

EU, GCC aim for 21st century alliance

Brussels, Belgium - European Union and Gulf Cooperation Council are ready to build a strategic partnership fit for the 21st century, said Charles Michel, President of European Council, at the opening of the first EU-GCC Summit in Brussels on Wednesday. He described the future of the two regions is strongly interconnected.

Michel noted that the current geopolitical situation is extremely difficult and requires significant courage and clarity. "I am absolutely convinced that we, in Europe and the Gulf, share a genuine wish to work much more closely together and to build bridges. Together, we can do more to promote stability, progress and solidarity in our regions and across the world. Today, global stability is once again under threat from the dramatic situation in the Middle



East, Russia's war against Ukraine and the tragic situation in Sudan."

Jasem Mohamed al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of GCC, called for a ceasefire in Gaza in his opening speech, urging pressure on Israel to deliver aid to the strip

and emphasising the importance of a Saudi initiative for a two-state solution for Palestine.

In his address, H. H. Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representa-

tive of His Majesty the Sultan, conveyed His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's best wishes for the success of the summit. H. H. Sayyid Asaad also spoke on the shared vision between the GCC and EU in expanding the scope of strategic partnerships and deepening existing cooperation.

"Cooperation between GCC and EU, whether political, economic, cultural or technological, is the bridge that will enable us to face common challenges more effectively," he said. He praised the role of EU and its openness to cooperation in achieving the positive transformation that the world needs.

H. H. Sayyid Asaad pledged Oman's support for positions aligned with those of GCC countries and the international community, aimed at securing an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and

recognising the State of Palestine. "This reflects the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and underscores the two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict," he added.

He affirmed Oman's support for the international coalition to implement the two-state solution announced by Saudi Arabia in partnership with Norway and EU.

H. H. Sayyid Asaad welcomed a call made by French President Emmanuel Macron to halt arms exports to Israel. "This is an important step in international efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza, protect innocent civilians from the horrors of this conflict and stop the Israeli aggression on Lebanon, which is a dangerous escalation that threatens to expand the scope of conflict, violence and instability."

H M issues two Royal Decrees

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued two Royal Decrees on Wednesday reading as follows:

Royal Decree No 47/2024 promulgates the Law on Protection of Bank Deposits after presenting the same before Council of Oman.

Article 1 stipulates that the Law on Protection of Bank Deposits attached to this decree will be enforced.

Article 2 states that all origins, rights, obligations and assets pertaining to the system of insurance of bank deposits cited in the Law on Bank Deposits Insurance Scheme promulgated by Royal Decree No 9/95 will be transferred to the 'insurance fund for the protection of deposits in licensed establishments of conventional origin' cited in the law attached to this decree.

Article 3 instructs the Governor of Central Bank of Oman to issue the Executive Regulations of the attached law, as well as the decisions necessary for implementation of its provisions. Till such time, the existing regulations and

decisions will continue to be implemented without prejudice to the provisions of the law attached to this decree.

Article 4 annuls the aforementioned Law on Bank Deposits Insurance Scheme promulgated by Royal Decree No 9/95, as well as all that contradicts the attached law or contravenes its provisions.

Article 5 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced starting the day following its publication.

Royal Decree No 48/2024 ratifies an agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan on mutual visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports signed in Muscat on June 26, 2024.

Article 1 ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

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

ONA

ME pledges to plant 50bn trees to combat climate change

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) took a significant step forward during its first ministerial council session in Jeddah on Wednesday with a bold pledge to plant 50bn trees across the region. This ambitious project aims to meet 5% of global afforestation goals, with 10bn trees planned in Saudi Arabia and the remaining 40bn in other Middle East-

This project aims to meet 5% of global afforestation goals, with 10bn trees planned in Saudi Arabia and the remaining 40bn in other Middle Eastern countries

ern (ME) countries. The initiative also seeks to restore 200mn hectares of degraded land.

MGI is an effort to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the region by 670mn tonnes, representing 10% of global contributions. The initiative aims to combat the effects of climate change by improving air quality, reducing soil erosion, providing habitats for wildlife and absorb-

ing carbon dioxide.

At the session, the council appointed a secretary-general of MGI and welcomed new member countries. Currently, the initiative is supported by 50 countries, organisations and regional bodies, all committed to addressing the climate crisis. The council urged other nations and financial contributors to join these efforts.

Oman was represented by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chair-

man of Environment Authority, at the session. In his speech, Amri highlighted the sultanate's commitment to environmental sustainability in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 goals. He emphasised the importance of preserving natural resources and noted that Oman has made significant progress in the Global Environmental Performance Index, rising 95 places to rank 54th globally and second in the Arab world.



Al Sayal causes floods; 23 rescue operations conducted



Omani women urge more STEM jobs

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Al Sayal causes floods, 23 rescue operations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The coastal city of Sur in South Sharqiyah recorded the highest rainfall in Oman over three days, with 215mm of downpour reported from Monday to Wednesday.

As the sultanate continues to feel the effects of the tropical depression 'Al Sayal', massive downpour led to severe impact across several governorates, prompting rescue operations and infrastructure assessments.

Data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources revealed that the coastal city of Qalhat received 194.4mm of rainfall followed by Quriyat 170mm, Muscat 100mm, while Jalan Bani Bu Ali experienced 94mm.

In Muscat, Muttrah received 68mm of rain, while Port Sultan Qaboos reported 74.8mm.

Weather forecasts indicate continued cloud cover for Thursday, particularly in coastal and mountainous regions of Dhofar, with expected rainfall between 10mm and 25mm. Similar conditions are anticipated in the eastern and western Al Hajar



(ONA)

Rescue teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority conducted 23 operations across South Sharqiyah and Muscat governorates

mountains, with some improvements expected on Friday.

In response to the adverse weather conditions, rescue teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) conducted 23 operations across the governorates of South Sharqiyah and Muscat.

The National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) confirmed 11 cases of rescue operations in South Sharqiyah and 12 more in Muscat.

Heavy rains necessitated multiple rescue operations over the past three days.

In Muscat, CDAA teams suc-

cessfully evacuated ten individuals from a house in the wilayat of Muttrah due to rising water levels. All of them were reported to be in good health.

Additionally, a person was rescued from a vehicle trapped in a wadi in Muttrah.

In South Sharqiyah, rescue teams responded to reports of some families getting trapped in their homes due to the rise in water levels in the wilayat of Sur.

They successfully rescued one family and another group of



(V K Shafeer)

people, who were trapped in their vehicle, which got stuck in an overflowing wadi. All have been rescued, and they are reported to be safe.

Sheikh Talal bin Saif al Hosni, Wali of Quriyat, and Eng Al Tayeb bin Mohammed al Harthi, Director General of Muscat Municipality, visited the affected areas to assess the damage caused by the tropical condition Al Sayal.

Their tour included Al Sahil village and areas such as Hail al

Ghaf and Al Mazara, focusing on the reopening of roads impacted by flooding.

Sheikh Hosni stressed the need for timely restoration of surface communication for the residents and visitors in affected villages, including Dhabab, Bimmah and Finns.

In parallel, Muscat Municipality initiated cleaning operations to address the aftermath of the inclement weather. Efforts included clearing debris, removing fallen trees, draining excess

water, and conducting pest control campaigns.

On Wednesday, authorities officially announced the termination of the National Center for Emergency Management and its associated structures following the dissipation of the weather depression.

The CDAA continues to urge the public to exercise caution, advising against crossing valleys and staying away from low-lying areas during adverse weather conditions.

Govt invites public to suggest topics for open dialogues

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In line with the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq regarding the importance of citizen participation in the decision-making process, the voting phase to select topics for the third edition of the 'Together We Progress Forum' kicked off on Wednesday.

The forum, for which the topics are to be chosen through public participation, aims to strengthen communication between the citizens and the deci-

sion-makers. It serves as a vital platform for direct meetings and open dialogues, allowing participants to learn about development policies, programmes, and government initiatives.

The forum, to be organised by the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers, promises an opportunity for the citizens to express their opinions, share suggestions, and discuss their interests in a collaborative environment focused on interaction.

The voting is open until October 23, an official said.

Participants can contribute to

the selection process by accessing the electronic questionnaire via a link shared through various media outlets and social media platforms.

The questionnaire covers three main areas for public consideration, including 'Economy and Development', which features topics such as the upcoming 11th five-year plan, economic diversification, local content, and entrepreneurship. The second area, 'Private Sector and Investment', addresses subjects including the role of the private sector in job creation, investment

in future technologies and artificial intelligence, and initiatives by the Oman Investment Authority to promote local and foreign investments.

The third area pertains to 'Governorate Development', encompassing discussions on the local economy, sustainable cities, and urban planning.

To encourage inclusivity, citizens are welcome to suggest topics outside those listed in the questionnaire. The topic receiving the highest number of votes will be prioritised for discussion at the forum.

Unicef workshop stresses ethical reporting to protect children

Our correspondent
Muscat

A two-day workshop - held by Unicef at the Ministry of Information - on ethical journalism while reporting on children, witnessed brainstorming sessions focussed on the dos and don'ts while reporting drowning incidents, war orphans, online abuse, bullying, and the kinds of pressure children face from parents for various reasons.

Led by Lebanese journalist Charbel Raji, the event focused on the importance of empathy and impartiality when reporting on issues related to children.

More than 100 participants from various sectors, including the media, law enforcement agencies, religious organisations, lawyers and academicians, attended the workshop, which emphasised the need for safeguarding children's dignity and privacy in media coverage.

One of the most alarming issues raised during the event was the rising number of child drownings during flash floods in Oman.

Mustafa Yousuf, a journalist and a filmmaker, expressed concern over this recurring tragedy. "Oman is prone to severe rains and flash floods, and children are often the victims. During a calamity earlier this year, 12 chil-



dren lost their lives," Yousuf said. In response to these incidents, Unicef aligned its efforts with the World Drowning Prevention Day (July 25) to raise awareness and promote preventative measures.

The issue of morality and age among offenders was also highlighted. A senior Royal Oman Police official shared a disturbing case where a 17-year-old boy blackmailed 71 Omani women by misusing their Instagram photos. "Due to legal restrictions, authorities had to wait until the boy turned 18 to arrest him," the official said. He was later sentenced to 22 years in prison.

The case underscored the growing risks of online abuse and the challenges of dealing with adolescent offenders.

Addressing the emotional needs of children was another key point of discussion. Hawra al Maimani, a lecturer and a parent, shared her personal experience of guiding her three-year-old

daughter through difficult questions. "Answers to children must be a priority for parents. If we do not satisfy their curiosity, who will? We must help them develop critical thinking; otherwise, they risk developing split personalities," she explained.

The increasing influence of social media on children was also discussed in that workshop.

Abdullah al Hashmi, from the Oman Journalism Association, spoke about the difficulty parents face in controlling their children's exposure to online contents. "Though I feel that I can control my son's exposure to YouTube, he knows everything about how to access it," he admitted.

Khalidja al Kindi, Unicef's communication officer, said, "Today's event highlights the urgent need for collaboration between parents, educators, policymakers, and the media to create a safer environment for Oman's children."

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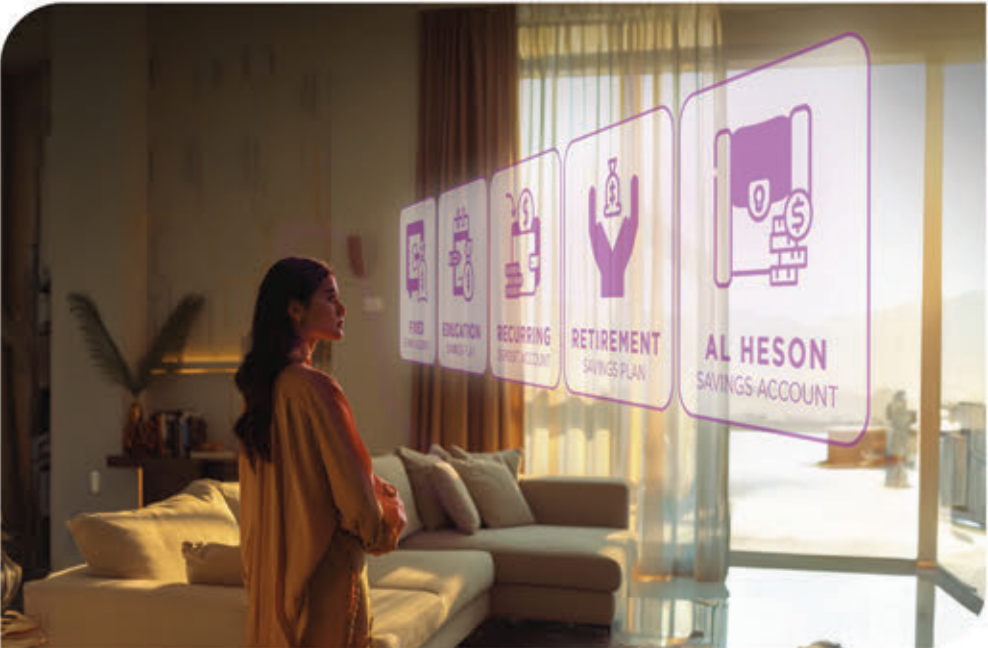
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New initiative launched to empower hearing impaired

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Signbook Company has launched an initiative called 'Skill and Sign' aimed at empowering individuals with hearing disabilities in collaboration with Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development.

The initiative is a new YouTube channel featuring educational videos designed to enhance their life, as well as their artistic and technical skills.

Sultan bin Nasser al Amri, CEO of Signbook, said that the initiative seeks to boost both professional and personal development for individuals with hearing impairment, improving their prospects in the job market or providing alternative sources of income.

The initiative also aims to raise community awareness about the importance of integrating hearing-impaired individuals into social and professional environments. It supports innovation and creativity in technology and entrepreneurship.

Amri noted that approxi-



(Supplied photo)

The initiative seeks to boost both professional and personal development for persons with hearing impairment

SULTAN BIN NASSER AL AMRI

mately 8,000 beneficiaries are expected to gain skills across eight fields, facilitated by eight trainers and interpreters.

"At Signbook, we believe technology should empower people and simplify their lives. Our mission is to make knowledge accessible to all, without barriers," he stated.

The initiative not only focuses on skill development but also aims to foster innovation among the hearing impaired, both locally and internationally. It addresses the gap in access to educational digital content by incorporating sign language translation and content produced by skilled individuals with hearing disabilities.

Video content will be released on a monthly basis on the channel. It will adapt based on audience feedback and has plans to expand the range of topics over time.

Amri highlighted Signbook's recent achievements, including winning the Youth Excellence Award in the digital economy category in 2023. The Signbook app offers various services, such as a visual call centre for hearing-impaired users and a platform for news translated into sign language. The company is also focused on improving digital access by tailoring websites for institutions to meet the needs of hearing-impaired individuals.

Looking ahead, he hopes for greater integration with international organisations, expansion, investment in research and development, and the launch of educational programmes that address the needs of all age groups and topics relevant to the hearing-impaired community.

He extended his gratitude to Petrogas, the main sponsor of Skill and Sign, for its support.

Public invited to shape Ibri city's master plan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) has launched a public survey, seeking the inputs of citizens and residents to help shape the future of Ibri city. This initiative, part of the master plan for Ibri, aims to transform the city into a key economic and cultural centre by 2040.

In a statement, MHUP stressed the importance of community feedback in designing Ibri's development. The survey covers several areas of interest, focusing on how the city can grow into a sustainable and connected hub.

Residents are encouraged to share their views on various aspects, such as how to create a greener Ibri, improving connectivity within the city, developing unique characteristics that make Ibri stand out, enhancing local educational and healthcare services, and fostering economic productivity.

Participants are also asked for their vision of Ibri by 2040, including identifying challenges and opportunities for the city today. The ministry emphasised



(Supplied image)

that every feedback in valuable, stating, 'Your input will play a crucial role in shaping the master plan for Ibri and improving the quality of life in the region.'

Residents can participate in the survey through the link <https://app.eform.om/app/form?id=aJCTJA>, which is also available on the ministry's website.

Survey inputs will directly inform the final master plan, ensuring it reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community.

In March 2023, MHUP signed

agreements to design master plans for seven future cities across Oman, including Ibri. The other cities are Salalah, Suhar, Nizwa, Haima, Bausher and Khor Grama in Sur. These plans aim to promote balanced urban development, providing over 40,000 housing units across 20mn sqm benefiting more than 150,000 people.

As Oman continues its efforts to modernise its cities, active participation of residents will be key to ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for Ibri.

EA video to raise awareness on sea turtle deaths from fishing nets

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In an awareness push, Environment Authority (EA) has launched a video aimed at educating the public about the rising number of sea turtle deaths linked to increasing use of fishing nets.

In a statement, EA emphasised the crucial role sea turtles play in maintaining marine ecosystems and called on the public to join efforts in protecting the marine environment to ensure the survival of these species.

In June 2024, EA concluded the third edition of its 'Turtle Commando' programme, during

which 17 tonnes of plastic waste, including bags and nets, were cleared from the beaches of Masirah Island and Ras al Hadd.

The campaign successfully rescued 68 large nesting sea turtles and 88,216 small turtles. The programme also promoted eco-tourism initiatives at the turtle reserve and participation in various events to raise awareness on turtle protection.

Oman's turtle nesting season runs from January to August, with the peak hatching period in March and April.

The video can be viewed through the link <https://x.com/i/status/1846483777532449115>

Arab nations urged to embrace AI, tech for tourism statistics

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Second Arab Forum for Tourism Statistics 2024 concluded in Muscat on Tuesday with key recommendations for Arab countries to adopt modern technologies such as big data analysis and artificial intelligence (AI) to improve tourism statistics.

The forum emphasised the importance of using these technologies to enhance the accuracy and speed of tourism data collection, as well as leverage administrative records available from various government agencies.

One of the main recommendations was to encourage inno-

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Encourage big data analysis and AI for faster, accurate tourism statistics
- ▶ Utilise mobile data, electronic payments, GIS and reservation data
- ▶ Strengthen cooperation among parties for better data governance and sharing
- ▶ Train personnel in advanced data collection and analysis techniques
- ▶ Produce regional tourism bulletins and improve data collection across Arab countries

vation in data sources, focusing on big data, including mobile phone location data, electronic payment systems, geographic information systems (GIS) and reservation data with the goal of providing comprehensive information that goes beyond standard indicators and supports decision-making and strategic

planning in the tourism sector.

The forum also called for stronger cooperation among stakeholders involved in tourism statistics, highlighting the need for effective governance, data exchange and open data availability. These efforts aim to increase transparency and improve the development of effective tourism

policies. Training and capacity building in innovative data collection and analysis techniques were also recommended.

In line with international best practices, the forum urged Arab countries to follow global frameworks for tourism statistics, adhering to UN Tourism guidelines. These include application of tourism satellite accounts to measure the broader economic impact of tourism and its contribution to national economies.

The importance of regional and international cooperation was stressed, particularly in adopting new technologies for data collection and analysis. The forum encouraged Arab nations to exchange expertise and best

practices to boost their competitiveness in tourism. It also recommended that Arab League members develop statistical bulletins to include key tourism indicators and enhance methods for collecting tourism data.

Organised by Oman's National Centre for Statistics and Information in partnership with the Arab League and Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the three-day forum featured discussions on innovative data sources and Arab experiences in tourism statistics. The final session was moderated by Linda Moreno from UN Tourism, focusing on regional and international case studies in non-traditional tourism data collection.

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Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Oil prices fall on easing Middle East concerns

Oil prices slightly decreased on Wednesday with eased concerns in the Middle East and the prospects of weak demand in China, one of the world's major crude consumers.

The international oil benchmark of Brent crude dropped 0.5% to \$73.99 per barrel at 0803GMT, down from the previous session's close of \$74.37.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate also declined by 0.4% to \$70.06 per barrel, compared to \$70.38 at the prior session's close.

Oil markets are watching for Israel's retaliation over an early-October missile strike by Iran.

Prices fell more than 4% in the prior session as the report eased concerns that the oil supply would be disrupted.

OQEP IPO oversubscribed 2.4 times

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Exploration & Production Company's (OQEP) initial public offering (IPO), the largest in Oman's history, has been oversubscribed 2.4 times, according to data released by the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

The offer attracted demand for approximately 4.820bn shares against an offer size of 2bn shares, reflecting confidence from both local and foreign investors in the company and the Omani capital market.

The RO780mn IPO generated demand for shares worth RO1.814bn at the upper range of the offered price of 390bz per share, indicating strong interest from both institutional and retail investors, as per FSA data.

The FSA has approved the allocation of shares to subscribers. The Category I portion of the IPO, which includes local and foreign institutions, was oversubscribed 3.36 times, with investors allocated 29.779% of their subscribed shares.

In Category II, the portion reserved for large individual investors was oversubscribed 3.067 times, allowing for an allocation of 32.608% of subscribed shares. The portion reserved for small retail investors in Category II was oversubscribed 1.269 times, with a minimum allocation



The RO780mn IPO generated demand for shares worth RO1.814bn at the upper range of the offered price of 390bz per share, indicating strong interest from both institutional and retail investors

of 8,000 shares plus 23.1808% of the remaining shares to each subscriber.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, H E Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the Financial Services

Authority, noted that the FSA adopted an allocation methodology that considers the interest of all segments of investors and contributes to expanding participation in public subscriptions.

This approach, he said, should

enhance the role of the capital market as an effective source of financing for the national economy.

H E Salmi emphasised that the strong investor interest and confidence demonstrated in the

OQEP IPO highlights the importance of the capital market in supporting economic activities and financing various investment projects.

The OQEP IPO comprised a total of 2bn shares, representing

25% of the company's total issued share capital. The IPO was expected to raise up to RO780mn (equivalent to \$2.026bn) at the top of the price range, valuing OQEP at up to RO3.120bn (equivalent to \$8.104bn).

OQEP's initial public offering marks the largest IPO in Oman's history and the first of its kind in the exploration and production sector. OQEP shares are expected to commence trading on the Muscat Stock Exchange on or around October 28, 2024, under the trading symbol 'OQEP'.

The company has adopted a quarterly dividend distribution policy to pay dividends after the IPO. OQEP has stated that it has a track record of robust and sustainable cash flow generation and intends to maintain a dividend policy designed to return substantially all of its distributable free cash flow after providing for growth opportunities and investments.

The company expects to pay its first dividend distribution of approximately RO57.7mn (\$150mn) around December 2024 for Q3 2024 and approximately RO57.7mn (\$150mn) around March 2025 for Q4 2024, equivalent to an annualised dividend payment of approximately RO230.7mn (\$600mn).



Oman records trade surplus worth RO4bn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's trade balance registered a surplus of RO4.304bn during the first seven months of 2024, compared to RO4.324bn during the corresponding period in 2023, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The statistics indicate that the total value of merchandise exports by the end of July 2024 reached RO13.72bn, representing an increase of 7.6% over the same period in 2023, when the figure stood at RO12.752bn.

The value of merchandise imports to Oman amounted to RO9.416bn, comprising an increase of 11.7% by the end of July 2024 compared to the corresponding period in 2023, when it stood at RO8.428bn.

The increase in the value of exports during first seven months of 2024 is mainly attributed to the rise in Oman's oil and gas exports, which reached RO8.569bn, up by 8% compared to the same period of 2023, when it stood at RO7.931bn.

Among oil and gas exports by the end of July 2024, the value of Oman's crude oil exports amounted to RO5.962bn, recording an increase of 7.6% over the same period in 2023. The value of refined oil exports increased

to RO1.163bn, up by 30.2%, while the value of Oman's liquefied natural gas exports decreased to RO1.444bn, down by 3.6% compared to the end of July 2023.

Exports rise 5.1%

Statistics revealed an increase in the value of non-oil merchandise exports by 5.1% by the end of July 2024, reaching RO4.152bn, compared to RO3.95bn at the end of July 2023.

Mineral products had the highest value of non-oil merchandise exports, amounting to RO1.514bn, representing an increase of 17.4% over the same period in 2023, followed by base metals and related products with RO767mn, an increase of 2.8%, and chemical products with an export value of RO608mn, increasing by 2.9%.

The value of Oman's exports of plastics and rubber increased to RO549mn, constituting a rise of 6.3%. Meanwhile, exports of live animals and animal products fell by 17.4%, reaching RO195mn, and the value of exports of other products amounted to RO520mn.

The value of re-exports from the Sultanate of Oman increased by 14.7% to RO999mn by the end of July 2024 compared to the end of July 2023.

Bank Muscat net profit rises 7.5% to RO170.8mn for first 9 months of 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bank Muscat has reported a net profit of RO170.79mn for the first nine months of 2024, compared to RO158.88mn reported during the same period in 2023, recording a growth of 7.5%.

The bank announced its preliminary financial results for the nine-month period ended September 30, 2024, on Wednesday. Its net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing stood at RO293.91mn for the first nine months of 2024, compared to RO280.98mn for the same period in 2023, reflecting an increase of 4.6%.

Non-interest income was RO110.33mn for the nine-month period ended September 30, 2024, as compared to RO100.23mn for the same period in 2023, an increase of 10.1%. This growth was attributed to overall improvements in various business lines, the bank said in a statement.



Net loans and advances, including Islamic financing receivables, increased by 4.1% to RO10.269bn as of September 30, 2024, compared to RO9.865bn a year ago

Bank Muscat's operating expenses for the first nine months of 2024 were RO154.64mn, compared to RO146.48mn for the same period in 2023, marking an increase of 5.6%. Net impairment for credit losses for the nine-month period in 2024 decreased to RO44.95mn from RO49.25mn for the same period in 2023.

Net loans and advances, including Islamic financing receivables, increased by 4.1% to RO10.269bn as of September 30, 2024, compared to RO9.865bn a year ago. Customer deposits, including Islamic customer deposits, rose by 6.6% to RO10.11bn in September this year, up from RO9.485bn as of the end of

September 2023.

Bank Muscat informed that its full results for the nine-month period ended September 30, 2024, along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements, will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors at its meeting scheduled for later in October 2024.

Citi lifts its bull case oil price forecasts on Middle East tensions

Peter Nurse

Citigroup has lifted its bull case for oil prices after assessing historical risk events, given the potential for supply disruption in the Middle East.

The US bank keeps its baseline forecast for \$74 per barrels Brent in the fourth quarter of this year and \$65 per barrel during the first quarter of 2025, with an indicative probability of 60%, owing to weak underlying oil market fundamentals.

However, Citi has lifted its bull case scenario for oil prices for the fourth quarter of 2024 and first quarter of next year to \$120 per barrel from \$80 per barrel, lifting its indicative probability to 20%,



up from 10%, given the heightened potential of the market to fear or realize supply losses during the months ahead.

A recent analog to the potential escalation in the Middle East

from here is the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022, during the beginning of which Brent oil rallied to average \$116 per barrel in the second quarter of 2022, the bank said.

"Our new bull case scenario is based on supply fears and disruptions similar in magnitude and duration to that which occurred during 2022," analysts at Citi said, in a note dated October 14.

Losses that may arise from escalation could range from an attack on a refinery disrupting crude oil and liquids supply (around 0.1-0.7mn barrels per day), to losing most of Iran's crude oil exports (around 1.5mn bpd), all the way up to impacting different degrees of impacts on the oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz (up to 20mn bpd), "although we view the latter as highly unlikely."

Supply losses might also

come from any response by Iran that targets regional energy assets.

"In our bull case scenario, we model higher actual disruptions than was the case during Russia-Ukraine, however higher levels of spare capacity and stock levels, and a weakening demand environment, may mean a similar price response," Citi added.

The bank's bear scenario includes OPEC+ raising production, starting in December, and a reduction in oil supply risks sees prices at \$60 per barrel for the fourth quarter of 2024 at \$60 and \$55 in the first quarter of 2025, with an indicative probability of 20%, down from 30%.

(Source: Investing.com)

AI can make markets more efficient and volatile

IMF’s new Global Financial Stability Report indicates that artificial intelligence-driven trading could lead to faster and more efficient markets, but also higher trading volumes and greater volatility in times of stress

Washington, US - More efficient or more volatile? The adoption of the latest iterations of artificial intelligence by financial markets can improve risk management and deepen liquidity; but it could also make markets opaque, harder to monitor, and more vulnerable to cyber-attacks and manipulation risks, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The IMF’s new Global Financial Stability Report looks at new market data to understand where this technology might be taking us. IMF staff conducted extensive outreach across various stakeholders - from investors to technology providers to market regulators - to show how financial institutions are harnessing advances in AI for capital market activities, and the potential impact of its adoption.

Hedge funds, investment banks, and others have been using quantitative trading strategies for decades. Automated trading algorithms have helped markets move faster and digest large trades more efficiently in major asset classes such as US equities. But they have also contributed to “flash crash” events when market prices have swung wildly in very short periods of time - such as in May 2010 when US stock prices collapsed only to rebound minutes later - and there are fears they could destabilise markets in times of severe stress and uncertainty.

As per IMF’s analysis, artificial intelligence, through its ability to



almost instantly process large amounts of data and even text for use by traders, is poised to take these kinds of changes to another level. However, while generative AI and other recent breakthroughs are attracting attention in both the popular press and in financial markets, today they are used in only limited ways by actual investors.

‘Patent filings are a good way to understand this, given what is

often a long lead time between filings and actual production-ready technology. Since large language models, or LLMs, started to appear in 2017, the share of AI content in patent applications related to algorithmic trading has risen from 19% in 2017 to over 50% each year since 2020, suggesting a wave of innovation is coming in this area,’ IMF report said.

These new innovations, the report added, will likely further AI’s

ability to quickly rebalance investment portfolios, which will in turn lead to higher trading volumes. Market participants we surveyed concur that high-frequency, AI-driven trading is expected to become more prevalent, particularly in liquid asset classes like equities, government bonds, and listed derivatives. They foresee greater integration of sophisticated AI in investment and trading decisions within three to five

years, although a “human in the loop” approach is expected to persist, especially for large capital allocation decisions.

The report suggested that prices may react much more quickly in an AI-driven market. Investors mentioned the release of the complex and lengthy minutes of Federal Reserve meetings as an example where AI could provide a trading signal faster than any human trader could, and this may

already be happening.

Who will be able to take advantage of these new technologies? The report said that AI might lead to a further migration of investment to hedge funds, proprietary trading firms, and other nonbank financial intermediaries, which would make markets less transparent and harder to monitor. Nonbanks have a structural advantage in the adoption of AI.

Policy recommendations

How should regulators and supervisors prepare for this new world? In a faster reacting market where nonbanks may continue to rise in importance, various aspects of regulation and supervision in AI-related areas should be enhanced, according to the report.

‘Financial sector authorities and trading venues should determine if they need to design new volatility response mechanisms - or modify the existing ones appropriately - to respond to flash crash events potentially originated in AI-driven trading. These include margin requirements, circuit breakers, and the resilience of central counterparties,’ the report said.

Similarly, financial sector authorities should continue to strengthen oversight and regulation of nonbank financial intermediaries by requiring them to identify themselves and disclose AI-relevant information; as well as require financial institutions to regularly map interdependencies between data, models, and technological infrastructure supporting AI models.

A close monitoring and oversight of this rapidly changing market lays the foundation for an opportune and balanced regulatory response that may allow financial sector participants to benefit from AI while mitigating its risks.



Leading financiers unite at ADIPEC 2024 to mobilise capital for energy transition

Abu Dhabi, UAE - ADIPEC 2024, the world’s largest energy event, will highlight the critical role of finance in accelerating the transition to a secure, equitable and sustainable energy future, through its inaugural Finance & Investment Conference. To be held during November 4-7 in Abu Dhabi, ADIPEC will gather financial leaders, policymakers, and energy executives to unlock the capital required for scaling low-carbon technologies and fast-tracking decarbonisation initiatives.

The three-day Finance & Investment Conference at ADIPEC has four main themes: Mobilising investment for a sustainable future; Navigating uncertain geopolitical factors to secure energy transition investment; En-

suring bankability of clean energy projects and technologies; and Meeting the growing demand for resilient and clean energy in developing countries.

In alignment with these themes, the conference will fea-

ADIPEC will gather financial leaders, policymakers, and energy executives to unlock the capital required for scaling low-carbon technologies

ture sessions led by global experts to activate investment needed to fast-track the global energy transition, including navigating macroeconomic volatility, unlocking capital for emerging markets, and developing regulatory frameworks that support de-

carbonisation technologies.

Key speakers will include Charlie Tan, CEO, Global Impact Coalition; Mazin Khan, CFO, Masdar; Julian Mylchreest, Executive Vice Chairman, Bank of America; Lina Osman, Managing

Director & Head, Sustainable Finance - Africa and MENAP, Standard Chartered; Semih Ozkan, Executive Director, EMEA Energy, Power, Renewables, Metals & Mining, JP Morgan; and Zoe Knight, Group Head, Centre of Sustainable Fi-

nance, Head of Climate Change MENAT, HSBC, who will jointly discuss solutions to the financing challenges faced by developing economies in their energy transition efforts.

Sharing his extensive expertise in securing investment within the energy and renewables sectors, Charlie Tan, CEO, Global Impact Coalition, said, “Achieving net-zero emissions requires ambition, financial frameworks and innovative investment models that can make decarbonisation viable from both a sustainability and commercial angle. As a global energy leader, Abu Dhabi provides the perfect stage for hosting ADIPEC’s critical conversations on bridging the gap between ambition and action in the broader energy transition.

UK inflation falls to 3-year low boosting hopes for rate cut

London, UK - Inflation in the UK has fallen to its lowest level for more than three years, official figures showed on Wednesday, a drop that has cemented market expectations that the Bank of England will lower interest rates at its next policy meeting.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said consumer prices rose 1.7% in September, down from 2.2% the previous month, largely as a result of lower air fares and petrol prices. However, food prices jumped by 1.9% and services were 4.9% more expensive than last year.

Core inflation, without food and energy prices, fell to 3.2% in September from 3.6% in the previous month.

The decline in the overall inflation was bigger than the 1.9% analysts had anticipated and means that inflation is below the central bank’s target rate of 2% for the first time since 2021.

As a result, the bank’s rate-setting panel is expected to further reduce its main interest rate when it meets again in early November to 4.75% from 5%.

“A quarter-point rate cut in November is now effectively a done deal, and this report certainly makes the path to a consecutive cut in December much



clearer,” said Luke Bartholomew, deputy chief economist at abrdn, formerly Aberdeen Asset Management to AP.

Central banks around the world dramatically increased borrowing costs from near zero during the coronavirus pandemic when prices started to shoot up, first as a result of supply chain issues built up and then because of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine which pushed up energy costs. As inflation rates have fallen from multi-decade highs recently, they have started cutting interest rates. The bank is widely expected to reduce borrowing costs again at its next meeting in November, especially as it will have details of the government’s budget on October 30.

The new Labour government

has said that it needs to plug a 22bn pound) hole in the public finances and has indicated that it may have to raise taxes and lower spending, which would likely weigh on the near-term outlook for the British economy and put downward pressure on inflation.

The lower inflation rate in September is a boon for Treasury chief Rachel Reeves as she prepares to deliver her first budget since many annual benefits from the government are linked to September’s rate. The prospect of lower borrowing rates in the months ahead is also welcome as it will reduce the government’s debt-related interest payments and potentially give her more leeway.

(Source: Euronews.com)

European Central Bank expected to cut interest rate to 2%, experts say

Frankfurt, Germany - The European Central Bank (ECB) is expected to continue its rate cuts at its monetary policy meetings this year, with experts estimating that the bank could reduce its deposit interest rate to as low as 2%.

According to estimates in the money markets, the ECB is expected to cut its three main policy rates by 25 basis points at this week’s meeting.

Peter Vanden Houte, chief economist at ING Group, told Anadolu that he expects the bank to cut its interest rates by 25 basis points at the October meeting.

Houte stated that September’s inflation figures show “a clear deceleration of inflationary pressures, also in services,” while “sentiment data have been quite weak, suggesting that the eco-



nom recovery in the eurozone is coming to a standstill.”

Houte estimates that the pace of monetary easing may accelerate based on recent macroeconomic data, and the ECB may continue to reduce rates at every meeting until the deposit interest rate drops to 2%.

Meanwhile, Dirk Schumacher, head of European macro research at investment firm Natixis,

told Anadolu Agency that the ECB may cut its deposit interest rate by 25 basis points at this week’s meeting.

“While there will be no direct guidance with respect to the future rate path, we think that the overall message of the October meeting will be one of increased confidence in the inflation outlook. That said, the stickiness of services inflation remains a thorn

in the side for the ECB,” he said.

Schumacher noted that the moderate course of wage increases “remains a necessary condition” for a steady and gradual path of rate cuts.

He emphasised that a 25-basis-point rate cut could be issued at each upcoming meeting until the deposit rate reaches 2% by June 2025.

Anadolu Agency



Mercure debuts in Muscat, offers gateway to Omani hospitality

Mercure, a locally-inspired brand from Accor, announced its debut in Oman with the soft opening of Mercure Muscat - a hotel that captures the essence of local exploration and authentic Omani hospitality.

Strategically located just 15 minutes from the international airport in Muscat, Mercure offers easy access to commercial hubs and government offices, catering to both business and leisure travellers.

Featuring 186 rooms and suites, the hotel combines elegance and simplicity for a truly authentic atmosphere, complete with panoramic views of the city, mountains, and sea. With calligraphy adorning all guest rooms and captivating urban art on the building's exterior, these creative elements showcase the deep artistic traditions of Oman, making the property a standout in Mercure's portfolio.

Guests can enjoy a range of top-tier facilities, including an inviting outdoor swimming pool on the seventh floor, complete with a Jacuzzi - a perfect retreat for relaxation. The hotel also features a state-of-the-art health club and a tranquil spa offering tailored treatments.

For business and special events, Mercure Muscat is equipped with versatile meeting and event spaces, accommodating up to 450 guests. The ballroom, one of the largest in the city, is pillarless and offers private access, making it an ideal choice for weddings and other large gatherings.

In addition, the hotel provides three meeting rooms and boardrooms for smaller events and business needs.

Mercure Muscat offers guests an authentic culinary

experience rooted in Omani culture through the brand's 'Discover Local' programme. Guests can enjoy a variety of dining options, including 'The Valley' - an all-day dining restaurant, 'M Café' - a cozy lobby café, a pool bar, and 'Yum Yum' - a speciality Asian Fusion restaurant. The hotel's menu features a mix of regional specialties and international favorites, all made with locally sourced, seasonal, and healthy ingredients.

At Mercure Muscat, we take pride in offering a dining experience that showcases authentic Omani flavours and a diverse range of tastes

ISMAIL IBRAHIM

"Food and beverage are key to immersing guests in the essence of a destination," commented Ismail Ibrahim, General Manager of Mercure Muscat.

"At Mercure Muscat, we take pride in offering a dining experience that not only showcases authentic Omani flavours but also caters to a diverse range of tastes, ensuring that every guest feels connected to the local culture. Through our 'Discover Local' programme, we invite guests to explore the region's rich culinary heritage, creating experiences that are both memorable and meaningful."

He also highlighted the hotel's unique features. "From the moment guests step into our property, they will feel the spirit of the neighbourhood."

Muscat, N Sharqiyah governorates exchange experiences, specialties

An official delegation from North Sharqiyah governorate visited Muscat recently and held an exchange meeting with the officials at the Muscat Governorate building.

According to a press release, the delegation was received by the Muscat governorate officials within the scope of cooperation and exchange of experiences between them.

'The visit (of the North Sharqiyah delegation) was planned and undertaken to provide employees with the opportunity to learn about Muscat governorate's experience in the fields of urban planning, project management, plans, and business strategies,' the release explained.

Additionally, discussions were held on municipal work and local administration, within the governorates' development priorities.

The visitors were received with a welcoming speech, followed by a documentary film on the most notable landmarks and achievements of Muscat governorate, besides giving a historical insight into the governorate's municipal work.

Dr Abdul Majeed al Aghbari, the Legal Department's manager in Muscat Governorate, gave a detailed presentation on gover-



nance implementations in Muscat's local administration, including the Strategic Plan, Institutional Excellence Indicators, Transactions Charter and Procedures' Documentation.

The project aims to document processes and procedures by developing an implementation plan to collect and document procedures according to a specific timeline, which contributes to improve the user experience, reduce time, effort and resources. As well as, promoting digital transformation in Muscat Governorate.

Muscat Municipality also reviewed several projects. Rehab

Al Saadi presented a visual presentation on the 'Etamid Platform', an advanced and integrated digital platform that unifies the procedures for issuing a no-objection certificate for all excavation activities outside the land borders within Muscat Governorate, for the various types of service lines. The program displayed a film highlighting Muscat Municipality's projects, such as road paving, water drainage projects, walkways, public parks, lighting projects and others.

Salim al Ameri presented Muscat Municipality's experience in municipal licences. Fatima al Fazari discussed the

strategy for projects' preparation in the annual plan, which focuses on the sources for preparing the plan, the aims card, the strategy for preparing the annual plan, and the proposed projects card in Muscat Municipality.

The first day's programme concluded with an open discussion, during which the two governorates' staff exchanged views and experiences on best practices in local administration. So, enhancing cooperation between the governorates. On the second day, the visitors were taken on field trips to several Muscat projects such as the Oman Botanical Garden in Al Khoud, the Al

Khuwair Square site, and the Sustainable City Yiti site.

This visit comes within continuous efforts to achieve integration between governorates and exchange experiences that contribute to the municipal and administrative work's development, according to Oman's Vision 2040 and the governorates' development.

These visits offer an opportunity to learn from other governorates' experiences in the planning and project management fields. Also, to learn about best practices in terms of the projects, and the implementation and follow-up methods.

Muttrah wali reviews zakat committee's plans and programmes for beneficiaries

Within the Muscat Governorate's efforts to enhance the social and humanitarian role, Dr Hamad bin Said al Mamari, the wali of Muttrah, visited the headquarters of the Zakat and Charity Committee in his wilayat and reviewed the work and the future plans of the committee.

During his tour, the wali listened to a detailed explanation about registration cases worthy of zakat and sadaqas, and shared his views on how to deal with the requests submitted by needy families.

He reviewed the efforts done to accurately evaluate the beneficiaries' situations so as to ensure that aid reach the 'neediest groups' in a transparent and fair



manner.

The Muttrah wali was introduced to the plans that the com-

mittee will implement in the future in order to improve the offered services and increase

charitable work. They also discussed the challenges that face the committee and their solu-

tions through enhancing cooperation between government and private entities. Thus, it supports the committee's efforts and increase beneficiaries.

He emphasised the joint work between various government and community entities to support worthy groups and provide them with welfare life.

He praised the zakat committee's efforts in fair distribution of aid, which contributes to achieve social fairness and enhance social cohesion.

This visit reflected the Muttrah Wali Office's interest in activating cooperation between various sectors to support the needy and promote charitable work in the community.



Registration opens for Indian Social Club's dance competition

The Indian Social Club has announced the opening of registration for Dancemania 2024, an exhilarating dance competition that promises to showcase the incredible talent of dancers from the Indian community.

This exciting event will take place, with preliminary rounds scheduled from November 4 to 7, culminating in a grand finale on November 9 at the CBFS Hall, Bousher.

Dancemania is an event designed to bring together dancers of all ages and styles, creating a vibrant platform to celebrate the art of dance. The preliminary rounds will serve as an opportu-

EVENT DETAILS

- Preliminary Rounds: November 4 to 7
- Grand Finale: November 9
- Venue: CBFS Hall
- Registration: Open

nity for participants to showcase their skills and compete for a place in the grand finale.

"We are pleased to welcome a celebrity judge from India, whose expertise in the world of dance will ensure a high level of competition and recognition for the participants," the organisers

said. "Registration for Dancemania has officially begun! Interested dancers are encouraged to sign up promptly to secure their spot in this exciting competition," they said, adding that participants can register through the Indian Social Club website or at its office in Muscat.

"Join us in celebrating the passion and creativity of our dancers as they compete for recognition, prizes, and the opportunity to perform in front of a captivated audience. We invite everyone to come and support the talented participants throughout the event and especially at the grand finale."

Em Sherif brings 'heart and soul' of exquisite Lebanese cuisine to Oman

Em Sherif, the celebrated Lebanese restaurant renowned for its exquisite cuisine and sophisticated ambiance, has opened its 24th location in Muscat, marking its debut in the Sultanate of Oman.

Located at the prestigious The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, Em Sherif brings a taste of Lebanon to the heart of the Sultanate, offering an unparalleled dining experience that blends tradition with contemporary flair.

Founded by visionary chef and restaurateur, Mireille Hayek, Em Sherif has garnered international acclaim for its unwavering commitment to authentic Lebanese flavours and its ability to create an inviting and familial atmosphere. The Oman restaurant promises to continue this legacy, offering guests a delectable journey through the rich tapestry of Lebanese gastronomy.

"We are thrilled to introduce Em Sherif's authentic Lebanese hospitality to Oman, offering a dining experience that blends tradition, elegance and genuine warmth," said Mireille Hayek,



Founder and Chef of Em Sherif.

"At Em Sherif, we celebrate the richness and diversity of our culinary heritage with every dish, and we are excited to share this passion with our guests in Oman, creating a space where family, friends, and communities can come together and enjoy the true flavours of Lebanon in a setting that reflects the heart of our brand."

Joining Mireille Hayek in leading this venture is her daughter, Executive Head Chef Yasmina Hayek. Yasmina, a rising star in the culinary world, brings her innovative approach and passion for Lebanese cuisine to the table. Her expertise and creativity have contributed significantly to Em Sherif's growing success.

Jason Xuereb, Hotel Manager at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat

Resort, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, "We are delighted to welcome Em Sherif to The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort. This collaboration aligns perfectly with our commitment to offering our guests the finest dining experiences. Em Sherif's reputation for excellence and its dedication to authentic Lebanese cuisine make it an ideal addition to our hotel."

UNIFIL holding all positions despite direct Israeli attacks: Spokesperson

Beirut, Lebanon - The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has reiterated it will not abandon its positions despite being 'directly and deliberately attacked' by the Israeli military.

"Peacekeepers remain in all positions and the UN flag continues to fly," UNIFIL spokesperson Andrea Tenenti said in comments to Anadolu.

"We will continue our work to implement our mandate, despite the immense challenges we are facing right now."

Over the past week, Israel has repeatedly targeted UNIFIL positions in southern Lebanon, sparking worldwide condemnation and fears about its larger military plans.

The attacks on UNIFIL are playing out along with Israeli airstrikes across Lebanon against what it claims are Hezbollah targets. The intensified Israeli assault on Lebanon has killed over 1,500 people, injured more than 4,500 others, and displaced at least 1.34mn people since late September.

Overall, the number of casualties in Israeli attacks since last October is now over 13,000, according to official Lebanese figures. "Since October 8, UNIFIL positions in Ras Naqoura, Labbouneh, and Ramia have been directly and deliberately attacked by the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)," said Tenenti.

"IDF Merkava tank fire also hit an observation tower at our headquarters in Naqoura. Five



Over the past week, Israel has repeatedly targeted UNIFIL positions in southern Lebanon, sparking worldwide condemnation and fears about its larger military plans

peacekeepers have been injured at our headquarters, including two in the direct hit on our observation tower."

Another 15 UN peacekeepers 'also suffered effects from a kind of smoke that was released by the IDF in Ramia,' he added.

While the UNIFIL official did not elaborate further, Israel's use

of banned white phosphorus weapons has been documented in both Gaza and Lebanon, including by UN experts and watchdogs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Protests and plans

Tenenti said UNIFIL remains in

'constant contact with authorities on both sides of the Blue Line', referring to the de facto border between Lebanon and Israel.

"Our head of mission and force commander has directly communicated to the IDF that attacks on UN positions and peacekeepers are unacceptable," he said. "We have formally

protested recent incidents to the IDF by letter."

As for the motives, he said the Israeli military 'has not told us why they are attacking our positions, cameras, lighting, and communications equipment'.

Tenenti reaffirmed that UNIFIL remains prepared for any eventuality. "We are regularly adjusting

our posture and activities, and we have contingency plans ready to activate if absolutely necessary," he said.

"All actors are reminded of their obligation to ensure peacekeeper safety and security and refrain from any actions that would put peacekeepers in harm's way. They are further reminded that

the inviolability of UN premises must be respected at all times."

The official pointed to the UN Security Council's call for 'all parties to respect the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel and premises ... (and) that UN peacekeepers and UN premises must never be the target of an attack'.

On Tuesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also issued a strong warning that

The attacks on UNIFIL are playing out along with Israeli airstrikes across Lebanon. The assault on Lebanon has killed over 1,500 people and injured more than 4,500 since late September

targeting peacekeepers 'may constitute a war crime'.

Meanwhile, Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen on Wednesday condemned Israel's military attacks on UNIFIL headquarters and critical positions of the peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon.

"I am deeply concerned about the reports of attacks directed at soldiers from the United Nations peacekeeping mission, UNIFIL, in Lebanon. Any attack against UN peacekeeping forces is unacceptable. The protection of peacekeeping personnel and UN premises is the responsibility of all parties in a conflict," Rasmussen said in response to an email from Anadolu.

Anadolu Agency

Nigeria: 100 dead in fuel tanker explosion

Abuja, Nigeria - At least 94 people were killed and 50 injured after a fuel tanker exploded, police in Nigeria confirmed on Wednesday.

The incident occurred in northern Jigawa state late on Tuesday. Many of the victims had approached the crashed tanker and were attempting to collect fuel spilled on the road.

Such incidents are relatively common in Nigeria, where fuel prices are extremely high compared to average incomes, particularly in poor rural areas.

Nigeria also lacks a sufficient railway system to transport goods such as oil.

'Horrific tragedy'

Public broadcaster Radio Nigeria quoted Jigawa state police spokesperson Lawan Shi'isu Adam as saying that the 'horrific tragedy' had occurred at around 11:30pm local time.

The driver lost control of the vehicle, causing it to tip over on a road en route from Kano state to Nguru town in Yobe state. Shortly after the accident, there was an explosion causing a massive fire.

He added that locals attempting to scoop up fuel had 'overwhelmed' police officers trying to stop them.

Adam said that local officials had organised a mass burial for the victims, and that the local community was gathering together to mourn them.

DW



Israel kills 65 more Gazans as overall death toll tops 42,400

Gaza City, Palestine - Israeli attacks killed at least 65 more Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, bringing the overall death toll since last year to 42,409, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Wednesday.

A ministry statement added that some 99,153 others were injured in the ongoing assault.

"Israeli forces killed 65 people and injured 140 others in six massacres of families in the last 24 hours," the ministry said.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army

detained 10 more Palestinians in military raids in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, according to prisoners' affairs groups. A woman and former prisoners were among the detainees in the raids that targeted several areas in the West Bank, including Hebron and Nablus, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner Society said in a joint statement.

"The arrests were marked by abuse, threats against detainees and their families, and acts of

vandalism and destruction on citizens' homes," the statement said. Israeli soldiers interrogated around 60 Palestinians in the field during the raids, according to the statement.

The new arrests brought the total number of Palestinians detained by the Israeli army in the West Bank since October last year to over 11,300, including those who were released after being arrested, according to Palestinian figures.

Anadolu Agency

Israeli warplanes carry out 3 strikes on Beirut suburb

Beirut, Lebanon - The Israeli army's warplanes on Wednesday carried out at least three airstrikes on the southern suburb of Beirut.

According to Lebanon's official National News Agency, the warplanes launched three successive airstrikes on Beirut's southern suburb, including an airstrike on the Haret Hreik neighbourhood, and another on a building near a school.

No further details were provided on casualties or material damage.

Late on Tuesday, the Israeli army carried out a series of violent airstrikes on several towns and regions in southern and eastern Lebanon, killing at least 23 people and injuring 31 others.

Meanwhile, at least five people were killed in Israeli airstrikes on municipal buildings in Nabatieh in southern Lebanon on Wednesday, the Health Ministry said.

A ministry statement said that efforts were underway to search for survivors under the rubble.

The state news agency NNA



At least five people were killed in Israeli airstrikes on municipal buildings in Nabatieh in southern Lebanon on Wednesday

said at least 10 airstrikes were launched by Israeli warplanes on Nabatieh this morning. Other strikes were reported in Lower Nabatieh, Khiyam, Adaiseh, and Markaba in southern Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Turkey assisted in air evacuation of more than 2,000 people from Lebanon amid Israeli attacks, according to Turkish Foreign Ministry sources.

As of October 16, Turkey has helped 2,120 people from 21 countries in Lebanon reach their destinations by air via Turkey.

The evacuated people are from Canada, US, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Argentina, Lebanon, Palestine, Philippines, UK, South Korea, Indonesia, Ireland, Spain, Serbia, Russia, France, Finland, Sweden, and Uzbekistan.

Additionally, Turkey evacuated 966 people from Lebanon by ship, including 878 Turkish citizens, 24 from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and their families.

Anadolu Agency

'Moscow-Beijing cooperation to enhance SCO's effectiveness'

Islamabad, Pakistan - Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on Wednesday said that cooperation between his country and China will further enhance the effectiveness of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

"I am convinced that cooperation between Russia and China will further enhance the effectiveness of the SCO and will help us fully realise the significant economic potential of our organisation," Mishustin said during talks with his Chinese counter-

part Li Qiang, on the sidelines of a two-day SCO heads of government summit held in Pakistan's capital Islamabad.

Extending congratulations to China on the 75th anniversary of the country's foundation and the establishment of bilateral ties between Moscow and Beijing, Mishustin said cooperation between the two countries has acquired a 'new quality and meaningful content'.

"We are multiplying the traditions of good neighbourliness, friendship and strategic partner-



Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin

ship and are confident in the future together," Mishustin said.

He also said that both countries are strengthening their economic cooperation, including in terms of mutual trade volume and joint investment, despite external pressures. Mishustin went on to say that their partnership in the energy sector has acquired a comprehensive strategic nature, adding that this covers the oil, gas, coal, and nuclear industries in particular.

For his part, Li reiterated the dynamic development of the

Chinese-Russian partnership and strategic cooperation, saying that both countries support each other on issues related to their core interests.

"At a new historical start, we are ready to jointly implement the agreements at the highest level, strengthen strategic interaction, expand mutually beneficial cooperation, contribute to the development of our countries, as well as to the cause of peace and development throughout the world," Li also said.

Anadolu Agency

North Korea claims 1.4mn youth volunteered for military

Istanbul, Turkey - North Korea claimed on Wednesday that over 1.4mn young people and students have volunteered to join or rejoin the military as tensions with South Korea escalate. According to the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), 'millions of young people have turned out in the nationwide struggle to wipe out the ROK (South Korea) scum who committed a serious provocation of violating the sovereignty' of North Korea. The report said the surge in volunteers occurred over the weekend, on October 14 and 15. The recruitment drive comes amid heightened hostilities between the two Koreas, following accusations that South Korean drones entered North Korean airspace over Pyongyang. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un convened a security meeting on Monday to address the alleged drone incursions, which Pyongyang claims have occurred since October 3. North Korea has blamed the South Korean military for the 'provocations'. In response, North Korea



The recruitment drive comes amid heightened hostilities between South Korea and North Korea

also reportedly destroyed land routes connecting the two countries, intensifying the standoff. Seoul, however, has stated it cannot confirm North Korea's allegations. KCNA condemned

the alleged drone incursions as an act designed to 'push the tense situation to the brink of war', warning that South Korea's actions could lead to its 'self-destruction'. The report went further, asserting North Korea's 'will to annihilate the scum of the ROK' and stating that if a war breaks out, 'the ROK will be wiped off the map'. Meanwhile, South Korea announced on Wednesday that it is coordinating with the US and Japan to form a joint mechanism. Anadolu Agency

Most severe drought in southern Africa leaves 15mn in urgent need of food aid

Cape Town, SA - A food crisis triggered by the most severe drought in the last 40 years in southern Africa has left 15mn people in need of urgent food assistance beginning this month. The region is experiencing the worst drought in 40 years, primarily affecting Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola, Botswana and Lesotho due to the El Nino weather phenomenon that has been in effect since July 2023, according to the World Meteorological Organization. Regional countries, which faced their worst harvest in the last five years in April because of the drought, are now confronting a serious food crisis as stocks run low. Furthermore, malnutrition and water scarcity are expected to lead to a significant rise in epidemic diseases in the coming months. According to data from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the total population of Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana - the countries most affected by the drought-hit 130mn. More than half, around 68mn,



The region is experiencing the worst drought in 40 years, primarily affecting Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola and Botswana

require varying levels of assistance due to drought and famine. 'Famine in Southern Africa,' a report by the World Health Orga-

nization (WHO) on October 14, said more than 22mn people in the region are facing high levels of food insecurity.

The report highlights that six months before the upcoming harvest period next April, the food stocks of countries in the re-

gion have reached a critical point. This situation has led to 15mn people needing urgent food aid starting this month, indicating a

severe humanitarian crisis expected to unfold in the coming month. The report noted that two million children are suffering from acute malnutrition, with 500,000 facing severe 'wasting'.

Countries most affected

Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana are the six southern African countries that have declared a state of emergency due to famine and drought, along with Mozambique and Angola, which are also deeply affected by the disaster, according to WHO data. Zambia tops the list with 5.8mn facing high levels of food insecurity. Following Zambia, Malawi has 5.7mn affected, Zimbabwe 4.4mn, Mozambique 3.3mn, Angola 1.5mn, Namibia 1.2mn, Botswana 400,000, and Lesotho has 37,000.

Increase in outbreaks expected

Additionally, millions are experiencing water shortages as sources dry up in the region. Limited access to drinking and household water increases the risk of waterborne diseases

spreading. The WHO report predicts that, along with malnutrition and harsh living conditions, there could be an increase in cases of cholera, malaria, polio, tuberculosis and measles in the coming months.

Energy crisis

For countries in the region that heavily rely on hydropower for electricity generation, the drought also signifies an energy crisis. According to a report in September by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Namibia has experienced daily power outages lasting up to 21 hours in September, with reservoir levels dropping to around 30%. In Zambia, where electricity production significantly relies on the Kariba Dam on the Zambezi River, the water level has fallen below 8%, leading to an average of only three hours of electricity supply per day. The World Meteorological Organization forecasts that the region is expected to be under the influence of the La Nina weather phenomenon starting next month. Anadolu Agency

Istanbul grapples with traffic due to fog

Istanbul, Turkey - The city of Istanbul experienced significant traffic congestion early on Wednesday as dense fog blanketed parts of the Turkish metropolis, which straddles Europe and Asia. Affecting both road and maritime transport in the Istanbul Strait, which runs between the Black Sea and Aegean Sea, the fog reduced visibility as drivers were forced to proceed with

caution. Major highways, including the D-100 and Trans-European Motorway, saw heavy traffic in both directions, with vehicles slowing to a crawl in some areas. Key bridges connecting the Europe and Asia sides of the city across the strait, including the July 15 Martyrs Bridge and Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, also experienced heavy congestion. Long lines formed at the toll

booths of the Eurasia Tunnel, an underwater road tunnel. The Eurasia Tunnel, an undersea road tunnel, also saw long queues at its toll booths. According to data from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, overall traffic density in the city reached 65%, with the Asian side experiencing 78%. The city's iconic Istanbul Strait, which divides Istanbul into its European and Asian sides, saw

some ferry services suspended due to poor visibility. This suspension led to increased pressure on other public transportation, including the subways, rapid metrobus transit, and Marmaray, an undersea rail line. The fog's impact extended beyond roads, rail, and waterways, causing crowding at major public transport nodes as commuters sought alternative routes. Anadolu Agency

A portrait by robot up for auction at Sotheby's

London, UK - A robot artist is set to make history as the first to have a work put up for sale by a major auction house, with the portrait of Alan Turing expected to fetch up to £150,000 (US\$196,000), organisers announced on Wednesday. The piece created by Ai-Da, a humanoid robot artist powered by artificial intelligence, will be the first sold at a major auction house and is set to go under the hammer at Sotheby's in London next month. It has been described as a 'haunting' portrait of the English mathematician Alan Turing, considered one of the fathers of modern-day computing.

The large-scale artwork is entitled 'AI God' and was 'first exhibited at the United Nations in May 2024 as part of a five-panelled Polyptych', Sotheby's said on its homepage. Robot with human-like features The ultra-realistic robot is designed to resemble a human female with a face, large eyes and a brown wig. The robot works by deploying AI algorithms and has cameras in its eyes, as well as bionic hands.



Ai-Da has bionic arms and was the brainchild of Aidan Meller (right)

The piece created by humanoid robot artist Ai-Da, powered by artificial intelligence, will be the first sold at a major auction house

Gallery owner and founder of Ai-Da Robot studio, Aidan Meller, headed the team that created the robot with AI specialists at the universities of Oxford and Birmingham.

Symbolic artwork Meller said Turing, who made his

name as a World War II code-breaker, had raised fears over the power of AI as early as the 1950s. He said the work's 'muted tones and broken facial planes' seemingly suggested 'the struggles Turing warned we will face when it comes to managing AI'. Ai-Da's works were 'ethereal and haunting' and 'continue to question where the power of AI will take us, and the global race to harness its power'. Ai-Da also made headlines in 2022 when depicting the headline acts of the Glastonbury music festival in the UK. Sotheby's Digital Art Sale will run from October 31 through November 7. DW

MYSTERIOUS BLACK BALLS ON BEACH



The popular Coogee Beach in Sydney, Australia, has been closed to public after mysterious black balls of debris washed ashore (Xinhua)

INDIA



Omar Abdullah takes oath as CM of J&K in Srinagar on Wednesday (ANI)

Omar Abdullah sworn in as CM of Jammu & Kashmir

Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir - National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah was sworn in as the first Chief Minister of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday.

L-G Manoj Saxena administered the oath of office to Abdullah and his council of ministers at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar. J-K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha administered the oath of office to Omar Abdullah along with his council of ministers.

National Conference MLA from Mendhar Javed Ahmed Rana, Javid Ahmad Dar from Rafiabadd, Sakina Itoo from DH Pora and Surinder Kumar Chowdhary were also administered oath by LG Sinha as ministers in Cabinet.

Independent MLA from Chhamb assembly seat Satish Sharma was given a place in Omar Abdullah-led cabinet.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and Congress general secretary

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were also present for the swearing in ceremony. Many INDIA Bloc leaders were present in the ceremony of the JKNC Vice President including Samajwadi Party Akhilesh Yadav, Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Prakash Karat, NCP-SCP MP Supriya Sule, DMK MP Kanimozhi, AAP leader Sanjay Singh and CPI leader D Raja.

PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti was also present during the ceremony. This came after the Congress-National Conference secured 48 seats, with the NC winning 42 and the Congress only six seats in the Jammu Kashmir assembly elections.

This will be the first elected government in Jammu and Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganisation of the former state into two Union Territories.

Omar Abdullah's grandfather, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, was the first prime minister of J&K after its accession to India and later served as the chief minister.

ANI

SCO meet: Jaishankar calls for good neighbourliness

Islamabad, Pakistan - External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has called for introspection if friendship between the two nations has fallen short or good neighbourliness is missing.

In his address at the 23rd Meeting of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) Council of Heads of Government in Islamabad, Jaishankar said: "If we fast-forward from the inception of the Charter to the situation today, these goals and these tasks are even more crucial. It is, therefore, essential that we have an honest conversation."

"If trust is lacking or cooperation inadequate, if friendship has fallen short and good neighbourliness is missing somewhere, there are surely reasons to introspect and causes to address. Equally, it is only when we reaffirm our commitment most sincerely to the Charter that we can fully realise the benefits of cooperation and integration that it envisages," he added.

He termed cross-border terrorism, extremism and separatism as the 'three evils' that hinder trade and people-to-people relations between countries.

He took a veiled jibe at Pakistan to state that if activities across borders are characterised by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are 'hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges in parallel'.

"We all realise that the world is moving towards multi-polarity. Globalisation and rebalancing are realities that cannot be denied. Cumulatively, they have created many new opportunities in terms of trade, investment,



Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif welcomes External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to a dinner hosted by him in Islamabad on Tuesday (ANI)

If trust is lacking or cooperation inadequate, if friendship has fallen short and good neighbourliness is missing somewhere, there are surely reasons to introspect

S JAISHANKAR

connectivity, energy flows and other forms of collaboration. There is no question that our region would benefit immensely if we take this forward. Not just that, others too would draw their own inspiration and lessons from such efforts," he said in his address.

"However, to do that, cooper-

ation must be based on mutual respect and sovereign equality. It should recognise territorial integrity and sovereignty. It must be built on genuine partnerships, not unilateral agendas. It cannot progress if we cherry-pick global practices, especially of trade and transit," the External Affairs Minister said.

Calling for firm commitment to the SCO Charter, Jaishankar said, "But most of all, our endeavours will progress only when our commitment to the Charter remains firm. It is axiomatic that development and growth requires peace and stability. And as the Charter spelt out, this means being firm and uncompromising in countering the 'three evils'. If activities across borders are characterised by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges in parallel."

Jaishankar said that India's initiatives and national endeav-

ours are 'strongly relevant' for the SCO. He said that the International Solar Alliance promotes renewable energy while the Global Biofuel Alliance recognises the task of energy transition.

Elaborating on India's initiatives, he said: "From an Indian perspective, our own global initiatives and national endeavours are also strongly relevant for the SCO. The International Solar Alliance promotes renewable energy. The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure prepares us for climate events. Mission LIFE advocates a sustainable lifestyle."

ANI

Haryana: Nayab Saini to take oath as chief minister today

Chandigarh, Haryana - Nayab Singh Saini was on Wednesday chosen as the leader of Haryana BJP Legislature Party in a meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Chandigarh. Nayab Saini will now take oath as Haryana Chief Minister for the second time on October 17.

Union Minister Shah said that Haryana's victory is the result of the developmental narrative carried by the Prime Minister across the country.

"This is a triumph of BJP's policies. Since the 1980s, no party has seen a Chief Minister re-elected for a third consecutive term, and if it happens, it happens with BJP," he said.

"I want to tell the opposition that if there is any state which buys all 24 crops, then it is the BJP-ruled Haryana state. If anyone has made the most purchases at MSP, it is PM Modi," he said.

The Union Home Minister further slammed the opposition



Home Minister Amit Shah felicitates Nayab Saini after he was chosen as the leader of BJP legislature party, in Panchkula on Wednesday (ANI)

The oath taking ceremony is slated to be held at Panchkula at 10am at Dussehra Ground in Sector 5 on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be present

over Agniveers and said that they left no stone unturned in instigating them.

"This is not a scheme of injustice towards the youth, but one that will rejuvenate the army with young blood. BJP promises that every individual who returns from Agniveer will secure a pensionable job in the Indian Government or the Haryana Government," Shah said.

The BJP is set to form its third successive government in

Haryana after it won 48 seats in the 90-member assembly as per the results announced last week. The Congress won 37 seats.

The oath taking ceremony is slated to be held at Panchkula at 10am at Dussehra Ground in Sector 5 on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be present, along with senior leaders from the BJP and the chief ministers and deputy chief ministers from NDA-ruled states.

ANI

Japan polls: Record number of women in the fray

Tokyo, Japan - A record number of 341 women have filed their candidacy for the upcoming general elections in Japan.

The number of female candidates for the October 27 House of Representatives election is higher from the previous record of 229 in the 2009 elections, as both the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) of Japan ratcheted up their support for them, according to the Kyodo News Agency on Wednesday.

The high women participation in the electoral process came as a recent report by the World Economic Forum found that Japan ranked 118th among 146 countries in the gender gap rankings in 2024, the lowest among the Group of Seven industrialised nations.

Of 341 candidates, 136 are



A record number of 341 women have filed their candidacy for the upcoming general elections in Japan

those who have a relative in office and inherited their position, or whose parents or grandparents have been members of parliament, reflecting so-called

hereditary politics in both the ruling and opposition parties.

In the LDP, such candidates totalled 97, accounting for 28.4% of its overall candidates,

including Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba.

Whereas, the CDP, which discourages hereditary succession, has pitched 27 such candidates,

or 11.4% of its total.

Online poll observer

In a first, a town in the western province of Tottori introduced an online poll observer on Wednesday for the general election's early voting due to a shortage of staff. The step from the town of Nambu comes as the prefectural government has been striving not to reduce the number of polling stations due to a lack of poll monitors amid an aging and declining population.

Whereas, voters in Ishikawa province, which was hit by a strong earthquake on the Noto Peninsula on New Year's Day, have called for government support for swift reconstruction.

Some of them argue that 'now is not the time for elections' given the region was also hit by record heavy rainfall last month.

Anadolu Agency

Zelensky presents Ukraine's 'victory plan'

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday presented his 'victory plan', a blueprint aimed at ending the war with Russia that continues since February 2022, to the parliament.

Speaking at the Verkhovna Rada in the capital Kyiv, Zelensky outlined five points that formulate the plan, the first of which is an invitation to join NATO.

"We understand that NATO membership is a matter of the future, not the present. But (Russian President Vladimir) Putin must see that his geopolitical calculations are losing," Zelensky said.

He listed the remaining points: defence, non-nuclear deterrence, economy, and

post-conflict security in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Zelensky said Ukraine proposes to deploy a 'comprehensive non-nuclear strategic deterrence package' that will protect the country from Russian attacks.

He said Ukraine's critical resource deposits are among Russia's key goals in the ongoing conflict, calling on the bolstering of the country's economic potential.

"These (resources) include, in particular, uranium, titanium, lithium, graphite and other strategically valuable resources that will strengthen either Russia and its allies or Ukraine and the democratic world in global competition."

Anadolu Agency

Rain washes out day one of India-New Zealand Test

Bengaluru, India - The opening day of the first test between India and New Zealand was called off without a ball being bowled due to incessant rain on Wednesday, with bad weather forecast throughout the week in the south Indian city of Bengaluru.

The umpires inspected the surface at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium shortly before tea and decided that no play would be possible.

It was another frustrating day for the touring side, whose Asian tour began with a one-off test against Afghanistan abandoned due to rain in Greater Noida last month.

The current series, which also features matches in Pune and Mumbai, is part of the World Test Championship. India are eyeing a big win over the 2021 champions to improve their chances of making a third consecutive final next year.

New Zealand are without batting mainstay Kane Williamson for the opening match due to a groin injury sustained during the 2-0 series defeat in Sri Lanka. Pace bowler Ben Sears was ruled out of the series with a knee injury.

The match marks Tom Latham's first assignment as the new permanent captain of the Black Caps after he took over from Tim Southee this month.

SAJID HELPS PAKISTAN FIGHT BACK AFTER DUCKETT TON

England lose five wickets in the final session to reach 239-6 at stumps

MULTAN, Pakistan - England opener Ben Duckett smashed a belligerent hundred but Pakistan off-spinner Sajid Khan struck three late blows to leave the second test evenly poised on an enthralling second day on Wednesday.

Replying to Pakistan's first-innings 366, England cruised to 211-2 with Duckett and Joe Root looking well set before Sajid (4-86) triggered a spectacular collapse.

England limped to 239-6 at stumps having lost five wickets in the final session including three in eight deliveries.

They are still 127 behind with Jamie Smith (12) and Brydon Carse (two) to the crease. It was a far cry from their swashbuckling batting earlier in the day when England scored at almost seven-an-over in the first 10.

Duckett (114) led the way, forging 50-plus partnerships with Zak Crawley, Ollie Pope and Joe Root. The feisty left-hander combined in a breezy 73-run opening stand with Zak Crawley, who led a charmed life before falling for 27. Crawley survived a run-out after a mix-up with Duckett only because bowler Sajid Khan had



Pakistan's Sajid Khan celebrates with teammates after taking an England wicket on Wednesday

Replying to Pakistan's first-innings score of 366, England cruised to 211-2 with Ben Duckett and Joe Root looking well set before Sajid Khan (4-86) triggered a spectacular collapse on Wednesday

broken the stumps before he could collect the ball.

Sajid suffered more disappointment when Crawley was adjudged lbw in his next over but the decision was reversed after replays confirmed the ball would have missed the stumps.

Crawley could not make the

most of the reprieves, though, and fell to Noman Ali.

After a caught-behind appeal against Crawley had been turned down, left-arm spinner Noman cajoled his captain Shan Masood to review the decision and replays confirmed an edge.

Ollie Pope (29) made a start

too before he was bowled through the gate by Sajid.

With Pakistan unleashing spin from both ends, Duckett found the sweep shot -- both traditional and reverse -- particularly productive and brought up his hundred with one such shot against Salman Agha.

Spain blank Serbia to reach Nations League knockouts

Cordoba, Spain - European champions Spain claimed a place in the Nations League quarter-finals with a 3-0 home win over Serbia thanks to goals by Aymeric Laporte, Alvaro Morata and Alex Baena on Tuesday.

With two games left, Spain have secured at least a second-place finish as they top League A Group Four with 10 points, three ahead of Denmark and six clear of Serbia, with Switzerland bottom on one point after a 2-2 home draw with the Danes.

Spain were missing several players from the team that beat England 2-1 in the Euro 2024 final in July but still outclassed Serbia with 30 shots against three from the visitors. Defender Laporte gave the Spaniards the lead with a close-range header in the fifth minute and Morata, who missed a penalty in the 54th, extended Spain's lead with a strike from just inside the box after 65 minutes.

Serbia's Strahinja Pavlovic was shown a straight red card for a last-man foul on Mikel Oyarzabal on the edge of the area in the 78th and Baena curled a delightful free kick into the top corner to wrap up an easy victory for Spain.

"We are in another final stage



Spain's Alex Baena celebrates his goal against Serbia

of a major tournament and that is something to be proud of," captain Morata told Spanish public television TVE.

"It seems easy because we are always there in the final stages but sure it isn't so we have to understand how special it is and give it the proper value it has.

"We have several injured players, we missed them but we have to look at the positives that are young players stepping up. What

we have created is special and we have to keep going forward. Spain has an incredible future."

Poland snatch draw with Croatia

Poland fought back from two goals down to snatch a dramatic 3-3 draw with visitors Croatia in an action-packed Nations League encounter on Tuesday.

Croatia, who fell behind early, had taken a stranglehold on the

We have several injured players, we missed them but we have to look at the positives that are young players stepping up

ALVARO MORATA

game with three goals in seven first-half minutes but were pegged back and then had keeper Dominik Livakovic sent off late on. The draw left Croatia second in Group A1 on seven points from four games.

Mbappe's representatives say rape allegations 'totally false'

Paris, France - Allegations of rape against French footballer Kylian Mbappe are "totally false" and "a slanderous rumour", his representatives said, and his lawyer said he was beyond reproach, following media reports that Mbappe was the subject of an investigation over an incident in a Stockholm hotel on Oct. 10.

Swedish prosecutors confirmed in a statement in response to the media coverage that a probe into an alleged rape at a hotel in central Stockholm had been opened, but they did not identify a suspect.

Swedish public broadcaster SVT and dailies Expressen and Aftonbladet, citing unnamed sources, reported that Mbappe, 25, was a suspect in the case.

"A new slanderous rumour is starting to ignite the web," a statement sent to Reuters by



Kylian Mbappe visited Sweden with friends last week

Mbappe's representatives at public relations firm Patricia Goldman said. "These accusations are totally false and irresponsible, and their propagation is unacceptable. Kylian Mbappe will under no circumstances tolerate his integrity, reputation and

honour being sullied by unfounded insinuations."

"We do not know who the complaint is against, I do not know if the complaint is targeting him," Mbappe's lawyer, Marie-Alix Canu-Bernard, told French TV channel TF1 on Tuesday.

Injuries cost top European leagues 732 million euros last season, says report

London, England - Players in Germany's Bundesliga are most likely to be injured amongst Europe's top five domestic leagues but England's Premier League bears the most injury-related costs, according to a report published on Tuesday.

The fourth edition of insurance firm Howden's Men's European Football Injury Index charts the upward trend in injuries recorded in the Premier League, Bundesliga, LaLiga, Ligue 1 and Serie A with a combined 4,123 during the 2023-24 season - a 4 per cent rise on 2022-23 and 37 per cent more than in 2020-21.

Injuries cost clubs a combined 732 million euros (\$797.73 million) last season in wages paid to



Knee injuries across all age groups reached a new high with 367 across the top leagues last season, costing clubs a combined 141 million euros

players while out of action while since the report's first edition in 2020-21, there have been 14,292 injuries in Europe's top leagues, costing clubs 2.3 billion euros in players' salaries.

The Howden report highlights a worrying increase in the severity of injuries to Premier League

players under 21 with each injury equating to an average 44-day lay-off -- up from 26.5 in 2022-23.

Knee injuries across all age groups reached a new high with 367 across the top leagues last season, costing clubs a combined 141 million euros.

Wirtz suffers ankle injury during Germany duty

Munich, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen midfielder Florian Wirtz sustained a capsule injury to his right ankle while on international duty with Germany, the Bundesliga club confirmed on Tuesday.

Wirtz suffered the injury during Germany's 1-0 home victory over the Netherlands in their Nations League Group A3 match on



Florian Wirtz

Monday, where he was substituted by Leverkusen teammate Robert Andrich late in the first half. The win secured the Germans a spot in the quarter-finals.

The 21-year-old underwent an MRI scan on Tuesday and is receiving treatment at Leverkusen, the club said. It is unclear when Wirtz will return to training, leaving him doubtful for Saturday's

Bundesliga match against Eintracht Frankfurt.

Champions Leverkusen are fifth in the league standings on 11 points from six games, three points behind leaders Bayern Munich.

Xabi Alonso's side visit French side Brest in the Champions League four days after hosting Frankfurt.

MESSI MASTERCLASS

Argentinian superstar hits hat-trick in 6-0 thrashing of Bolivia

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Lionel Messi scored his 10th international hat-trick and had a hand in two more goals as Argentina thrashed Bolivia 6-0 in South American qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup in front of an adoring home crowd at the Monumental stadium on Tuesday.

Making only his second international appearance since recovering from an injury sustained at the Copa America in July, Messi capitalised on a mistake by defender Marcelo Suarez to open the scoring in the 19th minute.

Bolivia goalkeeper Guillermo Viscarra made a couple of fine saves to prevent the hosts from extending their lead but he was beaten in the 43rd minute when Lautaro Martinez scored from Messi's quick cross.

Argentina made it 3-0 just before the break, with Messi setting up Julian Alvarez to score.

Lionel Scaloni's side controlled the second half and looked like they had extended their lead through Nicolas Otamendi, only to see the goal disallowed for offside.

Substitute Thiago Almada did make it 4-0, however, scoring from Nahuel Molina's pass in the



Argentina's Lionel Messi celebrates his goal against Bolivia

70th minute with the venue transformed into an Argentine party.

Messi, 37, gave fans more reason to celebrate in the closing moments, beating two Bolivia defenders before unleashing a fierce shot past Viscarra to score his second.

Messi needed only two more minutes to complete the hat-trick, joining Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo with the most in men's internationals, the Argentine skipper scoring with a left-footed drive to take his tally to 112 goals for his country.

"It's really nice to come here, to feel the affection of the people, it moves me how they shout my name," Messi said.

I feel like a kid because I'm comfortable with this team. As long as I feel good and can keep performing the way I want, I'll keep enjoying it.

LIONEL MESSI

"This drives me. Enjoying being happy where I am. Despite my age, when I'm here, I feel like a kid because I'm comfortable with this team. As long as I feel good and can keep performing the way I want, I'll keep enjoying it."

Argentina are top of the standings with 22 points, having returned to winning ways after losing to Colombia last month and drawing with Venezuela last week.



Brazil's Raphinha celebrates after scoring against Peru on Tuesday

Raphinha hits double to help Brazil blank Peru

Brasilia, Brazil - Raphinha converted a penalty in each half to guide an improved Brazil to a 4-0 home win over Peru in South American World Cup qualifiers on Tuesday.

Building on last week's 2-1 comeback win in Chile, Brazil looked livelier from the start and dominated possession, with late goals from Andreas Pereira and Luiz Henrique

The Barcelona forward extended Brazil's lead from the spot in the 54th minute after Zambrano had fouled Savinho in the box.

Substitute Pereira scored Brazil's third with an acrobatic volley in the 72nd minute, brilliantly finishing a cross from Luiz Henrique, who wrapped up the win two minutes later with a low strike from the

I think we needed this, it was really important winning both games to get back on track. It's a long way from perfect, but I believe we're on the right track.

RAPHINHA

putting the gloss on an impressive performance.

Brazil, who had lost four of five qualifiers before their win in Chile on Thursday, are fourth in the standings on 16 points after 10 games, trailing third-placed Uruguay on goal difference.

"I think we needed this, it was really important winning both games to get back on track," Raphinha told Brazilian television Globo.

"They were two games that we managed to control. It's a long way from perfect, but I believe we're on the right track."

After hitting the crossbar in the 24th minute, Raphinha gave the home side the lead from the penalty spot in the 38th minute after Peru defender Carlos Zambrano was penalised for handball.

edge of the box.

Argentina hammered Bolivia 6-0 and top the standings on 22 points, three points ahead of Colombia, who thrashed last-placed Chile 4-0.

Davinson Sanchez opened the scoring for Colombia with a deflected header in the 34th minute and Luis Diaz doubled their lead early in the second half with an easy finish into an empty net after a bad mistake by the visiting side's defence.

Jhon Duran and Luis Sinisterra wrapped up the win as Chile suffered a fifth consecutive defeat in qualifying.

Paraguay beat Venezuela 2-1 and are sixth on 13 points, level with fifth-placed Ecuador and one ahead of Bolivia in seventh. The top six sides are guaranteed a berth at the 2026 finals in North America.

Egypt, Senegal reach Africa Cup of Nations finals

Cape Town, South Africa - A 96th-minute winner from Sadio Mane earned Senegal a 1-0 win over Malawi and a place at the Africa Cup of Nations finals in Morocco next year, but Ghana are in serious danger of missing out after a surprise loss to Sudan on Tuesday.

Senegal had 30 attempts at goal against their hosts but it took until the final seconds for Mane to seal victory with a 25-yard free kick that curled into the bottom corner of the net.

The 2021 winners, who recently parted ways with long-time coach Aliou Cisse, join Burkina Faso as the qualified nations from Group L in the 24-team finals with two more matches to play in the November international window.

Ghana slumped to a 2-0 loss



Egypt's Ibrahim Adel celebrates with teammates after scoring against Mauritania in their Africa Cup of Nations qualifier

against Sudan in neutral Libya as Ahmed Al-Tash and Mohamed Abdel Rahman scored within three minutes of each other in the second half. Ghana look set to miss a first continental finals since 2004 having managed a paltry two points from their four games, five adrift of the qualification positions with a difficult trip to pool leaders Angola next up.

Angola sealed their place with a 1-0 win over Niger in Casablanca thanks to Zini's first-minute goal.

Record seven-time winners Egypt cruised to a place in the finals with a 1-0 win over Mauritania. Ibrahim Adel got the only goal of the game five minutes from the end.

Democratic Republic of Congo qualified following a 2-0 victory in Tanzania as Meschack Elia

scored a brace, but defending champions Ivory Coast suffered a shock 1-0 loss to Sierra Leone after Amadou Bakayoko's 85th-minute winner.

The Ivorians remain top of their group and will be favourites to book their place next month.

Coach Avram Grant's Zambia claimed an important 1-0 win over Chad to take a big step towards qualification thanks to Kennedy Musonda's goal 20 minutes from the end.

Gabon are also on course after a 2-0 win over Lesotho in neutral Durban, while Morocco completed a statement 4-0 win over Central African Republic as Eliesse Ben Seghir scored twice.

Uganda beat South Sudan 2-1 in Juba and top their pool ahead of South Africa, who were held to a 1-1 draw in Congo.

Mexico blank Pochettino's US in friendly

Guadalajara, Mexico - Mauricio Pochettino suffered his first defeat in only his second match in charge of the U.S. national team on Tuesday as his side lost 2-0 to Mexico in a friendly in Guadalajara.

Raul Jimenez opened the scoring midway through the first half with a superb long-range free kick that soared over the U.S. wall and angled into the top-right corner to the delight of fans at Estadio Akron.

"El Tri" took firm control of the match early in the second half when the ball fell to Cesar Huerta in front of goal and he whipped a quick shot past diving U.S. goalkeeper Matt Turner to double their advantage.

It was a much-needed victory for Mexico after they were booed by fans following a dis-

appointing 2-2 draw in a friendly last weekend against an under-strength Valencia.

The U.S., who beat Panama in Pochettino's debut on Saturday, were short on firepower with Christian Pulisic, Ricardo Pepi and Weston McKennie

The match also marked the emotional farewell of Guadalajara-born Andres Guardado, Mexico's most-capped player

among those who did not make the trip to Mexico and instead returned to their club sides.

Absences aside it was still an uninspired and passive perfor-

mance from the U.S., who had just one shot on target and saw their seven match unbeaten streak against their fierce rivals come to an end.

Pochettino said the U.S. started strong but the game changed after Mexico's first goal.

"It wasn't a great performance but this type of game is perfect for us to learn," the Argentine told reporters.

"Overall I think Mexico was a little bit better than us and fully deserved the victory.

"But for us, it is a process."

The match also marked the emotional farewell of Guadalajara-born Andres Guardado, Mexico's most-capped player, who left the field to a standing ovation when he was subbed early in the first half after earning the last of his 182 caps.

Tuchel named England manager

London, England - Former Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel has been named the new head coach of the England national team, the country's Football Association said in a statement on Wednesday.

The German, who is England's third foreign manager, after Sweden's Sven-Goran Eriksson and Italian Fabio Capello, will be assisted by Englishman Anthony Barry, the statement added.

"We are thrilled to have hired Thomas Tuchel, one of the best coaches in the world and Anthony Barry who is one of the best English coaches to support him," FA CEO Mark Bullingham said.

Tuchel replaces Lee Carsley, England's under-21 manager, who has been in temporary charge since the resignation of Gareth Southgate after England's



Thomas Tuchel, new head coach of the England national team, at the Wembley Stadium

defeat by Spain in the Euro 2024 final in July.

Former Chelsea boss Tuchel, who left Bayern Munich at the end of last season, said: "I am very proud to have been given

the honour of leading the England team.

"I have long felt a personal connection to the game in this country, and it has given me some incredible moments al-

ready.

"To have the chance to represent England is a huge privilege, and the opportunity to work with this special and talented group of players is very exciting."

FADING HOPES

Oman’s World Cup chances suffer blow after defeat to Jordan

Amman, Jordan - Oman went down 4-0 to Jordan in their Group B match of the AFC Asian Qualifiers at the Amman International Stadium on Tuesday.

It was a disappointing outing for an Oman side who had impressed in their 4-0 win over Kuwait on Thursday as Yazan al Naimat and Ali Olwan both netted braces to help Jordan bounce back from their 2-0 defeat to South Korea.

The defeat, Oman’s third in four matches, have left them with a mountain to climb in the qualifiers.

Oman are fourth in Group B with three points while Jordan are second with seven points, ahead of Iraq on goal difference. South Korea lead the group with ten points.

The group winners will qualify for the World Cup while the runners-up will play against the runners-up Group A and C for a place in the inter-confederation play-offs.

Jordan settled quickly and broke in the seventh minute after keeper Yazeed Abulaila sent a long ball through for Al Naimat, who evaded his markers at the edge of the box but was flagged offside much to Oman’s relief.

Oman again went unpunished in the 18th minute when Harib al



Oman's Mohammed al Musalami (R) battles for the ball with Jordan's Yazan al Naimat

Saadi’s back pass to Ahmed al Khamisi created a chance for Mahmoud al Mardi to break free into the box but Al Khamisi made sure his timely tackle was enough to foil the midfielder.

However, the pressure was too much for Oman as they conceded in the 26th minute after Al Mardi wriggled free from his

markers on the left flank before delivering a well-timed cross for Al Naimat to score with a glancing header past keeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini.

Al Mukhaini had to be on his toes 10 minutes later, reacting quickly to deny Olwan’s curling effort from inside the six-yard-box.

Jordan survived a close shave in the 41st minute when Amjad al Harthi sent a wonderful ball into the area for an unmarked Muhsen al Ghassani, only for the forward to waste his effort.

Oman were left picking up the pieces four minutes into the second half after conceding a penalty following Amjad al

Harthi’s foul on Al Naimat, with Olwan sending Al Mukhaini the wrong way.

Al Naimat put the game beyond Oman’s reach in the 54th minute, combining well with Olwan following a swift attacking move to strike a low effort which took a deflection before curling past a stunned Al Mukhaini.

Aqib Ilyas to lead Oman in ACC T20 Men’s Emerging Teams Asia Cup

Muscat - Oman head coach Duleep Mendis has placed his faith in a core group of experienced players as Oman prepares for the highly anticipated ACC T20 Men’s Emerging Teams Asia Cup.

The tournament kicks off on Friday at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat and features teams from eight nations, including A teams from Asia’s five Test-playing nations - Pakistan A, India A, Bangladesh A, Sri Lanka A, and Afghanistan A.

Aqib Ilyas has been named captain of the 15-member squad, which will compete against the strongest cricketing nations in the continent, along with teams from the UAE, Hong Kong, and the host nation Oman, representing the Associate nations.

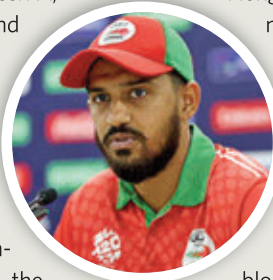
In preparation for the tournament, Oman faced Afghanistan A in a bilateral series and participated in a tri-series that included Hong Kong.

Despite a mixed performance - drawing the bilateral series and losing both tri-series matches - Mendis remains optimistic. He emphasised the importance of tough competition for his players’ development, and said, “Playing against strong teams is the way forward for my players.”

Oman face a stiff challenge in Group B, drawn alongside defending champions Pakistan A, former champions India A, and the UAE. Group A features Bangladesh A, Sri Lanka A, Afghanistan A, and Hong Kong.

The tournament kicks off on Friday with Group A matches. Bangladesh A will take on Hong Kong in the afternoon at 1pm, followed by Sri Lanka A facing Afghanistan A at 5:30pm.

However, the spotlight will shift to Saturday’s blockbuster Group B clash between arch-rivals India A and Pakistan A at 5:30pm. Earlier in the day, Oman will open their campaign against the UAE at 1pm.



Aqib Ilyas

OMAN SQUAD

Aqib Ilyas (captain), Shakeel Ahmed, Pratik Athavale (wk), Siddharth Bukkapatnam, Khalid Kail, Kaleemullah, Ayaan Khan, Shoaib Khan, Zeeshan Maqsood, Sufyan Mehmood, Hammad Mirza (wk), Kashyap Prajapati, Rafiullah, Muzahir Raza, Jatinder Singh.



Otabek Shukurov

Uzbekistan edge UAE to continue unbeaten start

Tashkent, Uzbekistan - Otabek Shukurov’s late penalty ensured Uzbekistan maintained their unbeaten start to Group A of the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 on Tuesday as the Central Asians secured a 1-0 win over 10-man United Arab Emirates in Tashkent.

Shukurov converted from the spot in the 76th minute with the visitors already short-handed following Abdulla Hamad’s sending off 11 minutes earlier for a dangerous challenge on Sherzod

Nasrullaev.

The win keeps Uzbekistan in pole position in the standings with 10 points from their opening four games as they continue their quest for a first-ever berth at the FIFA World Cup while the UAE, who last qualified for in 1990, remain on four points.

China picked up their first win in Group C as Branko Ivankovic’s side defeated Indonesia 2-1 in Qingdao with first-half goals from Behram Abduweli and Zhang Yuning securing the three points.

Bahrain hold Saudi Arabia to goalless draw

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia’s hopes suffered a setback after they were held to a goalless draw by Bahrain in a Group C of the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 tie at the King Abdullah Sports City Stadium on Tuesday.

The result meant that both teams found themselves level with Australia on five points, with group leaders Japan five ahead.

Both sides were eager to get their respective campaigns back on track after disappointing results on Matchday Three, with Saudi Arabia going down 2-0 to Japan, while Bahrain had to fight back to earn a share of the spoils in a 2-2 draw with Indonesia.

Firas al Brikan almost put Saudi Arabia ahead in the third minute when he cut across from the centre of the box, firing a low shot which was saved by Bahrain keeper Ebrahim Lutfallah.

Saudi Arabia dominated the match and their persistence saw them earn a penalty after Marwan al Sahafi was fouled inside



Saudi Arabia's Salem al Dawsari tries to get away from Bahrain's Amine Benaddi

Saudi Arabia face Australia next while Bahrain meet China, with both matches to be played on November 14

the area.

Salem al Dawsari stepped up to take the free-kick but to the dismay of the Saudi Arabia captain, Lutfallah guessed the right way to keep the tie level.

Both sides had opportunities in the remaining minutes of the half, with Rayan Hamed and Al Dawsari failing to find the target with efforts from outside the

box, while Sayed Dhiya, Komail al Aswad and Abdulla al Khalassy could not utilise their opportunities for Bahrain.

The chances in the second half were few and far between with Saudi Arabia’s Abdullah Radif coming close on two occasions from inside the area.

Saudi Arabia had a late penalty claim overruled after al

Dawsari clashed with Lutfallah as the sides had to be satisfied with a share of the points, with Bahrain ending the match with 10 players after Sayed Hashim Isa had to go off injured with all substitutions already made.

Saudi Arabia face Australia next while Bahrain meet China, with both matches to be played on November 14.

Azmoun stars as Iran thrash Qatar to go top of Group A

Dubai, UAE - Sardar Azmoun scored twice and set up a third as the Islamic Republic of Iran came from a goal behind to hand Qatar a 4-1 defeat and keep pace with Uzbekistan at the summit of Group A in the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 in Dubai on Tuesday.

Almoez Ali had given the Qataris the lead with a spectacular strike in the 17th minute but Azmoun scored twice - in the 42nd and 48th minutes - before laying on a third for Mohammad Mohebbi in the 65th minute to ensure the Iranians took all three points.

Mohebbi added the fourth eight minutes into stoppage time with a deflected header.

The win moves Amir Ghalenoei’s side onto 10 points and keeps them level with Uzbekistan, who notched up a 1-0 win over the United Arab Emirates earlier in the evening. Qatar, meanwhile, remain stuck on four points from their opening four games.

The Iranians made a lively start but, while Mehdi Taremi’s effort into the opening minute was called back for an offside decision, Mohebbi should have done better when he dragged his

second minute attempt across the face of Meshaal Barsham’s goal. But it was the AFC Asian Cup holders who were to take the lead in spectacular fashion. Lucas Mendes’ long ball over the top from deep released Ali behind the defence and the striker smashed a devastating first-time strike into the roof of Alireza Beiranvand’s net.

Omid Noorafkan tested Barsham from 20 yards soon after the half hour mark but the attempt was too weak to truly trouble the Qatar goalkeeper, while moments later Azmoun clipped the top of the bar with a thunder-

ous shot from distance as the pace picked up.

The Shabab Al Ahli striker did not have to wait much longer to equalise, however, rising unmarked in the penalty area to spear his header from Noorafkan’s cross into the top of Barsham’s goal with three minutes left in the half.

Two minutes into first half injury time the Qataris almost restored their lead, Boualem Khoukhi rattling the crossbar from Akram Afif’s searching cross from the right with a header that had Beiranvand beaten.

The woodwork was hit again

at the other end when Mehdi Ghayedi unleashed a powerful right-foot shot.

The drama continued into the early exchanges of the second half as the Iranians took the lead for the first time. Ghayedi’s cross was headed into the air by Mendes but, as Barsham came to collect, he tripped over his team mate and Azmoun smashed into the empty net. Azmoun then went from scorer to provider as the Iranians added a third, the forward bursting through the Qatar defence before rolling the ball across goal for Mohebi to pass the ball into an empty net.



Sardar Azmoun scored a brace for Iran



14

DIWALI SWEETS

Guests are waiting... Get down to some instant magic, in minutes



15

15...GOING ON 16
Apex Media celebrates
the 15th anniversary of
Muscat Daily



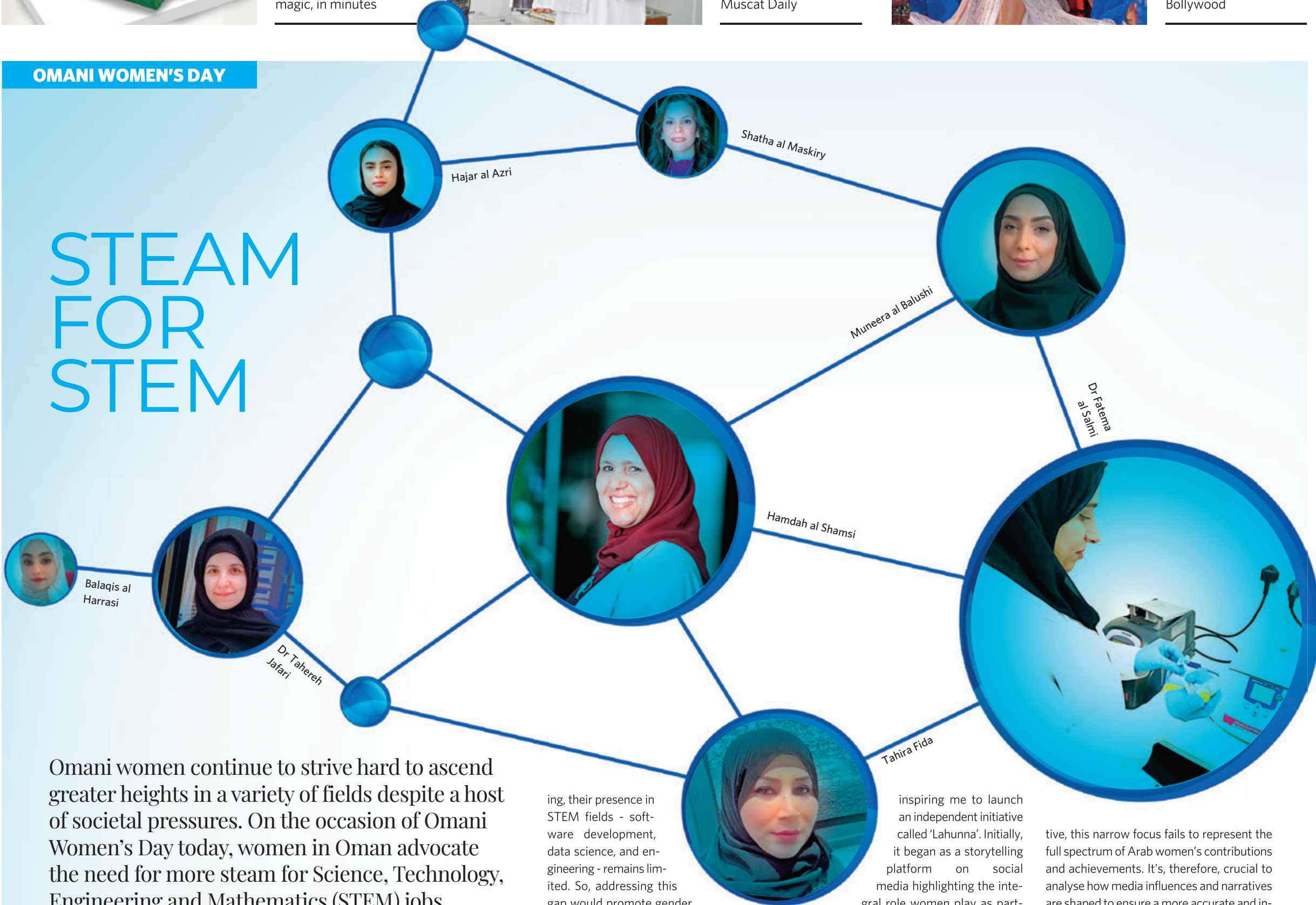
16

ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into Tinsel Town in Hollywood and also Bollywood

OMANI WOMEN'S DAY

STEAM FOR STEM



Omani women continue to strive hard to ascend greater heights in a variety of fields despite a host of societal pressures. On the occasion of Omani Women's Day today, women in Oman advocate the need for more steam for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) jobs

MD team

No one loves staying in the shadows against the glory of being in the limelight... And over the past few decades, women in Oman have proven time and again that they can manage to take on the reins of a range of professions, once restricted to and dominated by men, and shine equally bright, if not better!

Bound by traditions, taboos and unwritten norms for many years, many women have, however, broken themselves free from social shackles and, ably empowered by the ruling dispensation, taken on leading positions and crucial roles in a variety of fields in the sultanate. From education to industry, services

to governance, arts and crafts to aviation and space study, the march has been steady. And impressive, too.

Technology has been a game changer for women in Oman, and if the Economic Diversification Goals (Vision 2040) are any indicator, the increasing involvement of women in technology would boost innovation and competitiveness in the long run.

As pointed out by Tahira Fida, an accomplished artist, the tech industry is evolving rapidly and a diverse workforce, including more women, fosters better problem-solving and creativity. Hence, promoting female participation ensures Oman keeps pace with global advancements.

In line with Vision 2040, she points out, while women in Oman have excelled in education, particularly in healthcare and teach-

ing, their presence in STEM fields - software development, data science, and engineering - remains limited. So, addressing this gap would promote gender equity in key industries.

Also, empowering women in the tech startup ecosystem and involving more women in tech encourages other young girls to pursue similar paths, thereby shifting societal perceptions about gender roles in high-demand fields.

The evolution of Omani women in the workforce reflects a dynamic interplay between tradition and modern trends. The rapid change in socio economic trends have also benefited women who would like to explore things that are not bound by societal norms.

With modernisation spreading like wildfire in Oman, women are also adapting to newer lifestyles and imbibing many virtues from other cultures to make their lives more meaningful.

Shatha al Maskiry, managing director at Protiviti Oman, says, "Societal norms have also shaped my life beyond the workplace,

inspiring me to launch an independent initiative called 'Lahunna'. Initially, it began as a storytelling platform on social media highlighting the integral role women play as partners and collaborators in driving societal progress. Over the past three years, through 'Lahunna', I have led various women-centred initiatives, and I'm grateful to the male allies who encouraged me to bring them to life."

Shatha further says, "Generalisations are reductive and reflect a failure to acknowledge the significant progress and contributions Arab women have made across various fields. Many Arab women, both historically as well as today, are shaping their communities and achieving professional success while maintaining family responsibilities and motherhood side by side."

According to Leen Yaqoob al Ruqaishi, business owner of 'Iconic', "The Western media tends to focus on stereotypical images of women in this part of the world with cooking, fashion, and beauty - often their ideologies are based on celebrities rather than normal working women. From my perspec-

tive, this narrow focus fails to represent the full spectrum of Arab women's contributions and achievements. It's, therefore, crucial to analyse how media influences and narratives are shaped to ensure a more accurate and inclusive portrayal of women's diverse roles in society and the workforce."

By and large, Omani women have made their way ahead, despite hardships, and have become role models in many spheres of activity for the younger generation. The number of Omani women in the workforce and in universities has risen significantly and society has, indeed, realised their success quotients.

Interestingly, many women confess, that the ones who give strength and support to them, as achievers, are invariably the male figures in their lives.

Balaqis Ismail al Harrasi, branch manager, Bank Muscat-KOM branch, admits, "My biggest supporters were my father and husband. Whenever I faced any problem, they would always remind me of my goals and encourage me with the phrase - 'You will be able to overcome difficulties, just like those who have achieved their goals.'

In Oman, one of the fields that would benefit greatly from increased female participation is technology and innovation. Here's why – as per the Economic Diversification Goals (Vision 2040), Oman is actively diversifying its economy beyond oil, focusing on sectors like IT, startups, and artificial intelligence. Hence, increasing women's involvement in these fields would boost innovation and competitiveness and would hopefully enhance techno art.

TAHIRA FIDA
Artist

oman is making progress toward gender equality, but several fields still need greater participation by women, particularly in technology, entrepreneurship, and leadership roles. Increasing female involvement in STEM fields would boost innovation and address the skills gap. Encouraging women entrepreneurs can diversify the economy and drive job creation. Moreover, greater representation in senior leadership positions, both in public and private sectors, would lead to more inclusive decision-making.

HAMDAH AL SHAMSI
CEO, Eisar Financial Consultancy

I strongly believe that there should be more opportunities for women in higher-level and managerial roles within the pharmaceutical sector. This industry plays a crucial role in healthcare and innovation, and women's perspectives and leadership are essential here as this sector is crucial both for men and women. Expanding their presence in decision-making positions will also drive growth and innovation.

**MUNEERA ABDUL KHALEQ
AL BALUSHI**

Senior Account Manager

As the nation moves toward a digital and knowledge-based economy, it is essential to harness the skills and creativity of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. Hence, the field of technology and innovation requires greater participation by women as entrepreneurs. Increasing female representation in these sectors will not only foster innovation but also contribute to economic diversification and sustainability.

DR TAHEREH JAFARI
Associate Professor-Chemical
Engineering, International Maritime
College Oman, NUST

On Omani Women's Day, we must highlight the importance of female participation in the technology and innovation sectors. As Oman undergoes digital transformation, increasing women's roles in STEM fields can drive economic growth and foster diversity of thought. Empowering women in these areas not only enhances their professional development but also ensures that our technological advancements reflect a broader range of perspectives. Supporting women in technology will ultimately contribute to a more inclusive future.

DR FATEMA AL SALMI
Senior Lecturer, UTAS

With numerous accomplishments in engineering and scientific research, I am dedicated to highlighting the Sultanate's commitment to empowering Omani women and their vital role in the nation's development. Omani women have made significant strides across various fields, a testament to their capabilities and the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. I believe, it is crucial to ensure their involvement in key sectors such as energy and technology.

HAJAR KHAMIS AL AZRI
Innovator

The Western media tends to focus on stereotypical images of women in this part of the world with cooking, fashion, and beauty - often their ideologies are based on celebrities rather than normal working women. From my perspective, this narrow focus fails to represent the full spectrum of Arab women's contributions and achievements. It's, therefore, crucial to analyse how media influences and narratives are shaped to ensure a more accurate and inclusive portrayal of women's diverse roles in society and the workforce.

LEEN YAQOUB AL RUQAISHI
Proprietor, Iconic

cook-up



Balushahi

Ingredients
For Balushahi dough
1 cup all-purpose flour
¼tsp baking soda
tsp baking powder
¼ cup cold ghee
¼ cup cold curd
¼tsp salt
For sugar syrup
1 cup sugar
½ cup water
¼tsp cardamom powder
Few strands of saffron
For garnish
Chopped pistachios
Silver Vark sheets (optional)
Rose petals

Method
In a big mixing bowl, take flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Mix them very well. Add ghee and mix with your fingers. The mixture should be crumbly. Then add curd, mix, and form a dough. Do not knead the dough. Cover it with a damp cloth for at least 30 minutes.
Meanwhile, prepare the sugar syrup. In a pan, add water, sugar, cardamom powder, and saffron. Over medium heat, bring it to a boil. Let it boil until syrup is almost to one thread consistency. It will take about 4 to 5 minutes. Keep it aside.
Divide the dough into 12 equal parts. Take one portion and make a rough ball - balls should not be very smooth, should have cracks all around, and make a dent in the centre. Heat the oil and fry the balls over medium heat till golden brown. Take them out on a paper towel and rest it for a minute. Then, dip the Balushahis in the warm sugar syrup. Leave it for 1 to 2 minutes, remove and garnish with chopped pistachios, saffron, and rose petal leaves.

If the thought of making Diwali sweets at home scares you, think again. Here are simple recipes for sweets you can make, even after guests have arrived

EASY Diwali Sweets



Kaju Katli

Ingredients
1 tin Nestle Milkmaid condensed milk (200g)
150g skinned cashewnuts or cashew powder
150g khoya (condensed, dried milk)
50g all-purpose flour
½ cup milk
Silver Vark sheets

Method
Crush the cashew to a fine powder. Put all the ingredients together and blend to a smooth paste. Transfer to a thick bottomed pan and cook on a slow fire until the mixture starts leaving the sides of the pan and forms a ball. Remove the mixture on a tray lined with butter paper. Place another sheet of butter paper on top and roll out thin (½cm). Place sheets of silver vark on top and let it cool.
After an hour, with a sharp knife, mark inclined lines across each other to get diamond shapes.

Rawa Laddoo

Ingredients
1 cup rawa (semolina)
½ cup grated coconut
3tbsp ghee, 10 - 15 cashew nuts
10 - 15 raisins
¾ cup powdered sugar
½ cup water or milk
¼tsp cardamom powder

Method
In a pan over medium flame dry roast the dried coconut for 2-3 minutes, or until it turns aromatic. Now remove it on a plate. In the same pan, add 1tbsp ghee and once it melts add cashews and raisins. Roast till the cashews turn light golden, and remove on a plate. In the same pan add 2tbsp more ghee and once it melts add the semolina and roast for 6-7 minutes on medium flame until it turns aromatic and light golden in colour. Now add the powdered sugar and cardamom powder and mix till everything is well combined. Lastly add milk/water and mix till everything is well combined. Let the rawa laddoo mixture cool off partially. While still warm, take small portions of the mixture in between your palms and form neat balls. Set aside to dry for 2-3 hours before storing in an airtight container. Keep in the fridge to harden further - can last upto a week.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

An Indian male, with an MBA degree in Marketing and HR, 2.5 years of experience as HR Admin and Talent Acquisition Executive, is actively seeking a suitable position in Sales/Marketing/ Administration/HR domains. Email: arun.mkhr24@gmail.com
LinkedIn: Arun NK
Contact: +968-78053697

A digital marketer, with six years' experience of working with a digital marketing agency, having a strong background in SEO and Account Management, experience in client handling, paid social, SEO, PPC and website designing, is looking for a job opportunity in digital marketing in Oman Contact: +968-93801996 Email: akshaydinesh6@gmail.com

An Indian Male, with an MBA degree in Marketing and Finance, and 4 years of experience in Customer Care- call and chat audit, Process improvement, and Knowledge management is actively seeking a suitable position in Customer Care/Marketing/Process Improvement/ Knowledge Management. Email: junaidshahid@gmail.com
Contact: +968-79770974

An Indian male (28), with three years of experience in Amazon as operation specialist and masters from Canada, is looking for a position as HR, administrator, sales coordinator or management. Contact: +968-98234945 Email: Hashimsahil90@gmail.com

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with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

take a break

IN TOWN

Muscat Daily 15th anniversary



Staff of Apex Media celebrated the 15th anniversary of Muscat Daily on October 10



Photos: V K Shafer

BOGGLER

C	R	E	G
A	I	L	O
C	U	E	A
H	A	T	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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

- Who directed the 1975 English film Jaws?
A. Christopher Nolan
B. James Cameron
C. Steven Spielberg
D. Danny Boyle

- What is the name of a brand of apples popularised by an Australian horticulturist?



- A. Gala
B. Pink Lady
C. Honeycrisp
D. McIntosh red

- What is Omanah?
A. An ancient town in Sohar
B. A variety of Omani dates
C. Another name for Frankincense
D. A type of reed boat in Arabia

Answers
3. A
2. B
1. C

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

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

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Action is to be taken seriously. Do not move forward just because you're afraid to stand still right now, especially in romantic situations. Everything must happen in its own time, and you should definitely not rush things. Take advantage of opportunities, but don't push your agenda too strongly today.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

When you're driving in your car you realize that you aren't the only driver on the road. After all, you must be aware of what other people are doing to be as safe as you can be. This awareness should apply to all areas of your life right now. Take note of who is around you and how they're behaving.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you feel as though the circumstances of your life are not under your control right now, you're right, but only to a point. Granted, there are certain things you can't change, and it would be very helpful to resign yourself to the facts. But there are also quite a few malleable points you aren't seeing right now. To open your eyes a little wider, expose yourself to new ways of doing things.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

One of the best acts of self-nurturing is to be honest with yourself. This includes being honest about what you really need right now. If your energy level has been waning, then you need time to recharge your batteries. Give it to yourself. Or if you've had more energy than you know what to do with, then you need to get organised.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You are in desperate need of some stimulating input today, and you should look to one of your especially fiery friends for a great big dose of it. Get out there with them and explore as much of the world as possible. Indulge your growing passion for travel with a road trip way beyond your normal boundaries.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

People you want to impress are amazed by your ability to commit, so don't take it for granted. You know what you want right now, so stick with it, despite the hecklers in the audience. Everyone has doubts once in a while, but you won't let these little worries make you dodge responsibility. Too much is at stake.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

The time for exploring new ideas has passed. It will come around again soon enough, but today you have to curb your wanderlust and stick close to home. Instead of seeking out new faces and new places, you have to learn to appreciate the known and familiar. Today offers you a wonderful opportunity to communicate your ideas.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Getting caught up in the moment and acting impulsively is not only okay today, it is highly recommended. Throw caution to the wind. You won't be needing it for a while. You are in a very safe place and surrounded by trustworthy people. Your spontaneous energy will encourage new ideas and keep everything going in the right direction, and it will help you stay positive in the face of little bumps.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

There can be no such thing as too much happiness in your life, although today the amount of jovial and happy energy coming your way could overwhelm you. You're lucky you have problems like this, so be grateful for the embarrassment of riches you're currently enjoying. Reaching out to other people is important today, especially since you have so much positive energy to share.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

There's a threatening gray cloud of pessimism just over the horizon. Its power over your life will increase exponentially with each negative person you encounter today, so try to stick with people who always see the bright side of life and who are good at cheering you up. Stay away from naysayers who tell you the things you want to do can't be done.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You have a day full of possibilities, because your mind is open and you have a strong desire for new experiences. You are highly susceptible to some of the wacky ideas your friends are always tossing out. So if you're ready for a new adventure, step forward and rally the troops around you. It's been too long since you led the way down a mysterious path.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your love/hate balancing act with an authority figure is most definitely tipping in the love direction right about now. Even with the current hectic pace of your life, you two can find the time you need to clearly say what you expect from each other. Rely on your solid communication skills to ease any potentially rough spots that may appear in the near future.

entertainment



Taylor Swift, Travis Kelce's romance in celluloid

A new *Lifetime Christmas* movie inspired by the romance between pop star Taylor Swift and NFL player Travis Kelce is set to air later this year. As per *The Hollywood Reporter*, titled *Christmas in the Spotlight*, the film will be part of the network's annual holiday programming - 'It's a Wonderful Lifetime' - and will release on November 23.



NORA FATEHI
delights
NEW YORK INDIANS

Canadian dancer based in India, Nora Fatehi gave a glittering performance at the annual 'All That Glitters Diwali Ball' held at Pierre Hotel, in New York City, on October 12. The celebration was hosted by

Anjula Acharia, Huma Abedin, Simone Ashley, Avantika, Imran Amed, Bela Bajaria, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Anita Chatterjee, Bing Chen, Nora Fatehi, Tan France, Nina Garcia, Hannah Karp, Robert

Kyncl, Hasan Minhaj, Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Indra Nooyi, Rohan Oza, Falguni Peacock, Shane Peacock, Kal Penn, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, Versha Sharma, Jay Shetty, Jay Sean, Priya Shukla, and Jessel Taank.



Smash hits incoming...
Jin's gonna rule them all

The wait ended as details were finally shared regarding the highly anticipated KSJ1 album. After the brand new *Super Tuna* dropped and aced music charts, Jin's album aptly named *Happy*, the Mario colour coded album, just screams KIM SEOKJIN, the silver vocalist of BTS.

Till now, we have the schedule with dates of the title mv release and subsequent album release, fan events and teaser dates, and even a small tit-bit about collaborations. One of the events planned is a hi-five with 700 ARMYs! Squee... First a hug, now a hi-five! Jin is out to kill us all.

Meanwhile, *Red Velvet's* Wendy has been confirmed to feature in the album. The vocalist duo are sure to break records and hearts. After all, with years of experience and talent, this will definitely be a legendary collaboration that will go down in history.

Also, our itty bitty Nini is all grown up with his own album, and collaborations and fan events. 'JinHit' doesn't seem impossible now, does it?



Salman Khan's security beefed up

Security arrangements of Bollywood's most eligible bachelor Salman Khan has been beefed up following the slaying of his close aide, politician Baba Siddique who was shot dead by assailants earlier this week. The Bishnoi gang has reportedly claimed responsibility for the killing and has issued threats against anyone who assists Bollywood actor Salman Khan. In response the star's security has been enhanced.

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