

Service guide launched to facilitate investors

Guide provides details on 80 services offered by MoCIIP

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) launched a service guide to enhance the business environment for investors on Wednesday.

The guide was launched at a media briefing attended by H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and senior ministry officials.

The guide provides details on the 180 services offered by the ministry. It includes eight basic criteria for each service, such as the requirements and controls, documentation, average time to complete the service, fees and payment mechanism and contact points for the service.

The meeting also reviewed the electronic services offered by the ministry, which allow completion of investors' transactions electronically through the Invest Easy portal, without the need for investors to visit the ministry.

'The portal aims to enhance Oman's international indicators linked to the ease of starting a business. It also facilitates selling of shares by commercial institu-



(Supplied photo)

The portal aims to enhance Oman's international indicators linked to the ease of starting a business

tions and companies, transfer of ownership of commercial registry to another investor, or entering new partnerships,' the ministry stated.

The briefing also presented details on the Corporate Governance Charter for Closed Commercial Companies, with the aim of encouraging companies to make optimal and appropriate investments corresponding to their

capacity and resources.

MoCIIP informed that its call centre received nearly 13,500 calls in the last six months.

Through launch of various electronic services, MoCIIP seeks to complete the requirements of the National Programme for the Digital Economy, and the Executive Plan of the Government Digital Transformation Programme 2021-2025.



Sayyid Fahd receives GCC Legislative Councils meeting participants

Muscat - H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received chiefs of GCC shura, its representatives and national and Ummah councils who are taking part in the 16th meeting of the GCC Legislative Councils. The meeting is hosted by the sultanate.

H H Sayyid Fahd reviewed the Omani shura experience which is based on the sultanate's rich heritage and responding to requirements of the time.

He hailed the constructive role of the Council of Oman in cooperation with the state institutions in supporting the march of comprehensive development in the country. He also under-

scored the importance of the role undertaken by the GCC legislative councils in promoting cooperation and enhancing ties among GCC peoples to realise the envisaged goals.

The meeting touched on the march of the GCC legislative councils, as well as experience of each country in building its institutions. The latest regional and international developments were also reviewed during the meeting.

On their turn, the chiefs of GCC shura and other participants expressed their gratitude to the sultanate for the good preparations to host the meeting that had many positive out-

comes. They also commended Oman's constant support for the GCC march and lauded the Omani experience in building the state of institutions and the rule of law, as well as consolidating the pillars of nation-building that ensure a decent life for all citizens.

The meeting was attended by H E Khalid Hilal al Ma'awali, Chairman of Shura Council, Adel Abdulrahman al Asoomi, Speaker of the Arab Parliament, H E Dr Abdullah Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, and Sheikh al Fadhli Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary General of the Council of Minister.

ONA

► NEWS BRIEF

HIS MAJESTY RETURNS FROM THE UK

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned to Muscat on Wednesday after a visit to the United Kingdom where he offered condolences on the death of Queen Elizabeth II and congratulated King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and head of the Commonwealth on his accession to the UK throne.

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN ARAB INFORMATION MINISTERS' MEET

Cairo, Egypt - The sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Information, took part in the 52nd session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Information and 97th session of the Permanent Committee for Arab Media, on Wednesday, held in Cairo.

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Inflation in Oman hits 2.4% in August

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Shatti al Qurum offers many a quiet nook to unwind

A NEW BEGINNING AMONG RAVAGES OF WAR



A Syrian girl walks to school as the new academic year begins in the country's northern city of Raqa, on Wednesday. A total of 348 schools were destroyed by war and are still out of service in northeast Syria. Rajab al Mushrif, co-chair of the Education Board of Syria, told local media earlier in the month that 168 schools are partially damaged, while 180 schools are completely destroyed (AFP)

Committed to peace via dialogue: Oman at UN meet

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman stressed on the promotion of international peace and security and the resolution of disputes through dialogue and diplomacy at the 51st regular session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, in session till October 7.

Oman affirmed its support for the proposals recommended by independent experts on the establishment of a democratic and equitable international order, the most important of which is the holding of regular peace conferences under the auspices of the UN, in order to develop mechanisms and methods for consolidating peace, security and coexistence.

Counsellor Talal bin Hilal al Siyabi, part of Oman's permanent delegation to the UN, said in an address to the session, that the sultanate has consistently promoted international peace and security, strengthened coexistence between peoples, and re-



Talal bin Hilal al Siyabi

solved disputes through dialogue and diplomacy.

He said the position of the sultanate is in line with international efforts that call for cooperation and peaceful coexistence, reject differences and resolve disputes through understanding and dialogue, while supporting all steps taken to defuse conflicts at the regional and international levels.

He added that Oman's foreign policy is based on the principle of respect for others and non-interference in the affairs of others.

OTF offers \$1mn to winners of startup contest at GITEX 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of GITEX 2022 in Dubai, Oman Technology Fund will offer investment opportunities to the tune of US\$1mn in its OTF Investment Pitch Competition for startups.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, an official at OTF said that the fund will offer investments to competition winners at North Star 2022, which is a global startup

ecosystem and a part of GITEX, taking place from October 10 to 14.

According to the official, OTF has organised the competition with an aim to increase opportunities in technology and information communications technology companies and startups - both locally and abroad.

He added that GITEX includes an area dedicated to highlighting the services, prod-

ucts and achievements of startups from the Arab world.

An arbitration committee will choose 30 startups to present their services to the investment committee of the fund. Subsequently, the committee will determine if they can be included under the umbrella of investments of OTF.

Ten companies will qualify for the finals, and the winner will be announced at the closing ceremony of GITEX. Interested com-

panies can introduce themselves by completing a form and entering their details before September 30 at <https://bit.ly/3Me7FpQ>

Nasser al Hosni, a businessman, said, "The decision is a very good step because all developed countries support the technology sector and startups operating in the sector."

According to Hosni, the tech sector is one of the most important that helps develop all eco-

nom ic fields. "Oman has taken several steps in the digital field to achieve the goal of supporting startups, create job opportunities and encourage Omani youth to be innovative and provide jobs to others."

Ahmed al Jabri, innovator and CEO of Qutra Company, said, "Young people really need investments to implement their ideas. There are a lot of young Omanis who have creative ideas and startup companies that

need funding to start their projects."

Jabri added, "The decision is important as it will encourage Omani youth to participate in the competition. I believe Omani youth need someone who believes in their ideas and capabilities and supports them. I advise innovators and startup owners working in the technology sector to benefit from these initiatives such as the OTF competition."

Mahrrouqi surveys Dhofar's tourism development projects

Our Correspondent
Salalah

H E Salem bin Mohammed al Mahrrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, visited a number of tourist sites in Dhofar on Wednesday.

A statement said, 'The Minister of Heritage and Tourism paid a field visit to follow up on the construction work of the water-front development projects of Al Husn and Al Haffa markets.'

The two projects in Salalah are being implemented by Muscat National Development and Investment Company (ASAAS).

'His Excellency and his delegation visited several other tourist sites, including the Hamreer Talalat project and the Ain Garziz development project.'

In June, Dhofar Municipality signed a deal with Omran for the development of six tourist sites in Dhofar, including the Ateen Gardens project (camping sites) and Al Mughsail Beach project.



(Supplied photo)



(Supplied photo)

Oman, Uzbek forum explores trade exchange

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) hosted at its headquarters on Wednesday the Omani-Uzbek Business Forum attended by representatives of several Omani businesses and their counterparts from Uzbekistan.

The visiting delegation was headed by Furkat Sidikov, Deputy Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan.

The forum explored trade and investment relations between the two countries as business leaders from the two sides highlighted the importance of strengthening trade relations to augment the volume of bilateral trade.

The guests made a visual presentation on the most important and promising investment opportunities in Uzbekistan in

On the sidelines of the forum, B2B meetings were held between Omani and Uzbek businessmen with the aim of exchanging expertise and detailing investment opportunities in the two countries

the fields of information technology, raw material, chemicals, agriculture, renewable energy and others.

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MoSD holds forum to support needy families in Buraimi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to support social security families, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) held a forum on Wednesday in Buraimi.

The forum was held under the patronage of H E Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidi, Governor of

Buraimi.

The forum was part of the Tamkeen programme launched by the ministry in 2017 with the aim of investing in the capabilities of individuals, social security and limited income families, and persons with disabilities and qualifying them to participate in the country's economic development, besides raising their stan-



(Supplied photo)

dard of living. The forum targeted 743 people in its first stage.

A number of entities participated in the forum, including the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Oman Development Bank and the Public Authority for Social Insurance.

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MUSCAT DAILY

GEN NU'AMANI RECEIVES PAKISTAN'S NAVY CHIEF

H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office, received Adm Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi, Chief of Staff of Pakistan's Navy, on Wednesday. The two reviewed ways of enhancing cooperation to achieve joint interests and discussed several matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Rear Adm Saif Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of Royal Navy of Oman



Lions Club to hold entrepreneurship programme in Muscat on Sept 30



Our Correspondent
Muscat

A programme will be held by Model Lions Club of Travancore Oman at Sheraton Oman Hotel on September 30 to empower entrepreneurs in the sultanate.

Part of the popular Lions Club International, the Oman chapter was launched three years ago and currently has 35 members.

Speaking about the event, MJF Jayshankar, president of

Model Lions Club of Travancore Oman, said, "We are committed to serve society. During COVID-19, we helped distribute rations and repatriate families back to India. We have also held several social events, like blood donation camps, beach cleaning and diabetes check-up camps. We are now planning an event to address entrepreneurs who are facing challenges professionally."

More than 30 entrepreneurs have registered for the event, he

informed.

Sashi Kumar, secretary of the club, added, "Our main aim is to serve without any benefits in return. We do not generate any funds; our contribution is from our members only. This entrepreneurship programme will benefit new businesses, helping them thrive irrespective of the challenges they face. We will train them to think and implement ideas in a positive manner."

Ibri records 25mm rainfall in two days

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sporadic rains lashed several governorates in the last two days, according to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

In a statement, CAA said, 'A number of wadis overflowed. There was low cloud cover and fog over parts of Oman. A number of villages in the wilayat of Nizwa in Dakhliyah governorate witnessed sporadic rains on Wednesday that led to overflowing wadis, including Wadi al Rahba.'

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), Ibri recorded 25mm rainfall on September 19 and 20.

Data collected from the rain monitoring stations of MAFWR from Monday to Tuesday showed that Ibri received 23mm of rainfall, Izki 20mm, Hamra 14mm, Mahdah 10mm, Buraimi 7mm, Jabal Akhdar 5mm and Nizwa 2mm.

FLOWERS BLOSSOM AS AL SARB BEGINS IN DHOFAR



The spring season called Al Sarb began in Dhofar on Wednesday with flowers starting to bloom on the mountains. The season, which lasts for three months until December 21, is characterised by bright sunshine, moderate weather and low humidity after the fogs associated with khareef disappear. It is the time for flowers to blossom and cold breeze to blow, attracting tourists to enjoy the picturesque nature, in addition to calm seas (ONA)

Oman gears up for Chinese travellers before tourist wave returns in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is gearing up to secure the first-mover advantage, prepare and adapt to the needs of Chinese travellers, before the Chinese outbound tourist wave returns in 2023.

Chinese travellers are currently limiting international travel owing to restrictions on their return home.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) organised a workshop - China Ready - to introduce partners in the Omani tourism sector on how to deal with Chinese visitors and meet their requirements.

More than 80 partners from the tourism sector, representing travel and tourism companies, hotels and airlines in the sultanate participated in the work-



shop held under the patronage of H E Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in the MHT.

'China is one of the priority markets. Chinese outbound flights have witnessed growth, flying about 57mn passengers in 2010 to 155mn in 2019. The sultanate has seen remarkable

growth in the number of Chinese tourists, from 44,580 in 2018 to 107,446 in 2019 - a growth of 141 per cent, which is the strongest of its kind,' the ministry stated.

The China Ready workshop was conducted by Marcus Lee, CEO of CBISN, the largest marketing agency promoting destinations and service providers to

Chinese outbound travellers. The company has successfully launched the programme in 49 countries across six continents.

The ministry informed that the workshop will help the sector prepare before reopening of the Chinese outward bound market, 'as target groups, preferences and behaviour of Chinese

tourists have changed since the pandemic. This knowledge will help hotels, destination management companies, tourist attractions and other service providers upgrade and update their product offerings'.

The workshop focused on understanding the Chinese traveller, what attracts them, digitalisation and technological changes, and how they choose destinations and hotels.

According to the China Outbound Tourism Research Institute, destinations need to prepare for the return of Chinese outbound tourists with better products and niche offerings.

"The preparation, the acquisition of knowledge and the adaptation of services need to be done now, before the wave arrives," said Wolfgang Georg Arlt, CEO of the institute.



Municipal Council in North Batinah meets to discuss projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Municipal Council in the North Batinah governorate on Wednesday held its sixth meeting of the year under the chairmanship of Governor H E Mohammed Sulaiman Hamood al Kindi to discuss various development projects envisaged for the governorate.

During the meeting, a presentation was made on probable projects for the governorate, including some for improvement and beautification of public areas in different wilayats.

Two important proposals were - an integrated plan for con-

verting overhead electric lines into ground cables and allocating a site for an Eid Habta market.

The council also discussed proposed solutions, such as fixing of tracking devices, so as to prevent any fishing boat getting lost in the sea.

Other important issues that came up for discussion, included investments in the old site of Sohar Hospital with an option for establishing a private hospital there. Possibility of developing the site of Al Ardah race in the village of Umm Khalifa in the wilayat of Saham, and option for a housing scheme in Ajeeb town in the wilayat of Shinas were also discussed in the meeting.

MAFWR encouraging investments in aquaculture

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) is calling for investments in aquaculture and urging investors to submit a feasibility report on probable projects, their proposed sites and areas.

An investor must provide information on the initial investment costs of a project and indicate the type of fish that will be cultivated and determine the fish farming system.

According to MAFWR, an investor must also provide an overview of project management, production stages, as well as the expected date by which one would start working on the project. An investor should also present the services that a project would provide to serve the local community.

The last date for submission



of applications is October 17. The ministry called on those wishing to invest in fish farming to register via www.maf.gov.om.

According to statistics issued by the ministry, fish production from commercial aquaculture projects in the sultanate reached 1,703 tonnes in 2021.

Dr Issa bin Mohammad al Farsi, Director of the Fisheries Development Department in

Construction of Duqm tuna canning complex starts

Muscat - Construction work has started at a complex for canning tuna in Duqm, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources stated on Wednesday.

The complex will be used for canning tuna, sardines and other seafood products in the Fisheries Industries Zone (FIZ) in Duqm.

The factory is designed to the highest international standards and food safety specifications. Its production capacity will reach 30,000 tonnes annually, subject to future expansion. The complex is scheduled for commercial production by 2024.

The project, which resulted from the Tanfeedh Programme,

is in line with Oman Vision 2040. It will contribute to economic diversification by maximising returns from fish landings and localising the value-added chain of fishery products before exporting to global markets, the ministry stated.

'The project will positively support Oman's GDP.'

MAFWR, said that the integrated fish farming projects focus on the integration between agricultural activity and fish farming in order to achieve food security in the country.

"The ministry seeks to increase the contribution of the fish farming sector to the GDP and to achieve Oman Vision 2040 through several projects, such as the farming of white shrimp in the wilayat of Jalan Bani Bu Hassan and the establishment of an abalone production project in the wilayat of Mirbat."

In July, the ministry signed an usufruct contract to establish a project for finfish farming in the wilayat of Seeb in Muscat. The contract is worth RO30mn and the project will come up over an area of 1.5mn sqm. Production capacity of the first phase of the project using floating cages is projected to be 3,000 tonnes.

ROP NEWS

Four expats arrested for smuggling drugs into Oman

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Wednesday arrested four Asian nationals for smuggling large quantities of drugs into Oman.



'The General Administration of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control arrested four Asian for smuggling narcotic drugs,' ROP said. More than 79kg of crystal meth were seized from the accused, it added.

One killed in hit-and-run crash in S Batinah, driver arrested

The South Batinah Police Command arrested the driver of a vehicle accused of fleeing the accident scene after running over a bicycle rider. 'The driver ran away while the man died. The driver has been referred for legal action,' ROP said in a statement.

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Securities Law to boost transparency: CMA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's new Securities Law, which was issued in June this year under Royal Decree No 46/2022, will boost consumer protection, enhance market transparency and advance the regulatory standards in the sultanate's capital market, according to the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

The CMA on Wednesday organised a press conference on new Securities Law at the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) which was attended by H E Abdullah al Salmi, executive president of CMA, and Haitham al Salmi, chief executive officer of the MSX, and other senior officials of both institutions.

"The new law enhances the level of consumer protection, provides for fair market, offers multiple options for funding and provides legal coverage for virtual investment assets," H E Salmi said while addressing the press conference.

He said the issuance of new Securities Law will advance the regulatory standards of Oman's securities industry to cope with the current and future requirements in the light of the technological revolution and emergence of financial technologies (Fintech). H E Salmi added that the law creates a legal coverage for innovative financing instruments



H E Abdullah al Salmi (centre), executive president of Capital Market Authority, addresses a press conference along with other senior members of CMA and MSX, at the Muscat Stock Exchange on Wednesday (Muscat Daily)

that can be introduced at the MSX. H E Salmi noted that the new law will contribute to the growth of Fintech-based investments in Oman, providing financial support for the economic sectors employing innovative financial solutions.

"The law confers on the CMA the power to regulate innovative funding and the approval of implementation of technology and virtual and digital investments and allow for expanding funding option through new products and services such as warehouse receipts, derivatives and futures etc," he said.

The Securities Law, as explained by CMA and MSX officials at the press conference, has

been issued to protect the consumers in Oman's capital market and to ensure a financing environment with multiple options.

The law includes many processes in the regulation of the securities industry and currently focus on the activities related to the securities such as the funds and the activities of market intermediaries.

The new Securities Law also allows the introduction and regulation of new investment products and services such as derivatives and futures on the MSX. It also allows the CMA to establish consumer protection fund to compensate the consumers in case of losses to their assets with the company.

Exchange for SMEs

The sultanate's new Securities Law supports special initiatives and programmes for funding small and medium enterprises (SMEs) due to the economic importance of SMEs whose funding needs are of special nature.

The law confers on the CMA the power to license the establishment of a separate stock exchange for the trading in shares of SMEs. The establishment of a stock exchange for small business will support SMEs by providing funding from the public.

As per the officials, the CMA and MSX are conducting studies and working on procedures to establish the stock exchange for SMEs.



Inflation in Oman hits 2.4% in August

Muscat - The inflation rate of the Consumers Price Index (CPI) in Oman stood at 2.4 per cent in August this year, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data indicated a rise in the prices of main groups in August 2022 compared to August 2021, such as education by 5.1 per cent, food and non-alcoholic beverages by 4.9 per cent, health by 3.5 per cent, transport by 3.1 per cent, restaurants and hotels by 2.1 per cent, miscellaneous goods and services by 1.5 per cent, recreation and culture by

1.4 per cent, furniture, household equipment and routine household maintenance by 1.2 per cent, clothing and footwear by 0.9 per cent and housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels by 0.6 per cent.

The prices of commodities under some main groups such as tobacco and communications however, remained unchanged.

Prices also went up for oils and fats by 19.2 per cent, meats by 8.8 per cent, fruits by 7.5 per cent, non-alcoholic beverages by 4.4 per cent, bread and cereals by 4.1 per cent, milk, cheese and eggs by 3.2 per cent, sugar, jam,

honey and sweets by 2.3 per cent, other foodstuff by 1.9 per cent and fish and seafood by 1.7 per cent. Prices declined for vegetables by 2.9 per cent..

As far as governorates are concerned, Buraimi recorded the highest inflation rate of 4.3 per cent, followed by Dakhiliyah (2.9 per cent), Dhofar (2.7 per cent), A'Dhahirah (2.6 per cent), North Batinah (2.4 per cent), North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah (2.3 per cent), while the Governorate of Muscat recorded the lowest inflation rate of 2.1 per cent.

ONA

Twitter to depose Elon Musk ahead of buyout deal trial

San Francisco, US - Twitter's lawyers will question Elon Musk next week as they gather evidence in a legal battle to hold him to his US\$44bn buyout deal, a Tuesday court filing said.

The Tesla chief will be deposed under oath for two days and maybe even a third if needed, in sessions that are to be recorded by 'stenographic, sound and visual means', according to the filing.

Musk's deposition is set to take place privately in law offices, and comes as part of an evidence gathering phase ahead of a five-day trial scheduled to begin October 17 in the Court of Chancery in the state of



Tesla chief Elon Musk

Delaware.

The long list of those being asked for documents or to answer questions in the case includes Twitter co-founder and former chief Jack Dorsey, who was to be deposed on Tuesday by Musk's lawyers.

Musk, the world's richest man, said in a letter in April that he was cancelling the deal because he was misled by Twitter concerning the number of bot accounts on its platform, allegations rejected by the company.

He later added accusations made in a whistleblower complaint made by a former head of security at Twitter to his reasons for walking away from the deal.

Twitter has stood by its assessment of user numbers, and portrayed the whistleblower as a 'disgruntled former employee' whose allegations are without merit.

AFP

Zero-COVID harming 75% of European firms

Beijing, China - China's 'inflexible' and 'inconsistent' zero-COVID policy is crippling European business operations in the country, a major business lobby said on Wednesday, warning that the presence of the companies 'can no longer be taken for granted'.

The report by the European Union's Chamber of Commerce in China marks the latest statement by the foreign business community that Beijing's hard-line virus curbs are harming the world's second-largest economy and isolating it on the international stage.

China is the last major economy wedded to a strategy of stamping out emerging virus outbreaks as they arise, through a combination of snap lock-



downs, mass testing and lengthy quarantines.

Despite sparking business closures and roiling global supply chains, President Xi Jinping has declared the approach China's most 'economic and effective' path forward, and officials have

not indicated when the rules might be eased.

The European Chamber - a group of more than 1,800 European companies in China - said in a position paper that zero-COVID and its 'massive uncertainty' had had a 'negative

impact' on 75 per cent of its members' operations.

"China's business environment will remain unpredictable as long as the threat of lockdowns exists," the organisation said, calling Xi's flagship policy 'inflexible and inconsistently implemented' and cautioning that ideology seemed to be 'trumping the economy'.

It added that the situation had prompted nearly a quarter of firms to consider shifting current or planned investments out of China, the highest percentage in the past decade. Despite China's significant growth potential, 'the extent of European firms' engagement can no longer be taken for granted', the report said.

AFP

Amazon announces 71 renewable energy projects globally

Seattle, US - Amazon is expanding its renewable energy portfolio globally, with an additional 2.7 gigawatts (GW) of clean energy capacity across 71 new renewable energy projects, the company said.

The expansion includes the company's first renewable energy project in South America - a solar farm in Brazil - and its first solar farms in India and Poland. Once fully operational, Amazon's global renewable energy portfolio will generate 50,000 gigawatt hours (GWh) of clean energy, which is the equivalent amount of electricity needed to power 4.6mn US homes each year.

"We are bringing new wind and solar projects online to power our offices, fulfillment centers, data centers, and stores, which collectively serve millions of customers globally, and we are on a path to reach 100% renewable energy across our entire business by 2025," said Adam Selipsky, CEO of Amazon Web Services.

"Around the world, countries are looking to accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy, and continued investments like ours can help accelerate their journey as we all work together to mitigate the impacts of climate change."

As the largest corporate purchaser of renewable energy globally, Amazon now has a total of 379 renewable energy projects across 21 countries, including 154 wind and solar farms and 225 rooftop solar projects, representing 18.5 GW of renewable energy capacity. By the end of 2021, the company had reached 85% renewable energy across its business.

Amazon continues to successfully enable projects in power grids around the world.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Amazon is announcing the company's first three large-scale projects in India. All three are solar projects in Rajasthan, representing 420MW of clean energy capacity. Amazon is scaling



fast in India, and these first investments play a critical role in reducing our carbon emissions in the country. In the Asia-Pacific region, the company now has a total of 57 renewable energy projects.

In Europe, Amazon now has 117 renewable energy projects.

Amazon is announcing its first rooftop solar projects in France and Austria, and its first solar farm in Poland. Amazon's investment in its first utility-scale project in Poland is one of the largest corporate solar deals announced to date in the country. With this commitment, Amazon is directly

contributing to the Polish government's goal of increasing renewable energy on its grid. Corporate support of new renewable energy projects like Amazon's helps open up the market for additional wind and solar farms, and accelerates the decarbonization of the grid.

In North America, the company is adding 1GW of clean energy capacity across the southeastern US, including the company's first two renewable energy projects in Louisiana. The company now has a total of 202 projects across North America.

In South America, Amazon is announcing its first renewable energy project, which is a 122MW solar farm in Brazil. In addition to providing renewable power to Amazon's operations in the region, this project will also provide economic benefits to the local economy and the region's biodiversity. The project includes a US\$380,000 investment in environmental programmes during construction to protect and promote biodiversity.

The project is estimated to create 850 jobs during the construction phase, with an additional 30 permanent jobs once the project becomes operational.

To help scale the benefits of investments in the renewable energy sector as it continues to

grow, Amazon is also working through the Clean Energy Buyers Institute's (CEBI) 'Beyond the Megawatt' initiative to ensure the industry is maximising the economic, environmental, and social impact of energy procurement.

"As a key leader in the CEBA community, Amazon continues to demonstrate that when it commits to a vision, it drives a pace and scale that's a new bar to follow," said Miranda Ballentine, CEO of Clean Energy Buyers Association (CEBA) and Clean Energy Buyers Institute (CEBI).

"Amazon also continues to be a leader in not only deploying today's clean energy procurement tools at scale, but also in leading its community of peers and partners in developing tomorrow's clean energy solutions - whether that's focusing on ensuring renewables have sustainable supply chains or expanding the impact of clean energy through next generation procurement tools."

UK unveils plans to pay half of business energy bills

London, UK - Britain on Wednesday unveiled a six-month plan starting in October to pay about half of energy bills for businesses, as Prime Minister Liz Truss targets the soaring cost of living.

The announcement comes ahead of a mini-budget on Friday when finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng is expected to unveil tax cuts to help a nation struggling with decades-high inflation.

Wholesale electricity and gas prices for businesses as well as charities, hospitals and schools will be capped at half the expected cost on the open market, the government said in a statement.

The scheme comes after Truss launched plans for a two-year household energy price freeze which also starts next month.

"We have stepped in to stop businesses collapsing, protect jobs and limit inflation," Kwarteng said on Wednesday.

The chancellor of the exchequer's budget will seek to boost economic growth amid forecasts that Britain will this year sink into recession on sky-high energy



bills fuelled by the invasion of Ukraine by major oil and gas producer Russia.

Truss took office on September 6, two days before the death of Queen Elizabeth II, after winning an election of Conservative party members on a tax-cutting platform.

Media reports suggest that the government will also scrap an EU limit on bankers' bonuses following Brexit.

And Truss is committed to scrapping planned tax hikes on both company profits and salaries that predecessor Boris

Johnson had signed off.

Truss defended her tax-cutting agenda in the face of opposition from US President Joe Biden as the two prepared to meet at the UN in New York.

"I am sick and tired of trickle-down economics. It has never worked," Biden tweeted ahead of their first meeting, echoing arguments that tax cuts disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

But Truss told Sky News, "I don't accept this argument that cutting taxes is somehow unfair."

"What we know is people on higher incomes generally pay

more tax. So when you reduce taxes, there is often a disproportionate benefit because those people are paying more taxes in the first place," she said.

Economists meanwhile warn that the UK cost-of-living measures will ravage public finances already reeling from pandemic expenditure.

While official data on Wednesday showed British public borrowing improved in August, it is expected to surge as the government funds the planned tax cuts.

AFP

Germany reaches deal to nationalise debt-laden gas giant Uniper

Berlin, Germany - Germany has reached a deal to nationalise troubled gas giant Uniper, the government said Wednesday, as the energy sector reels from the fallout of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The deal will leave Germany with a 99 per cent stake in the debt-laden gas company, the economy ministry said in a statement. "Uniper is a central pillar of German energy supplies," the ministry said.

Under the agreement, Berlin will inject €8bn in cash into Uniper and buy €500mn of shares from its majority shareholder, the Finnish state-owned energy company Fortum.

Fortum will also be repaid for an €8bn loan it gave Uniper.

"The situation has become much more dramatic" for Uniper since the shutdown in late August of the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, Economy Minister Robert Habeck told a press conference.

One of the biggest importers of Russian gas, Uniper has been squeezed as Moscow has reduced supplies to the continent in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine in February.

Gas crisis

Missing deliveries have had to be replaced with expensive supplies from the open market, where prices for gas have skyrocketed. The German state had already



agreed in July to take a 30 per cent stake in Uniper as part of an initial bailout agreement.

But Uniper announced earlier this month that the two sides were exploring a possible nationalisation as the energy crisis showed no signs of abating.

Fortum provided an eight-billion-euro loan to Uniper in January as the price of gas had already begun to climb amid tensions with Moscow before the invasion of Ukraine.

The Finnish company held nearly 80 per cent of stake in Uniper, which would have been cut to around 56 per cent under the July bailout plan.

Fortum said Uniper has accumulated close to €8bn in gas-related losses 'and cannot continue to fulfil its role as a critical provider of security of supply as a privately-owned company'.

"New measures to resolve the situation were needed, as both Uniper and Fortum were exposed to significant risks," said Fortum chief executive Markus Rauramo at a press conference.

'No longer viable'

'The role of gas in Europe has fundamentally changed since Russia attacked Ukraine, and so has the outlook for a gas-heavy portfolio. As a result, the business case for an integrated group is no longer viable,' Rauramo also said in a separate statement.

Fortum had taken an 'inevitable decision in exceptionally uncertain circumstances', said Tytti Tuppurainen, the Finnish minister responsible for state companies. "The situation is a result of Russia's attack on Ukraine," Tuppurainen said.

AFP

Markets drop as Fed hike looms; Putin move lifts dollar and oil

Hong Kong, China - Stocks fell on Wednesday ahead of what many expect to be a third successive jumbo rate hike by the Federal Reserve, while the dollar hit fresh multi-decade highs against the pound and euro after Russia stepped up its war in Ukraine.

Equities around the world have been clattered by fears of a recession in major economies as central banks ramp up borrowing costs to combat the highest inflation in decades, which has been compounded by the Ukraine war and supply chain snarls.

In Washington, the Fed is due to conclude its latest policy meeting, with most analysts predicting it will announce another 75 basis-point lift, though some have tipped a full percentage-point move.

However, while the hike has largely been priced into the markets, the US central bank's forecast and post-meeting comments from boss Jerome Powell are the main attraction for investors.

"Volumes remain light and the mood cautious, with few looking to take on large positions before hearing what the Fed says and where policy makers see rates going by the end of the hiking cycle," Fiona Cincotta, at City Index, said.



Vladimir Putin

"This is what will drive the markets, not the rate hike... but what the Fed plans to do next."

Fed officials have for months stuck to the mantra that they will only ease up on their hawkish drive when inflation comes down and remains subdued.

This has led many to warn that rates are unlikely to come down anytime soon, possibly as late as 2024, with a recession more than likely in the United States as well as other major economies.

Dollar extends rally

Other central banks are also meeting this week. On Tuesday, officials in Sweden surprised markets by unveiling a one percentage-point hike, while the



Jerome Powell

United Kingdom and Switzerland are expected to announce more increases.

Asian markets were back in the red, reversing Tuesday's bounce.

Tokyo, Hong Kong, Sydney and Manila were all down more than one per cent, while there were also losses in Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore, Wellington, Taipei, Mumbai and Jakarta.

London rose in early trade, but Paris and Frankfurt were down.

Adding to the dour mood was Vladimir Putin's announcement of a 'partial mobilisation' as he upped the ante in his battle against Ukraine after his forces were routed from several cities in recent weeks.

He added that he would

annex the territories his forces have already occupied and backed weekend referendums in four regions in Russian-held parts of Ukraine.

"We will definitely use all means available" to protect Russian territory, he warned, adding: "That's not a bluff."

The moves mark an escalation of the seven-month war, which has roiled markets and sparked an energy crisis.

Oil prices, which have wilted in recent months owing to worries about demand caused by any recession, surged more than three per cent.

And the dollar, a safe haven in times of uncertainty and turmoil and which was already elevated ahead of the rate decision, rallied further.

It hit a fresh 37-year high of US\$1.1305 against sterling and a new 20-year peak of US\$0.9885 per euro, with the eurozone already in economic trouble owing to sanctions on Russian oil and Putin's decision to cut off gas supplies to the continent.

The announcement and possible escalation in the war 'raises a whole new set of uncertainties', Rabobank's Jane Foley said.

"This is set to weigh on the euro and on the currencies of eastern Europe."

AFP

South African inflation slows slightly as fuel prices drop

Johannesburg, South Africa - Inflation in South Africa slowed slightly in August as fuel prices dropped, but it remained near a 13-year record high, official data showed on Wednesday.

Hundreds of South Africans marched to the seat of government in the capital Pretoria last month to demand action against power cuts and the rising cost of food and fuel.

Inflation soared to 7.8 per cent in July.

While petrol and diesel prices pulled annual inflation down to 7.6 per cent last month, food prices continued to rise, according to the national statistics agency, StatsSA.

The August reading is the lowest since January, said StatsSA in a statement.

"The welcome decrease in the cost of fuel had an impact on the overall transport index, which declined by 1.0 per cent between July and August," the agency said.

But the price of corn flour, a staple for most South Africans,



South Africa's City Power staff take action against illegal connection as the country fights power cuts, in Johannesburg on June 9 (AFP)

surged to 29.1 per cent in August, while prices for bread and cereals also accelerated to 17.8 per cent.

In a bid to stabilise inflation, the country's central bank in July hiked its key interest rate by 75 basis points to 5.5 per cent, the highest increase in ten years.

The bank is due to announce

a new rate on Thursday with economists forecasting another 75-basis-point increase.

Inflation began to rise as countries emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and it shot higher after Russia's war in Ukraine sent global energy and food prices soaring.

AFP

Schneider Electric to fully take over UK firm Aveva

Paris, France - French electrical equipment maker Schneider Electric announced on Wednesday that it would take full control of British software firm Aveva in a deal valuing the company at £10.15bn.

Schneider Electric, which has held a 60-per cent stake in Aveva since 2017, said in a statement that it is offering £31 per share for the London-

listed firm.

The French firm said it was making a 'a unique proposal to combine energy data, industrial processes and software to serve customers of Schneider Electric and Aveva'.

Schneider Electric said Aveva would remain a separate legal entity with its own board of directors.

AFP

Hertz to buy 175,000 GM EVs through 2027

New York, US - US rental car giant Hertz will buy up to 175,000 electric vehicles from General Motors by the end of 2027, the companies announced on Tuesday, as the auto industry grapples with concerns over climate change and petroleum dependency.

First deliveries, which will consist of BOLT EVs and EUVs, should take place in the first quarter of 2023, according to the joint statement.

Subsequent purchases will depend on how fast General Motors (GM) ramps up production of electric vehicles. The automaker says it plans to manufacture one million a year in



North America by 2025. Hertz will be able to select

from GM's Chevrolet, Buick, GMC, Cadillac and BrightDrop

EV brands, according to the press release.

"With the vehicle choice, technology and driving range we're delivering, I'm confident that each rental experience will further increase purchase consideration for our products and drive growth for our company," GM CEO Mary Barra said.

Hertz, which is aiming for one-quarter of its fleet to be comprised of electric vehicles by 2024, has already signed agreements for 100,000 Teslas and 65,000 Polestars, an electric car firm controlled by Sweden's Volvo and its Chinese owner Geely.

While gasoline-powered cars

still dominate US roads, auto giants are unveiling more and more EVs as they pump billions of dollars in investment in a bid to wrest control of a growing market from Tesla and newer upstarts.

In addition to its agreement with Hertz, GM announced on Tuesday it has entered into a partnership with the Environmental Defence Fund to ensure that at least 50 per cent of its new vehicles sold by 2030 are zero emitting.

The end goal is to eliminate all tailpipe emissions from passenger vehicles sold by GM by 2035, Barra said.

AFP

Mazda Skyactiv technology makes cars most fuel efficient



Mazda achieved what was thought unachievable, leaving many engineers who had been working on an engine like this for decades in awe.

A technology that would reduce the fuel consumption by up to 30 per cent while decreasing the weight of the engine, resulting in an overall faster, cheaper, and controlled drive.

This puts the Mazda Skyactiv engine above every single gasoline and diesel engine in the world; making Mazda the most fuel efficient car producer in the world.

If it was that hard to achieve for the rest of the engineers...how did Mazda manage to do this on its own?

'Well, quite frankly, when we examine the mechanism and the compact and combined use of diesel and gas engine mechanism, it doesn't look too hard to build at all,' said the company. Mazada said Skyactiv technology's philosophy of Jinba Ittai, 'the ride and the rider being one' is the main driving force that helped the team achieve this. 'When the engineers worked on the engine with the philosophy - the prior problems that came with fuel-efficient engines started to make sense with a newer perspective,' it added.

PSM gets 'special students' trained at McDonald's



Pakistan School Muscat (PSM) has recently got a group of special students from their centre trained at McDonald's, which would help them live their lives independently.

According to a press release, PSM was instrumental in paving the way for these students to get apprenticeship and professional training at McDonald's.

PSM is committed to achieving excellence in all educational spheres with sincere attention on special education by providing a platform to special students to put all their abilities into action.

With the collaboration of McDonald's, the students of the Centre for Special Education were able to perform their practical obligations that ultimately rewarded in the form of monthly financial incentives for their encouragement, appreciation and boosting up their confidence to participate in their practical walk of life to become significant members of society, the school said.

Mcdonal's is committed to creating an environment that enables all employees to achieve their best, regardless of circumstances. This belief underpins how it works with employees with different abilities, ensuring that they are given a platform from which they can reach their full potential and become the boundary-pushing innovators of the future.

SOHAR to sponsor youths to take part in half marathon

Leading the generations of tomorrow, SOHAR Port and Freezone will sponsor 300 students and 20 employees to take part at the Sohar Half Marathon on Friday.



Organised by Excellence Performance, the Sohar Half Marathon aims to enrich the youth of the Al Batinah North governorate and promote a healthy and active lifestyle. SOHAR will sponsor 50 students from Grade 7 and 8 to participate in the 3km race, 150 students from Grade 9 and above to take part in the 10km race, and 100 students from colleges and universities in the governorate to enter the Sohar Half Marathon event. Mohsin al Jabri, Executive Manager - Corporate Affairs, said, "Being able to offer 300 students the chance to take part in the Sohar Half Marathon forms a key component in our ongoing student development, health and sports programmes for schools."

GHSO Energy Future Leaders Programme elicits strong interest from budding researchers



Volunteer Abdalaziz al Hashemi



Volunteer Abd Alhadi Alsaadi



Volunteer Hisham al Sulaimi



Volunteer Houd Alsaqri



Team leader Dr Intisar al Busaidi



Volunteer Yarub Alhadhrami

The Energy Future Leaders Programme - organised as part of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) Global Conference & Exhibition - has garnered an overwhelming response from young researchers studying in universities and colleges within and outside the sultanate.

Generously sponsored by Oman LNG, the roughly two-month-long programme was aimed at recognising and rewarding young talent in the renewable and green energy space that, in a matter of a few years, will find themselves on the frontlines of the international drive to decarbonise global economies, the organisers said in a statement.

Entries received from some of the 120 universities locally and internationally are presently being evaluated by a Technical Committee of experts, they said.

A selection of winning entries will be invited to attend this year's Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) Conference and Exhibition - the country's pivotal platform showcasing national and global aspirations for the growth of a green energy based economic future.

Posters highlighting their outstanding concepts and research work will be featured at the summit. Three of these winners will go on to present their work to an international audience of dignitaries and experts during the Summit, and receive prestigious awards as well.

Commenting on the success of the Energy Future Leaders Programme, team leader Dr Intisar al Busaidi said, "It was gratifying to receive such a large number of abstracts, many of them high quality and merit-worthy. The response from young Omani research students was particularly commendable, which was demonstrative of the deep interest that our youth have in their country's low-carbon energy future. Going forward, we hope to build on the momentum created by this initiative to drive further interest in the green energy future among our youth."

Creating a cadre of young energy professionals to serve this vitally important emerging industry is an underlying objective of the GHSO Exhibition and Conference.

Assisting Busaidi in the delivery of the GHSO Energy Future Leaders Programme was a team of enthusiastic student volunteers.

Sharing about his support for the initiative, Abd Alhadi Alsaadi said, "Young people are the force of the future, and developing their skills and abilities is one of the most important things that must be done to ensure a better future. I have always believed in renewable sources of energy, and it seems that green hydrogen gives a wider choice of different energy options, and this increases the enthusiasm to join this team, which aspires to hone the capabilities of ambitious students."

Fellow team member Houd Alsaqri added: "As the world is pushing towards fighting climate change and hydrogen being one of the main solutions, I'm happy to be with the team to enhance my skills and work for something that can help the world."

Yarub Alhadhrami stated: "The air that we breathe and the water that we drink do not know political boundaries, as everyone is affected when something bad happens to these resources. Seeing many people from different countries do their best to save the environment brings up bright hope for a green and peaceful future. I am happy to be part of the Future Energy Leaders Programme management team."

For Abdalaziz al Hashemi, a place on the Project Team also afforded him the opportunity to improve his management team. He said, "The Future Energy Leaders Programme was a great chance to delve into the latest research in the green hydrogen field from more than 200 universities around the world that have long experience in renewable energy research. Furthermore, I was excited to be on the management team of this programme as it is a great opportunity for me to expand my knowledge in green hydrogen and also to improve my management skills."

Hisham al Sulaimi added in conclusion: "What a great opportunity to join the management team of the Future Energy Leader Programme, where more than 120 universities from around the globe are competing and sharing experiences. I hope this programme will result in excellent outcomes for the world to be a more climate-friendly place."

Organised by Birba Energy in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the GHSO Summit & Exhibition will be held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre December 5 to 7 this year.

Infiniti QX55 available for test drive: SBA

Infiniti Oman - from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles - has announced that the premium crossover QX55 can be availed for a test drive from the comfort of one's home through their website.

'Prospective customers interested in exploring the Infiniti QX55 can book a test drive from the comfort of their home on the website



(www.infiniti-oman.com/services/test-drive.html);' an SBA statement said, further adding that interested customers can also schedule a test drive of the vehicle by visiting the showroom.

Possessing a luxury status, Infiniti QX55 hits right notes, combining comfort, innovative technology, and trendsetting style in equal measure. From a provocative design perspective,

at the Infiniti Oman showroom."

Customers can schedule a test drive for an Infiniti QX55 through the company's official website by filling their personal details such as name, phone number and email address. Once the booking of appointment is completed, the car will be dropped off at a preferred date and time.

The soul of the iconic Infiniti FX lives on in the QX55, bringing an eye-catching crossover coupe silhouette together with performance-inspired details to create something truly, unapologetically individual. The Infiniti QX55 has an entirely new shape with more stylish details and a modernised interior. The QX55 inserts Infiniti back into a category it helped to create with a refined design language, and sporty styling. The signature double-arch grille is

complemented by a stunning, origami-inspired mesh pattern that delivers visual depth and showcases modern Japanese-inspired artistry. Flanked by standard LED headlights that mimic the human eye, the QX55 announces its arrival in style.

The elegant and flowing lines of the model reach from the hood, over the front fenders, across the doors, and over the rear wheels. Twenty-inch wheels are standard on all QX55 models, which fill the wheel arches and assert the SUV's dynamic presence.

SBA is largely committed to supporting Infiniti Oman's growth in the sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman.

AKBAR TRAVELS OPENS NEW BRANCH



Indian Ambassador H E Amit Narang inaugurates the new branch of Akbar Travels in the presence of the group's Chairman and Managing Director K V Abdul Nazar, Executive Director Ashiya Nazar and Chief Financial Officer Rajendran N P, besides the other staff members of the group

Court delays trial of Istanbul mayor

Delayed until November, the trial could see Ekrem Imamoglu banned from politics

Istanbul, Turkey - A Turkish court on Wednesday delayed until November a highly controversial trial that could see Istanbul's popular mayor banned from politics over a remark he made after beating President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ally in 2019 polls.

Ekrem Imamoglu's fate is being watched closely for signs of judicial independence nine months before a general election in which Erdogan will struggle to extend his two-decade rule.

The 52-year-old mayor is the most internationally recognised of the opposition leaders who might run against Erdogan.

But a court could keep him from seeking higher office - and possibly force him to give up his post - as punishment for an off-hand remark he made about Erdogan's ruling party in the aftermath of the heated mayoral race.

Imamoglu's office accuses the ruling party of trying to 'eliminate him from the upcoming elections'. Imamoglu's office said the trial was adjourned until November 11 moments after it started on Wednesday.

The hearing itself was closed to reporters - an unusual step in Turkey.

The police also sealed off the roads leading to the courthouse



Supporters stand in front of Anadolu justice palace in Istanbul on Wednesday during the trial of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, on charges of 'insulting' election officials in the Kartal district (AFP)

with metal fences to keep away protesters in the highly anticipated trial.

'Suspicious votes'

Imamoglu was stripped of his narrow March 2019 win over the ruling party's candidate after Erdogan - who launched his own career as Istanbul mayor and views the city as his second

home - refused to recognise the result. Election officials reported discovering hundreds of thousands of 'suspicious votes' after Imamoglu had already been sworn into office.

Their decision to call a re-run election for that June sparked global condemnation and mobilised a groundswell of support for Imamoglu that included for-

mer ruling party voters.

Imamoglu won the second election by more than 800,000 votes.

But the usually soft-spoken mayor let his lingering bitterness at the ruling party spill over in November 2019.

"Those who cancelled the March 31 election are idiots," he told reporters at the time.

'Insulting'

Erdogan's ruling party seized on the remark and sued the mayor for 'insulting' public officials.

Prosecutors have asked for Imamoglu to be banned from politics and jailed for 15 months - a relatively light sentence that almost never sees people put behind bars.

Defence lawyer Kemal Polat

told AFP the mayor would immediately appeal against any ban and keep his job while the case wound its way through the courts. "Imamoglu can remain in his current position as mayor until the end of the appeals process. He would not have to resign," Polat said.

Turkey's Western allies accuse Erdogan of stacking the courts with allies and using them to jail his rivals in the aftermath of a failed military putsch in 2016. Erdogan responded to the

Imamoglu can remain in his current position as mayor until the end of the appeals process.

KEMAL POLAT

coup attempt with sweeping purges that saw thousands jailed on 'terrorism' and other charges.

Everyone from human rights leaders and civil servants to opposition politicians - many of them from the main pro-Kurdish party - were jailed in mass trials that instilled fear across swathes of Turkish society.

AFP

Japan PM 'willing' to meet North Korea's Kim

United Nations, US - Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday renewed his offer to meet North Korea's reclusive leader Kim Jong Un, as tensions simmer over Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Kishida said that Japan still stood by diplomacy set out two decades ago by former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi on his historic visit to Pyongyang.

"Japan is prepared to engage in dialogue on matters of mutual concern," Kishida said.

"I am determined to meet with Chairman Kim Jong Un without any conditions and will miss no opportunity to take actions with all my dedication," he said.

Kim met three times with former US president Donald Trump, easing tensions but reaching no permanent solution on its nuclear programme.

Japan is a close ally of the United States but some in Tokyo were privately uneasy with the outreach to North Korea, an arch-enemy that abducted Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s to train its spies.

AFP

Taliban supreme leader appoints new education minister



This file photo shows a girl reading from a textbook in a secret school at an undisclosed location in Afghanistan on July 24, this year (AFP)

Kabul, Afghanistan - The Taliban supreme leader has installed a loyalist cleric as Afghanistan's education minister, with the hardline Islamists doubling down on their ban on secondary education for girls.

Hundreds of thousands of girls and young women have been deprived of an education since the Taliban returned to power a year ago.

Habibullah Agha, a member of reclusive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada's inner circle, was named the new education minister in a reshuffle announced by the government spokesman on Tuesday.

"We can't make any plans on our own. We don't do that. Rather, I will act according to the instructions given by the supreme leader," Agha, 68, told AFP on Wednesday.

He refused to share his personal views on girls' education, and said he had not received any orders yet on the matter.

Many conservative Afghan clerics within the Taliban are sceptical of modern education. "The appointment of Habibullah Agha... indicates the Taliban are elevating loyalists who reject the reopening of girls' schools," said Nishank Motwani, an Afghan specialist and fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School.

Outgoing education minister Noorullah Munir was in charge when the government announced the reopening of girls' schools in March.

Akhundzada blocked the decision in a move that upset the Taliban's political leadership in Kabul.

Munir was named the head of a body that issues religious edicts in the Tuesday reshuffle.

The international community has made the reopening of secondary schools for girls a key condition for recognising the Taliban government.

Taliban officials say the ban is temporary, but they have also wheeled out a litany of excuses for the closures - from a lack of funds to time needed to remodel the syllabus along Islamic lines.

Munir told local media this month that it was a cultural issue, claiming many male elders in deeply conservative and patriarchal Afghanistan were against their teenage daughters attending school.

Within weeks of seizing power last year, the Taliban began imposing severe restrictions on women to comply with their austere vision of Islam - effectively squeezing them out of public life.

Apart from closing high schools for girls, the Taliban have barred women from many government jobs and also ordered them to cover up in public, preferably with an all-encompassing burqa.

Agha, the new education minister, was a judge during the first regime of the Taliban between 1996 and 2001.

AFP

Indigenous Australians win 'historic' legal battle

Sydney, Australia - A group of Indigenous Australians won a 'historic' legal case against Santos on Wednesday, with the country's Federal Court tearing up the energy giant's approval to drill in the Timor Sea.

Dennis Tipakalippa, an Indigenous elder on the remote Tiwi Islands, filed the lawsuit against Santos in June, alleging the Australian gas and oil company failed to consult properly with the Munupi Clan.

He argued that because of this failure, the national regulator, which signs off on offshore drilling, should not have given Santos approval for its Barossa gas project.

The Federal Court sided with Tipakalippa, invalidating the approval and instructing Santos to vacate the Barossa field by October 6.

"I am the happiest man alive," Tipakalippa said of the ruling. For the Munupi people, one of eight Tiwi clans, he said

'the most important thing... is to protect our Sea Country'.

"We want Santos and all mining companies to remember - we are powerful, we will fight for our land and Sea Country, for our future generations no matter how hard and how long. We will fight from the beginning to the end."

During the case, Tiwi Traditional Owners told the court they feared the Barossa gas project could harm their food sources and also their spiritual

connection to the area.

In August, the court took the unusual step of travelling to the Tiwi Islands to gather evidence from Traditional Owners, including in the form of song and dance.

Tipakalippa's lawyer, Alina Leikin of the non-profit Environmental Defenders Office, described the win as 'historic' and said the 'decision puts oil and gas companies on notice'.

Santos issued a lengthy statement after the ruling,

'noting' the court's decisions and indicating that it would appeal or seek a new environmental approval.

"Santos will be seeking to expedite these processes," the company said, adding that the court's decision was 'a disappointing outcome'.

The company said it had consulted with representative Aboriginal groups, including the Tiwi Land Council and the Northern Land Council.

AFP

Marcos era abuses 'never to be forgotten'



Protesters carry placards as they march during a rally to commemorate 50 years anniversary of the imposition of martial law at a university grounds in Quezon City, suburban Manila on Wednesday (AFP)

The Marcoses need to at least acknowledge their role in those dark days

CARLOS CONDE

repeat it as they say," said John Magtibay, a 22-year-old film student protesting at the University of the Philippines.

"We are beginning to see that now."

Half a century after martial law began, 11,103 people have been officially recognised as victims of torture, killings, enforced

disappearances and other abuses.

They have been compensated with some of the wealth - estimated to be in the billions of dollars - stolen by Marcos and his wife Imelda.

But human rights groups say there has never been a true reckoning of the abuses - or those responsible held to account.

Marcos was toppled from power by a bloodless 'people power' revolt in 1986 and the family was chased into exile.

After the patriarch's death in 1989, they returned to the Philippines and began a remarkable political comeback that culminated with Ferdinand Marcos Jr's victory in the May 9 presidential

election. "The fact that we allowed the Marcoses to re-enter Malacanang is really messed up," said Patricia Pobre, a 24-year-old protester, referring to the presidential palace.

'One of the darkest periods'

His landslide win was helped by a massive online misinformation campaign that whitewashed abuses and corruption during the dictatorship.

Martial law victims and activists have described the Marcos regime as 'one of the darkest periods' in the country's history.

They accuse Marcos Jr and his supporters of distorting the facts about martial law and

falsely portraying it as a 'golden age' for the Philippines.

"There are young Filipinos who are interested in learning what really happened in spite of many others who were really blinded," said former political prisoner Bonnie Ilagan, who spent two years in jail where he was repeatedly tortured.

"The fight continues. We must never forget."

Ilagan and others accused Marcos's allies in Congress of slashing budgets and weakening the government agencies responsible for preserving the nation's past.

In the run-up to Wednesday's anniversary, documentary screenings and exhibitions have been held to educate the public about the horrors of martial law.

But a left-wing political party said they were forced to scrap a film screening in suburban Manila on Tuesday after five members of the local police intelligence unit showed up and 'harassed' them and 'shot video'.

Marcos Jr, who has repeatedly praised his father's rule, last week defended martial law as 'necessary' to protect the country against communist and Muslim insurgencies.

"We do recognise the problems that happened, the abuses that occurred like in any war," Marcos Jr said. But he said critics were 'wrong' to call his father a 'dictator'.

AFP

Iran case about lives, not dollars, says US

The Hague, Netherlands - The United States accused Iran on Wednesday of whitewashing its involvement in terror attacks, saying Tehran's bid before the UN's top court to unfreeze billions in assets concerned 'human lives, not dollars and cents'.

Tehran dragged Washington before the International Court of Justice in 2016 after the US Supreme Court seized some US\$2bn in Iranian assets.

It ordered the cash go to survivors and relatives of attacks blamed on the Islamic republic.

The case, before the Hague-based ICJ, comes as hopes fade of reviving a landmark deal that sought to tame Iran's nuclear ambitions. Former US president Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the agreement in 2018.

"This case is an attempt by Iran to invoke the now terminated Treaty of Amity to avoid accountability for its role in acts of terrorism perpetrated against US citizens," US representative Richard Visek told the court. Visek was referring to a treaty signed between Tehran and Washington in 1955, which predates the 1979 Islamic revolution that overthrew the pro-US shah and severed ties with the United States.

The treaty - which US lawyers said was 'fundamentally ruptured' in 1979 - encourages 'friendly relations' and economic cooperation between Washington and Tehran.

'Dollars and cents'

Tehran now 'only wants to talk about the monetary value of the (US) judgments against Iran', US lawyer Daniel Bethlehem told the judges.

But this case 'is not a dispute about dollars and cents, it is a dispute about a domestic process rooted in the judicial examination of facts and evidence', he added. "It has at its purpose the holding to account the state sponsors of terrorism. It is about the loss of lives and the US process to held Iran to accountability," Bethlehem said.

This week's hearings at the ICJ - set up after World War II to rule in disputes between states - centred on a US Supreme Court ruling.

AFP

Putin calls up reservists, warns Russia will use 'all available means' to defend

Moscow, Russia - President Vladimir Putin ordered a partial military mobilisation and vowed on Wednesday to use 'all available means' to protect Russian territory, after Moscow-held regions of Ukraine suddenly announced annexation referendums.

The votes, already denounced by Kyiv and the West as a 'sham', will dramatically up the stakes in the seven-month old conflict in Ukraine by giving Moscow the ability to accuse Ukrainian forces of attacking Russian territory.

Four Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine - Donetsk and Lugansk in the east and Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in the south - said on Tuesday that they would hold the votes over five days beginning on Friday.

In a pre-recorded address to the nation early on Wednesday, Putin accused the West of trying to 'destroy' his country through its backing of Kyiv, and said Russia needed to support those in Ukraine who wanted to 'determine their own future'.

The Russian leader announced a partial military mobilisation, with Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu telling state television that some 300,000 re-



Russian President Vladimir Putin speaking during a televised address to the nation in Moscow on Wednesday (AFP)

servists would be called up.

'Not a bluff'

"When the territorial integrity of our country is threatened, we will certainly use all the means at our disposal to protect Russia and our people. This is not a bluff," Putin said.

Germany branded the partial call-up as a 'wrong step' while jailed Kremlin critic Alexei

Navalny said it would result in a 'massive tragedy, in a massive amount of deaths'.

Putin said that through its support for Ukraine the West was trying to 'weaken, divide and ultimately destroy our country', while Shoigu said Moscow was 'fighting not so much Ukraine as the collective West' in Ukraine.

The sudden flurry of moves

by Moscow this week came with Russian forces in Ukraine facing their biggest challenge since the start of the conflict.

A sweeping Ukrainian counter-offensive in recent weeks has seen Kyiv's forces retake hundreds of towns and villages that had been controlled by Russia for months.

In a rare admission of military losses from Moscow, Shoigu

said on Wednesday 5,937 Russian soldiers had died in Ukraine since the launch of the military intervention in February.

'Wake-up, finally'

As Putin made his announcement, residents clearing rubble and broken glass from a nine-storey apartment block hit by an overnight missile strike in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Svetlana, 63, gathered with friends to look on as neighbours and municipal workers cleared debris, urged the region's Russian neighbours to ignore the mobilisation and 'to wake up, finally'. Meanwhile her neighbour, 50-year-old Galina, expressed bewilderment at Moscow's aims against Ukraine.

"They want to liberate us from what? From our homes? From our relatives? From friends? What else? From over life? They want to free us from being alive?" she told AFP.

The referendums follow a pattern first established in 2014, when Russia annexed the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine after a similar vote.

Like in 2014, Washington, Berlin and Paris denounced the latest referendums and said the international community would

never recognise the results.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said they were a 'sham', French President Emmanuel Macron called them a 'travesty', and White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said they were 'an affront to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity'. "Sham referenda and mobilisation are signs of weakness, of Russian failure," the US ambassador in Ukraine, Bridget Brink, said on Twitter.

"I thank all the friends and partners of Ukraine for their massive and firm condemnation of Russia's intentions to organise yet more pseudo-referendums," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in response.

Kyiv said the referendums were meaningless and vowed to 'eliminate' threats posed by Russia, saying its forces would keep retaking territory regardless of what Moscow or its proxies announced. Political analyst Tatyana Stanovaya said the vote announcements were a direct result of the success of Ukraine's eastern counter-offensive.

"Putin does not want to win this war on the battlefield. Putin wants to force Kyiv to surrender without a fight," she said.

AFP

Six killed as Iran protests spread over woman's death

Paris, France - Protests have spread across Iran over the death of Mahsa Amini after the young woman was arrested by the morality police, as a rights group said on Wednesday two more protesters were killed overnight, raising the toll to six.

Public anger has flared since Iranian authorities on Friday announced the death of 22-year-old Amini, who had been held for allegedly wearing a hijab headscarf in an 'improper' way.

Activists said the woman, whose Kurdish name is Jhina, had suffered a fatal blow to the head, a claim denied by officials in the Islamic republic who said they had launched an investigation. Some women demonstrators have defiantly taken off their hijabs and burned them in bonfires or symbolically cut their hair, video footage spread virally on social media has shown.

State media reported on Wednesday that, in a fifth night of street rallies that had spread to 15 cities, police used tear gas and made arrests to disperse crowds of up to 1,000 people.

Demonstrators hurled stones at security forces, set fire to police vehicles and garbage bins and chanted anti-government



A bin burning in the middle of an intersection during a protest for Mahsa Amini, in Tehran on Tuesday (AFP)

slogans, the official IRNA news agency said.

Rights group Article 19 said it was 'deeply concerned by reports of the unlawful use of force by Iranian police and security forces' including the use of live ammunition.

Overnight rallies were held in Tehran and other cities including Mashhad in the northeast, Tabriz in the northwest, Rasht in the north, Isfahan in the centre and Shiraz in the south, IRNA reported.

'Death to the dictator' and 'Woman, life, freedom', protesters could be heard shouting in video footage that spread be-

yond Iran, despite online restrictions reported by internet access monitor Netblocks.

In Iran, the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei spoke publicly on Wednesday, but without mentioning the spreading unrest, and the ultra-conservative President Ebrahim Raisi was to speak later in the day at the UN General Assembly in New York.

Ismail Zarei Koosha, the governor of Kurdistan province - where Amini lived and where the protests started - said on Tuesday that three people had been killed during protests.

AFP

Palestinian murder suspect found hanged in central Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv, Israel - A Palestinian suspected of beating an 84-year old Israeli woman to death was found hanged in the heart of Tel Aviv on Wednesday, Israeli police said.

Police had launched a massive manhunt for the suspect identified as Mousa Sarsour, 28, following Tuesday's murder in the town of Holon just outside the Israeli metropolis. "The body of a man has been found on Bar Kochba Street in Tel Aviv and a preliminary examination shows it to be the body of the murder suspect," police said in a statement.

The body was found hanged at the corner of Bar Kochba and Dizengoff Streets, a busy nightlife and shopping district, by a passerby who notified the police, the officer in charge of the area said. Israeli media quoted police as saying his death was an apparent suicide.

They said Sarsour, from the town of Qalqilya in the occupied West Bank, had entered Israel with a valid permit to work on a building site in Holon.

Authorities have not identified his victim, who was killed with a metal pole.

In a statement late on Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Yair



Israeli security forces stand at the site where a man died of an apparent suicide, in Tel Aviv, on Wednesday (AFP)

Lapid described the incident as 'a shocking attack by a despicable and cowardly terrorist who murdered an elderly woman who could not fight back'.

Overnight, the Israeli army said it had arrested 11 suspects in raids across the West Bank, among them 'five individuals suspected of assisting in the terror attack'.

Israel has stepped up operations in the northern West Bank in particular after a wave of attacks against Israeli targets killed 20 people, since March. The army has carried out near nightly

raids on Palestinian-administered towns and cities, sparking frequent clashes with residents.

Dozens of Palestinians, including civilians and members of armed groups, have been killed.

Earlier this month, Israeli armed forces chief Lieutenant General Aviv Kohavi said 'around 1,500 wanted people were arrested and hundreds of attacks prevented' in operations Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 when it captured the territory from Jordan in the Six-Day War.

AFP

230 pilot whales stranded in Australia, 'about half' feared dead

Sydney, Australia - A pod of 230 pilot whales was found stranded on the rugged west coast of Tasmania on Wednesday, with Australian officials saying only half appeared to be alive.

Aerial images showed a devastating scene of dozens of black glossy mammals strewn across a long beach, stuck on the waterline where the frigid southern ocean meets the sand.

Locals covered survivors with blankets and doused them with buckets of water to keep them alive, as other whales nearby tried in vain to twitch free and yet more lay dead.

The whales were 'stranded near Macquarie Harbour' said the state's Department of Natu-

ral Resources and Environment. "It appears about half of the animals are alive."

Officials said marine conservation experts and staff with whale rescue gear were en route to the scene.

They will try to refloat animals that are strong enough to survive and likely tow the carcasses out to sea, to avoid attracting sharks to the area.

It is almost two years to the day since Macquarie Harbour was the scene of the country's largest-ever mass stranding, involving almost 500 pilot whales.

More than 300 pilot whales died during that stranding, despite the efforts of dozens of vol-



The pilot whales beached on Macquarie Harbour, in Tasmania on Tuesday (AFP)

unteers who toiled for days in Tasmania's freezing waters to free them.

Distress signals

The cause of mass strandings is still not fully understood.

Scientists have suggested they could be caused by pods going off track after feeding too

close to shore.

Pilot whales - which can grow to more than six metres long - are highly sociable and can follow podmates who stray into danger.

That sometimes occurs when old, sick or injured animals swim ashore and other pod members follow, trying to respond to the trapped whale's distress signals.

Others believe gently sloping beaches like those found in Tasmania confuse the whales' sonar making them think they are in open waters.

The news came just hours after a dozen young male sperm whales were reported dead in a separate mass stranding on King Island - between Tasmania and

the Australian mainland.

The young whales' deaths may be a case of 'misadventure', wildlife biologist Kris Carlyon from the state government conservation agency told the local Mercury newspaper.

"The most common reason for stranding events is misadventure, they might have been foraging close to shore, there might have been food and possibly they were caught on a low tide," Carlyon said. "That's the theory at the moment."

In nearby New Zealand strandings are also common.

There, around 300 animals beach themselves annually, according to official figures.

AFP

INDIA

Hate speech: Apex court pulls up TV news channels, government

New Delhi, India - The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked why the government was remaining a mute spectator to hate speech and also pulled up mainstream TV news channels for holding debates that often give space for hate speech.

A bench of Justices KM Joseph and Hrishikesh Roy said the role of anchor in the TV channel debate is 'very important' and 'critical' and observed that it's their duty to ensure that guests invited to the show don't indulge in hate speech. The bench also said that TV channels which often give space to hate speech escape without any sanctions.

"Role of the anchor is very important. These speeches are on mainstream media or social media that is unregulated. Mainstream TV channels still hold sway. The role of the anchor is critical. The moment you see somebody going into hate speech, it is the duty of anchor to immediately see that he doesn't allow that person," said Justice Joseph.

The apex court was hearing a batch of pleas seeking direction for steps against hate speech incidents. The bench further said that hate speech benefits politi-



The Supreme Court said it was the duty of TV anchors to ensure that guests invited do not indulge in hate speech (ANI)

cians the most and TV news channels give platforms for hate speech. Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde appearing for one of the petitioners in the case also agreed with the bench and said, "Channels and politicians feed on such speech. Channels get money. They keep ten people in debates."

"You should be communicat-

ing what others are saying not what you want to say. Pillars of democracy are supposed to be independent and not take orders from anyone," the bench said.

The bench said, "If sanctions are effected this will go... Any anchor will have his own views, but what is wrong is when you have people of different views and you are not allowing them

to express those views... in doing that you are bringing hate and your TRP is going up."

The bench further observed that freedom of the press is important and 'ours is not as free as the US but we should know where to draw a line'.

Citing an instance, Justice Joseph said that one news channel was fined heavily in the

United Kingdom.

"We don't have that here. They (news channels) are not being dealt with firmly. They can be taken off air, fined, if such sanction comes..." Justice Joseph opined. Hegde told the bench that 'on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden said that we cannot give hate oxygen'.

To this, Justice Joseph re-

sponded, "Not one bit. We cannot give hate any air."

The top court further added that nowadays nobody reads because of the paucity of time, but visual media has a power that has been recognised by this court in censorship cases.

During the hearing, the bench asked why the Central government was remaining a 'mute spectator' on the hate speech issue.

"What's the problem? Why government of India not taking a stand? Why is the government remaining a mute spectator?" asked the bench from Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj.

Government should not take an adversarial stand on this but assist the court, Justice Joseph said.

Nataraj, representing the Centre, told the bench that 14 states have filed their responses. The apex court asked the Centre to also file a response collating the State government's inputs.

In July this year, the top court had directed the Centre to prepare a detailed chart outlining States' compliance with the general directions issued by it in the judgments relating to curbing hate speech.

ANI

PLI scheme for solar PV modules approved

New Delhi, India - The Centre on Wednesday approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme solar PV modules with an outlay of Rs 19,500 crore for achieving a manufacturing capacity of Giga Watt (GW) scale in High-Efficiency Solar PV Modules.

The Union cabinet approved the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy's proposal for the implementation of the PLI (Tranche II) scheme on the 'National programme on High-Efficiency Solar PV Modules', according to an official statement. This national programme aims to build an ecosystem for manufacturing solar PV modules in India, and thus reduce import dependence in the area of Renewable Energy. It will strengthen the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and generate employment, it said.

ANI

Shashi Tharoor meets Mistry as poll buzz gets stronger in Congress

New Delhi, India - Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, who has signalled his desire to contest the election to elect a new party chief, met the party's Central Election Authority chairman Madhusudan Mistry on Wednesday.

Madhusudan Mistry later said they answered all queries of the party MP regarding election of Congress president. "We answered all his (Shashi Tharoor's) queries regarding Congress presidential election. We explained to him about the electoral rules, number of agents

and their roles, and discussed how to fill out the form for election," Mistry told ANI.

The election of the Congress president is slated for October 17 and the counting of votes will take place on October 19.

Mistry said those who want to contest for the post of president will need the signatures of 10 delegates.

Asked if Ashok Gehlot can file his nomination while continuing in the post of Rajasthan Chief Minister, Mistry said the party constitution states that anyone can fight the presidential



Congress leader Shashi Tharoor (right) arrives at AICC office to meet party election members, in New Delhi on Wednesday (ANI)

election on the condition that he or she is a Congress delegate. Amid growing buzz about his nomination, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has said he is ready to discharge any responsibility given to him by the party. He met Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday.

Mistry also said that a separate polling booth will not be made for party leaders on Bharat Jodo Yatra including Rahul Gandhi.

He said CEA can arrange for postal ballot for Rahul Gandhi and other delegates on the

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said he is ready to discharge any responsibility given to him by the party

yatra. "A separate polling booth will not be made for Bharat Jodo Yatris like Rahul Gandhi as they are in the ongoing Bharat Jodo Yatra but if he informs us before

time, we can take his vote through postal ballot for the Congress Presidential election," Mistry said.

Shashi Tharoor had met the party's interim chief Sonia Gandhi on Monday and is learnt to have conveyed his intention to contest the party's presidential elections to 'make internal democracy' in the party stronger.

Tharoor is a member of G23 which had written to Sonia Gandhi seeking sweeping reforms in the party.

ANI

Fiona leaves trail of destruction, heads toward Bermuda

San Juan, Puerto Rico - Hurricane Fiona continued its slow and devastating march northward after slamming the Turks and Caicos Islands on Tuesday and leaving a trail of destruction in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said on Wednesday morning that the storm had grown stronger, registering maximum wind speeds of 130 miles per hour (210km per hour) as it barreled toward Bermuda.

The NHC said Fiona was 105 miles north of Turks and Caicos and had been upgraded to a Category 4 hurricane, the second highest level on the Saffir-Simpson scale. "Swells from Fiona are expected to reach Bermuda by early Thursday. The swells could cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions," the NHC said in its latest advisory.

At least five people have died as the storm churned across the Caribbean - one in the French overseas department of Guadeloupe and two

each in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

"Hurricane Fiona has proven to be an unpredictable storm," Anya Williams, the deputy governor of Turks and Caicos, said in a broadcast.

Williams said no casualties or serious injuries had been reported in Turks and Caicos, but she urged residents to continue to shelter in place.

Blackouts were reported on Grand Turk and several other islands in the archipelago and 165 people were admitted to shelters, she said, adding that Britain's Royal Navy and the US Coast Guard are standing by to provide assistance.

Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader has declared three eastern provinces to be disaster zones: La Altagracia - home to the popular resort of Punta Cana - El Seibo and Hato Mayor. Authorities said on Tuesday that more than 10,000 people had been moved to 'safe areas,' while about 400,000 are without electricity.

AFP

American, Russian cosmonauts blast off for ISS

Baikonur, Kazakhstan - A US astronaut and two Russian cosmonauts blasted off to the International Space Station (ISS) on Wednesday on a Russian-operated flight, in a rare instance of cooperation between Moscow and Washington.

The Russian space agency Roscosmos and NASA both distributed live footage of the launch from Kazakhstan and commentators speaking over the feed said it was stable and that 'the crew is feeling well'.

NASA's Frank Rubio and Russia's Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitry Petelin make up the crew that launched from the Russia-leased Baikonur cosmodrome at 1354 GMT.

Rubio is the first US astronaut to travel to the ISS on a Russian Soyuz rocket since President Vladimir Putin sent troops into pro-Western Ukraine on February 24.

In response, Western capitals including Washington have hit Moscow with unprecedented sanctions and bilateral ties have sunk to new lows.

Space remained an outlier of cooperation between the two countries.

Russia's only active female cosmonaut Anna Kikina is expected to travel to the orbital station in early October aboard a



Russian cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev (centre) and Dmitry Petelin (right) and NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, walk to report to Russia's Roscosmos space agency head prior to the launch in Kazakhstan on Wednesday (AFP)

SpaceX Crew Dragon.

She will become only the fifth professional woman cosmonaut from Russia or the Soviet Union to fly to space, and the first Russian to fly aboard a spacecraft of SpaceX, the company of billionaire Elon Musk.

Russian cosmonauts and Western astronauts have sought to steer clear of the conflict that is raging back on Earth, especially when in orbit together.

A collaboration among the United States, Canada, Japan, the European Space Agency and Russia, the ISS is split into two sections: the US Orbital Segment, and the Russian Orbital Segment.

Russia leaving ISS

At present, the ISS depends on a Russian propulsion system to maintain its orbit, about 250 miles (400km) above sea level,

with the US segment responsible for electricity and life support systems.

Tensions in the space field have grown after Washington announced sanctions on Moscow's aerospace industry - triggering warnings from Russia's former space chief Dmitry Rogozin, an ardent supporter of the Ukraine war.

Rogozin's recently appointed successor Yuri Borisov later con-

firmed Russia's long-mooted move to leave the ISS after 2024 in favour of creating its own orbital station.

US space agency NASA called the decision an 'unfortunate development' that would hinder scientific work on the ISS.

Space analysts say that the construction of a new orbital station could take more than a decade and Russia's space industry - a point of national pride - would not be able to flourish under heavy sanctions.

The ISS was launched in 1998 at a time of hope for US-Russia cooperation following their Space Race competition during the Cold War.

During that era, the Soviet space programme flourished. It boasted a number of accomplishments that included sending the first man into space in 1961 and launching the first satellite four years earlier.

Experts say Roscosmos is now a shadow of its former self and has in recent years suffered a series of setbacks, including corruption scandals and the loss of a number of satellites and other spacecraft.

Russia years-long monopoly on manned flights to the ISS is also gone, to SpaceX, along with millions of dollars in revenue.

AFP

Muguruza eager to see back of ‘tough, roller-coaster’ season

Tokyo, Japan - Former world number one Garbine Muguruza wants to end a “roller-coaster” season with “a different feeling” after winning her opening match at the Pan Pacific Open on Wednesday.

The Spaniard beat Greek qualifier Despina Papamichail 6-4, 6-2 to move into the quarter-finals in Tokyo and gain “a little bit more confidence” in a poor year for the two-time Grand Slam champion.

Muguruza has not managed

to string together more than two wins at a tournament and fell out of the world top 10 earlier this month. At the recent US Open she squandered two match points before losing to Petra Kvitová in the last 32.

Muguruza gave Wednesday’s win a cautious welcome but said it was far too early to know whether she is turning a corner. “It’s been a tough season, a little bit of a roller coaster,” said the 28-year-old, who is now ranked 12 in the world.

“I don’t know if I’m going to be able, with these last tournaments, to have a different feeling. That’s my goal.”

Muguruza, who won the French Open in 2016 and Wimbledon a year later, started the year ranked number three but has since lost in the first round of six tournaments.

She struggled to put away Papamichail when she had her on the ropes several times in a tense first set and admitted that she still lacked the killer instinct.

“I think that it’s all about confidence and how well you’re playing or how many matches you’ve been playing,” she said.

“Definitely this year I feel that I haven’t played that many matches so obviously when the important moments come, you really feel that confidence that is not quite there yet.”

Muguruza knows she must stay patient. “I think also trying and trying, at some point I will get rewarded,” she said.

AFP



Garbine Muguruza of Spain hits a return against Despina Papamichail of Greece (AFP)

ONE LAST DANCE

Roger Federer eyes dream farewell alongside Rafael Nadal at Laver Cup

London, United Kingdom - Roger Federer wants to bring the curtain down on his glittering career by teaming up with long-time rival Rafael Nadal at the Laver Cup in London on Friday.

The 20-time Grand Slam winner announced last week he intended to retire after the three-day tournament at London’s O2 arena, which starts on Friday.

Federer, whose most recent competitive match was a loss to Hubert Hurkacz in last year’s Wimbledon quarter-finals, has been struggling with a knee problem.

The Swiss great confirmed on Wednesday that the final match of his long and illustrious career will be in the doubles on Friday evening.

Italian Matteo Berrettini, the first alternate for the tournament that pits Team Europe against Team World, will then take Federer’s place over the weekend.

The Swiss great does not yet know whether he will be able to link up with Nadal but said it would be the dream scenario.

“Of course, no doubt,” he told a packed press conference at the O2. “I mean, I think it could be quite a unique situation, you know, that if it were to happen.”

Federer said he and Nadal, 36,



Roger Federer (R) feels his relationship with arch-rival Rafael Nadal is a great message to not just tennis but sports and maybe even beyond (AFP)

had always maintained a respect for each other even as they vied for the biggest trophies in the sport.

“For us as well to go through a

career that we both have had and to come out on the other side and being able to have a nice relationship I think is maybe a great message as well to not just tennis but

sports and maybe even beyond,” he said.

“For that reason, I think it would be great. I don’t know if it’s going to happen, but I think it

could be obviously a special moment.”

Nadal, who holds the record for Grand Slam titles in men’s tennis with 22, Novak Djokovic, who has won 21, and three-time major winner Andy Murray are all part of the six-man Team Europe, captained by Bjorn Borg.

‘Bittersweet’

Federer said he was happy to step away from tennis at the age of 41 but admitted it was a “bittersweet decision”.

“You always want to play forever,” he said. “I love being out on court, I love playing against the guys, I love travelling. I never really felt like it was that hard for me to do, of winning, learn from losing, it was all perfect. I love my career from every angle.”

The Swiss said he was happy with his place in the debate over who is the greatest of all time in the men’s game even though his tally of Grand Slam titles has been eclipsed by Nadal and Djokovic.

“I’m definitely very proud and very happy where I sit,” he said.

“One of my big moments of course was winning my 15th slam at Wimbledon, you know, when Pete (Sampras, who had won a then-record 14) was sitting there. Anything after that was a bonus.”

AFP



Zheng Qinwen of China (L) greets Paula Badosa of Spain after her victory at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo on Wednesday (AFP)

Top seeds fall on day of Tokyo tennis shocks

Tokyo, Japan - Top seed Paula Badosa joined US Open semi-finalist Caroline Garcia and Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in making shock early exits from the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo on Wednesday.

World number four Badosa lost 6-3, 6-2 to fast-rising Chinese teenager Zheng Qinwen, failing to hit a single ace and losing seven straight games.

Badosa, who had a bye into the second round, compounded a miserable evening in the Japanese capital by swatting a return straight into the ground on match point.

The 19-year-old Zheng, who reached the last 32 at the US Open, said her win over Badosa was “a big jump” after beginning the year ranked number 126.

“There was a lot of emotion there on court - even though the

score was like this, it wasn’t an easy win,” said Zheng, who will play American Claire Liu in the quarter-finals.

“I always know that I have the level to be here - it’s just that I have to show up on court in the tournament.”

Number two seed Garcia put up a fight but still crashed out in her first match, squandering a match point to be ousted 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/5) by China’s Zhang Shuai.

France’s Garcia has been in red-hot form, winning the Cincinnati Masters last month before reaching her first Grand Slam semi-final at Flushing Meadows two weeks ago.

But she came up short against world number 28 Zhang despite hitting 27 aces - the best on the WTA tour this year.

AFP

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AL HARTHY EYES SPA THERAPY

Oman Racing's Ahmad Al Harthy relishes return to Spa, his favourite circuit, for the penultimate race of ELMS season

Muscat - Ahmad Al Harthy returns to the scene of the biggest race victory of his glittering motor racing career this weekend when the European Le Mans Series arrives at Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps for the penultimate round of the 2022 season.

The Omani racer, who is part way through his maiden campaign in the prestigious ELMS, is determined to climb back up the LMGTE championship standings after a frustrating outing at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya last time out with Oman Racing.

He had qualified the No.69 Aston Martin Vantage GTE on pole position for the fourth round of the season, but contact from a rival midway through the four-hour race led to damage and an unscheduled pit-stop which wrecked the squad's podium challenge and they had to settle for 10th position.

Al Harthy, partnered by British driver Sam De Haan and Danish ace Marco Sorensen, is hungrier than ever to return to winning ways as the ELMS season heads into its latter stages. The trio had secured a faultless first LMGTE class victory at Italian track Imola in May.

Spa-Francorchamps has long been a favourite track for Al Harthy, and it holds incredible memories for the multiple champion racer - the biggest being his and Oman Racing's win in the Pro-Am class at the Total 24 Hours of Spa back in 2019.



Oman Racing's Ahmad Al Harthy will be keen to bounce back in Spa from his frustrating outing in Barcelona in the fourth round of ELMS

The remarkable victory, which came following an enforced pitlane start, was the springboard from which Al Harthy claimed his second Pro-Am title in the then Blancpain Endurance Cup, now known as the Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS Endurance Cup.

Two years prior, Al Harthy and Oman Racing sealed their first Pro-Am crown in Blancpain with a second-place finish during the

Spa round. Recently, in 2020, Al Harthy won at Spa on his debut in the International GT Open.

"We have many good memories from racing at Spa, the highlight being the win in the 24 hour race back in 2019", said Al Harthy, who is supported by the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sohar International Bank, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS.

"It's an incredible track and

one where we have always gone well, so I'm hopefully we can continue that this weekend.

"Barcelona was disappointing in the end, we definitely had the capability of finishing on the podium, so now we're all more determined than ever to hit back. The contact we had in the previous round was damaging to our championship, so the focus now is on trying to win the LMGTE class this Sunday and then see

where we are going into the final round in Portugal in October."

Free practice at Spa-Francorchamps will take place on Friday ahead of a standalone session for Bronze graded drivers such as Al Harthy, before a second practice run on Saturday and the qualifying. On Sunday round five of the ELMS will begin at 11.30 local time with live streaming available at <https://live.europeanle-mansseries.com/en/>

PGA players say LIV must wait, change for world ranking points

Charlotte, United States - PGA players at the Presidents Cup pushed back Tuesday on a call by Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series players for world ranking points, saying they must wait and make major changes.

In an open letter to rankings board chairman Peter Dawson, all 48 players in last week's Chicago Invitational asked for retroactive recognition of the 54-hole, shotgun start events.

"An OWGR (Official World Golf Rankings) without LIV would be incomplete and inaccurate," the players said, comparing it to England, Argentina and Belgium being left out of the FIFA rankings.

But Billy Horschel, a rookie on the US squad facing the Internationals at this week's team matches in Charlotte, said LIV doesn't meet the criteria for ranking points and players knew the risks when they left the PGA for the record riches on offer from the upstart series.

"I know it's a year to an 18-month process before they even get world ranking points. So just wait it out. Meet the criteria," Horschel said. "They don't meet, from what I've been told, the first nine things on the criteria list. They don't have an average field size of 78. They don't have a cut. They don't have open qualifying. They don't award points or spots to local qualifiers. They don't have a Q-School."

The move comes as LIV Golf chairman Greg Norman visits US lawmakers in Washington this week to discuss the upstart circuit and its anti-trust lawsuit against the US PGA Tour. But he'll also get questions about Saudi Arabia's human rights record.

Obtaining world golf ranking points is vital for LIV players if they hope to qualify for majors based upon their world ranking, a pivotal step in playing in future



Billy Horschel of the US Team during practice on Tuesday prior to the Presidents Cup (AFP)

major championships.

LIV players were allowed in this year's US and British Opens, the tour's June debut coming after qualifying for those events.

World number three Cameron Smith of Australia, who won the British Open in July, won LIV's Chicago Invitational on Sunday with two-time major winner Dustin Johnson sharing second.

"The level of competition at the average LIV event is at least equal to that at the average PGA Tour event," the players claimed. "We know because we've played in both."

The letter points out LIV has 21 of the past 51 major winners and notes Johnson's fall from 13th to 22nd in the world rankings despite a win, runner-up and third-place LIV finish.

"Every week that passes without the inclusion of LIV athletes undermines the historical value of OWGR," the letter said.

That, says US star Justin Thomas, is their own fault.

"Is it going to be skewed because some of the top players aren't going to be in there? Yes. But that's their own fault for making the decision they made," Thomas said.

AFP

MotoGP targets Indian Grand Prix 'in near future'

Paris, France - MotoGP is hopeful India will soon be hosting a round of the world championship, promoter Dorna's boss Carmelo Ezpeleta said on Wednesday.

After a recent visit to New Delhi's Buddh International Circuit, the likely venue to stage a MotoGP, Dorna envisaged an Indian Grand Prix "in the near future". Noting the "hundreds of millions of two-wheeled vehicles on its roads", Ezpeleta said the arrival of the world championship would be "an incredible spectacle for our fans" and allow the sport to grow in the region.

"Racing in India would be a reflection of our commitment to open the doors to the sport as widely as we can, and would be an important achievement for the

championship," added the Spaniard.

"India could potentially be one of MotoGP's biggest markets in terms of viewership as well as revenue," forecast India's Sports Minister Shri Anurag Thakur.

The Buddh International track has already played host to Formula One, staging three F1 grands prix between 2011 and 2013. MotoGP is seeking to enhance its global appeal and this month signed a memorandum of understanding with Saudi Arabia to bring the championship to the kingdom soon.

Japan stages the fifth-last race of 2022 this weekend, with only 17 points covering the three top riders in the standings.

AFP

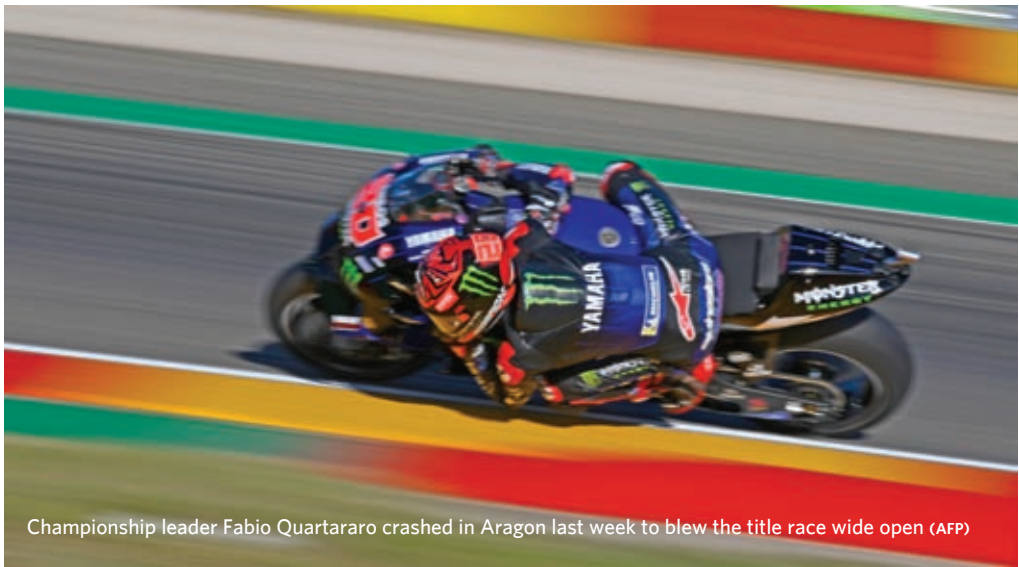
'Super-hot' title race heads to Japan MotoGP

Motegi, Japan - A thrilling MotoGP season moves to Japan this weekend after world champion Fabio Quartararo crashed in Aragon to blow the title race wide open with five grands prix to go.

The Frenchman still heads the standings but his lead has been slashed to 10 points by hard-charging Italian Francesco Bagnaia and Spain's Aleix Espargaro is also firmly in the title hunt.

Ducati rider Bagnaia had ramped up the pressure on Yamaha's Quartararo by winning four races in a row going into last weekend at Aragon, Spain, where Quartararo made a spectacular and painful first-lap exit after clipping the Honda of six-time world champion Marc Marquez.

Bagnaia was denied a fifth straight win by Enea Bastianini on



the last lap after a nerve-jangling duel, but second place was good enough to tighten the squeeze on the shaken Quartararo and the

Italian now has all the momentum.

"I gave my best and I would like to have another fight in

Japan," said the 25-year-old Bagnaia, who is chasing a first MotoGP world title.

The Italian said he was happy

to settle for the 20 points that came with finishing second rather than risk going for broke in the pursuit of 25 points for the win.

Just 17 points divide the top three in the title race heading to Motegi for the first MotoGP in Japan since the pandemic.

Bastianini is not out of the championship fight in fourth, 48 points behind Quartararo.

Bagnaia, though, is uneasy about any title talk.

"For sure now we are more close and now we can speak more about the championship, but I don't want to," he said.

"I want to do more weekends in Japan like we are doing this second part of the championship and see what happens."

AFP

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COOK-UP

Wake up at any time and convert your break-fast into lunch



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IN TOWN

Nepal's 'Sambidhan Diwas' and ISC Malayalam Wing's Onasadhya



16

ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town in Hollywood and Bollywood

BAYWATCH

Seaside shenanigans

Shatti al Qurm offers many a quiet nook to unwind with light chitchat on a weekend after dusk. However, while some spend quality time alone or with family, there are vandals who deface public property, often putting causal strollers at risk

Hubert Vaz
Photos: Syed Fasiuddin

The Oman Sea at Shatti al Qurm always seems to be in its element after dusk, when the high tide comes in, bringing shattered shells, asphyxiated fish and typical marine odours. But, if you're not watchful, you just might get tossed into the foamy maze!

While relaxing or enjoying a few moments of leisure by the seaside, make sure you are at a secure spot where you can take in the sea breeze without losing your stance. Some barricades installed at some vantage points have been vandalised, leaving behind precarious perches that could prove fatal for frolicking youth or unsuspecting adults.

Vandal acts come in many different forms, from littering or scribbling cheeky graffiti to outright destruction of public property - all of it done with not just juvenile playfulness but also with a careless attitude and disregard for civic efforts towards keeping the city clean and tidy.

It is a common sight to see families or groups of revellers settling on the sands or the adjacent lawns towards the far end of Shatti al Qurm (near 'W' hotel) for an evening of leisure. Sadly, it is also common practice for some people to leave behind their trash without a conscience despite the fact that trash bins of different sizes have been placed at

- WHAT'S ALLOWED**

 - Walking/jogging
 - Exercising
 - Sit-down parties
 - Leisure meets
 - Playing games
 - Kids revelry (ball/frisbee)
- WHAT'S BANNED**

 - Swimming
 - Riding bikes/cars
 - Football/cricket
 - Bringing pets
 - Doing barbecue
 - Littering
 - Tampering plants

many different locations.

A tiny board holds out a humble appeal to keep the beach beautiful and clean - however, the writing on the board has been washed out by the sands of time, quite literally. There are also more prominent boards at some corners which indicate prohibited activity - like driving cars or riding bikes on the sandy stretch, littering, having a barbecue, bringing along pets or tampering with plants/trees, which attract a fine of RO100. But, every now and then, you might see all of these being violated in the absence of watchful eyes on vandals or violators.

Some beachgoers say, the presence of a vigilance booth, even if it is not always manned, would deter miscreants from having a field day. Others draw attention towards the need for regular patrolling as well as civic inspections to repair or remove damaged infrastructure or street furniture in the vicinity of the beach. Merely placing bins and boards will in no way ensure order on the beach, they assert.

On the brighter side, there is a section where a set of exercise machines have been installed to channelise the energies of youths who come to the beach in the morning/evening. While some earnestly avail of these to shape up, by and large, they seem to facilitate play rather than workouts. In some other locations, however, such machines have proved to be immensely useful for those who do not have access to gyms.



cook-up

TOAST TOPPINGS

MEAL MIX-UP

If you sleep and wake up hungry at odd times, and often wonder which meal you need to consume, try a few mix-ups in your kitchen. Experimenting with your morning toast is one way to convert your breakfast into lunch

Creamy Mushrooms on Toast

- Ingredients**
- ½ cup creamy White Bean Dip
 - 2tbsp grapeseed oil, divided (or butter)
 - 1 large clove garlic, minced (or 2 small)
 - 300g mushrooms - sliced
 - Salt and pepper (to taste)
 - 4 slices bread
 - Chopped parsley (for garnish)

Method

Heat 1tbsp of the grapeseed oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Scatter mushrooms into the hot oil. Let them cook undisturbed until golden brown on the bottom, 4 to 5 minutes. Flip and cook until golden brown on the other side, about 4 minutes. Reduce heat to medium. Add remaining 1tbsp of grapeseed oil and garlic, then stir to coat mushrooms. Cook until garlic is fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Season well with salt and pepper. Then, remove from heat.

To assemble, toast bread and spread with White Bean Dip. Top with mushrooms and garnish with parsley.

Masala French Toast

- Ingredients**
- 4 large eggs
 - 3tbsp milk
 - 3-4 slices bread cut in half
 - ½tsp cumin seeds optional
 - ¼tsp turmeric powder
 - 1tsp red chilli powder
 - 1tbsp garlic granules optional
 - 2tbsp coriander leaves and stems - minced
 - 2 green chillies - minced
 - ½ onion - diced
 - Salt and pepper
 - 2tbsp oil
 - 1tbsp ghee

Method

Add eggs and milk in a bowl. Add cumin seeds, turmeric, red chilli, garlic granules, chopped coriander, green chillies, onion, salt and black pepper. Whisk together. Heat oil and ghee in a large pan. (Cut bread slices in half to make it easier if you like). Dunk a piece of bread into the egg mixture, making sure you coat both sides. Repeat with more bread slices and add bread slices to pan. Cook for 2½ - 3 minutes on one side, then flip. Cook until the surface is golden and edges are crisp. Garnish with grated cheese, if desired, and serve with ketchup.



Hummus Avocado on Toast

- Ingredients**
- 4-6tbsp hummus
 - 4-6 bread slices of your choice
 - 1 ripe avocado – peeled and sliced
 - 1tsp – toasted sesame seeds
 - A pinch of red chilli flakes or crushed black pepper

Method

Toast up your bread in a toaster or hot plate. If preparing for a party, you can line up bread slices on a baking sheet and toast them up in the oven. Once the toasted bread is cool, spread at least 1tbsp of hummus per slice. Sprinkle the toasted sesame and chilli flakes/black pepper. Over this, place a layer of sliced avocado or any other desired topping. (It's a good idea to add a layer of spicy tuna salad or shredded chicken over the avocado, to make it more wholesome)



Beef Mince on Toast

- Ingredients**
- For the beef**
- 500g beef mince
 - 2tbsp red vinegar
 - 1 cup chopped tomato
 - 300ml beef stock
 - 1tbsp Worcestershire sauce
 - 1 large onion - diced
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 1tsp fresh thyme leaves
 - Sea salt & cracked black pepper, to taste
 - 1tsp corn starch mixed with a splash of cold water
 - 2tbsp olive oil

- For the garnish**
- 4 slices bread of your choice (white/brown/multi-grain)
 - 2 carrots - minced
 - 2 sticks celery - minced
 - 2 turnips – minced
 - 1 king oyster mushroom - minced
 - 1 bunch watercress

Method

Season the minced beef with a sprinkling of sea salt. Heat a tablespoon of oil over high heat in a casserole, then sauté the beef until well browned then set aside. Add onions to the same dish and soften over medium heat until soft and lightly coloured. Add vinegar, tomato paste, and herbs, then reduce by three quarters. Next, add the stock and simmer for five minutes before thickening with the cornstarch mix. Add beef to the sauce, cover with a lid and simmer gently for 45 minutes until meat is tender. While the beef is cooking, sauté the diced vegetable garnish in a tablespoon of oil until just cooked and lightly coloured, then fold through the beef for the final five minutes of cooking.

Toast the bread, then ladle over the savoury mince, garnish with watercress and serve warm. For extra richness, scatter with grated mature cheddar.

take a break

IN TOWN

ISC Malabar Wing Onam celebration



Indian Social Club - Malabar Wing celebrates Onam in Muscat with a cultural meet and traditional lunch known as ‘Onasadhya’



Nepal’s National Day



Embassy of Nepal hosted a celebration to mark Nepal's National Day and Constitution Day which falls on September 19, also known as ‘Sambidhan Diwas’



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What large flightless bird found in Mauritius by the Portuguese is believed to have died out in 1681?
A. Dodo
B. Kiwi
C. Emu
D. Moa

02. What was the UK #1 single released by the band Stereophonics in 2005?
A. Dakota
B. Carolina
C. Virginia
D. California

03. What fictional island off the coast of Sumatra that first appeared in the 1933 film ‘King Kong’ is the home of King Kong and other creatures?
A. Soames Island
B. Treasure Island
C. Skull Island
D. Pitcairn Island

Answers: 1. A, 2. A, 3. C

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

BOGGLER

L	A	D	A
E	P	O	F
E	O	R	R
S	O	C	B

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

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

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

They say that the only two things that are certain are death and taxes. Fortunately, you won't be dealing with either of those now. Unfortunately, you will have to deal with a lot of uncertainty. Changes could be popping up all day long. Expect continually revised schedules.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Life is a fluid experience, now so more than ever. Things keep changing, and you're usually ready to roll with the punches. It's part of what keeps things exciting. Right now, these changes might require some painful (or at least uncomfortable) adjustments on your part. You might even have to postpone some big travel plans, but this adjustment doesn't have to be permanent.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's not difficult to find something about yourself that you want to improve. Bad habits or a less than totally healthy lifestyle could be getting to you right now. Instead of feeling down on yourself, feel the power you hold. Change is within your grasp, and this is a great starting point for curbing or adjusting your behavior.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

An exciting, vibrant energy is coming into your world. Look for new people (or a new version of one of your current friends) to inject your life with a new level of risk. They have been taking big gambles lately, and it's been paying off big time. If this success serves as an inspiration to you, start taking a few risks yourself.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Problems in your professional realm could be weighing on you, dragging you away from the pleasurable events all around you. Instead of pushing it out of your mind to deal with later, take a few minutes with a friend and spill what's bothering you. You won't be yourself until you get the truth off your chest, and a sympathetic ear will help you feel renewed.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Other people's secrets are becoming clear to you, so if you think you know something juicy, you just might. It can be tough to know how much information you should share and how much you should keep to yourself (especially now), so you might want to play it safe with any controversial insider knowledge. It can be a dangerous thing, but these secrets might give you the upper hand.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Things that normally bug you will drift right by without your notice. You're entering a very enriching period of reflection in your life, and this is distracting you from seeing much of the peripheral world. Your attention will be diverted throughout the day, so important meetings that require full concentration might not be a good idea. Don't make any commitments right now. You can't see all the ramifications of what you might be agreeing to.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Relationships can be like a dance: one partner leads while the other one follows. One of your relationships, it could be a friendship, romantic partnership, or even a business connection, is in the middle of quite a tango. Your goal should be to advance things and become closer with this person. But in order to do that, you might have to let them lead for a while.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your role as supportive mentor to the rest of your crew might feel uncomfortable at times, but it gives you a perspective on your friends that no one else has. Now more than ever you can see the connections that make people need each other so much, and you have keen insight that could help them sort out their issues.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

One of the most important skills you still need to master is knowing when to ask for help. It's important to not immediately call out to friends or coworkers if you feel like you're in over your head. First take a deep breath and assess your situation. Chances are things are nowhere near as daunting as you think.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Moving upward requires you to utilize every resource you can find, including some of your friends. But this doesn't mean you should use friends in the exploitative sense. That's not your style. But it does mean that you should feel free to extend your feelers and let it be known that you have certain goals and would appreciate help.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Not everything you do has to have some grand plan or goal behind it. Explore situations that require no risks (and no big payoffs) whatsoever. Play around with what intrigues you right now, and get comfortable with making mistakes. You aren't perfect, and there's no reason to even try to be. Everyone loves your imperfections because they make you who you are.

entertainment



Prince Harry and Meghan Markle stand in sorrowful silence at UK Queen's funeral

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle stand close together in sorrowful silence as they watch the Queen Elizabeth II's coffin make it's final trip through London to Windsor. The young couple subtly supported each other during the queen's funeral service. Speaking to *People* was attorney and funeral guest Pranav Bhanot, who revealed the subtle moments shared between the Duke and Duchess of Sussex during the queen's state funeral at Westminster Abbey. In particular, he recounted Harry's sweet gesture toward Meghan (the *Suits* actor), making sure that she was 'comfortable.'

Hollywood sign to get a centennial makeover

The iconic nine-letter 'Hollywood' sign that beams down on Tinseltown turns 100 years old in 2023, and like the time-defying actors and actresses it watches over, it looks pretty much the same as it has for decades. But as all good performers know, a little nip here, a little tuck there can keep one looking young forever. Almost 400 gallons of paint and primer will be lavished on the 14m high sign, the Hollywood Sign Trust said as it announced the makeover.

Say 'no' to roles that objectify women: Binoche

Actors must learn to just say 'no' to roles that objectify women, Oscar-winning French actor Juliette Binoche said Sunday at the San Sebastian film festival where she will be honoured with an award for her acting career.

"You have to know how to say no to things so that you don't end up in a kind of situation where you are seen in a certain way," said Binoche, who is one of France's most recognised actors. When she was offered roles where she was 'somebody's woman, or objectified as a woman', she turned them down. "I just said 'no' because I wasn't interested."



BENIN WELCOMES 'THE WOMAN KING'

A giant 30-metre high bronze statue representing an Amazon is seen in central Cotonou on September 17, as a symbol of national identity and key part of its rich history to showcase in a bid to attract tourists to the country. Benin's historic female warriors known as the Amazons of Dahomey are legendary across West Africa, but a Hollywood production is bringing them again

to the limelight. *The Woman King*, released last Friday and shown at one Cotonou's rare cinemas on Saturday, is inspired by the story of the Agojie women who protected the ancient Kingdom of Dahomey and fought against French colonial troops in the 18th century. The main character General Nanisca is played by the Oscar-winning American actress Viola Davis.

NEW RELEASE



DON'T WORRY DARLING
A 1950s housewife living with her husband in a utopian experimental community begins to worry that his glamorous company may be hiding disturbing secrets.
Genre: **Thriller**
Starring: **Olivia Wilde, Gemma Chan, Chris Pine, Harry Styles, Kiki Layne**
Language: **English**



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW:
HOUSE OF DARKNESS
Genre: Comedy, horror mystery
Starring: Kate Bosworth, Justin Long, Gia Crovatin



TROUBLE IN THE DARK

Neil LaBute's 2006 remake of the 1973 British folk horror classic *The Wicker Man* had been largely dismissed as one of the worst movies of all time. However, with *House of Darkness*, LaBute tries to bring back something similar to *The Wicker Man*. And this time the result is not all that disappointing.

The film opens with a couple - Hap (Justin Long) and Mina (Kate Bosworth) who enter a large mansion after meeting in a bar that night. Hap had volunteered to drive Mina home, hoping to take his chance acquaintance a notch higher. The huge house - one of several owned by Mina's family - is nothing less than a castle as one would imagine all horror movies to offer the same to prop up the suspense and mystery when the screenplay is weak.

Yes, there are noises and indications that they are not alone in the mansion and faulty electricity plays its part to build up the suspense.

There aren't any new sequences which one would have not seen in similar horror flicks but there is a twist in the final act. And if you are an avid horror movie buff, you would've figured it out long before LaBute's loose screenplay leads you to it.

While *House of Darkness* is a slow-paced movie, the comedy and mystery does keep you engaged, especially the chemistry between the leads which is quite commendable. Okay to watch on a boring day.

Rating ★★★★★



BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: CHUP
Genre: Romantic thriller
Starring: Dulquer Salmaan, Sunny Deol, Shreya D, Pooja Bhatt



CRITICAL SILENCE

Amid all the light-hearted, low-budget flicks and the big-budget potboilers that have been taking Bollywood buffs for a jolly good ride over the past two years, R Balki's *Chup*, starring Dulquer and Sunny Deol, now comes with a fresh breath of bold creativity. It's the type of movie that doesn't just entertain, but also makes one think deep about issues and ironies that decide the fortunes of people in the tinsel world who are just as good or bad as their last release. *Chup* was screened for a section

of the public on September 20 and garnered largely favourable reviews on Twitter as moviegoers seemed to relish a new face in Bollywood - Malayalam star Dulquer Salmaan who has quite affirmatively announced his presence with sterling performances in recent Malayalam and Telugu films - *Kurup* and *Sita Ramam* respectively, both of which did extremely well at the box office. Dulquer seems to be blessed with a Midas touch of sorts and is attracting much attention from Hindi film makers because of his good looks and acting skills that together light

up the silver screen. This film marks Dulquer's third Bollywood release, after *Karwaan* and *The Zoya Factor*. *Chup* is said to be a homage to one of Indian cinema's greatest filmmakers - Guru Dutt - known for movies like *Pyaasa*, *Sahib Biwi Aur Ghulam*, and *Kaagaz Ke Phool*. The story revolves around the character Suresh, a lonely movie director, who stumbles into a promising actress Shanti one evening and casts her as the lead in a film. As expected, good fortune smiles on Shanti who becomes a superstar overnight though Suresh's stature as a film-

maker comes crashing down, in much the same way as Guru Dutt was left disillusioned with his craft after *Kaagaz Ke Phool* failed. In this film, be ready to sit on edge as you encounter a disgruntled artist who turns out a killer on the loose, taking revenge on film critics by carving out stars on the foreheads of film critics before killing them. Sunny Deol plays a cop investigating the case. Is Dulquer the victim or the killer in this romantic thriller? Find out!

Rating ★★★★★