term master service agreement to continue to use the towers and used the cash proceeds to repay debt.

'The company (Omantel) may also sell an additional 226 towers for \$53mn over the next 12-18 months. However, deleveraging

was modest because we added back around \$440mn of Moody's-adjusted capitalised lease to our debt calculation,' Moody's said.

In July 2023, Qatar's Ooredoo, Kuwait's Mobile Telecommunications Company (Zain), and TASC Towers Holding entered exclusive negotiations to create an independent tower company comprising up to 30,000 towers in Qatar, Kuwait, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, and Jordan. Moody's said this partnership, if it succeeds, will form the largest independent tower company in the Middle East and North Africa region.

GCC telecom operators are actively seeking and investing in telecommunications enterprises in Europe and potentially in Africa and Asia. This increased market activity, which has been evident since 2022, follows several quiet years.

'Thanks to the buoyant macroeconomic environment in their domestic markets, the GCC telecom companies demonstrate solid financial performance and benefit from robust balance sheets. Now, they are eager to deploy their significant resources, diversify from oil-dependent or emerging market economies, increase their buying power over vendors, and preserve growth in consolidated revenue and earnings,' Moody's said.

Oman Tax Authority, Bank Muscat organise seminar on VAT regulations

Muscat - The Oman Tax Authority and Bank Muscat organised a seminar on the value added tax (VAT) to raise the awareness of corporates and entrepreneurs on the VAT regulations and liabilities.

The seminar encompassed a number of topics, most prominently; the concept of VAT, tax rates, taxable registrants, input tax calculations, tax return, tax payment method, tax records and books, in addition to tax refund and deferral of payment of tax. The seminar also witnessed a remarkable interaction where the attendees' queries were answered.

The attendees were informed about tax laws and the most important electronic services that allow taxable entities process their transactions and submit returns on the specified dates.

Specialists from the Oman



Tax Authority stressed the importance of raising tax awareness among the institutional and corporate sector of tax laws and introducing them to the most important developments of tax legislation. They explained the importance of submitting tax returns on time through the electronic portal of the authority,

where most of the services are available online to make it easier for the taxable institutions complete their tax transactions from their place in Oman.

On the occasion, Ibrahim bin Khamis al Balushi, senior assistant general manager - SMEs, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat attaches great importance to

supporting corporates and developing small and medium-sized enterprises. It is keen to organise workshops and seminars hosting reputed global expertise in order to help customers get well-informed about the economic trends and latest business-related outlooks, as part of Oman Vision 2040 objectives."

Qatar signs 27-year gas supply deal with China's Sinopec

Doha, Qatar - Qatar has agreed to supply Sinopec with natural gas for 27 years, the Gulf emirate's state-owned energy company said Saturday, its second such deal with the Chinese firm.

Doha will supply three million tonnes of gas a year under the deal, QatarEnergy said, announcing another agreement granting the Chinese oil giant for a further share of Qatar's North Field gas expansion project.

The expansion, which broke ground last month, contains the world's biggest natural gas reserves and extends under the Gulf into Iranian territory.

Under the deal inked in Shanghai, QatarEnergy will give Sinopec a five per cent interest in a joint venture with a six million tonnes per year capacity in the second phase the expansion, North Field South.

Asian countries led by China,



with Qatar for four million tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) annually, which at the time was the longest in the industry.

"These historic milestones are a testament to the excellent bilateral relations between the People's Republic of China and the state of Qatar as well as between Sinopec and QatarEnergy," the Gulf firm said in a statement.

The first Sinopec deal was succeeded by a flurry of similar 27-year agreements with France's Total, Britain's Shell and Italy's Eni, all announced in recent weeks.

In June this year, Qatar also announced a 27-year supply deal with the China National Petroleum Corporation.

US giants ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil have also signed deals to partner in the expansion. AFP

Israel-Hamas conflict causes concern about new economic corridor project

Istanbul, Turkey - The Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza may pose a significant threat to the feasibility and sustainability of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) project if clashes extend to other regions, according to experts.

"Presently, it is evident that the future prospects of IMEC are quite grim in the face of the ongoing conflict," Md Nazmul Islam, a political science professor at Ankara Yildirim Beyazıt University, told Anadolu Agency. Islam said it is noteworthy that the recent conflict is intertwined with one of the two crucial actors of the project - Saudi Arabia and the UAE - which are actively striving to secure their positions.

"It is important to acknowledge that their efforts may not

prove entirely effective if the conflict extends to other regional areas, such as Lebanon, Syria, or Iran, as these nations may become embroiled in it, either directly or indirectly," said Islam.

He said consequently, the IMEC initiative is likely to encounter various opposition, encompassing security and political challenges in the future.

Nonetheless, the initiative, instigated by India and led by Western powers, is positioned for long-term shallow success, he said, adding that ultimately reverting to its original course as its primary objective is to establish a strategy of checks and balances in the global strategic competition, especially against China and its initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic



People check the damage caused by an Israeli strike on the Al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, on Saturday (AFP)

Corridor (CPEC), as well as against entities opposed to the Western alliance in global politics.

"While short-term obstacles may impede its progress, the initiative is poised for long-term

resurgence, as it is well-prepared to confront the political, security, trade, and business challenges that lie ahead," Islam added.

The IMEEC was unveiled at the G-20 summit in New Delhi in September. It aims to connect

India to Europe with a route that runs through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Greece.

A memorandum of understanding was signed at the summit between India, US, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, Italy and the EU to establish the IMEC, which will help increase trade, provide energy resources and develop digital connectivity.

While the countries signing the memorandum did not make a binding financial commitment, they agreed to prepare an "action plan" for the creation of the corridor within two months.

One of the middle points of the IMEEC is planned to be in Israel, making the current escalation in the region another cause for concern.

Dr Ajay Sahai, Director General and CEO of the Federation of

Indian Export Organizations, said the effect of the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict has until now, not led to countries coming together and openly joining the war, either partying ways with Israel or Palestine.

"However, if the war does not prolong, we may not see much impact of that except on the oil prices front, about which we in India has a little concern," he told Anadolu Agency.

Sahai expressed concern regarding logistics, saying the conflict may push up the freight costs as there may be a limited availability of fleet, and with war insurance premiums going up, the freight rate may go up.

The crises may also result in a "little" challenge on the credit front as well and probably the premium of companies, the in-

ternational insurance or re-insurance companies and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India may go up, he said.

"We are already seeing what is happening in Russia and Ukraine. Probably we cannot not afford a second war in our Asian Gulf region," he said.

Sahai believes the conflict between Hamas and Israel will be contained, but if it escalates into a kind of conflict with Mideast countries joining, there will probably be "a big question mark over the entire IMEC project also."

The IMEC is being envisioned as a network of transport corridors, including railway lines and sea lanes, that is expected to aid economic growth through the integration of Asia, the Arabian Gulf and Europe.

Anadolu Agency

Energy giant Shell reports \$7bn profits in Q3

London, UK - British energy giant Shell said its net profit rose 4.5% to \$7bn in the third quarter from a year earlier, as it benefits from high oil prices.

"Shell delivered another quarter of strong operational and financial performance, capturing opportunities in volatile commodity markets," chief executive Wael Sawan said in a statement.

"We continue to simplify our portfolio while delivering more value with less emissions," he added in an earnings statement.

Energy majors are benefiting in the current fourth quarter from elevated oil prices, which are being fuelled by concerns the Israel-Hamas conflict could widen across the crude-rich Middle East.

Shell on Thursday also an-

Shell delivered another quarter of strong operational and financial performance, capturing opportunities in volatile commodity markets

Wael Sawan

nounced a fresh buyback of shares worth \$3.5bn.

Adjusted earnings in the third quarter stood at \$6.2bn, up compared with the second quarter, on "robust operational performance and higher oil prices and refining margins".



Over the first nine months of 2023, Shell's profit was however down sharply, reflecting lower oil

prices year-on-year. Crude futures had soared at the start of 2022 following the

invasion of Ukraine by major oil producer Russia. After later falling somewhat,

they are once more on the rise thanks also to output cuts by Saudi Arabia and Russia, the main players in the OPEC+ oil-producing cartel.

"Higher oil prices have coincided conveniently for Shell with a three-per cent increase in production..., reaching the equivalent of 1.75mn barrels of oil a day," Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown, noted.

"Shell is still flirting with an all-time high in its share price, with the decision by CEO Wael Sawan to refocus on the hydrocarbons business, while pivoting more slowly to renewables," Streeter added.

As expected, Shell's latest bumper profits drew the ire of environmentalists.

"People are sick of watching oil bosses feign concern about the planet while slashing jobs and investment in renewables and ploughing money into dividends, share buybacks, and new fossil fuel projects," Charlie Kronick, senior climate advisor at Greenpeace UK, said in reaction to the company's results.

Shell in June said it planned to keep oil output steady until 2030, while maintaining that its overall goal to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 remains intact.

Meanwhile last month, Qatar agreed to supply Shell with natural gas for 27 years.

Shell rival BP on Tuesday posted net profit totalling \$4.9bn for the third quarter.

AFP

Apple sales lose ground, but iPhone growth strong

San Francisco, US - Apple reported that sales fell for the fourth consecutive quarter when compared to the prior year, but profit rose on the back iPhones and services.

The tech giant said it made a profit of \$23bn on revenue of \$89.5bn, which was down slightly from the same period last year.

Apple chief executive Tim Cook said iPhone sales set a new record for its September quarter while money taken in from services hit an all-time high.

The company brought in \$43.8bn from iPhone sales while its services unit selling products such as Apple Music and iCloud brought in \$22.3bn, up 16% from a year ago.

"We now have our strongest lineup of products ever heading into the holiday season, including the iPhone 15 lineup," Cook said in an earnings release.

The iPhone performance came as sales of smartphones continued to shrink globally in the recently-ended quarter as consumers watched spending, according to market tracker Counterpoint.

Smartphone sales fell 8%, marking the ninth consecutive quarter of decline in year-over-year comparisons, according to research by Counterpoint's Market Pulse service.

Apple's strong September sales along with buzz around the new iPhone 15 line-up were signs the current quarter may break the losing trend, according to the market tracker.

The company said that the supply of premium versions of the iPhone 15 would be constrained until the end of the year, putting a brake on sales.

"We're working very hard to get the product in the hands of all the customers that have ordered



This photo taken on October 30 shows a poster for the new iPhone 15 at an Apple store in Shenyang, China (AFP)

it," said Apple CFO Luca Maestri.

Cook said that Apple continued to face "an uneven macro-economic environment" in the quarter, including pressure from currency exchange rates.

"We've adapted continuously to circumstances beyond our control, while being thoughtful and deliberate on spending."

Apple brought in \$43.8bn from iPhone sales while its services unit selling products such as Apple Music and iCloud brought in \$22.3bn, up 16% from a year ago

Apple's Macs suffered in particular with sales plummeting by half, to \$7.6bn for the quarter, though this was partly due to a post-covid sales burst a year ago.

"We have great confidence in our Mac lineup and are excited about the recently announced iMac and MacBook Pro, powered by our M3 chips," Maestri said.

The number of Mac users is at an all-time high, and half of the people buying models during the recently ended quarter were new to Apple's line of computers, according to Maestri.

Apple unveiled its latest iPhone lineup in September, with

its Lightning charger ports replaced on the newest models by a universal charger after a tussle with the European Union.

The firm said sales in China slipped, but Cook added this was due to foreign exchange factors.

"Underneath that if you look at the different the categories, iPhone actually set a September

quarter record in mainland China," he said.

Since the US tech giant first established a presence in China in 1993, Apple has grown into a major provider of smartphones, laptops and consumer electronics in the country.

During an earlier visit in March to Beijing, Cook said his company enjoyed a "symbiotic" relationship with China.

The country remains the company's main manufacturing hub, despite diplomatic turbulence between Washington and Beijing as well as talk of pivoting more production to India.

AFP

Turkish inflation rate holds near 61%

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's annual inflation rate held steady near 61% last month, official data showed, highlighting government efforts to ease a historic cost of living crisis.

The rate inched down to 61.36% in October from 61.53% in September, the TUIK state statistics agency said.

The pace of month-on-month increases also slowed to 3.43% from 4.75%.

Central bank chief Hafize Gaye Erkan said that the rate will likely peak between 70% and 75% next May.

She expects inflation to

reach 65% by the end of the year and drop to 36% by the end of 2024.

Turkey is suffering the worst bout of inflation of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's two-decade rule. The official annual inflation rate peaked at 85% in October last year and climbed back up above 60% in September.

After winning a May election, Erdogan appointed a new team of market-friendly economists that was given the freedom to sharply hike its policy setting rate.

Analysts blame Erdogan for

provoking the crisis by forcing the nominally independent central bank to slash borrowing costs far below the rate at which prices were rising.

Erdogan had been a long-time supporter of the unorthodox theory that the high interest rates cause - rather than cure - consumer price spikes.

Erkan has lifted the bank's policy rate to 35% from 8.5% since the May vote.

Most analysts expect her to raise rates to 40% or higher in the coming months.

AFP



NATIONAL ALUMINIUM PRODUCTS COMPANY S.A.O.G

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE THIRD QUARTER ENDED 30 September 2023

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors I present the unaudited financial statements for the period ended 30th September 2023 and an overview of the performance of the Company.

Economic environment

The global economy recovery has been uneven, and many economies remain below pre-pandemic trends. Medium-term global growth projections remain weak with persistent core inflation and the near-term risks remain tilted to the downside.

Performance Review

The financial performance of the Group, Parent Company its Subsidiary, during the nine-month ended 30th September 2023 as compared to 2022, is summarized in the table below:

Particulars	Summary of Income Statement			
	Group		Parent	
	2023 YTD	2022 YTD	2023 YTD	2022 YTD
Revenue	20,616	18,852	20,427	18,829
Net loss before taxation	(2,133)	(3,291)	(2,194)	(3,241)
Net loss after tax	(1,860)	(2,805)	(1,923)	(2,756)

Total production and dispatch quantity increased by 27% during the period compared to the same period last year combined with an LME drop by 20% during the respective periods.

The Group realized revenues of RO 20.616 million, compared to RO 18.852 million during the same previous last year but reported a net loss after tax of RO 1.860 million, compared to RO 2.805 million the previous year. The company's financial performance remains affected by severe working capital constraints, significant delays in collections, the high costs of borrowing and delays in restructuring the Company's finances.

Future outlook

The GCC economy is still expected to grow by about 2.5% in 2023 and 3.2% in 2024. However, the Aluminium market is expected to witness fluctuating growth trends in the long-term and inflation and supply chain concerns are expected to continue in 2023.

The company is exploring all options to reinstate its Capital, enhance its working capital facilities and secure the raw materials at reasonable cost and palatable credit terms. Management also strives to develop new markets and widen its customer base with high yield and good margin opportunities..

Corporate Governance:

The Board and Management maintain a high level of professionalism and integrity in all its operations and stand fully compliant with the Code of Corporate Governance.

Acknowledgement and Appreciation

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I express my deep appreciation to our clients for their confidence in our products, our stakeholders support for their trust in our company, Management and staff for their loyalty, hard work, dedication and contribution, to all my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their valuable contributions. Particular appreciation is extended to regulatory and government authorities, MSM and CMA whose continuous support we find vital.

We all express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik for his vision and guidance and wish him all success in leading Oman to achieve greater progress and prosperity.

For & on behalf of the Board of Directors
National Aluminium Products Co. S.A.O.G.

Dr. Zakia Hassan Al-Naseeb
Chairperson

Condensed interim statement of financial position As of 30th September 2023				
	Unaudited period ended 30 September 2023	Audited year ended 31 December 2022	Unaudited period ended 30 September 2023	Audited year ended 31 December 2022
	RO	RO	RO	RO
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	10,410,774	10,746,918	10,406,988	10,742,263
Intangible assets	53,057	71,274	47,076	63,963
Right-of-use asset	922,236	949,627	922,236	949,627
Investment property	460,000	460,000	460,000	460,000
Investment in subsidiary	-	-	31,500	31,500
Deferred tax asset	901,188	628,500	900,148	628,500
Total non-current assets	12,747,255	12,856,319	12,767,948	12,875,853
Current assets				
Inventories	2,371,283	2,402,175	2,371,283	2,402,175
Trade and other receivables	8,647,075	7,856,186	5,315,940	5,517,222
Amounts due from related parties	-	-	3,486,278	2,586,113
Cash and cash equivalents	406,067	260,688	121,771	22,341
Total current assets	11,424,425	10,519,049	11,295,272	10,527,851
Total assets	24,171,680	23,375,368	24,063,220	23,403,704
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity:				
Share capital	857,145	3,357,145	857,145	3,357,145
Legal reserve	-	1,119,048	-	1,119,048
Revaluation reserve	1,404,814	1,550,598	1,404,814	1,550,598
(Accumulated losses)/retained earnings	(3,154,904)	(5,059,685)	(3,174,165)	(5,016,392)
Total equity	(892,945)	967,106	(912,206)	1,010,399
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities				
Lease liability	1,073,124	1,068,158	1,073,124	1,068,158
Employees' end of service benefits	273,378	298,977	273,378	298,977
Total non-current liabilities	1,346,502	1,367,135	1,346,502	1,367,135
Current liabilities				
Lease liability	65,128	65,128	65,128	65,128
Borrowings	15,972,716	15,964,865	15,972,716	15,964,865
Trade and other payables	7,680,278	5,011,134	7,591,080	4,996,177
Total current liabilities	23,718,122	21,041,127	23,628,924	21,026,170
Total liabilities	25,064,624	22,408,262	24,975,426	22,393,305
Total equity and liabilities	24,171,680	23,375,368	24,063,220	23,403,704
Net assets per share	(0.104)	0.029	(0.106)	0.030
Condensed interim statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income. for the period ended 30th September 2023				
	Consolidated Unaudited 01.01.2023 to 30.09.2023	Consolidated Unaudited 01.01.2022 to 30.09.2022	Consolidated Unaudited 01.01.2023 to 30.09.2023	Consolidated Unaudited 01.01.2022 to 30.09.2022
	RO	RO	RO	RO
Revenue	18,062,186	16,285,412	17,873,607	16,261,395
Scrap sales	2,553,515	2,566,809	2,553,515	2,566,809
Cost of sales	(20,232,695)	(19,625,805)	(20,223,813)	(19,613,388)
Gross Profit	383,006	(773,584)	203,309	(785,184)
Other income	63,955	198,337	60,247	198,337
Expenses:				
General and administrative expenses	(831,301)	(815,673)	(808,084)	(807,477)
Selling and distribution expenses	(681,655)	(598,219)	(593,973)	(549,246)
Allowance for expected credit losses	(87,432)	(192,875)	(87,432)	(192,875)
Net finance costs	(979,312)	(1,109,011)	(968,320)	(1,104,937)
Loss before tax	(2,132,739)	(3,291,025)	(2,194,253)	(3,241,382)
Income tax	272,688	485,658	271,648	485,668
Loss for the period	(1,860,051)	(2,805,357)	(1,922,605)	(2,755,714)
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-	-
Total Comprehensive loss for the period	(1,860,051)	(2,805,357)	(1,922,605)	(2,755,714)
Basic loss per share	(0.289)	(0.111)	(0.299)	(0.109)
NOTE				
The Company does not have items under other comprehensive income.				
Certain comparative figures have been reclassified to confirm to presentation adopted in these financial statements.				
The complete accounts will be sent to any shareholder who requests them either in Arabic or English as required within 7 days of receipt of the request.				

Workshop on nuclear science teaching ends

The Ministry of Education (MoE), in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), concluded on Thursday the regional workshop on best practices for teaching nuclear science and technology at the secondary level.

The five-day workshop had 81 participants from 22 countries, in order to empower teachers at the secondary stage and enhance their teaching skills related to nuclear science and technology and raise their level of awareness about the wide and diverse applications of nuclear technology in various areas of life.

During the five days of the regional workshop witnessed a number of sessions included various presentations on topics related to the best practices and experiences in teaching nuclear sciences and technology.

On the last day, moderators of all the sessions presented the outcomes of the papers presented in these sessions. Then, the agreed action plan was approved to contribute to achieving the goal of reaching 10mn students through the programmes provided by the regional technical cooperation project RAS0091 on strengthening education in nuclear science and technology.



The strategy for building teachers' skills with regard to facilitating learning of nuclear science and technology subjects in a sustainable manner was also approved.

The posters displayed in the workshop included a number of the experiences of the participating countries, among which: Teaching nuclear science and technology from the perspective of Bangladesh, linking nuclear science and technology with secondary school curricula in Syria, developing curricula and teaching tools in nuclear science and technology in Jordan, placing atomic energy and nuclear science in secondary science curricula

in Nepal, introducing nuclear science technology into the upper secondary school curricula in Sri Lanka, supporting secondary education by sending nuclear science and technology experts to schools, developing the Ene Hyakka information website, and applying radiological detection in order to apply best practices in linking nuclear science and technology in secondary education applications to the nuclear devices laboratory, using Learner Guided Activity Sheets (L-GAS) to help improve the academic performance of 10th grade students, break down stereotypes about nuclear science and technology, and enhance their benefit

to society and the environment through curriculum design and evaluation.

The workshop came up with several recommendations, including: Completing a series of best practices guide on teaching nuclear science and technology at the secondary educational level, in addition to a special strategy for building teachers' skills towards facilitating learning related to nuclear science and technology topics in a sustainable manner, and formulating a strategic action plan agreed upon unanimously to enhance the achievement of the desired goal that is to reach 10mn students by 2025.

Bank Muscat organises seminar for customers

In line of its corporate vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to enhancing and supporting the SMEs sector, Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, organised a seminar on 'Secrets of Success - A Company's Transformational Journey Towards Growth' in Salalah, with the attendance of a number of executive officers from the Bank and 'Najahi' Business Banking customers from Dhofar.

Speaking on the occasion, Taya Eid Bait Sabee, Deputy General Manager - Interior Regions, Bank Muscat, delivered a speech in which he expressed his gratitude for the active participation of entrepreneurs in the seminar organised for 'Najahi' Business Banking customers.

During the speech, the Deputy General Manager highlighted the prominent roles the SME sector plays in driving the sultanate's economic growth, bringing about sustainable development, and creating job opportunities for the Omani youth. He also explained that the Bank Muscat's 'Najahi' Business Banking provides great support to SMEs through a suite of products and services offered to cater the diverse needs of entrepreneurs and customers.

Therefore, Taya extended his thanks and appreciation to all



SMEs for their constant trust in the support granted by Bank Muscat, having emphasised that the bank will continue providing the best services to its individual and institutional customers.

During the event, Ahmed Ndoom, an entrepreneurial consultant, delivered a workshop about 'Secrets of Success - A Company's Transformational Journey Towards Growth' in which he illustrated the importance of Small-Medium Enterprises as a key player in the sultanate's economic growth, having focused on a number of major subjects that were of high importance for entrepreneurs to expand their businesses.

The seminar constituted a new step for ambitious entrepreneurs to develop their businesses and find solutions to the chal-

lenges facing the SME sector. Therefore, the entrepreneurial consultant, during the delivery of the workshop, highlighted the main leadership qualifications and traits that future leaders must have and also gave reference to other fundamental practices they must be capable of doing to reach a higher and global level of leadership, such as integrity values, demonstration of leadership capability through practices that speak to the public needs and interests, a clear vision, ability to encourage the talented people, and enhancement of a positive competitive atmosphere.

Bank Muscat has previously organised such successful seminars touching upon various matters and topics that received its customers' positive feedback.

Joyalukkas Exchange opens its 40th branch at South Mawaleh



Joyalukkas Exchange, Oman's leading money exchange firm, has opened its 40th branch behind Rusail vegetable market, in South Mawaleh. Joyalukkas Exchange general manager Nixon Baby inaugurated the branch in a simple ceremony.

Joyalukkas Exchange aims to open more branches in convenient locations for foreign workers and residents. The location of the new branch is a place which such people frequent, and hence it will

be convenient for them. 'We are prepared to provide all the services to the customers to transfer funds to different parts of the world,' the company stated.

Nixon Baby said that the 40th branch opening is on the occasion of Oman's 53rd National Day celebration, also on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Joyalukkas Exchange opening its doors in Oman, it will make remittances more convenient for customers at this part of muscat.

Head of Operation Ansar Shentharr reminisced about Joyalukkas Exchange's beginning in Oman with two branches. "Now we operates with 40 branches and is aiming to reach 50 branches by the end of 2024, with the support of our valued customers."

Other officials, such as marketing manager Unas K and business development manager Alex Varghese, also attended the event.



LuLu Exchange opens new customer centre

LuLu Exchange - Oman's leading service provider of cross-border payments & foreign exchange officially inaugurated the 43rd customer engagement center at Al Hail on Thursday.

The customer engagement centre was inaugurated by Sheikh al Mutassim Abdullah al Siyabi, deputy wali of Seeb, in the esteemed presence of Sheikh Mohammed Hamed Ali al Ghazali, Director, LuLu Exchange Oman, Adeeb Ahamed, MD, LuLu Financial Holdings and other senior management of the company.

The LuLu Exchange Al Hail

customer engagement centre marks an expansion for the company in Oman, bringing the total number of customer engagement centres to 43. The broader global network under LuLu Financial Holdings now has 310 customer engagement centres.

While congratulating the Lulu Exchange Oman team on the opening, Siyabi said, "The new branch will add value to the residents of Al-Hail area by providing accessible and efficient payment services. Today's opening is a clear demonstration of Lulu Exchange's continued commitment to making a positive

contribution to the Omani economy. I wish them more success in the forthcoming years."

Adeeb Ahamed said, "LuLu Exchange Oman has fully embraced digital payment methods while concurrently expanding our physical presence in the nation. Our commitment lies in the advancement and enhancement of Oman's cross-border payment sector. The primary objective of the company is to provide exceptional services consistently."

He termed the establishment of the new engagement centre "as a strategic move aimed at not only fulfilling our customers' pay-

ment requirements but also ensuring a smooth transition towards future payment solutions".

LuLu Exchange Oman offers cross-border payment solutions, currency exchange services, and additional value-added services with a commitment to delivering prompt, transparent, and dependable services. The company's diverse services are facilitated through its extensive network of engagement centers and digital payments app, LuLu Money. LuLu Exchange is among the leading and most trustworthy financial service providers in Oman.

Mall of Muscat opens first Oud Dubai store in sultanate

Sultanate's luxury retail scene has gained a noteworthy addition with the opening of the first Oud Dubai store at the Mall of Muscat, Oman's premium shopping destination. The store comes as part of Oud Dubai's expanding luxury boutique chain, under the corporate umbrella of Oud Amber.

Oud Dubai is a renowned name for its royal quality products, including Miracle Oud, often referred to as the black gold, and Dehn Oud, the world's most expensive natural perfume.

Established in early 2016, Oud Dubai has been rapidly expanding with its showrooms located in various prime locations in UAE. The brand's global vision is evident as its products have

reached international markets, gaining fans from Europe, America, the Middle East, and Australasia. The brand is the owner of three distinct lines: Oud Miracle, Oud Dubai and Aroma Trix.

A spokesperson for Mall of Muscat said, "We are absolutely delighted to welcome Oud Dubai to Oman. Their opening in our mall marks a significant moment as they continue their journey of scenting the world with the most luxurious and natural fragrances. We believe Oud Dubai's unique offerings will add an unequalled scent experience for our discerning customers, enriching the luxury retail landscape in Oman."

A spokesperson for Oud Dubai said, "We are pleased to



bring Oud Dubai to the Mall of Muscat, a prime location in Oman that aligns perfectly with

our brand values of luxury and exclusivity. Our aim has always been to craft experiences. By of-

fering the finest natural oud, perfumes, and an array of other high-quality products, we are

bringing a luxurious scent experience to a new and astute clientele. We look forward to becoming a cherished part of the local community."

Ingredients for Oud Dubai products are sourced globally, from countries including France, Switzerland, Holland, Spain, Dubai, China, India, and Southeast Asian nations. Prices for their exclusive collections can go high, reflecting the exceptional quality and rarity of the ingredients.

The Oud used in its products is often considered a perfumer's most valuable ingredient, dating back to ancient civilisations.

Oud Dubai's team of specialists meticulously crafts long-lasting perfumes with distinctive

top and heart notes that meet the varied needs of their global clientele.

Incorporating an expanse of approximately 200,000 square meters and providing more than 3000 parking spaces, the Mall boasts a substantial area. Beyond its shopping allure, Mall of Muscat presents a host of family-centric attractions, including a cinema, an entertainment zone, and other engaging features. Remarkably, it also hosts the Oman Aquarium, the largest and only public aquarium within the Sultanate. With an impressive array of 240+ brands spanning across fashion, lifestyle, sports, and electronics, Mall of Muscat offers an unparalleled luxurious experience.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Blinken makes surprise visit to West Bank

The US diplomat met Palestinian president as Israel pressed on with its deadliest campaign in Gaza

Jerusalem - Top US diplomat Antony Blinken made a surprise visit to the occupied West Bank on Sunday, meeting the Palestinian president as Israel pressed on with its deadliest campaign yet in Gaza to destroy Hamas.

Blinken arrived in Ramallah under tight security one day after meeting in Jordan with Arab foreign ministers angered by mounting civilian deaths in Gaza, where the Hamas-run health ministry said on Sunday at least 9,770 people had been killed.

Washington has rebuffed calls for a ceasefire, instead backing Israel's goal of crushing Hamas fighters who staged the deadliest attack in the country's history on October 7, killing more than 1,400 people and taking 240 hostages, according to Israeli officials.

In his sit-down with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, Blinken said Palestinians in Gaza 'must not be forcibly displaced', and the pair also discussed 'the need to stop extremist violence against Palestinians' in the West Bank, a US State Department spokesman said.

Israel has repeatedly urged Palestinian civilians in northern Gaza to head south as fighting has intensified and Israeli forces have encircled and heavily bombed Gaza City and other parts of the territory.

Abbas denounced 'the genocide and destruction suffered by our Palestinian people in Gaza at the hands of Israel's war ma-



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas at the Palestinian Muqataa Presidential Compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Sunday (AFP)

chine, with no regard for the principles of international law', according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa. Israel has relentlessly bombarded the besieged Gaza Strip in its battle to destroy Hamas, levelling entire city blocks and killing thousands, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Blinken last week told a Senate hearing Abbas's Palestinian

Authority should retake control of Gaza after the war, even though it currently exercises only limited autonomy in parts of the West Bank and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long sought to sideline it.

Abbas said on Sunday the Palestinian Authority could return to power in Gaza only if a 'comprehensive political solution' is found for the Israel-

Blinken arrived in Ramallah under tight security one day after meeting in Jordan with Arab FMs angered by mounting deaths in Gaza

Palestinian conflict. The US administration has said it backs a Palestinian state alongside Israel, but Netanyahu's hard-right government has been implacably opposed.

The Israel-Hamas war has exacerbated tensions in the West Bank, where more than 150 Palestinians have been killed in clashes with Israeli forces and in settler attacks, including three young men killed

by Israeli forces on Sunday, according to the Palestinian health ministry. In the West Bank city of Jenin, bulldozers on Sunday cleared the smoke-blackened rubble of buildings officials said were burnt in a nighttime Israeli raid.

'Like an earthquake'

Ground battles raged on Sunday in northern Gaza, where Israeli troops tightening their encir-

clement of Gaza City were seen engaged in house-to-house combat as tanks and armoured bulldozers churned through the sand in footage released by the army.

"This strike is like an earthquake. It's an earthquake that has hit us," Gaza City resident Alaa Abu Hasera said while surveying damaged buildings there.

In a video taken from Israel's Sderot along the border with the Gaza Strip, an Israeli flag was seen raised on top of a destroyed building.

Since Israel sent ground forces into the north of the narrow Palestinian territory late last month, 'over 2,500 targets have been struck' by 'ground, air and naval forces', the army said on Sunday.

Leaflets dropped by the army again urged Gaza City residents to evacuate south between 10am (0800 GMT) and 2pm (1200 GMT), a day after a US official said at least 350,000 civilians remained in and around the city that is now an urban war zone.

The Hamas-run health ministry said Israeli bombing of Al-Maghazi refugee camp late on Saturday killed 45 people, with an eyewitness reporting children dead and homes smashed.

"An Israeli air strike targeted my neighbours' house in Al-Maghazi camp, my house next door partially collapsed," said Mohammed Alaloul, 37, a journalist working for the Turkish Anadolu Agency.

AFP

Israel minister reprimanded over Gaza nuclear 'option' comment

Jerusalem - Israel's government on Sunday reprimanded an ultranationalist junior minister who advocated in an interview dropping a nuclear bomb on war-torn Gaza, labelling his comments 'disconnected from reality'.

Heritage Minister Amichay Eliyahu was also suspended from government meetings 'until further notice', Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said, stressing that Israel was seeking to spare 'non-combatants'.

Despite the immediate reprimand, the junior minister's inflammatory comments drew wide condemnation from within Israel and across the Middle East. Eliyahu told Israel's Kol Barama radio he was not entirely satisfied with the scale of Israel's retaliation.

When the interviewer

asked whether he advocated dropping 'some kind of atomic bomb' on Gaza 'to kill everyone', Eliyahu replied: "That's one option."

In a follow-up question about the hostages held in Gaza, Eliyahu said that 'in war

"International law, along with fundamental principles of human morality and common sense, strictly prohibits the use of mass destruction weapons," it said in a statement.

Following the outcry over his remarks, Eliyahu said in a

Aboul Gheit said Eliyahu's remarks reveal that 'Israel possesses nuclear weapons, which is an open secret'.

"But it confirms the truth of the racist view Israelis hold against Palestinians. This is the true face of the occupation government."

Saudi Arabia criticised the Netanyahu government for not dismissing him. "Failing to immediately dismiss the minister from the government and simply freezing his membership reflects the height of disdain for all human, moral, religious and legal standards and values of the Israeli government," the Saudi foreign ministry said in a statement.

Jordan said the minister's remarks were a 'call for genocide and a hate crime' against the Palestinians.

AFP

It confirms the truth of the racist view Israelis hold against Palestinians. This is the true face of the occupation government

AHMED ABOUL GHEIT

we pay a price'. "Why are the lives of the hostages... more important than the lives of the soldiers?" he said.

The Hostages and Missing Persons and Families Forum, representing relatives of people taken by Hamas, slammed Eliyahu's 'reckless and cruel' statements.

post on X, formerly Twitter, that his statement about the atomic bomb was 'metaphorical' and that Israel was 'committed to doing everything possible to return the hostages safe and sound'.

Israel has never admitted to having a nuclear bomb.

Arab League chief Ahmed



Pope Francis waves from the window of the apostolic palace during the weekly Angelus prayer on Sunday (AFP)

Pope Francis renews call for ceasefire in Hamas-Israel war

Vatican City, Holy See - Pope Francis on Sunday renewed his call for an end to the Hamas-Israel conflict, urging the release of hostages and humanitarian aid for Gaza, describing the situation as 'very serious'.

"I continue to think about the serious situation in Palestine and in Israel where many people

have lost their lives," he said after the traditional Angelus prayer at Saint Peter's Square in Rome.

"I beg you in the name of God to stop, cease fire," he said.

"I hope all the possibilities are being explored so that a widening of the conflict is absolutely avoided, that the wounded can

be helped, and that aid can reach Gaza, where the humanitarian situation is very serious, and that the hostages be immediately released."

The pope has previously pleaded for an end to the conflict and for humanitarian aid to be allowed into the Gaza Strip.

AFP

A month into conflict, Gaza transformed into apocalyptic battleground

Jerusalem - One month after Israel was wracked by Hamas attacks, life has been upended for both the Palestinians and Israel after it launched a war of reprisal in the Gaza Strip.

Images of charred and mutilated bodies invoked comparisons to the horror of the Holocaust, and the abduction of more than 240 people by the Hamas gunmen continues to stir political and emotional turmoil. Gaza - a territory of 2.4mn people packed into one of the most densely populated areas

on Earth - has been transformed into an apocalyptic battleground by air strikes and ground assaults after Israel vowed to eradicate Hamas.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza says nearly 9,500 have been killed, two-thirds of them women and children, and mostly civilians.

Al Quds, the most widely read Palestinian daily, said 'Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of innocent people'.

"It feels like we have to pinch ourselves to make sure that this



People reach the central Gaza Strip on foot via the Salah al-Din road on their way to the southern part of the Palestinian enclave on Sunday (AFP)

is truly the new reality," the left-wing Israeli daily *Haaretz* wrote this week. "The change wrought by the war is total: in losses of life and in damage, in anxieties, in the country's agenda and in the total upending of old political conventions from every possible aspect."

'Powder keg'

Fears have mounted of a possible regional conflagration. Iran, an ally of both Hamas and Hezbollah in Lebanon, has warned the situation risks spi-

ralling 'out of control' in a Middle East transformed into a 'powder keg'.

A Pentagon spokesman said the United States is 'concerned about all elements of Iran's threat network increasing their attacks in a way that risks miscalculation, or tipping the region into war'.

US military advisers are in Israel and two American carrier groups have been deployed to the eastern Mediterranean. As tensions increase, the Israeli army is on alert on its northern

border with Lebanon too.

Breaking a month of silence on Friday, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said 'all options' were open for an escalation of the conflict on the Lebanese frontier with Israel, while at the same time blaming the United States for the war. Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Patrick Ryder said he did not think Hezbollah would escalate the fighting, telling the BBC 'a broader regional conflict has been deterred'.

AFP



Mahamudu Bawumia delivers a speech after winning the presidential primaries in Accra on Saturday (AFP)

Ghana’s VP gets nod for 2024 presidential run

Accra, Ghana - Ghana's ruling NPP party on Saturday elected the country's Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia as their candidate for the 2024 presidential ballot, according to results from primaries released by the electoral commission.

Ghana is undergoing its worst economic crisis in years, which will be a major electoral issue next year when President Nana Akufo-Addo steps down after two terms and an agreement for a US\$3bn loan from the International Monetary Fund. According to the final results, Bawumia won 61.4 per cent of the votes while this nearest rival Kennedy Ohene Agyapong won 37.4 per cent.

Bawumia, a former deputy central bank governor, had been widely touted by pollsters to win the New Patriotic Party (NPP) candidacy. He will face opposition National Democratic Congress candidate, ex-president John Dramani Mahama at the end of next year.

Bawumia had already won the first round of NPP voting and as

the first Muslim candidate to lead the ethnic Akan and southern-dominated party, he had positioned himself to bridge some of Ghana's regional divisions.

"It's a victory for the rank and file of our great party and particularly to the grass root members. I am humbled and overwhelmed," he said in a speech after the results.

"We know that the NPP is the only party that can transform Ghana. The NPP will enter 2024 united and energised."

"I believe the party has been fair and transparent," his rival Agyapong said after the result.

"That is the only thing I've always been preaching. My grassroots have spoken and therefore I accept the results in good faith."

A major cocoa and gold producer, Ghana also has oil and gas reserves. But its debt load has expanded and like other sub-Saharan African nations it has struggled with the economic fallout from the global pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

AFP

Turkey's opposition changes leader after election defeat

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's main opposition party on Sunday dumped its embattled leader in favour of an untested former pharmacist following a disappointing election defeat to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The staunchly secular Republican People's Party (CHP) has been riven by divisions since Kemal Kilicdaroglu lost a bitterly fought May runoff against Turkey's dominant but divisive president.

At the party's annual congress, delegates voted to replace Kilicdaroglu with the relatively unknown Ozgur Ozel after squandering what many viewed as the opposition's best chance to end two decades of Erdogan's Islamic conservative rule.

The May election came in the throes of a dire cost-of-living crisis that analysts blame squarely on Erdogan's unorthodox economic beliefs.

Kilicdaroglu managed to pull together a multi-faceted alliance that included both right-wing nationalists and left-wing socialists and Kurds.

But the six-party bloc nearly fractured months before the election and then underperformed in the polls.

Erdogan managed to cement his control of parliament through support from Islamic and ultra-nationalist groups.

Kilicdaroglu then riled many within his own party by refusing to concede defeat and quit.

The 74-year-old lost his leadership post after two rounds of heated party congress voting to a candidate backed by Istanbul



Kemal Kilicdaroglu (right) and Ozgur Ozel talk as they attend the congress of Republican People's Party in Ankara, Turkey on Saturday (AFP)

The staunchly secular Republican People's Party (CHP) has been riven by divisions since Kemal Kilicdaroglu lost a bitterly fought May runoff against Turkey's dominant but divisive president

mayor Ekrem Imamoglu.

Ozel had spent a large part of his career working as a private pharmacist in the socially liberal Aegean resort city of Izmir.

He eventually became head of Turkey's pharmacy association and was elected to parliament in 2011.

The bespectacled 49-year-old German speaker won the final ballot by a 812-536 margin after promoting himself as the candidate for 'change'.

But the vote was far more focused on personalities than any particular policies.

Kilicdaroglu compared at-

tempts to unseat him to a 'stab in the back'.

Ozel countered that he wanted to 'write a new story and reshape Turkish politics'.

Focus on March polls

The CHP congress came with much of the political attention turning to March municipal elections that Erdogan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) enter with a full head of steam.

Erdogan had long prided himself on never losing a national election and keeping his conservative alliance in control of both

parliament and Turkey's main cities. But his air of invincibility was punctured in landmark 2019 elections that saw the opposition win both Istanbul and Ankara for the first time during Erdogan's rule.

Erdogan has been focused on seizing back both cities since his re-election to a final five-year term.

Analysts believe Erdogan's chances are strongest in Istanbul - the city where the Turkish leader grew up and where he launched his political career as mayor.

AFP

Succession to happen before next election, says Singapore PM Loong

Singapore - Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced on Sunday he will hand over power to a younger generation of leaders before the 2025 general elections.

Lee, 71, had planned to step down by 2022, before his 70th birthday, and hand the reins to his deputy, Lawrence Wong.

But that was postponed as Lee said he had to lead Singapore through the coronavirus crisis.

In a speech to members of his People's Action Party (PAP) on Sunday, Lee said Wong and his team had 'earned their spurs' during the pandemic and 'there is no reason to delay the political transition'.

"Therefore, I intend to hand over to DPM Lawrence before



Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (AFP)

the next general election," Lee said.

"After that, I will be at the new PM's disposal. I will go wherever he thinks I can be useful. I will do

my best to help him and his team to fight and win the next GE," he said.

Lee, who has been prime minister since 2004, did not say exactly when he would hand over to Wong, 50, the current finance minister.

"If all goes well, I will hand over by the PAP's 70th birthday next year," Lee said, referring to the party's founding anniversary in November 2024.

If Wong takes over, it would be only the second time since Singapore's independence in 1965 that the prime minister is not a member of the Lee family.

Lee Hsien Loong's father, Lee Kuan Yew, was the country's first prime minister.

A visibly emotional Lee told

party members that it had been his 'great fortune and honour' to serve the country for his entire adult life.

Lee said the party had been 'utterly transformed, shaped by our many trials and tribulations'.

But he said it remained 'dedicated to Singapore' and keeping the island 'safe and secure', which would not change under the next generation of leaders.

A series of rare scandals have rocked the ruling party recently.

The scandals, which officials admit have hurt the government's reputation for incorruptibility, included the transport minister being probed for corruption and two ruling party legislators resigning over an affair.

AFP

N Korea creates new holiday to mark ICBM test launch

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea has created a new holiday to celebrate the anniversary of the successful test launch of its Hwasong-17 intercontinental ballistic missile last year, state media reported on Sunday.

On November 18, 2022, Pyongyang carried out what is believed to be the first full flight test of the Hwasong-17 - dubbed the 'monster missile' by analysts.

The North's Korean Central News Agency said on Sunday that the anniversary had been designated as a holiday at a meeting of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly.

"The establishment of Missile Industry Day marks a spe-

cial event in our sacred journey of national defence development," KCNA said.

With the launch, it added, North Korea had 'demonstrated to the world the majesty of a world-class nuclear power and the nation with the strongest intercontinental ballistic missile'.

North Korea often carries out major weapons tests on key holidays, and Seoul's spy agency said last week that the country was in the final stages of preparing for a third launch of a military reconnaissance satellite.

After a failed second attempt in August, Pyongyang said it would carry out the third launch in October, though it

never materialised.

Analysts have said there is significant technological overlap between space launch capabilities and the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, from which Pyongyang is banned under multiple UN sanctions.

North Korea has conducted a record number of missile tests this year, ignoring warnings from the United States, South Korea and their allies.

In September, Pyongyang enshrined its status as a nuclear power in its constitution, with leader Kim Jong Un calling for more modern atomic weapons to counter perceived threats from the United States.

AFP

Donald Trump set to take the stand in New York civil fraud trial

New York, US - Donald Trump rose to political power touting the business acumen he says made him a fortune.

On Monday, the 77-year-old once and potentially future president is expected to take the stand at a civil trial in which he stands accused of fraudulently inflating those famous assets to advance his real estate empire.

Trump's son Eric says he is 'very fired up' ahead of his testimony - due to begin at 10am (1500 GMT) - before New York judge Arthur Engoron, with whom the Republican has had a fractious relationship since the trial opened last month.

Just as he has insulted the judges overseeing his four criminal trials, Trump has called En-

goron 'unhinged' and a 'Trump-hating, radical left, Democrat operative'. Engoron has responded by slapping Trump with two fines - one for US\$5,000, another for US\$10,000 - when he ruled the onetime reality television star had violated a partial gag order imposed after he bashed the judge's clerk on social media.

Trump has been heard twice in connection with this case - on August 10, 2022 and again on April 13 of this year.

In excerpts from the first deposition, he called the proceedings 'the greatest witch hunt in the history of our country', and called New York state attorney general Letitia James an 'out of control prosecutor.'

The bench trial - there is no



Donald Trump looks on during a break at court as he testifies during a fraud trial in New York on October 25 (AFP)

jury, and the judge will decide on his own - is just one of a long line of legal troubles for the candidate who is currently the 2024

Republican presidential frontrunner, according to opinion polls.

So far, two of his children - Donald Jr and Eric - have testi-

This trial is only the tip of the legal and logistical iceberg for Trump, as he also stares down four criminal trials

fied, along with executives from the Trump Organization, a conglomerate that manages skyscrapers, luxury hotels and golf clubs around the world.

Even before opening arguments, Engoron ruled that James' office had already shown 'conclusive evidence' that Trump had overstated his net worth on financial documents by between

US\$812mn and US\$2.2bn between 2014 and 2021.

As a result, the judge ordered the liquidation of the companies managing the assets in question, such as the Trump Tower and 40 Wall Street skyscrapers in Manhattan and the opulent Seven Springs private estate in the suburbs. Simply put: Trump would lose control of part of his real estate empire.

Criminal trials

That order is on hold pending appeal, but its potentially sweeping consequences highlight the high stakes for the former president, who has built his political persona on the image of the successes described in his book *The Art of the Deal*.

This trial is only the tip of the legal and logistical iceberg for the candidate, as he also stares down four criminal trials set to unfold during the 2024 campaign season.

In March, Trump - who was impeached twice while in the White House, though never convicted - is expected in federal court in Washington for the start of his trial on charges that he conspired to overturn the results of the 2020 election, which he lost to President Joe Biden.

Thus far, his popularity in the polls has not taken a major hit, despite the media circus created by his frequent appearances at the New York courthouse over the last few weeks.

AFP

Rescue efforts called off after Nepal quake which killed 157

Jajarkot, Nepal - Search and rescue efforts after an earthquake in Nepal wrapped up on Sunday as the focus shifted to providing relief to survivors awaiting food and shelter, officials said 36 hours after the disaster struck.

At least 157 people were killed in isolated western districts of the Himalayan country when the 5.6-magnitude earthquake hit late on Friday.

Many survivors spent the night under the open sky, their mud houses reduced to piles of rubble.

Several people died in the village of Nalgad, in the worst-hit

Jajarkot district, where Mahesh Chanare prepared to cremate his father-in-law on Sunday.

"The rest of my family is safe," the 34-year-old plumber told AFP.

"But the houses have buried everything with them, there is hardly anything to eat," he added.

"No relief materials have reached us. People here desperately need food and tents."

Altogether 105 people died in Jajarkot and another 52 in neighbouring Rukum district, officials said, with more than 100 injured, and search and rescue



A woman mourns the loss of her grandson, victim of a recent earthquake, in Chiuri village on Sunday (AFP)

operations had been concluded.

"We are in touch with all areas and rescue operations have wrapped up," said provincial police spokesman Gopal Chandra Bhattarai.

"But we are still on alert as this is a remote area and there might be some isolated areas from where information has not flowed."

Harish Chandra Sharma, a Jajarkot district official, said the focus was now on providing relief to the victims.

"It has been a tough night and we are trying to get relief materials to those affected by the

quake," Sharma said.

"Some have been distributed but we need to reach all areas."

On Friday, locals frantically dug through rubble in the dark to pull survivors from the wreckage of collapsed homes and buildings, as others crouched outside for safety.

The quake was felt as far away as India's capital New Delhi, nearly 500km (310 miles) from the epicentre.

Security forces were deployed on foot and in helicopters to assist with search and rescue operations.

AFP

Acrid smog blankets India's capital city

As pollution levels remain high, primary schools in Delhi will stay closed till November 10

New Delhi, India - Authorities in India's smog-ridden capital New Delhi on Sunday extended an emergency schools closure by a week, with no signs of improvement in the megacity's choking levels of pollution.

New Delhi is blanketed in acrid smog every autumn, primarily blamed on stubble burning by farmers in the neighbouring agrarian states.

The city is regularly ranked as one of the most polluted on the planet, with its annual smog blamed for hundreds of thousands of premature deaths each year.

"As pollution levels continue to remain high, primary schools in Delhi will stay closed till 10th November," Delhi state's education minister Atishi posted on X, formerly Twitter.

Secondary schools 'are being given the option of shifting to on-line classes', added Atishi, who uses only one name, after days of high pollution levels.

The Indian capital - which has a population of 30mn - once again ranked as the world's most polluted city on Sunday, according to monitoring firm IQAir.

Delhi state annually imposes restrictions on construction ac-



People wearing face masks walk along the Kartavya Path amid heavy smoggy conditions in New Delhi on Sunday (AFP)

The city is regularly ranked as one of the most polluted on the planet, with its annual smog blamed for thousands of premature deaths

tivities and orders some vehicles off roads when pollution reaches severe levels. But critics say that governments wilfully ignore the agricultural primary source of the public health crisis.

The farmers in neighbouring states are a powerful electoral lobby and leaders have long resisted calls to impose strict fines and other punitive measures on them for their actions.

New Delhi is set to host a cricket World Cup match on Monday between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

But both teams cancelled their scheduled pre-match training sessions in recent days over health risks from the smog.

'No choice'

Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha admitted on Sunday that they have 'no choice' but to play.

"We were concerned. We are trying to minimise our exposure to the outdoors as much as possible," he told reporters.

"The air quality is affecting both teams. It's not ideal, but we have no choice. We have to play in the conditions in front of us."

Some asthmatic players had not attended training, he added.

Severe smog levels are expected to persist in the city for several more weeks.

Levels of the most dangerous PM2.5 particles - so tiny they can enter the bloodstream - reached 570 micrograms per cubic metre on Sunday according to IQAir, nearly 40 times the daily maximum recommended by the World Health Organization.

AFP

Broadcaster killed in the Philippines

Manila, Philippines - A radio broadcaster was fatally shot inside his studio in the Philippines on Sunday, police said, the latest in a long list of journalists killed in the country.

Juan Jumalon, 57, was in his home-based studio on the southern island of Mindanao when a gunman shot him in the head, said Captain Deore Ragonio, police chief in Calamba municipality. Jumalon is the fourth journalist to be slain since President Ferdinand Marcos took office in June of 2022, the National Union of Journalists said, condemning 'the brazen killing'.

The archipelago nation is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, and their killers often go unpunished.

Radio broadcasters outside the capital are frequently the target. Marcos condemned the 'murder' of Jumalon and ordered the authorities to 'swiftly bring the perpetrators to justice'.

"Attacks on journalists will not be tolerated in our democracy, and those who threaten the freedom of the press will face the full consequences of their actions," Marcos said in a post on social media. Police said the suspect gained entry to Jumalon's studio by pretending to want to make an on-air announcement.

AFP

Life of German jailed in Iran 'at grave risk' over failing health

Paris, France - A German citizen abducted in Dubai and sentenced to death by Iran is almost unable to walk and talk due to health conditions that prison authorities have failed to properly treat, his daughter told AFP.

Jamshid Sharmahd, who is also a US resident, suffers from Parkinson's disease and could die due to his deteriorating health, Gazelle Sharmahd told AFP after her father last week made a rare phone call from prison to the family.

Sharmahd, 68, was kidnapped in the United Arab Emirates and forcibly transferred to Iran in the summer of 2020, according to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Iran has only said he was detained in a 'complex operation'.

He was put on trial in Iran and convicted of 'corruption on earth' and sentenced to death.

In the United States, Sharmahd helped develop a website for an exiled Iranian opposition group and also hosted



Jamshid Sharmahd (AFP)

radio broadcasts. The family have rubbished claims made in Iran against him over a blast in 2008 in the southern city of Shiraz. According to human rights group Amnesty International, he had been subjected to 'enforced disappearance, torture and other ill treatment'.

Gazelle Sharmahd said: "My dad has advanced stage Parkinson's and delaying his medication makes it nearly impossible for him to talk, walk, move or even breathe."

Speaking after he unexpectedly called her mother last week,

Gazelle Sharmahd added: "His teeth have been broken under torture or through malnourishment, he cannot enunciate words or chew or eat properly."

"He has been in complete solitary confinement for over 1,185 days, that alone can drive you to insanity and take the last drop of energy out of your body."

"He has severe chest pains as soon as he tries to walk in his tiny torture chamber. He said his feet are constantly swollen."

The family do not know where in Iran he is being held.

Gazelle Sharmahd, a critical care nurse specialised in coronary care, warned her father was in danger of suffering a heart attack.

"His life is at grave risk in the inhumane conditions under which they try to break him and, on top of that, he is still condemned to death after lawless sham-trials and can be pulled out of his cell at any minute to be hanged."

AFP

Opposition activists held in Bangladesh

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh police have arrested nearly 8,000 opposition figures in a nationwide crackdown since officers broke up a major rally in the capital a week ago, a report said on Sunday.

The sweeping wave of detentions comes ahead of a general election due in January.

The country's major opposition, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and its allies have been staging giant rallies in recent months demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina step down and allow a neutral government to supervise the vote.

Hasina has overseen impressive growth in her 15 years of power, but she has been accused of ruling the South Asian nation with an iron fist.

The United States has imposed sanctions on some of its most senior police figures for widespread human rights violations. More than 100,000 opposition supporters joined a 'grand rally' in central Dhaka last Saturday, when a policeman was killed in clashes.



Police personnel stand guard in front of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) headquarters during nationwide transport blockade called by BNP, in Dhaka on Sunday (AFP)

Since then police have launched a widespread crackdown on the BNP, arresting thousands of activists and accusing at least 162 of its top leaders of murdering the officer.

The country's best-read and most respected newspaper *Prothom Alo* reported on Sunday that at least 7,835 people had been held, based on reports from its correspondents across the coun-

try. National police spokesman Abir Siddique Shuvra, could not give AFP an exact number of detentions, but said those arrested faced criminal cases and warrants. "It is impossible to give an exact figure. Police are doing our regular work," he said.

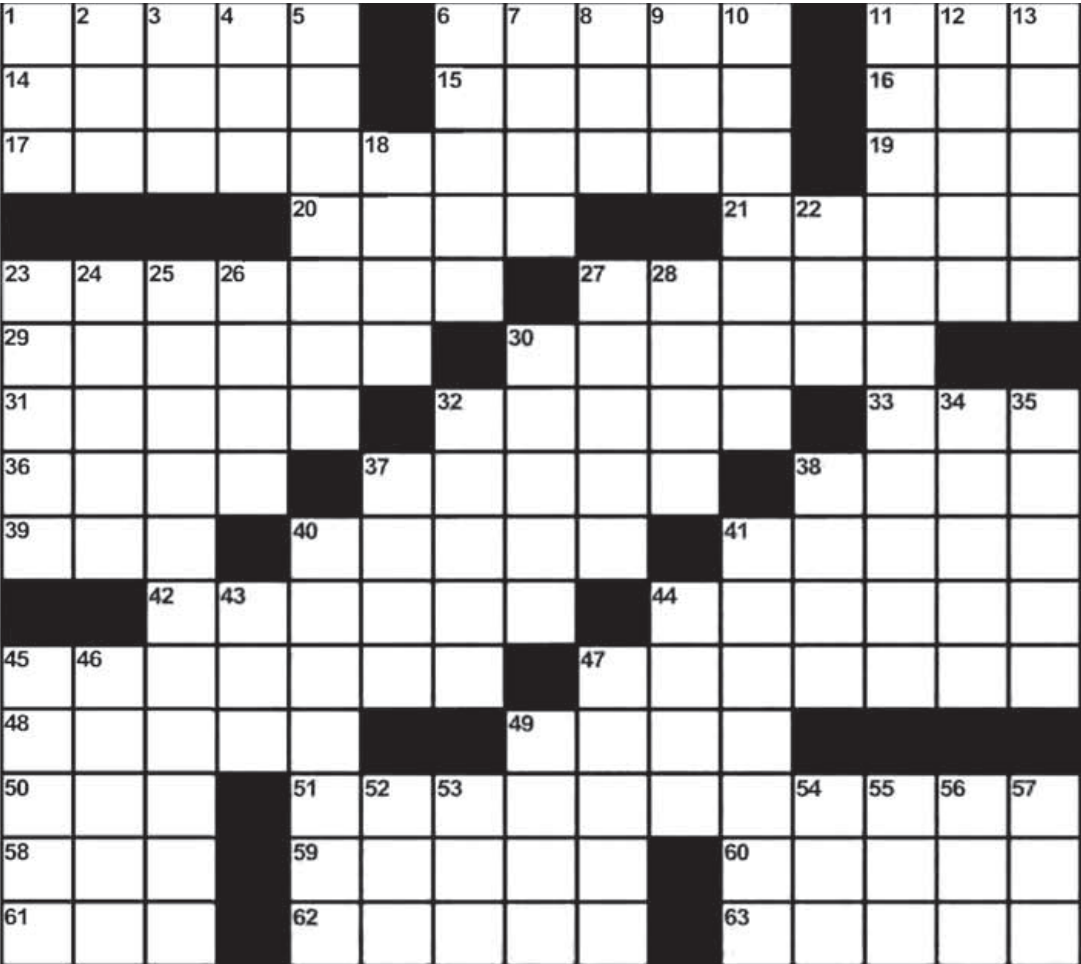
The Dhaka Metropolitan Police previously said that it had arrested more than 2,100 people over charges of violence since

last Saturday.

According to the BNP, those detained include its top official in Bangladesh, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, and his number two Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury. On Sunday the country's Rapid Action Battalion, arrested BNP vice president Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, a former home minister and air force chief.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Definitely on one's toes
 - 6) Inundated
 - 11) Be competitive
 - 14) Lift a lawyer's license
 - 15) Large book size
 - 16) Common connector
 - 17) Smaller part of a larger zoned area
 - 19) Mai _ (rum cocktail)
 - 20) Requirement
 - 21) Hard to make out
 - 23) One delivering a dress-ingdown
 - 27) Wall candleholders
 - 29) Brought to mind
 - 30) Fine cigar
 - 31) Editor's insertion sym-bol
 - 32) Cop's treat in stereo-types
 - 33) Prefix with "natal"
 - 36) Betting figures
 - 37) "Dined" partner
 - 38) Tablet-producing com-pany
 - 39) Formerly known as, in maiden names
 - 40) Puts money in the bank
 - 41) Peculiar
 - 42) Musketeer's need

- 44) Combat pilot's flight
 - 45) Cause disorder to
 - 47) Any pest
 - 48) Strengthened a poker pot
 - 49) One way to make a sweater
 - 50) 1040 reviewer, briefly
 - 51) Doing one's job, and how!
 - 58) Primitive dwelling
 - 59) Flynn of old Hollywood
 - 60) Suddenly bright stars
 - 61) Absorbed, as a cost
 - 62) Roll in a roller derby
 - 63) First square of many board games
- DOWN**
- 1) Magazine revenue sources
 - 2) Bucharest currency
 - 3) Emulate a certain tide
 - 4) "Awesome!" in the '90s
 - 5) Bauble
 - 6) Label for the skinny pic-ture
 - 7) Dictionary entry
 - 8) Late boxing champion
 - 9) "I'm quoting this exactly"
 - 10) Cruel barracks "gag" of old
 - 11) Where the Pope lives

- 55) Egg of old Rome
- 56) Tolstoy title word
- 57) Catcher of a clumsy acrobat

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Try to be the person who takes on the more passive role in today's activities. This is not the greatest time for heavy action for you. In fact, it's the opposite. Let someone else call the shots for a while and see how it feels. You might find that you like it quite a bit. You shouldn't let anyone boss you around, but there's no reason to feel threatened if someone else has better ideas than you do. Your ego can handle it, and your energy level will be invigorated by it.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

If you're trying to convince someone to agree with your ideas or opinions today, be aware that they could end up changing your opinion in the process. Your mind is very malleable now, and when you hear a good argument for something, you're not going to put in any effort to learn the argument against it. This isn't going to get you very far. Stick to your guns and know what you think, but respect those who happen to think differently.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

The wild child inside you is going to feel like popping out at a very inopportune time today, but so what? Trying to censor every word you say all day will only stress you out, so accept that a gaffe may occur and just let it happen. No one's perfect, and if you spend all your energy trying to make people think you are, you're making a huge mistake. Besides, chances are it will be seen as endearing or even charming. Just be yourself and let it all hang out



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What type of book are ac- counts usually written in?

- A. Biography
- B. Encyclopedia
- C. Ledger
- D. Lexicon

02.What type of computer uses three possible values in its calcu- lations: the digits -1, 0, and +1?

- A. Binary computer
- B. Ternary computer
- C. Indecisive computer
- D. Government computer

03. Which 1973 British film, di- rected by Lindsay Anderson, fea- tured the music of Alan Price?

- A. O Lucky Man!
- B. Britannia Hospital
- C. In Celebration
- D. The Whales of August

Answers: 1. C 2. B 3. A

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You shop around for bargains when it comes to buying a car or anything else, so you know that a little bit of legwork and patience can really work in your favor. Why not apply that attitude to your love life? Even if you're desperate for a date, don't just accept the first invitation that comes your way. Being alone is a lot better than spending time with someone who doesn't interest you in the least. Do your research and figure out what you really value in a partner.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Someone who's making a lot of changes in their life is looking to you for guidance on what to do next, and you're more than ready to give it. The true sense of purpose for the alliance you're building with this person isn't completely clear yet, but you'll understand why you're so compelled to help them soon enough. All you need to do is follow your instincts, stay present in the moment, and be ready to gain inspiration from their remarkable transformation.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Your growing confidence is thrilling to all the people who are tired of you putting yourself down, but be careful not to get too cocky right now. If you want to keep feeding this wonderful wave your ego's riding on, the key is to enjoy it. Take a few risks that require you to have faith in yourself. Accept a challenge you never would have dreamed of tackling just a few months ago. Proving your worth to yourself is more important than bragging about it to others.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

In order to boost your attitude, try to be more active in social situations. This means that you should start calling the shots. Take the initiative in the group and make a few suggestions about where to go and what to do. Everyone else is looking for a change just as much as you are. And the only way to have a new experience is to consult a new source. That's where you come in! Pipe up for once and tell everyone what you think would be a fun thing to do.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Today will have its fair share of drama going on, and you are probably going to be a featured player -- luckily, it's likely that you will be the hero in the story, not the suffering and helpless victim! Someone will trust you with a very valuable secret, and while keeping it might not be easy, it will be a blast knowing that you know something no one else knows! Tonight, you'll find a neutral person -- share your secret in this one-on-one conversation only if you know it's safe!

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Your good nature gets even better today when your faith in humanity is restored. Someone, possibly a stranger, could perform an act of kindness so random that it leaves you feeling a little suspicious of them. But where is your altruism? Sometimes people do nice things just because. There are no hidden agendas or ulterior motives going on. It's just a nice thing that you should be thankful for and inspired to imitate.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

The authority figure in your life might be tough for you to deal with today, but ask yourself if it's just because you don't really like what they're saying. What you're being told to do or tolerate might not be to your liking, but it's necessary if you want to maintain your good standing and stay on the right side of powerful and influential people. Unless you have a moral objection to it, you have to carry out orders. Take a deep breath and follow the leader.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your physical health is directly affecting your emotional health more than ever, so make sure you eat well today and get enough exercise. That way, you'll stay happy and fully energized. Make sure you start this day with a good breakfast, not a doughnut! Too much sugar too early in your day guarantees that you'll run out of steam before lunch. Balance your food intake like you balance your life. Variety is more important than ever.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You'll find encouragement around every corner today. At the office, coworkers are eager to help you finish any project big or small. At school, your teachers are spending more time explaining ambiguous or confusing ideas to you. At home, your family members or roommates are taking care of the chores you hate most and letting you take a well-deserved break! In turn, you'll remember these kindnesses and be that much more ready to give when it's your turn.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

N	E	S	U
C	S	K	D
A	F	O	H
N	E	B	D

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



BIRTHDAY BASH

Kohli equals Tendulkar's ODI ton record as India thrash South Africa

Kolkata, India - India's Virat Kohli equalled Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 one-day international hundreds as unbeaten World Cup hosts India thrashed fellow semi-finalists South Africa by 243 runs in a pool match on Sunday.

Kohli, on his 35th birthday, got to the landmark in 119 balls, including 10 fours, at Kolkata's Eden Gardens. It had taken him 277 innings to score 49 hundreds at this level compared to the 438 required by fellow India 2011 World Cup-winner Tendulkar.

Kohli's 101 not out was the centrepiece of India's 326-5 before their powerful attack cleaned up as Rohit Sharma's men made it eight wins out of eight at the tournament.

Together with Shreyas Iyer (77) he shared a third-wicket partnership of 134 after India captain Rohit had won the toss.

India, fresh from dismissing Sri Lanka for just 55 - the lowest total by any Test side at a World Cup - during a 302-run rout of the 1996 champions, sparked another collapse as South Africa were dismissed for 83.

It was the Proteas' second-lowest ODI total, behind their 69 against Australia at Sydney in

1993 and lowest at a World Cup.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja did the bulk of the damage with 5-33, with India now assured of finishing the pool phase in top spot, while South Africa lower-order batsman Marco Jansen's 14 was the innings' top score.

This was South Africa's second pool defeat following a stunning loss to non-Test side

Every opportunity to play for India is a big one, to be able to ton up on my birthday is the stuff of dreams. It is something you dream about as a child

VIRAT KOHLI

Netherlands and the gap between the top two teams on Sunday was almost as much of a shock as that reverse.

Kohli, now averaging more than 108 in the World Cup, said during the innings break: "Every opportunity to play for India is a big one, to be able to ton up on my birthday is the stuff of dreams. It is something you dream about as a child."

Tendulkar led the tributes to Kohli, the retired India great writ-



India's Virat Kohli celebrates his century against South Africa in Kolkata on Sunday (AFP)

'Stuff of dreams'

Kolkata, India - Virat Kohli said it was "the stuff of dreams" to equal Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 one-day international centuries on Sunday.

"Every opportunity to play for India is a big one and to do this on my birthday in front of a huge crowd is the stuff of dreams. It is something you dream about as a child," said Kohli.

"I am just happy to help the team as much as possible."

In all, Kohli now has 49 ODI centuries, 29 hundreds in Test matches and one ton in Twenty20 internationals.

He has accumulated more than 26,000 runs in all three formats.

ing on X, formerly Twitter: "Well played Virat. It took me 365 days to go from 49 to 50 (years old) earlier this year. I hope you go from 49 to 50 and break my record in the next few days. Congratulations."

India, then had South Africa's Quinton de Kock, the tournament's leading run-scorer, out for just five when he played onto Mohammed Siraj before Jadeja bowled Proteas captain Temba Bavuma.

Mohammed Shami, coming off a superb five-wicket haul against Sri Lanka, struck with just his fifth ball when Aiden Markram was caught behind off a brilliant delivery that angled in and jagged away to take the outside edge. Jadeja had dangerman Heinrich Klaasen left before and 40-4 became 40-5 when pace-man Shami overturned another original not out decision as Rassie van der Dussen was lbw for 13.

Earlier, left-arm quick Jansen, whose first over cost 17 runs, returned expensive figures of 1-94 in 9.4 overs.

Rohit launched the innings in style with a typically brisk 40 before he was well caught by Bavuma at mid-off.

AFP

End of an era, admits England's Moeen

Ahmedabad, India - Moeen Ali said England's exit from the Cricket World Cup could be the end of an era for the 2019 champions, admitting they had "not been good enough" in India.

England's sixth defeat in seven matches, a 33-run reverse against Australia in Ahmedabad on Saturday, ended their semi-final hopes and left them bottom of the 10-team standings.

Jos Buttler's struggling team started their title defence with a defeat to New Zealand at the same venue and although they then beat Bangladesh it proved to be their sole victory so far in a disastrous campaign.

A majority of the squad are in their 30s and unlikely to play in the next edition in 2027 as Eng-



Moeen Ali

land look to rebuild.

Asked if it was the end of a great 50-over team, the 36-year-old all-rounder Moeen responded: "Yeah, maybe."

England, captained by Buttler and coached by Matthew Mott, started as one of the tournament favourites but they flopped spectacularly, with multiple batting

collapses.

They folded for 156 against Sri Lanka, 129 against hosts India, 215 in a mighty upset by Afghanistan, and fell short again chasing Australia's 286.

"It's just lack of confidence, especially in the batting department," said Moeen.

"The lack of runs, especially in a part of the world, where in India it can be nice to bat but it can be difficult, it's probably a different approach, but we haven't been good enough."

"The bowling has got better over the last two games in particular," said Moeen.

"But no positives really, we are bottom of the table with two points in a World Cup in which we expected to do better."



Australia's Adam Zampa (L) takes the catch to dismiss England's David Willey on Saturday (AFP)

Australia's Zampa relishes 'most satisfying' ODI show

Ahmedabad, India - Spinner Adam Zampa on Saturday said his match-winning World Cup show with bat and ball against defending champions England was his most satisfying performance in one-day cricket.

Zampa hit 29 off 19 balls in a late flourish and then returned 3-21 with his leg-spin at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

The stellar show knocked England out of the tournament and boosted Australia's chances of making the semi-finals with their fifth straight victory.

"I'd say tonight is as satisfying as it feels after an ODI in terms of my 10 overs," said Zampa, who has claimed 161 wickets in 92 ODIs, after Australia's 33-run win.

"Bowling mainly to lefties, (Dawid) Malan, (Ben) Stokes, (Moeen) Ali, they're quality players. And to sit back, knowing that I went for 20 runs off 10 overs, my length control was as good as it's been, it was a really satisfying

one tonight."

Zampa had a bizarre start to the tournament when he swam into the wall of a hotel pool, suffered from back spasms and then caught a fever.

He leads the tournament

My length control was as good as it's been, it was a satisfying one tonight

ADAM ZAMPA

bowling with 19 wickets after a day which saw him first send back England skipper Jos Buttler, out for one.

He then broke a key stand to dismiss Stokes, for 64, after the left-hand batsman attempted a paddle sweep to be caught at short fine-leg.

Another wicket of Moeen on

42 and Zampa kept up his charge in the tournament where he has already claimed three four-wicket hauls.

Zampa said he enjoyed dismissing his friend Buttler.

"He smacks me a lot as well, particularly in T20 cricket," he said.

"I know that you'll say that I've got a good ODI record against him, but I think I got him out three times after they won the T20 World Cup and I'm not sure he'd sobered up yet."

"So yeah, it's always satisfying to get a player like him out. He's a good friend of mine as well and a big wicket in the English team, big wicket."

But it was his batting that left everyone surprised.

Marnus Labuschagne top-scored with 71 to set up Australia's total but it was Zampa's late hitting and a 38-run ninth-wicket stand with Mitchell Starc that steered them to 286 all out, a total that proved enough.

AFP

Pakistan 'could have chased 402', says match-winner Zaman

Bengaluru, India - Fakhar Zaman insisted Pakistan would have been happy to chase down a mammoth 402-run target to beat New Zealand before the rain in Bengaluru made life less complicated for them in Saturday's World Cup battle for survival.

Zaman cracked an aggressive 81-ball 126 not out to guide Pakistan to 200-1 which gave them a 21-run win on the DLS method after rain ended the match after 25.3 overs.

Pakistan had been given a revised target of 342 in 41 overs after the first rain break of 90 minutes, with their total at 160-1.

New Zealand had made 401-6 on the back of a third World Cup century by fast-rising Rachin Ravindra and 95 by Kane Williamson at Chinnaswamy Stadium.



Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman celebrates his century against New Zealand

The win kept Pakistan's hopes of a semi-final place alive although they will still need to win their last game against England in Kolkata on November 11.

With eight points from as many matches, Pakistan will want Sri Lanka to beat New Zealand, who have a better run

rate, also in Bengaluru on November 9. Zaman said Pakistan could have chased down 402.

"The best thing about our players and the team management is that we are always positive and have never lost hope of a semi-final place," said Zaman.

"We knew that rain was due

to come so we were looking at the DLS par score and after 21 overs we were above that par score, so we knew all the calculations."

The 33-year-old left-handed batsman was dropped from the side after scoring just 12 in Pakistan's first World Cup match against the Netherlands.

He then missed the next five matches with a recurrence of a knee injury, only returning with a brilliant 81 in the win over Bangladesh.

Zaman said he had worked hard to overcome fitness and form problems.

"I didn't do well in the Asia Cup so after that I went to my coach Aftab Khan in Peshawar and he worked on my weaknesses. I dedicate my innings to him," said Zaman.

AFP

'IT'S A DISGRACE'

Arteta rages as Newcastle end Arsenal's unbeaten league run in controversial fashion

Newcastle, United Kingdom - Newcastle ended Arsenal's unbeaten start to the Premier League season as VAR controversially allowed Anthony Gordon's goal to stand in the Magpies' explosive 1-0 victory on Saturday.

Mikel Arteta's side were defeated for the first time in 11 league games, with the Arsenal manager labelling the defeat "a disgrace".

Joelinton clearly pushed Arsenal defender Gabriel as the pair challenged for Joe Willock's cross, with the ball running for Gordon to score from close-range.

As well as appealing in vain for a foul by Joelinton, Arsenal angrily claimed the ball had gone out before Willock's cross.

It was one of a host of debatable moments in a tempestuous encounter at St James' Park.

Arsenal's Kai Havertz and Newcastle's Bruno Guimaraes were both lucky to avoid red cards in the first half.

"The result should not be what it is. Embarrassing what happened, how this goal stands, in the Premier League, this league we say is the best in the world," Arteta said.

"I've been 20 years in this country and now I feel ashamed. It's a disgrace. There's too much at stake here."

Coming just days after they crashed out of the League Cup at West Ham, Arsenal's second successive loss was a painful blow to their title bid.

Arteta's men sit in third place, three points behind leaders Manchester City, with Tottenham able to move into pole position and climb five points ahead of their north London rivals if they beat Chelsea on Monday.

Newcastle's victory capped a memorable week for Eddie Howe's sixth-placed team, who

The result should not be what it is. Embarrassing what happened, how this goal stands, in the Premier League, this league we say is the best in the world

MIKEL ARTETA

knocked Manchester United out of the League Cup at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

Howe disagreed with Arteta's assessment of the winner, saying: "I haven't seen anything other than what I saw at the time. It looked a good goal to me.

"It's a massive win, full credit to players. It was a battling performance."

In a scrappy first half, perspiration rather than inspiration was the driving force as both teams



Newcastle United's Anthony Gordon celebrates after scoring against Arsenal on Saturday

thudded into tackles and pressed relentlessly.

Much of the frenetic action ended with a lack of focus and composure in the final third and Newcastle failed to muster a single shot in the opening half hour.

Arsenal were hardly more clinical, creating precious little to worry Newcastle keeper Nick Pope.

A tetchy evening finally boiled over when Havertz launched into a reckless challenge that sent Sean Longstaff crashing down, sparking a melee between the teams.

Havertz escaped with a booking from referee Stuart Attwell, much to the frustration of Longstaff and team-mates Gordon and Fabian Schar, who were all booked for protesting the decision.

Gabriel Martinelli's strike was held by Pope in a rare moment of Arsenal incision, but Guimaraes brought an appropriately acrimonious end to the half.

The Brazilian was fortunate to avoid a red card as he elbowed Jorginho in the head, then booted the ball at Havertz and was shoved by Declan Rice in retaliation.

Guimaraes seemed to be embracing his role as the game's agent provocateur and the midfielder's needless barge into Jorginho somehow escaped punishment after the break.

Rice headed narrowly wide after Newcastle failed to properly clear Martinelli's cross.

It proved a costly miss as Newcastle scored in controversial fashion after 64 minutes.

Kane hits hat-trick as Bayern thump Dortmund to keep pace with Leverkusen

Dortmund, Germany - 4-0 away on Saturday, closing the gap with leaders Bayer Leverkusen to two points.

Bayern captain Manuel Neuer lauded his striker, telling German TV "that's his experience, he brought it with him to the Bundesliga from England and he shows us it week after week."

"We've got some quick guys up front and with them we really hurt Dortmund."

Stung by a midweek German Cup elimination by third-division Saarbruecken, Leverkusen's 3-2 win at Hoffenheim on Saturday meant injury-hit Bayern were five points behind Xabi Alonso's side at kickoff.

The visitors however crafted the perfect response, scoring two goals in the opening nine minutes to grab a hold on the match.

France centre-back Dayot Upamecano, cleared to play just hours before the match after missing a month with a hamstring injury, headed Bayern in front four minutes in from a Leroy Sane pass.

The former Man City winger laid on Bayern's second on the



Bayern Munich's Harry Kane (R) celebrates with Thomas Muller after scoring against Borussia Dortmund on Saturday

counter, slipping a perfect pass across the face of goal for Kane to tap in. Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel said after the match "we had confidence because we have

quality" despite the Cup defeat.

"We knew what we could do, and we had enough confidence to put a plan in place."

Unbeaten at home for more

than a year, Dortmund were shell-shocked by the power of the supposedly weakened visiting side.

Dortmund manager Edin Terzic made four changes early in the second-half as his side hoped to chase the game but Bayern scored next, Kane stroking in a controlled finish with 15 minutes remaining.

"The way we played during the week, it was bitter" Neuer said of the German Cup loss "but we showed what we can do today."

"Bayern were simply more aggressive in the duels and simply more dangerous on the counter attack" said Dortmund 'keeper Gregor Kobel, who made several key saves early in the second half.

The England captain scored again in injury time and now has 15 league goals in 10 matches since joining Bayern from Tottenham in the summer.

Billed as Germany's equivalent to La Liga's 'el Clasico' between Real Madrid and Barcelona, Bayern have not lost to Dortmund in the league since 2018.



Barcelona's Ronald Araujo celebrates with teammates after scoring against Real Sociedad

Araujo snatches Barcelona win against dominant Real Sociedad

San Sebastian, Spain - Ronald Araujo headed home in the 92nd minute to snatch Barcelona an undeserved 1-0 win at Real Sociedad on Saturday in La Liga.

Having suffered a last-gasp defeat by Real Madrid in the Clasico last Saturday despite having the better of the game, Xavi Hernandez's side inflicted the same suffering on Real Sociedad in San Sebastian.

Barcelona failed to create any clear chances until the final stages, with their goalkeeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen keeping

the score level, before Araujo headed Ilkay Gundogan's cross home with seconds remaining.

The victory takes Barcelona third, two points above Atletico Madrid, who lost on Friday at Las Palmas and one point behind second placed Real Madrid, who host Rayo Vallecano on Sunday.

Girona provisionally lead La Liga by three points from Los Blancos after they came from behind to beat Osasuna earlier Saturday.

"These are three very impor-

tant points after coming from the Clasico, which we lost playing well, it was really important to get the three points," Araujo told Movistar.

Xavi brought Robert Lewandowski into the Barca starting line-up after he made his return from injury as a substitute against Madrid.

However the Polish forward was just as quiet as he was last weekend as the game passed him and Barcelona by for large periods.

AFP

Martinez fires Inter Milan past Atalanta in the rain

Milan, Italy - Lautaro Martinez scored the winning goal as Serie A leaders Inter Milan edged Atalanta 2-1 away in a rain-lashed slog in Bergamo on Saturday.

Inter are now five points clear of Juventus and six ahead of AC Milan, who slipped to a 1-0 home defeat to Udinese, after showing relentless spirit despite the conditions playing havoc with the run of the ball.

The away side suffered an early blow when French central defender Benjamin Pavard

limped off in the first half.

Hakan Calhanoglu lifted their spirits with a confidently converted spot-kick on 40 minutes sending Inter into a welcome half-time break from the rain.

The fiery Martinez ripped a curling shot round two defenders and into the top corner with an impressive effort on 57 minutes.

Inter lost 'keeper Andre Onana to Manchester United in the close season but replaced him with Swiss stopper Yann Sommer, who produced an as-

sured performance with his saves, calls and mobility.

Former West Ham player Gianluca Scammacca was fortunate to see his pullback goal stand after a foul in the build-up, but at 2-1 it was game on again until Rafaele Toloi was given a straight red card late on.

After a tricky test, Inter can look forward to Wednesday's Champions League game at Salzburg, where a victory would send them through to the last 16.

Reigning Italian champions

Napoli beat southern neighbours Salernitana 2-0 earlier on Saturday to climb provisionally into the top four.

Inter, Juventus and Milan are all still ahead of the champions, but Napoli appear to be putting early season jitters behind them as French coach Rudi Garci starts to make his mark.

This could have been a mismatch with bottom side Salernitana winless so far this season.

Napoli, who host Union Berlin in the Champions League in mid-

week, were without injured Nigerian forward Victor Osimhen. In his absence Giacomo Raspadori slotted home on 13 minutes and Macedonian winger Eljif Elmas assured the win on 82 minutes with a curling shot after an impressive burst down the left.

If AC Milan were hoping for a confidence boost before the visit of Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League on Tuesday, they were disappointed as they went down to Roberto Pereyra's 62nd-minute penalty.



Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez celebrates after scoring against Atalanta on Saturday

A DOSE OF HISTORY

John Kennedy scores winner as Fluminense beat Boca for first Copa Libertadores title

Rio De Janeiro, Brazil - John Kennedy struck a spectacular extra-time winner as Fluminense ended their long wait for a first ever Copa Libertadores crown on Saturday with a 2-1 victory over Argentina's Boca Juniors.

Substitute Kennedy volleyed home from the edge of the area in the 99th minute of an ill-tempered final at Rio's Maracana Stadium after the match finished 1-1 after 90 minutes.

Kennedy was promptly sent off for collecting a second yellow card for an over-exuberant celebration among Fluminense's delicious home fans following the goal.

The 21-year-old Kennedy - named by his history-loving father after the 35th President of the United States - had been a decisive influence for Fluminense after being brought on as a substitute for playmaker Ganso 10 minutes from the end of normal time.

At that point, Boca looked to be getting on top after equalising with a 72nd-minute shot from Peruvian international right back Luis Advinula which cancelled out Fluminense's 36th-minute opener from veteran forward German Cano.

But the arrival of Kennedy breathed fresh life into the Fluminense attack and in the first half of extra-time, the young forward made the breakthrough.

A deft touch by Keno teed up the ball for Kennedy in space, who crashed a thunderous right-foot volley beyond the dive of



Fluminense players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Copa Libertadores final against Boca Juniors on Saturday (AFP)

Substitute John Kennedy volleyed home from the edge of the area in the 99th minute of an ill-tempered final at Rio's Maracana Stadium after the match finished 1-1 after 90 minutes

Boca's former Manchester United and Argentina international goalkeeper Sergio Romero.

Tempers flared near half-time of extra-time with an ugly multi-player melee after unsuccessful Boca appeals for a penalty.

Boca's Frank Fabra was given his marching orders by Colombian referee Wilmar Roldan after a VAR review caught him aiming a slap at Fluminense defender Nino.

With both teams down to 10 men, Fluminense could have wrapped up victory but Guga's effort after a sweeping counter-attack came back off the inside of

the post and rolled across the face of goal.

Fluminense, the four-time champions of Brazil, were one of just two of the country's 12 biggest clubs never to have won the Libertadores prior to Saturday's victory.

AFP



Jayson Tatum of Boston Celtics scored 32 points and grabbed 11 rebounds against Brooklyn Nets

Celtics remain NBA's last unbeaten as Tatum leads win at Nets

New York, United States - Jayson Tatum scored 32 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to power Boston to a 124-114 victory at Brooklyn on Saturday, keeping the Celtics as the NBA's last unbeaten club.

Jaylen Brown added 23 points and Latvian forward Kristaps Porzingis had 22 as the Celtics improved to 5-0 to stay atop the Eastern Conference.

"They present different challenges. They play fast, get up a lot of threes, so this was a good test for us on the road to figure it out," Tatum said. "I like the way we closed out the game."

Tatum, a 25-year-old forward, became the youngest player in Celtics history to reach 10,000 career points. "That's special. That's cool," Tatum said. "I've just been blessed to be at a great franchise... hopefully I've got a lot more to go and a lot more games to win."

Former Milwaukee guard Jrue Holiday, who arrived in Boston after two trades, contributed 18 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds.

"Everybody is shining," Tatum said. "I love this team. We're having fun. We're playing hard. We're competing."

Keeping pace one game behind the Celtics were the Philadelphia 76ers as Joel Embiid scored 26 points and grabbed 11 rebounds to lead the Sixers over visiting Phoenix 112-100.

Kelly Oubre added 25 points, Tobias Harris had 18 points and 10 rebounds and Tyrese Maxey contributed 22 points, and 10 assists on his 23rd birthday to spark the 76ers (4-1).

"I was trying to be aggressive, whether I was making the right read, getting the assist or scoring the ball," Maxey said.

"I'm trying to pick my spots when to be ultra aggressive and when to get to the paint to get Joel a shot, get Kelly a shot, get them in the right spots. I think I'm doing a solid job of it right now."

AFP



Novak Djokovic was unstoppable in the Paris Masters final on Sunday (AFP)

Djokovic sinks Dimitrov for seventh Paris Masters title

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic defeated Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 6-3 in Sunday's final to win a record-extending seventh Paris Masters title and close in on securing the year-end number one ranking for an eighth time.

The 36-year-old Djokovic eclipsed his previous record set two years ago as the tournament's oldest champion, capturing his 40th Masters 1000 title and stretching his winning run to 18 matches.

Djokovic collected his sixth title of the season to draw level with Carlos Alcaraz, adding to the Masters victory in Cincinnati that set him up for a landmark 24th Grand Slam singles crown at the US Open.

"It's incredible. To be able to win it after quite challenging circumstances for me this week," said Djokovic, who had been hit by a stomach virus that left him feeling under the weather in Paris.

He was taken to three sets in each of his three previous rounds but didn't face a single break point against the 17th-ranked Dimitrov.

"Basically, coming back from

the brink of losing three matches in a row, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. I was very close to losing those matches and somehow managed to find an extra gear when it was needed," said Djokovic.

"I think the match was closer than the scoreline indicates, but another amazing win for me. I'm very proud of this one, considering what I've been through this week

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NOVAK DJOKOVIC



very proud of this one, considering what I've been through this week."

It is the second time Djokovic has completed a French Open and Paris Masters double in the same season. Andre Agassi is the only other player to achieve it.

Djokovic's seventh Bercy crown makes it his most successful Masters event ahead of Miami and Rome, where he has won on

six occasions each.

His 97th career title also nudged him closer to Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103).

Djokovic will take a 1,490-point lead over Alcaraz into the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin later this month, all but guaranteeing he will finish 2023

as the world's top-ranked player.

The Serbian won the eight-man tournament for the sixth time last year - matching Federer's all-time mark - after Alcaraz withdrew because of injury.

Dimitrov, 32, was chasing his first title in Paris since winning the ATP Finals in 2017 but suffered a 10th straight loss to Djokovic in a meeting of the two oldest players in the top 20.

Pegula reaches WTA Finals title match but Swiatek-Sabalenka halted by rain

Cancún, Mexico - Jessica Pegula beat Coco Gauff on Saturday to reach the WTA Finals title match but continuing weather woes saw Aryna Sabalenka's clash with Iga Swiatek suspended by rain.

World number one Sabalenka and number two Swiatek had played just three games when rain blew in, halting a match between players fighting for the year-end number one ranking.

If Australian Open champion Sabalenka wins, she'll finish the year atop the rankings, but if French Open champion Swiatek advances and goes on to claim the title she will regain the number one spot. Whoever wins will have to get past a red-hot Pegula, who has not lost a set on the outdoor hardcourts in Cancun.

Pegula shook off a late rain delay and windy conditions to dispatch US Open champion Gauff, her doubles partner, in an hour. "I executed what I wanted to do really well," Pegula said. "In the windy conditions, I think it



Jessica Pegula of the US hits a return to compatriot Coco Gauff (AFP)

worked even better. I was just trying not to get frustrated with my serve or returns or any funky kind of points that we had and just to keep my feet moving."

There was no respite for Sabalenka and Swiatek from the weather that has wreaked havoc all week at the tournament.

They were on serve with Swiatek up 2-1 in the opening set when showers started, the players remaining on the court

wrapped in towels amid hopes they would get underway again soon.

Heavier rain, however, saw them sent to the locker room, officials calling a halt to the night shortly after 10 pm local time.

Sabalenka beat Swiatek in last year's WTA Finals semi-finals and has split two clay meetings with the Pole this year, winning at Madrid while falling to Swiatek in the final at Stuttgart.

Villegas, Kuchar share lead at PGA Tour Mexico event

Los Cabos, Mexico - Matt Kuchar followed an early charge with a late collapse but shared the lead with Camilo Villegas after Saturday's third round of the US PGA Tour's World Wide Technology Championship.

Kuchar seized a six-stroke advantage before making a quadruple-bogey at the 15th hole on his way to firing a five-under-par 67 to match Colombian Villegas on 19-under 197 after 54 holes at Cardonal at Diamante in Los Cabos, Mexico.

"I saw a big lead go away but I feel awfully pleased at the state of my game," Kuchar said.

"It was a fun first 14. That 15th hole is one everybody has circled - this one could get you in trouble. That's the only one I'd love to have back."

Villegas birdied three of the last four holes to shoot 69 and grab his first share of a 54-hole PGA lead since the 2010 Honda Classic.

"Nice birdie on 18 to finish the day. Didn't hit it that sharp, missed a couple putts, but overall it wasn't bad," Villegas said.

"It's nice to see the work I've been doing the past year, which has been tough, a lot of swing changes, is paying off."

South African Erik van

Rooyen was third on 198 with Canada's Mackenzie Hughes with Americans Justin Suh and Will Gordon on 199.

Kuchar torched the first Tiger Woods-designed course used for a PGA Tour event for an eagle and six birdies against a lone bogey for a seven-under 29 on the front nine.

The 45-year-old American reeled off three consecutive birdies starting at the 12th to grab a six-stroke edge before his disaster at 15, a bogey at 16 and two closing pars.

"This course has some trickiness to it," Kuchar said. "But it's golf. Every hole has the same

value, the same importance to it. You can look at it multiple different ways.

"I shot 5-under today. I'm playing really good golf. I really like the state of my game. I'm pretty good at letting that stuff roll off my back and I'm going to do my best to let that one roll off my back and go try to play some good golf tomorrow."

Playing partner Villegas, meanwhile, birdied 15 and 16 to match Kuchar for the lead, missed a four-foot par putt at 17 to fall one adrift, then sank his clutch closing birdie to pull level.

AFP

FLAWLESS IN NEPAL

Oman celebrate T20 World Cup berth with thrilling win against hosts Nepal in Asia qualifier final

Muscat - Oman emerged champions of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier Final after a nail-biting win over hosts Nepal in the summit clash at the TU ground in Kirtipur, Nepal, on Sunday.

In a match that was decided through a one-over eliminator (super over), Oman outplayed Nepal by 11 runs. Naseem Khushi blasted 19 runs for Oman to score 21 in the over and then Bilal Khan conceded just ten runs and took a wicket to silence the 35,000 fans who packed the ground.

Earlier, Oman, chasing 185 to win, were restricted to 184/9 with seasoned Mohammed Nadeem playing a crucial knock of 24 in nine balls to tie the match. Needing eight to win in the final over, Oman lost two wickets off successive balls from Sandeep Lamichhane but Nadeem hit a four off the penultimate ball to set up a grandstand finish.

Needing two to win off the final delivery of the match, Nadeem played a sweep and ran the first run but while going for the winning run, Fayyaz Butt fell short to send the match to super over.



Oman team celebrate with the trophy

Oman's chase was kept on track with opener Kashyap Prajapati playing a stellar innings of 63 off 52 balls that included four maximums and three boundaries. Aqib Ilyas (33) and skipper Zeeshan Maqsood (26) played crucial knocks to take the game deep into the final overs.

Maqsood also became the top scorer for Oman in T20Is with 1,100 runs following his knock, getting past Jatinder Singh's 1,078 runs.

Hosts Nepal elected to bat first and put up a solid total of 184, courtesy an unbeaten 52 from skipper Rohit Paudel and Gulshan Jha's hurricane 54 off 25 balls. Opener Kushal Bhurtel's 31 at the top helped the team put on 47 in the powerplay. A late cameo of 20 off just six balls from Karan KC put Nepal in a good position to defend.

Oman's Fayyaz Butt went for runs aplenty as he conceded 63 runs in his four-over spell while Bilal Khan was the most successful with 3/26. Ilyas picked 2/22 and Maqsood had one for 27. Butt's 63 runs in four overs was the most given by an Oman bowler in T20Is.

Prajapati was named the player of the match.

Heartbreak for Al Harthy and Oman Racing as engine failure halts podium bid in WEC finale

Muscat - Oman's number one racing driver Ahmad Al Harthy watched his hopes of a glorious conclusion to his debut year in the FIA World Endurance Championship disappear during the closing stages of the season finale in Bahrain on Saturday after an engine failure ended his major podium push.

Al Harthy, a two-time GTE Am podium finisher in his maiden WEC campaign along with Oman Racing with TF Sport

team-mates Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood, got things off to a very strong start in the eight-hour contest with an impressive opening stint. Having qualified the No.25 Aston Martin Vantage GTE an excellent third fastest on Friday, the Omani started the final race of the season for the team and was as quick and competitive as always.

Although having the knock-back of needing to err on the side of caution at the beginning, in

order to avoid a tangle between LMP2 prototype Hypercar runners ahead, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS supported racer Al Harthy recovered the lost ground very impressively with a faultless drive around the Sakhir track.

Dropping to eighth as a result of the delay, he charged back through and delivered a masterclass in overtaking to pass car after car in the GTE Am class.

Storming back through toward the podium placings in the opening hour, after handing over the Aston Martin to Dinan the progress continued.

Back behind the wheel in hour three, Al Harthy ran a comfortable third and all looked well placed for a potential podium finish. Dinan returned to the car midway through the race, before Eastwood got behind the wheel for a triple stint to conclude the Middle East encounter.



Oman's Ahmad al Harthy in action in Bahrain

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LIVE'S

Twist

At this time of year, the trees on Alan Risolo's land in central Italy should be groaning with olives. But extreme weather blamed on climate change has ruined his harvest.

"Production has fallen by 80%," said the 43-year-old farmer from Sabina, north of Rome, despondently holding up a branch with only a few shrivelled green and black olives on it.

Known since Roman times for its olive groves, this region boasts trees said to be hundreds, even thousands, of years old. But the changing weather patterns are proving hugely

ITALY'S OLIVE GROWERS LAMENT POOR HARVESTS FROM EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS THAT HAVE CUT PRODUCTION OF OLIVE OIL SUBSTANTIALLY

challenging.

"For several years, our land has really suffered from climate change, like torrential rain contrasted with long periods of heat lasting into the autumn," Risolo told AFP.

Normally, he and his workers would be in coats for the autumn harvest, when they use electric devices to shake the trees so the fruit falls onto tarpaulins below. Earlier this week they were collecting the olives while wearing T-shirts, as the thermostat hit 29 degrees Celsius.

The cut in production has affected not just Sabina, but most of the central and northern regions of Italy, the world's second-largest producer of olive oil after Spain.

This year national production is estimated to be 290,000 tonnes, down from 315,000 in 2022, and the lowest figure in the last four years, according to agricultural association Coldiretti.

More uncertain than ever

When harvested, Risolo's olives go to the OP Latium mill, where they and others from the area are washed, sorted and then crushed into a greenish paste from which the precious extra virgin oil is extracted.

The smell is glorious, and the equipment is state-of-the-art. But all the technology in the world cannot squeeze oil from olives that don't exist.



Agronomist Stefano Cifeca, who is responsible for quality control on site, confirmed this year's meagre harvest.

"Unfortunately, this year climate change meant that in April and May (the flowering months) we had heavy rainfall that washed away the pollen," hindering fertilisation and the development of olives, he said.

Faced with increasingly hot summers and long periods without rain, Unaprol, the national association of olive oil producers, is calling for a national plan to help save water.

Cifeca backs this idea at a local level, urging the creation of basins to collect water in winter that can then be reused when drought hits.

Farmers here are used to tough times. In 2018, Risolo recalls, a frost wiped out his harvest. But, he warned, that agriculture faces a more uncertain future than ever, because one cannot accurately predict these changes in the climate.

Saved by the south

The stakes are high. Italy has 150 million olive trees representing

3bn euros (US\$3.19bn) in annual turnover and supporting 400,000 businesses, according to Coldiretti. The risk is that some farmers switch to other crops, although Cifeca insists this is not yet necessary.

"Luckily the olive tree is a very robust plant that can adapt to changes in climate and different territories," he said. Despite the poor performance in the centre and north, Italian production this year was saved by its southern regions, both Puglia - which makes half of Italy's oil - and Calabria.

Farmers have also been helped by rising prices in the global market for olive oil, as production in Spain, which normally produces half of the world's supply, has also suffered.

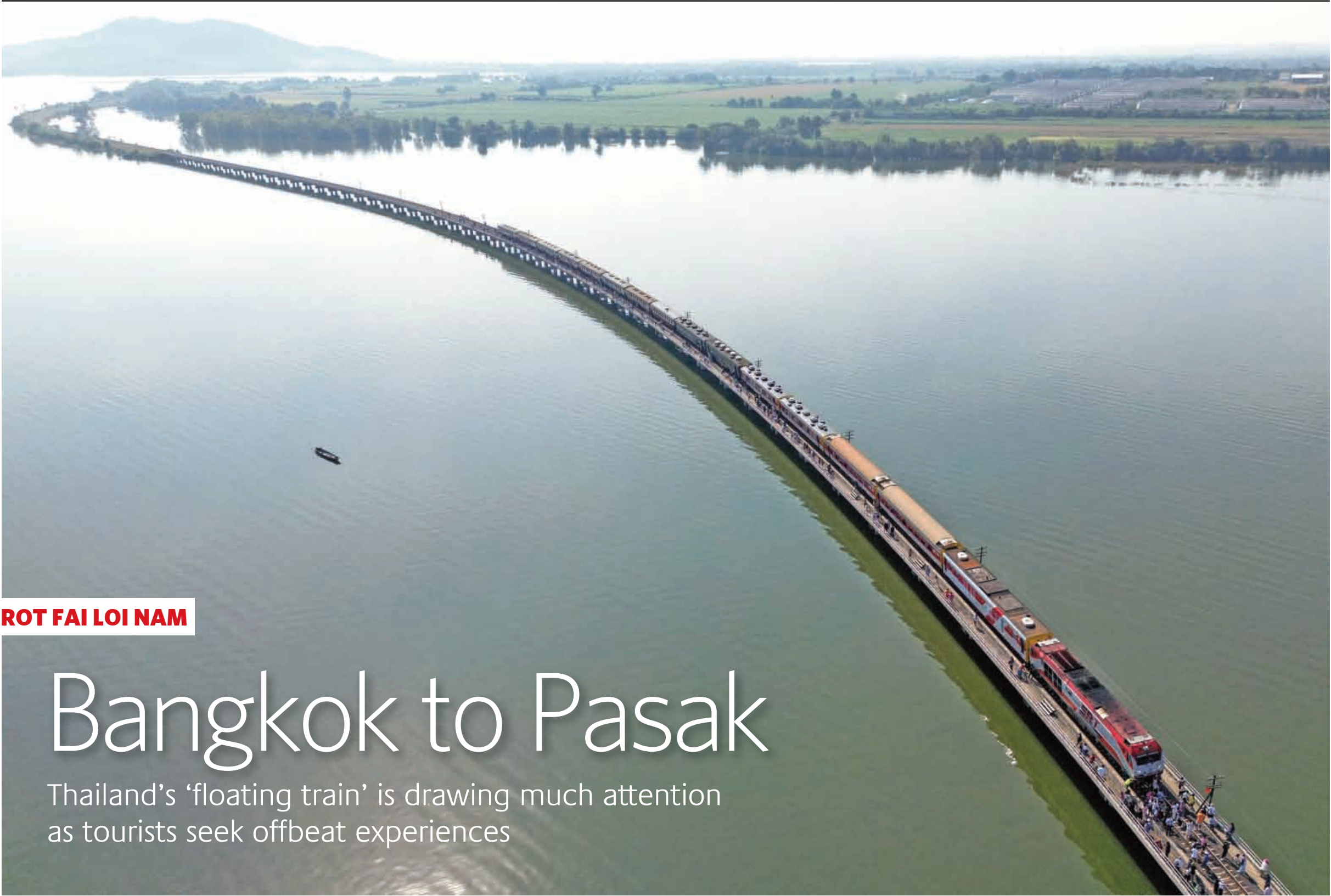
Production in Spain fell 34% compared to the average over the last four years, according to Coldiretti figures from September, due to a prolonged drought. But the rising prices are bad news for consumers - including in Italy, which consumes 15% of olive oil produced worldwide.

AFP



For several years, our land has really suffered from climate change, like torrential rain contrasted with long periods of heat lasting into the autumn

ALAN RISOLO



ROT FAI LOI NAM

Bangkok to Pasak

Thailand's 'floating train' is drawing much attention as tourists seek offbeat experiences



A lone boatman watched the spectacle of Thailand's so-called 'floating train' as selfie-seeking passengers soaked up the water views after disembarking from carriages stopped on a narrow bridge.

Railway adventures are gaining popularity in the kingdom with tourists seeking off-the-beaten-track travel experiences, away from the hordes visiting temples and beaches.

Saturday was the State Railway of Thailand's first Bangkok to Pasak Jolasid Dam service 'Rot Fai Loi Nam' marking the end of the rainy season. Hundreds of bleary-eyed passengers boarded the train at Bangkok's century-old Hua Lamphong Station before sunrise.

Lotus ponds, jungles, temples and rice paddies zipped by as tourists in third class hung out the window and took pictures while enjoying the natural air conditioning.

Greying Thai ladies boarded at Ayutthaya, the ancient former capital of Siam, to sell fairy floss and pad krapow, a famous stir-fry basil dish.

Three and a half hours after chugging out of Bangkok, the refurbished Japanese train pulling more than a dozen carriages crossed the Pasak Jolasid reservoir over a series of viaducts and stopped for 20 minutes of selfie time.

For most of the year, cattle graze underneath the bridge, but from October to January, the water is high on both sides which gives the impression that the train is floating on water, said long-time British expat, train enthusiast and travel blogger Richard Barrow.

"I have done it many times and I am already booked to do it three more times this season."

Barrow lamented the trip was only publicised in Thai language and not English so not many foreigners know about the unique experience.

"It's kind of a missed opportunity," he said.

Enjoying the day trip with her mother, 11-year-old Lily Piratchakit said the water view was 'endless'.

"It was amazing," she observed. "It's nice to travel, be outdoors and get some fresh air."

Taiwanese university exchange student Wei Wu, 21, said it was a thrill to pose for photos on the railway track.

"It's very cool. It's my first time to take a

It's my first time to take a train in Thailand. Most tourists will only see the stereotypes of Thailand

WEI WU

train in Thailand," she said.

"Most tourists will only see the stereotypes of Thailand."

Later some passengers toured the Pasak Jolasid Dam and enjoyed picnics.

The dam is used for agriculture and flood prevention and is fast becoming a tourism drawcard with the popular rail trips running from November to January.

For Mail, 28, and his friend, the floating train experience was the perfect compromise on water views.

"I don't like the sea, but he likes it. That's why we came here," he quipped.

AFP



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