

GCC to develop end-of-service system for expatriate workers

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman, under the aegis of its Ministry of Labour, led the ninth meeting of the GCC Ministers of Civil Service and Labour on Wednesday.

Aligned with the directives of the GCC Supreme Council, the meeting convened to discuss vital recommendations put forth by the undersecretaries of the member ministries to the ministerial committees and saw the participation of the GCC Secretariat-General and Executive Office of GCC Labour Ministers.

An important topic of discussion was development of an end-of-service reward mechanism for expatriate workers across the GCC states.

Additionally, the meeting shed light on the Secretariat-General's proposal focused on



Establishment of a specialised team representing the GCC ministries of labour and retirement and insurance funds approved

practical job training.

The meeting also deliberated on topics and the areas of collaboration

to be highlighted at global forums, particularly concerning civil service and labour

sectors.

Khalid Ali al Sunaidi, Assistant Secretary for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC Secretariat-General, emphasised the unified vision of GCC leaders.

"Leaders of the GCC countries stress the pivotal role of jobseekers in shaping the future

through cutting-edge programmes and assimilation into the labour market," Sunaidi stated.

Key outcomes of the meeting included endorsement of a strategy for joint Gulf action in the work and manpower domain, alongside conceptualisation of strategic initiatives and projects.

Additionally, it approved the establishment of a specialised team representing the GCC ministries of labour and retirement and insurance funds. The team of specialists will delve into the technical and administrative intricacies of integrating end-of-service benefits for expatriate workers into the social protection frameworks existing in the GCC states.

The meeting also greenlighted the Secretariat-General's proposal for on-the-job training.

Health ministry feted by UN for tobacco control

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman has been recognised for its tobacco control efforts by the United Nations. On Tuesday, the Ministry of Health received the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs Award in a ceremony held virtually on the sidelines of the 78th United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The award acknowledges Oman's continuous efforts and commitment to multispectral action for the prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases by implementing plain packaging for tobacco products on a national level.

Speaking to Muscat Daily, Dr Jawad al Lawati, senior consultant and rapporteur of the National Tobacco Control Committee, said it "really is a great achievement for Oman".

This, he added, was because the award is given "purely in the field of tobacco control".

Dr Lawati informed that in March this year, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) issued a decision on Omani Standard Specification (OS 1655:2022) on plain packaging of tobacco products, and deemed it a binding Omani standard specification.

"It shows Oman's commitment to strong tobacco control," he said.



MoCIIP's decision in March on plain packaging of tobacco products deemed it a binding Omani standard specification

DR JAWAD AL LAWATI

The move was appreciated by the World Health Organization office for the Eastern Mediterranean, describing Oman's action as 'significant and pioneering'.

Plain packaging bans use of logos, colours, brand images or any kind of publicity on tobacco packages.

Dr Lawati further informed that the MoCIIP decision was based on Ministry of Health recommendations, and was being worked on for the last few years.

At least 65% of the packaging will now include a public health warning, picture and a message to quit, while the rest will have the brand name.

13

Globetrotter - 74 countries and counting

Netanyahu says 'historic peace' possible with Saudi

New York, US - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said an ambitious US-backed deal to normalise relations with Saudi Arabia was possible, as he met US President Joe Biden in New York.

"I think that under your leadership, Mr President, we can forge a historic peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia," Netanyahu

told reporters, adding that it could "go a long way" to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

President Biden met Netanyahu on Wednesday for the first time since the latter's re-election last year and said they would discuss "hard issues" including upholding "democratic values".

Meeting Netanyahu on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York amid concerns over his far-reaching judicial overhaul, Biden also said he hoped to see the Israeli prime minister in Washington "by the end of the year."

Meanwhile, Israeli forces killed a 19-year-old Palestinian in a pre-

dawn raid in the West Bank on Wednesday, the Palestinian health ministry said, as violence in the occupied territory showed no sign of any letup. He was killed in a clash with Israeli soldiers raiding Aqabat Jaber refugee camp near the city of Jericho to carry out arrests, the ministry said.

AFP

HAPPY DIAMONDS

EVERY DAY DIAMONDS AT LOWEST PRICE

GET 100% VALUE ON DIAMOND EXCHANGE

FREE OMR 20 GIFT VOUCHER ON PURCHASE OF DIAMOND, PEARL AND POLKI JEWELLERY

GET 100% VALUE ON OLD GOLD EXCHANGE

Offer valid from 15th September to 15th October 2023

*On minimum purchase of OMR 250

www.joyalukkas.com

Joyalukkas World's favourite jeweller

OMAN • UAE • QATAR • BAHRAIN • KUWAIT • KSA • SINGAPORE • MALAYSIA • UK • USA • INDIA

CR NO - 1622358

R025,000 school innovation award for educational excellence launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) unveiled the OMIFCO School Innovation Award for the academic year 2023/2024 on Wednesday.

H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of Education in MoE, presided over the launch ceremony.

The award, which celebrates excellence in school innovation, was instituted in collaboration with Omani Indian Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO).

In his address, H E Ambosaidi expressed optimism, saying, "This award aims to foster creativity and uplift the standard of education. Having originated in South Sharqiyah governorate, it's now a nationwide initiative. The competition is held in four main categories, each with specific criteria. Designed to engage



We hope to see significant participation from schools across the sultanate

NASSER AL SIYABI



(Supplied photos)

all educational institutions, we hope to see significant participation from schools across the sultanate."

Explaining the award's vision, mission and values, Nasser al Siyabi, Head of Competitions and Awards Department at MoE, emphasised its alignment

with Oman Vision 2040's educational goals and its efforts to enhance school management, while elevating students' academic achievements.

The award focuses on four areas:

- Administrative organisation, which involves school coun-

cils, committees, safety protocols and discipline.

- Strategic planning encompasses leadership effectiveness and overarching school plans.

- Community partnership involves engaging parents and connecting with local com-

munity institutions.

- And performance quality gauges development of staff performance and students' academic achievement.

The award is given at the governorate and national levels.

At the governorate level, the first place winners receive

RO2,000, RO1,500 for the second and RO1,000 for the third place winner.

At the national level, winners receive RO5,000, RO4,000 and RO3,000 for first, second and third place respectively. Additionally, there are three incentive prizes, each of RO1,000 and four creativity shields, each worth RO2,000, recognising exceptional achievements in each competition category.

The OMIFCO School Innovation Award, held biennially, honours top-performing government schools. It champions strategic planning, administrative prowess, performance quality and community engagement. By emphasising precision and data-driven strategies, the award seeks to motivate schools towards integrated planning, exemplary performance and impactful community partnership.

Real estate trading in S Batinah grows 55%

Muscat - Real estate trading in South Batinah has seen a significant uptick this year, valued at RO564.5mn till August. This marks a 55% increase from RO252.3mn during the same period in 2022.

Khalfan al Naabi, Director of Directorate General of Housing and Urban Planning in South Batinah, highlighted the allocation of 93 plots of land through usufruct contracts.

Additionally, 11 plots were allocated through electronic bidding for industrial, commercial, agricultural and other activities. By the end of August, a total of 729 usufruct contracts had been registered.

The directorate collected RO6.7mn in fees for legal transactions till August 2023, an increase of 8% from RO6.2mn in 2022. Although the traded value of sales contracts rose 25% to RO3.3mn, there was a decrease of 22% in the number of sales contracts.

Oman, Iran discuss economic partnership, strategic ties

Muscat - Qais bin Muhammad al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, held talks with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Aliabadi, Minister of Industry, Minerals and Trade, in Muscat on Wednesday.

The meeting, focused on strengthening economic ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran, highlighted potential areas of mutual investment and trade.

The discussions referenced His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's noteworthy visit to Iran and the significant topics addressed during the leadership dialogue.

Aliabadi underscored Iran's



view of Oman as not just a friend but also a strategic partner. He noted the considerable prospects for bilateral cooperation, given the countries' strategic geographical positioning.

Key sectors in Oman, such as industry, tourism, mining, food

security and logistics, were identified as potential areas for Iranian investors. Furthermore, the dialogue included collaborative private sector initiatives and ways to boost shared investments.

The meeting saw the partici-

pation of Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry in Oman's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Ali Najafi, Iranian Ambassador to Oman, besides senior officials from both countries.

Oman, Solomon Islands establish diplomatic ties

New York, United States - The Sultanate of Oman and Solomon Islands signed an agreement establishing diplomatic relations on Tuesday. The signing ceremony took place at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations in New York.

The agreement was signed by H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and Jeremiah Manelli, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in Solomon Islands.

The two sides expressed keenness to encourage diplomatic communication, commercial and economic cooperation, develop friendly relations between the two countries' peoples and exchange expertise.

Meeting with ministers

On the sidelines of the 78th UN General Assembly, H E Sayyid Badr held bilateral talks with foreign ministers and officials of several countries.

In a meeting with Zbigniew Rau, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, H E Sayyid Badr underscored the two countries' eagerness to enhance



existing relations and cooperation in various fields of interest.

The two sides also exchanged views on various regional and international matters of mutual interest.

H E Sayyid Badr also met Geir Pedersen, UN Special Envoy for Syria. The two sides exchanged views on efforts exerted to reach a consensus regarding the Syrian crisis and to achieve the aspirations of the people of Syria.

Additionally, the Foreign Minister met Zambry Abdul Kadir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia. The two ministers reviewed relations and cooperation between the two countries and

means of enhancing these in various fields.

H E Sayyid Badr also held talks with Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Iraq.

At H E Sayyid Badr's meeting with his Iranian counterpart Dr Hossein Amir Abdullahian, they affirmed the keenness of the two countries to strengthen existing friendly relations and cooperation in all fields of mutual benefit.

The meetings were attended by H E Dr Mohammed Awad al Hassan, Oman's Permanent Representative to the UN, and senior officials of the other countries.



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
DIRECTORATE GENERAL
OF HEALTHSERVICES
AL DHAHIRA GOVERNORATE



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health - Directorate General of Health Service
AL Dhahira Governorate of Health invites specialized companies
to participate in the following Tender: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of tenders Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
3507/2023	General maintenance in Hejermat Health Center in Ibri	Sunday 08/ Oct /2023	Before 9 am on Sunday 29/ Oct /2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board-fourth grade.	R.O 25/= Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above. against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.

- The DGHS is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via

Telephone: 24402200

Email id etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.



Royal Oman Police

Directorate of Public Relations
& Security Information

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Royal Oman Police - Directorate of Public Relations & Security Information - announces the holding of a public auction to sell used police vehicles at 4:00 pm on Sunday, 01/10/2023, at the General Department of Transport in Airport Heights.

Vehicles can be inspected during official working hours, starting from 24/09/2023 until 27/09/2023.

The person awarded the auction must adhere to the following:

- Pay the value of the vehicles and brokerage fees (3%) electronically immediately after the auction is awarded.
- Transporting vehicles within a maximum period of three days from the date of awarding the auction, and a fine of RO 5 will be calculated for each day of delay after the specified period.
- The buyer is responsible for paying the vehicle registration fees in his name in the traffic system before receiving the vehicle.



55% of Liwa carriageway complete

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has informed that the 55% of the Liwa dual carriageway project has been completed, adhering to the benchmarks set in the Road Design Manual.

This critical 5.5km road connects North Batinah from the Liwa Roundabout on the Batinah Road to the Batinah Expressway junction.

The project will transform the current single carriageway into a dual carriageway, featuring two lanes in each direction with a 22.1m cross-section.

Additionally, the project encompasses the construction of two new roundabouts, designated entry and exit lanes, and service roads flanking the carriageway to facilitate seamless movement for both residential and commercial areas. The road will be equipped with essential traffic safety features, including concrete and metal barriers, directional signs, warning markings, and LED lighting fixtures.

GCC social development ministers discuss joint action in Muscat meet

Muscat - The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, chaired the 9th meeting of the Ministerial Committee of GCC Ministers of Social Development and Social Affairs held in Muscat on Wednesday.

The meeting discussed four main topics, viz. the decision of the GCC Supreme Council on the Unified Law for Empowering Persons with Disabilities; the Unified Law for Volunteering Action; the decision of the Ministerial Council on protecting moral, religious and family values in Gulf societies; and the decision of the Ministerial Council on endorsing the tasks and responsibilities of the GCC Joint Charitable Action Committee.

The meeting discussed the GCC joint strategy on women's affairs, the dissemination of a Privilege Card for persons with disabilities in GCC states and the State of Kuwait's proposal to dedicate an award for outstanding people with disabilities in member states.

The meeting also endorsed the first initiative that stems from the GCC social development strategy aimed at devising unified policies on securing the stability of Gulf societies and instilling a spirit of Gulf citizen-



The current circumstances and rapid changes in daily life around the world produce many social issues and pose challenges that require our attention

H E DR LAILA AHMED AL NAJJAR

ship and Arab and Islamic identity.

Chairing the meeting, H E Dr Laila Ahmed al Najjar, Social Development Minister, said, "The current circumstances and rapid changes in daily life around the world produce many social issues and pose challenges that

require our attention. This is because such developments have direct and indirect impacts that may lead to radical and profound phenomena threatening to affect the social system and challenge social values, family cohesion and the unity of the Gulf society."

H E Dr Laila lauded the keenness of GCC states to address these challenges, provide social protection for various segments of society and ensure a decent living for Gulf citizens.

This, she added, can be achieved by utilising modern methods and technologies to collect data and draw up strategic and proactive plans. In this way, the authorities concerned would be able to control many social problems and phenomena in various sectors of social action, she explained.

ONA



RO4mn extension of Wadi Bani Jaber road approved

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The General Secretariat of the Tender Board has commissioned the design and execution of the second phase of the road connecting Wadi Bani Jaber to the wilayat of Sur in South Sharqiyah governorate.

Valued at over RO4mn, this expansion aims to enhance access to one of South Sharqiyah's most scenic tourist destinations, Wadi Bani Jaber.

Eng Youssef Abdullah al Mujaini, Director of the Road Construction Department at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said that the upcoming 6km stretch will seamlessly join the already established first phase.

Initiation is anticipated this year, with an estimated completion time of one year.

Mujaini highlighted the project's dual significance - one being economic and the other service-oriented. Through improved road infrastructure, access to vital community hubs like health centres, schools, and other

services will become significantly more convenient.

The new road promises to bolster tourism while tackling some existing challenges, such as the uneven terrain that demands substantial cutting and filling, Mujaini adds.

Abdullah al Jabri, a Wadi Bani Jaber resident, echoed Mujaini's sentiments, emphasising the community's excitement. "This second phase will alleviate many transportation concerns, especially during inclement weather. It's not just about convenience; it's a lifeline that links us, fuels trade, and bridges communities," Jabri stated.

The Ministry of Transport recently completed the first phase of the project, which introduced a 16.7km long two-lane road. Each lane is 3.5m in width with 1.5m shoulders on either side.

Features include 34 box ferries of varying sizes and a 160m long arched iron bridge to ensure uninterrupted traffic flow. This stretch provides a crucial link between Wadi al Manqal and Bani Jaber in the wilayat of Sur, serving numerous neighbouring villages.

Close to 1mn tourists visited khareef till Aug

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Close to a million people visited Dhofar - the stunning diverse landscape in the Arabian Peninsula - in just two months coinciding with the khareef season.

The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) data show that the number of visitors from June 21 to August 31 to Dhofar stood at 924,792.

According to the NCSI, the number of visitors in all the three segments - citizens, GCC visitors and tourists belonging to other nationalities - increased sufficiently this year.

While, the number of Omani visitors this khareef increased 16.4 % to reach 656,119, a total



of 156,953 visitors from other GCC states arrived in Dhofar this season, as against 134,309 during the corresponding period in 2022.

The number of visitors belonging to other nationalities

rose from 95,017 to 111,055 this season.

The NCSI data indicates that 714,520 visitors arrived via land checkpoints, while the number of air travellers was 209,607 - an increase of 36 % over the

figures of this segment last year.

Almost 57% of the total visitors of the current khareef season explored Dhofar during the month of August, the data further showed.

Construction of Wadi Suroor Dam in Dhairah complete



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Wadi Suroor Dam, located in the wilayat of Dhank, Dhahirah governorate, has started functioning fully after its successful completion.

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries, and Water Resources (MAFWR) announced the completion and cited the construction of the dam as a pivotal move to bolster the falaj and water wells in the region.

About 165m in length, the dam stands 15m tall with a base width of 6m. Its spillway extends 55m, and the dam boasts a storage capacity of 1.29mn cubic metre.

Designed for both underground and surface storage, the Wadi Suroor Dam will play a crucial role in ensuring water availability for farms, villages, and population centres nestled in the valley's slopes and mountains. Additionally, the dam offers enhanced flood protection for several villages.

However, the challenges persist. Data from the Ministry reveal a concerning annual water deficit of 316mn cubic metre.

Although the renewable water sources provide roughly 1.318mn cubic metre annually, the strain on these resources is palpable, highlighting the importance of infrastructure projects like the Wadi Suroor Dam.

sifr
SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

COOL SUMMER SPECIALS

50 ONLY

HOT & COLD DISPENSER

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 30 REFILL COUPONS

20 ONLY

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

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 15 REFILL COUPONS

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

C.R. No: 1355452 | MPR: 06/789/2023

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

TRUSTED SINCE **1920**

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

OMR 4 SERVICE FEE

SIMPLE | SECURE | SWIFT

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

OMR 2.5 SERVICE FEE

SIMPLE | SECURE | SWIFT

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE شركة برشوتم كانجي للمصارفة

Download it NOW!

+968: 91787829 | 99849289 | 91787829
www.pkexchange.com

MARKET WATCH

MSX304,694.09

Sensex66,800.84

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian	215.50
Pakistan	753.63
Bangladesh	285.21
Philippines	147.17
Sri Lanka	844.63

*Rates as on September 20

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Russia, China ink deal for oil complex

China's Xuan Yuan Industrial Development and Russia's United Petroleum and Gas Chemical Company signed a 5bn yuan (\$686mn) agreement for the development of an oil transshipment complex in Russia's far east, according to the Roscongress fund on Monday.

The project, which will receive funding from the Roscongress Foundation for five years, is in accordance with Russia's 'leaning towards the east' approach in Asia.

The project also requires the construction of an oil terminal for receiving, storing, blending, and loading crude oil, along with oil and gas condensate mixtures of various qualities, in a volume of up to 5.8mn tonnes per year.

OPAZ board approves annual plan for 2024



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The board of directors of Oman's Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) held its third meeting of the year 2023 at the OPAZ headquarters in Muscat. The meeting was chaired by H E Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, chairman of the board of directors.

During the meeting, the board of directors approved the general framework of OPAZ's annual plan for 2024 and its affiliated zones, which will be submitted to the Council of Ministers.

OPAZ board of directors approved unifying usufruct fees for lands allocated to the companies providing services in SEZAD and directed OPAZ management to study the possibility of applying the same in all affiliated zones in Oman

The meeting covered various subjects, including the regulation of the electricity sector in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) between OPAZ and the Public Services Regulatory Authority.

The board of directors ap-

proved unifying usufruct fees for lands allocated to companies providing services in SEZAD and directed OPAZ management to study the possibility of applying the same in all affiliated zones, in coordination with the zones' management.

The board of directors of OPAZ further discussed the requests submitted to extend the exemption period from paying usufruct fees for some local companies in the sultanate's zones supervised by OPAZ, and appropriate actions were taken.

OPAZ oversees the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, free zones in Sohar, Salalah, and Al Mazunah, as well as any other special economic zone or free zone in the sultanate. The authority also oversees the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and Khazaen Economic City.

GCC outlook lowered due to oil output cuts

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The economic performance of GCC countries weakened in the second quarter of 2023 due to reduced oil outputs under an OPEC+ agreement, according to a new report.

Projections for GCC growth this year have been scaled back by 0.5 percentage points to 1.4%, as revealed in the latest Economic Insight report for the Middle East. The report was commissioned by ICAEW and compiled by Oxford Economics.

The pace of GDP growth in the Middle East region has been downgraded by 0.4 percentage points, and it is forecasted to slow to just 1.7% this year. Despite the slowdown, optimism prevails as the region's non-oil activity remains robust.

'Nonetheless, there are encouraging indicators in the non-oil sector and domestic demand. Businesses have reported growth in their customer base and employment. However, this positive performance may face challenges due to the impending impact of high-interest rates on consumption and private investment,' the report said.

Growth in the GCC region's non-energy sector is demonstrating significant resilience, primarily fueled by the tourism-related sectors. Data shows double-digit expansion in transport, storage, accommodation, and food services. Energy prices recently have seen strong gains, with the Brent oil price rising to \$90 per barrel, the highest since November 2022. This is a result of support from Chinese stimulus measures, robust US demand, and deeper supply cuts.

Saudi Arabia has extended its voluntary 1mn barrels per day (bpd) oil production cut through the year-end, while Russia has also pledged to reduce its oil exports further. Consequently, ICAEW has adjusted its oil price projection, raising the average Brent oil price estimate for this year to \$83.10 per barrel, compared to the forecast of \$81.5 per barrel three months ago.

Hanadi Khalife, head of Middle East at ICAEW, said, "This [second] quarter has been challenging for the region, marking weaker growth than initially pre-



dicted. However, looking forward, the planned inclusion of Saudi Arabia and the UAE into the BRICS group next year is expected to create new opportunities for increased trade and investment. This development will also help reduce their reliance on the US dollar, offering a positive outlook for the future."

Scott Livermore, ICAEW economic adviser and chief economist and Managing Director at Oxford Economics Middle East, said, "The recent energy cuts

Recent oil output cuts have had a pronounced impact on the GCC economic outlook for this quarter. As a result, 2023 is forecasted to be the GCC's weakest year for the energy sector since 2017, excluding the exceptional circumstances of 2020

SCOTT LIVERMORE

have had a pronounced impact on the economic outlook for this quarter. As a result, 2023 is forecasted to be the GCC's weakest year for the energy sector since 2017, excluding the exceptional circumstances of 2020."

The ICAEW report also noted the favorable level of GCC inflation in recent months, due to a decline in food and fuel prices. However, despite the outlook of inflation normalising, interest rates are expected to remain at the same levels, as the GCC currency pegs to the US dollar, preventing regional central banks from cutting rates before the Federal Reserve starts its easing cycle.

Standard Chartered issues first green guarantee for solar project in Oman

Muscat - Standard Chartered announced the issuance of its first-ever green guarantee for China Energy Engineering Shanxi Electric Power Engineering Company (CEEC-SEPEC) in Oman.

This ground-breaking initiative underscores the bank's and CEEC-SEPEC's commitment to sustainable finance and supporting renewable energy projects globally and regionally.

The green guarantee provided by Standard Chartered is for a solar project in Oman, where CEEC-SEPEC is the main EPC contractor. The project aims to develop and operate a state-of-the-art solar power plant, contributing to Oman's renewable energy targets and reducing carbon emissions.

Standard Chartered's guaran-



tee not only demonstrates its confidence in CEEC-SEPEC's project but also reinforces its commitment to fostering a greener and more sustainable future, the bank said in a press re-

lease.

Commenting on this milestone, Hussain al Yafai, CEO of Standard Chartered Oman, said, "We are proud to play a vital role in facilitating sustainable devel-

opment in Oman. By issuing the first green guarantee for CEEC-SEPEC's renewable energy project, we are not only supporting the growth of the renewable energy sector but also aligning our

efforts with Oman's vision of a more sustainable future. This partnership demonstrates our unwavering commitment to driving positive change and advancing the transition to clean energy."

On the collaboration, CEEC-SEPEC's chairman Wang Xinpeng, said, "We are pleased to have Standard Chartered as our trusted financial partner for this landmark project. This green guarantee is a testament to our shared commitment towards renewable energy development in Oman. With Standard Chartered's support, we will accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon economy, contribute to Oman's sustainable development goals, and create a positive impact for the local community."

IMF, WB meetings to proceed in Morocco despite quake

Washington, US - The World Bank and International Monetary Fund have confirmed that their annual meetings will go ahead in Morocco as planned next month despite a deadly earthquake near the event site.

The 6.8-magnitude earthquake hit Al-Haouz province south of Marrakesh on September 8, killing nearly 3,000 people and injuring thousands more.

In a joint statement released Monday, World Bank President Ajay Banga, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and Moroccan Finance Minister Nadia Fettah Alaoui, said they had worked together to "thoroughly assess" Marrakesh's capacity to host the meetings.

"Based on a careful review of the findings, the managements of the World Bank and IMF, together with the Moroccan authorities, have agreed to proceed with holding the 2023 annual meetings in Marrakech from Oc-



tober 9 to 15, adapting the content to the circumstances," they added.

The annual gathering of world leaders hosted by the two international financial institutions was initially scheduled to be held in Marrakesh in 2021, but was postponed twice due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year's meetings will be the first since the appointment of the former Mastercard chief ex-

ecutive Ajay Banga to lead the World Bank on a pledge to bring more private sector funding into development and climate financing.

"At this very difficult time, we believe that the annual meetings also provide an opportunity for the international community to stand by Morocco and its people," Banga, Georgieva and Alaoui said.

AFP

China sets new record for oil imports

Washington, US - China imported record volumes of crude oil during the first half of this year due to refinery extensions and economic recovery initiatives after the government eased COVID-19 mobility restrictions, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA).

The EIA data showed that the volume of imported crude oil averaged 11.4mn barrels per day (bpd), marking a 12% increase compared to last year's annual average of 10.2mn bpd.

China sourced much of the



additional crude oil from Russia, Iran, Brazil and the US.

Compared with last year's averages, the country's imports

from Russia increased by 23%, from Saudi Arabia by 7%, and from Brazil by 49%.

China imported more crude

oil from Russia in June than it had ever done in a single month before, amounting to a record-breaking 2.6mn bpd.

In addition, China's imports from the US in the first half of this year more than doubled from last year. The report said that industry analysts indicate that much of the oil that was shipped from Iran to China was relabeled as originating from countries such as Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman to avoid sanctions.

Anadolu Agency

Eurozone inflation eased to 5.2% in August

Brussels, Belgium - Eurozone inflation slowed slightly in August, the EU statistics agency said, revising its previous figure.

Consumer prices in the 20-country single currency area fell to 5.2% in August from 5.3% in July, according to Eurostat.

The agency had previously put August inflation at 5.3%.

Eurostat also said food and drink prices rose by 9.7% in August, revising its 9.8% figure published on August 31.

Inflation across the 27-na-

tion European Union reached 5.9% in August, down from 6.1% in July, the data showed.

The revision will be welcome but inflation is still far above the European Central Bank's official target of two percent despite an unprecedented series of rate hikes.

The ECB raised its key interest rates by another 25 basis points on Thursday, but a bank official suggested they were now at levels that could be enough to tame inflation.

AFP

UK set to backtrack on net zero policies

London, UK – The UK looked set to backtrack Wednesday on policies aimed at achieving net zero emissions by 2050 with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak expected to water down some of the government's green commitments.

The move comes amid growing concern over the potential financial cost of the government's policies to achieve net zero carbon emissions by mid-century.

A general election is expected next year and Sunak's Conservative Party is trailing in the polls behind the Labour opposition amid a cost-of-living crisis that has seen food and housing costs spiral.

Sunak was to deliver a speech at Downing Street later on Wednesday.

According to British media reports, the premier in particular wants to water down plans to phase out gas boilers from 2035 and delay the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars due in 2030.

In a statement late Tuesday



This handout photo shows UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak making a statement in the House of Commons, in London, on September 11 (AFP)

he said that while the government was committed to the net zero target, it would try to achieve it "in a better, more proportionate way".

The Conservative's narrow win in a west London by-election in July – largely put down to a campaign against the expansion of a vehicle pollution toll zone in the capital by Labour mayor Sadiq Khan – triggered calls within the party to rethink climate commitments.

Sunak said politicians "of all stripes have not been honest about costs and trade-offs" and that he would "put the long-term interests of our country before the short-term political needs of

the moment".

Interior minister Suella Braverman told Sky News on Wednesday morning that "we're not going to save the planet by bankrupting the British people".

"We absolutely remain committed to delivering net zero by 2050 in line with our international agreements," she said, adding that "we also need to adopt an approach of pragmatism and proportionality".

Put growth first

"We need to put economic growth first, we need to put household costs and budgets first, we need to put the cost of living first," she added.

The government's expected net zero rethink sparked anger among opposition lawmakers, environmental campaigners, the car industry and some Conservative MPs, setting up a possible rift in Sunak's party.

In July, Sunak approved hundreds of new oil and gas licences in the North Sea off Britain's east coast, angering environmentalists.

Former COP26 president and Conservative lawmaker Alok Sharma warned that "for any party to resile from this agenda will not help economically or electorally."

Chris Skidmore, a Conservative former energy minister who recently led a review on net zero for the government, said Sunak "still has time to think again and not make the greatest mistake of his premiership."

Reports suggested that some MPs may even be preparing letters of no confidence should Sunak go ahead with the move.

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas said "this decision would be economically illiterate, historically inaccurate and environmentally bone-headed."

Ed Miliband, Labour's spokesman for energy, called it a "complete farce from a Tory government that literally does not know what they are doing day to day."

AFP

Britain's inflation drops to 18-month low

London, UK – British inflation unexpectedly slowed in August, data showed Wednesday, hitting an 18-month low and sparking hope this week's widely-forecast interest rate hike by the Bank of England could be its last for now.

The Consumer Prices Index dropped slightly to 6.7% from 6.8% in July, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement on the eve of the BoE's latest monetary policy decision.

That was the lowest since February 2022 and confounded expectations for an acceleration to 7.1% on higher energy prices.

Wednesday's news sent the pound sliding almost 0.4% to \$1.2347 in morning deals, with the US Federal Reserve set to hold rates later in the day.

Finance minister Jeremy Hunt said his Conservative government's plan to lower inflation is "working" but conceded that the rate is "still too high".

It comes one day after data showed eurozone inflation also slowed slightly in August.

"The surprise fall in UK inflation triggered a kneejerk selloff in



UK's Consumer Prices Index dropped slightly to 6.7% in August from 6.8% in July

sterling, as today's data cements the expectation that the Bank of England's next rate hike could also be its last," said Swissquote Bank analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya.

Despite the drop, British inflation remains the highest in the G7 group of rich nations, after peaking at a 41-year high of 11.1% in October last year.

Elevated inflation has prompted almost 18 months of regular stoppages by public and private-sector workers whose pay is failing to keep pace.

In the latest walkout, medical consultants and junior doctors working in England for the country's National Health Service held their first ever joint strike on Wednesday.

The BoE has so far ramped up

its key interest rate 14 times in a row to the current level of 5.25% in a bid to bring down red-hot inflation.

The data "probably won't be enough to prevent the BoE from raising interest rates... to 5.5% tomorrow", noted Capital Economics analyst Paul Dales.

"But it supports our view that that will be the last hike".

The ONS added that food prices rose by less in August than a year earlier. This impact was only partially offset by higher energy costs.

"The rate of inflation eased slightly this month driven by falls in the often-erratic cost of overnight accommodation and air fares, as well as food prices rising by less than the same time last year," said ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner.

"This was partially offset by an increase in the price of petrol and diesel compared with a steep decline at this time last year, following record prices seen in July 2022."

However, economists caution that this week's rebound in oil prices toward \$100 per barrel will fuel fresh inflationary pressures.

"The ramping up of crude prices over recent weeks will filter through, but there will be relief that oil prices have also snuck away from the week's highs," said Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown.

AFP

Toshiba says \$14bn offer to go private set to succeed

Tokyo, Japan – Toshiba said on Wednesday that a \$14bn tender offer to take the troubled Japanese conglomerate private is set to succeed.

The announcement comes after a takeover scheme to delist Toshiba launched last month by a Japan Industrial Partners-led consortium closed on Wednesday.

"We have received a report from the offeror that the tender offer is forecasted to be successful," Toshiba said in a statement.

The final results will be announced once the company receives it, it said.

In March, Toshiba said the tender offer would be called off if the consortium failed to buy at least 66.7% of the outstanding shares.

The consortium taking control in the nearly two trillion yen deal includes 17 Japanese firms and six Japanese banks.

Toshiba, which once symbolised Japan's economic might, has recently been mired in scandals, financial turmoil and resignations.

Two years ago, a bombshell buyout offer from private equity fund CVC Capital Partners put a question mark over the conglomerate's future.

After the CVC offer was dropped, plans were floated to split the company up and spin off its device segment -- meeting stiff opposition from some investors.

Toshiba grew into a vast conglomerate, but has been in upheaval since it was rocked by a profit-padding scandal in 2015.

The company also suffered from huge losses at its US nuclear subsidiary, followed by a recovery that brought pressure from new activist shareholders.

AFP

Oil prices decline ahead of Fed's policy rate decision

Muscat – Oil prices declined on Wednesday as investors profited from 10-month price highs due to uncertainties ahead of the much-anticipated US Federal Reserve meeting later on Wednesday, although bearish oil demand data capped further price downturns.

International benchmark crude Brent traded at \$93.48 per barrel in morning trade in London, a 0.91% loss from the closing price of \$94.34 a barrel in the previous trading session on Tuesday.

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at the same time at \$89.64 per barrel, down 0.93% from the previous session's close of \$90.48 per barrel.

Brent reached its highest level since last November, hovering around \$95 a barrel on supply concerns after Saudi Arabia and Russia extended curbs until the end of the year.

However, prices dipped on Wednesday as investors sought to profit from the high price of oil before the Fed announced its



next monetary policy decision.

Although investors anticipate that the Fed will keep interest rates unchanged for this month, they will be watching Fed officials closely for any indications of the direction the bank will take moving forward.

However, bullish demand signs in the US limited further price declines following the American Petroleum Institute's

announcement late Tuesday of an estimated fall of 5.25mn barrels in US crude oil inventories, against the market expectation of a 2.66mn-barrel draw.

The US Energy Information Administration's (EIA) data on oil stocks will be announced later on Wednesday, and if the stock decline is confirmed to be larger than estimates, prices could fall further.

Alternative supplies outside the OPEC+ alliance have so far offset the output curbs of OPEC+ members by more than 2.5mn barrels per day (bpd) since the start of the year. The US and Brazil recorded export increases of 1.9mn bpd between January and August, according to data by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

However, the agency said the loss of OPEC+ production, led by Saudi Arabia, will drive a significant supply shortfall through the fourth quarter of 2023, although sanctions-battered Iran boosted output by around 600,000 bpd.

Agencies

China economy builds recovery momentum

Beijing, China – China's economic indicators were stronger than expected in August, indicating that the country's pro-growth policies are effective and solidifying its hopes of accomplishing its full-year economic growth target, according to analysts and officials.

Positive factors in China's economy are accumulating, and naysayers will be disappointed yet again, Cong Liang, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, told a press conference on Wednesday.

With major economic indicators showing signs of perking up, China has ridden the positive momentum and introduced a string of macro policies across the board.

On the fiscal front, China has revved up its issuance and use of special-purpose local government bonds. And on the monetary front, the country's central bank has made policy rate adjustments and cut the financial-institution reserve requirement ratio twice this year.

"At a defining moment for the Chinese economy, the central bank made its moves at just the



China's central bank has made rate adjustments and cut reserve requirement ratio twice this year

right time," said Dong Ximiao, chief researcher at Merchants Union Consumer Finance Company Limited.

The effects of the comprehensive policy package have been reflected in the August data. In August, China's value-added industrial output increased 4.5% year on year, higher than the 3.7% uptick recorded in July, and retail sales of consumer goods saw an accelerated 4.6% increase after a slowdown that

lasted three consecutive months, data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) will continue to utilise a combination of policy tools to keep liquidity at a reasonable and sufficient level, and guide the financing costs of the real economy downward, PBOC official Zou Lan said on Wednesday.

The property sector, though still weighing on the Chinese economy, reported encouraging signs in multiple regional markets in August, according to Cong.

Recently, China relaxed the criteria identifying first-home buyers to allow more people to benefit from preferential policies, and lowered the interest rates of existing first-home mortgages.

Zhong Zhengsheng, chief economist at Pingan Securities, said the slew of measures has apparently prompted a rebound in sales of second-hand homes, although the response in the new-home market is delayed.

Wang Qing, an analyst at Golden Credit Rating, said local governments are expected to double down on efforts to stimulate their housing markets, including efforts to relax home purchase restrictions and provide home purchase subsidies.

"These moves will effectively increase the synergy of macro policies and buoy market confidence in the process of counter-cyclical regulation," Wang said.

As existing and incremental policies have a synergistic effect, China's economy will rebound and sustain long-term upward momentum, Cong said at the press conference.

Xinhua

Al Mouj Sarai wins Luxury Residential Development of the Year Award 2023

Al Mouj Sarai, the ultra-elite collection of 28 sea-facing palaces launched by Al Mouj Muscat at the start of the year, has been crowned Luxury Residential Development of the Year - Oman Award at the celebrated Real Estate Asia Awards 2023.

Set at the westernmost crest of Al Mouj, the win affirms Al Mouj Sarai's status as the most desirable and glamorous address in the sultanate, and arguably in the region, which set within the exclusive and gated Sarai neighbourhood, takes oceanfront majesty and seclusion to an unsurpassed level.

This is the second consecutive year that Oman's premium lifestyle destination has earned regional recognition in the prestigious awards programme that celebrate the most innovative real estate developments and companies across the Asia Pacific region, with the awards presented at a glittering ceremony in Singapore.

Overlooking both the Sea of Oman and Al Mouj's Gold Anchor marina with mesmerising views, Al Mouj Sarai are lavish six-bedroomed mansions set over three and four floors that through high-end design features



and opulent interiors combined with bespoke amenities and an outstanding location, have redefined the meaning of luxury.

Designed by award-winning international architects, each is a private sanctuary of wellness and tranquillity offering buyers a holistic living experience at the heart of the premium lifestyle destination where an abundance of world-class leisure, retail, entertainment and community amenities are close by.

The annual awards programme recognises major break-

throughs, innovations as well as key players across the real estate industry and says Al Mouj Muscat's CEO Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani: "It is a great honour to once again be recognised in these awards, and evidence that Al Mouj Sarai is truly remarkable. The response from the market has been overwhelmingly positive, demonstrating how we continue to design products that not only meet buyers' aspirations but consistently surpass them."

There are two styles of Al Mouj Sarai palaces, Ocean Sarai

and Marina Sarai and a choice of plots of between 2076sqm to 3079sqm. Ocean Sarai boasts uninterrupted views of the glistening sea and Marina Sarai offers the exhilaration of living at the tip of Al Mouj Marina complete with private jetty and superyacht mooring.

"Without question, Al Mouj Sarai is the shimmering jewel in Al Mouj Muscat's crown, offering the region's influencers and most eminent elite with incomparable homes to enjoy life without compromise," Sheibani added.

Ominvest participates in forum to exchange insights

Oman International Development and Investment Co SAOG (Ominvest), the leading investment company in the Sultanate of Oman listed in the Muscat Stock Exchange, participated in an insightful forum organised by the References for Conferences and Seminars Centre, Salalah in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour.

'Strategic Project Management within the Concept of Good Governance' forum served as a platform for governance experts and professionals within the sultanate and abroad to engage and exchange experiences and ideas, and further explore progressive approaches to governance across different industries and sectors.

The forum also touched upon the effects of good governance in relation to strategic project management and sustainable development.

Sarah Lashkoo, Chief Legal Officer and the company's secretary at Ominvest, was the natural choice to represent Ominvest at this forum as an accredited governance expert, in addition to her extensive experience in the governance domain.

Sarah shared Ominvest's experience that stems from its pledge to uphold the highest standards of governance and transparency in all its investments and operations.

"The Forum was a chance to



Sarah Lashkoo, Chief Legal Officer at Ominvest

showcase the company's experience in the field of governance from a publicly listed investment company perspective. We shared our experiences, success stories and best practices in the investment-decision process in terms of governance, ESG and sustainability," Sarah Lashkoo commented.

"It was a great opportunity for us to actively participate in the Forum and exchange governance knowledge with a diverse group of specialists and experts. We believe that engaging in such dynamic platforms is instrumental for all stakeholders."

AbdulAziz Mohammed al Balushi, Ominvest Group CEO, said that the company's focus is on enhancing its presence as a leading investment company that works to invest wisely in terms of

governance in various sectors, locally and abroad. "Ominvest is committed to maintain governance and ESG standards and is determined to implement them across its businesses, due to their importance in maximising gains and achieving sustainability for all stakeholders as well as customers," he explained.

The Ominvest CEO pointed out that Sarah Lashkoo's participation in this forum confirms the company's dedication to developing the skills of its people, through participation in various events.

"This further reaffirms the company's commitment to empower women and see them excel in all their endeavours."

Ominvest is one of the oldest, highly successful and largest investment firms in the region.

Smart Decision Training Center holds seminar on 'journey of a real estate valuer'

Smart Decision Training Center - under the esteemed patronage of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning - successfully organised a panel discussion that has been marked a unique and groundbreaking initiative in the field of real estate appraisal in the Sultanate of Oman.

The panel discussion on 'The Journey of a Real Estate Valuer' found to be potential to contribute to significant development and organisation of opportunities in the real estate market. This event coincided with the launch of the academic track for the field of real estate appraisal, which is the first of its kind in Oman, in collaboration with the Saudi Authority for Accredited Valuers.

The panel discussion featured the participation of specialised experts in the field of real estate appraisal. It addressed several important topics related to the funda-

mentals of the profession, the challenges it faces, and proposed solutions and recommendations.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of regulating work in the field of real estate appraisal, understanding current and future trends, reviewing the core curricula for the profession to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its practitioners, and developing curricula that serve the Omani market with qualified professionals in accordance with international standards. Masoud al Hashmi, the Director-General of the Real Estate Development Department at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, emphasised the urgent need to regulate and improve professional practices in real estate appraisal based on sound scientific foundations to protect the rights of parties involved in real estate transactions.



Bank Muscat opens new corporate branch in Duqm

In line with its customer-centric vision and continuous endeavours to provide high-quality banking services to customers across the sultanate, Bank Muscat recently opened a new Corporate Banking branch in the wilayat of Duqm.

The opening ceremony was held in the presence of Sheikh Bader Nasser al Farsi, wali of Duqm, Ilham Murtadha al Hamid, General Manager, Corporate Banking, Bank Muscat, senior officials from the bank and

customers. The opening of the new branch is in line with the emergence of Duqm as a key business and industrial hub in the sultanate and also the future prospects for rapid development in this strategic part of Oman.

The new Corporate Banking branch features state-of-the-art technology and the highest levels of security and safety required for various banking transactions. It is characterised by a spacious and comfortable design and layout, and is manned by well qualified

and experienced Omani cadres.

It will provide a wide range of banking products and services, including loans for global trade services, project financing, debt financing through direct loans and syndicated loans.

Ilham Murtadha al Hamid, General Manager, Corporate Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "We are pleased to open our new Corporate branch in the wilayat of Duqm, which is one of the most important upcoming cities in the region and currently witnessing

unprecedented economic growth.

"Bank Muscat will be delighted to play its part in the enormous developments happening in Duqm, and will be offering a range of banking services and facilities to both government institutions and corporates in the Governorate of Al Wusta."

With the latest addition in Duqm, the bank now has five Corporate Banking branches across the sultanate including two branches in Muscat and one

each in Sohar and Salalah. Corporate banking branches offer a range of important services including corporate loans and capital financing to expand projects as well as bid bonds, performance bonds, advance payment bonds, financial bonds, and performance guarantee bonds.

The bank also provides letter of credit services for the purchase of equipment and machinery, standby letters of credit, and a range of other services to corporates and institutions.

State-of-the-art badminton academy opens near Grand Mosque

A state-of-the-art badminton academy has come up recently near Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Ghala, much to the delight of badminton lovers in Muscat.

Oman Racquet Sports Committee chairman Dr Abdul Rahim Musallam al Darwashi inaugurated the Oasis Badminton Academy that boasts of six courts with modern facilities.

These courts have been prepared with the international standard injury-proof surface and have been named after major cities of Oman. Along with this, the academy has also gymnasium, areas for cycling and running, rest room for players, cafeteria, shower room,



safety lockers and ample parking facility.

Any age can be admitted to the academy, but specialised training is given to those from the age of five. The players will be trained under three expert coaches from India and Indonesia. The coaches are Bala Subramaniam, Arif and Roban.

There is also live streaming that allows parents to directly watch their children's training, evaluate it and give necessary suggestions from the comfort of their homes. A mobile application has also been launched to know more about the academy, get admission and tournament registration at the academy.

Courts will work from 4 am to

12 pm. Tournaments and special classes of outside expert players and coaches are also provided to evaluate the performance of the players.

A special discount is also available on Badminton equipment. Management representatives Yogendra Singh Katiyar (founder) and Rassam Meethal and Jasper Potharaju said that the main objective of the academy, which is working with the approval of the Oman Sports Ministry, is to prepare the trainees to compete in the Asian Games, Olympics and World Cup in the next five years, and to open more courts due to the increasing popularity of badminton in Oman.

Israel troops kill 19-year-old Palestinian in pre-dawn raid in West Bank

Jericho, Palestinian Territories - Israeli troops killed a 19-year-old Palestinian in a pre-dawn raid in the West Bank on Wednesday, the Palestinian health ministry said, as violence in the occupied territory showed no sign of any letup.

Durgham al-Akhras was killed in a clash with Israeli soldiers raiding Aqabat Jaber refugee camp near the city of Jericho to carry out arrests, the ministry said.

The Israeli army said 'explosive devices' were hurled at troops, who 'responded with live fire toward one of the suspects and neutralised him', a statement said.

Separately, the Palestinian health ministry announced the death of Yasser Mussa, 29, who was wounded during an Israeli raid on Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank late on Tuesday.

In total, the raid by Israeli troops backed by a drone killed four Palestinians, the ministry said.



A friend of Yousef Radwan, who was killed the previous day, cries during his funeral in southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday (AFP)

The Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, armed wing of the Islamist Hamas movement that controls the Gaza Strip, said two of those killed in Jenin were members. Hundreds of mourners attended the funerals of the dead on Wednesday.

Rising bloodshed

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 and its troops routinely carry out incursions into areas such as Jenin, which are nominally under the Palestinian Authority's security control. Violence linked to the Israel-Palestinian conflict has surged since early last year, particularly in the West Bank.

At least 238 Palestinians have been killed so far this year in incidents linked to the conflict.

The bloodshed has also seen 32 Israelis, a Ukrainian and an Italian killed over the same period, according to an AFP tally based on official sources on both sides. They include, on the Palestinian side, combatants as well as civilians and, on the Israeli side, mainly civilians including minors and three members of the Arab minority.

In recent days, unrest has also surged in the Gaza Strip, with Palestinians holding protests that have turned violent along the border with Israel.

Palestinians have thrown rocks and explosives towards Israeli troops guarding the border fence, who have responded with tear gas and gunfire.

AFP

Turkey's Erdogan meets Israel's Netanyahu in NY

United Nations, US - Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met in New York on Tuesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said 'ties between the two countries were improving'.

After more than a decade of tensions, relations have improved with recent high-level visits, including that of Israeli President Isaac Herzog to Ankara last year.

In Tuesday's meeting at Turkish House on the sidelines of the annual UN General Assembly, 'the two leaders decided to continue advancing bilateral relations in trade, economic matters and energy', Netanyahu's office said, and extended reciprocal invitations for visits 'soon.'

They also discussed 'regional and international issues, including normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia', the statement said.

Though Saudi Arabia was not one of the Gulf and Arab countries to normalise ties with Israel as part of the 2020 US-brokered Abraham Accords, speculation has grown of an impending deal.

Riyadh has repeatedly said it would stick to the decades-old Arab League position of not establishing official ties with Israel until conflict with the Palestinians is resolved.

On Tuesday, Erdogan and Netanyahu also discussed 'the latest developments regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict', according to a statement from the Turkish presidency.

Erdogan is a fervent supporter of the Palestinian cause and a fierce critic of Israel - but he has also altered regional strategy by initiating an outreach to Israel after years of tensions, including sending congratulations to Netanyahu after his victory in December elections.

Ankara's relations with Israel froze over an Israeli raid on a Turkish ship carrying aid into the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian territory, which killed 10 civilians in 2010.

A brief reconciliation lasted from 2016 until 2018, when Turkey withdrew its ambassador and expelled Israel's over the killing of Palestinians during a conflict with Gaza.

Netanyahu meets US President Joe Biden on Wednesday on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly for the first time since being re-elected, in what is expected to be a tense encounter.

Relations between Netanyahu and the Biden administration have been rocky since the Israeli leader made his political comeback.

AFP

Azerbaijan halts operation in Nagorno-Karabakh region

Baku, Azerbaijan - Azerbaijan on Wednesday announced it had halted its military operation in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, after separatist Armenian forces agreed to lay down their arms and hold reintegrating talks.

Baku and the ethnic-Armenian authorities in Karabakh said a deal was brokered by Russian peacekeepers to stop the fighting a day after Azerbaijan launched an 'anti-terrorist operation'.

The separatists said they had committed to a 'full dismantlement' of their forces and the withdrawal of Armenian army units from the region, at the centre of two wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Azerbaijan's defence ministry said in addition that 'all weapons and heavy armaments are to be surrendered' under the supervision of Russia's 2,000-strong peacekeeping force on the ground.

Both sides said talks on reintegrating the breakaway territory into the rest of Azerbaijan would be held on Thursday in the city of Yevlakh.

The stunning collapse of separatist resistance represents a major victory for Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev in his quest to bring Armenian-majority Nagorno-Karabakh back under Baku's control.

Armenian Prime Minister



Russian peacekeepers help to evacuate refugees from Stepanakert on Wednesday (AFP)

The separatists said they had committed to a 'full dismantlement' of their forces and the withdrawal of Armenian army units from the region

Nikol Pashinyan said in a televised address that Yerevan 'did not participate in drafting' the Karabakh ceasefire deal, and insisted his country's army was not in the enclave.

It was 'very important' that the ceasefire hold, he added.

than 200 wounded by the shelling in Karabakh as the latest onslaught from Azerbaijan saw artillery, aircraft and drone strikes rock the region.

Baku said on Tuesday it had taken control of more than 60 military positions during 'localised anti-terrorist measures'.

Russian peacekeepers and separatist forces evacuated thousands of civilians from the fighting. Pashinyan had accused Azerbaijan of engaging in 'ethnic cleansing of Karabakh Armenians'.

International pressure

The announcement of the ceasefire came after Aliyev warned the military operation would continue until the separatists laid down their weapons, in the face of mounting international pressure to halt fighting.

Russia, the United Nations and Pope Francis added to calls to stop the violence, after the United States and France reached out to the leaders of both Azerbaijan and Armenia.

AFP

Iran MPs vote to toughen penalties for women who breach dress code

Tehran, Iran - Iranian women who flout the strict Islamic dress code mandating head coverings and modest clothing would face up to 10 years' prison under a bill passed on Wednesday.

The push to step up penalties comes a year after a wave of protests sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested for allegedly breaching the rules.

Since then, a growing number of Iranian women have been seen in public without hijab head scarves or observing the rules against clothes that are deemed too tight-fitting or otherwise revealing. Iran's legislature approved 'the 'Support for the Culture of Hijab and Chastity' bill for a trial period of three years', the official IRNA news agency reported.

Out of the 290 lawmakers, 152 voted in favour, 35 against, and seven abstained, with the remainder absent. The bill still requires approval by the Guardian Council.

Last year's protests, labelled foreign-instigated 'riots' by Iranian authorities, saw hundreds of people killed, including dozens of



Iran's Ebrahim Raisi meeting with families of security personnel killed during mass protests, on September 15 (AFP)

Out of the 290 lawmakers, 152 voted in favour, 35 against, and seven abstained, with the remainder absent

security personnel, and thousands arrested.

Under the bill, violations would be punished most se-

verely if they are considered linked to what Iran regards as hostile foreign forces.

Women breaching the dress rules 'in cooperation with foreign or hostile governments, media, groups or organisations' could face five to 10 years' prison.

Those seen 'half-naked in public spaces' would also face lengthy jail terms.

The draft law also imposes fines against anyone 'promoting nudity' or 'mocking the hijab' in

the media. Business owners whose female staff break the dress rules could be banned from exiting the country.

As many Iranian women have flouted the rules, especially in Tehran, Iran's executive and judiciary in May proposed the bill to 'protect society' and 'strengthen family life'. Iran's ruling conservatives have argued that relaxing the rules would rupture 'social norms'.

AFP

EU, Germany demand Poland clarify 'serious' visa scandal

Berlin, Germany - The European Union and Germany on Wednesday pressed the Polish government to clear up 'serious' visa fraud allegations that could impact its neighbours in the bloc.

Polish media reports said a system for giving out Schengen visas to people from the Middle East and Africa in exchange for bribes was put in place through the Polish consulates and some external companies in the countries concerned.

Amid growing tensions within the EU over migration, German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser called her Polish counterpart Mariusz Kaminski on Tuesday and her ministry asked Warsaw's envoy to Berlin to appear over the issue, officials said.

During the talks, Berlin demanded that Warsaw provide 'rapid and complete clarification' of the 'serious' allegations.

The European Commission on Wednesday gave Warsaw two weeks to provide 'clarifications' of the charges, calling the reports 'very concerning'.

Berlin's queries prompted an angry response from Kaminski, who rejected the 'absurd' claims



German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser answers questions at the Bundestag (lower house of parliament) in Berlin on Wednesday (AFP)

regarding the scope of the affair.

"Unfortunately, the German press latched onto the opposition's completely absurd narrative regarding the scale of what we were dealing with," Kaminski told Poland's Radio Zet.

"I spoke to the German interior minister yesterday...I explained the actual scale."

Authorities in Warsaw say the scheme may have involved several hundred Polish work visas, while the Polish opposition says the real number could be around 250,000. Poland's secret service said last week that seven people had been detained in the scandal ahead of October 15 elections, in which the governing party is running on an anti-immigration platform.

Three of the seven are under arrest, according to the prosecutor's office, which is leading an inquiry into the alleged racket for fraudulently obtaining visas.

AFP

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Stand firm against genocide: Zelensky

Zelensky renewed an invitation for world leaders to join a ‘peace summit’ to end Russian invasion

United Nations, US - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in a wartime trip to the United Nations on Tuesday urged the world to stand firm against Russia’s ‘genocide,’ as he tried to convince skeptical developing nations they share a stake in Kyiv’s victory.

Taking the rostrum of the UN General Assembly in his trademark military fatigues, Zelensky renewed an invitation for world leaders to join a ‘peace summit’ to end the invasion.

“For the first time in modern history, we have the chance to end the aggression on the terms of the nation which was attacked,” Zelensky said in a speech met with applause led by Western nations but many empty seats elsewhere.

“This is a real chance for every nation - to ensure that aggression against your state, if it happens, God forbid, will end not because your land will be divided, but with sovereignty upheld,” he said.

Zelensky lashed out at Russia for what Ukraine says is the deportation of thousands of children. The practice has led the International Criminal Court to issue a warrant for the arrest of President Vladimir Putin of Russia, which says it is taking war orphans into foster care.

“Those children in Russia are taught to hate Ukraine, and all ties with their families are broken,” Zelensky said, as Russia’s deputy ambassador to the United Nations sat without any



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addresses the 78th United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York City on Tuesday (AFP)

expression.

“This is clearly a genocide. When hatred is weaponised against one nation, it never stops there,” he said.

He accused Russia of using both energy and food as a way to pressure the world, after Moscow ended a UN-backed agreement to let ships of grain sail out of Ukraine.

“The aggressor is weaponising many other things, and those things are used not only against our country but against all of yours as well.”

For the first time in modern history, we have the chance to end the aggression on the terms of the nation which was attacked

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

Warning to Central Asians

Zelensky warned that Russia’s other neighbours were at risk.

“Russia has almost swallowed Belarus. It is obviously threatening Kazakhstan and the

Baltic states,” he said.

The leaders of Kazakhstan and the four other Central Asian former Soviet republics met at the United Nations with US President Joe Biden in a first-of-a-kind summit.

Biden told the leaders that the United States backed their ‘sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity’.

“These principles matter more than ever, in my view,” Biden said.

Biden in his own speech to the United Nations, with Zelensky looking on, warned that Putin was hoping the world will ‘grow weary’ over Ukraine.

“But I ask you this: if we abandon the core principles (of the UN Charter) to appease an aggressor, can any member

state in this body feel confident that they are protected? If we allow Ukraine to be carved up, is the independence of any nation secure?” Biden said.

“We must stand up to this naked aggression today to deter other would-be aggressors tomorrow.”

Zelensky is also meeting leaders less dedicated to Ukraine’s cause, including Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who has styled himself as a neutral mediator.

“Work needs to be done to

create space for negotiations,” Lula told the General Assembly.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who will also meet Zelensky, said that the ‘war will have no winners and peace will have no losers’.

“We will step up our efforts to end the war through diplomacy and dialogue on the basis of Ukraine’s independence and territorial integrity,” Erdogan said.

Russia has met overwhelming criticism at the General Assembly over its February 2022 invasion, but the focus on the war has also drawn criticism from developing countries who believe it has distracted the West, especially from other urgent priorities.

“It is a grave indictment of this international community that we can spend so much on war, but we cannot support action that needs to be taken to meet the most basic needs of billions of people,” said South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who also met the Ukrainian president.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has tried to keep a focus on development. He opened the General Assembly with a bleak speech highlighting the recent floods that killed thousands in Derna, Libya.

“Even as we speak now, bodies are washing ashore from the same Mediterranean Sea where billionaires sunbathe on their super yachts,” Guterres said.

AFP

West flayed over Quran burnings

United Nations, US - Muslim leaders addressing the United Nations on Tuesday berated the West over burnings of the *Quran*, denouncing the acts protected as free speech as discriminatory.

Sweden has seen a series of burnings of the Islamic holy book, with the government voicing condemnation but saying it cannot stop acts protected under laws on free expression.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan - who has put pressure for months on Sweden over its welcome to Kurdish activists Turkey sees as terrorists - said that Western countries were seeing ‘a plague’ of racism including Islamophobia.

“It has reached intolerable levels,” he told the UN General Assembly.

“Unfortunately, populist politicians in many countries continue to play with fire by en-



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses the UN General Assembly in New York City on Tuesday (AFP)

couraging such dangerous trends,” he said.

“The mentality that encourages the hideous attacks against the holy *Quran* in Europe, by allowing them under the guise of freedom of expression, is essentially darkening (Europe’s) own future through its own hands.”

Protests in Sweden that have

involved *Quran* burnings have been organised by refugee Salwan Momika, sparking outrage in the Middle East including his native Iraq.

Erdogan in July said he would lift a blockade on Sweden’s bid to join NATO but the Turkish parliament has not yet ratified the country’s membership.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, a cleric representing the Shiite theocratic state, held up a *Quran* at the UN rostrum.

“The fires of disrespect will not overcome the divine truth,” Raisi said, accusing the West of seeking to ‘divert attention with the tool of freedom of speech’.

“Islamophobia and cultural apartheid witnessed in Western countries - evident in actions ranging from the desecration of the holy *Quran* to the ban on the hijab in schools - and numerous other deplorable discriminations are not worthy of human dignity,” Raisi said. He was alluding to France, which has controversially banned Muslim girls wearing hijabs in schools.

The emir of Qatar in his speech said that ‘compromising the sanctity of others deliberately’ should not be seen as freedom of expression.

AFP

Japan’s Kishida says open to meeting North Korean leader

United Nations, US - Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Tuesday he was willing to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, seeking a diplomatic path as tensions soar over Pyongyang’s weapons programmes.

Kishida reiterated the public offer at the UN General Assembly days after his government publicly announced his willingness for a summit.

In a speech from the UN rostrum, Kishida said that Japan was willing to resolve all issues with North Korea - including Pyongyang’s past kidnappings of Japanese civilians to train its spies.

“From the perspective of opening up a new era together, I would like to convey my determination to meet with President



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida addresses the UN General Assembly (AFP)

Kim Jong Un face to face at any time without any conditions,” Kishida said.

He said he would ‘like to hold high-level talks under my direct supervision to realise a summit meeting at an early time’.

Japan’s former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi paid a landmark visit to Pyongyang

while in office in 2002, meeting Kim’s father Kim Jong Il and setting out a path to normalise relations in which Japan would offer economic assistance.

The trip led to the return of five Japanese nationals and a follow-up trip by Koizumi but the diplomacy soon broke down, in part over Tokyo’s concern that North Korea was not coming clean on the abduction victims.

North Korea carried out a nuclear test in 2006, setting a more confrontational phase. Tensions have soared in recent months as Pyongyang carries out a series of missile tests.

The United States under President Joe Biden has also offered talks but North Korea has shown little interest.

AFP

Gold and mercury, not books, for Venezuela’s hundreds of child miners

El Callao, Venezuela - At 10 years old, Martin cannot read, but he is an old hand at detecting traces of the gold he and his young cousins dig for at an open-pit mine in southeastern Venezuela.

In the town of El Callao, extracting gold from soil starts as a kid’s game, but soon becomes a full-time job that human rights activists slam as dangerous exploitation. Small and agile, the children’s size helps them shimmy into narrow wells to hack out muddy earth, hoping it will contain gold - which has become ever more precious as Venezuela’s oil production has plummeted.

Doubled over, they carry heavy bags of earth under the relentless sun to murky puddles of



Venezuelan mining children searching for gold in an open pit mine in El Callao, Venezuela, on September 2 (AFP)

water where they rinse it in wooden trays.

Martin explains that ‘whatever is gold gets stuck to the mercury,’ a poisonous and envi-

ronmentally toxic substance they use for its ability to extract gold from ore.

He is one of around a thousand children in the region in-

volved in illegal gold mining, a booming industry in the resource-rich country that has been battered by multiple economic crises.

In the town of El Callao, extracting gold from soil starts as a kid’s game, but soon becomes a full-time job for small and agile children that human rights activists slam as dangerous exploitation

‘A matter of survival’

Martin - not his real name - lives in El Peru, a nearby hamlet. He has never been to school.

Carlos Trapani of the Cecodap

children’s rights NGO, told AFP that the backbreaking work and its associated dangers have become ‘normalised’ in these communities. Despite what Trapani describes as ‘the worst conditions’, Martin says he ‘would rather get gold than go to school’.

“My dad says that money comes from work,” he told AFP, in an interview granted with the consent of his parents.

“With the money I earn here I buy my things: shoes, clothes, sometimes some sweets.”

Around a thousand children are working in illegal mines in the region, according to the private Catholic university UCAB in neighbouring Guyana.

“It’s a matter of survival,” said Eumelis Moya, coordinator of the university’s office of human

rights. “People have postponed their aspirations to eat, to meet their needs.”

Venezuela has been going through a serious economic crisis since 2013, which experts blame on political mismanagement, US sanctions and an over-reliance on its massive oil reserves.

GDP has contracted by 80 per cent, and hyperinflation has eroded purchasing power. Some seven million of the country’s 30mn people have left in search of a better life elsewhere.

In 2017, President Nicolas Maduro vowed to rescue the economy by focusing on the country’s other mineral resources, saying it could have ‘the biggest gold reserve in the world’.

AFP



Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi speaks in Lok Sabha in New Delhi on Wednesday (ANI)

India's lower house votes to reserve third of seats for women

Kigali, Rwanda - India's lower house of parliament passed a bill on Wednesday that would more than double the number of women lawmakers in its ranks, following several failed attempts to enact the measure stretching back decades.

The proposed law would reserve one-third of seats in India's lower house and state assemblies for women once it takes effect, which could take until at least the end of the decade.

It would not take effect before national elections next year but will be a further fillip to the already commanding position of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party ahead of that poll.

A total of 454 lawmakers voted for the bill, with only two against.

"The proposal has been passed with more than a two-thirds majority of the members present in the house," said Om Birla, the speaker of

parliament.

When prime minister Indira Gandhi took office to lead India in 1966 she became the world's second woman head of government in a parliamentary democracy, following Sri Lanka's Sirimavo Bandaranaike six years earlier.

Two women have served in India's ceremonial presidency and others have been chief ministers, party leaders and powerbrokers in the decades since, but that has not equated to broader political representation.

Just 104 of India's 788 MPs were women after the last national election, according to government figures - a little over 13 per cent.

Those figures reflect a broader under-representation of women in Indian public life. Just under a third of working-age Indian women were in the formal labour force last year, according to government data. AFP

India warns on Canada travel after row over Sikh murder

New Delhi, India - India on Wednesday warned its citizens against visiting parts of Canada, the latest salvo in a diplomatic row over allegations New Delhi was involved in the killing of a Sikh separatist near Vancouver.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has demanded India treat with 'utmost seriousness' the bombshell revelation of its probe into the murder.

The fallout prompted tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions and a forceful denial from India, which said any suggestion it played a role in the June killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar was 'absurd'.

Without explicitly referring to the row, India's foreign ministry said it was concerned for the safety of its citizens in Canada because of 'politically-condoned hate crimes and criminal violence'. "Threats have particularly targeted Indian diplomats and sections of the Indian community who oppose the anti-India agenda," a ministry statement said.

"Indian nationals are therefore advised to avoid travelling to regions and potential venues in Canada that have seen such incidents." The advisory did not name specific cities or locations for Indians to avoid.

Nijjar was shot dead by two masked assailants outside the Sikh temple he presided over in Surrey, an outer suburb of Vancouver. An activist for the creation of a Sikh state known as Khalistan, Nijjar was wanted by Indian authorities for alleged ter-



An image of Jathedar Hardeep Singh Nijjar is displayed at the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara temple in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, on Tuesday (AFP)

Threats have particularly targeted Indian diplomats and sections of the Indian community who oppose the anti-India agenda

INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY

rorism and conspiracy to commit murder.

He had denied those charges, according to the World Sikh Organization of Canada, a nonprofit

organisation that says it defends the interests of Canadian Sikhs.

The Indian government accuses Ottawa of turning a blind eye to the activities of radical

Sikh nationalists who advocate the creation of an independent Sikh state to be carved out of northern India.

'Not looking to provoke'

Relations between Canada and India have been strained in recent months since the assassination of the Sikh leader and the demonstrations that followed in Canada.

Trudeau, who met with Modi on the sidelines of this month's

G20 in New Delhi, said on Tuesday that his government did not rush to judgment in the case and had worked closely with its intelligence agencies. "India needs to take this matter with the utmost seriousness," he said. "We are doing that, we are not looking to provoke or escalate."

The United States has joined Canada in calling for India to reveal what it knows about the slaying.

AFP

Son of ousted Gabon leader Ondimba held in graft case

Libreville, Gabon - The son of Ali Bongo Ondimba and several allies of the ousted Gabon president have been charged with corruption and placed in custody, the state prosecutor told AFP on Wednesday.

Bongo's eldest son Nouredin Bongo Valentin and former presidential spokesman Jessye Ella Ekogha 'have been charged and placed in provisional detention' on Tuesday over alleged corruption, said Libreville prosecutor Andre-Patrick Roponat.

In all, 10 people were indicted on Tuesday with charges ranging from electoral college operational issues, counterfeiting and use of the seals of the republic, to corruption, embezzlement of public funds and money laundering, Roponat told a press conference.

Bongo, 64, who had ruled the oil-rich central African country



Nouredin Bongo Valentin, the eldest son of Ali Bongo Ondimba

since 2009, was overthrown by military leaders on August 30, moments after being proclaimed the winner in a presidential election.

The result was branded a fraud by the opposition and the military coup leaders, who have also accused his regime of widespread corruption and bad governance.

On the same day as the

coup, soldiers arrested one of Bongo's sons and five senior cabinet officials. National TV showed rolling images of those arrested in front of suitcases filled with cash allegedly seized from their homes.

Bongo's wife Sylvia Bongo Valentin is under house arrest in the capital Libreville 'for her protection', according to authorities. Her lawyers say she is being held 'arbitrarily'.

Bongo, who was himself under house arrest for several days after the coup, is 'free to move around' and go abroad, Gabon's new military ruler General Brice Oligui Nguema said on September 6.

Oligui has been sworn in as interim president after spearheading the coup that ended a half-century of rule by the Bongo family.

AFP

A ROYAL WELCOME



French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne greets Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla upon their arrival at the Orly Airport on Wednesday on the first day of a three-day state visit to France (AFP)

Women in the driver's seat with female crash test dummy

Linköping, Sweden - Her name is SET 50F and she's the world's first female crash test dummy, designed by a Swedish engineer to help make sure women are better protected in cars.

Legislation only requires carmakers to conduct crash tests with dummies based on male proportions - a model dating back to the 1970s - even though statistics show that women are more at risk of injury in the event of a frontal collision.

Carmakers have used smaller-sized versions of male dummies to represent women and children, but those have not taken into account the different morphology of women's bodies. Astrid Linder, an engineer at the Swedish Na-

tional Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI), decided to change that with 'the world's first average-sized female crash test dummy', according to VTI.

In a warehouse in Linköping, 200km (125 miles) south of Stockholm, the female dummy is strapped into a car seat projected along a metal rail at 16km per hour (10 miles per hour), before being brought to a sudden halt.

A screen shows the body moving in slow motion at the moment of impact, the mannequin's chest visibly distinguishing it from a standard male crash test dummy. "The muscles in the neck are normally weaker in a woman," says Tommy Petterson, one of Linder's colleagues at VTI, pointing to the



Astrid Linder is seen next to her creation, the world's first female crash test dummy, in Linköping on August 30 (AFP)

nape of the dummy's neck, deformed by the impact.

"If you compare it with a male dummy, this neck is more flexible and has more movement."

Narrow shoulders, wide hips

Tested in Sweden since late 2022, the female prototype made of rubber, metal and plastic is fitted with 24 sensors, measures 162cm (5 feet 3 inches) and weighs 62kg (137 pounds). That is 15cm and 15kg fewer than a male crash test dummy.

Her shoulders are also narrower and her hips wider.

These differences, as well as a lower centre of gravity, play an important role in evaluating the

risks women face in a car accident. "For non-fatal injuries which can lead to disabilities, statistics show that the factor that always stands out is the difference between men and women," Linder told AFP. "The resulting suffering can last a lifetime. It is essential to establish how everyone can be protected."

According to a 2019 study from the University of Virginia in the United States, women are 73 per cent more likely than men to be injured in the event of a frontal collision. They are also twice as likely to suffer whiplash injuries in an accident because of the morphology of their necks and the design of neck supports in cars.

AFP

BULLISH MOOD

Verstappen primed to roar back at ‘old school’ Japan GP

Suzuka, Japan - Runaway Formula One championship leader Max Verstappen will be determined to roar back at Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix after his record streak of 10 straight wins ended in Singapore.

The Dutchman finished fifth under the Marina Bay lights after starting 11th on the grid, meaning he will not be able to clinch his third straight world title at Suzuka.

But Verstappen, who has won 12 of the 15 races so far this season, can move to the cusp of retaining his crown while his Red Bull team can seal the constructors' championship.

The 25-year-old told reporters after struggling with Singapore's street circuit, where overtaking is all but impossible, that "this track is so different to Suzuka and it doesn't relate".

"We have learned a bit from today and have a few ideas with what we got wrong," he said after Carlos Sainz triumphed for Ferrari to ruin Red Bull's perfect record this season.

"I cannot go into details but I feel good about Suzuka."

Verstappen certainly enjoyed his last visit to Japan, beating Ferrari's Charles Leclerc to clinch last season's championship



Max Verstappen

Nothing feels like here in Suzuka because of just the old-school nature - the gravel and the grass. You know you have to really build up your confidence and build up to the limit

MAX VERSTAPPEN

there. The Dutchman won a chaotic race shortened by rain and then saw nearest rival Leclerc relegated to third by a five-second penalty, handing Verstappen the title.

Verstappen was only informed he had clinched the championship midway through the post-race TV interview, and even the driver himself was not

sure if he had secured the title.

With Verstappen a whopping 151 points clear of Red Bull teammate and nearest challenger Sergio Perez in the current campaign, he could be crowned champion again as early as next month's Qatar Grand Prix.

This year's race in Japan has been shifted two weeks earlier in the Formula One calendar and

the forecast is for dry conditions.

That should give Verstappen the chance to cut loose on Suzuka's sweeping bends and dramatic elevation changes.

He could barely contain his excitement last year as the race returned after a three-year absence because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Nothing feels like here in Suzuka because of just the old-school nature - the gravel and the grass," he said.

"You know you have to really build up your confidence and really build up to the limit."

Perez finished eighth in Singapore in a rare weekend to forget for Red Bull, whose hopes of

sweeping every race in 2023 came to an end.

The last time neither Verstappen nor Perez stood on the top step of the podium was in Brazil in November 2022.

Instead it was Ferrari's Sainz who took the honours in Singapore, ahead of McLaren's Lando Norris and Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton. Hamilton's teammate George Russell was pushing hard for the victory until he crashed on the final lap.

After the drama and unpredictability of Singapore, the Red Bulls will start as heavy favourites to restore normal order on Suzuka's high-speed circuit.



Buddh International Circuit

India revs up for maiden MotoGP at circuit where F1 stalled

Greater Noida, India - India hosts its maiden MotoGP on Sunday as the premier motorcycling championship looks to tap a potentially lucrative new fan base and succeed on a track where Formula One stalled.

Two-wheelers are India's most popular means of petrol-powered transport with more than half of all households owning at least one motorbike or scooter, compared to just eight percent with cars.

Sales figures show an increasing appetite for high-end, high-octane motorbikes, and organisers are banking on the trend to fuel interest in the sport in the world's most populous country.

"We have more than a million bikes in the 250cc-plus category selling every year in India, which means more than a million people are buying bikes for more than just transportation," Vaib-

hav Sinha, chief executive of Indian MotoGP promoters Fairstreet Sports, told AFP.

"They are using it for thrills, adventure, sports and leisure riding," he added.

"We intend to tap this potential to make biking a very big sport in our country."

But the lead-up to the race has seen concerns raised about the safety of the Buddh International Circuit, with particular fears about walls that are too close to the asphalt.

"In India all the riders together are going to walk the track before we get on the bike to understand the situation," Spanish rider Aleix Espargaro was reported as saying. Some MotoGP personnel and riders also had problems getting visas for India, but organisers on Tuesday blamed a technical glitch and said it was on the way to being resolved.

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian male civil engineer with over 15 years of experience in leading an MNC retail company for Interior fitout, project, property management, QS and facility management with valid Oman driving licence seeking a suitable placement.
Contact: +968-91252058

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

Muscat Daily offers a variety of classified listings for individuals and establishments:

Situations Vacant/Wanted, Accommodation Wanted or Available, Sale of Household Items, Cars for Sale or Wanted, Matrimonial Alliances, etc

Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call: 99104346

SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR

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

OPEN POSITIONS

Require qualified & experienced male

1) Multicuisine "Cook" (Chef De Parte)
2) Baker
for a high-profile family in Oman

Job requirements are:

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

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

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

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

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

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي
ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

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

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

mai alkaline
pH 9.1 to 9.5
Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- Ultra-hydrating
- Revitalizing
- Energizing
- Electrolytes

oman OASIS

800 71 222
9275 5522

© OmanOasis © OmanOasisOfficial © OmanOasisWater

ASIAN MISSION

Ronaldo helps Al Nassr to historic AFC Champions League win in Iran

Tehran, Iran - Cristiano Ronaldo enjoyed a winning debut in the Asian Champions League as he helped Al Nassr to a 2-0 victory against 10-man Persepolis in Iran on Tuesday night.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner, who has five UEFA Champions League titles to his name, captained the Saudi Arabian side to an opening three points in Group E.

The match at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran was played without fans after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) upheld a one-game ban for Persepolis supporters dating back to 2021.

That clearly helped Nassr, who grabbed both goals in the second half against the two-time runners-up, through a Danial Esmailifar own goal and a fine strike by defender Mohammed Qassem.

It marked the first time a Saudi club played in Iran since 2016, after the AFC announced a "ground-breaking agreement" earlier this month between the two countries' federations.

Iran and Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic ties seven years ago, meaning Asian Champions League matches had been since played at neutral grounds.



Al Nassr's Cristiano Ronaldo (R) and Mohammad Omri of Persepolis battle for the ball during their AFC Champions League match in Tehran on Tuesday (AFP)

Ronaldo played a key role in Al Nassr's opener, the Portuguese instigating the move that led to Abdulrahman Ghareeb's blocked shot cannoning off Persepolis full-back Esmailifar and nestling in the net

Ronaldo, 38, was heavily involved throughout, twice going close in the first half.

His initial chance - a powerful, close-range header - was sent straight at Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand which left Ronaldo beating the post in frustration.

Al Nassr's hopes grew considerably at the beginning of the second half, when Persepolis midfielder Milad Sarlak was given a second yellow card, this time for appearing to stamp on Ronaldo's boot.

Replays showed it was unintentional, the contact minimal.

Ronaldo played a key role in Al Nassr's opener just after the hour, the Portuguese instigating the move that led to Abdulrahman Ghareeb's blocked shot cannoning off Persepolis full-back Esmailifar and nestling in the net.



Stefan Kuntz

Turkey split with German coach Kuntz

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey on Wednesday parted ways with German head coach Stefan Kuntz after a dire spell in which the national football team failed to qualify for last year's World Cup.

The last straw for the former German international came when Turkey drew 1-1 at home with archrival Armenia in a Euro 2024 qualifying match.

Turkey followed that up losing 4-2 in a friendly against Japan.

The football federation said it had decided "to part ways with Mr. Kuntz within the framework of good will and professionalism".

"We would like to thank Mr. Stefan Kuntz for his contributions to our National Football Team and wish him success in his future life," it said in a two-line statement.

The sacking ends a nightmare year for Germany's two-time Under-21 European title winner that began full of promise 12 months ago.

Kuntz scored nine goals playing for Istanbul-based side Besiktas in the 1995/96 season and expressed delight at returning to Turkey as head coach.

Bangladesh, New Zealand rest key players ahead of World Cup

Dhaka, Bangladesh - New Zealand and Bangladesh will both rest their captains and several other key players in their three-match one-day international series starting Thursday ahead of the World Cup.

Instead of Kane Williamson, Lockie Ferguson will lead the Kiwis, who included only five members of their World Cup squad for the series at Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Tim Southee - who is to have a thumb operation - and Tom Latham are the highest-profile other Kiwi absentees.

But pacer Trent Boult, all-rounder Rachin Ravindra, spinner Ish Sodhi, and batsman Will Young are included.

The Kiwis will be looking to win their first ODI series in Bangladesh in 15 years, having lost all seven matches to the hosts in the previous two series respectively in 2010 and 2013.

Bangladesh have yet to name their World Cup squad but rested regular captain Shakib Al Hasan along with all-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz, batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, and pace trio Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud and Shoriful Islam.



Liton Das

The players who will play have been out of international cricket for a long time

Stand-in Bangladesh captain Liton Das said the series would be a great opportunity for his teammates to stake a claim to the World Cup squad.

"The players who will play have been out of international cricket for a long time," he said. "Everyone has a chance."

Bangladesh have recalled senior

campaigner Mahmudullah Riyad for the series, with the right-hander last playing an ODI in March against England.

Veteran opening batsman Tamim Iqbal also returned after his retirement U-turn and injury layoff that forced him to miss the recent Asia Cup.

Japan beat Qatar to launch bid for Asian Games football gold

Hangzhou, China - Japan began their bid for a first Asian Games men's football gold since 2010 with a 3-1 win over Qatar on Wednesday, as Syria and Afghanistan pulled out.

Japan were cruising 2-0 at half-time after goals by Teppei Yachida and Kotaro Uchino, before Qatar hit back in the 79th minute through substitute Abdulla Al Sulaiti.

But just as the Qataris threatened to grab a point in the group-round match, defender Taichi Yamasaki popped up to make the game safe for Japan in the closing minutes. The Games in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou do not officially open until Saturday, but several sports are already under way.

On Tuesday, the first day of action, South Korea launched their quest for a third men's football gold in a row with a 9-0 demolition of Kuwait.

The men's football competition has been hit by withdrawals, however, with Afghanistan and Syria pulling out on Wednesday from Group C.



Hangzhou Olympic Sports Center

Asian Games host Hangzhou - replica Eiffel Tower and robot dogs

Hangzhou, China - China's eastern city of Hangzhou is set to host the largest Asian Games ever with nearly 12,000 athletes in action.

Ahead of Saturday's opening ceremony, here's what you need to know about Hangzhou and the Games venues:

Tech town

An ancient, scenic city at the southern end of the centuries-old Grand Canal, Hangzhou has in recent years become known as the birth place of Jack Ma's Alibaba and its hugely popular shopping app Taobao.

Numerous tech start-ups have set up shop in the city of 12 million people, drawing comparisons to Silicon Valley.

The Games will showcase some of China's latest tech, including robot dogs, facial recognition and driverless buses.

'Big Lotus'

The Games will take place at more than 50 venues, most of them in Hangzhou but a few in

other cities.

The centre piece is a massive flower-shaped stadium capable of hosting 60,000 spectators and will stage the opening and closing ceremonies.

Inspired by the lotuses that bloom on the city's famed West Lake each summer, the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Center was completed in 2018 and been used mainly as a football stadium since.

A lookalike venue nearby, dubbed the "Small Lotus", houses the tennis finals while a butterfly-shaped structure combines the aquatics venue and indoor sports halls.

High-rise village

The vast Asian Games Village will be home to nearly 20,000 athletes, technical officials and journalists in a mini city within a city.

It is spread over 113 hectares (280 acres) and equipped with shops, gyms and a clinic, and is served by two newly opened metro stations.

New Zealand to decide Southee's World Cup fate after surgery

Wellington, New Zealand - Black Caps paceman Tim Southee's participation in next month's 50-overs World Cup will be decided after his surgery for a fractured and dislocated thumb, New Zealand Cricket said Wednesday.

Southee faces an operation on Thursday and his World Cup fate will be decided early next week, but New Zealand coach Gary Stead is hopeful the bowler can recover in time.



Tim Southee

"We've got our fingers crossed the surgery goes well for Tim," Stead said.

Southee, New Zealand's Test captain, will have pins or screws inserted in his thumb, Stead said.

"Providing the procedure is a success, it will be a matter of ensuring Tim can tolerate the pain and manage the actual wound when returning to train and play," Stead added.

The Black Caps coach hopes Southee plays in their World Cup

opener against England in Ahmedabad on October 5.

Southee suffered the injury last Saturday while dropping a catch off England's Joe Root in the final one-day international of the four-match series.

The New Zealander immediately looked to be in pain and left the field to go for a scan, failing to return.

The 34-year-old has taken 214 wickets in 157 ODIs.



Barcelona's Joao Felix celebrates after scoring against Antwerp on Tuesday (AFP)

Felix double helps Barcelona thrash Antwerp

Barcelona, Spain - Joao Felix struck twice as Barcelona flexed their muscles with a crushing 5-0 win over Royal Antwerp in the Champions League on Tuesday, showing their determination to be considered among Europe's elite once again.

After consecutive humiliating group stage eliminations Barcelona are desperate to go deep in this season's competition, last winning it eight years ago.

The victory followed a 5-0 thrashing of Real Betis on Saturday, leading coach Xavi Hernandez to describe these two performances as the best since he joined the club in November 2021.

"I think these last two games are the best level we have shown with me as coach - it's the path to follow," he told Movistar.

Felix shone for the Spanish champions on a stroll on a warm night in the Catalan capital, helped on their way by an own goal, with Robert Lewandowski and Gavi also scoring.

After a troubled spell at Atletico Madrid and an even worse loan at Chelsea, the Portuguese forward finally seems ready to flourish.

"We all played really well, I am happy with the win and enjoying myself," said Felix.

"The most difficult thing now is to maintain this level. I have started well, the team is playing well.

"Getting to this level it's not the most difficult thing, it's maintaining it. We all have to work hard to do that."

Barcelona's 2015 triumph was the last in a run of four victories over a golden decade in the club's history, during which current coach Xavi Hernandez was a key figure in midfield.

Xavi said those feats weighed heavy on the club

now, that the current team were under "brutal" pressure to succeed in Europe.

It did not show against Antwerp, with Barcelona brushing aside Marc van Bommel's Belgian title-winners with ease in their first Champions League appearance at the Olympic Stadium.

With Felix and Joao Cancelo joining on loan at the end of the summer transfer window, Barcelona immediately appear a more dynamic side, with supreme creative quality in the final third reflected in successive five-goal wins.

Lewandowski century Felix opened the scoring for Barca after 11 minutes with a fine drilled finish after a neat passing move ended with Ilkay Gundogan feeding him.

Lewandowski added the second eight minutes later from close range after Frenkie de Jong's superb ball found Felix, who crossed to the back post. It was the veteran Polish striker's 100th European goal.

Barcelona went three goals up inside 22 minutes when Raphinha's cross was deflected into his own net by Jelle Bataille.

Gavi added the fourth early in the second half with a blistering strike into the top corner after a long spell of Barcelona possession.

Raphinha created Barcelona's fifth with a vicious cross to the back post where Felix nodded home as the hosts kept up the pressure.

"Joao Felix has a lot of quality, a lot of talent and he's showing it," De Jong told Movistar. "I hope he can keep going like this. If he keeps working like now, he will give a lot to us."

Xavi brought on 16-year-old starlet Lamine Yamal to become the second youngest player of all time in the competition's history.

AFP

UP AND RUNNING

Alvarez guides Man City to winning Champions League start after Red Star wake-up call

Manchester, United Kingdom - Julian Alvarez's double saved Manchester City's blushes as the holders began their Champions League defence with a 3-1 win after Red Star Belgrade took a shock lead at the Etihad on Tuesday.

The visitors' goal had been bombarded before they stunned Pep Guardiola's men when Osman Bukari opened the scoring in first-half stoppage time.

However, Alvarez continued his sparkling early season form by levelling just two minutes after the break.

The Argentine then got some help from Red Star goalkeeper Omri Glazer as he flapped at Alvarez's free-kick to allow the ball to fly into the far corner.

Rodri rounded off the scoring with a composed finish 17 minutes from time.

"If we scored two goals early in the beginning it would've been completely different," said Guardiola, who was frustrated at his side's finishing after having 22 shots in the first-half alone.

"Having 22 shots on goal means you are playing really good. It has to be the responsibility of the people in front to score the goals."

Red Star were expected to be lambs to the slaughter after City followed up their treble success last season with a perfect start five games into the new Premier League campaign.

But the English champions made life difficult for themselves, while Glazer performed heroics for the Serbian giants before the break.



Manchester City's Julian Alvarez (R) celebrates with Phil Foden after scoring against Red Star Belgrade in their Champions League group match on Tuesday

City's stretched squad due to injuries was shown as they named only eight of a permitted 12 substitutes, two of which were goalkeepers. And Bernardo Silva had to be replaced just before half-time by Jeremy Doku

Erling Haaland has now failed to score in four consecutive Champions League games and was frustrated at himself after heading against the crossbar from point-blank range.

Phil Foden then nodded an even easier headed opportunity straight at Glazer.

City's stretched squad due to injuries was shown as they named only eight of a permitted

12 substitutes, two of which were goalkeepers. And Bernardo Silva had to be replaced just before half-time by Jeremy Doku in what could be another injury problem for Guardiola.

Red Star had barely been out their own half in the opening 45 minutes, but City were stunned when Bukari burst in behind and finished confidently past Ederson.

The Ghanaian's joy was temporarily quelled by the offside flag but a VAR check revealed he had been played onside by Ruben

Dias. City quickly went to work after the break to ensure that was to be the only shock of the night.

Haaland may not have found his range in front of goal, but the Norwegian's clever pass played in Alvarez to round Glazer for the equaliser.

"We conceded an early goal (in the second-half) and after that it was difficult to maintain the pace, because we never play at this pace in our league," said Red Star coach Barak Bakhar.

AFP

Mbappe, Hakimi on target as PSG beat Dortmund

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain got their Champions League campaign off to a winning start on Tuesday as a Kylian Mbappe penalty set them up for a 2-0 victory over Borussia Dortmund at the Parc des Princes.

The French champions had dominated the first half without overly troubling the Dortmund defence, but they went ahead four minutes after the break when Mbappe scored a spot-kick awarded for a Niklas Sule handball.

Achraf Hakimi added a memorable second, and PSG could have won the Group F encounter by a far more handsome margin in the end.

The result immediately puts them in control of the group, after AC Milan and Newcastle United drew 0-0 earlier, and coach Luis Enrique will hope they can build on this performance when they visit the English side next in a fortnight.

"It was an almost perfect evening," said Luis Enrique.

"I enjoyed practically every-



PSG's Achraf Hakimi (C) celebrates with Kylian Mbappe (R) and Vitinha after scoring against Borussia Dortmund

thing about it, our intensity from the very beginning, the way we controlled the game for the first 75 minutes.

"We could have scored at least another goal but this win gives us confidence going for-

ward. This is going to be a difficult group for everyone."

Dortmund, meanwhile, were nowhere near their best and must improve when they entertain Milan next in what is an unforgiving section.

They are still adapting to life without Jude Bellingham and coach Edin Terzic also dropped Sebastien Haller here, with the big striker enduring a difficult start to the campaign.

PSG are in the early weeks of

a new era following the departures of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Marco Verratti, and Luis Enrique's arrival.

The former Spain coach, who won the Champions League with Barcelona in 2015, insisted on the eve of this game that he needs time to get his ideas across to his players, many of whom also arrived over the summer.

There were five new signings in PSG's line-up here, including Ousmane Dembele and Randal Kolo Muani in attack.

Preferred to Goncalo Ramos, Kolo Muani was starting for the first time since joining from Eintracht Frankfurt.

With him, PSG controlled the first half, while Dortmund and their five-man defence sat back and offered little going forward.

Vitinha hit the upright in the 19th minute and Dembele later forced a save from goalkeeper Gregor Kobel at his near post, but PSG had precious little to show for a share of possession that reached almost 80 percent going into the break.



Newcastle United's Bruno Guimaraes (L) fights for the ball with AC Milan's Ruben Loftus-Cheek (AFP)

Howe 'proud' of Newcastle's Milan stalemate on Champions League return

Milan, Italy - Eddie Howe was proud of Newcastle United's dogged return to Champions League football after two decades away, holding seven-time European kings AC Milan to a goalless draw in Tuesday's opening Group F match.

Howe was the happier of the two managers with taking a point from the clash at the San Siro as his team were mostly on the back foot against last season's losing semi-finalists.

Newcastle did little in their first fixture in Europe's top club competition since 2003, the

Saudi Arabia-backed club barely creating a chance and lucky to escape with a draw on the balance of play. Milan should have won after wasting a string of chances, particularly in the first half, and dominating the play on Sandro Tonali's return to his old stomping ground after being sold to Newcastle in July.

"Definitely pride in result and the performance and the mentality shown," Howe said. "Within the squad the result wasn't underestimated. Also they are very honest players that acknowledge the fact that we can perform bet-

ter. I think we'll get better and better as time goes on. Hopefully can grow into the tournament."

Stefano Pioli's Milan sat top of a tough group before Paris Saint-Germain's opener with Borussia Dortmund at the Parc des Princes later on Tuesday, level with their Premier League opposition.

Tonali's father was at the San Siro and saw much more football played by the hosts than by his son, back in the Newcastle starting line-up after missing international duty and the weekend's 1-0 win over Brentford with injury.

Before kick-off and during the

match the Italy midfielder was loudly cheered by supporters who don't resent his mega-money move to England.

But home fans, who watched their team thumped 5-1 by local rivals Inter Milan on Saturday, were left frustrated by their side's poor finishing and Newcastle's at times desperate defending which left the match goalless.

"You have to win when you play so much better than such a good team. Unfortunately we weren't able to capitalise on the situations we created," said Pioli.

AFP



14
MODAKS & MOMOS
Whether sweet or savoury, these steamed delights are scrumptious



15
IN TOWN
Namat Sustainability Awards 2022-23 given to winning schools



16
ENTERTAINMENT
A peek into tinsel town in Hollywood and Bollywood

GLOBETROTTER

NIZWA CITIZEN, NASSER MOHAMMED AL NUMANI VISITS 74 COUNTRIES TO PROMOTE OMAN AROUND THE WORLD, CARRYING ALONG A KIT OF EIGHT ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

Mohammed Taha

There's a blank look in his eyes and an inexplicable smile goes with it...but hidden deep down in his psyche is an indomitable spirit to conquer a self-set goal of taking the essence of Oman around the world.

For Nasser Mohammed al Numani, a middle-aged resident of Nizwa who has already visited 74 countries over the past 25 years, the journey has only begun. And, in his quest to build up awareness and an interest to explore the heritage as well as modernising strides of the sultanate, he has also come face to face with diverse cultures and populaces which have only strengthened his resolve.

Numani's immediate goal is to visit 100 countries by the end of 2026, but the broader aim of his self-styled mis-

sion is to make people around the world aware of what they are missing if they side-step Oman while exploring destinations in the middle east.

He offers all those he meets during his ambitious tours a glimpse of the Jewel of Arabia, and this he does by sharing details about Oman's location, its heritage, culture, varied achievements, as well as nuances of its well known hospitable population.

"I set out in 1998 from Muscat to France, and so far, I have visited 74 countries, including USA, Costa Rica, Mexico, Rwanda, Uganda, Tunisia, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Poland, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and Russia," said Numani, adding that he does visit all famous landmarks in every country but also leaves behind impressions of Oman that would make people curious about the sultanate.

"During every trip, I carry along eight essential items - shoes, sportswear, gloves, water bottles, medicines, my mobile phone, a camera and visa documents to facilitate my visits," says Numani, adding that he tries to keep his expenses slim, visa costs being the major expense of every trip.

Numani has been enjoying his hobby of travel over the past two and a half decades with multiple goals - to discover the world, spread the message of peace, promote Oman, make new friends, and establish new relationships between people in Oman and the rest of the world.

"What started as a hobby has now become a mission," he says, disclosing that he combine his travel experiences with serious tasks of distributing travel brochures about Oman, Omani sweets/dates, and Oman's flags, so that people get an idea about Oman and its traditions.

Meticulously planning every trip in advance, he ensures that all travel documents are in place while also researching the experiences of other travellers in every destination he intends to go, to be well informed about what to expect.

He has also been documenting his travels in the form of photographs/video clips as well as recording his own commentary and observances. He also purchases mementos and artefacts to mark his various visits and has a wide collection of these in his home.

On some of my trips, Numani goes with his family (wife and children) as he also wants to inculcate a spirit of travel and an eagerness to see the world in them.

"I believe, travel is a great way to strengthen ties between people. So, I annually organise group trips to some countries with friends and professionals like doctors, lawyers, and engineers, to exchange experiences," he said. By the end of September, he plans to travel to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with a group of friends.

Talking about unique experiences, he said, "In December 2021, I travelled to Pakistan and went to watch the snow-fall at night in the Murreea mountain. Unfortunately, the location was overcrowded and many people were injured/killed in a sudden stampede." There have been other hurdles like high costs of travel, lack of information about some countries, etc.

With a vast set of interesting experiences around the world, globetrotter Numani says he is not done yet. He wants to set a record of being the first Omani to visit the most number of countries around the globe to promote Oman.

I believe, travel is a great way to strengthen ties between people

NASSER MOHAMMED AL NUMANI



Around the world with 8 items



cook-up

STEAMED SURPRISES

MODAKS VS MOMOS

For a more healthy, oil-free snack or meal, try these steamed delights that can be made in two versions – sweet and savoury

Sweet Modaks

Ingredients

For outer covering

½ cup rice flour
½tsp ghee
Salt, to taste
Water, as needed

For inner sweet filling

1 cup grated coconut
½ cup jaggery - crushed
¼tsp cardamom powder
¼tsp nutmeg powder
1tsp ghee

Method

To make the modak sweet filling, heat ghee in a pan. Add coconut and jaggery to it. Mix well and keep cooking until jaggery starts to dissolve. Cook until it is thick but still juicy. Do not over-cook as it might turn hard and chewy. Add ghee, cardamom powder and nutmeg powder to it. Mix well and switch off. Let it cool.

To make the modak dough, to a mixing bowl, add rice flour, salt and ghee. Mix this well first, then add boiled and cooled water, little by little. Keep mixing using a spatula and gather the dough together to form a thick smooth mass. If too sticky, add a little more rice flour and mix. Set aside in refrigerator to harden slightly. Now take a small portion, roll it into a smooth ball, then flatten it to form a small disc. Add a tea-spoon full of the coconut jaggery filling on it and pull the edges together to form a taper. You may use a modak mould or shape it by hand and mark shallow cuts on the exterior with the blunt edge of a knife to get a design on it. Make a set of modaks in this way and cover with a damp cloth. Now heat water in a steamer, place the modaks in batches on the steamer rack and steam for around 10-12 minutes. If the exterior appears sticky to touch, steam them for a couple of minutes more.



Chicken Momos

Ingredients

For the filling

300g chicken mince
1 medium onion - chopped
2tbsp ginger-garlic paste
1tbsp soya sauce
1tbsp coriander - finely chopped
½tbsp black pepper powder
Salt, to taste

For the momo dough

1 cup whole wheat flour
1 cup all-purpose flour
Salt, to taste, water, as required

For the dipping sauce

10 dry red chillies
3 tomatoes - chopped
1tbsp oil
2tbsp garlic - finely chopped
1tbsp ginger - finely chopped
1tbsp onion - finely chopped
1tbsp vinegar
1tbsp soya sauce
2tbsp tomato sauce,
1 cup water, salt, to taste

Method

To make the dough, in a bowl, add wheat flour, all-purpose flour, salt, water and make a nice soft dough. Leave it to rest 15-30 minutes.

For the filling, in a bowl add chicken mince, onion, ginger-garlic paste, soya sauce, coriander leaves, black pepper powder, salt and mix it well.

After resting the dough, take a small portion and roll it out into a disk.

Add the filling in the centre and wrap it up to any desired shape. When all the momos are ready, place them in a steamer and steam for 12-15 minutes. Serve warm with the sauce.

To make the sauce, take a pan, add water, tomatoes, red chilli and cook it until tomatoes get soft. Blend it to a fine paste. In another pan, add oil, ginger, garlic, onion, red chilli-tomato paste and stir it for a minute. Now add soya sauce, vinegar, tomato sauce, salt and cook it for 10 minutes on medium-low flame. The sauce is ready.

Shrimp Wontons

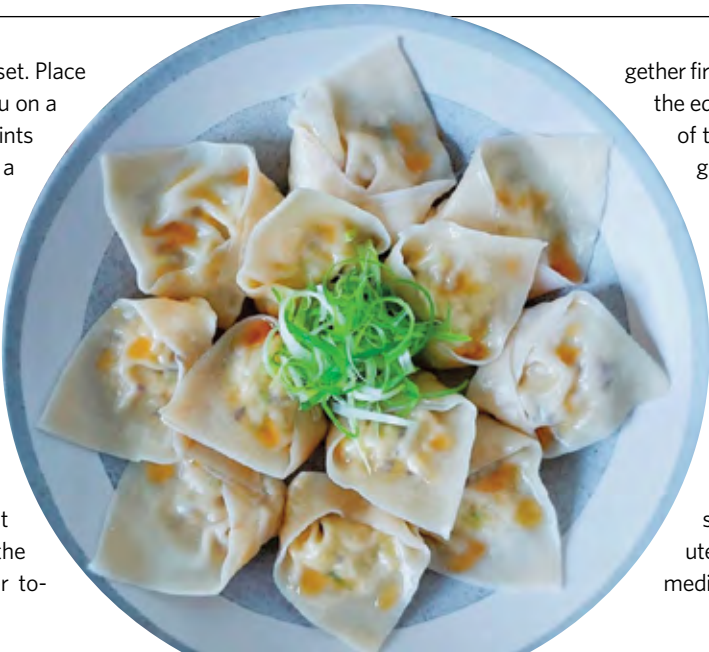
Ingredients

400g shrimps - diced fine
1 can bamboo shoots - diced fine
1 garlic clove - minced fine
1½tsp sesame oil
¾tsp salt,
½tsp sugar
¼tsp white pepper
2tbsp corn starch
Square wonton noodle wrappers

Method

Combine all the ingredients (except wrappers) in a bowl and mix well. Refrigerate for

about 1 hour to allow marinade to set. Place one wonton wrapper in front of you on a 'diamond' angle - so one of the points is pointing directly at you. Add a small dollop of the shrimp mixture in the center of the wonton wrapper. Dipping your index finger in water, trace the exposed edges of the wonton wrapper. This is what will make it stick together. Try not to get it too wet, just enough to moisten it. Fold the edge of the wonton wrapper closest to you (that diamond point) over the dollop of shrimp and join it with the corresponding point on the other edge, pinching the wrapper to-



gether firmly. Using your index fingers, seal the edges of the wrapper on either side of the joined points, making a triangular pouch. Turn the triangle pouch around so the centre point is once again facing you. Moisten the top edge of the right point of the triangle, then gently bend the left and right points together firmly pinching the left point on top of the right. Repeat until you have used all the shrimp mixture - about 30 dumplings. Now, place them in a steamer and steam for 8-10 minutes. These can also be pan fried on medium heat with a drizzle of oil.



عالي البروتين
و قليل السكر

GRENADE®

Distributed by



Please contact +968 22060236/237

take a break

IN TOWN

NAMAT SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS 2022-23



The Namat Sustainability Awards for 2022-23 were given to winning school teams for their outstanding projects under three themes on Monday



Photos: V K Shafeer

BOGGLER

M	U	C	S
N	O	G	D
O	E	S	G
O	U	I	I

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS



1. You planted sunflower seeds in your back garden. Every day, the number of flowers doubles. If it takes 52 days for the flowers to fill the garden, how many days would it take for them to fill half the garden?
- A 26 days
B 42 days
C 51 days
D 50 days

2. What is the rarest blood type?
- A B-
B A+
C O+
D AB-

3. How many feathers are there in a shuttlecock?
- A 16
B 12
C 8
D 18

Answer :
3. A
2. D
1. C

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Are you feeling the opposite of romantic right now? Feelings are just feelings, so don't let this worry you. If you're single, you're going to start to appreciate your independence in a whole new way. But if you're in a relationship or just starting one, you might struggle with this sudden urge to be by yourself. Your partner will understand if you need your space, so don't be afraid to ask for it.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You can reach an important agreement with an authority figure if you both agree to follow the same path, no matter where it leads. Alliances with people who are more powerful than you can be extremely hard to create, but they're the most valuable alliances you can ever have. If you have to give a little bit more than you want to in order to win this person's trust and favour, do it.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

This is a good day to have some old-fashioned fun. You've got good people around you, and there are a lot of creative ideas forming about how to spend your time together. Try to do something that will spark a few laughs if you can. Activities that take people out of their comfort zone have a way of enabling people to laugh at themselves.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Be extravagant and bold today. Now is not the time to hide your light under a bushel! Get back in touch with your more outgoing nature and stop worrying about what people might think of you. Who cares what others think anyway? You need to feel good about yourself, and the best way to make that happen is to speak up and make that joke that's on the tip of your tongue.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

When it comes to starting a new romance, mixed signals aren't going to stop you today! You know what you feel, and it doesn't matter that the other person hasn't returned the sentiment, or does it? Take a step back today and ask yourself once and for all if you're wasting your time. And then ask your crush the same question. Your confidence in this situation is critical.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your ego got bruised recently, and it's perfectly healthy to spend some time nursing it. But you should try to start shifting back into normal life today. Getting back to the action will help you snap out of any self-pity you've been feeling and remind you how capable you are. You have learned something from this humbling experience.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

This is a good day to celebrate yourself! At least once a year, whether it's your birthday or not, you have to give a cheer for who you are and what you bring to the world. Make some time to do something just for yourself today. Go out for a long lunch, convince some buddies to meet you for dinner after work, schedule a spa day, go shopping for something you want.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You want something from somebody, but you don't know how to get it. Have you tried asking them? Sometimes you can save a whole lot of extra effort with the direct approach. And it's better to find out now rather than later if they can't or won't give what you want. Then you can turn your attention to finding out where you can get what you need and who is willing and able to give it to you.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Make sure you're realistic today. You must balance your optimism with caution and not believe everything you see right away. Be a little more skeptical, and don't shy away from questioning authority. This isn't the time to take anything for granted. While you want to think the best of people, sometimes it just isn't smart.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

If you give in to someone's demands, you'll only be showing them that they can push you around. And their one simple request today could snowball into bigger and more complicated demands in the future. You need to put a stop to this growing dynamic between you. Nipping it in the bud might cause some tension.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Giving in might not be something you really feel like doing today, but the pain you feel in letting go of one of your hopes will be a lot less than the pain you would feel if you fight to the end for everything you want. Compromise is an enlightened choice for you right now. Not only will it end the growing tension but it will also show the other person that you are mature.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Instead of getting bored by the idea of a routine, you'll find a great deal of comfort in knowing what's going to happen in your daily life for the next few days. A predictable schedule isn't always bad. Sometimes it's nice to be free of drama. There aren't any mysteries for you to solve right now.

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

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

entertainment



DEEPIKA SHARES HER 'JAWAN' EXPERIENCE

Deepika Padukone talked about being part of *Jawan* and shared her working experience with Shah Rukh Khan and how it was special because of the bond they share. Deepika revealed that she was filming for *Project K* in Hyderabad when SRK and Atlee met her and explained her part in the movie. She stated that the length of her character didn't matter, but the impact her role was having was enormous.

"I was shooting for *Project K* in Hyderabad, and both of them flew down and came to see me, and they narrated the whole story to me and about the part of Aishwarya. For me it wasn't about the length of the role but the impact this character is going to have."

NORWAY'S PRINCESS TO MARRY HER SHAMAN

Norway's Princess Martha Louise, the oldest child of King Harald and Queen Sonja, will marry self-proclaimed shaman (one who communicates with spirits) Durek Verrett on August 31, 2024, the couple announced on Wednesday. The romance between the 51-year-old princess and Verrett, a Hollywood spiritual guru, has not gone down well in the Scandinavian country, where his alternative medicine methods and statements have seen him labelled a 'quack'. The wedding will be held in the town of Geiranger, on the shores of a fjord of the same name, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

TARSEM SINGH BRINGS DARK LOVE STORY TO TORONTO FILM FEST

Indian director Tarsem Singh Dhandwar, known for his award-winning music videos and visually arresting fantasy features, unveiled his first movie in eight years at the Toronto film festival - a shocking true-crime story about love, class and murder in 1990s Punjab.

Dear Jassi is Singh's first-ever film set in his home country and, in an interview with AFP, he explained how he waited for just the right time to make it.

The 62-year-old Singh first heard the real-life tale of star-crossed love - a Canadian-born girl from a wealthy Punjabi family meets a rickshaw driver while visiting relatives in India - more than 20 years ago, and the idea never left him.



TAYLOR SWIFT TAKES ON HOLLYWOOD



She already rules music, so now it's on to Tinseltown: Taylor Swift's concert documentary is poised to dominate the fall movie season, challenging the hegemony of film studios and consecrating her business empire. Swift is taking a break from her wildly popular tour that began in March - performances will resume in November and run late into next year. But in the meantime, the 33-year-old is hitting the silver screen, *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour* is slated for release on October 13, and has already broken the record for pre-sales in the United States in one day, with US\$37mn in revenue. The film is expected to exceed US\$100mn in its opening weekend, said Jeff Bock, an analyst for box office tracker Exhibitor Relations.



ANNE HATHAWAY DETESTS HER AGE COMPLIMENT

Anne Hathaway does not consider it a compliment when people tell her she looks good for her age. The 40-year-old actress regards the concept of ageing as irrelevant and sees the process as 'another word for living'. In an interview, she said, "To me, ageing is another word for living. So, if people want to pay a compliment, it's nice. But whatever the hype is, I'm interested in what's beyond the concept of hype."

'AMERICAN FICTION' WINS TOP PRIZE AT TORONTO FILM FEST

American Fiction - a satire about race, media and how white audiences consume Black culture - sealed its place as an early Oscars frontrunner by winning the coveted top prize Sunday at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film, the debut feature from Cord Jefferson, tells the story of Thelonious 'Monk' Ellison (Jeffrey Wright), an author and university professor who is told by his publishers that his writing isn't 'black enough'.



RELEASING TODAY



Genre: Action
Starring: Jason Statham, Sylvester Stallone, Dolph Lundgren, Tony Jaa, Megan Fox, 50 Cent, Iko Uwais, Language: English

EXPEND4BLES

The *Expendables* are the world's last line of defence and the team that gets called when all other options are off the table. But new team members with new styles and tactics are going to give 'new blood' a whole new meaning.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: A HAUNTING IN VENICE
Genre: Crime Starring: Kelly Reilly, Michelle Yeoh, Kenneth Branagh

DARK REALITY

A *Haunting in Venice* is a 2023 American mystery film produced and directed by Kenneth Branagh, who reprises his role from the previous films, from a screenplay by Michael Green, loosely based on the 1969 novel *Hallowe'en Party* by Agatha Christie. It serves as a sequel to *Death on the Nile* (2022) and is the third film in which Branagh portrays the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot.

The plot is set in post-World War II Venice. Having lost faith in God and humanity, Detective Hercule Poirot lives in retirement in post-war Venice, employing ex-police officer Vitale Portoglio as a bodyguard. On Halloween, novelist Ariadne Oliver convinces Poirot to attend a séance at the palazzo of opera singer Rowena Drake and help expose medium Joyce Reynolds as



a fraud.

Rowena has hired Reynolds to help her commune with her daughter Alicia, who committed suicide after her fiancé, chef Maxime Gerard, broke off their engagement. Among those in attendance are Maxime, Rowena's housekeeper Olga Seminoff, Drake family doctor Leslie Ferrier and his son Leopold, and Reynolds' assistant Desdemona Holland.

During the séance, Poirot deduces Reynolds has not one assistant but two, revealing Desdemona's half-brother Nicholas hiding in the chimney of Alicia's bedroom. Reynolds then speaks to Rowena in Alicia's voice, reveals Alicia was murdered, and states the killer is one of the guests.

With a storm cutting off the palazzo,

Poirot begins interviewing the guests, during which he hallucinates seeing Alicia's ghost. And, the investigation yields perplexing results.

The film makes good use of its locale, with tonnes of tourist-baiting shots of the city. Film history aficionados may appreciate the many visual acknowledgments of the master's filmography, including ominous views of Venice. It was shot digitally in IMAX resolution and commits to the idea of letting the medium be what it naturally is, rather than force it to imitate something else.

Branagh locates the sombre and the sobering in a well-delineated time and place, elevating the film's premise.

Rating ★★☆☆☆