



MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2022

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► NEWS BRIEF

H M GREET'S PRESIDENT OF ZAMBIA

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Hakainde Hichilema of the Republic of Zambia on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Hichilema and the people of his country.

OMAN TAKES PART IN GCC CYBERSECURITY DELIBERATIONS

Muscat - Oman, represented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, took part in a meeting of the GCC Ministerial Committee for Cybersecurity, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Sunday. The Omani delegation was headed by H E Said Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

National Net Zero Plan unveiled

Oman targets RO54bn investment in green hydrogen, 70,000 new jobs by 2050

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman on Sunday reaffirmed its commitment to achieve its net zero emissions target by 2050 and unveiled the sultanate's National Net Zero Plan and an ambitious green hydrogen strategy, which targets investments worth RO54bn and creating 70,000 permanent jobs.

The sultanate's new climate commitment and National Net Zero Plan were announced by Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, at a press conference.

Under the leadership of His



Oman is committed to decarbonise and help the world decarbonise. The sultanate is positioned as one of the most attractive nations to produce green hydrogen competitively and on a large scale

SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFİ

Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman has committed to reaching net zero emissions in 2050, in line with the Paris Climate Agreement's objectives of limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels.

To lead its transition towards a green economy, His Majesty has mandated the creation of

Oman Sustainability Centre, which will ensure the implementation of the National Net Zero Plan. The centre will be the leading body undertaking the supervision and follow-up plans and programmes of carbon neutrality.

Based on Sunday's announcement, net zero will now be one of the most important components

of Oman's national sectoral strategies for industry, urban planning, energy, transportation and more.

Addressing the press conference, Aufi said the route to net zero targets is an opportunity for Oman to create economic value, increase industrial competitiveness and attract investments to

help diversify and strengthen the economy.

"Oman is committed to decarbonise (its economy) and help the world decarbonise," he said.

According to the government's strategy to achieve net zero targets, development of a green hydrogen economy is at the heart of the sultanate's decarbonisation efforts and energy security objectives.

To lead Oman's ambitious green hydrogen strategy, the government has established Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), a fully owned autonomous subsidiary of Energy Development Oman.

"With the abundant renewable energy resources Oman is blessed with and appropriate

structuring of the sector via the creation of Hydrogen Oman as directed by His Majesty, Oman is positioned as one of the most attractive nations to produce green hydrogen competitively and on a large scale," Aufi said.

The sultanate has set an ambition to become one of the largest green hydrogen producers and exporters globally, targeting production of 1mn tonnes by 2030.

Oman's new ambitious sustainability initiatives come a few weeks before COP27 in Egypt.

Faiza al Harthi, head of energy, environment and natural resources priority support at Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, said, "The vision is to create effective, balanced, and resilient ecosystems to protect and sustain Oman's natural resources in support of the national economy. This will be done by setting targets, a measurement mechanism and a follow-up methodology for the initiatives and projects helping to achieve net zero emissions."

See also [Page 05](#)

'No new COVID-19 strain in circulation'



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has denied rumours about the presence of a new variant of COVID-19 in Oman.

Dr Abdullah al Qaudi, consultant in inflammation and immunology in the Directorate General of Disease Surveillance and Control of MoH, said, "Our observations show registration of a small number of positive tests for the COVID-19 virus during the past few weeks, but a high registration of cases of seasonal influenza. The rumours about the presence of a mutated COVID-19 virus are misleading."

He informed that the most common respiratory viruses present in Oman are influenza viruses, respiratory syncytial virus and rhinovirus.

He added that the winter season creates a conducive environment for the reproduction and mutation of many respiratory viruses, as well as their spread.

"Respiratory viruses spread naturally at this time of the year, and cold and fever symptoms are frequent, and this is what we are currently witnessing in the country. There is no need for concern."

He stated that respiratory viruses often spread among children in schools and nurseries because it is not possible to control children's behaviour and ensure their commitment to preventive measures.

"Children under the age of one year are more susceptible to viral infections. Every year, children get infected with respiratory viruses and need hospitalisation, and this year is no different."

Dr Qaudi advised everyone to take the influenza vaccine in order to get protection from severe infections from H1N1, H3N2 and type B virus.

MoH has announced that seasonal influenza vaccines are available at its health centres.

The ministry is administering the seasonal flu vaccine to the following target groups - people over the age of 50 years and those with chronic diseases (respiratory, heart, renal, liver, neurological, blood, and metabolic disorders, including uncontrolled diabetes and obesity) among adults and children, pilgrims, workers in the health sector, and pregnant women.

The vaccine is available in private health institutions for citizens and residents who are not in the target group.



Rishi Sunak declares bid for British PM



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FOOD WASTAGE IN OMAN

Last week, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources marked the official inauguration of the Omani Food Bank (Dayma) that aims to collect food that otherwise end up being wasted.

According to the latest official studies, the total volume of food wasted each year goes over 560 tonnes, causing a financial loss of RO60mn annually. Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Hosni, chairman of the Board of Directors of Dayma, said with the opening of three branches of Dayma in Dhofar, Buraimi and North Batinah, the mission intends to play an important role in tackling food wastage.

Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers had to say on the best ways to reduce food wastage:

Dr Upasana Venaik
Dentist

My opinion on reducing wastage is to have fridges placed in different localities, where people can deposit their leftover food for the needy. A collection team can also be deployed, which can be reached on phone by an individual to request collection of extra food from home. This can really help in reducing food wastage and in turn help the needy. Awareness camps can be held in schools and offices.



Sabra Nasser al Maskari
Specialist, Health & Social Care,
Royal Hospital

In fact nearly one-third of all food produced in the world is discarded or wasted for various reasons. Let's make a quick move in Sultanate of Oman to save our dear country by taking these steps wisely: Do smart shopping, make a list, do regular shopping instead of bulk buying at one go; and buy fresh food as per your need. Avoid peeling and make use of fibres; check expiry dates while buying and try to freeze food. In case of extra food during celebrations or any other occasions, we should always share or donate to the needy people. Let's follow this saying, 'Cutting food waste is a delicious way of saving money, helping to feed the world and protect the planet.'

Krishna
Consultant

Hypermarkets throw leftover food everyday. A team can be set up to collect them and distribute among the needy.

Mike Kosie
Private company employee

Create a proper demographic data base to ensure imports are not in excess of consumption rate. Waste should be converted to feeds for poultry and herds. Waste are very useful in farms if mixed up with top soil and left to fallow for a considerable amount of time to replenish the farmlands. Let the sultanate put in place measures to reach the poor and less privileged to get free food in identified outlets.

Kamal Kapoor
Assistant manager - clearing

Here are some of the best possible ways to reduce food wastage in Oman. Avoid bulk buying, try new recipes, buy healthy food and raise awareness.

Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

School/college/universities - at all levels we should promote the culture of 'zero-waste' of food as 560 tonnes (of wastage) is an enormous figure. In addition, the small plate concept of Japanese people can be introduced so that one can be discouraged from taking extra food. In this way, people will also remain agile and will have positive impact on obese people.

Finally, guardians should sensitise their children to the world of oppressed/deprived class in poor countries, where a breadwinner can be a child. It's time to ponder and take this issue seriously.

Hya Alviar
Programme administrator

There should be a campaign to consume food in moderation and teach how to plan meals per week so as not to overbuy or take more than what is needed. Government should also plan to have food waste collected and used them for fertilisation of farmlands.

Filu Fernandes
Private company employee

Many people living in this world are faced with the ravages of high cost of living. Those living in abject poverty have been steadily increasing. Food banks are vital because they support and help those gripped by poverty.

Reema Bhatia
Teacher

There are some easy ways that may lead to saving food. Cook less and count the number of people you are preparing the food for instead of cooking in bulk. Make sure you look at the expiry date on products before buying them and use them on time. Avoid impulsive buying and always stick to a grocery list. Every time you waste food on your plate, remember there are thousands of people starving in different parts of the world. Importance must be laid on educating children and adults that food doesn't simply come by magic but takes a lot of effort and time to bring it to one's table.

Arun Kuruville Alexander
Advertising professional

Since majority of the consumers buy food and groceries from malls and supermarkets, I feel there should be PR campaigns on food wastage at the entrance of the supermarkets.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Wadi Dayqah Dam now offers adventure activities at the site, adding to its popularity as a tourist spot. Which other tourist sites you would like to see developed with better amenities?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

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

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SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Announcement

The Directorate General of Financial Affairs at Ministry Of Health announces to all companies and institutions dealing with (MOH Headquarters) and (Directorates General of Health Services and its affiliated departments at all the Governorates) to submit their invoices to the concerned authorities not later than 06.11.2022, to settle all their claims before the end of current year 2022 .

US official describes Oman's role as 'central' in promoting regional peace

Muscat - Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs of the United States underscored the central role played by the Sultanate of Oman in backing endeavours to achieve regional security and peace.

In a statement to ONA, she added that her ongoing trip to Oman comes within the context of consultation and discussion of a range of topics and bilateral issues of regional dimension. She said that the advanced relations between the two countries and issues of common concern were discussed during meetings with Omani officials.

Barbara said that her country aspires to further develop the bilateral relations between the two countries and expand the level of cooperation to cover areas of climate, education, culture and science, in addition to enhancing economic, trade and investment relations.

She also commended Oman's efforts in relation to the situation



Trip to Oman comes within the context of consultation and discussion of a range of topics and bilateral issues of regional dimension

BARBARA LEAF

in Yemen. She dubbed such efforts as 'irreplaceable'. Barbara added that Oman's partnership, endeavours and diplomacy are 'quite critical' in the same issue.

Within the same context, the US official added that the Omani efforts have been central to the successful efforts of the US together with regional partners and

the United Nations. She reiterated the good efforts of Tim Lenderking, US Special Envoy to Yemen, to foster the two months truce in Yemen and the ongoing efforts to extend it.

Barbara visited the National Museum of Oman and expressed her admiration of the exhibits depicting the deep, long, historical relationship between the United States and Oman, which goes back to 1833.

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RNO CELEBRATES RETURN OF SHABAB OMAN II

The Royal Navy of Oman's (RNO) vessel *Shabab Oman II* was accorded a warm reception at the Port Sultan Qaboos on Sunday morning on the conclusion of its sixth international voyage. A ceremony to mark the return of the ship was held under the auspices of H H Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of Central Bank of Oman. The vessel returned to Muscat after participating in several international events in 18 countries and docking at 25 ports as part of its international voyage 'Oman Land of Peace' (ONA)



CPA records 156 violations in Muscat markets in October

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) conducted 3,254 field visits to shops and commercial centres and registered 156 violations during inspection campaigns in Muscat this month. There were 2,566 complaints against various businesses in this period. Representing the CPA, the Directorate General of Consumer Services and Market Control in Muscat, carried out these field inspection campaigns in the wilayats of Muscat governorate. Of the 2,566 complaints lodged, 233 were resolved.

MAFWR calls on fishermen to register for Masirah village

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has announced that fishermen who wish to relocate to the fishermen's village in Masirah, South Sharqiyah, can register for the same. A statement issued by MAFWR said, 'The initiative aims to provide housing and basic services to support fishermen and stimulate commercial activities. The ministry urges fishermen who wish to live in the village to register their names to benefit from the services that will be provided there.' MAFWR has set certain conditions to be eligible for the initiative, including that fishermen should be citizens, engaged in the profession full-time, not committed any violations in the past two years, and be registered with the Public Authority for Social Insurance. 'The fisherman must be from outside Masirah



The fisherman must be from outside Masirah and have a lease contract for a fishing boat

MINISTRY and have a lease contract for a fishing boat,' it added. The ministry confirmed that all services are available in the

village, including a mosque, fuel station, ice-making unit, fish market and a pier. 'The ministry has provided five housing units targeting 50 fishermen and registration is open until the desired goal is achieved.' MAFWR started construction of the fishermen's village in Masirah on an area of 4,537sqm in September 2020. Besides helping jobseekers find work, the initiative aims to help the fishery sector contribute more to the national economy.

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MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY Advertisement No.(40 / 2022)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following tenders:

Tender No.	Description of Tender	Document Fee	Last date for inquires submission	Last date for obtaining Tender Docs.	Last date for Submission
28/2022/MM/PA-5-Recall-1	Supply of Foodstuff (Specified for SMEs)	Rail 25	31/10/2022	03/11/2022	06/11/2022
44/2022/MM/PA-11-Recall-1	Supply of Lubricant Oils	Rail 25	07/11/2022	18/11/2022	21/11/2022
61/2022/MM/PA-17-Recall-1	Supply of Building Materials	Rail 25	07/11/2022	18/10/2022	21/11/2022
66/2022/MM/PA-21-Recall-1	Supply of Plumbing Materials	Rail 25	07/11/2022	18/10/2022	21/11/2022
67/2022/MM/PA-22-Recall-1	Supply of Painting Materials	Rail 25	07/11/2022	18/10/2022	21/11/2022
114/2022/MM/PA-25	Supply of Printers	Rail 25	13/11/2022	28/11/2022	01/12/2022
115/2022/MM/PA-26	Supply of Chain Saw Machines	Rail 25	13/11/2022	28/11/2022	01/12/2022
116/2022/MM/PA-27	Supply of Containers for Collecting Coal	Rail 25	13/11/2022	28/11/2022	01/12/2022

- Specialized Companies with a valid registration certificate from Tender Board can obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Starting from the date of this announcement until the end of deadline mentioned above.
- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically through link mentioned above.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond as per details mentioned in E-Tendering and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality and valid for (90) days starting from the deadline for submission.
- Tender not accompanied by a tender bond will be rejected.
- Clarifications and support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please contact us through e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
 - For technical support of e-tendering system, please send an email to etenderhd@mtc.gov.om or call (+96824402200).
 - For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to esnad@gstb.gov.om or call (+96824402200/24402330).

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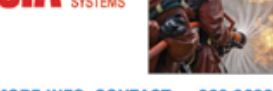
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8 injured in gas cylinder blast in Seeb restaurant

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Eight people were injured in a gas cylinder explosion in a restaurant in Seeb, according to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDA).

A statement issued by the authority said, 'Rescue and ambulance teams in the Governorate of Muscat were called to deal with a cooking gas cylinder explosion in a restaurant in the wilayat of Seeb. As a result of the explosion, eight people were moderately injured.'

CDA provided emergency medical care to the injured, and later transferred them to a hospital.

It called upon all to comply with the safety rules and regulations while using and storing gas cylinders.

According to CDA's emergency handbook, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders must only be purchased from authorised dealers, and must always be stored upright, never horizontally.

'Keep the gas cylinder at least 1m away from open flames, heat sources and electrical outlets,' the authority's handbook instructs.

'Ensure that there are no naked flames nearby when changing the gas cylinder. Store no more than one spare cylinder at any time, and the spare should be kept upright in a ventilated cabinet.

'Keep windows open and the kitchen well ventilated while cooking; never leave cooking unattended or place inflammable



items near the flame,' the handbook lists among other instructions.

'Turn off the gas supply from the regulator before leaving home. Check all gas connections regularly for leakage. There is leakage if bubbles appear when detergent or soap solution is applied on the gas hose. Replace gas hoses every two years and gas regulators every five years.'



Cooperation with Saudi in transport, logistics reviewed

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - H E Said Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, met Saleh al Jasser, Minister of Transport in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in Riyadh on Sunday.

This came on the sidelines of H E Ma'awali's participation in the meeting of the GCC Ministerial Committee for Cybersecurity. The two explored areas of co-

operation in the field of transport and logistics. They also discussed several matters of common interest and means of enhancing these in the interest of the two countries. ONA



Gen Nu'amani receives US official

Muscat - H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office, received at his office Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs of the United States, on Sunday.

The guest expressed her thanks and appreciation for the sultanate and the two sides explored aspects of enhancing cooperation between the two

countries. They also reviewed the march of relations binding Oman and the US in several sectors and means of promoting these to achieve mutual interest.

The two also touched on several regional and international developments of common interest. The meeting was attended by H E Leslie M Tsou, US Ambassador to Oman. ONA

MoL conducts job tests in 2 governorates

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) conducted tests and personal interviews for Omani jobseekers to fill many vacancies in various government agencies in Dhofar and North Sharqiyah on Sunday.

In a statement, MoL said, 'Tests and personal interviews are being conducted for many job opportunities in some government agencies in Dhofar and North Sharqiyah governorates, which will continue till October 27.'

Announcement of Auctions

Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C) hereby announces auctions as mentioned in the following table:

Auction No.	Material for Sale	Last date of buying	Preview Date	Last date of submission
Re-float 02/2022	Selling of Scrap Materials at Saih Al Khirat Power Station - Dhofar Governorate	31/10/2022	2/11/2022	7/11/2022
04/2022	Selling of obsolete Spare Parts and other Scrap Materials at Rural Areas Electricity Company (TANWEER) Warehouses in Muscat Governorate and Dhofar Governorate	31/10/2022	To Be Determined	14/11/2022

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Interested and Specialized Companies in scrap activities and have official registration with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain the auction documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, against non-refundable payment of RO. 50/- (Rial Omani One Hundred Only) for each set of documents. The fees of the auction shall be deposit on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om , or call us on phone number: 24250824.
- Offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to the Chairman of Minor Tender Committee, Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C), marked with the auction number and subject. Other marks or reference whatsoever should be printed on the envelope. The identity of the bidder should not be revealed and should be submitted before 1:00 P.M. on the assigned date for submission of the auction.
- The buyer must pay the complete amount of his offer within **Two Weeks** of such notification by deposit or certified cheque.
- The buyer must transfer all the material and clean the location within **One Month** from the date of client notification for taking the materials. If the buyer does not transfer the materials purchased within the specified period, the same will be confiscated by the company. Such confiscated materials will be released to the buyer upon payment of demurrage charges to be calculated by the Seller.
- Rural Areas Electricity Company has the right to accept or reject any offer without giving reasons.
- Preview of the material to be determined later during the formal working hours.

For more information please call: 80077787



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OPINION

SALEH MIRI, MUSCAT DAILY COLUMNIST, IS AN ARCHITECT WHO CAME TO OMAN IN THE EARLY 1980S



It is interesting to discover the origins of words. It is through reading that we gain rare insight into the etymology of words we use today and perspective of just how intricate, comprehensive and sophisticated language has become

Though many of us "use" words each and every day, seldom do we know or enquire about their origins. There's an interesting example that relates to the word 'Croatia'. As described in the British scholar Noel Malcolm's invaluable research into the racial relationship between Iranians and some ethnicities of the former Yugoslavia: "The name Croat, or Hravat in Serbian, is not a Serbian word. It is similar to the Iranian name Choroatos, found on tombstones of Greek dwelling regions of south Russia."

He goes on to add that the original form of the word is "Khoravat" as mentioned in Avesta, meaning "friendly."

Malcolm also wrote that Iranians migrated from Iran towards the area known, until 1992, as Yugoslavia. They wore a scarf around their head and rode horses or camels. Once they arrived at their destination, they knotted the scarf around their necks. They were known subsequently as the Croavatis.

Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, wearing a tie has been seen as an insult to Islam. It is sad to see that people rarely conduct serious research into the roots - and foundation - of countless words we use throughout the world. If we did, I assume many Iranians would be proud to learn of the legacy of their nation and would, perhaps, wear a tie in respect of their old traditions. Till today, many family names in Croatia have their roots in Persian history.

Another interesting story about the etymology of a particular word now recognised globally comes from Hassan Sabah, a 12th century Persian general. Sabah was a friend of the famous poet, Omar

Khayyam, who lived in Samarkand. He was leading a small army of soldiers in Alamut, a location west of Tehran. The soldiers were tired and unfit to fight income enemy determined to capture Alamut Fort.

It is said that Sabah had created an amazing garden filled with beautiful animals, birds and a particular "dry herb." This dry herb was the outcome of compressing and processing parts of the cannabis plant. Yes, Sabah had cannabis planted in order to produce "hashish" in his private residence on top of the fort. One night, he called ten of the soldiers and introduced them to ten beautiful girls, in addition to enough hashish, which left them "speechless" upon their return to camp!

When the soldiers finally woke up, they were told the experience was a sample of what awaits them in heaven. The soldiers narrated their experience to other soldiers and they all decided to become martyrs in order to benefit from the advantages of paradise.

They were originally named the "Hashashin," which later developed into the Order of the Assassins or simply the "Assassins" - a derivative term indicative of the ruthless carnage they exacted on their enemies.

It is interesting - if not fascinating - to discover the origins of not only words but also terms, phrases and idioms! It is through reading - listening, speaking and writing - that we gain rare insight into the etymology of words we use today and maybe, just maybe, a new perspective of just how intricate, comprehensive and sophisticated language has become on a global scale.

Avocado, salary, uppity, moron. Look up these words and their past. You just might be surprised of where they come from.

ETYMOLOGY

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

Oman aims to become leading green hydrogen producer



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has set an ambition to become one of the largest green hydrogen producers and exporters globally, targeting production of one million tonnes by 2030.

The sultanate on Sunday announced its green hydrogen strategy and plans that target massive investments and installation of 180GW renewable energy capacity by 2050. The plan includes installation of 300mn solar panels and 10,000 wind turbines for the green hydrogen projects by 2050.

To accelerate the development of green hydrogen sector, Oman on Sunday launched Hydrom Oman (Hydrom) – an autonomous subsidiary company of Energy Development

Oman – with a vision to position the sultanate as a leading global green hydrogen hub.

Hydrom will focus to develop the green hydrogen sector

On November 6, Hydrom will be opening a first public bid round aimed at awarding the first land blocks by 2023 to meet the 2030 green hydrogen production target

by enabling the delivery of projects competitively and at scale for the world.

Speaking at the 'Future of Green Energy' press conference, Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, director general of renewable energy and hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said, "Oman aims to be-

come one of world's leading green hydrogen hubs. Over the last few months, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has developed an ambitious green hydro-

gen strategy and defined the structure of the green hydrogen sector."

"The development of the green hydrogen economy will provide a strategic opportunity for Omani and international companies to participate and collaborate in driving local and global energy security, eco-

nomics diversification and much needed climate change mitigation," he said.

Hydrom's mandate includes the delineation of government-owned land areas and the structuring of associated large-scale world-class green hydrogen projects.

On November 6, 2022, Hydrom will be opening a first public bid round aimed at awarding the first land blocks by 2023 to meet the 2030 production target, according to Shidhani.

For Phase A of tendering, two blocks in Duqm and four blocks in Salalah have been selected in order to meet 2030 green hydrogen production targets, he added.

Eng Mazin al Lamki, chief executive officer of Energy Development Oman, said, "We are delighted to announce the new

brand identity of Hydrom, a fully owned autonomous subsidiary of EDO. Working in tandem with the ambitious government plans, Hydrom will leverage Oman's location and abundant solar and wind resources to produce green hydrogen and support the government's drive to reduce the carbon footprint and achieve the decarbonization targets."

Dr Firas al Abduwani, acting managing director of Hydrom, said "We at Hydrom look forward to working with international partners to build the future of energy. The bid round we announced today is the first of its kind globally and we are convinced it will help accelerate the development of the green hydrogen industry in Oman and globally."



US economic outlook 'pessimistic': Fed

Washington, US – Economic prospects are becoming "more pessimistic" in the United States on growing worries of weaker demand, the Federal Reserve said in a report, citing heightened inflation and rising interest rates.

The Fed's latest "beige book" survey of economic conditions comes on the back of its aggressive interest rate hikes to cool surging consumer prices, all while trying to avoid tipping the world's biggest economy into a recession.

Economic activity has been sluggish in many areas in the United States, with "slowing or weak demand" due to higher interest rates, inflation and supply disruptions, the report said.

The central bank has hiked the benchmark lending rate five times this year for a total of three percentage points, saying that more increases are on the way.

"Recession fears" have also spread in several districts, said the report, which surveys firms and other contacts throughout the Fed's 12 districts.

Households have been grappling with soaring costs worsened by supply chain snarls, snap lockdowns in China and rocketing energy prices sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

And consumer prices remain

elevated, fueling expectations of a further rate hike by the Fed at its policy meeting next month.

For now, retail spending has been relatively flat with consumers spending more on essentials, said the report on Wednesday.

Auto dealers also saw slower sales due to limited inventories, higher vehicle costs, as well as rising interest rates.

While manufacturing generally held steady as supply chain disruptions eased, some districts reported a "cooling in labor demand" with firms hesitant to add to payrolls as worries of a downturn intensified.

The IMF said this month that major economies including the US will continue to stall, pegging US growth this year at 1.6 per cent.

Although price growth remained elevated, the Fed's report said Wednesday, "some easing" has been seen, with declines in commodity, fuel and freight costs.

"Looking ahead, expectations were for price increases to generally moderate," the report said.

Commercial real estate slowed in construction and sales too, with scattered reports of declining property prices.

AFP

'Europe faces long-term pain from energy crisis'



Qatar's Energy Minister Saad al Kaabi (right) and Shell's CEO Ben van Beurden hold a signing ceremony in Doha, on Sunday (AFP)

Doha, Qatar – Europe faces painful "industrial rationalisation" due to its energy crisis that risks political trouble, the head of Shell warned Sunday, as the oil giant joined a natural gas project in Qatar.

Shell chief executive Ben van Beurden agreed a deal for a 9.3 per cent stake in Qatar Energy's North Field South project, that will play a major role in the Gulf state's effort to increase liquefied natural gas (LNG) production by 50 per cent in the next five years.

At the signing ceremony in Doha, van Beurden said European industry face taking a major hit from the energy crisis, worsened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Europe has reduced consumption "quite effectively, quite significantly" following the loss of 120mn tonnes of Russian gas a year, van Beurden said, but "a lot of this reduction is achieved by switching off industry".

Europe has desperately

searched for quick alternatives to Russian gas, but van Beurden said Europe would need large amounts of LNG for decades.

"A lot of people say, turn down the thermostat, or maybe don't switch on the air conditioning," he said.

"But there is also 'why don't we switch off the fertiliser plant that we have' or 'let us scale down on some petro chemicals production in general'. And that rationalisation, if it goes on long enough, becomes permanent."

Van Beurden said there have been "some victory laps" in Europe over the way it has reduced demand, but added "some of it is actually bad news for the long term, namely economic or industrial rationalisation."

The Shell chief, who will retire at the end of the year, said industrial cuts could spark some "rejuvenation", but also brought risks.

"To do it at this scale, this abruptness, at a time of eco-

nomics challenges in general, I think will bring quite a bit of pressure on European economies, and perhaps also a lot of pressures for the political system in Europe," he said.

British-based Shell is the second European company, after France's TotalEnergies, to take a stake in North Field South.

Twenty-five per cent of the project has been reserved for international energy giants.

Expansion across the North Field, the world's biggest proven gas reserves, is intended to increase Qatar's LNG production by 50 per cent to about 127mn tonnes a year by 2027.

Shell and TotalEnergies took stakes earlier this year in the North Field East zone.

"Natural gas assumes greater importance in light of recent geopolitical turmoil," said Qatar's Energy Minister Saad Sherida al-Kaabi as he welcomed the Shell deal.

AFP

 الشركة العالمية لإدارة الفنادق ش. م. م Hotel Management Company International SAOG THE CHEDI, MUSCAT شيدى ، مسقط		
ص.ب: 964 الخوير - الرمز البريدي 133، سلطنة عمان P. O. Box 964, P.C. 133, Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman		
BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT On behalf of the Board of Directors, I hereby present the first quarterly report ending 30 September 2022 of the Hotels Management Company International SAOG.		
The company achieved the following financial results during the period : - The company has generated total revenue of RO. 4,423,321 million (vs. related period previous year RO. 1,232,451 million) which is an increase of 259% as compared to the corresponding period of previous year in total revenue. - The company has Net loss after income tax of RO 544,273 million vs. related period previous year net loss of RO. 1,834,133 million. It shows an decrease of 70% as compared to the previous year of the same period. - Not having the long-haul travel back to the pre-pandemic levels affected CMU's Q3 performance. The hotel wasn't able to capture its market share as most of its GCC clients chose to travel to Europe and Asia (especially since they couldn't travel last two years) as borders opened up. Asian countries opening their borders and attracting tourists from main source markets such as UK and Germany had a negative effect on bookings. - Traditionally CMU attracts corporate clients and small groups during summer, due to the special low season rates we offer. Business and Corporate travel not coming back to the pre-pandemic level, and not having few Incentives and corporate groups also affected CMU's numbers adversely.		
Achievement: Conde Nast traveller ME voted The Chedi muscat one of the best hotels in the Middle East yet again. The Chedi Muscat was voted the best for its design and exemplary service.		
Outlook Q4 business looks positive for Chedi Muscat. The hotel has managed to secure a good base business on the books looking forward.		
Demand and interest from the main source markets look promising. Positive exposure for the property in some very prominent publications, as well as collaborations with key partners in main source markets has helped the property to regain its position.		
Targeted activities by MOHT (Public relations and Sales activities) in main source markets like UK, Germany, France, and Italy has helped to bring back Oman into people's mind.		
Inflation and currency devaluation in Europe and UK will have an effect on our retail booking channels. Flights are much more expensive than at pre-pandemic levels and along with devaluing currency against the dollar, will have a negative effect on CMU's business in the long run.		
Appreciation The members of the Board of Directors join me in acknowledging sincere thanks to our valued guests and shareholders for their continuous confidence in our hotel.		
We wish to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, Capital Marketing Authority, Muscat Securities Market, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Heritage and tourism for their prudent supervising and guidance on our endeavors.		
We salute and pledge our allegiance to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said as he takes the country on continued progress and prosperity.		
The Chairman Hotel Management Company International SAOG		
UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 September 2022		
	30-Sep 2022	30-Sep 2021
Non-current Assets	9,644,145	6,798,436
Property, plant and equipment	5,486,761	6,224,944
Fixed deposits – long term	3,541,235	0
Deferred tax Asset	616,149	573,492
Current Assets	1,943,997	5,001,094
Inventories	444,302	420,739
Debtors and Prepayments	722,208	412,301
Due from related parties	9,969	58,616
Bank and cash	767,518	4,109,438
Total assets	11,588,142	11,799,530
Current Liabilities	1,595,381	1,090,934
Current portion of term loan	350,000	0
Creditors and Accruals	1,197,742	970,195
Due to related parties	47,639	120,739
Income Tax payable	0	0
Non-current liabilities	3,556,800	3,909,735
Term Loan	3,150,000	3,500,000
End of service benefits	406,800	409,735
Total liabilities	5,152,181	5,000,669
Net assets	6,435,961	6,798,861
Equity		
Share capital	3,000,000	3,000,000
Legal reserve	1,000,000	1,000,000
Retained earnings/(accumulated losses)	2,435,961	2,798,861
Total equity	6,435,961	6,798,861
UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME For the Period ending 30 September 2022		
	30-Sep 2022	30-Sep 2021
Turnover/ Revenue	4,423,321	1,232,451
Operating costs	(4,565,168)	(3,215,108)
Operating profit	(141,847)	(1,982,657)
Administration & selling expense	(380,138)	(207,800)
Impairment loss/reversal of loss on trade receivables	1,475	7,231
Management & licence fees	(128,121)	(8,595)
Net Operating Profit	(648,631)	(2,191,821)
interest expense	138,431	81,532
Interest income	(137,435)	(65,514)
Profit on disposal of property, plant and equipment	7,314	18,000
Profit for the period	(640,321)	(2,157,803)
Taxation	96,048	323,670
Profit after tax provision	(544,273)	(1,834,133)
Earnings per share	(0.181)	(0.611)
Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.		

Omantel backs GCC telecoms’ drive to Open RAN

Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in the Sultanate of Oman, has expressed its full support to the adoption of Open Radio Access Networks (RAN), a totally new approach to building mobile networks that seamlessly connect smartphones and devices to the Internet and other users.

Omantel is an active member of the GCC Consortium that seeks to accelerate the early adoption of Open Radio Access Network (Open RAN) solutions in the operators’ networks with a robust regional ICT ecosystem. The consortium has published a whitepaper that sets out the challenges of deploying Open RAN in brownfield networks, such as interoperability, operational complexity, cyber security, performance, and TCO issues. It also addresses potential opportunities, mainly 5G prospects, disaggregation, the path to 6G, and automation. Dr Ali al Hashmi, general manager of Network at Omantel, said, “Omantel shares the GCC operators’ view that Open RAN development is rapidly accelerating towards a point of maturity with major performance enhancements and capabilities, in particular for LTE and 5G technologies and beyond. Omantel has been playing a major role in contributing to the tech and telecom industry not just in Oman, but in the GCC. Our strong support to this project reflects Omantel’s strong position as the main enabler for the future of tech and telecom in Oman.” Historically, RAN has undergone a series of developments in the network architecture. Starting with traditional RAN, it progressed to centralised RAN and virtualised RAN (vRAN), until the dawn of Open RAN.

Upgrade B2B plan and win tickets to FIFA cup: Ooredoo



With the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 just a month away, Ooredoo is offering its B2B customers the opportunity to win match tickets to the first FIFA World Cup in the Arab world. Customers who activate or upgrade their business line, either mobile or fixed, before November 20 will automatically be entered into the raffle draws, held monthly until November end.

The action gets underway with hosts Qatar against Ecuador on November 20, in Al Khor and ends with the World Cup Final in Doha on December 18. There are 30 tickets up for grabs, and the higher the plan, the more entries each customer receives, and the more chances there are to win tickets to any of the 64 games!

Three raffle draws have already taken place, under the supervision and presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. So far 9 lucky winners have already been announced, but there are still chances to win tickets in the draws taking place on Monday, and then on November 6 and 20.

“Ooredoo is a strong supporter of football in Oman and across the region, and this is another way we are turning the everyday into something amazing for our customers,” said Saied al Lawati, director of Business Marketing and ICT Solutions at Ooredoo.

Trade delegation from Spain to visit sultanate tomorrow

The Economic and Trade Office of the Spanish Embassy in Muscat announced the visit of a trade mission to the sultanate from Tuesday to Thursday.

The Trade Mission delegation includes six delegates representing Spanish companies led by the Spanish Federation of Healthcare Technology Companies, the embassy said. During this trade mission, the Spanish companies will establish trade business relationships through the introduction of several products such as dental implants and dental prostheses CAD/CAM components; soapy sponges and mittens for daily personal hygiene; high quality oral care products; lighting solutions supplier for the healthcare sector; disposable medical devices and diagnostic products; and packaging for medical products and sterilisation processes. The visit seeks to continue to build on the close bilateral relationships that exist between Oman and Spain. During the visit, the representatives will meet potential distributors and agents. Local companies interested in meeting the Spanish companies of this trade mission may contact the Trade Office of the Embassy of Spain.

Al Mouj Muscat Marathon posts record participation



Al Mouj Muscat Marathon 2022 kicks off in just under a month, and already the running community from across Oman is firmly behind the returning event. Thousands of runners will take their place on the starting line at Al Mouj Muscat over the weekend of November 11-12 and put their fitness and determination to the test.

So far 12,000 runners have registered for this year’s event, breaking the previous participation record, the organisers said.

This year’s event features five race categories, each with a different distance and designed with participants of every fitness and experience level in mind - including children, with 1km, 2km and 3km races.

The upcoming edition of the Al Mouj Muscat Marathon is also helping to support communities across the country by donating proceeds from the 5km runs to the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) and Oman Diabetes Association (ODA). Both non-profit organizations aim to make a positive difference in the community by raising awareness of the need to care for the natural environment and the health and well-being of people across Oman.

“Sport has the power to unite the community towards a collective goal. This year’s event will support just some of the excellent causes in operation within the nation. We are incredibly proud to support these projects and use Oman’s most iconic sporting event to

raise awareness of the important programs dedicated to maintaining Oman’s natural heritage. Together, we can make a long-term positive contribution to creating opportunities to improve people’s quality of life and enhance the wellbeing of the communities across the country,” says Ali al Ajmi, general manager of Sabco Sports, organisers of the event.

Al Mouj Muscat CEO Nasser al Sheibani said, “Al Mouj Muscat, Oman’s premier lifestyle destination, is proud to bring the community together to support Oman’s most popular sporting event. This is the perfect venue for the race, and we can’t wait to celebrate the dedication of the athletes, share the sense of togetherness enjoyed here every day and take part in the passion for the sport that is enjoyed by so many. We look forward to welcoming the return of runners from across the country and visitors from around the world to experience Oman and share great moments throughout the weekend.”

Sabco Sports has also partnered with UFC Gym Oman to help runners of all ages and experience levels reach their goals. Public training sessions kicked off on September 16 to offer professional advice on how to make the most of the race. The coaches have already helped hundreds of runners maximise their training, nutrition, and preparations as the first step towards a healthier and more active lifestyle.

The sessions take place every Friday morning from 8am to 9am until the

weekend before the race.

There are also opportunities to join the team over the weekend of November 11-12 as a volunteer and help out in the race village or along the course.

First organized by Muscat Road Runners in 2012 with 135 competitors, Muscat Marathon has quickly grown in stature. In 2017, the event became known as the Al Mouj Muscat Marathon with Al Mouj Muscat, Oman’s premier lifestyle destination, Oman Sail and Muscat Road Runners joining forces.

Fast-forward to 2019 and the marathon, marathon relay, half marathon and 10km routes were all certified by world-running organization AIMS, aligning the event with International Association of Athletic Federation (IAAF) standards. The Charity Fun Run 5km saw thousands of runners raise money for good causes and the Kids’ Run sold out in record time!

The last edition hosted just under 11000 runners competing in six race categories across a two-day festival of running. Participants represented 103 different nationalities, furthering the marathon’s reputation as the most iconic event on the Sultanate of Oman’s sporting calendar.

The event had to be cancelled in 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic but returns in 2022 under the management of Sabco Sports with the aim of reigniting Oman’s passion for an active lifestyle and creating memorable experiences.

Al Mouj Muscat, Oman’s premier lifestyle destination... We look forward to welcoming the return of runners from across the country and visitors from around the world to experience Oman

Nasser al Sheibani

ahlibank opens multifunctional kiosk at Madinat Qaboos branch

In line with its digital transformation strategy, and its drive to keep pace with the latest digital technologies that are focused on enriching the banking experience of its customers, ahlibank has launched its first multi-functional device for express banking services, at its newly opened branch in Madinat al Sultan Qaboos, to expedite banking processes and present a unique avenue for its existing and new customers at any time.

As part of this new service, ahlibank customers can carry out their banking transactions digitally, round-the-clock, including the opening of accounts for new customers, opening of additional accounts for existing customers, updating profiles and Civil ID/resident cards, printing account statements and cheque-books instantly, issuance of debit cards, and contacting ahli-connect directly, the bank said.

The interactive device is



equipped to issue new and supplementary debit cards and enable debit card activation, replacement, and increase daily withdrawal limit. In addition, customers can also change their purchase limit, thus availing the freedom to carry out all their banking needs at any time.

Commenting on this, Hassan al Zaabi, head of e-Channels, Digital Banking at ahlibank, said, “We have expanded the reach of our digital services with the newly launched multi-functional device, which provide comprehensive and advanced digital banking solutions that enhances

the customers experience and facilitates access to their accounts around the clock.

“We are proud of our strategy to keep pace with the changing market, leading with innovative technologies, such as launching the first multifunction device in the Sultanate that enables new

customers to open a bank account digitally at any time.

“We will continue to add such devices to enhance our digital offerings as we continue to develop our creative solutions. We are dedicated to contributing to Oman 2040 vision of a digitalized society and a technology-

driven economy,” he added.

With the unveiling of express banking, ahlibank is redefining its digital identity. It has leveraged its status to demonstrate its commitment to exceed customer expectations in every banking segment and added to its product portfolio a new design for the direct debit card with features that exceed expectations and cover all segments’ needs.

Commenting on this milestone, Taher al Balushi, deputy general manager - Strategy and Transformation at ahlibank, said, “ahlibank’s growth strategy includes shaping the future of digital services in Oman. Therefore, we seek to leverage our digital umbrella to add value and enhance the user experience with this brand-new multifunctional device. Our customers can now enjoy access to a wide range of banking services anytime. We believe that meeting customer expectations at all levels, will re-

tain their loyalty and sustain our growth.”

Upholding its robust digital transformation strategy, ahlibank has enhanced features on its ‘ahli B2B’ platform and the Corporate Internet Banking platform - ‘ahliNET’, offering greater flexibility and more convenient transaction banking. The bank also continues to expand its Point of Sale (POS) offerings powered by AFS, rapidly increasing in popularity across the country.

Its Remote Deposit Capture (RDC) offerings make it very convenient for customers to deposit their bulk cheques with the bank from the convenience of their offices instead of visiting the branch.

The bank offers a comprehensive suite of technologically advanced services across its branches in Oman. All its product offerings and account types aim to inculcate a culture of savings and develop financial stability.

‘Audi RS range perfect to add speed, adrenaline to their life’



“With dynamic styling, aggressive powertrains, and all the luxuries you would expect from the forward-thinking brand, the Audi RS range is perfect for anyone looking to add speed and adrenaline to their life,” said Christian Nehme, general manager of Premium Motors Oman - the dealer of the premium car in the sultanate.

Built using technology developed on the racetrack, the Audi RS range offers head-turning style, inspirational appointments, and unmatched excitement, the company said. 'Indisputable proof of Audi's steadfast passion for performance and automotive progress, all Audi RS models guarantee awe-inspiring performance and 'progress through technology,' it added. Sporty high-performance Audi RS models are designed to amaze and make a lasting impression on the road. With nearly a dozen RS vehicles in Audi's lineup, each of the supercars offers an out-of-the-world experience. “Seasoned drivers will appreciate the jaw-dropping horsepower and sporty aesthetic to match,” Nehme added.

JAC vehicles offer highly efficient solutions: Company



Thanks to its one hundred million US dollars worth of world-class international R&D facility, JAC offers a range of commercial vehicles specifically designed to provide highly efficient and cost-effective solutions for businesses, the company said. JAC's commercial range consists of T8, M4 Panel Van, Titan LCV 3 Ton Double Cab & Titan LCV 3.5 Ton.

JAC T8 comes in double cabin with 2WD & 4WD versions. T8 pickup adds value to your business by offering 900kg payload at a top speed of 150km per hour along with a generous warranty of five years or 200,000km, whichever comes first. The sturdiness and cargo space of M4 give daily businesses an edge against the commercial industry. The powerful manual transmission gives you more control with a top speed of 160km per hour. JAC's five years or 150,000km (whichever comes earlier) guarantee ensures your business never stops and your vehicle stays safe.

JAC Titan trucks are made to serve your business needs without costing you the hefty locomotive costs.

Oman Handball Federation organises course for coaches

The Oman Olympic Solidarity Course for Handball Coaches, organised by Oman Handball Federation in cooperation with Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), started at the OOC headquarters on Saturday, said a press statement. To continue until October 29, the course - with the support of International Olympic Solidarity and under the supervision of International Handball Federation (IHF) - is having 20 participants taking up the course. The course is being imparted according to the conditions set by the IHF, under which a trainee would obtain a training certificate (D), and the participants who pass the current course would be able to obtain a training certificate (C) approved by the federation. The international lecturer Effat Rashad Shaker will lecture in the course and will be assisted by Zuhair Samha, the refereeing expert at Oman Handball Federation.



OFSEC: Exhibition on fire, safety to begin tomorrow

The two-day OFSEC 2022 - Oman's only and most comprehensive exhibition on fire, safety and security, will be inaugurated by H H Sayyid Azzan bin Kais al Said at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) in Muscat on Tuesday.

The exhibition, in its sixth edition, will bring together over 70+ exhibitors from over ten countries to enable them to showcase their avant-garde solutions, latest technologies, cutting edge innovations, cost-effective products and services to meet the requirements of governments, businesses, industrial and commercial entities, aviation, construction, infrastructure, transportation, manufacturing, oil and gas and utilities sectors, a press release said.

The exhibition - from 10am to 6pm - is designed to meet the needs of the local, regional and international markets by linking practitioners, suppliers, distributors and manufacturers from the fire, safety and security industry, with key decision makers from the government and private sectors mak-

THE KEY REASONS TO VISIT THE EVENT

- ▶ Source best solutions to suit your business requirements
- ▶ See first-hand live interactive demonstrations
- ▶ Discover edge-cutting and innovations developments
- ▶ Compare and contrast prices and specifications product variants
- ▶ Meet specialist exhibitors from local, regional& international leading companies

ing it a definitive networking platform, where new projects and partnerships are initiated and visionary objectives are implemented. This event also aims to create synergy and strengthen the collaboration between the authorities and the industries, the organisers said.

The event will lay foundation and be the gateway to the current and future market trends in the fire, safety and security sectors, for the industry professionals to communicate, share ideas, identify solutions, to operate effectively and efficiently and stay abreast with the latest global trends. OFSEC

will confluence and strengthen local and international business engagement and encourage investment.

The OFSEC Summit will feature an expansive line-up of 30+ stellar speakers, case studies, panel discussions, unique presentations providing access to a wealth of industry leading knowledge, sharing best practices and experiences, spotlighting trends, information exchange, insights and outlooks with actionable takeaways.

The summit is the definitive meeting place facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue with power packed networking

opportunities among C-Level executives, leading industry experts, decision makers, policy makers and government officials from across the value chain to foster collaboration, discuss current challenges, business opportunities, develop strategies, share knowledge and identify solutions aimed at shaping the future of fire, safety and security.

OFSEC is supported by Civil Defense and Ambulance Authority of Oman. The Strategic Partners are OPAL - Oman Society for Petroleum Services and SSS - Security and Safety Services.

Some of the key Supporters & Associations are, Madayn, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Oman HSE Professionals (OHSE), Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH Oman), JOIFF - International Organization for Industrial Emergency Services Management, Oman Manufacturers Association (OMFA), Oman Society of Engineers, UL Solutions and more are also supporting the show.

SBA affirms attractive Nissan Altima impresses customers

Expressive styling, an uplifting interior, two new powertrains, and advanced Nissan Intelligent Mobility features are among the features that make Nissan Altima the preferred car in the mid-size sedan segment, said a representative of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) - the official dealer of the brand.

“Nissan Altima is cherished by owners in Oman for its good looks, striking exterior, colour range, spaciousness and fashionable interior. Nissan Altima offers effortless power while furthering remarkable fuel economy. Its powerful high-performance engine and a range of other options adds to its appeal,” the SBA official further said.

Nissan Altima has been electrifying customers with its class leading fuel economy, classy design, driving dynamics, comfortability and safe technology.



New standard of design

Nissan Altima has advanced safety features for those seeking a more focused driving experience. Owners vouch that with its advanced technology and in-

built design, Nissan Altima is a pleasure to drive.

The Nissan Altima 2.0L Turbo, which has a new standard of design, driving enjoyment and technology has been creating waves within the mid-size sedan segment since its launch. The sedan's advanced VC-Turbo engine - the company's first pro-

duction-ready variable compression ratio engine - is one of the most advanced internal combustion engines ever created. Similarly, Nissan Altima 2.5L features expressive styling, an uplifting interior, two powertrains, and advanced Nissan Intelligent Mobility features.

The Nissan Altima 2.0 has the

world's first variable compression turbo engine. The engine is so smart that it anticipates what the driver wants. The Altima's shape-shifting VC-turbo engine lets the driver enjoy a lot. Nissan Altima 2.5L unlocks the pure joy of driving through its innovative latest technology and Nissan Intelligent Mobility feature that responds to

the world around in real time.

Technological package

Powered by an innovative 248 horsepower, 2.0L, turbocharged variable compression, four-cylinder engine, Nissan Altima continuously adjusts its compression ratio to optimise

power and efficiency. Whether its turbocharged power that pushes you back in your seat or efficiency that sips fuel, even in city streets, Altima's shape-shifting VC-Turbo engine gives you the best of both worlds. The sedan is a complete technological package - it over delivers on the basics, boasts features and innovative technologies never seen in its class.

The VC-Turbo engine has been developed after years of research and consumer feedback. It seamlessly changes its compression ratio between 8:1 (for high performance) and 14:1 (for high efficiency) - with an advanced multi-link system continuously raising or lowering the pistons' reach to transform the compression ratio. While a high compression ratio gives greater efficiency, a low compression ratio allows for greater power and torque and avoids knocking.

Nissan Altima also comes standard with a traditional 2.5L, four-cylinder engine. The 2.5L inline 4-cylinder, which is standard on all Altima grades, utilises more than 80 per cent or re-designed parts. Nissan Altima

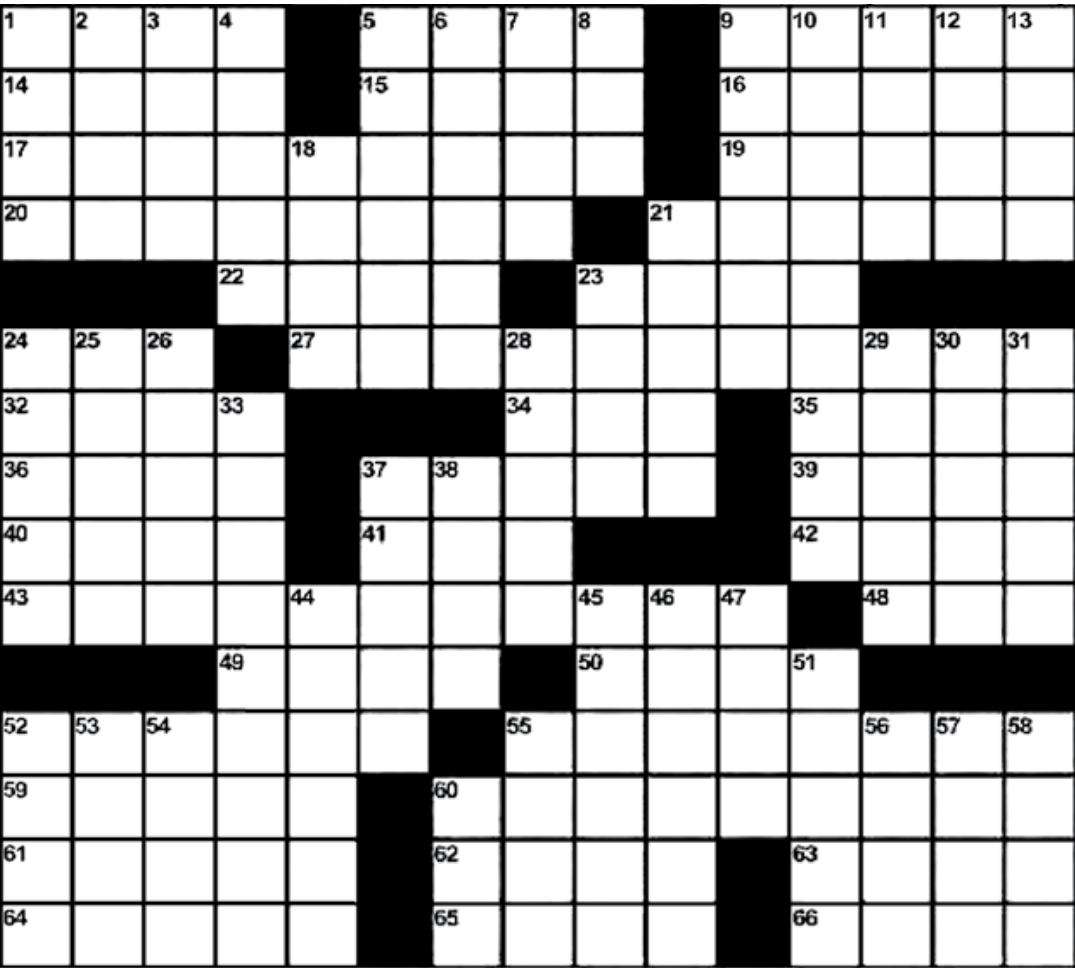
2.0L Turbo delivers 248hp. It has a CVT transmission.

Cutting-edge appeal

Among the Nissan Altima's many features, perhaps the one that stands out most is its 'class above' appeal, which is apparent at first look and first touch of both the exterior and interior executions. Ensuring these are right is critical to success in this segment as mid-size sedan buyers are traditionally motivated first and foremost by the rational aspects of the purchase decision - excellent value, reliability and comfort. This is particularly true of Nissan Altima buyers who are typically well-informed on the segments' competitive offerings. The Nissan Altima's design was inspired by the award-winning Nissan V Motion 2.0 concept car, which debuted at the 2017 North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

Cutting-edge Nissan Intelligent Mobility technologies have been integrated into the Altima as standard. These include Nissan's Rear Cross Traffic Alert, which helps drivers to detect stationary objects when reversing.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Nut center
5) Bring up
9) Ekberg of "La Dolce Vita"
14) " _ Angel" (Mae West
15) Director Kazan
16) French red wine
17) In shape for Waikiki?
19) For all to see
20) Full scholarship, in-
formally runners
21) Hall ofFamers
22) Ancient Iranian
23) Take wing
24) Spray graffiti on, say
child?
27) Curative vegetation?
61) Charity recipient
32) Part of UAR
34) Feedbag morsel
35) "A," in NATO code
36) Lower-class, to Brits
37) Gridiron series
39) Minor complaints
40) Knot or watt
41) First lady McKinley
42) Pub missile

movie)
43) Stolen indoor ball?
48) Carrier to Bergen
49) Red- _ (wieners)
50) Lo or chow follower
52) Some Millrose
Games runners
55) Shimmer iridescently
59) Warnings of gas
leaks
60) Lawbreaking aban-
doned child?
61) Charity recipient
62) Cruel dude
63) Coup d'_
64) Toys with runners
65) Applied henna to
66) Speed Wagons of
autodom

DOWN

1) Offend a bit
2) Kuwaiti bigwig
3) One chip, perhaps
4) Tribal carving
5) Dwell
6) Slipped past
7) River of Leeds
8) UK fliers

9) Indifferent to ethics
10) Peter Pan's home
11) Creative spark
12) Grounds for a suit
13) Takes measures
18) City near Provo
21) Petting zoo animals
23) Read the UPC of
24) Show some back-
bone, slangily
25) Quaker's Rice-_
26) Took to the clink
28) Dubuque native
29) Disney's middle
name
30) TV workers' union
31) Goes hungry
33) Totally ruined
37) Loses on purpose?
38) Bookie's concern
44) Carousel units
45) Roman or Ottoman
46) Chewed out
47) Nail salon need
51) Not as stale
52) Stylish Brits of the
'60s
53) One on a pedestal
54) Like a hermit

55) Wild party
56) Fill to the gills
57) "See ya"
58) Direct deposits, e.g.
(Abbr.)
60) Oft-fried fish

NOTE PAD

COIFSBEGANCAR
ONTAPIGLOORUE
BOOTLEGGERSD
HOPATEESIR
AQUATICMAJESTY
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TEDGRETASANDS

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You've got quite the day ahead of you, so get up early and get it started as soon as possible. Of course, no one's ever had to prompt you to get the show on the road, and you've also never needed to be talked into being first in line.

But today, you'll be the one who's talking everyone around you either into or out of whatever you see fit, and you'll have remarkable success at it too.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

The stuff you're putting out can only lead to one thing no matter what direction you aim it in: a serious attraction. If you're already in that mode, you're guaranteed success. Whoever you're romantically attracted to doesn't stand a chance of resistance. If you're not interested, that's a different story. Take some time away from the person you've been inadvertently charging up and practice being a bit less irresistible, just for the heck of it.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

The concept of having fans is nothing new to you. In addition to the well-known hypnotic effect that fire has on us all, the energy and enthusiasm you put out can't help but attract a following. At the moment, however, you'd better wield this weapon carefully, because your already lethal charm will be even more irresistible. It won't just be tough to say no to you, it will be downright impossible. For mere mortals, anyway.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You've been dutiful, diligent, and respectful to your elders. You've done everything you could possibly do for all parties concerned, not just lately but for as long as you can remember. You've gone even further above and beyond the call of duty over recent days and weeks, so no one could possibly begrudge you at least one or two fun-filled days. Guess what? Here they come. Fasten your seat belt and prepare for some well-deserved fun.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You've always been a no-nonsense kind of person, most especially when it comes to your work. Your coworkers will be more than willing to attest to that fact, but if a higher-up fails to follow the rules or drops the ball in any way now, no one will need to say a word. You'll be more than willing to let them have it, no matter where you are or who happens to be in the vicinity. Just be careful. Paychecks come in handy.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Once again, you'll be asked to take charge of a situation that's been left unmanaged. Fortunately, you just love that sort of thing, and with recent successes under your belt, you'll be even more confident. The best part is that you're also going to be in the mood to undertake a task like this. The kind thing to do, however, would be to remind everyone who wants some of your recreational time that you won't have any, since duty calls. They'll understand. They know how you get.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's not hard to tell when you're excited. It's a natural state of affairs when your eyes are open. You approach every day with the kind of excitement most people only see (and adore) in children. It's refreshing, exhilarating, and highly contagious. Your mission now is to recognize that wonderful quality in yourself and spread it around. You own the kind of enthusiasm that just about anyone would pay big bucks to learn or at least be delighted to spend some time around.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're restless and quite eager to jump right out of your rut. For the moment, at least. You'll have absolutely no problem finding someone to go with you, and with your encouragement they'll have no problem talking their way into a few days (or a lot of days) off. Don't hesitate to ask them along for the ride. You know how you are. You hate to do anything alone, and that goes double when you're off for an adventure.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've got a lot going on at home now, but someone you love seems to be intent on getting you to take a little trip, and it's not going to be down memory lane either. They want you on their arm in an exotic location, and they'll present their case with remarkable persuasion. Of course, it's all up to you. If you can do it now, you'll probably want to, but if family or work responsibilities won't allow it, you can always reschedule.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You've never been a fan of letting the sun set on angry words, or uncertain ones, for that matter. If you and a loved one have left things unresolved between you, don't let that continue any longer. Lure them over to your place any way you can, maybe with the promise of one of your amazing home-cooked meals. Regardless, just don't let them even think about leaving until you've cleared the air. There's absolutely no substitute for honesty and you know it.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

This is one of those days that can't deliberately be arranged and won't easily be forgotten. Your job is to spend each and every minute with someone who will appreciate just how special it is. Of course, you being who you are and having the personal depth that you have, that won't be a problem. You may have a tough time deciding which deserving soul to give this time to, but if that's your worst problem, you'll pardon us for not being all that sympathetic.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You've gone way past just thinking there might be something between you. You're sure of it, and you know they feel the same. So what's the next step? Well, it might be to talk to them about it to let them know what you're feeling and give them a chance to tell you what's on their mind too.

An invitation to dinner would be a good place to start. If all goes well, order one dessert and two forks.

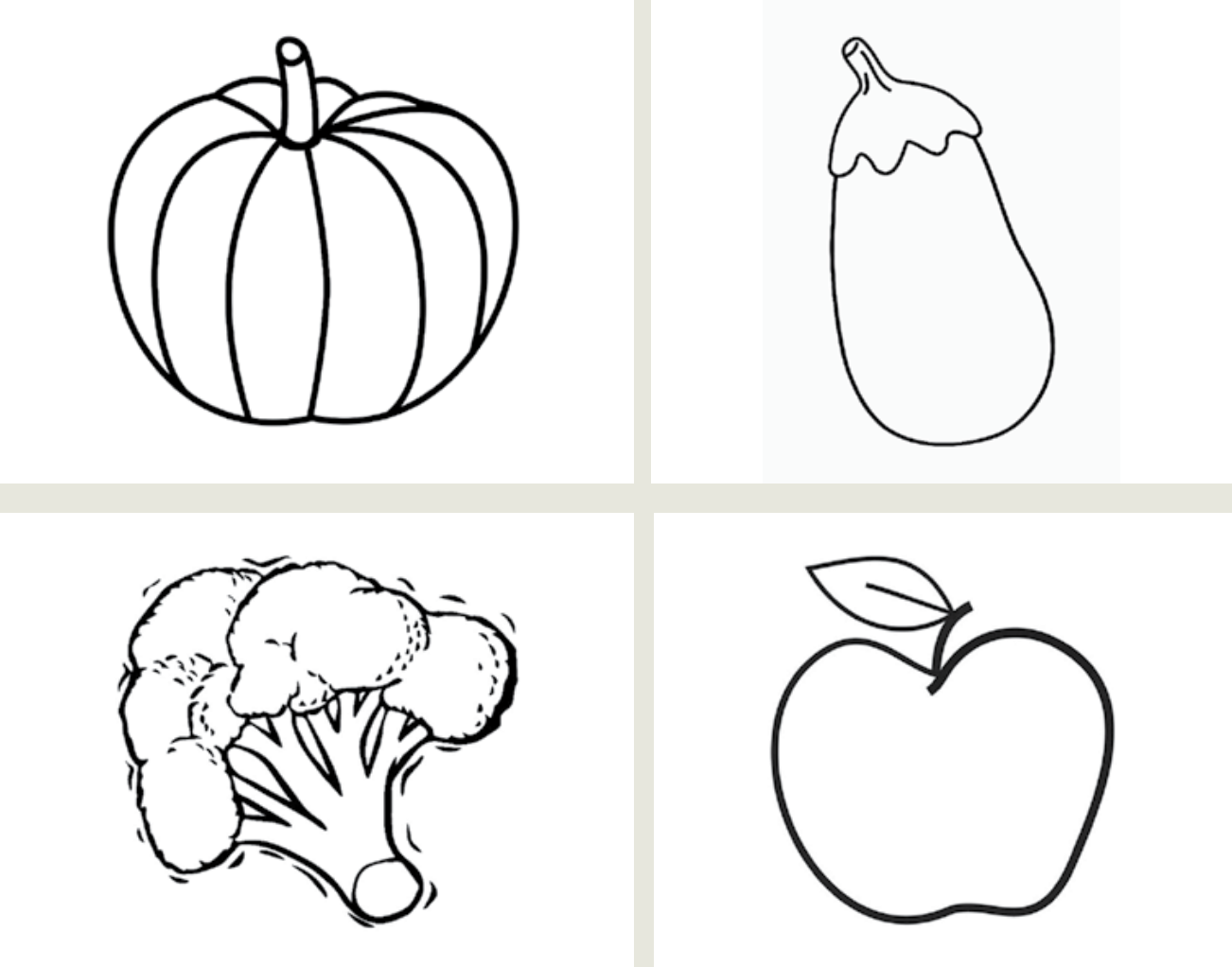


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. In the 2020 Olympic Games, the International Olympics Committee (IOC) replaced the gold medal for which winner?
- A. Daiki Hashimoto, gymnastics
B. Yuki Ota, fencing
C. Naohisa Takato, judo
D. Miu Goto, softball
02. By what name was Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar better known?
- A. Che
B. Don Quixote
C. El Cid
D. Gauguin
03. The ACE metric is used to measure or express what?
- A. Effects of climate change
B. The energy used by a tropical cyclone during its lifetime
C. Atmospheric effects on cy-clones
D. Energy generation from coal

Answers: 1.D 2.C 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	T	E	T
A	Y	D	R
W	M	H	I
B	A	I	E

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Xi Jinping secures historic third term as China's leader

Beijing, China - Xi Jinping secured a historic third term as China's leader on Sunday and filled his inner circle with close allies, achieving after a decade in power complete dominance over the ruling Communist Party. The party's Central Committee elected Xi as its general secretary for another five-year term, bringing the country back towards one-man rule after decades of power-sharing among its elite.

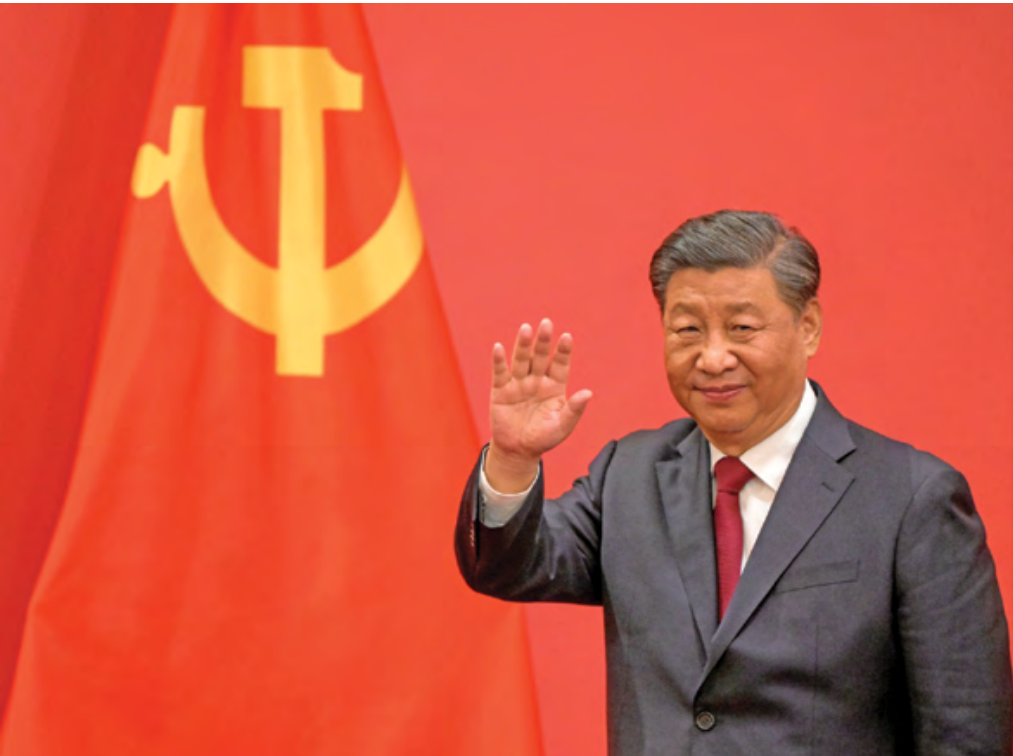
"I wish to thank the whole party sincerely for the trust you have placed in us," Xi told journalists at Beijing's Great Hall of the People after the closed-door, rubber-stamp vote was announced. Xi, 69, was also reappointed head of China's Central Military Commission, keeping him in charge of the People's Liberation Army.

He is now all but certain to sail through to a third term as the country's president, due to be formally announced during the government's annual legislative sessions in March.

Sunday's developments cement him as the most powerful leader since Communist Party founder Mao Zedong.

In a wide-ranging acceptance speech on Sunday, Xi made signature remarks celebrating China's rise as a global power and its success under his rule.

"The world needs China," Xi said. "After more than 40 years of unflagging efforts towards reform and opening up, we have created two miracles - rapid economic development and



China's President Xi Jinping waves during the introduction of members of the Chinese Communist Party's new Politburo Standing Committee in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sunday (AFP)

After more than 40 years of unflagging efforts towards reform and opening up, we have created two miracles - rapid economic development and long-term social stability

XI JINPING

long-term social stability."

Six of Xi's proteges and allies were also unveiled on Sunday alongside him as members of the Politburo Standing Committee - the party's apex of power that rules the country.

Li Qiang - a former chief of staff for Xi who oversaw a gru-

elling two-month COVID lockdown in Shanghai this year - was named as number two in the Standing Committee.

This means he is likely to take over as premier from Li Keqiang, a former Xi rival who will retire next year.

Close aide Ding Xuexiang and

Guangdong party chief Li Xi, a longtime confidante of the president, were among other allies named in the Standing Committee. "The new Politburo Standing Committee confirms decisively that Xi has consolidated power at the top of the Communist Party to an extent unseen since the Mao era," said Neil Thomas, a senior China analyst at Eurasia Group. "Xi has installed allies onto all seven seats of the Communist Party's top decision-making body, allowing him to dominate the political system for the foreseeable future."

Alfred Wu Muluan, a Chinese politics expert at the National

University of Singapore, said: "It is all Xi's people, signalling he wants to rule even beyond a third term."

Xi abolished the presidential two-term limit in 2018, paving the way for him to govern indefinitely. Xi was swiftly congratulated on Sunday by some of China's allies, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The United States offered no immediate response.

Sunday's announcements came after a week-long Congress of 2,300 hand-picked party delegates during which they endorsed Xi's 'core position' in the leadership and approved a sweeping reshuffle that saw Li and other former Xi rivals relegated. On Saturday the delegates elected the Central Committee of around 200 senior party officials, who on Sunday chose the 24-person Politburo and the Standing Committee.

The Politburo will have no women members for the first time in 25 years.

Analysts had closely watched for whether the party charter would be amended during the Congress to enshrine 'Xi Jinping Thought' as a guiding philosophy, a move that would put Xi on a par with Mao.

That did not take place, though a resolution did call the creed 'the Marxism of contemporary China and of the 21st Century', adding that it 'embodies the best Chinese culture and ethos of this era'.

AFP



Red Bull founder and CEO Dietrich Mateschitz (AFP)

Dietrich Mateschitz, the founder of Red Bull, dead at 78

Vienna, Austria - Red Bull founder Dietrich Mateschitz, who made the energy drink a global phenomenon and forged a title-winning Formula One team and a sports empire, died on Saturday aged 78, the company said.

Red Bull expressed both its 'sadness' at the Austrian billionaire's death and 'gratitude for what he accomplished'.

Mateschitz, a reclusive man who rarely gave interviews, took a sweet drink that was already popular in Asia and adapted it for the Western market with huge success.

He was named as Austria's richest person by Forbes in 2022 with an estimated net worth of US\$27.4bn. Mateschitz invested heavily in sport to give his brand global exposure.

Besides its involvement in Formula One - the team's Dutch driver Max Verstappen is the world champion for the second consecutive year - Red Bull bought the football club of the Austrian city of Salzburg in 2005, then Leipzig in Germany.

Both clubs have enjoyed trophy-winning success thanks to the brand's substantial investment. Red Bull have also branched out into extreme sports, sponsoring events such as air acrobatics and cliff diving.

The head of the Red Bull Formula One team, Christian Horner, said 'thankfully' Mateschitz lived to see Verstappen clinch his second title by winning the Japanese Grand Prix two weeks ago.

Horner described Mateschitz as the 'backbone of all we do'.

"It is very, very sad," said Horner, speaking at the United States Grand Prix in Austin, Texas. "A great man, one of few of a kind, for what he achieved and he has done for many people

around the world and across so many sports."

Horner told Sky Sports F1 that Mateschitz 'proved you can make a difference. He was a passionate supporter and the backbone of all we do. A remarkable man and inspirational individual'.

'Visionary entrepreneur'

Formula One chief executive Stefano Domenicali described Mateschitz as 'a hugely respected and much-loved member of the Formula One family'.

The Italian said: "He was an incredible visionary entrepreneur and a man who helped to transform our sport and created the Red Bull brand that is known all around the world."

Mateschitz's legacy, the Red Bull energy drink, was born during one of his many business trips as marketing director of a German cosmetics company when he was served a sweet beverage common in Asia in a luxury bar in Hong Kong.

He was immediately fond of it and was impressed by the drink's apparent ability to help him overcome his jet lag. He decided to partner with the beverage's developer Thai businessman Chaleo Yoovidhya and the two men founded Red Bull in 1984.

Based in Fuschl-am-See, the drink slowly but surely won over Western taste buds and the brand developed globally thanks to clever marketing and the tie-ins with sport.

Red Bull entered F1 by taking a 60 per cent share in the Swiss-based Sauber team, before the two parted company following a row over the choice of drivers. Three years later, Red Bull bought the failing Jaguar team from owner Ford and rebranded it.

AFP

NATO chief looks forward to working with Italy PM

Brussels, Belgium - NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Saturday congratulated Giorgia Meloni on becoming prime minister of Italy and said he looked forward to working with her. Meloni, the 45-year-old leader of the post-fascist Brothers of Italy party, took office on Saturday after promising to keep her country 'fully, and with its head held high, part of Europe and the Atlantic Alliance (NATO)'.

"Congratulations on your appointment as Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni," Stoltenberg



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (AFP)

tweeted. "Italy is a founding member of NATO, committed to

the transatlantic bond and making strong contributions to our

security in a more dangerous world. I look forward to working with you."

Meloni tweeted back her thanks, saying: "Ready to work with NATO, that is more than a military alliance: a bulwark of common values we'll never stop standing for."

Her pledge to work closely with NATO contrasted with the stances of her partners in her coalition government, who are both considered close to Russia.

One of them is Matteo Salvini, a long-time fan of President Vladimir Putin, who is now

deputy prime minister under Meloni.

The other is former premier Silvio Berlusconi, who was this week heard in a leaked recording talking about his warm ties with Moscow and appearing to blame Russia's war in Ukraine on President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Meloni, in a tweet on Saturday thanking Zelensky for his congratulations to her, said: "Italy is and will always be on the side of the brave people of Ukraine that is fighting for its freedom and for a rightful peace."

AFP

Doctors tell Saudi crown prince to skip summit

Algiers, Algeria - Doctors have advised Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince not to travel to Algiers for an upcoming summit, the Algerian presidency said on Sunday, amid an absence of Saudi reports confirming health issues.

Mohammed bin Salman 'apologised for not being able to participate in the Arab Summit to be held on November 1 in Algiers, in accordance with the recommendations of doctors who advise him not to travel', the official Algerian news agency APS said, citing a presidency statement.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune responded during a phone call that 'he understood the situation and regretted the crown prince's inability to attend' the summit, expressing 'wishes for his health and well-being'.

The story did not provide any explanation for the doctors' recommendations.

Saudi officials did not im-

mediately respond to a request for comment.

A report on the call by the official Saudi Press Agency made no mention of the summit or any advice from Prince Mohammed's doctors.

It said that during the call 'the aspects of bilateral relations between the two fraternal countries were reviewed', and that the two leaders discussed 'opportunities for joint cooperation'. Prince Mohammed, 37, has been first in line to the Saudi throne since 2017. Saudi Arabia has for years sought to quell speculation over the health of his father, 86-year-old King Salman, who has ruled the world's top oil exporter since 2015.

In 2017, it dismissed mounting speculation that the king was planning to abdicate in favour of Prince Mohammed. King Salman has been hospitalised twice this year.

AFP

'Lost hope': Inflation force doctors to quit Turkey

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkish doctor Mesut began his career wanting to help patients and be of use to his country, but now the threat of patient violence and soaring inflation has forced him to plan a move abroad.

Mesut says he will quit his job at a private Istanbul hospital and next year leave with his wife and two children for Germany.

He is one of a growing number of highly skilled professionals who are leaving or want to leave Turkey - a trend that experts say has accelerated in recent years as families struggle to keep up with the rising cost of living.

"We have lost all hope for the future," the 38-year-old anaesthesiologist told AFP.

"When I talk to my colleagues and close friends, they're desperate. Everyone is considering alternative options," said Mesut, who did not wish to give his full name.

Turkish doctors in particular say their working conditions have worsened, with long hours, an increase in physical and verbal abuse from patients or their relatives, and bullying by bosses.



Chairwoman of the Istanbul Medical Chamber, Professor Nergis Erdogan, posing for a photograph during an interview with AFP in Istanbul (AFP)

In one of the most recent attacks, a gunman in July shot cardiologist Ekrem Karakaya 15 times and killed him, reportedly because he held the doctor responsible for his mother's death.

Turkey's economic woes have only made emigrating more attractive, with inflation exceeding 83 per cent and the Turkish lira having lost around 30 per cent in value against the dollar since the start of the year.

Some say even next year's

elections - in which President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will struggle to extend his two-decade rule - offer no hope for change.

'Lost all motivation'

A specialised doctor at a Turkish public hospital earns a monthly average of more than US\$1,000 - more than three times the minimum wage of nearly US\$300, but still much less than what a doctor earns in Europe.

Mesut says he earns US\$2,000 a month, but even

that is not enough now life is so much more expensive.

"We work hard but the money we get... has no value," he said.

"We are exposed to violence, beatings and attacks from patients, and we've lost all motivation." The government says it is trying to solve these issues, and in July increased doctors' wages by 42 per cent in the public sector. It introduced reforms in August towards further improving their economic conditions and protecting them from violence.

The regulations aim to limit the number of doctors leaving Turkey, and curb the rising trend of medical professionals switching from public to private hospitals for better pay.

Demonisation of doctors

Erdogan last month unleashed his anger on Turks leaving the country.

"We pity those who arrive at the door of other countries for superficial aspirations, just because they want to drive a better car or go to more concerts," he said.

Mesut said the government's demonisation of doctors was the 'last straw'.

"We already make a lot of sacrifices in this profession," he said.

"I had been thinking about it for a while, but our president's words, 'let them leave', played a major part in my decision to go abroad." Mesut is already learning German ahead of his move with his wife, an intensive care unit nurse, and their children.

Professor Nergis Erdogan, chair of the Istanbul Medical Chamber, said applications for certificates of good standing - documents that allow doctors to work abroad - had soared this year. In 2012, only 59 Turkish doctors applied to receive the certificates.

But in the first nine months of this year alone, 1,938 physicians - 1,014 specialists and 924 generalists - put in requests.

"We ask first-year students about their projections. A significant part of them start by saying: 'I will take a German course,'" she told AFP.

AFP

Meloni takes over as Italy's first woman PM

Giorgia Meloni joined outgoing premier Mario Draghi for a handover ceremony

Rome, Italy - Giorgia Meloni officially took over on Sunday as Italy's first woman prime minister at the helm of the country's most right-wing government since World War II.

Four weeks after her post-fascist Brothers of Italy party won general elections, Meloni joined outgoing premier Mario Draghi for a handover ceremony at Chigi Palace, the prime minister's seat in Rome.

After almost 90 minutes of private talks, the pair smiled broadly as Draghi, a former European Central Bank chief, symbolically handed over to Meloni a small bell used in cabinet debates. She will later hold her first meeting of ministers comprising members of her party and its allies, former premier Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia party and Matteo Salvini's far-right League.

The Eurosceptic, anti-immigration coalition takes over the eurozone's third largest economy at a time of soaring inflation,



Italy's new Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni rings the bell as she presides over her government's first Cabinet meeting on Sunday (AFP)

an energy crisis and war in Ukraine.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Saturday she had a 'good first call' with Meloni, adding: "I count on and look forward to constructive cooperation with the new government on the challenges we face together."

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany later said he looked forward to 'working closely together with Italy in EU, NATO and G7' - a sentiment Meloni reflected in

responses to congratulatory messages on Twitter.

Italy's *La Stampa* daily spoke of a 'European beginning' on its front page on Sunday. 'Meloni: down to work, with pride', headlined the *Corriere della Sera*.

Reassuring ministers

On Saturday, Meloni and her 24 ministers were sworn in before President Sergio Mattarella at the Quirinal Palace in Rome, once home to popes and kings of Italy.

She declared her intention to get 'straight to work'.

Meloni's ministerial experience is limited to three years as youth minister under Berlusconi's 2008-2011 government, while her party has never held power.

Brothers of Italy won just four per cent of the vote in 2018 elections, but secured a historic 26 per cent of the vote in the September 25 poll.

Meloni was a fan of late dictator Benito Mussolini as a

teenager, but has managed to distance her party from its neo-fascist roots.

She presents herself as a straight-talking 'Christian mother', a defender of traditional values and Italy's national interests, particularly in Brussels.

Her party no longer wants Italy to leave the EU's single currency but remains strongly Eurosceptic, as is the League, which won nine per cent in the elections. However, she named committed European Antonio Tajani,

Meloni was a fan of late dictator Benito Mussolini as a teenager, but has managed to distance her party from its neo-fascist roots. She presents herself as a straight-talking Christian mother, a defender of traditional values

2019. That went instead to a technocrat, Rome prefect Matteo Piantedosi.

Coalition tensions

The talks to form a government had been overshadowed by disagreements within Meloni's coalition on one of the biggest issues facing Europe - the response to Russia's war in Ukraine. She was forced to clarify her strong support for Kyiv and EU sanctions against Moscow after Berlusconi was recorded defending his old friend President Vladimir Putin.

Salvini, too, is a long-time fan of Putin and has criticised Western sanctions imposed on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

On Saturday Meloni again affirmed her desire to work with NATO, which she described as 'more than a military alliance: a bulwark of common values we'll never stop standing for'.

Meloni said Italy would 'always be on the side of the brave people of Ukraine'.

But the tensions with her allies reinforce doubts as to how long she can keep her coalition together, in a country that has had almost 70 governments since 1946. Shortly after the handover ceremony, Pope Francis noted the start of the new government in his weekly Angelus and offered his prayers for 'unity and peace in Italy'.

AFP

Palestinian fighter killed in explosion in West Bank: Police

Nablus, Palestinian Territories - A Palestinian fighter was killed on Sunday in an explosion in the occupied West Bank, police said, with Israel staying silent on allegations from fighters that it was behind his assassination.

Tamer al-Kilani was killed overnight in the Old City of Nablus in the northern West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said. A Palestinian police inspector told AFP that Kilani was killed in an explosion in Nablus, where the Lions' Den militant group has emerged in recent months. The group described Kilani as one of its 'fiercest fighters' and blamed Israel for his death overnight.

'The treacherous occupation (Israel) put a sticky TNT device as the way to assassinate' Kilani, the group wrote on Telegram.

Palestinians gathered on Sunday around the charred remains of a motorbike that was allegedly



Palestinian mourners carry the body of Tamer al-Kilani during his funeral in the city of Nablus on Sunday (AFP)

laden with explosives.

At Nablus's Rafidia Hospital, Kilani's mother and sister stood over his body.

The Israeli military refused to confirm its involvement in the killing when contacted by AFP.

An army spokeswoman said Kilani was involved in attacks

targeting Israelis and had previously been jailed by Israel.

The Fatah movement described the killing as a 'cowardly assassination' in a statement published by the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

Dozens of Palestinian militants and civilians have been

killed this year amid an uptick in Israeli military raids, most targeting the northern West Bank.

The army spokeswoman said Israeli forces 'will continue to operate at all times and in all places from which terror attacks against Israelis emanate'.

AFP

Israel's top court clears way for Lebanon maritime border deal

Jerusalem - Israel's Supreme Court on Sunday paved the way for the signing of a maritime border deal with Lebanon, after it rejected appeals that the pact requires parliamentary approval.

The signing is expected later this week.

Israel and Lebanon, who are technically at war, agreed to terms earlier this month on a US-brokered deal to demarcate their disputed maritime border, a step likely to unlock production at Mediterranean gas fields. Four right-wing Israeli groups mounted legal challenges against the deal, claiming that centrist Prime Minister Yair Lapid was giving away 'sovereign' Israeli territory, which requires parliamentary approval.

Israel holds elections on November 1, and the petitions additionally argued that

agreements to cede territory should not be concluded during an election period.

The Supreme Court rejected appeals that the pact requires parliamentary approvals

Opponents of the deal also sought to force the government to hold a referendum on the terms.

But a three-judge panel at Israel's top court threw out all arguments against the deal in a decision on Sunday, with the full arguments to be released later.

The ruling means Lapid's cabinet, which has also en-

dorsed the terms of the agreement, can give final, binding approval.

Israeli and Lebanese reports say the signing will happen this week, with officials from the two countries inking the deal in separate locations.

It will go into force as soon as the United States sends notice confirming it has received from Lebanon and Israel their separate approvals.

The two nations will then deposit maritime border coordinates with the United Nations. Under the deal, Israel has full rights over the Karish gas field, which is expected to start gas production within weeks.

Lebanon will have full rights to operate and explore the so-called Qana or Sidon reservoir, parts of which fall in Israel's territorial waters, with the Jewish state receiving some revenues.

AFP

Israel names Herzi Halevi as next chief of army

Jerusalem - The Israeli government on Sunday confirmed Major General Herzi Halevi, a former military intelligence head who led forces along the Gaza border, as the country's next military chief.

Halevi, 54, who serves as deputy to outgoing Chief of General Staff Aviv Kohavi, will take charge of Israel's armed forces on January 17, Prime Minister Yair Lapid said in a statement.

Halevi's appointment comes as violence surges in the occupied West Bank and just weeks since the latest Gaza flare-up. His nomination was approved less than two weeks before Israelis head to the polls on November 1, in the country's fifth election in less than four years.

AFP

Afghan cyclists to race to raise 'alarm' over women's plight

Paris, France - For Afghan refugee cyclist Masomah Ali Zada, it will be a bittersweet moment. For the first time in five years, she will take part in the Afghanistan Women's Cycling Championships on Sunday, but not in Kabul.

Instead, the 26-year-old will race in southwest Switzerland, reunited with dozens of Afghan cyclists who now live in different countries.

Since the hardline Taliban returned to power last year and restricted women's freedoms, Ali Zada says 'sport is dead' for Afghan women.

The Taliban have banned women from playing sport, barred women from many government jobs and forbidden secondary school education for girls.

But Ali Zada, who has lived in France for the past five years, has not given up and continues to represent her country.

A special moment for Ali



This file photo shows Masomah Ali Zada getting ready for a training session at the World Cycling Centre (CMC) in Aigle on July 1, 2021 (AFP)

Zada came last summer when she took part in the Tokyo Olympics where she hoped to be a beacon for women forced to leave their country or to abandon their sporting dreams.

She was the first Afghan female cyclist to compete in the games as part of the Refugee Olympic Team.

But 'the Taliban ruined what I experienced in Tokyo', she tells AFP.

Unable to enjoy her Olympic adventure, she spent the rest of the summer with a heavy heart as she followed minute by minute the events unfolding in Afghanistan, with Kabul falling in August 2021 and the Taliban put

back in charge.

When she was growing up, her family, part of the historically oppressed Shiite Muslim Hazara community, were forced to live in Iran like millions of other Afghans. It was there she learned how to ride a bike before joining the Afghan national team at the age of 16 when the family returned to Kabul.

'Worsens each day'

After years of being physically attacked for daring to don sportswear, suffering insults for simply riding a bike and having stones thrown at her, she sought asylum in France in 2016. The pressure on her to give up had become too strong as her victories multiplied.

The situation has since worsened in Afghanistan.

"Every day, women lose a new right," she says in a soft voice, adding that many are put in prison or forced to leave the

country.

Since their return, the Taliban have imposed restrictions that aim to force women to live under a fundamentalist version of Islam. Girls can no longer go to high school and while women can still attend university, that will be difficult in the future since girls today will not have the necessary classes to go on to higher education. "Dreaming big for girls today is just being able to go to school. Just going to school. So sport is completely dead for women," says Ali Zada, who is currently studying at Polytech Lille University.

Benafsha Faizi, a journalist and former spokeswoman for the Afghanistan National Olympic Committee who fled the country with the International Cycling Union (UCI) in 2021, agrees.

"For a woman to play sport today in Afghanistan is just unthinkable. And the situation

worsens each day,' she says.

Afghan women 'abandoned'

Ali Zada, who has joined the International Olympic Committee Athletes' Commission, believes 'the world has become silent' in the face of the repression of Afghan women.

"We abandoned women in Afghanistan. Everyone who says they defend human rights, all those who say they defend women, they haven't done anything," she says.

She hopes the race on Sunday, and the media interest that it will garner, will 'raise the alarm' to 'wake the world up'.

A total of 49 female cyclists from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Singapore and Switzerland will take part in the 57km race in the Swiss city of Aigle and the surrounding Vaud canton, where UCI has its headquarters.

AFP

Sunak declares bid for British PM

Former finance minister is the second Conservative MP to declare a run at the top job

London, UK - British Conservative Rishi Sunak on Sunday announced he is standing to be prime minister, just weeks after failing in a first attempt and setting up a potentially bruising battle with his former boss Boris Johnson.

Ex-finance minister Sunak said he had a 'track record of delivery' and would lead Britain out of 'profound economic crisis', which experts say has been worsened by the aborted policies of outgoing leader Liz Truss.

"I want to fix our economy, unite our party and deliver for our country," he said in a short statement posted on Twitter confirming his widely expected candidacy. The no-frills announcement contrasted with his last failed bid to be Tory leader, when he faced criticism for a slickly produced video launched just days after he had helped depose ex-prime minister Johnson by resigning in July.

Sunak, 42, is the second Conservative MP to declare a run at the top job, after cabinet member Penny Mordaunt launched her campaign on Friday.

Johnson is anticipated to enter the likely week-long contest, after he cut short a Caribbean holiday to return to



Britain's former Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak leaves his home in London on Saturday (AFP)

Britain on Saturday and attempt an audacious political comeback less than two months after leaving office.

The 58-year-old is said to be intensely lobbying Conservative colleagues ahead of a Monday afternoon deadline to secure the 100 nominations required to face a vote of 357 Tory MPs.

'Secret summit'

Sunak has raced ahead in that count, crossing the minimum

threshold on Friday and currently boasting the public backing of 139 Tory lawmakers, according to a BBC tally.

That compares to Johnson's 56 and 23 for Mordaunt, though the ex-leader's allies insist he has secured the 100 nominations.

"Boris's campaign tell me that they have the numbers," Business Secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg told the BBC. "Clearly, he is going to stand. There is a great deal of support for him."

The Tories have been forced into a second, this time expedited, leadership contest since the summer following Truss's resignation after only 44 disastrous days into her tenure over her calamitous tax-slashing mini-budget.

If two candidates remain after Conservative lawmakers vote on Monday, the party's approximately 170,000 members will make their choice, with the result announced on Friday.

Johnson, who only relinquished power in early September following a government revolt over a slew of scandals, is still seen as the grassroots' favourite.

Amid growing calls for unity within the fractured ruling party, he and Sunak held talks late into the night, reports said on Sunday, as the feuding political heavyweights battle behind the scenes.

Few details have emerged about what *The Sun* dubbed a 'secret summit'. *The Sunday Times* said it lasted several hours 'in the hope of burying the hatchet and thrashing out a deal to govern together'.

"We're all waiting for white smoke," an ally of one told the newspaper. However, Sunak's announcement on Sunday suggests he is confident he can vanquish Johnson.

'Guaranteed disaster'

Mordaunt, who missed out on the last contest's run-off by just eight MPs' votes, is adamant she alone is able to bring the party together.

"I'm best placed to unite our party," the 49-year-old told the BBC, arguing she was 'the halfway house' between Sunak and Truss in the summer race.

Johnson's attempt at political resurrection has already been decried by opposition politicians, and even some in his own party.

"This isn't the time for Boris," Sunak-supporting Northern Ireland minister Steve Baker told Sky News, arguing another Johnson-led government 'would be a guaranteed disaster' and implode within months.

"Voters out there love him and he's a wonderful man - but he doesn't have that meticulous compliance with tedious rules," he added.

Sunak has also picked up several other endorsements, including from Home Secretary Grant Shapps, a former ally of Johnson, and trade minister Kemi Badenoch, an influential right-winger who finished fourth in the last leadership contest.

In a swipe at the ex-premier in *The Sunday Times*, she cautioned against 'nostalgia for the cavalier elan of 2019' - when he won an 80-seat majority - and said the party 'is not a vehicle for any one individual's personal ambitions'.

New polling showed the Tories could benefit from a change of leader, after Truss's missteps plunged them to unprecedented lows.

AFP

Pope Francis signs up for World Youth Day in 2023

Vatican City, Holy See - Pope Francis on Sunday made official his participation at World Youth Day in Lisbon next year, the largest gathering of young Catholics that had been postponed because of coronavirus.

The event, begun by pope Jean Paul II in 1986, usually takes place every three years but was moved from this year to 2023 due to the pandemic.

"There, I have registered," the pope said, tablet in hand, standing with two young people from Portugal at the window overlooking St Peter's Square, where he delivered his weekly Angelus prayer.

The pontiff said he had registered 'as a pilgrim' for the event.

Around one million people are expected in Lisbon for World Youth Day next year, which runs from August 1 to 6.

"Dear young people, I invite you to register for this meeting in which, after a long period of staying at a distance, we will rediscover the joy of the fraternal embrace between peoples and between generations, which we need so much!" the pope said on Sunday.

AFP



Protesters march in solidarity with protesters in Iran in front of the White House in Washington, DC, on Saturday (AFP)

Iran's nuclear agency says email server hacked

Tehran, Iran - Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation said on Sunday an email server of its subsidiary was hacked in a 'foreign' attack aimed at drawing 'attention' amid protests over the death of Mahsa Amini.

The Islamic republic has been gripped by weeks-long demonstrations sparked by the death of 22-year-old Amini on September 16 after her arrest for allegedly violating the country's strict dress code for women.

The street violence has led to dozens of deaths, mostly among protesters but also among the security forces, and hundreds of demonstrators have been arrested.

A group called Black Reward on Friday issued an ultimatum on Twitter, threatening to release documents on Tehran's nuclear programme unless all 'political prisoners, prisoners of conscience and people arrested in the recent protests' were released within 24 hours.

Material on social media said to be released by the group on Saturday included a short clip from a purported nuclear site in Iran, as well as documents containing agreements, maps and payslips.

The nuclear agency acknowledged in a statement that a hack had targeted its subsidiary, the Atomic Energy Production and Development Company, but downplayed the importance of the documents.

"Unauthorised access by a source originating from a spe-

cific foreign country to the email system of this company led to the publication of the content of some emails on social media," it said in a statement.

These emails contain 'technical messages and normal and daily exchanges', it added.

"The purpose of such illegal efforts, which are made out of desperation, is to attract public attention, creating media at-

Material on social media said to be released included a short clip from a purported nuclear site in Iran as well as documents

mospheres and psychological operations," the statement continued to add.

Iran in 2015 reached a landmark deal with world powers, after years of negotiations over its nuclear programme.

The agreement, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), gave Iran sanctions relief in return for restricting its nuclear programme.

It was derailed in 2018 when then-president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from it, but on-off talks have taken place since April 2021 in an effort to revive it.

AFP

Army clashes with M23 rebels in eastern DR Congo

Goma, DR Congo - Fresh clashes between the army and M23 rebels have erupted in eastern DR Congo, officials said on Sunday, breaking a period of relative calm between the two sides.

A mostly Congolese Tutsi group, the M23 resumed fighting late 2021 after lying dormant for years. It has since captured swathes of territory in North Kivu province, including the strategic town of Bunagana

on the Ugandan border in June.

The resurgence of the group has destabilised regional relations in central Africa, with the Democratic Republic of Congo accusing its smaller neighbour Rwanda of backing the militia.

The frontline between Congolese troops and M23 rebels had been calm in recent weeks. But clashes erupted again on Thursday, violence monitor Kivu Security Tracker stated on Saturday evening.

On Sunday, army officials and local residents said that M23 fighters had captured the village of Ntamugenga, a strategic target that lies close to the highway leading north out of provincial capital Goma.

"The situation is gloomy here," said village chief Celestin Nyamugira. "They came from the forest and infiltrated the city."

Congolese Colonel Mavinga Serge confirmed the capture of

the village to AFP, but said troops were 'next door'.

The M23 first leapt to prominence in 2012 when it briefly captured Goma before a joint Congolese-UN offensive drove it out.

The militia is just one of scores of armed groups that roam eastern DRC, many of them a legacy of two regional wars that flared late last century.

Despite official denials from Kigali, an unpublished report for

the United Nations seen by AFP in August pointed to Rwandan involvement with the M23.

The official death toll from the latest clashes remains unclear. Kivu Security Tracker said at least two civilians had been killed and a dozen wounded.

Medical officials from the region's Rutshuru Hospital said that four civilians had been killed on Friday and Saturday, with eight wounded.

AFP

Hurricane Roslyn hits Mexico's Pacific coast

Puerto Vallarta, Mexico - Hurricane Roslyn made landfall on the west coast of Mexico on Sunday as a powerful Category 3 storm, the US National Hurricane Center said, as communities braced for damaging winds, a dangerous storm surge and flash flooding.

The storm hit the central Nayarit state around 5:30am (1130 GMT) packing estimated maximum sustained winds of 120 miles (195km) per hour, the NHC said.

Just hours before hitting the Mexican coast, Roslyn was downgraded to a Category 3 storm on the five-tier Saffir-Simpson Wind Scale, with the NHC predicting 'rapid weakening' after landfall.

'Roslyn is expected to produce a life-threatening storm surge with significant coastal flooding in areas of onshore winds' through Sunday, the NHC said, adding that near the coast 'the surge will be accompanied by large and destructive waves'.

It warned as well of damaging winds and heavy rains that could cause flash flooding and landslides.

Authorities have declared a precautionary alert in the Pacific coast states of Jalisco, Colima, Nayarit and Sinaloa.

Victor Hugo Roldan, director of civil protection in Jalisco, told reporters on Saturday that several hundred people had been evacuated from the town of La Huerta, close to the hurricane's expected path.



The seafront buildings are seen in the tourist area of Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco State, Mexico on Saturday, before the arrival of hurricane Roslyn (AFP)

Just before hitting the Mexican coast, Roslyn was downgraded to a Category 3 storm on the five-tier Saffir-Simpson Wind Scale, with a prediction of rapid weakening

Most went to relatives' homes, while some went to shelters, he said.

'Heed every warning'

Jalisco, which is slated to get up to 10 inches (25cm) of rain in some spots, set up shelters in the

cities of Cabo Corrientes, La Huerta and the tourist resort of Puerto Vallarta.

Businesses in the resort town began to close on Saturday afternoon on officials' recommendations. Residents rushed to make last-minute preparations,

though by late Saturday afternoon some tourists were still lounging on the beach or unsuccessfully searching for open bars and restaurants.

For 59-year-old shopping mall manager Graciano Pena, the memory of 2002's Hurricane Kenna, which made landfall as a damaging Category 4 and left four dead, is still fresh.

"After that experience, we heed every warning and make preparations ahead of time," he said.

Other coastal states also pre-

pared shelters.

Tropical cyclones hit Mexico every year on both its Pacific and Atlantic coasts, usually between May and November.

At the end of May, Agatha, the first Pacific storm of the season, hit the coast of the southern state of Oaxaca, where heavy rain in mountainous towns killed 11 people.

In October 1997, Hurricane Pauline struck Mexico's Pacific coast as a Category 4 storm, leaving more than 200 dead.

AFP

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Arsenal fail to restore their four-point lead as Stuart Armstrong’s second-half goal rescues draw for Southampton

Southampton, United Kingdom - Arsenal dropped points for only the second time this season as Stuart Armstrong’s equaliser forced the Premier League leaders to settle for a 1-1 draw against Southampton on Sunday.

Mikel Arteta’s side went in front through Granit Xhaka’s first-half strike at St Mary’s.

But Armstrong levelled after the interval as Arsenal paid the price for failing to convert several chances to increase their advantage.

It was a rare slip from the Gunners, who had won nine of their 10 previous league games this season, with their only defeat coming at Manchester United.

The end of Arsenal’s eight-game winning run in all competitions leaves them two points clear of second-placed Manchester City with both having played 11 games.

While Arteta will be frustrated that Arsenal squandered the lead given to them by Swiss midfielder Xhaka, it is a tribute to his team’s unexpected rise this season that failing to take maximum points ranks as a disappointment.

Arsenal have 28 points after 11 matches, their best ever total at this stage of a Premier League season.

But Arteta said: “We had three or four good opportunities and should have scored more. We needed two or three goals, but only scored one.

“It’s very disappointing. We created enough chances but couldn’t put the ball away.”



Arsenal’s Bukayo Saka tries to dodge past Southampton’s Romain Perraud (L) and Stuart Armstrong during their English Premier League match in Southampton on Sunday (AFP)

We had three or four good opportunities and should have scored more. We needed two or three goals, but only scored one. It’s very disappointing

MIKEL ARTETA

Meanwhile, Aston Villa responded to the sacking of Steven Gerrard with a 4-0 thumping of Brentford.

Former Liverpool captain Gerrard was the fall guy for Villa winning just two of their opening 11 league games with a 3-0 defeat

at Fulham on Thursday the final straw.

Caretaker manager Aaron Danks did not shy away from big

decisions as captain John McGinn was dropped to the bench and got an immediate re-action.

Leon Bailey fired Villa in front after just two minutes before the Jamaican teed up Danny Ings to make it 2-0.

Ings then added a third inside 14 minutes from the penalty spot before Ollie Watkins rounded off the scoring in the second half.

Wolves are not enjoying the same success under their caretaker boss Steve Davis as Leicester moved out of the relegation zone with a 4-0 win at Molineux.

Youri Tielemans’ stunning strike that dipped into the top corner got the Foxes off to a flying start before Harvey Barnes’ cool finish doubled the lead for Brendan Rodgers’ men.

James Maddison and Jamie Vardy sealed Leicester’s first away win against a side still in

the Premier League for a year in the second half.

Victories for Villa and Leicester meant Leeds dropped into the bottom three after a 3-2 home defeat to Fulham.

Rodrigo gave under pressure Leeds manager Jessie Marsch the start he needed as the Spaniard headed in at the far post.

But Aleksandar Mitrovic started the Fulham fightback that lifted Marco Silva’s men up to seventh.

AFP



Franck Ribery of Salernitana greets the crowd

Diaz hits brace in Milan’s win, Ribery bids farewell

Milan, Italy - Spain attacking midfielder Brahim Diaz scored twice as AC Milan beat Monza 4-1 on Saturday.

Diaz, 23, on loan from Real Madrid until the end of the season, doubled his goal tally for the season with first half efforts before Belgium’s Divock Origi and Portugal’s Rafael Leao contributed after the break to send the champions behind leaders Napoli on points difference.

Diaz opened the scoring in San Siro after 16 minutes after a long-range run was finished with a sliding effort.

The former Manchester City playmaker claimed his second after receiving an Origi pass and smoothly finishing home four minutes before the break.

Origi was on the scoresheet for the first time the league this season after 65 minutes as he fired his effort into the top corner.

Last season’s Serie B play-off winners Monza, owned by former Milan president Silvio Berlusconi, claimed one back five minutes later as Filippo Ranocchia scored a superb free-kick for the outfit based to the north of the city.

The three points were confirmed with six minutes left as Leao, who looks set to go the World Cup with his country, added his fifth goal of the season.

Earlier, former France international Franck Ribery bid a tearful farewell to football as he took a

Franck Ribery announced his retirement on Friday after succumbing to a persistent knee injury

lap of honour ahead of Salernitana’s 1-0 win at home to Spezia.

The 39-year-old announced his retirement on Friday after succumbing to a persistent knee injury which had kept him out of action since the opening weekend of the season.

Later, Lautaro Martinez followed in Diaz’ footsteps by also scoring twice as Inter Milan edged Fiorentina 4-3 to go above Juventus to seventh spot.

AFP

Red-hot Real Madrid turn on the style to beat Sevilla and increase Liga lead

Madrid, Spain - Just when it seemed Real Madrid might consider dropping points in the title race, the champions calmly moved up a gear to secure a 3-1 win over Sevilla on Saturday and extend their La Liga lead.

Carlo Ancelotti’s unbeaten side moved six points clear of rivals Barcelona, who host Athletic Bilbao on Sunday, thanks to two strikes in three minutes from Lucas Vazquez and Fede Valverde in the final stages.

Sevilla thought they might take something from the game when Erik Lamela’s leveller cancelled out Luka Modric’s early strike, but Madrid confidently wrestled control of the match back.

Vinicius Junior, through on goal in the 79th minute, unselfishly squared for substitute Vazquez to roll the ball home and then Valverde continued his own sublime form with a rocket which



Real Madrid’s Federico Valverde (L) celebrates with Lucas Vazquez after scoring against Sevilla on Saturday (AFP)

left Sevilla goalkeeper Bono scrambling helplessly.

“We lost a bit of confidence when we let in the goal, but luck-

ily, the substitutes gave energy to the team and more confidence,” said Ancelotti.

“We scored the second goal

with a spectacular counter and a great pass from Vinicius, and from there we were on our way.”

The goals provided a rip-roar-

ing finale to a fine night for Madrid supporters, despite heavy rain. Karim Benzema had offered the Ballon d’Or he won on Monday to the masses at the Santiago Bernabeu before kick-off, handed his trophy by former winners Modric and Zinedine Zidane.

Fans brandished gold sheets laid out for them by the club.

Although they were not able to watch the French striker here, with a thigh problem keeping him out, their team maintained their momentum.

It took Real Madrid just five minutes to open the scoring.

Vinicius was the architect, picking the pocket of Gonzalo Montiel, driving forward deep into the area and then sliding a perfect pass across to split the defence and leave Modric with a simple finish on his 450th appearance for the club.

AFP

Leaders Union Berlin lose to bottom side Bochum

Berlin, Germany - Union Berlin missed a chance at reinstating their four-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga, going down 2-1 away at bottom side Bochum on Sunday.

Union came into the weekend with a four-point lead, but the gap was cut to just one after Bayern Munich defeated Hoffenheim 2-0 on Saturday.

Bochum took the lead in the final minute of the first half when Philipp Hofmann headed in a corner. Looking to ignite a tired-looking side exhausted by frequent midweek matches as a result of their first Europa League campaign, coach Urs Fischer made three changes in the 63rd



Union Berlin players look dejected at the end of the match

minute.

However it was the home side which continued to look fresher,

scoring a second on the counter in the 71st minute when Christopher Antwi-Adjei crossed for

Gerrit Holtmann to score.

Union had a chance to mount a comeback when awarded a penalty in the 77th minute, but Bochum goalkeeper Manuel Riemann saved Milos Pantovic’s tentative spot-kick.

Pantovic got on the board in the last minute of injury time, but it was not enough as Union failed to secure three points for just the fourth time this season.

The win was just Bochum’s second of the season, lifting them from last spot in the table ahead of Schalke.

Blanc gets first win

Alexandre Lacazette’s late goal handed Laurent Blanc his first

victory as Lyon coach on Saturday as his new club beat Montpellier 2-1 to end a six-match winless run in Ligue 1. The former France and Paris Saint-Germain boss took charge earlier this month after Dutchman Peter Bosz was sacked following a dismal start to the season.

Houssem Aouar, who was little used under Bosz this term, put Lyon ahead on 33 minutes.

Elye Wahi’s superb overhead kick brought the hosts level on 70 minutes.

Lacazette had the final say as he struck the winner in the 90th minute to halt Lyon’s wretched series of results.

AFP

Oman’s Azaan to compete at Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship in Thailand

Muscat - Oman’s Azaan al Rumhy will be making his eighth appearance in the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship (AAC) at the Amata Spring Country Club in Thailand from Thursday to Sunday.

Azaan, Oman’s leading golfer in the World Amateur Golf Rankings will be competing against the region’s top amateur golfers in the event which was created in 2009 as a joint initiative to develop the game by the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation, the Masters Tournament and The R&A.

The winner of the championship will get a dream invitation to play in two of the four ‘major’ Championships, the Masters Tournament and The Open.

Over the years, the championship has served as a springboard to some of the world’s top players. AAC participants have gone on to win 23 PGA Tour tournaments, highlighted by Hideki Matsuyama winning the 2021 Masters and Cameron Smith winning The Open Championship this year.

“I am looking forward to competing in the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship once again,” said Azaan.

“Amata Springs is a course that I have been fortunate to play in the past and it will be a test for the players. My goal is to play well and to make the cut. I have been working hard to prepare for the event and thoroughly enjoyed the AAC Academy program in



Azaan al Rumhy trains at the AAC Academy Dubai

Dubai in September.

“I am hoping to have my best AAC and improve my amateur ranking. I must thank Augusta National, The R&A, and the Asia Pacific Golf Federation for giving us this fantastic opportunity,” said Azaan.

Oman’s junior players Adam Al Barwani and Avi Hamlai will also travel to Thailand for the 88th SINGHA Thailand Junior World Golf Championships at Royal Hua Hin Golf Course.

Adam is in good form having just returned from the Pan Arab Golf Championships in Tunisia where he finished fourth and led the Oman Under-15 team to a fourth-place finish.

Mundhir Al Barwani, Chairman of the Oman Golf Association, said: “We wish Azaan, Adam, and Avi all the best for their upcoming trips to Thailand. For Azaan to be competing in his eighth Asia Pacific Amateur Championship is a great achievement, we know that the standard in this event is extremely high, so it is an opportunity for Azaan to measure himself against the best in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

“For Adam and Avi the Thai Junior Championships will serve as a fantastic platform to develop their abilities. We must thank the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth for their ongoing support and also our partners and sponsors; Oman LNG, Sohar Aluminium, Moore Stephens, and Shell for allowing us to continue to develop junior golf in Oman.”



Ducati’s Francesco Bagnaia speeds ahead of Ducati Gresini Racing’s Enea Bastianini and Repsol Honda’s Marc Marquez at the Malaysian Grand Prix in Sepang on Sunday (AFP)

‘NOW I CAN RELAX’

Ducati’s Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia on verge of MotoGP title after Malaysia win

Sepang, Malaysia - Francesco Bagnaia said he could relax at last after winning a dramatic Malaysian motorcycle Grand Prix on Sunday to put him on the brink of a first MotoGP world championship.

The Italian’s champagne remains on ice, however, after rival Fabio Quartararo finished third to take the battle to the season’s final race at Spain’s Valencia in two weeks.

Bagnaia would have clinched the title had Quartararo finished outside the podium places at Sepang, but the Ducati rider instead extended his lead to 23 points. Bagnaia took the chequered flag in 40min 14:332sec, 0.270sec ahead of fellow Ducati rider Enea Bastianini. Quartararo completed the podium 2.7sec adrift.

“Now I can relax!” said a jubilant Bagnaia, who now just needs to finish higher than 15th in Spain to be crowned world champion



The weekend was quite tough after the mistakes I did yesterday. For Valencia, we have to understand that we can be strong without forcing like we did yesterday.

FRANCESCO BAGNAIA

for the first time.

“The weekend was quite tough after the mistakes I did yesterday. For Valencia, we have to understand that we can be strong without forcing like we did yesterday. Today our pace was good enough without doing crazy things.”

Bagnaia started ninth on the grid, but made a blistering start which saw him swoop through the field to be second by the end of the first lap, chasing the back wheel of pole sitter Jorge Martin.

“I did the best start I ever did in my life,” said Bagnaia. “It was perfect.”

The dynamics of the race changed on the seventh lap when Martin crashed out, allowing the Ducati rider to charge into first with Bastianini hot on his tail.

Seventh win

“I took some risk at the front,” said Bagnaia. “Following Jorge was a bit too much for the rear tyre and I was starting to stress, then unfortunately he crashed.”

Bastianini managed to overtake his countryman on turn four of the 10th lap, but his lead was short-lived as Bagnaia regained the ascendancy.

Quartararo, who earlier in the season had been 91 points ahead

of Bagnaia, was meanwhile being drawn in a battle against Marco Bezzecchi for third, but held his ground to stave off the Gresini Racing rider.

At the front, Bastianini continued to pressure Bagnaia, but the Italian kept his cool to cross the finish line for his seventh win of the season.

“Today we did a really, really good job in terms of the championship. It’s also my seventh win, so we can be very happy,” said Bagnaia.

With a maximum 25 points available in Valencia, Quartararo must win the final grand prix of 2022 and hope Bagnaia finishes 15th or lower to have any hope of retaining his world title.

“It’s been a long time since I made the podium,” said Quartararo, who crashed in the previous race at Phillip Island, but also had a great start from down at 12th on the grid.

AFF



Muhammed Ali (L) and Vijeesh Velunni of Strenserv

Strenserv, Fagor FCC register wins in Oman A Division cricket

Muscat: Strenserv defeated Orient Travels by two wickets in their opening match at the A Division Oman Cricket League.

Batting first, Orient Travels’ innings ended at 185 runs in 42.5 overs. Amandeep Singh made 52 runs, while Vijesh Velunni was the pick of the Strenserv bowlers with four wickets for 47 runs.

In reply, Strenserv reached the target in 42.1 overs for the loss of eight wickets, with Muhammed Ali scoring 56 runs.

In another A division match, Fagor FCC beat OCT Ruwi by 121 runs.

Put in to bat Fagor FCC were all out for 190 in 45.3 overs. Shazaf Ali top-scored

with 36.

Then they bundled out OCT Ruwi for a mere 69 runs.

Chirag Mandaviya and Pradeep Kumar were the wreckers-in-chief, picking three wickets each.

Brief Scores: Orient Travels 185 all out in 42.5 overs (Amandeep Singh 52(68) 8x4; Vijesh Velunni – 4/47) lost to Strenserv 189/8 in 42.1 overs (Ali Muhammed 56(48) 8x4; Syed Amir Ali 2/32) by 2 wickets.

Fagor FCC 190 all out in 45.3 overs (Shazaf Ali 36(55) 3x4,1x6; Mohammed Al Balushi 44/3) beat OCT Ruwi 69 all out in 29.3 overs (Chirag Mandaviya 3/11 and Pradeep Kumar 3/13) by 121 runs.

Ogier takes 55th career rally win in Catalunya



France’s Sebastien Ogier of Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT celebrates his victory at Rally of Catalunya in Salou on Sunday (AFP)

Salou, Spain - Eight-time world champion Sebastien Ogier claimed his 55th career victory with the Rally of Catalunya on Sunday as this season’s overall winner Kalle Rovanpera finished third.

Frenchman Ogier, 38, who claimed the last of his drivers’ championships successes last year, has chosen to compete in just five of this season’s 13 rallies.

He edged Belgian Thierry Neuville by 16.4sec in second and Finn Rovanpera, who won the world title earlier this month in New Zealand, was 34.5sec

slower.

Ogier, who was in the car alongside co-driver Benjamin Veillas, continues to trail compatriot Sebastien Loeb’s record of 80 wins. The combined performances of Ogier and Rovanpera helped Toyota to the manufacturers’ title before the final rally of the season in Japan which starts on November 10.

“It’s Benji’s first win so I am very happy for him,” Ogier said.

“It’s fantastic to get this win because it was an important weekend for the team.”

AFF

Ferrari’s Sainz clinches pole for USA Grand Prix in Austin

Austin, United States - Carlos Sainz outpaced team-mate Charles Leclerc to take pole position as Ferrari dominated Saturday’s tense qualifying for Sunday’s United States Grand Prix.

The Spaniard delivered a final flying lap in one minute and 34.356 seconds to beat his Monégasque partner by 0.065 seconds, leaving world champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull third, on the day his team’s founder and co-owner Dietrich Mateschitz died aged 78.

With Leclerc taking a grid penalty, Dutchman Verstappen will start second on Sunday



Carlos Sainz of Spain drives his Ferrari during qualifying ahead of the F1 Grand Prix of USA at Circuit of The Americas on Saturday (AFP)

alongside Sainz on the front row as he bids for a record-equalling 13th win of the season to help Red Bull clinch the constructors’ title.

His Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez, who also faces a grid penalty, was fourth ahead of seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton and his Mercedes team-mate George Russell, Aston Martin’s Lance Stroll and Lando Norris of McLaren.

“I knew it was coming boys, I knew it,” said Sainz after taking his third pole of the season.

“It was a lot of fun, very tricky with the gusts of wind, but I managed to put together a good lap without mistakes.”

The Red Bull team had been informed of Mateschitz’s death before qualifying and Verstappen said it had been a difficult day.

“It’s been hard news for everyone - for Red Bull and for the sport and for me - in general, in my career and in my life. It is a very tough day. We missed out in qualifying by a little bit, but there is a race tomorrow and we’ll try to do it for him,” he said.

The session began in a sombre atmosphere with tributes from Formula One, Ferrari, Mercedes and many others preceding the action in front of a sell-out crowd at the Circuit of the Americas.

AFF



Melbourne, Australia - An unbeaten 82 from Virat Kohli led India to a stunning last-ball win over Pakistan to supercharge their bid for a first Twenty20 World Cup crown since 2007 in front of 90,000 fans at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

The world number one Indians restricted their fierce rivals to 159-8 and scraped home by four wickets after a remarkable final over, with superstar Kohli the hero.

no words, no idea how that happened," said Kohli. "I am really lost for words. Hardik believed we can do it, if we stayed till the end."

Victory was critical in a group that includes South Africa, Bangladesh and qualifiers Zimbabwe and the Netherlands, with only the top two making the semi-finals.

India have largely dominated Pakistan since the late 1990s but had lost two of their three previous clashes including by 10 wick-

VIRAT KOHLI

It looked to be going badly wrong for India as they struggled to just 45-4 off 10 overs, halfway through their chase.

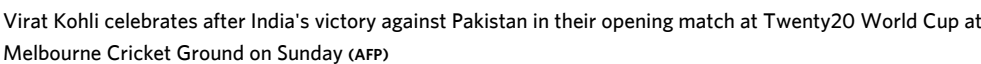
But Kohli and Hardik Pandya (40) launched an incredible fightback with a century stand that left India needing 16 off the final over from a nervous Mohammad Nawaz, who peppered it with wides and no-balls to help them to their target.

ets in the group phase at last year's T20 World Cup and the recent Asia Cup.

But India had been in good recent form, winning home series against Australia and South Africa, riding on the success of their batting line-up.

"Those two guys (Kohli and Pandya) are experienced. Staying calm and taking the game deep was very critical. Good for our confidence," said India skipper Rohit Sharma. "We were in no position to win this," he admitted.

'I have no words'
"It's a surreal atmosphere, I have



A deflated Pakistan captain Babar Azam also paid tribute to Kohli.

‘Credit to Virat’

“Our bowlers bowled really well. We had a chance, we tried to stick to our plans. But credit to Virat Kohli.”

Few sporting rivalries match the passion of India-Pakistan and the atmosphere was electric as Pakistan got off to a stuttering start after being sent in to bat with captain Babar Azam out lbw for a golden duck to Arshdeep Singh.

Azam reviewed, but it was plumb in front, with Singh's swing causing more carnage in his next over when Mohammad Rizwan (4) top-edged a rising ball to Bhuvneshwar Kumar at fine leg.

Shan Masood survived a narrow run out appeal as he and Iftikhar Ahmed worked to rebuild the innings.

They reached 60-2 at the halfway mark before Ahmed accelerated when the slow bowlers came on, hitting Ravi Ashwin for six then plundering three more in one over from Axar Patel.

Ahmed reached his half-century before Mohammed Shami trapped him lbw, sparking a collapse with Pandya snaring Shadab Khan, Haider Ali and Mohammad Nawaz in the space of 19 runs.

India also had a horror start

with KL Rahul out in the first over to Naseem Shah, dragging the ball onto his stumps, then Ahmed took a blinding catch at slip to remove skipper Sharma (4) off the Harris Rauf.

That brought Suryakumar Yadav, arguably the best T20 batsman in the world, to the crease but he only lasted eight balls, caught behind for a whirlwind 16 off Rauf as the Pakistan fans roared in celebration.

When Patel was run out in the next over, India were reeling at 31-4.

Kohli started slowly but finally found his groove and with Pandya launched a fightback, hitting three sixes in one over off Nawaz.

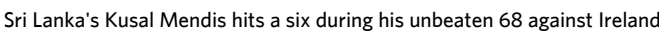
AFP

Hobart, Australia - Disciplined bowling and an unbeaten half-century by Kusal Mendis powered Sri Lanka to a nine-wicket hammering of Ireland in their opening Super 12 match at the Twenty20 World Cup on Sunday.

Asian champions Sri Lanka restricted Ireland, who qualified for the second round by knocking out two-time champions West Indies, to 128-8 in Hobart.

Spinners Maheesh Theekshana and Wanindu Hasaranga took two wickets each after Ireland chose to bat first.

Mendis then powered his side past their 129-run target with a second successive half-century, off 43 balls, hitting a six to win with five overs to spare.



The island nation have turned around their fortunes after being stunned by Namibia in their first-round opener but bounced back to advance to the Super 12.

"We knew they (Sri Lankan spinners) would be a big threat. There wasn't a whole lot of spin, but enough to challenge the stumps and bat," said Ireland

AFB

Hobart, Australia - South Africa captain Temba Bavuma vowed Sunday his team will come out with all guns blazing in their Twenty20 World Cup bow in Australia, with no time to ease themselves into the tournament.

The Proteas have a poor record in global events, never winning a World Cup or reaching a final in either short-ball format. They failed to make the T20 World Cup semi-finals a year ago on net run-rate.

Bavuma's side meet resurgent qualifier Zimbabwe in an all-African clash in Hobart on Monday to get their Australian campaign under way with the pressure on. But he said they were up for the challenge.

"We have Zimbabwe as our opening game. There, everything that we've spoken about in our meetings and our preparation, we'll be looking to execute them as well as we can," he said.

"We obviously want to start on a positive note. We don't want to kind of ease ourselves into the tournament. There really is no time to do that.



"Tomorrow will really be an opportunity for us to execute our skills and our plans accordingly." Bavuma himself is desperate for runs with his batting form so poor he was overlooked in the auction for South Africa's new T20 franchise competition.

He followed that by scoring only three runs in three innings in their recent T20 series in India.

Zimbabwe, meanwhile, booked their berth in the Super 12 at the expense of Scotland in round one on Friday, to continue their good form under coach Dave Houghton.

AFP



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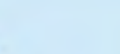
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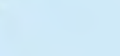
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BORDER SECURITY

Finnish fence

Finland plans fence on Russia border, dividing East and West. Some look at it as a symbolic gesture, others feel it's a futile move

More than 30 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Finland plans to erect a barbed-wire fence on its border with Russia dividing East and West, following the war in Ukraine.

The prospective NATO member this week announced broad parliamentary support to replace its wooden fences, designed mainly to stop livestock from wandering across the 1,300km border, with sturdier barriers to keep Russians and migrants out.

"Hopefully the work can start as quickly as possible," Prime Minister Sanna Marin told reporters in Helsinki.

Finland saw an influx of Russians in September following President Vladimir Putin's mobilisation order, before it clamped down and heavily restricted their entry. Estonia, Latvia and Poland have also either started or plan to beef up their borders with Russia.

The Finnish border guard says it is necessary to build between 130 and 260km of barriers in areas deemed most critical, particularly in southeastern Finland where most border traffic takes place.

In contrast to the livestock barriers, the new fence proposed on Europe's longest border with Russia is a tall, sturdy metal fence with barbed wire on top and a road running next to it.

The project, estimated to cost hundreds of millions of euros, will start with the construction of a pilot fence a few kilometres long, with the full fence due to be completed in three to four years.

End of 'pragmatism'

The new barrier would not cover the entire border, most of which is difficult forested terrain far from populated areas, but would help detect large border movements and concentrate migrants to smaller, more easily managed areas.



In this file photo, a street sign announces the Finnish-Russian Imatra border crossing, in Imatra, south-eastern Finland



Passengers disembark a bus coming from Russia at the Vaalimaa check point, Finland, on the border with the Russian Federation

aged areas.

While Marin has political support for the project, experts have questioned its aims.

"I think the fence shows an emotional reaction to the war," professor Olga Davydova-Minguet, an expert on Russia and border issues, told AFP.

The Finnish border has great symbolic value as a boundary between the East and West, but it has been 'a very pragmatic and practical border', said Jussi Laine, professor of human geography at the University of Eastern Finland.

"Children may have been going to school

on the Finnish side, with the parents living on the other side", he told AFP.

With projects like electronic visas and new railway connections between eastern Finland and Saint Petersburg, there had been a push since the 1990s to make the Russia-Finland border a 'normal European border'.

"That meant that in people's everyday lives the border's significance would disappear," Laine explained. These pragmatic ambitions explains in part why Finland was slow to restrict border traffic, compared to the Baltic countries. "Finland has long marketed itself in the EU as an expert on Russia".

An initial November 2021 proposal from the opposition centre-right to build a proper fence was dismissed as populism. But the situation radically changed with Putin's war in Ukraine, Laine explained.

Five months after Russia's invasion, Finland, in July, amended its Border Guard Act to allow for the construction of stronger fences, the closure of border crossings and concentrating asylum seekers at specific points in the event of a large-scale crossover attempt.

That came amid concerns of 'hybrid threats' where migrants could be used to exert political pressure - as in the 2021 migrant crisis on the Belarus-EU border.

But when Putin's military mobilisation in September led to a doubling of the number of Russians crossing the border, plans for the new fence gained momentum.

The Finnish border guard has said it is preparing for difficult developments as the situation evolves. "It is possible that when travel is restricted, attempts at illegal border crossings will increase," a spokesman said.

More harm than good

The border fence construction may enjoy broad political consensus, but it has been harshly criticised by researchers. "The harms are alarmingly greater than the benefits",

Laine said.

Besides being a very expensive solution to a relatively small number of migrants, research suggests that building barriers creates greater risks for migrants while stopping only very few people.

"In short, people die. Fences don't solve problems," Laine emphasised, noting that some migrants could venture into more hazardous terrain to cross into Finland.

And while a new fence may facilitate the Border Guard's work, making crossings more difficult fuels human trafficking, he added.

Laine believed the fence discussion - originally proposed to deter migrants - got confused with condemning Russia's aggression in Ukraine and explained the sudden change in political opinion.

"The fence has a symbolic value. It is not based on rational analysis but on emotions", he said.

Some have also stressed the psychological effect of increasing Finns' sense of security. But Davydova-Minguet argued the fence also 'reinforces the image of the Russians as a scary source of threats'.

"The fence is creating the impression that there is a danger beyond the border from which we have to separate ourselves," he said.

AFP

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MISHKAK STREET



UP IN Smoke

Anirban Ray

It is evening, and unlike other parts of the city, there is a rapid transition towards Seeb...and you wonder why? A friend dropped a hint but refused to spill the beans, so we decided to drive to this popular locale that literally goes up in smoke every evening!

After the sun sheds its final rays and neon street lights add a warm ambience, the evening suddenly gets into a celebratory mood here and you seem to forget the stress of work/pending assignments and shift into a realm of leisure where there's a feast for the senses.

With evening prayers done sincerely, it's time to settle down for a treat and what better way to do it than indulge in steaming hot barbecue delights, prepared right in front of you. When you drive past this area, even if you are on an urgent errand, your appetite seems to pitch tent, so you have to stop by for a bite or a takeaway.

Located along the street immediately after Al Mouj Muscat (formerly The Wave) and stretching towards Al Hail, the area is known for its mouth-watering street food, ranging from a wide variety of original grilled items to fusion delights.

Colourful food trucks and stalls, decked with flashy LED lights and lantern seen from a distance will guide you to the right spot. And after you park your car, be prepared to be swept off your feet - for the aromas around the place have an overpowering effect and they can make you gain a few pounds in an instant.

Abdul Rehman, a student of marketing who helps his friend Ali al Hashmi with his truck 'Cholo Burger', said, "We started the truck in 2018 and this is the second branch after the one in Al Amerat. With 10 staff, we prepare various dishes, including chicken/meat burgers grilled squid and prawns. Ali started this as a passion - something which he



discovered from our camping trips when he played 'chef'."

A wooden brush generously coats the hot iron grills with oil and vapours rise in a maze as he places spiced-up, thick patties of meat and chicken on the grills and fans the red hot coals with a cardboard, and sparks of fire rise up, heralding that your order is in the making. That is sight to behold, then the aromas of tasted meat enthrall your olfactory cells, and finally the treats lands on your platter to send your taste buds in a tizzy - a feast for the senses, indeed!

Most of the trucks open by 6:30pm and go on until past midnight. Often screening football matches and afterward celebrations, they are open beyond to enable diners treat themselves. The menu and items served are almost the same in most food trucks, but there's fun in trying out how each one does it best.

There is a mixture of Omani, Indian, African and Turkish tastes in the offering as per spices and condiments used by each stall. Swahili food is also another hot favourite, especially with Potato Urojo. The mishkak sticks costs 200

This street in Seeb is popular for its row of mishkak stalls which cater to varied palates, providing robust, smoky bites every evening

baizas while burgers range from RO1 onward. You can also enjoy grilled chicken, quail, beef liver, and seafood like squid, baby octopus, shrimps and tuna at some stalls.

Ibrahim Abaid from Asoom Burger said, "People in Oman have always loved street food - indeed it is very difficult to find authentic street food in the country though most hotels claim to be providing it.

Interestingly, mishkak has been a festive food in Oman for decades. As explained by some stall owners, this item was prepared mainly during Eid al Adha. It was a long process and needed equipment that was difficult to find earlier, unlike the present times.

Majid al Amri, staying at Mabelah and one of the regular visitors in the area said, "It was not so easy to make this dish when I was a small boy. I remember, my uncles used to take lot of time preparing the charcoal and we used to have lots of fun. Now, mishkak has gone very popular, thanks to the modern cooking machines."

While the stretch of this street remains synonymous with mishkak and is busy all throughout the year, winter is the best time of the year when people throng in huge numbers to dine by the street as well as take parcels home. Many people buy stuff in large quantities for parties/picnics and other celebrations from this street.

And if you think driving up to Seeb for a mishkak treat is a far cry, you only have to come here once. After that, it will become a regular haunt for you when you want to 'feel' the food and the ambience that goes with it, not just savour the delicacies on display.

People drive long distances from both ends, even from as far as Ruwi and Amerat to enjoy this street food under the skies. There is also seating arrangement for women and families, especially for senior citizens, who come along with big groups for some chit chat and a few sumptuous bites when they want to skip dinner at home.

Actions speak louder

To complement the spicy mishkaks, if you are not tuned towards having chilled aerated waters, how about some hot karak tea flavoured with cardamom, cinnamon, lemon grass, and ginger?

Two young friends run a popular tea stall here, selling a variety of flavoured teas silently. You read that right - silently! Both guys have impaired hearing and speech but you cannot miss their winning smiles that entice you into trying out their teas.

Mater Ahmed al Rashdi and Mutaz Bader al Amri have been selling their brews every evening to go with the grilled snacks on sale all around. But the demand for their tea goes right up to midnight when some people drive in only for a cup of tea.

Customer can be seen conversing with the duo in sign language - one can use words in any language as long as you correctly convey your order with appropriate signs. And, if you are not able to express your choice of brew or the ingredients in signs, simply read the notes pasted along their flasks to indicate your choice or show them a picture on your mobile phone and you would be served in a minute.

Most people pay them more than the price indicated - after all, actions speak louder!



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