

H M STRESSES ON HALTING MILITARY OPERATIONS IN GAZA IN CALL TO BIDEN

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a phone call from President Joe Biden of the United States of America (USA) on Friday.

During the call, the two leaders reviewed aspects of bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern, particularly the latest developments in Palestine.

His Majesty the Sultan underscored the importance of halting military operations in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, protecting civilians and according top priority to humanitarian aid.

His Majesty the Sultan also stressed the importance of resorting to resolutions of international legitimacy and international humanitarian law, and underlined the Palestinians' right to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

03

Unesco recognises Jibreen Castle, historian Ruzaiq



Islamic governments should designate the army of the occupying and aggressor regime as a terrorist organisation

Iranian President **Ebrahim Raisi**



What we need in Gaza is not pauses for a couple of hours, rather we need a permanent ceasefire

Turkish President **Recep Erdogan**



Israel bears responsibility for crimes committed against Palestinians. We call for an end to the siege of the Gaza Strip

Saudi Prince **Mohammed bin Salman**



We are facing an unmatched genocidal war. We call on US to pressure Israel into halting its offensive

Palestinian President **Mahmoud Abbas**



The policies of collective punishment of the people of Gaza cannot be justified by self-defence or any other claims

Egyptian President **Abdel Fattah al Sisi**

MUSLIM LEADERS SLAM ISRAEL

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Arab leaders and Iran's president meeting in the Saudi capital on Saturday roundly condemned Israel's actions in its war against Hamas in Gaza, as fears mount the conflict could draw in other countries.

The emergency meeting of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) comes in the wake of Israel's aerial and ground offensive in Gaza, which has killed more than 11,000 people, mostly civilians and many of them children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Host Saudi Arabia "confirms that it holds the occupation (Israeli) authorities responsible for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, said as Saturday's summit began.

"We are certain that the only way to guarantee security, peace and stability in the region is to end the occupation, siege and the settlements," he said of Israel's actions in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, on his first trip to Saudi Arabia since the two countries mended ties in March, said Is-



Self-defence does not come about by killing children, women and defenceless men; demolishing homes, places of worship, facilities, schools and hospitals; depriving residents of water, food, fuel and medicine; and imposing a stifling and unlawful blockade

lamic countries should designate the Israeli army a "terrorist organisation" for its conduct in Gaza.

Israel says it is out to destroy Hamas and blames the Palestinian armed group for the high death toll, accusing it of using civilians as 'human shields' - a charge Hamas denies.

The Arab League and the OIC, a 57-member bloc that includes Iran, were originally meant to meet separately.

Arab diplomats told AFP the decision to merge the meetings came after Arab



Children cry during a funeral of a family killed in Israeli bombing on Rafah in Gaza on Nov 11

League delegations failed to reach an agreement on a final statement.

Some countries, including Algeria and Lebanon, proposed responding to the devastation in Gaza by threatening to disrupt oil supplies to Israel and its allies as well as severing the economic and diplomatic ties that some Arab League nations have with Israel, diplomats said.

However, at least three countries - including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which normalised ties with Israel in 2020 - rejected the proposal, accord-

ing to the diplomats who spoke on condition on anonymity.

Failure of UN Security Council

H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Oman's Foreign Minister, stressed in his speech that Palestinian people are facing horrendous human suffering, which is heartbreaking.

He said this is happening due to the United Nations Security Council's failure to take decisive action to stop the barbaric war that Israel is waging in the Gaza

Strip under the pretext self defence.

He said he was saddened to see the position of some friendly countries that defend international law and its application in other regions of the world, while not denouncing Israel's violation of it in the context of Palestine.

Joint statement

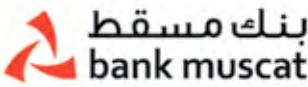
The final statement from the joint summit demanded that the UN Security Council adopt 'a decisive and binding resolution' to halt Israel's 'aggression' in Gaza. 'Failure to do so is complicity that allows Israel to continue its brutal aggression that kills innocent people... and turns Gaza into ruin'.

The leaders rejected any proposal that would keep Gaza separate from the West Bank in a future Palestinian state.

They stressed the importance of 'the unity of Gaza and the West Bank as the territory of the Palestinian State', with East Jerusalem as its capital.

They further rejected describing 'the war in Gaza as self-defence or justifying it under any pretext' and demanded an immediate halt to military operations there after more than a month of war.

Agencies



Grow your business With Meethaq SME Solutions

- Sharia compliant products and services
- Dedicated account relationship managers
- Large network of branches across Oman
- Long and short-term financing



To get a callback



2465 6666

www.meethaq.om



Pioneer of Islamic Banking in Oman

Terms & Conditions Apply

C.R. No. 1/4573/8

Unesco recognises Jibreen Castle, historian Ruzaiq

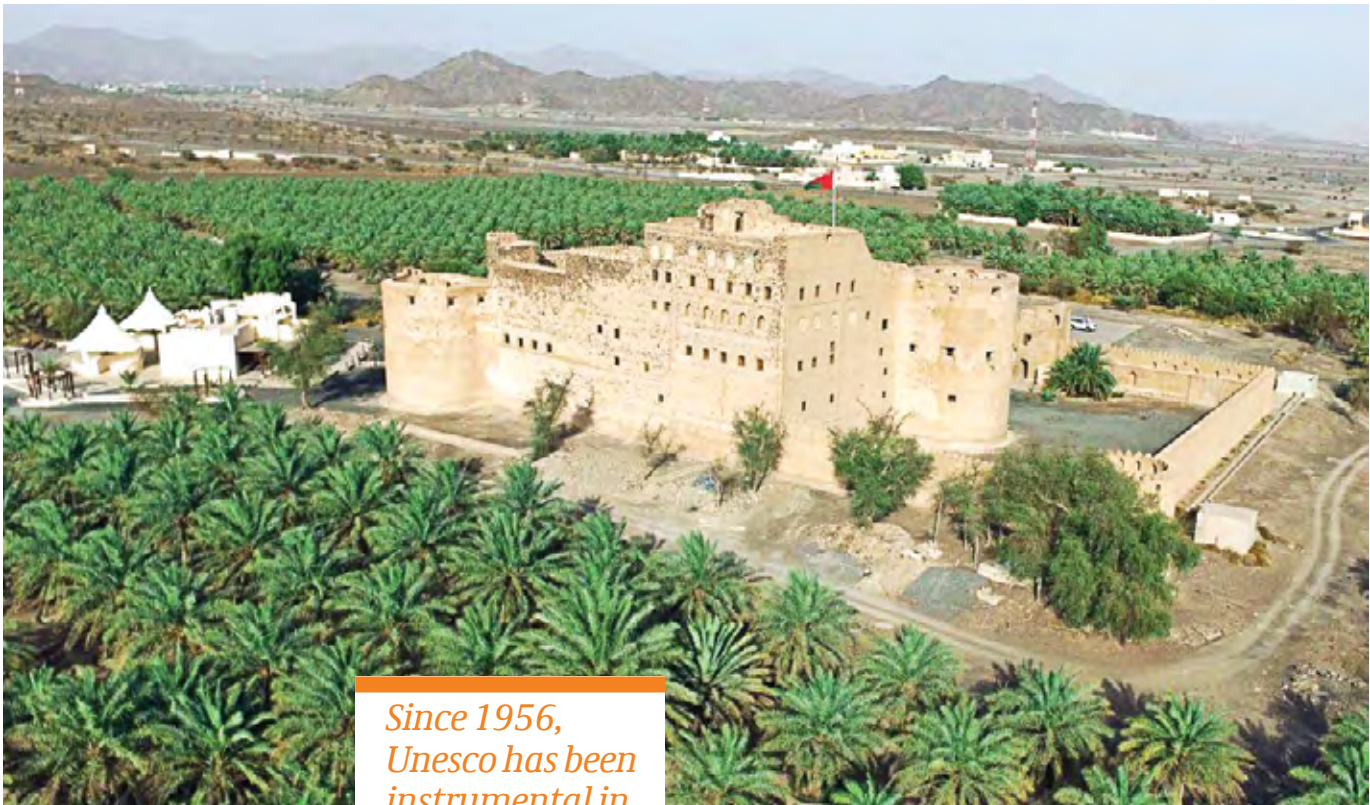
Omani elements in Unesco's celebration programme increase to eight

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) has recognised Oman's rich cultural history by including two significant Omani cultural milestones in its list of anniversaries for 2024-2025. This recognition includes the 350th anniversary of the Jibreen Castle and the 150th death anniversary of renowned Omani historian and poet Humaid bin Mohammed bin Ruzaiq.

Since 1956, Unesco has been instrumental in commemorating historical events and eminent personalities of its member states, elevating their significance on a global platform. Such celebrations are pivotal in fostering international understanding, enhancing cultural exchanges and promoting peace.

An architectural gem of the 17th century, Jibreen Castle marks its 350th anniversary of construction under the reign of Imam Belarab bin Sultan al Yarubi. Completed in 1675, the castle is a testament to Oman's architectural prowess, built by the era's finest craftsmen and ar-



Since 1956, Unesco has been instrumental in commemorating historical events and eminent personalities of its member states

chitects. Beyond its architectural magnificence, Jibreen Castle was a centre of knowledge and learning, and served as a residence for the imam and the seat of his governance.

It flourished as an educational hub, attracting scholars and educators in various fields such as jurisprudence, literature, history, astronomy, mathematics, medicine and chemistry. It produced over 40 distinguished scholars and writers under Imam Belarab bin Sultan's patronage.

In addition to Jibreen Castle, Unesco commemorates the 150th anniversary of the passing

of the 19th century Omani historian Ruzaiq. His contributions were monumental in documenting the historical phase from the rise of the Al Busaid dynasty to the end of Sayyid Said bin Sultan's reign in 1856. His works, characterised by neutrality and meticulous research, provide in-

valuable insights into the European presence in the Indian Ocean and the Arab region. Ruzaiq's writings are not only historical records but also serve as critical references for contemporary researchers in Omani history.

The inclusion of these two elements takes the total number of Omani contributions to Unesco's celebration programme to eight. The sultanate has successfully highlighted six other Omani figures in the past, including linguist Al Khalil bin Ahmed al Farahidi in 2005, pharmacist Rashid bin Omaid al Hashimi al Rustaqi in

2013, polymath Sheikh Nour al Din Abdullah bin Humaid al Salmi and physicist Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Muhammad al Azdi, known as Ibn al Dhahabi, in 2015, poet Nasser bin Salem al Rawahi, also known as Abu Muslim al Bahlani, in 2019, and the famed navigator Ahmed bin Majid al Saadi in 2021.

Unesco's recognition of Omani cultural heritage underscores the sultanate's significant contributions to the global cultural landscape, celebrating the rich tapestry of its history and the enduring legacies of its eminent personalities.



MAFWR pushes wheat production to fortify food security

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) is actively advancing wheat cultivation across the sultanate as part of a broader strategy to enhance food security.

Recent data shows Oman harvested 7,119 tonnes of wheat cultivated on 6,359 acres in the 2022-23 farming season.

Yahya Hamdan al Saadi, head of Horticultural Crops in MAFWR, informed that the initiative to augment wheat cultivation and quality with improved local varieties is pivotal for Oman's food security objectives. "The ministry is set to ensure a steady supply of 54 tonnes of superior quality seeds on subsidy to farmers each year, bolstering yield and encouraging continuous wheat production."

The initiative includes three stages: acquisition of advanced planting and harvesting machinery, training for automated har-

vesters, and a commitment to provide 54 tonnes of enhanced quality wheat seeds annually. Additionally, MAFWR offers a wheat harvesting service to farmers for free.

According to Saadi, six state-of-the-art wheat harvesters were deployed in the 2022-23 season, offering cost-free harvesting services to wheat cultivators. A trial has also been conducted to explore cost-effective cultivation of wheat seeds.

In terms of yield and cultivation area, Dhofar governorate stands out, accounting for 80% of the cultivated wheat area and 83% of Oman's total wheat production with 5,940 tonnes produced from 5,112 acres.

MAFWR has laid out a five-year plan, with an investment of RO5mn, aiming to sustain and scale wheat production through 2027. This plan is a cornerstone in Oman's strategy to consolidate its food security infrastructure and fulfil the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.

Italian President confers Star of Italy Order on Dr Taha al Lawati

Muscat - Dr Taha bin Mohsin al Lawati, Senior Consultant at The Royal Hospital, has been awarded the Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy by Sergio Mattarella, President of Italy.

H E Pierluigi D'Elia, Ambassador of Italy to Oman, presented the knighthood on behalf of the Italian President, at a reception held on the occasion of the Italian National Unity Day and Armed Forces Day at Crowne Plaza Muscat.

"Dr Taha al Lawati, among the most appreciated doctors in the sultanate, graduated and specialised in Rome and over the years has greatly contributed to enhancing stronger relations in the medical field between Italy and Oman. His in-depth knowledge of the Italian language and wide network with universities



Dr Taha al Lawati receives award from H E Pierluigi D'Elia

and researchers in Italy make him an enthusiastic promoter of academic and scientific bilateral collaborations," H E D'Elia said.

The prestigious award is bestowed by decree of the President of Italy, on the

recommendation of Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in recognition of individuals who have achieved extraordinary results in the preservation and promotion of bilateral relations between Italy and their nations.

New Yanqul fish market nearing completion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has completed 80% construction work of a new fish market in Yanqul, Dhahirah governorate.

Backed by Petroleum Development Oman, the project is in line with the ministry's commitment to enhancing fish marketing facilities across the sultanate.

Ibrahim bin Muhammad al Alawi, who oversees fish markets at the ministry, shed light on the objectives of this development. "The market, a cornerstone in the ministry's strategy, is part of a broader agenda to establish robust marketplaces for fish com-



merce in collaboration with the private sector."

The market is spread over a 5,329sqm plot, with the building constructed on 1,366sqm. Upon completion, it will have 24 dedicated stalls for fish sales, equipped with 12 cutting tables, ensuring efficiency and hygiene.

Additional amenities include a café, a dressing room, separate halls for cutting and wholesale transactions, and an ice factory of five-tonne capacity.

One of the main features of the market is a modern air conditioning and drainage system, aligning with the contemporary standards of fish markets in the sultanate.

Alawi added that the design incorporates technical specifications that allow for future expansion, catering to both local and regional fish supply demands.

"This project promises to contribute to the community by providing a reliable source of seafood and also streamline the fish supply chain."

KALYAN JEWELLERS

FREE GOLD COINS TO BRIGHTEN YOUR CELEBRATION

GET FREE GOLD COINS WITH EVERY PURCHASE

GET 1/4 GM GOLD COIN ON PURCHASE OF GOLD JEWELLERY BETWEEN OMR 350 - OMR 599
 GET 1/2 GM GOLD COIN ON PURCHASE OF UNCUT / PRECIOUS / PLATINUM JEWELLERY BETWEEN OMR 350 - OMR 599 OR ON PURCHASE OF GOLD JEWELLERY WORTH EVERY OMR 600
 GET 1 GM GOLD COIN ON PURCHASE OF UNCUT / PRECIOUS / PLATINUM JEWELLERY WORTH EVERY OMR 600 OR ON PURCHASE OF DIAMOND JEWELLERY BETWEEN OMR 350 - OMR 599
 GET 2 GM GOLD COIN ON PURCHASE OF DIAMOND JEWELLERY WORTH EVERY OMR 600

OFFER VALID UNTIL 24th DECEMBER 2023

GOLD COIN VALUE IS OFFERED IN THE FORM OF VOUCHERS THAT CAN BE REDEEMED INSTANTLY | WWW.KALYANJEWELLERS.NET | FOLLOW US ON: KALYANJEWELLERSMIDDLEEAST | KALYANJEWELLERS

Oman's surplus drops as revenues fall

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's budget surplus shrank by nearly 30% to RO791mn in the first nine months of 2023, compared to RO1.123bn surplus recorded in the corresponding period last year, mainly due to a decline in the sultanate's oil and gas revenues this year.

Total public revenues decreased to RO8.886bn in the January–September period this year, down 16% compared to RO10.567bn registered in the same period of 2022, according to the Fiscal Performance Bulletin published by the Ministry of Finance.

Net oil revenue decreased to RO4.838bn, a drop of 10% compared to RO5.361bn registered over the same period in 2022, mainly due to lower crude prices compared to last year.

Oman's average oil price stood at US\$81 per barrel and average oil production was 1,054,000 barrels per day during the first nine months of 2023.

Net gas revenue also dropped by whopping 42% to RO1.583bn



Sultanate's net oil revenue fell by 10% to RO4.838bn in the first nine months of 2023 as compared to RO5.361bn registered over the same period in 2022, mainly due to lower crude prices compared to last year

in the first nine months of 2023, compared to RO2.741bn registered in the same period of 2022.

'This decline (in net gas revenue) is due to the deduction of gas purchase and transport expenses from the total revenue collected from the Integrated Gas Company,' the Ministry of Finance bulletin noted.

The government's current revenue slightly increased to RO2.454bn during the January–September period of 2023 against RO2.450bn collected in the same period of 2022.

Spending down 14%
Oman's total public spending for the first nine months of 2023 decreased by RO1.349bn or 14%

Ominvest gets CBO approval to boost stake in Bank Muscat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) has received the green light from the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) to increase its stake in Bank Muscat up to 15%.

'Ominvest would like to disclose that it has received the CBO's approval to increase shareholding in Bank Muscat up to 15%,' Ominvest said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange. The company also expressed its commitment to keeping the market updated regarding any further developments in this regard.

Ominvest is already an existing shareholder in Bank Muscat.

In a separate disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange, Bank Muscat confirmed that it has been notified by Ominvest that the company has received the CBO's approval to increase their shareholding up to 15% in the bank.

Moody's downgrades US debt rating outlook to negative

Washington, US – Moody's has downgraded its outlook on US debt to negative from stable, one week before crucial budget negotiations in Congress.

For now, the agency has maintained its 'Aaa' rating on US government debt.

"In the context of higher interest rates, without effective fiscal policy measures to reduce government spending or increase revenues, Moody's expects that the US's fiscal deficits will remain very large, significantly weakening debt affordability," the agency said.

The US Treasury immediately voiced its disagreement with Moody's decision.

"The American economy remains strong, and Treasury securities are the world's

preeminent safe and liquid asset," Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo in a statement.

"The Biden Administration has demonstrated its commitment to fiscal sustainability, including through the more than \$1tn in deficit reduction included in the June debt limit deal as well as President Biden's budget proposals that would reduce the deficit by nearly \$2.5tn over the next decade."

The US budget deficit, published last month for the 2023 fiscal year ending September 30, has widened to \$1.7tn.

Due to interest rate hikes by the US central bank to curb inflation, the cost of debt for the United States has ballooned, with Washington paying \$162bn

more for interest in the last fiscal year compared to 2022.

Moody's is the only major agency to maintain its rating for US sovereign debt at its highest level – underscoring the potential economic danger to the United States of failing to reach an agreement to keep the government funded in one week's time.

Neither the Democratic-controlled Senate nor the Republican-led House of Representatives has passed a bill to extend government funding, which expires at midnight next Friday into Saturday.

Without an agreement by November 17, the world's largest economy would enter a so-called government shutdown. AFP



Taageer Finance wins 'Best Performing Company' award in mid-cap sector

Muscat – Oman's leading finance and leasing company Taageer Finance has been named 'Best Performing Company' in the mid-cap sector at the Alam Al Iktisaad awards.

Beginning the fourth quarter with a string of prestigious industry awards, the company has also been named 'Finance and Leasing Company (FLC) of the Year' and won the 'Pioneers in Digital Evolution' in the NBFC Sector at the DX Oman Digital Transformation awards.

Additionally, the company's CEO Shahin Mohammed al Balushi has also been named the 'Finance and Leasing CEO of the Year'.

In a press release, Balushi

said, "Taageer Finance remains committed to realising its vision and mission, contributing to the economic growth of our nation, and creating lasting value for our customers and shareholders. This recognition energizes us to continue pioneering financial solutions that drive prosperity and empower communities."

He added, "To be the recipient of this award is exceptionally gratifying as we grow and evolve our business to be the nation's FLC partner of choice. A number of important areas of focus are reflected in this success – our commitment to supporting our clients; being an employer of choice; and the way in which we operate, alongside

our focus on constantly developing new and innovative solutions. Most significantly, these awards reflect the exceptional talent that we have at Taageer Finance."

Witnessing the highest growth in market share among FLCs, Taageer Finance has demonstrated consistent growth across its revenue, portfolio, profitability, and provision coverage, showcasing financial resilience and prudent risk management practices.

Playing a pivotal role in SME development, Taageer Finance contributes significantly to job creation and economic empowerment.

With a commitment to fos-

tering local talent, the company actively contributes to the development of a skilled workforce, a crucial element for the nation's progress.

The company credits its success to a cadre of experienced and talented top management professionals and teams that bring industry knowledge and strategic acumen to the forefront.

Taageer Finance offers a diverse range of financial and leasing solutions for businesses and individuals. The company has an extensive nationwide network, through branches at Wattayah, Sohar, Al Kamil Al Wafi, Barka, Nizwa, Salalah and most recently Seeb.

TENDER NOTICE

SULTANATE OF OMAN
The Ministry of Agricultural
Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
276/2023/MAF WR/HQ-22-Recall-1	Replacement of the Steel Floating Pontoons at Fishery Harbour - Khabuara	25/-	Specialized	Thursday 16/11/2023	Monday 27/12/2023
1007/2023/MA FWR/HQ-106	Supply of Pesticides for Desert Locust Control	25/-	Specialized	Wednesday 22/11/2023	Tuesday 12/12/2023
1008/2023/MA FWR/HQ-107	Supply, installation and activation of hosting services for the water licensing system on the cloud at the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries wealth & Water Resources	25/-	Specialized	Wednesday 22/11/2023	Tuesday 12/12/2023
108/2023/MAF WR/HQ-1009	supply of research equipment of red palm weevil	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 26/11/2023	Sunday 17/12/2023
109/2023/MAF WR/HQ-1010	Maintenance works At Aquaculture Center ,Albustan	25/-	Fourth	Sunday 26/11/2023	Sunday 12/12/2023
110/2023/MAF WR/HQ-1011	maintenance contract for all types of central air conditioners in the Ministry's General Office building and its affiliated buildings for a period of 36 months	25/-	Fourth	Sunday 26/11/2023	Sunday 17/12/2023

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- Preference will be given to companies whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanization and possible purchase of national products.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration (regarding the exemption from submitting a bid bond in tenders).
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402200** or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Advertisement For Quick Sale Through Envelopes

The legal liquidator of one of the companies announces the sale of ready-made stainless steel clothing display stands and two 2021 Kia Picanto cars by selling through envelopes. The last day for submitting offers is the end of business day of Tuesday, 14/11/2023.

For more information, please contact: 71555163

IMF and Jordan reach agreement on \$1.2bn loan programme

Washington, US – The International Monetary Fund said it had reached agreement with Jordan on a new four-year loan program worth around \$1.2bn to help it weather financial shocks including the Israel-Hamas war.

The agreement, which is still subject to approval by IMF management, will replace an existing program due to expire early next year, the Fund announced.

The IMF expects Jordan's economy to grow by 2.6% in 2023, and by 2.6% at most next year, due to the impact of the ongoing conflict between Jordan's neighbor Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

"The external environment remains challenging," IMF Mission

Chief for Jordan Ron van Rooden said in a statement, pointing to high global and regional tensions, elevated interest rates and uneven global growth.

"The conflict in Gaza and Israel poses yet another risk to the region and could adversely affect Jordan's economy," he added.

Despite the fighting, Van Rooden said Jordan was well-placed to withstand any economic shocks resulting from the conflict, barring a "significant escalation" in the fighting. "The aim is to accelerate growth over the medium term to address persistent high unemployment, while ensuring continued macro-economic stability," he added.

AFP

US Fed could hike rates again if 'appropriate'

Washington, US – The US Federal Reserve is prepared, if needed, to hike interest rates further in order to bring inflation down to its long-term two per cent target, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said.

"We know that ongoing progress toward our two per cent goal is not assured: Inflation has given us a few head fakes," Powell told a conference in Washington on Thursday.

"If it becomes appropriate to tighten policy further, we will not

hesitate to do so," he added, in remarks that were briefly disrupted by climate protesters.

Powell's comments come just over a week after the US central bank voted to hold interest rates steady at a 22-year high for a second consecutive meeting, fueling expectations that it was done with rate hikes.

While the Fed's rate-setting committee is "committed" to achieving a sufficiently tight stance of monetary policy, "we are not confident that we have



achieved such a stance," Powell said.

The Fed chair's comments suggest the US central bank is still concerned about the prospect of a re-acceleration of

We know that ongoing progress toward our two per cent inflation goal is not assured: Inflation has given us a few head fakes. If it becomes appropriate to tighten policy further, we will not hesitate to do so

JEROME POWELL

inflation, which has more than halved since peaking last year, according to the Fed's favored yardstick.

However, Powell later indicated that he felt the Fed was

"probably" at a point where its monetary policy was "significantly restrictive," suggesting that the Fed felt confident in its current stance.

"We're watching the effect

carefully on the economy," he said. Despite the Fed's aggressive monetary tightening, which brought rates to a level between 5.25-5.50%, economic growth remains strong and the labour market remains fairly buoyant – although it has shown some recent signs of slowing.

The strong recent economic data has increased the likelihood of a so-called "soft landing," whereby the Fed succeeds in tackling inflation without plunging the United States into recession.

Most Fed policymakers indicated back in September that they expect one more interest rate hike before the year is out, although many of them have since indicated they think the Fed could be done tightening monetary policy.

Fed Governor Michelle Bowman recently told a conference in Ohio that she continued to expect the Fed will need to raise rates further.

AFP



Garment workers and activists protest in Dhaka on Saturday (AFP)

150 garment factories shut in Bangladesh, 11,000 workers charged

Dhaka, Bangladesh – Bangladeshi garment manufacturers on Saturday shuttered 150 factories "indefinitely", as police issued blanket charges for 11,000 workers in connection with violent protests demanding a higher minimum wage, officers said.

Bangladesh's 3,500 garment factories account for around 85% of its \$55bn in annual exports, supplying many of the world's top brands including Levi's, Zara and H&M.

But conditions are dire for many of the sector's four million workers, the vast majority of whom are women whose monthly pay, until recently, started at 8,300 taka (\$75).

Violent protests demanding better pay erupted last month, with at least three workers killed and more than 70 factories ransacked or damaged since, according to police.

A government-appointed panel raised the sector's wage by 56.25% on Tuesday to 12,500 taka, but garment workers have rejected the hike, instead demanding a 23,000 taka minimum wage.

On Thursday, 15,000 workers clashed with police on a key highway and ransacked Tusuka, a top plant, along with a dozen other factories.

"Police have filed cases against 11,000 unidentified people over the attack on Tusuka garment factory," police inspector

Mosharraf Hossain told AFP.

Bangladesh police often issue primary charges against thousands of people – without specifying their names – following large protests and political violence, a tactic that critics say is a way to crack down on dissent.

Human rights groups have previously warned such mass cases launched against thousands of unidentified people gives police the license to target innocent protesters.

Wage protests pose a major challenge to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has ruled the country with an iron fist since 2009.

A resurgent opposition has challenged her rule as she readies for elections due before the end of January.

Police told AFP that 150 factories had closed in the major industrial towns of Ashulia and Gazipur, both north of the capital Dhaka, as manufacturers feared further strikes when Bangladesh's working week began on Saturday.

"The manufacturers invoked Section 13/1 of the labour laws and shut 130 factories at Ashulia indefinitely citing illegal strikes," Sarwar Alam, head of police in the manufacturing hub, told AFP.

Ashulia is home to some of the biggest Bangladeshi factories, with some employing as many as 15,000 workers in a single multi-storied plant.

AFP

EU urges ban on Russian LNG

Brussels, Belgium – EU lawmakers urged the bloc to ban imports of Russian liquefied natural gas and to shut loopholes in existing sanctions that help Moscow fund its war on Ukraine.

The European Union has imposed 11 rounds of unprecedented sanctions on Russia since the Kremlin launched its all-out invasion in February 2022.

Brussels is currently formulating proposals for a fresh package of sanctions, expected to include a ban on Russian diamonds, that diplomats say should be discussed by member states next week.

Several of the more hawkish EU member states in eastern Europe have also called for a ban on LNG in the next sanctions package.

But there seems to be little appetite across the bloc to impose a ban that could further roil



Europe's fragile gas markets and push up prices.

In a non-binding resolution, the European Parliament urged the EU to forbid imports of liquefied natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas that have helped swell the Kremlin's coffers.

"The European Union still remains one of Russia's largest fossil fuel clients, due to continued imports of pipeline gas and LNG, as well as various exceptions to the ban on importing crude oil and oil products," a statement said.

AFP

A'Sharqiya Investments Holding Co. (SAOG)

P.O. Box 47 PC 118 Al Harthy Complex Sultanate of Oman

Tel: +968 24566160 / Fax: +968 24566162 / Email: admin@asharqiya.com

Chairman's Report for the Quarter ended September 30, 2023

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it gives me great pleasure to present the unaudited consolidated financial statements of A'Sharqiya Investment Holding Company (SAOG) and its subsidiary – Qalhath Real Estate Investments & Services LLC. (QREIS) - For the nine months period ended September 30, 2023.

Overview of Operations and Financial Performance

A summary of the company's operating performance for the nine months period ended September 30, 2023 in comparison to the corresponding period in 2022 and the full year ended 2022 is presented below:

Period ended September 30, 2023	Sep 30 2023	Sep 30 2022	Increase (Decrease) %	Full Year ended 2022
Total Operating Income	817	854	(4.3)	1,167
Profit after Tax (PAT)	235	356	(33.8)	486
Total Assets	16,894	18,670	(9.5)	18,704
Shareholder's Equity	13,070	14,859	(12.0)	14,804

It may be noted from above; the company's operations during the nine months period ended September 30, 2023 generated an income of RO 817,292 as compared to RO 854,322 during the corresponding period in 2022. Profit before tax recorded a decrease of 29.3% at RO 303,746 as against RO 429,892. The profit after tax arising from the company's operations during this period aggregated to RO 235,427 as compared to RO 355,623 generated during the comparable period in 2022 reflecting a decrease of 33.8%. The decrease in operating income and the subsequent decrease in Net Profit was due to lower dividend income from portfolio companies and lower lease income recorded in comparison to the same period last year.

The total assets of the company as at September 30, 2023 was RO 16,894,121 as compared to a RO 18,670,032 as at September 30, 2022, reflecting a decrease of 9.5%. Shareholder's Equity decreased to RO 13,069,538 from RO 14,859,198 reported in the same period last year. This primarily reflects the marked to market impact of some of the investee companies which has been facing operational and regulatory headwinds in their operations during the year. This is expected to improve in the near future.

As an objective to diversification, the company has invested in a portfolio of bonds and GCC securities which is expected to further enhance its returns in coming years.

The break- up value of the company's equity share works out to Baizas 145 on September 30, 2023 as compared to Baizas 165 on September 30, 2022.

Investment and future Outlook

The global economy is expected to grow 3.0% in 2023 after an estimated increase of 3.5% in 2022, as per IMF Economic Outlook (October 2023). Global headline inflation is expected to fall from 8.7 percent in 2022 to 6.9 percent in 2023 but underlying (core) inflation is likely to decline more gradually. Oman is projected to witness a GDP growth of 1.2% in 2023 followed by 2.7% in 2024. The above IMF projections for Oman economic growth in 2023 have decreased from 1.7% to 1.2% since the outlook in April. The projection for global growth remain below the historical (2000–19) average of 3.8 percent. Economic activity varies widely by region with emerging and developing economies still falling short of pre pandemic activity.

The Company will continue to add value to its investee companies in the local market with a long-term view. The Company is also constantly diversifying the investments across different markets and asset classes.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his able leadership of the country. I also thank the shareholders for their continued support and for the confidence reposed on the company. My appreciation also goes to the company's management and staff for their contributions and commitment to the company.

Mohammed Ali Mohammed Al Fannah
Chairman

UN-AUDITED SEPARATE CONSOLIDATED CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

	30 September 2023	30 September 2022	31 December 2022		
	Parent RO	Group RO	Parent RO	Group RO	
ASSETS					
Non-current assets					
Property and equipment	2,750	275,994	6,124	6,167	
Lease receivables	-	3,681,170	-	4,487,432	
Investment in subsidiary	250,000	-	250,000	-	
Financial assets:					
A) At FVOCI	6,509,833	6,509,833	9,088,074	9,088,074	
B) At FVTPL	343,970	343,970	98,493	98,493	
Investments in Bonds classified as FVOCI	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	
Investments in Bond Instruments	2,033,835	2,033,835	-	-	
Deferred tax assets	39,463	39,463	54,467	54,467	
Capital Work in Progress (Water net work)	-	-	286,684	-	
Total	9,329,851	13,034,265	9,647,158	14,171,317	
9,329,851	13,034,265	9,647,158	14,171,317	9,367,555	13,774,869
Current assets					
Lease receivables	-	806,240	-	636,800	
Prepayments/Other receivables	132,190	409,813	187,769	447,322	
Fixed deposits in Banks	577,500	577,500	-	-	
Bank balances and cash	539,414	2,066,303	1,737,427	3,414,593	
Total	1,249,104	3,859,855	1,925,196	4,498,715	
Total assets	10,578,955	16,894,121	11,572,354	18,670,032	
EQUITY					
Capital and reserves					
Share capital	9,000,000	9,000,000	9,000,000	9,000,000	
Legal reserve	1,632,478	1,715,812	1,520,894	1,604,228	
Fair value reserve	(676,598)	(676,598)	1,020,302	1,020,302	
Retained earnings	395,494	3,030,324	(150,009)	3,234,668	
Equity attributable to equity holders of parent	10,351,374	13,069,538	11,391,187	14,859,198	
LIABILITIES					
Non-current liabilities					
Finance lease payable	-	3,471,593	-	3,487,640	
End of service benefits	152,149	187,763	122,480	152,510	
Total	152,149	3,659,356	122,480	3,640,150	
Current liabilities					
Finance lease payable	-	16,047	-	15,691	
Retention payable	-	-	-	20,058	
Accruals and other payables	33,555	79,627	28,704	59,432	
Provision for taxation	41,877	69,553	29,983	75,503	
Total	75,432	165,227	58,687	170,684	
Total liabilities	227,581	3,824,583	181,167	3,810,834	
Total equity and liabilities	10,578,955	16,894,121	11,572,354	18,670,032	
Net assets per share	0.115	0.145	0.127	0.165	

UN-AUDITED SEPARATE AND CONSOLIDATED CONDENSED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

	30 September 2023	30 September 2022		
	Parent RO	Group RO	Parent RO	Group RO
INCOME				
Dividend income:				
Dividends	267,723	267,723	339,181	339,181
Interest income	64,938	93,836	23,576	46,423
Interest income from Bonds	36,450	36,450	1,572	1,572
Dividend from Subsidiary	400,000	-	899,993	-
Finance Lease Income	-	315,506	-	381,254
Maintenance services income	-	42,898	-	46,788
Other income	60,522	15,522	34,214	31,283
Income tax refunds of earlier years	-	-	28,348	28,348
Unrealised gain/(loss) on assets at FVTPL	20,936	20,936	(20,527)	(20,527)
Gain on disposal of FVTPL asset	24,421	24,421	-	-
Operating income	874,990	817,292	1,306,357	854,322
EXPENSES				
Bank Charges	(3,624)	(3,740)	(701)	(745)
Staff cost	(252,806)	(252,806)	(180,425)	(180,425)
Finance cost on lease payable	-	(137,379)	-	(137,997)
Decrease in fair values of FVTPL investments	-	-	-	-
Depreciation	(2,773)	(13,675)	(2,704)	(2,770)
General administrative expenses	(96,551)	(105,946)	(96,109)	(102,493)
Operating expenses	(355,754)	(513,546)	(279,939)	(424,430)
Profit before taxation	519,236	303,746	1,026,418	429,892
Taxation	(40,643)	(68,319)	(28,749)	(74,269)
Profit for the period	478,593	235,427	997,669	355,623
Other comprehensive income:				
Net change in fair value of FVOCI financial assets	(1,629,692)	-	86,233	86,233
Deferred tax Adjustment for the period	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period	(1,151,099)	235,427	1,083,902	441,856
Total comprehensive income attributable to:				
Equity holders of parent	(1,151,099)	235,427	1,083,902	441,856
Non-controlling interests	-	-	-	-
	(1,151,099)	235,427	1,083,902	441,856
Profit attributable to:				
Equity holders of parent	478,593	235,427	997,669	355,623
Non-controlling interests	-	-	-	-
	478,593	235,427	997,669	355,623
Earnings per share	0.005	0.003	0.011	0.004

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them in Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Not Alone: Oman holds mental health forum

In a resounding success, the third annual Mental Health Forum organised by H H Sayyida Dr Basma al Said and the dedicated team behind the Not Alone campaign.

Held in association with the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO) Oman on November 4 at the Oman Across Ages Museum, the forum has left an indelible mark on the landscape of mental health awareness.

This year's forum focused on the pivotal theme of mental health, with a strong emphasis on the significance of a sense of belonging, especially during these times of uncertainty.

The event witnessed a historic turnout, with the highest number of attendees ever recorded in the history of the museum for a forum. Esteemed guests, including Princess Kholoud al Said from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, royal families, dignitaries, and ministers, added to the event's prestige.

Over 250 people attended, making it an impactful gathering of minds. The forum featured 30



speakers, with some of the most notable names in the field of mental health and wellbeing.

The main speakers included Dr Ramani Durvasula, a licensed clinical psychologist and founder of LUNA Education, Training & Consulting from California, USA, and Dr Rania Awaad, a Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford University.

Dr Moustafa el Nahas, a psychiatry consultant and the General Manager of Sabeel Addiction Center from Egypt, and Dr Hassan Mirza, a consultant psychiatrist at the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital and Whispers of Serenity Clinic, also shared their expertise.

In addition to these prominent figures, head representatives from Unicef Oman, WHO Oman, and the Ministry of Health shared their insights, along with psychologists, professors from Sultan Qaboos University, Omani artists, and athletes. The forum also included light-hearted talks from children aged 10-13.

The event featured back-to-back panel discussions on various important topics, including the Role of International Organizations in Mental Health Programs, Media and Mental Health, an Artists Panel, a Sports Panel, and workshops for parents, dealing with grief and loss. The event concluded with a meditation session, offering attendees a holistic view of mental health.

The organisers expressed their gratitude to everyone involved in making this event a resounding success, especially the volunteers, esteemed sponsors including Ominvest, LNG, Petrogas, Daleel Petroleum, and the event partner Oman Across Ages Museum, who contributed significantly to the event's triumph.



Oman Air's Global Sale campaign back with up to 20% off

Oman Air has announced the return of its highly anticipated Global Sale, offering travellers up to 20% off fares in Business and Economy Class.

With a range of must-visit destinations across the airline's network, including Europe, the Far East and the Indian Subcontinent, it's an extraordinary opportunity to explore the world at unbeatable prices, the company stated.

The campaign, which is running until November 15, is part of Oman Air's commitment to providing exceptional

travel experiences that combine maximum convenience, unmatched comfort, and world-class service. 'Whether it's a relaxing beach escape, a cultural adventure, or a business trip, now is the perfect time to book a flight and turn travel dreams into reality'.

The promotion is valid for travel until March 31 and includes one-way and return flights. The domestic sector, interline sector, codeshare partners, Jeddah and London are not included. Other terms and conditions apply.

MoE conducts training for Omani participants of Arab championship for maths, logic games

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiads, on Thursday began a training camp for the Omani participants of the Arab Championship for Mathematics and Logic Games in its 'first' edition.

The training camp will continue for seven days, with the participation of 'four students' representing the governorates of Dakhiliyah, North Sharqiyah, South Batinah, and Buraimi, at the Best Western Primer Hotel in Al Khuwair.

The training camp includes intensive training consisting of 48 training hours in a variety of puzzles and mathematical logic games, in several areas, the most important of which are: Logic, arithmetic, compositions, algebra, geometry, decoding, cutting, folding, and paving; to prepare students to participate and represent the Sultanate of Oman in the championship organised by the Arab Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), which is scheduled to be held in the Republic of Tunisia



during from November 27 to 29.

The training camp aims to train students and prepare them to participate in the championship, provide them with various skills and new ideas, and form a national team that will compete in the championships for years to come.

It is worth noting that a number of 22 students from various educational governorates were nominated, with two students from each governorate, to compete for the participation in the championship.

They were trained for 30 virtual training hours, and then a filtering test was conducted to choose four candidates - two of them - participating in this championship - are Muhammad al Hudaifi (grade 6) from Abdul Rahman bin Abi Bakr School for Basic Education in North Sharqiyah governorate, and Shahad al Mandhari (grade 6) from Umm Ayman School for Basic Education in Dakhiliyah governorate.

The other two students namely Mohammad al Salmani (grade 6) from Suhaib bin Sinan School for Basic Education in South Batinah governorate and Sarah al Kalbani (grade 5) from Hafeet School for Basic Education in Buraimi governorate, were chosen to prepare to compete in the upcoming championship.

Samsung AI Forum in Korea showcases key advancements

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd opened the Samsung AI Forum, at which it shared the latest research achievements in artificial intelligence (AI) and computer engineering (CE), contributing to enhancing the company's next-generation semiconductor technology.

With over 1,000 attendees - including leading academics, industry experts, researchers, and students - the seventh iteration of the Samsung AI Forum took place at the Suwon Convention Center in Gyeonggi-do, Korea, under the theme of 'large-scale AI for a better tomorrow'.

The events on the first day of the two-day forum were hosted by the Samsung Advanced Institute of Technology (SAIT), while the second day events were hosted by Samsung Research at the Samsung R&D campus in Seoul, Korea.

Kye Hyun Kyung, President and CEO of Samsung Electronics' Device Solutions (DS) Division, said in his opening remarks, "The

spotlight has recently shifted toward Generative AI technology, as it provides us the potential to unlock new solutions and address long-standing challenges. But the need for in-depth research on the safety, trustworthiness, and sustainability of AI is increasing at the same time."



About the event, Kyung added, "We expect this forum - where top global experts have gathered - will be a platform to discuss ways to create a brighter future through AI and semiconductor technologies."

Yoshua Bengio, expert in deep learning technology and professor at the University of Montreal, shared his latest research in a keynote presentation titled, "To-

wards a Safe AI Scientist System." He introduced a safe AI machine learning algorithm that can prevent large language models (LLMs) from developing in directions not intended by developers.

Jim Keller, CEO of AI semiconductor startup Tenstorrent, introduced the open instruction set architecture (ISA) RISC-V during his session titled, 'Own Your Silicon', and emphasised that RISC-V will create new possibilities in next-generation AI through innovation in hardware structure design.

During the forum, Samsung announced the winners of the Samsung AI Researcher Award and the Samsung AI/CE Challenge.

The intent of these accolades is to honour upcoming researchers, university students and graduates who are excelling domestically.

Samsung AI Researcher of the Year awards were presented to five AI researchers.

Wizz Air Abu Dhabi commences operations from new Terminal A with first flight to Cairo

Wizz Air Abu Dhabi, the ultra-low-fare national airline of the UAE and the second largest airline in Abu Dhabi by seat capacity, has recently started operating from the new Abu Dhabi International Airport Terminal A, a release stated.

The airline is one of the first national carriers to fully move operations to the new world class facility. The new terminal will support the national carrier's growth plans in ramping up operations and offering a seamless journey to meet its ambitious growth plans and high demand.

Terminal A will offer a seamless passenger journey, fostering connectivity and facilitating business, trade and tourism. This will be a major step-forward in enhancing the local aviation ecosystem and will enable it to grow its regional and global visitors to explore the incredible art, culture, tradition and hospitality across the emirate.

Wizz Air Abu Dhabi celebrated the move to the new ter-



terminal with the inauguration of its first flight from Abu Dhabi to Sphinx International Airport in Cairo. The new route provides affordable, hassle-free, point-to-point travel for tourists and residents in the UAE, Egypt and across the region.

The flights from Cairo and Abu Dhabi will operate on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Wizz Air managing director Johan Eidhagen said: "We are delighted to be one of the first airlines to commence operations from the new-state-of-the-art

Terminal A. The move to the new terminal and launching our new route to Sphinx, Cairo is a milestone moment in our phenomenal recent growth as it strengthens our position in playing a key role in the growth of the aviation sector in Abu Dhabi and accelerating the emirate's position as a global gateway and aviation hub. We will continue building on our ambitious expansion plans and expand our network with a plethora of incredible destinations. Together, we will ensure greater connectivity from Abu Dhabi to the world."

Elena Sorlini, managing director and interim CEO of Abu Dhabi Airports, said, "Wizz Air Abu Dhabi is an integral part of our family of national carriers, that continues its exponential growth in passenger uptake as they rapidly expand with more aircraft coming online. With the launch of operations from Terminal A, we are providing the aviation infrastructure for our national carriers to flourish and achieve their growth requirements as well as Abu Dhabi's strategic visitation plans."

Wizz Air currently flies to a total of more than 39 destinations in 27 different countries from Abu Dhabi and is ready to accelerate and expand operations further in 2024, providing cost-effective, unique experiences for travel lovers looking to explore. The new terminal will strengthen Abu Dhabi's reputation as a destination of choice and a global hub for trade and business, transforming the local aviation ecosystem.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Gaza hospitals under constant fire

Al-Shifa hospital was struck repeatedly overnight and lost power for hours

Jerusalem - Gaza hospitals reported being under constant fire and running on nearly exhausted supplies on Saturday as Israel rejected key allies' condemnation of a rising civilian death toll in the Hamas-controlled territory.

The director of the besieged Palestinian territory's largest hospital, Al-Shifa, said on Saturday the compound was struck repeatedly overnight and lost power for hours after its generator was hit.

"We received calls about dozens of dead and hundreds wounded in air and artillery strikes, but our ambulances weren't able to go out because of gunfire," said hospital director Mohammad Abu Salmiya.

Israel has denied targeting hospitals and its army has accused Hamas of using the medical facilities as command centres and hideouts, a charge the Palestinian group denies.

The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry said dozens of premature babies at Al-Shifa compound were at risk of dying because the lack of generator fuel meant their incubators could be shut down on Saturday as fighting raged.

They added one of the babies



A woman is helped down from a building destroyed during Israeli bombing on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, on Saturday, as battles between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement continue (AFP)

had died, and one person was killed and several others wounded in a strike on Al-Shifa early on Saturday.

The suffering in Gaza has prompted growing calls for a halt in five weeks of fighting in order to protect civilian lives and allow humanitarian aid into the densely populated territory.

Hamas fighters smashed through the militarised border on October 7, killing around 1,200 people, according to the most recent Israeli figures.

The Gaza health ministry says Israeli fighting has killed more than 11,000 people, also mostly civilians and thousands

of them children. Islamic Jihad, another Palestinian armed group present in Gaza, said on Saturday its 'fighters are engaged in fierce clashes in the vicinity of Al-Shifa hospital complex' and other areas of Gaza City, claiming to have caused 'casualties in the ranks of the (Israeli) enemy forces'.

'Far too many' deaths

Concern over the civilian toll has also come from staunch Israel ally Washington, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken saying Friday: "Far too many Palestinians have been killed."

The conflict has stoked regional tensions, with deadly cross-border exchanges between the Israeli army and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement. In northern Gaza, the director of the Indonesian hospital said lack of fuel forced the facility to cut power to thinks like their desalination plant, scanners and lifts.

"The hospital is working with 30-40 per cent of its capacity," Atef Al-Kahlout said. "We call on the honourable people of the world, if any of them are left, to put pressure on the occupation forces to supply the Indonesian hospital and the rest of the hospitals in the Gaza Strip."

Hospitals have become key sites for Palestinians seeking refuge from the intense gun battles and bombardment.

A wounded boy at the Indonesian hospital, Youssef Al-Najjar, said he was waiting for surgery but the necessary machines were off due to lack of power.

"I'm very thirsty but I'm not allowed to drink or eat until the operation is done," he added.

Twenty of Gaza's 36 hospitals are 'no longer functioning', the UN's humanitarian agency said. Fighting has reduced some streets in Gaza to ruins,

France's Macron calls on Israel to stop bombing Gaza civilians

Paris, France - French President Emmanuel Macron called on Friday on Israel to stop bombing civilians in Gaza, saying there was 'no justification' and the deaths were causing 'resentment'.

In an interview with the BBC, Macron said Israel had the right to protect itself after the October 7 Hamas attacks, but he added: "These babies, these ladies, these old people are bombed and killed. 'So there is no reason for that and no legitimacy. So we do urge Israel to stop."

Macron said France 'clearly condemns' the unprecedented cross border attacks by the Palestinian groups. "We do share [Israel's] pain. And we do share their willingness to get rid of

terrorism," Macron said in the interview on the fringes of an international peace forum in Paris.

"We know what terrorism means in France." But he insisted there was 'no justification' for the bombing of civilians. "It's extremely important for all of us because of our principles, because we are democracies. It's important for the mid-to-long run as well for the security of Israel itself, to recognise that all lives matter," he added.

Macron said that all governments and aid agencies at a conference in Paris had agreed that a 'humanitarian pause' followed by a 'cease-fire' was the only way to protect Gaza's civilians.

AFP



Smoke billows from hills in Ramim Ridge after an exchange of fire between Israel and the Hezbollah movement on Saturday (AFP)

Israel drone strikes deep into Lebanese territory: Media

Beirut, Lebanon - An Israeli drone struck on Saturday a vehicle deep in Lebanese territory, official media in Lebanon said, after weeks of skirmishes mainly limited to border areas since the Israel-Hamas war began.

Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) said 'an enemy drone targeted a pick-up truck' on a farmland in the Zahrani area on Lebanon's coast, some 45km (28 miles) from the Israeli border, without reporting any casualties.

The frontier between the two countries has seen daily exchanges of fire, mainly between Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement and Israel, since October 7 when attacks on Israel by Palestinian group Hamas sparked war.

Saturday's was the deepest Israeli strike on Lebanese territory since the latest hostilities began. It also came hours before Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah was due to make a

televised address at 3pm (1300 GMT).

The Lebanese army prevented journalists from approaching the area, which is near the Zahrani power plant, one of Lebanon's ailing energy facilities. The NNA reported Israeli attacks on areas near the border on Saturday, while an AFP correspondent in northern Israel reported apparent incoming rocket fire after air raid sirens sounded.

Hezbollah said it carried out two cross-border attacks on Israeli troops on Saturday, claiming they caused casualties. The powerful Shiite Muslim movement said on Friday that Israeli fire had killed seven of its fighters, without specifying where or when they died.

It later released several statements claiming attacks on northern Israel near the border, including three drone assaults - one of them on an Israeli army barracks.

AFP

Gaza's health system on its knees: WHO

United Nations, US - The health care system in the Gaza Strip is 'on its knees', the head of the World Health Organization warned on Friday, noting that half of the territory's 36 hospitals are no longer functioning.

Speaking to the Security Council, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described the situation on the ground as desperate: "Hospital corridors crammed with the injured, the sick, the dying; morgues overflowing; surgery without anaesthesia; tens of thousands of displaced people sheltering at hospitals."

"The health system is on its knees, and yet somehow is continuing to deliver lifesaving care," he said.

Tedros said there had been more than 250 attacks on health care - such as strikes on hospitals, clinics, ambulances and patients - in Gaza and the West



WHO chief Tedros Ghebreyesus addressing the Security Council meeting in New York City on Friday (AFP)

The best way to support health workers is by giving them the tools they need to deliver that care - medicines, medical equipment and fuel for hospital generators

TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

Bank, and 25 such attacks in Israel in the conflict triggered by Hamas's shock October 7 assault. "The best way to support those health workers and the people they serve is by giving them the tools they need to deliver that care - medicines, med-

ical equipment and fuel for hospital generators," he said, calling for an increase in aid trickling in through the Rafah crossing with Egypt and repeating the UN's call for a ceasefire.

"I understand what the children of Gaza must be going through, because as a child, I went through the same thing," said the WHO chief, who is from Ethiopia's Tigray region.

"The sound of gunfire and shells whistling through the air; the smell of smoke after they struck; tracer bullets in the night sky; the fear; the pain; the loss - these things have stayed with me throughout my life."

He also denounced the 'horrific, barbaric and unjustifiable attacks' carried out by Hamas fighters, and demanded the release of hostages held by the group.

AFP

Thousands march in London at pro-Palestinian demo

London, UK - Huge crowds marched through the British capital on Saturday, as pro-Palestinian supporters made their latest mass call for a ceasefire, with police out in force to prevent clashes with counter-protesters.

The 'National March for Palestine', organised by the Stop the War Coalition, set off after a two-minutes' silence to remember Britain's war dead on Armistice Day was observed at The Cenotaph war memorial in central London at 1100 GMT.

Huge crowds of protesters waved black, red, white and green Palestinian flags and held aloft placards proclaiming 'Stop



Protesters with placards and flags take part in the 'National March For Palestine' in central London on Saturday (AFP)

Bombing Gaza'.

As the march set off, protesters shouted 'free Palestine' and 'ceasefire now'.

Scuffles

London's Metropolitan Police has made a total of nearly 100 arrests at previous pro-Palestinian marches, including for supporting Hamas. But Saturday's march has generated concern because it coincides with Armistice Day, commemorating the end of fighting in World War I in 1918 - and political criticisms about the policing operation.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak made a late plea for calm late on Friday, calling for protesters to do so 'respectfully and peacefully'. Met Police deputy assistant commissioner Laurence Taylor said march organisers had changed the route from Hyde Park to the US Embassy in south London to ensure it will not pass any landmark memorials.

Previous events have seen 'small groups break away' and that 'their behaviour has been escalating and becoming more violent', Taylor, who is leading the policing operation, told reporters. Metal barriers have been placed around the area containing the most significant memorials, and an exclusion zone created, with police able to arrest any marchers who try to breach it.

Thousands of people wearing red poppies - the symbol of remembrance - stood heads bowed at The Cenotaph on Whitehall for a solemn ceremony of reflection.

AFP



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (AFP)

North Korea slams Blinken’s comments on ties with Russia

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea’s foreign ministry on Saturday slammed US Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s comments on Pyongyang’s relations with Moscow, saying the remarks would ‘only escalate the dangerous political and military tension’ on the peninsula.

Blinken was in Seoul earlier this week after attending a G7 foreign ministers’ meeting in Japan. He met with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and other top officials.

During his visit to the South Korean capital, he said military ties between Pyongyang and Moscow were ‘growing and dangerous’, and urged Beijing, Pyongyang’s main ally, to restrain the nuclear-armed North.

Pyongyang on Saturday condemned Blinken and said his comments were ‘irresponsible and provocative’.

The remarks ‘only escalate the dangerous political and military tension in the Korean peninsula and the region’, Pyongyang’s foreign ministry said, according to the state-run Korean Central

News Agency.

“The US should be accused to the new reality of the DPRK-Russia relations,” it added, using the North’s official name.

Historic allies Russia and North Korea are both under international sanctions - the former for its invasion of Ukraine and the latter over its nuclear weapons and missile programmes. Their growing military cooperation has been a source of concern for Ukraine and its allies, especially following North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in September.

Seoul has said that Pyongyang sent one million artillery rounds to bolster Moscow’s war in Ukraine in exchange for advice on satellite technology.

Pyongyang said on Saturday that ‘no matter what others may say, the friendly and cooperative relations between the DPRK and Russia aspiring after independence, peace and friendship will steadily grow stronger’.

AFP

Liberia football legend faces tight run-off to stay president

Monrovia, Liberia - Liberians vote for a new president on Tuesday in a tight run-off between President George Weah, an ex-international football star, and political veteran Joseph Boakai.

The United Nations has urged all parties ‘to contribute to a peaceful environment’, in the first elections since peacekeepers left the civil war-ravaged West African country.

Weah, 57, and Boakai, 78, finished neck and neck in the first round of voting on October 10. Neither could get an absolute majority.

Campaigning for the run-off has been low-key, with each side scrambling to secure endorsements from the 18 contenders who lost in the first round.

Observers anticipate a close fought rematch of the 2017 second round when Weah easily beat Boakai with 61.5 per cent against 38.5 per cent.

Weah was only marginally ahead last month, with 43.83 per cent to Boakai’s 43.44 per cent.

“The run-off between Boakai and Weah will be very tight,” Lawrence Yealue, who runs the civil society group Accountability Lab Liberia, said.

Weah entered politics after a career as a striker for top-flight European teams and is popular among Liberia’s largely young population. He is the only African to win football’s most prestigious individual award, the Ballon d’Or, in 1995.

Raised in the Monrovia slums, he was largely absent from Liberia during the 1989-2003 civil wars which left more than 250,000 people dead.

Some voters complain he has



Supporters of Liberia’s ruling party react in Monrovia on October 24 as official results show George Weah as the winner in the first round of the election (AFP)

Our economic system has broken down, the sellers are more than the buyers. Our health facilities have broken down, our educational system has broken down

SHAD FOSTER

failed to tackle corruption and improve life for the poorest amid rising prices and shortages of basic necessities.

“Our economic system has broken down, the sellers are more than the buyers. Our health facilities have broken down, our educational system has broken down,” Shad Foster, 33, from Monrovia’s Duazon neighbourhood, told AFP.

If Weah wins a second term, he said he feared that ‘things will

be worse’.

Tough time

Boakai was vice president from 2006 to 2018 under Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa’s first elected female president. He has held various state and oil industry jobs.

He says his Unity Party wants to rescue the country from poor governance and corruption.

Boakai has pledged to improve infrastructure, invest in agricul-

ture and restore the image of the country, still recovering from 14 years of conflict and an Ebola epidemic.

More than a fifth of the population survives on less than US\$2.15 a day, according to the World Bank.

“We are engaging the people from towns, cities and villages and we can see that our message is resonating,” his party’s Abel Plackie told AFP.

Boakai has formed alliances with local political leaders, including ex-warlord and now senator Prince Johnson, who supported Weah in 2017 and enjoys strong support in his native northeastern Nimba County.

But with two thirds of Liberians aged under 25, detractors say Boakai’s age is a hindrance.

Post-vote fears

International observers praised the smooth conduct of the first round of voting, despite fears of post-election violence.

During the campaigning period, clashes had erupted between supporters of the ruling party and the opposition, leaving several people dead.

While voter turnout in the first round topped 78 per cent, described by the electoral commission as ‘historic’, voter fatigue is now a risk.

“We see a lack of interest in a lot of voters, and from our engagements, we have heard people who voted in the first round saying they will not vote,” Yealue, of Accountability Lab Liberia, said.

AFP

REMEMBRANCE DAY



The Sydney Opera House is illuminated with poppies as Royal Australian Navy bugler Phill O’Neill plays the ‘Last Post’ to commemorate Remembrance Day in Sydney on Saturday (AFP)

Icelandic town of 4,000 people evacuated over volcano fears

Reykjavik, Iceland - An Icelandic town near the capital Reykjavik and home to some 4,000 people was evacuated overnight after hundreds of tremors caused fears of a volcanic eruption, authorities said on Saturday.

Iceland declared a state of emergency on Friday after a series of powerful earthquakes rocked the country’s southwestern Reykjanes peninsula, in what could be a precursor to a volcanic eruption near Sundhnjukagigar, some three kilometres (1.86 miles) north of the town of Grindavik.

The town - around 40km southwest of Reykjavik - is located near the Blue Lagoon geothermal spa resort, a popular tourist destination which

closed temporarily earlier this week as a precaution.

Grindavik is also near the Svartsengi geothermal plant, the main supplier of electricity and water to 30,000 residents on the Reykjanes peninsula.

Iceland has 33 active volcanic systems, the highest number in Europe

Iceland has 33 active volcanic systems, the highest number in Europe.

The Icelandic Met Office had initially said that an eruption would most likely take place ‘in several days rather than hours’, as magma had

been observed accumulating under the Earth’s surface at a depth of about five kilometres for several days.

But late on Friday it noted that seismic activity was moving closer to the surface and magma was beginning to rise vertically toward the Earth’s crust between Sundhnjukagigar and Grindavik - suggesting an eruption could come sooner.

Authorities decided to evacuate Grindavik after the Met Office said there was a ‘likelihood that a magma intrusion has extended beneath Grindavik’.

“At this stage, it is not possible to determine exactly whether and where magma might reach the surface,” it said.

AFP

Hundreds of environmental activists demand plastic action in Kenya

Nairobi, Kenya - Hundreds of environmental campaigners marched in the Kenyan capital Nairobi on Saturday demanding drastic curbs on plastic production, ahead of a meeting to negotiate a global plastics treaty.

Representatives from more than 170 nations will meet in Nairobi from Monday to negotiate what concrete measures should be included in a binding worldwide treaty to end plastic pollution.

Marchers called for the talks to focus on cutting the amount of plastic produced and waved placards reading ‘Plastic crisis =

climate crisis’ and ‘End multigenerational toxic exposure’.

They chanted ‘let polluters pay the price’ as they walked slowly behind a ceremonial band from central Nairobi to a park in the west of the capital.

Nations agreed last year to finalise by 2024 a world-first UN treaty to address the scourge of plastics found everywhere from mountain tops and the deepest sea trenches to inside human blood streams.

Negotiators have met twice already but Nairobi is the first opportunity to debate a draft treaty published in September



Climate activists hold banners and chant slogans as they march to demand reduction in plastic production, in Nairobi on Saturday (AFP)

that outlines the many pathways to tackling the plastic problem.

“There is a lot of talk on end of pipe solutions which we do not need right now,” Tiara Samson, an associate from the Break Free From Plastic movement, which organised the Saturday march, told AFP.

“Investing in those solutions divert the focus on what we really need to do which is mandating ambitious targets on plastics reduction,” added the campaigner, who travelled from the Philippines.

The November 13-19 meeting in Nairobi is the third of five ses-

sions in a fast-tracked process aiming to conclude negotiations next year so the treaty can be adopted by mid-2025.

At the last talks in Paris, campaigners accused large plastic-producing nations of deliberately stalling after two days were lost debating procedural points.

This time around, the sessions have been extended by two days but there are still concerns a weaker treaty could emerge if time for detailed discussion is swallowed up going in circles.

Global plastic production has more than doubled since the start of the century to reach

460mn tonnes, and it could triple by 2060 if nothing is done.

It wraps food, is woven into clothes and the fabric of buildings, and is an important material for disposable medical products. But less than 10 per cent of plastic waste is currently recycled.

Microplastics have been found everywhere from clouds to the deepest sea trenches, as well as throughout the human body.

The effects of plastics on human health remain poorly understood, but there is growing concern among scientists.

AFP

Grain tune: Indian PM’s millet music gets Grammy nod

New Delhi, India - India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made an entry into the halls of global music with a song featuring him and his passion for millet nominated for a Grammy.

‘Abundance In Millets’ by Falu and Gaurav Shah, a tune the musicians say was ‘written and performed’ with the prime minister, features speeches by Modi expounding the benefits of his favourite grain.

India is the world’s largest

producer and second-largest exporter of millet, a gluten-free grain which can grow on marginal land with limited water, and Modi’s government has been working to boost its production and consumption since coming to power in 2014.

‘Millets are a wonder’, Falu and Shah sing, pondering ‘what if we could change the world?’

The tune was nominated on Friday in the Best Global Music Performance category, along-



India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi (ANI)

side six others, ranging from Nigerian Afrobeat star Burna Boy and Davido, to Mexico’s Silvana Estrada and Franco-Lebanese trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf.

Grammy-winning Indian-American singer Falguni Shah, popularly known as Falu, has said the song was a ‘smart idea’ from Modi himself who collaborated in its making to realise his ‘vision’ of helping overcome hunger and alleviate poverty in

the world.

The song was ‘written and performed with Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help farmers grow millets and help end world hunger’, Falu said on X in June.

Modi, 73, has called the tune ‘very creative’ and said he believes it ‘will inspire more people to embrace millets for healthy living!’

It was India’s suggestion that the United Nations declare

2023 as the International Year of Millets, and at the G20 summit in September in New Delhi world leaders were served an all-vegetarian dinner dominated by millet.

Millet was a staple food in many regions of India for thousands of years, and was eaten as porridge, flatbread, dosa pancakes and with lentils.

But the ‘green revolution’ that started in India in the 1960s saw the production of millet fall as

hybrid high-yield varieties of wheat and rice gained prominence. As a result, millet began to be seen as the food of the rural poor.

“The shared efforts of our farmers and us...will adorn India and the world’s prosperity with a new radiance,” Modi says in the song, in a sample from a speech.

Grammy winners will be announced on February 4.

AFP

Kyiv targeted ending 52-day calm

Ukraine is bracing for a renewed Russian aerial onslaught this winter

Kyiv, Ukraine - A missile targeted Kyiv on Saturday, ending nearly two months of relative calm in the Ukrainian capital, while front-line regions fended off waves of drone attacks overnight.

Ukraine is bracing for a renewed Russian aerial onslaught this winter, after systematic strikes last year targeted the country’s energy grid, leaving thousands without heating or electricity in freezing temperatures for long periods.

“After a long pause of 52 days, the enemy renewed missile attacks on Kyiv,” said the head of the Kyiv city military administration Sergiy Popko.

He added that the Russians had launched a missile attack on the capital on Saturday morning.

AFP journalists in central Kyiv heard two strong explosions and saw trails in the sky at dawn.

Air sirens sounded soon after that.

Asked why the alarm had gone off after the explosion, air force spokesman Yuriy Ignat said on television that ‘ballistic missiles fly extremely fast and are not as visible as cruise missiles on the radars’.

The air force said it was clarifying whether the capital had been targeted by an Iskander ballistic missile, or by an S-400 anti-aircraft missile.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday that Ukraine



A couple walks behind a billboard depicting a Ukrainian serviceman in the central of Kyiv on Friday amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

had deployed more Western air defence systems, as it braces for a second full winter of Russian attacks on energy facilities.

‘Fair’ response

Air defences last downed a missile in Kyiv on September 21. The falling debris wounded seven people, including a child.

There were no reported casualties or damage in the capital itself on Saturday.

But two missiles hit a field between two settlements in the

wider Kyiv region, the head of the regional military administration said.

“The blast wave damaged five private residential buildings. In particular, roofs and windows were smashed,” Ruslan Kravchenko said.

Other regions of Ukraine meanwhile fended off drone attacks overnight.

The air force said it downed 19 of the 31 attack drones launched by Moscow between Friday evening and Saturday 3am

The Ukrainian air force said on Saturday it was clarifying whether the capital had been targeted by an Iskander ballistic missile, or by an S-400 anti-aircraft missile

(0100 GMT).

“The Russian occupants sent most of the attack UAVs to the frontline areas,” it said.

It added Russia used several missiles overnight, but did not specify if any of them were downed.

Ukraine warned it may attack Russian oil and gas infrastructure if Moscow repeats its campaign of strikes on energy infrastructure over the winter.

Energy Minister German Galushchenko said it ‘would be

fair’ to target Russia’s oil and gas infrastructure if Ukraine’s power grid came under sustained attacks, in an interview with Politico.

On the ground, Ukrainian forces are facing assaults from Russian troops around the eastern frontline town of Avdiivka.

“Our servicemen and women are steadfastly holding the line in the Avdiivka sector,” Ukrainian army commander Oleksandr Tarnavskiy said.

AFP

Australia responds to ‘cyber incident’ at ports

Sydney, Australia - The Australian government said on Saturday it was responding to a ‘significant cyber security incident’ affecting several ports operated by DP World Australia that could last a number of days.

Home Affairs Minister Clare O’Neil said on social media platform X the government was coordinating a response to the incident and that authorities were working with DP World Australia ‘to understand the impacts’.

O’Neil said the national crisis management framework employed during the COVID-19 pandemic was being used in response to the incident.

DP World Australia did not respond immediately to a request for comment from AFP.

However, the ports operator said in a statement quoted by *The Sydney Morning Herald* it had ‘restricted landside access to our Australian port operations while we continue our investigation’ to safeguard employees, customers and its networks.

National Cyber Security Coordinator Darren Goldie said on X, formerly Twitter, that the ‘interruption is likely to continue for a number of days and will impact the movement of goods into and out of the country’.

AFP

GIFT OF GOD



Itzae (meaning ‘Gift of God’ in Mayan), a four-month-old albino puma cub (*Felis concolor*) born in captivity last August and considered an endangered species, is pictured next to its mother at Thomas Belt Zoo in Juigalpa, Nicaragua, on Friday (AFP)

Venezuelan prison crackdown: A show?

Caracas, Venezuela - Since September, Venezuela has deployed thousands of security force members to wrest control of seven prisons from the hands of powerful gangs - finding caches of guns, drugs, swimming pools and restaurants - even a zoo.

The facilities - which sometimes resembled luxury retreats for gang bosses rather than places of detention - were shuttered and their 9,000-odd inmates moved to other, already overcrowded prisons.

While Justice Minister Remigio Ceballos has triumphantly declared a death blow to gangs that have for years run the prisons with impunity, observers denounce a smoke and mirrors tactic to distract from human rights and other concerns in a country under international scrutiny.

It is all ‘a show’, said Humberto Prado of the Venezuelan Prison Observatory (OVP), an NGO, pointing out that the first, highly-publicised raid of the infamous Tocoron prison came in the same week the UN released



This file photo shows members of the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB) standing guard outside the Tocoron prison in Tocoron, Aragua State, Venezuela, on September 20 (AFP)

a report on human rights violations in the economically and politically troubled South American nation. The OVP claims to have evidence that top gang leaders were tipped off by authorities and left the country before some of the raids.

For Prado, the entire operation had been carefully designed to ‘divert attention’ as Venezuela moves toward holding presidential elections next year seeking to shed some of its pariah status, and sanctions.

Caracas is under investigation by the International Criminal Court in The Hague for alleged crimes against humanity over its response to protests in 2017 against President Nicolas Maduro. Over 100 people died in a crackdown and hundreds more have been arrested since then who are among dozens of inmates described by rights activists as political prisoners.

In the first of the raids, on September 20, authorities found restaurants, a pool, a nightclub

and a zoo at Tocoron prison.

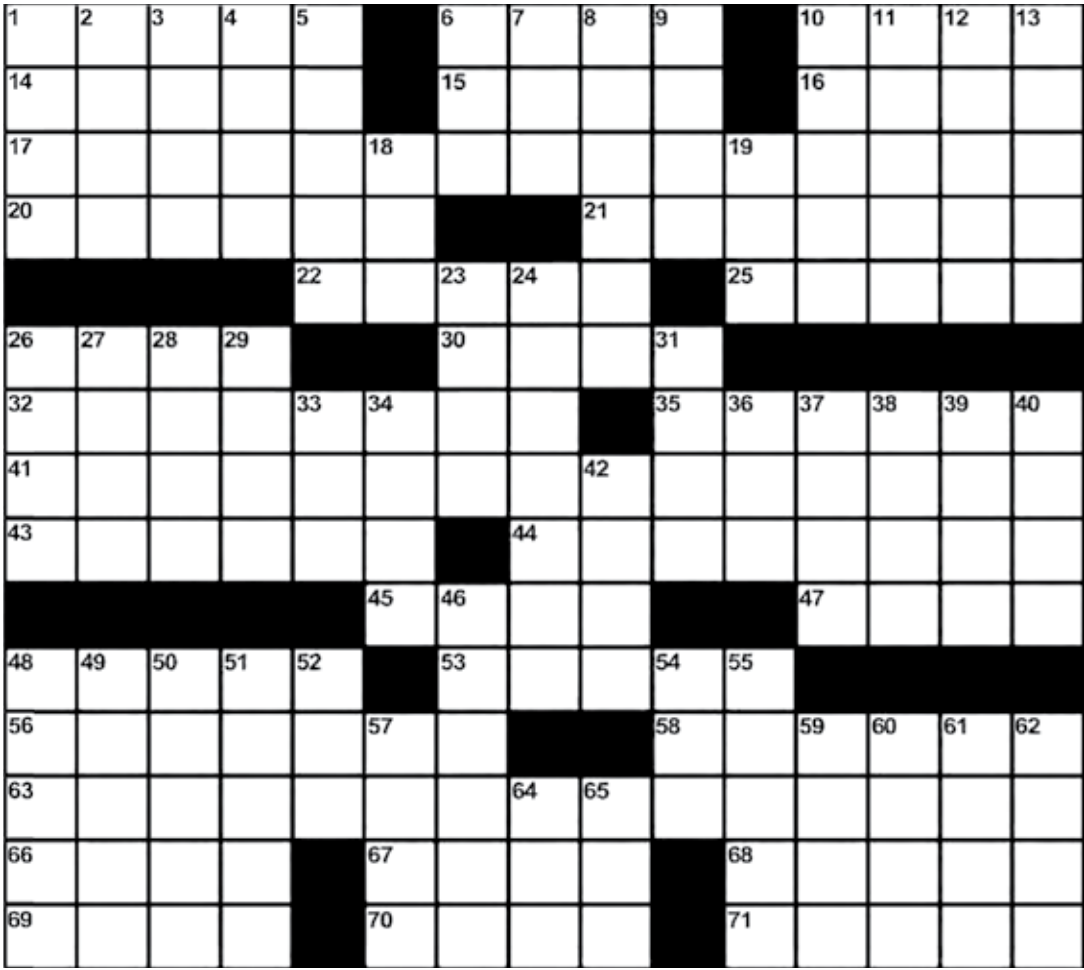
The also seized Bitcoin mining machines, rocket launchers and machine guns with thousands of belts of ammunition.

One soldier was killed in the operation at the prison ruled by the Tren de Aragua gang, which had been using it as a base for its international criminal operations.

Six more raids followed, including La Pica penitentiary where officials said gangs had been running an extortion centre.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Goes from snow to slush
6) Make a contract official
10) Mass garments
14) Priest's leave
15) Doing nothing
16) Numbered circle
17) Used the black credit card
20) Start to give in
21) Olympics participant
22) "Nevermore" speaker
25) Jeter of baseball fame
26) Basic impulse
30) "Not to mention ..."
32) Levy anew
35) Type of columnist
41) Certain homey dwelling
43) Like the Milky Way
44) Catholic prayer
45) _ spumante (sparkling wine)
47) Irksome insect
48) Flowery writing
53) Cardiff-born
56) Pakistani neighbor
58) County, in Louisiana
63) Is evenhanded

66) Soon-to-be adult
67) Sound of an active blender
68) British cleric
69) Poker pay-in
70) Beginner or apprentice
71) Cousin of a gazelle

DOWN

1) Untidy situation
2) World's Fair, for one
3) New thing to turn over?
4) Lemony, e.g.
5) Have the helm
6) Violate a commandment
7) Awaited words at a wedding
8) Learns little by little
9) At the front of the line
10) British pop sensation
11) Ocean vessel
12) Keep the turkey moist
13) Glossy
18) Modern evidence type, briefly
19) High degree
23) Bouquet holder
24) Take to another level?
26) _ Major ("Big Bear"

constellation)
27) Agents, briefly
28) Decorated with gold
29) Kuwaiti VIP
31) Leer over
33) Sch. support group
34) _ podrida (spicy stew)
36) A little resistance?
37) Cleansing bar
38) Certain
39) Wife of Osiris
40) Boggy matter
42) Opposite of good
46) Like nets around Stephen Curry?
48) Serving in an Italian restaurant
49) Much more than occasionally
50) White-plumed wading bird
51) "Rise and_!"
52) Talk, talk, talk
54) Place for mud baths
55) Bisect
57) Little salamander
59) Amtrak transportation
60) Andean civilization
61) Check out groceries,

perhaps
62) Bovine bunch
64) Tire filler
65) Sib of sis

NOTE PAD

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You can't do it all today, which is a fact that will become glaringly apparent almost as soon as you get started this morning. But instead of feeling frustrated, start cutting out a few tasks and adjusting your expectations. Despite what you may think, you aren't a superhero! It's much better to do less and succeed often than it is to always aim for the stars and continually fall short. Climbing a smaller mountain is still climbing a mountain.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Look out for people who are emotionally on the edge. That kind of irregular energy is contagious, and it's the last thing you need to catch today. Understand that irrational people aren't a good influence on your life, and get as much distance from them as you can. You might have an honest desire to maintain goodwill with one of them, but at a certain point your attempts to placate them will stop working. Instead, it's just best to leave them alone.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

When you're working toward a goal, you have every right to use all your skills in addition to your intelligence. Today, pull out your secret weapon: your charm! Flash that smile and tell people just how wonderful you think they are. People like to be treated well, and you know how to boost someone's ego without being fake or flirtatious. By helping people lighten up and not take things too seriously, you'll help them take you more seriously.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

It's a good idea for you to stick close to home and focus on one or two people who matter the most to you today. Things around your home like warmth and safety are very appealing and satisfying to you. Also, there is a huge possibility for new depths in your personal relationships. A recent drama, while frustrating, has drawn you a lot closer to someone, and this fledgling relationship could benefit from some more attention today.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Look out for people who are emotionally on the edge. That kind of irregular energy is contagious, and it's the last thing you need to catch today. Understand that irrational people aren't a good influence on your life, and get as much distance from them as you can. You might have an honest desire to maintain goodwill with one of them, but at a certain point your attempts to placate them will stop working. Instead, it's just best to leave them alone.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Put your household issues at the top or your priority list today. From fixing a dripping faucet to painting a room to moving some furniture around, you need to get hands-on experience in your home. Putting physical energy into your intimate surroundings will energize you and fill you with a sense of pride that can't be achieved in any other way. And it doesn't have to be a solitary activity. Get a friend or roommate to help and make it a bonding experience.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

When it comes to improving the health of your finances, everything else has to take a back seat. If you're afraid that you'll be called a cheapskate by your friends, you need to get over it fast. But chances are good you won't. After all, they care about you and want you to meet your goals. When you chose your friends, you were smart enough to put their ability to support you high up on your list. If they only like you when your wallet is open, they're not your friends.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Have you been bored lately? That's all about to change when your routine gets disrupted and your life gets turned on its ear! An exciting surprise could throw you for a loop, but it will also energize you in a way you haven't felt in years. Sure, there might be a twinge of fear mixed in there too, but only enough to make you feel more alive than you've felt in years. Share your good news with someone close to you and let them take you out to celebrate.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It's a strong day for consensus. Others will agree with you, and you'll most likely agree with them. Everyone is on the same page, which means that big projects can move forward more quickly, and fewer egomaniacs are going to feel threatened. You deserve a lot of the credit for getting everyone aligned, and this will be noted in your next discussion with the higher-ups. This is also a great day to resolve any conflict at home. The love you share is bigger than anything else.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

The same old, same old suddenly feels a lot fresher today, and you could find yourself actually enjoying your daily routine. There is a lot of comfort in familiar tasks and faces. New adventures can wait. You're in no hurry to get going on any new projects and will enjoy just keep on with what you're working on now. It's a peaceful, even-keeled day that might not be remarkable, but it should be very pleasant. Enjoy a refreshing night's sleep tonight.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're feeling and looking extremely good today, and your positive energy will only grow with every social encounter you have. Talk it up and get your flirt on. Shine your bright smile on everyone you meet and you'll make their day. Expect a lot of double takes wherever you go. By the end of the day you might even feel embarrassed by all of the attention you've been getting, but why fight it? The fact is you're one hot ticket.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Have you been bored lately? That's all about to change when your routine gets disrupted and your life gets turned on its ear! An exciting surprise could throw you for a loop, but it will also energize you in a way you haven't felt in years. Sure, there might be a twinge of fear mixed in there too, but only enough to make you feel more alive than you've felt in years. Share your good news with someone close to you and let them take you out to celebrate.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. If you went due east of Rio De Janeiro, what country would you get to first?
A. Somalia
B. Namibia
C. India
D. Australia

02.The name of which floor or floors is often omitted in Chinese high-rise buildings and elevators?
A. Thirteenth
B. Any which contain the number "four"
C. Any which contain the number "one"
D. Seventh

03. How long is an Olympic-sized swimming pool?
A. 20 yards
B. 150 metres
C. 10 metres
D. 50 metres

Answers: 1.B 2.B 3.C D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

B	U	H	F
F	A	A	G
E	R	A	E
T	S	E	R

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Barca are in a dip, not a crisis: coach Xavi

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez insisted Saturday his club were in a dip but not falling into crisis and said president Joan Laporta had full confidence in his project.

The Spanish champions have played poorly in recent weeks and fell to an embarrassing 1-0 defeat by Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League on Tuesday in Hamburg. Despite the loss, Barcelona are still joint group leaders and expected to qualify for the knock-out phases, and are third in La Liga.

The Catalans lost at home to Real Madrid in the Clasico on October 28 and scraped a 1-0 win at Real Sociedad last weekend, despite a drab performance.

"I don't think this is (my worst moment) at all, my worst moment as a coach came last year," Xavi told a news conference, referring to his team's Champions League group stage elimination.

"I have lived through terrible crises here, this doesn't go that far, it's a dip ... we haven't played well, we have to recover our game. Getting that back is key - as a coach, I feel good, this is nothing to do with the situation we had last year."

Spanish media singled out Xavi for criticism after the Shakhtar loss, but the coach said Laporta was 'calm'.

"After each game we speak with the president," explained Xavi. "We are very united, he's a very positive person, more than me even, and he is very calm. "He has maximum confidence in us, as staff and as a group."

WOLVES STUN SPURS

Stoppage-time goals hand Wolves thrilling win

London, United Kingdom - Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou said his under-strength side ran out of gas after Wolves struck twice in stoppage time to snatch a dramatic 2-1 win on Saturday.

Brennan Johnson's first Spurs goal looked set to send Tottenham back above Manchester City to the top of the Premier League.

But after being wasteful for the first 90 minutes, Wolves found their shooting boots in added time. Substitute Pablo Sarabia smashed home the equaliser before Mario Lemina steered in the winner.

Spurs have now suffered back-to-back defeats after losing for the first time in the league under Postecoglou on Monday when Chelsea emerged from north London 4-1 victors after an action-packed encounter.

There were also longer lasting consequences for Spurs from defeat to Chelsea as influential summer signings Micky van de Ven and James Maddison were ruled out with injury until the new year.

Cristian Romero and Destiny Udogie were also suspended after being sent-off against Chelsea and Postecoglou conceded Spurs paid for the number of changes they were forced to make.

"Wolves were always going to come on strong. We probably ran out of a little bit of legs there



Tottenham Hotspur's Brennan Johnson (C) scores against Wolves in their English Premier League match on Saturday (AFP)

which is understandable, a lot of those guys haven't played and they scored a couple of good goals," said Postecoglou.

There were no signs of a hangover early on as Postecoglou's men made a perfect start.

Pedro Porro's low cross picked out Johnson at the near post and the Welshman prodded in his first goal since a £47.5 million

(\$58 million) move from Nottingham Forest. That was as potent as the Tottenham attack were all game as the visitors were eventually made to pay for relying on a makeshift defence.

"I thought we could have been a bit more positive," added Postecoglou. "Scoring early, we played a bit more conservatively."

Man Utd beat Luton

Victor Lindelof was Manchester United's unlikely hero as they moved into the Premier League's top six with a 1-0 win over Luton on Saturday.

The Swedish defender scored his first goal for nearly three years by smashing in from close range after Luton failed to clear a corner.

United boss Erik ten Hag desperately needed a response after his side slumped to a ninth defeat in 17 games this season by losing 4-3 to FC Copenhagen on Wednesday.

The English giants may be at risk of an early exit from the Champions League, but they have now won four of their last five in the Premier League.

All of those victories have been by a single goal and the manner of victory was again far from convincing for United in the Hatters' first trip to Old Trafford since 1991. Rasmus Hojlund scored twice on his return to Denmark in midweek to take his tally to five goals in four Champions League games.

AFP

Messi celebrates Ballon d'Or with MLS fans but Miami lose

Fort Lauderdale, United States - Inter Miami saluted Argentine star Lionel Messi's eighth Ballon d'Or on Friday, but their friendly match to mark the achievement ended in a 2-1 loss to MLS rivals New York City FC.

The defeat, in a match between two teams long out of the MLS championship running, was just a footnote on a celebratory night that began with Messi offering his thanks to fans for the welcome he'd received in Florida.

Fans, many of them shouting "Messi! Messi!" in unison, nearly filled the DRV PNK stadium - despite the fact that the club's MLS season ended last month.

"Thank you for being here, for

this beautiful tribute," Messi said after raising the trophy he'd collected in Paris last month. "I have been here for a short time, but it seems like a lot of time.

"I want to thank all the people of Miami, not only those who are here, but in the city in general, for the treatment I and my family have received during this time.

"They showed me a lot of affection, they made me feel at home."

The 36-year-old superstar received a rapturous welcome when he arrived at Inter Miami in July and powered the struggling franchise to the Leagues Cup title in a tournament with MLS and Mexican league clubs in August.



Inter Miami's Lionel Messi displays his Ballon d'Or trophy before their Major League Soccer friendly against New York City FC

He played his first MLS regular season match for Miami on August 26 as a second-half substitute, scoring a goal in Inter's 2-0 win at New York Red Bulls to snap an 11-match winless streak.

But nagged by a late-season leg injury, Messi was unable to lift Miami from the league cellar into the MLS Cup playoffs.

Even so, he has electrified the US league, his appeal underscored by a spike in jersey sales and a rise in sales of MLS season pass viewing subscriptions as well as ticket sales wherever Miami played.

Fans were chanting for him again late in Friday's match, but he was unable to produce an

equalizer in a contest won by NYCFC with goals from Talles Magno and Julian Fernandez.

Messi's latest Ballon d'Or rewarded exploits achieved well before his move to MLS, namely his inspirational performances at last year's World Cup in Qatar where he scored seven goals and was named the tournament's best player as he carried Argentina to victory.

But Messi said he was aiming to build on Miami's Leagues Cup crown next season - when his club will defend that title and compete in the US Open Cup and CONCACAF Champions Cup in addition to their MLS campaign.

I had to walk too much, up and down many mountains: Luis Diaz's dad recounts kidnapping

Barrancas, Colombia - Between tears, Luis Manuel Diaz, father of Liverpool striker Luis Diaz, recounted Friday how he was made to walk "too much" with little sleep in the nearly two weeks he was held hostage in a mountainous area of Colombia by members of the ELN guerrilla group.

Diaz, finally liberated Thursday after calls from around the world for his freedom, told reporters at his home in the country's north he went through a "very difficult" time, surviving "almost 12 days without sleep."

Diaz's wife Cilenis Marulanda, who was taken by the same ELN kidnappers on October 28 but rescued hours later, rubbed her husband's back lovingly as he broke down in tears mid-statement.

Behind the pair hung a string of golden balloons spelling out "Welcome Mane," his nickname, in Spanish. Diaz walked with ob-



Iga Swiatek celebrataRelatives of Liverpool's Luis Diaz celebrate after the liberation of his father, Luis Manuel Diaz, in Barrancas on Thursday (AFP)

the rebels handed Diaz over to humanitarian workers at an undisclosed location in the Serrania del Perija mountain range, from where he was flown by helicopter to the city of Valledupar

vious difficulty as he arrived for the press conference, and had to be helped up from his chair afterwards and led away.

He told reporters he was not maltreated by his captors.

"I had to walk too much, up and down many mountains, trying to stay safe so that... I could return home," said the 56-year-old, who is no stranger to the mountainous region he has explored since a child.

But "this was a different story," he said Friday. "I would not want anyone to be in that mountain in the situation I was in."

Footballer Diaz's parents were abducted by armed men on motorcycles at a gas station in Barrancas, a town near the Venezuelan border.

Marulanda was rescued hours later and a massive search operation by ground and air was launched for her husband, with more than 250 soldiers involved.

The ELN, which is in peace negotiations with the government and is party to a six-month ceasefire that entered into force in August, described the kidnapping by one of its units as a "mistake."

On Thursday, after days of intense negotiations, the rebels handed Diaz over to humanitarian workers at an undisclosed location in the Serrania del Perija mountain range, from where he was flown by helicopter to the city of Valledupar, some 90 kilometers (55 miles) from his hometown. Hours later, he arrived by car to neighbors celebrating with drums and trumpet music outside his home, which was under police guard.

On Friday, Diaz told reporters he hoped his release was a step towards "peace in Colombia and so that everyone, and all the hostages, will have a chance to be free."



Nice's Gaetan Laborde (L) fights for the ball with Montpellier's Maxime Esteve (R) during the French Ligue 1 match on Friday (AFP)

Ligue 1 leaders Nice slowed by Montpellier stalemate

Paris, France - Nice recorded a seventh successive clean sheet in a 0-0 draw at Montpellier on Friday as the Ligue 1 leaders continued their unbeaten start to the season.

Nigerian striker Akor Adams twice hit the post for Montpellier against a Nice side that have still yet to fall behind in a single game this campaign.

However, they could be replaced at the top on Saturday if Paris Saint-Germain win at fourth-placed Reims.

PSG are looking to bounce back from a poor midweek display in the Champions League away to Milan, where they went down 2-1.

Monaco will also go above Nice if they beat Le Havre.



Italy's Martina Trevisan celebrates winning a point against Slovenia's Kaja Juvan on Saturday (AFP)

Italy beat Slovenia to clinch BJK Cup final spot

Seville, Spain - Four-time champions Italy reached the Billie Jean King Cup final on Saturday with a 2-0 triumph over Slovenia in Seville.

Italy, who last won the competition 10 years ago, triumphed in both semi-final singles rubbers to wrap up victory before the doubles.

Martina Trevisan eased past Kaja Juvan 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 before Jasmine Paolini sealed the win with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 triumph over Tamara Zidansek.

"I'm really happy and really proud of my team, it was a really tough match today, a little bit of a rollercoaster," said Paolini.

"I'm so happy for my country, my team and everybody who is cheering for us and working for us to make the week better."

Paolini said regardless of whether Italy face Canada or the Czech Republic in the final, who play later Saturday in the second semi-final, it would be a difficult clash.

"We'll try to do our best, it's gonna be tough for sure, Canada and the Czech Republic are really strong teams," she added.

"We'll go on court and give 100 per cent and we'll see what happens."

Trevisan saved a set point in the tie-break at the end of the first set, and then converted her fourth match point to take the first rubber.

Zidansek double faulted on break point to hand Paolini a 5-3 lead in the decisive third set and she served out to clinch the match and the tie.



Australia's Cameron Smith hits a shot at the Hong Kong Open on Saturday (AFP)

Smith 'grinds' into share of Hong Kong Open lead

Hong Kong, China - Major winner Cameron Smith birdied three of his last six holes to grab a share of the lead at the Hong Kong Open on Saturday heading into the final round.

The 2022 British Open champion, who started the day tied second, carded six birdies against a lone bogey for a third-round five-under-par 65 at a damp Fanling.

The Australian, attempting to win Asia's oldest professional golf tournament for the first time, was tied with overnight leader Phachara Khongwatmai of Thailand on 16-under overall.

The leading duo was a shot ahead of New Zealander Ben Campbell, with Taiwan's Lee Chieh-po a further shot back in the \$2 million Asian Tour Inter-

national Series event.

Graeme McDowell, the 2010 US Open champion, was lurking in tied seventh, four shots off the pace.

The 30-year-old Smith, one of the biggest names to jump ship to the lucrative Saudi-backed LIV Golf tour, said it had been "a bit of a grind out there today".

"Hopefully it can be stress-free tomorrow.

"I found parts of the course I don't want to see ever again.

"It was a grind, (but) I was happy with the way I hung in there, with the way I was able to make the most of the opportunities that did come," Smith said.

The Hong Kong Open is back for the first time since 2020 following a break because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

NECK AND NECK RACE

Martin closes gap on Bagnaia as Alex Marquez wins Malaysian MotoGP sprint

Sepang, Malaysia - Alex Marquez won the Malaysian MotoGP sprint race at Sepang on Saturday ahead of championship rival duo Jorge Martin and Francesco Bagnaia, who saw his lead at the top cut to 11 points.

Spain's Marquez romped home on his Ducati nearly 1.6 seconds ahead of compatriot Martin, who gained two points on Italy's Bagnaia in their championship tussle with three races left.

It was a disappointing afternoon for title-holder Bagnaia, who started on pole on his factory Ducati and led for half of the 10 laps before slipping into a distant third.

Bagnaia is on 396 points heading into Sunday's race and Martin is on 385, their title duel set to go right down to the wire.

"We did the maximum and the maximum was not enough today to win," said the 26-year-old Bagnaia, who was at a loss to explain exactly where his race had gone wrong.

"This race will help us understand something for tomorrow.

"My feeling wasn't the best, absolutely."

The Italian, who smashed the Sepang lap record in qualifying to snatch pole from rival Martin for the sprint and Sunday's race, made a clean start to retain his lead at the first corner.

Martin, also on a Ducati, slipped to fourth early on.

The Prima Pramac rider recovered and then engaged Marquez in a battle for second as Bagnaia maintained his advantage at the front in mostly serene



Ducati Lenovo Team's Francesco Bagnaia (L) rides in front of Prima Pramac's Jorge Martin (top L) and Gresini Racing MotoGP's Alex Marquez

We did the maximum and the maximum was not enough today to win. This race will help us understand something for tomorrow. My feeling wasn't the best, absolutely

FRANCESCO BAGNAIA

fashion.

But Gresini Racing's Marquez - who started fourth on the grid - saw off Martin and then seized his moment to snatch the lead from Bagnaia with five laps to go.

Martin soon darted past Bagnaia as well, relegating the championship leader to third in a flash.

Marquez stormed away from there, establishing a lead on Martin of more than a second for the remainder of the sprint.

"Today I was on a mission,"

naia as well, relegating the championship leader to third in a flash.

Marquez stormed away from there, establishing a lead on Martin of more than a second for the remainder of the sprint.

"Today I was on a mission,"

said Marquez. "I did everything to perfection."

Bagnaia's factory Ducati team-mate Enea Bastianini was fourth.

Marquez's older brother Marc, the six-time MotoGP world champion, has had a weekend to forget so far, qualifying a lowly 20th and coming 21st in the sprint.

Ducati bikes had dominated the qualifying, with Bagnaia snatching pole position from Martin late in a dramatic session.

Martin came off his bike late

in qualifying when pushing hard to beat the Italian but was unhurt.

The top six places on the grid were all Ducatis.

After the 20-lap race at Sepang the season goes to Qatar and then the last grand prix of the campaign in Valencia, in what looks set to be a thrilling conclusion to the championship.

Alex Marquez is not in contention for the title - and that makes him dangerous, said Bagnaia.

AFP

James scores 32 points as Lakers rally to beat Suns, Celtics down Nets

Los Angeles, United States - LeBron James shook off an early injury scare to score 32 points and key the Los Angeles Lakers' 122-119 comeback win over the Phoenix Suns on Friday in his first taste of the NBA's new in-season tournament.

After a knock to his lower left leg had him hobbling briefly in the first quarter, the 38-year-old superstar settled in and produced another age-defying performance, helping the Lakers snap a three-game losing streak.

He connected on 11 of 17 shots from the field, including three of four from three-point range. He added 11 rebounds and six assists.

James was delighted not only with a first road win of the young season but with a victory in the Lakers' first game in the new in-season tournament - a Cup-style competition that commissioner Adam Silver hopes will fire players' competitive instincts and give added interest to early season games with the promise of a trophy and prize money.



LeBron James of Los Angeles Lakers in action against Phoenix Suns during

"It feels great because it's an in-season tournament win and we'll take that," James told broadcaster ESPN after the game. "We'll take that for sure. Y'all heard there's 500,000 (dollars) on the line, so we're going for that. We're going for that."

Kevin Durant scored 38 points

to lead the Suns, who led by as many as 14 on the way to a 63-55 halftime lead.

Austin Reaves' layup with 9:45 left to play gave the Lakers their first lead since the first quarter.

It was part of a 14-0 Lakers run, and Los Angeles were able

to make the lead stand up.

"I think we just finally got sick of being out-rebounded," James said of the Lakers' improvement on the boards late in the contest. "We kept bodies in front of bodies."

"We finally started hitting our three pointers and that definitely

helped us get back into game," added James, whose Lakers made 12 three-pointers - nine of them in the second half.

While James wasn't shy about targeting the in-season tournament, Boston star Jayson Tatum was more pleased to see the Celtics end a two-game skid with a 121-107 victory over Brooklyn.

Jaylen Brown scored 28 points and Tatum added 23 in a relatively comfortable victory.

Stung by back-to-back defeats, the Celtics came out strong and led by as many as 17 in a first half in which they made 12 three-pointers.

"Yeah, it would be nice to win (the in-season tournament), but more importantly it was just good to get back in the winning column.

"We lost two in a row, so it was important to come back home and get a win."

Eight teams will advance from group play to knockout rounds, all culminating with a title match on December 9 in Las Vegas.

AFP

Murray splits from coach Lendl for a third time

London, United Kingdom - Andy Murray has split from coach Ivan Lendl for a third time after a grueling season for the former world number one.

The British star won all three of his Grand Slam titles in his first two spells with Lendl and they reunited again in March last year.

But although the Scot regained his place in the top 50 after years of battling to overcome hip problems, he has not achieved the results he wanted, particularly at the biggest tour-

naments.

"Ivan has been by my side at the biggest moments in my career and I can't thank him enough for all that he's helped me achieve," said Murray, 36.

"He's a unique character who understands what it takes to win and I've learnt an awful lot over the years from him."

Murray won two Wimbledon titles, the 2012 US Open and two Olympic gold medals while working with Lendl.

Lendl's reluctance to travel

from his home in the United States has been an issue.

"I will look back with some great memories of the time Andy and I worked together," said eight-time Grand Slam champion Lendl.

"He's as hard a worker as there is and the sport is better because of him. I wish him only the best in the years to come."

Murray, now ranked 42nd in the world, suffered a frustrating first-round defeat against Australia's Alex de Minaur at the re-

cent Paris Masters despite holding a match point, admitting afterwards he is "not enjoying" his tennis.

But he is set to be part of Britain's Davis Cup team for their quarter-final against Serbia in Malaga later this month and it was announced earlier on Friday that he will begin next season at the Brisbane International.

Murray will continue to work with Mark Hilton and Jonny O'Mara.

AFP



Andy Murray



PAKISTAN CRASH OUT

England’s victory sends New Zealand into semis

Kolkata, India - England sent Pakistan crashing out of the World Cup with a convincing 93-run win as Ben Stokes and David Willey helped their team end their miserable title defence on a high in Kolkata on Saturday.

Stokes, who came out of ODI retirement for the World Cup, scored 84 while Joe Root hit 60 to lift England to an impressive 337-9 in their 50 overs before Pakistan folded on 244 in 43.3 overs.

"It's nice to put in a good performance. It probably sinks in more right now. There's lots to reflect on," said England skipper Jos Buttler after his side failed to make the knockout round.

Willey, who already announced he will retire from international cricket after the World Cup, removed Pakistan openers Abdullah Shafique (nought) and Fakhar Zaman (one) before dismissing Agha Salman for 51 to finish with 3-56. With Salman's wicket, Willey also completed 100 wickets in his 73rd ODI.

Fellow fast bowler Gus Atkin-

son (2-45) had Babar Azam for 38, caught at short mid-wicket off a miscued pull to end the Pakistan skipper's below-par tournament on 320 runs with four fifties but without a century.

"Very disappointed with the performance of my team, all the players," admitted Azam.

Spinners Moeen Ali (2-60) and Adil Rashid (2-55) took care of the middle-order as only Salman defied the bowling with a fighting 45-ball knock studded with six boundaries and a six.

Tail-enders Shaheen Shah Afridi scored 27 and Haris Rauf made 35 to at least take Pakistan past the 200-mark.

Ali removed Mohammad Rizwan for a 51-ball 36 and Iftikhar Ahmed for three while Rashid had Saud Shakeel bowled round his legs for 29 before bowling Shadab Khan for four with a googly.

Pakistan started the day needing to beat England by 287 runs in order to squeeze into the semi-finals on net run-rate but that escape route was immediately



England's Gus Atkinson celebrates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's captain Babar Azam on Saturday (AFP)

closed when Buttler won the toss and chose to bat first.

As a result, New Zealand became the fourth team into the semi-finals and will face undefeated India in Mumbai on November 15. A day later, Australia and South Africa will meet in the other semi-final in Kolkata.

Stokes - dropped on 10 by Shaheen off his own bowling -

New Zealand will face undefeated India in the first semi-final in Mumbai on November 15. A day later, Australia and South Africa will meet in the other semi-final in Kolkata.

rode his luck during a 76-ball innings.

Root added a 72-ball 60 after England won the toss and batted.

Stokes and Root built on a solid opening stand of 82 between Jonny Bairstow (59) and David Malan (31), taking full advantage of a slow Eden Gardens pitch and some wayward bowling.

Bairstow hit seven boundaries and a six in his 61-ball knock - his second fifty in an otherwise lacklustre performance in the tournament.

Marsh hits ton as Australia cruise past Bangladesh

Pune, India - Mitchell Marsh's career-best 177 not out was labelled "scary" by skipper Pat Cummins as Australia headed into next week's World Cup semi-finals with a convincing eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in Pune on Saturday.

Marsh's second hundred of the World Cup ensured Australia, already guaranteed a last-four clash with South Africa, made light of their target of 307 to win with 32 balls remaining.

This was just Marsh's third hundred in 87 one-day internationals and surpassed his 121 against Pakistan earlier in the tournament as the 32-year-old's highest score.

The all-rounder, strong on the drive and square of the wicket, faced 132 balls including 17 fours and nine sixes, having briefly returned to Australia following the death of his grandfather before rejoining the squad.

Cummins praised Marsh's "outstanding" innings, with the fast bowler adding: "He is a scary prospect to have in the next week."



Australia's Mitchell Marsh and Steve Smith (R) run between the wickets

Marsh also shared a stand of 120 with David Warner (53) and put on an unbroken 175 with Steve Smith, the star batsman hitting the winning boundary in a morale-boosting 63 not out after

returning from vertigo.

Victory meant Australia ended the group stage with a seventh successive win after their campaign for a record-extending sixth men's World Cup

title started with two defeats.

Marsh joked his innings had offset a bowling figures of 0-48 in four overs.

"Not every day that you get player of the match after you

concede 50-odd in four overs," he said.

"Started off with -50 when I began batting. But good to get stuck in."

Cummins, reflecting on Australia's progress in India, said: "Seven games in a row, even when we were not at our best in some of those games, we came away with a win."

"Chasing 300-plus was something we did not do earlier. It feels like everything is clicking together."

Bangladesh's 306-8, their highest total of the tournament, left Australia needing to surpass their record World Cup-winning chase of 292 against Afghanistan in Mumbai on Tuesday - a match where Glenn Maxwell's stunning unbeaten 201 sealed an astounding three-wicket following a collapse to 91-7.

Maxwell was rested on Saturday, but Australia had no need of his heroics as they overpowered a Bangladesh attack missing captain Shakib Al Hasan after the all-rounder was ruled out with a broken finger.



Rassie van der Dussen (AFP)

South Africa will ride on 'must-win mindset' in World Cup semi-final

Ahmedabad, India - South Africa's Rassie van der Dussen said the team will take their "must-win mindset" into the World Cup semi-final against five-time winners Australia.

The Proteas on Friday won their concluding league match against Afghanistan by five wickets courtesy of Van der Dussen's unbeaten 76 in Ahmedabad.

They head into the last-four with a record of seven victories in nine matches, having lost to India and, surprisingly, the Netherlands.

South Africa thrashed Australia by 134 runs in the early days of the tournament, but Van der Dussen said their semi-final clash will pose a different challenge.

"I think it will probably be different in the sense that a lot of their guys have been in those situations before and have a good reference of how it is having won the World Cup and having played in the semi-final four years ago," Van der Dussen said of his opponents.

"So, in terms of that, they'll probably know what it's about a bit more but it's on the day, it's

what team rocks up, what team is switched on, what team executes their plans."

Van der Dussen added: "From the start it's been almost like a must-win type of mindset for us. I don't think too much will be different. I think it will be a good game. They're a great team."

South Africa have lost two World Cup semi-finals to Australia, the most painful being in 1999 when the match ended in a tie and their rivals went through because of a higher group stage finish.

"In '99, I was 10 so I don't remember too much, but they obviously had a really good chance to win the World Cup, I think we have a good chance as well," said Van der Dussen. "In 2007 again I suppose on the day the team didn't execute like they wanted to and that's fine. It's going to happen like that. Someone's going to win and someone's going to lose."

Van der Dussen added: "The whole chat around our group was, you know what, on the 19th of November (final) we'll be where we need to be if it's lifting the trophy or not."

Afghanistan 'future's bright' after memorable World Cup

Ahmedabad, India - Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott on Friday said the "future is bright" for his team after enjoying their most successful World Cup.

Afghanistan's campaign finished in a five-wicket loss to South Africa which ended their slim hopes of making the semi-finals.

Needing to win the game by a mammoth 438 runs to stay in contention, Afghanistan were 244 all out with Azmatullah Omarzai top scoring on 97 before the Proteas, already assured of a semi-final place, chased down the target with 15 balls to spare.



Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai plays a shot during his unbeaten knock of 97 against South Africa on Friday (AFP)

But the team, led by Hashmatullah Shahidi, had definite highs in the tournament with two of their four wins coming against defending champions England and former winners Pakistan.

"I had confidence in the players, but sometimes until somebody does it or they do it themselves, you're never quite sure," Trott, a former England batsman, told reporters.

"I said numerous times before the tournament that we just need to win a couple of games to get that belief and the buzz around the side... We've won games and found ways to win games."

Known for their world class

spin attack including Rashid Khan, who claimed a team-best 11 wickets, Mohammad Nabi and Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Afghanistan saw their batsmen make an impact as well.

Ibrahim Zadran became the first Afghan to hit a World Cup century albeit in the heartbreaking defeat against Australia.

Zadran ended the tournament as his side's top scorer with 376 runs and an average of 47. That is enough to give him a spot in the current top 10 of run-makers at this World Cup, a list dominated by players from India, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

'CAPTAIN FANTASTIC'

Dravid hails Rohit in India's World Cup odyssey

Bengaluru, India - Rohit Sharma was hailed on Saturday as a "fantastic" captain for leading India to a perfect eight wins from eight matches and a place in the World Cup semi-finals.

India play their last league match against the Netherlands in Bengaluru on Sunday before they move on to the semi-finals.

The hosts have remained unbeaten with impressive wins over arch-rivals Pakistan, defending champions England and most recently South Africa.

The 36-year-old Rohit, who may be in his last World Cup alongside 35-year-old Virat Kohli, has scored 442 runs including one century at a strike-rate of 122.77.

"Rohit has certainly been a leader without a doubt," coach Rahul Dravid said on Saturday.

"He's led by example both on and off the field. There have been some games where it could have been tricky for us, but the fact that he's been able to get us to those kinds of starts has literally cracked open the game."

Dravid added: "He's been fantastic in his batting, the leadership that he's shown and taking on the game, in leading from the



India captain Rohit Sharma with coach Rahul Dravid

front."

Rohit's 131 against Afghanistan led the way and he followed it up with an 86 in the crushing win over Pakistan. The captain's 87 remained key in a low-scoring game against England.

Rohit took over the captaincy

from Kohli, who was removed from the job in 2021 without a world title under his leadership belt. India have travelled an exhausting 12,000km (7,500 miles) on their World Cup journey and Dravid said the team has played good cricket across all

venues.

"We've travelled the length and breadth of this country and played in eight venues. This is our ninth," said Dravid.

"I think what this team has done really well is it has represented India fantastically. It's

played a really good brand of cricket.

"We know we have nine boxes to tick, and we've ticked eight."

The cricket-mad nation of 1.4 billion people has been rooting for the hosts to end their world title drought stretching back to the

2013 Champions Trophy. India last won the World Cup at home in 2011.

The Netherlands have made an impact in the 10-team tournament after they stunned a high-flying South Africa. They also beat Bangladesh.

"I think the performances of teams like the Netherlands certainly go a long way in boosting the morale of a lot of the other associate nations. They can certainly compete, they've got some very good players," said Dravid.

"And it's quite inspiring to see that in spite of the challenges they face they're able to compete at this level to play at this level."

Asked to weigh on the Angelo Mathews "timed out" dismissal - a first ever in the 146-year history of international cricket --

I think what this team has done really well is it has represented India fantastically

RAHUL DRAVID

Dravid said there were no winners.

"You might not do it yourself. We might not do it, but you can't blame somebody for following it because you put that in place and you have to give scope for that level of understanding of somebody," said Dravid. "Whether you choose to do it or not is completely your decision."

Mathews branded Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan as "disgraceful" after he was adjudged to be out when he failed to take strike within the two-minute time limit when he came out to bat in New Delhi.

Sri Lanka appeals ICC ban over political meddling

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka's sports minister said Saturday he would appeal the country's suspension from the International Cricket Council (ICC) over alleged political interference in the local board.

Roshan Ranasinghe said the world governing body's action on Friday night against his country was "illegal" and would appeal to the ICC's Dispute Resolution Committee.

"The ICC suspension of Sri

Lanka is illegal. We have been maliciously suspended without giving us an opportunity to respond to the allegation," Ranasinghe told reporters in the capital Colombo.

He said the ICC had referred to "political interference" in Sri Lanka Cricket, the elected body that governs cricket in the country, but had not specified the charges.

"First, we must have the charges and then an opportunity

The local board said Sri Lanka stands to lose a \$2.4 million grant from the ICC to develop local venues if the 16-nation Under-19 tournament was scuttled due to the suspension

to respond," Ranasinghe said.

"If we fail to get redress from the DRC, we will go to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in

Switzerland."

The ICC said on Friday that Sri Lanka Cricket was "in serious breach of its obligations as a

member", highlighting "the requirement to manage its affairs autonomously and to ensure that there is no government interference".

The suspension came a day after Sri Lanka's parliament asked the board to resign over allegations by Ranasinghe that it had syphoned off millions of dollars. The ICC board will decide the suspension conditions later, it said in a brief statement. It was not immediately clear

if the indefinite suspension would affect Sri Lanka hosting the Under 19 World Cup in January.

The local board said Sri Lanka stands to lose a \$2.4 million grant from the ICC to develop local venues if the 16-nation Under-19 tournament was scuttled due to the suspension.

The crisis involving the cricket board -- the richest sporting organisation in the bankrupt island country -- came

to a head after Sri Lanka's humiliating World Cup defeat by India last week.

Parliament unanimously asked Sri Lanka Cricket's elected board members to resign on Thursday, accusing them of unprecedented corruption.

The board is now locked in litigation after it was sacked by the sports minister on Monday, only to be restored the following day by the Court of Appeal pending a hearing in two weeks.

CLASSIFIEDS

JOB VACANCY

Inviting applications for the post of production and factory in charge - steel fabrication from those specialised in steel pipes fabrication, structural steel, tanks, vessels, skid packages; with 5 years of experience and having a driving licence email: najma@alrouba.com

Urgently required SCADA Engineer, Planning Engineer and Electrical Engineer for a water network project (PAEW /OWWSC-approved). Kindly send CVs to www.consult2021@gmail.com

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684

Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

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



أوربيت ORBIT

Car Rental & Lease

SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR

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

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي
ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

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

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



mai alkaline

pH 9.1 to 9.5

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing
- ✓ Electrolytes

oman OASIS

800 71 222

9275 5522

CA.No. 1365452

Since Koyo Kouoh took over the reins of the Zeitz MOCAA, the Cape Town museum has been making waves in the contemporary art world by putting Africa front and centre.

Under the ambitious Cameroonian-born curator, the museum in the city's port district has built its identity around Pan-Africanism, showcasing the work of artists from the continent and its diaspora.

"Africa is for me an idea that goes beyond borders. It's a history that goes beyond borders," Kouoh told AFP, cutting an elegant figure in a white dress topped by long green braids. "Americans don't like to hear this but I always tell them that America is another African country."

A country is an aggregation of cultural expressions and influences, she said, adding that using these parameters Brazil, Cuba and Haiti could also be considered part of the African continent.

"That's how I look at them," she said, with a serious smile.

More than 40 million people in the United States, or about 12% of the population, are African American, while more than half of Brazil's about 200 million people are of African descent.

"The African diasporic influence in the US is undeniable. That's why I like to talk about black geographies, more than African diasporas - where black culture, black bodies, black people have influenced society," she said.

Energetic and with bright, lively eyes, 56-year-old Kouoh grew up between Douala in her native Cameroon and Zurich in Switzerland.

BEYOND BORDERS

African identity

CAPE TOWN ART MUSEUM IS ON A MISSION TO RECLAIM THE AFRICAN IDENTITY UNDER A NEW CAMEROONIAN CURATOR



After setting up a cutting-edge art centre in Dakar, Senegal, she took over the MOCAA - housed in an old grain silo that has been renovated with square windows evoking a beehive of glass and concrete - four years ago.

Having inherited a 'broken' and 'dys-functional' institution, she set out to give it new meaning.

'I own the space'

Focusing on Pan-Africanism was a 'no brainer' and necessary since, even decades after the end of colonialism, the narrative around the continent was largely still defined by others, Kouoh said.

Seekers, Seers, Soothsayers, an exhibition currently on show explores the spiritual and supernatural through photo and

video projections on the walls as well as textile installations.

"There is a strong need to bring other stories to the table and not as a means of correcting," she said. "I have no interest in correcting, I don't own and don't internalise the wrong story. But own the space."

MOCAA is now recognised worldwide for its approach and is sought after for collaborations by major New York and European institutions.

Its a recent exhibition - *When We See Us* - which presents a century of African figurative painting, is soon due to leave Cape Town to be shown in the Swiss city of Basel.

Kouoh said she initially focused on group exhibitions, displaying the works of several artists on a specific subject but has since moved towards single artist shows.

"When you conceptualise a group show, you hope that you create a symphony but most of the time you create a cacophony because there are too many voices," she said, speaking from the building's panoramic elevator which offers a bird's-eye view of the imposing entrance hall.

"With the solo show, you have a real symphony - of experience and of the universe."

Going forward, Kouoh said she wants to pursue three priorities - showcasing emerging talents, underrated practices, and female artists.

"I am not an activist about it. I am just decidedly, and very forcefully, promoting African women artists," she said.

AFP



The African diasporic influence in the US is undeniable. That's why I like to talk about black geographies, more than African diasporas - where black culture, black bodies, black people have influenced society

KOYO KOUOH



A general view of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in Cape Town

taste the

NEW GOODNESS

طبيعي أطيب

NATURAL IMMUNITY BOOST

DISTRIBUTED BY

CONTACT NO.: +968 22060236 / 237



Let's celebrate the success stories

Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards 2023, one of the most prestigious brand award events in the sultanate, will soon turn the arc-lights on a variety of top brands in Oman which have consistently scored high in delivering quality products and services.

And the most important element in their elevation to the top is – You! Get set to join scores of consumers in Oman to handpick those brands which have upheld consumer interests the most and made a mark for themselves. Your vote is paramount in the final verdict.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS



AN APEX MEDIA EVENT



Sotheby's auctioneer Oliver Barker takes bids during Sotheby's auction of 'The Emily Fisher Landau Collection: An Era Defined' in New York City and (below) Pablo Picasso's *Femme a la Montre* ('Woman with a Watch') at the same auction



MASTERPIECES

PABLO PICASSO'S 'WOMAN WITH A WATCH' FETCHES US\$139MN AT NEW YORK AUCTION

One of Pablo Picasso's masterpieces - 'Woman with a Watch' - sold at an auction on Wednesday night for US\$139.3mn by Sotheby's in New York, the second-highest price ever achieved for the artist.

In a jam-packed room at the venerable auction house, it only took a few minutes of telephone bidding for the 1932 painting depicting one of the Spanish artist's companions and muses, the French painter Marie-Therese Walter, to be sold.

Femme a la montre had been valued at over US\$120mn before going on the block, according to Sotheby's. It was part of the house's special sale this week of the collection of New York arts patron Emily Fisher Landau, 102, who died this year. Julian Dawes, Sotheby's head of impressionist and modern art, called the Picasso canvas - which hung in Landau's living room - 'a masterpiece by every measure'.

"Painted in 1932 - Picasso's *Annus Mirabilis* - it is full of joyful, passionate abandon yet at the same time it is utterly considered and resolved," he said.

Walter was regarded as Picasso's 'golden muse', and features in another of his works going under the hammer on Thursday at Christie's - *Femme endormie*, or 'Sleeping Woman', estimated to sell for US\$25-US\$35mn.

She also featured in *Femme assise pres d'une fenetre* (Marie-Therese), or 'Woman Sitting Near a Window', which was sold in 2021 for US\$103.4mn.

Walter met Picasso in Paris in 1927, when she was just 17 and the Spanish artist was still married to Russian-Ukrain-

ian ballet dancer Olga Khokhlova. The couple had a daughter, who died last year.

Another Picasso from 1932 was sold for US\$106mn in 2010. The record sale for one of his works was of 'The Women of Algiers (Version O)', a 1955 oil painting which sold for US\$179.4mn.

When it went under the hammer at Christie's New York in 2015, it was also the record for any work of art sold at an auction. It was dethroned in November 2017 by the sale of *Salvator Mundi*, attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, which went for US\$450mn and holds the record to this day.

Hot market

Fifty years after his death in 1973 at age 91, Picasso remains one of the most influential artists of the modern world, often hailed as a dynamic and creative genius. But following the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and assault, his reputation has been tarnished by accusations he exerted a violent hold over the women who shared his life and inspired his art.

Sotheby's has already netted US\$406mn in sales from Landau's collection, which also includes works by Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Andy Warhol.

'Flags' by the 93-year-old Johns sold for US\$41mn, while 'Securing the Last Letter (Boss)' by painter and photographer Ed Ruscha sold for US\$39.4mn.

Auction houses are enjoying a healthy art and luxury goods market, driven by China and showing no signs of a slow-down, said Kelsey Reed Leonard, head of contemporary art sales at Sotheby's.

Against a backdrop of wars in Ukraine and Gaza, as well as worldwide inflation, the two titans of the sector - Sotheby's and Christie's - will be moving a host of big-ticket lots in the autumn sales, though they may still have a hard time topping last year, when total sales hit a record US\$16bn.

AFP

Painted in 1932 - Picasso's 'Annus Mirabilis' - it is full of joyful, passionate abandon yet at the same time it is utterly considered and resolved

JULIAN DAWES

MUSCAT DAILY
YOUR WINDOW TO THE WORLD



SUBSCRIBE
TO MUSCAT DAILY

www.muscatdaily.com

R024
1 YEAR
(Print edition)

R015
6 MONTHS
(Print edition)

R015
1 YEAR
(Online edition)

For more details

PLEASE CALL 80076000

E-mail: subscription@apexmedia.co.om

Or call Shamshad on 99104345

Muscat Daily actual annual subscription rate: R0 52

Name

Flat No: Building / Villa No: Way No:

Area: Landmark:

Mobile No: Email:

Print edition only ☐ print+Online edition ☐ Online edition only ☐

Fill up the form and send it to WhatsApp no: 99104345