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Uruguay: Bento

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2022

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► NEWS BRIEF

TANZANIAN MINISTER
EXPLORES AREAS OF
JOINT COOPERATION

Muscat - H E Dr Abdullah Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, received in his office Nape Moses Nnauye, Tanzanian Minister of Information, Communication and Information Technology, on Wednesday.

The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and discussed areas of cooperation in media with the primary objective of highlighting the two countries' historical, economic and trade ties.

OFM subsidiary to acquire
stake in Modern Dairy

Oman approves short-term rentals

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Holiday makers in Oman will soon have more accommodation options as the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) is opening the short-term rental market to property developers, hospitality companies, small and medium enterprises and to individually owned properties at a later stage.

An agreement to this effect has been signed between Visit Oman and the UK's UnderTheDoormat Group - an award-winning global short-term rental technology company.

Oman currently offers short-term rentals through a variety of players on global platforms, such as Airbnb and Booking.com, but the tech partnership breaks new ground, and officially opens the market in a transparent manner.

'This first-of-its-kind partnership will pave the way for opening government approved short-term rentals in Oman, while offering travellers from around the



world choice in the types of accommodation they can access to explore everything Oman has to offer. It will further enhance Visit Oman's capabilities to connect international travel trade with tourism suppliers and new types of accommodation in the sultanate,' a press release stated.

At an official ceremony hosted by H E Azzan bin Qassim al Bussaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism

in MHT, in Muscat recently, the agreement was signed between Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, and Merilee Karr, Founder and CEO of UnderTheDoormat Group.

As the partnership launches, integrated tourism complexes (ITCs) will lead this innovation in the sultanate, including some of the largest property developers and hospitality companies. The

first properties will go live through the UnderTheDoormat Group's Hospiria property management and distribution platform towards the end of 2022.

'ITCs, SMEs and in the future individual property owners with an approved licence, will be able to access the global short-term rental market through a single technology system, Hospiria. This will connect their homes, vil-

The UnderTheDoormat partnership is another significant milestone for Visit Oman in its journey to provide Oman tourism suppliers opportunities to market their products to global travellers

SHABIB AL MAAMARI

las or apartments to guests and travellers seeking short-term rental accommodation during their stay in the sultanate, through an officially approved channel,' stated MHT.

The partnership will provide the opportunity for both large tourism companies and SMEs to provide their services to travellers giving them additional rental income opportunities, as the Hos-

piria technology will link and market their properties via the largest online booking engines and aggregators in the world with a single system to distribute and manage their portfolios.

UnderTheDoormat will also work with Visit Oman to help Omani ITCs, SMEs, property owners and leasers gain confidence in offering their short-stay guests a "home away from home" managed according to internationally accredited and verified quality standards.

"Oman's innovation in opening the short-term rental sector for approved companies and owners is a game changer for tourism in the country, and a great example of how technology can help enable the responsible growth of our sector," Merilee said at the signing ceremony.

Licensed and approved companies, SMEs and property owners in Oman who would like to register their interest in being a part of the programme can contact the Visit Oman team through www.visitoman.om

SAYYID ASAAD BIDS ADIEU TO ENVOYS OF BRAZIL, UK



Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received separately in his office Ligia Maria Scherer, Ambassador of Brazil to Oman, and Bill Murray (pictured), Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Oman, to bid them farewell at the end of their tours of duty. The two ambassadors expressed their thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to them in the sultanate from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people, which enabled them to carry out their duties. They also wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life and the sultanate further development and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan (ONA)

Omani researcher
wins L'Oréal-Unesco
science awardM Najmuz Zafar
Muscat

An Omani researcher is among the five winners of the prestigious L'Oréal-Unesco for Women in Science Middle East Regional Young Talents 2022 programme for her study investigating underlying causes of Type 1 diabetes.

Recognising the remarkable scientific discoveries of women in the Arab world, and underscoring their role in solving today's challenges as well as inspiring the future generation of girls, the programme aims to promote the participation of young women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Yemen and the GCC countries.

Dr Maha al Riyami, Assistant Professor in the Department of Biochemistry, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University, was chosen for her research investigating underlying causes of Type 1 diabetes and other autoimmune diseases that could lead to their prevention.

Following a PhD in experimental medicine from McGill University, Canada, Maha worked in the supervision of eminent scientists



Dr Maha al Riyami

and research teams. "All these experiences enriched and enhanced my passion for science and research," she told *Muscat Daily*.

Elaborating on her research and how it is going to help fight Type 1 diabetes, Maha said that understanding the pathogenic mechanism of any disease is highly important for its future prediction and prevention. "Type 1 diabetes and autoimmunity, although intensively studied, the underlying mechanisms of these are still not fully understood. In my project, we are exploring the potential contribution of somatic mutations to the pathogenicity of Type 1 diabetes and other autoimmune diseases by a similar mechanism.

Continued on Page 02

King of Jordan
confers order
on Omani
ambassador

Amman, Jordan - King Abdullah II Ibn al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan conferred the Order of Independence (First Class) on Sheikh Hilal bin Marhoon al Maamari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Jordan, at the end of his tour of duty.

Conferring the order on Maamari was in appreciation of his efforts in carrying out diplomatic duties, which contributed to strengthening Omani-Jordanian relations.

The Order of Independence (First Class) was presented to the ambassador when King Abdullah received him at Al Husseinia Palace in Amman on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the king asked the ambassador to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

On his turn, the ambassador expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Jordanian King for honouring him with the Order of Independence. He also thanked the government of Jordan for the cooperation provided to him during his tour of duty in Jordan.

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MUSCAT DAILY PRESENTS

2022
OMAN'S MOST TRUSTED
BRAND AWARDS

Frankincense season in Dhofar to start on Nov 28

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has announced that the frankincense season will start in Dhofar governorate next Monday and will run until December 2.

The event will open in the Land of Frankincense sites in Al Baleed Archaeological Park, Samhram Archaeological Park, and Wadi Doka Nature Reserve, the organisers said.

Khaled Abdullah al Abri, Director General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, said, "The season will include an exhibition of perfumes and Omani frankincense products made by the most prominent companies in the sultanate, in addition to an exhibition of photographs of Khor Rori highlighting the wildlife in the Sumhuram Archaeological Park."

The programme of the season will also include a presentation on how frankincense products and extracts were manufactured in the ancient times and are being done today. The event will throw light on its export in the ancient times through the ports in Dhofar by caravans.

According to Abri, the event aims to promote the historical features of the sites in the Land of Frankincense and their roles in



The ministry will plant 1,000 frankincense trees in the Wadi Dawka Reserve on December 2 to mark the inclusion of the Land of Frankincense in the Unesco Heritage Sites

KHALED ABDULLAH AL ABRI

facilitating cultural and commercial exchanges with various civilisations of the world in the past, besides highlighting the impor-

tance of the Land of Frankincense in attracting tourists from different parts of the world today.

Ample space will be provided for restaurants and a children's theatre, besides giving visitors the opportunity to experience pleasure boats in Khor al Baleed. "The specialists at the ministry will plant 1,000 frankincense trees in the Wadi Dawka Reserve on December 2 to mark the inclusion of the sites of the Land of Frankincense in the Unesco World Heritage Sites," said Abri.

Global conference on AMR to commence in Muscat today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A two-day international conference on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) will begin at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat on Thursday bringing together experts from across the world to find out ways to address this vital issue through international cooperation.

Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, will inaugurate the 3rd Global High-level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance, the ministry said in a statement.

Apart from a host of senior officials from Oman, more than 30 ministers and representatives from over 40 countries, representing human health, animal health and environment will attend the conference, it added.

Directors general, presidents, and representatives of the Gulf Health Council, World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the

Over 30 ministers and representatives from over 40 countries are attending the two-day event at Kempinski

World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will also attend the event.

According to the ministry, Dr Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health, Dr Saoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Ernst Kuipers, Minister of Health, Welfare and Sports from Netherlands will address the august gathering.

The opening ceremony will highlight Oman's efforts in addressing AMR, as the host country throws open the conference for the global experts to share their views.

The conference is being organised by the government of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of

Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in cooperation with the Gulf Health Council for the Cooperation Council States as well the Quadripartite Alliance (WHO, FAO, WOAH, and UNEP) formed by the United Nations to monitor antimicrobial resistance.

The first day of the conference will have four key parallel sessions moderated by renowned international speakers from specialised organisations and institutions. The sessions will address integrated surveillance, country implementation, political action and financing, and research and development.

The second day will start with a review of the four parallel sessions and their recommendations, followed by a ministerial plenary discussion on effective collaboration and partnership that would be included within the conference report for follow up. All heads of delegation will have the opportunity to state their views on AMR and the Muscat Ministerial manifesto during the day. The theme of this year's conference is 'The AMR: From Policy to One Health Action'.

CPA imposes RO3,000 fine on three for selling chewing tobacco in Barka

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has imposed a fine of RO3,000 on three expats for trading and selling chewing tobacco in the wilayat of Barka, in South Batinah governorate.

The authority stated that the Consumer Protection Department in South Batinah recently arrested three expatriates, who traded and sold chewing tobacco to consumers.

CPA officials had received information that the trio in Barka was selling ready-made chewing tobacco to consumers.

"This is a violation of decision No 256/2015 and its amend-



ments regarding the ban on trading chewing tobacco in any form and under any name," a CPA

statement said. After collecting evidence and coordinating with the concerned

authorities in the governorate, the expatriates were arrested and legal measures were taken against them.

"Stocks of chewing tobacco were seized and will be destroyed while an administrative fine of RO3,000 was imposed on the violators," CPA stated.

The authority affirmed that it spares no effort in following up and monitoring the markets. 'CPA will control everything that may harm the health and safety of consumers or is against consumers' rights,' the statement said, appealing to consumers to report any abuses they may notice in the market through the authority's various communication channels.

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Oman govt approves animal feed subsidy to stabilise prices

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's government has taken notice of rising raw material prices for the manufacture of animal feed and approved the provision of subsidy to stabilise prices in the local market.

Two of the biggest producers of animal feed in the sultanate, Oman Flour Mills Company and Dhofar Foods & Investment Company, on Wednesday announced that they received a letter from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for the approval of subsidy on animal feed raw materials for six months.

'We would like to inform that we received a letter on November 21, 2022 from General Director of Food Security at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for the government approval to subsidise four main raw materials animal feed ingredients,' Dhofar Foods & Investment said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The government will pay a third of the difference between base price and market price for six months starting from July 1, 2022, the company said in its disclosure.



The government will pay a third of the difference between base price and market price of animal feed raw materials for six months starting from July 1, 2022

'This subsidy will reduce company's loss in feed production section,' Dhofar Foods & Investment added.

In a separate disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange, Oman

Flour Mills said, 'Oman Flour Mills has received a letter from the government on November 21, 2022 for the subsidy of inputs of basic raw materials in the manufacturing of the concen-

trated animal feed for six months. The subsidy will be effective from July 1, 2022.'

This government support aims at stabilising the concentrated animal feed prices in the local market, Oman Flour Mills said. It added that further details will be disclosed along with the financial statements of the company.

The prices of animal feed raw materials sharply increased this year that substantially raised the

production cost for the manufacturers of animal feed.

Dhofar Foods & Investment's net loss sharply increased by 153 per cent to RO1.39mn during the first nine months of 2022 compared to the same period of last year, according to the company's financial report.

'The main contribution [to increased losses] was from feed mill division due to high cost of inputs that has deteriorated the gross margin,' Dhofar Foods & Investment said in the report. The company added that it was not able to pass the increased raw materials cost onto customers due to regulated market policies adopted in Oman for feed, poultry and dairy industry.

Oman Flour Mills in its financial report said that the group's total expenses increased by 34 per cent in the first nine months of 2022 as compared to the previous year's same period. It said the main reason for the increase in expenses is attributed to the increase in purchase prices of raw materials compared to last year.

Oman Flour Mills said its group net profit fell by 82 per cent to around RO1mn in the first nine months of 2022 from RO5.8mn recorded in the same period of 2021.



OFM subsidiary to acquire stake in Modern Dairy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Atyab Investment Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Oman Flour Mills Company (OFM), has signed an agreement to purchase a stake in Modern Dairy Factory Company (Al Khamayil).

As per the agreement, Atyab Investment, along with the Ministry of Defense Pension Fund and Seven Seas Company, will acquire 80 per cent of Modern Dairy Factory, of which Atyab Investment's stake will be 40 per cent in Modern Dairy Factory.

The completion of this acquisition is subject to satisfying certain conditions that were agreed upon between the parties. Oman Flour Mills will inform the market upon the completion of the deal in general, the company said in a press statement.

It said the acquisition will enhance the role of Oman Flour Mills Group in supporting the sultanate's food security sector and expanding its investment portfolio.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Fannah, CEO of Oman Flour Mills, said, "The acquisition of Modern Dairy Factory will contribute to expanding the company's products range as well as strengthening its capability to enhance the food security system in Oman."

Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahaibi, director general of investment at the Ministry of Defense Pension Fund, said, "The MOD Pension Fund always seeks to contribute actively to the national economy, supporting local products and companies which have profitable economic feasibility, in order to achieve good revenues and diversifying the investment portfolio of the fund."

Wahaibi added, "This deal will help to provide Oman market with various dairy products and natural juices of standard specifications and quality that enhances the presence of Omani products in the local market, as well as contributes to achieving self-sufficiency."

Rebound Plastic Exchange to support GCC efforts in waste management

Abu Dhabi , UAE - Rebound Plastic Exchange, a global B2B digital trading platform for recycled plastics, said it is ready to support the GCC countries in achieving sustainable waste management.

Currently, it is estimated that it will take US\$60-85bn invested across four key value streams, plastic, concrete and cement, metal, and bio-waste over the next 20 years to meet targets throughout the GCC region, according to a new report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in collaboration with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD).

The recent launch of Rebound Plastic Exchange will spur trust and quality assurance amongst buyers and sellers in the GCC, providing companies and nations with a vital benchmark for their capacity to adopt and trade quality assured plastics, equip them with frameworks to facilitate exchange, and highlight the tangible benefits of transparent plastic trading.

In a press release, Maryam al Mansoori, general manager, Rebound Plastic Exchange, said, "Facilitating the demand supply gap with the GCC's recycling infrastructure will position the GCC as a key actor in the global effort towards circularity. Rebound Plastic Exchange can help do just that."

The report, titled "Recycling in the GCC: Securing Valuable Resources for a Sustainable Future", finds that the GCC generates between 105mn and 130mn tonnes of waste per annum, and that the US\$85bn investment stronghold would cover design, collection, sorting, and recycling investment across these four key waste streams.

The recorded numbers underscore how the generated waste



Maryam al Mansoori

in the Gulf countries comes primarily from Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), Construction and Demolition Waste (CDW), and agricultural waste.

As the host of COP28 next year, the UAE has an opportunity to not only drive climate action at home but also to set an example to the world. Hosting the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) World Congress in 2023, Oman will certainly build on the momentum by attracting key stakeholders to the region.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE together account for approximately 75 per cent of the region's waste, which accentuates the joint WBCSD-BCG study.

Dr Abdulwahab al Sadoun, Secretary General of Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA), commented, "Plastic waste - when harnessed and managed properly - has significant value which can be tapped into to drive our circular economy efforts. Plastics also perform better when compared to alternatives when it comes to carbon emissions. According to a recent study by McKinsey & Co, there are few viable alternatives to plastics in food packaging applications, with plastics having a lower greenhouse gas impact in 13 of the 14 non-plastic alternatives analysed. This is thanks to its inherent properties which help to drive down CO2 emissions in many modern applications today."

Young investors in Middle East prefer Islamic and sustainable assets: Survey

Dubai, UAE - Lombard Odier, a leading global wealth and asset manager, revealed further results from its 'Middle East Investor Views 2022' survey, which examines the investment habits of next generation investors.

Having surveyed 300 high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), of which 200 were under the age of 40, the findings reveal that younger investors are more likely to seek investments that comply with their values, including in Islamic and sustainability-focused assets, while seeking a wealth management partner that shares their investment values and principles.

Younger investors in the region are positive on values-based assets such as Shariah-compliant and Islamic investments, alongside those taking sustainability factors into account. Around 91 per cent say they already allocate to Islamic investments, while 88 per cent plan to increase their allocations to sus-



tainable assets.

This comes as no surprise given the positive performance of sustainable investments, with 73 per cent of respondents believing that they can generate improved returns through ventures that drive the transition to a net-zero economy, and 74 per cent assuming that new business opportunities will be found in sustainable sectors in the region.

"Islamic finance has proven its resilience against the worst of situations" said a younger investor in the UAE, with a

younger Saudi investor commenting, "Sustainable investing is a key business fundamental for us. We formulate our investments and determine whether they are sustainable according to key factors, prioritising these conditions."

Adherence to Islamic principles is also a key area of focus. While the families of 85 per cent of young respondents share traditional Middle Eastern values based on religious or cultural principles, 31 per cent say those traditional values are updated

for the present day. This contrasts with older investors, 79 per cent of which say their values are exclusively traditional.

There is also a divergence in the objectives of younger and older investors in preserving and growing their wealth. Younger investors have a greater focus on improving their lifestyle and remaining wealthy compared to older investors over the age of 40 (45 per cent versus 16 per cent), who are more interested in their financial and reputational legacy.

The survey also highlights the geographic spread of younger respondents' investments. Around 89 per cent of younger HNWIs hold their assets in the Middle East and intend to keep them there over the next five years, while the remaining 11 per cent keep their assets in Europe (5 per cent), North America (4 per cent) and Asia Pacific (2 per cent).

In a press release, Arnaud

Leclercq, partner and head of new markets at Lombard Odier, said, "The latest results from our Middle East Investor Views 2022 survey reveal a consensus emerging between older and younger investors in several areas, but specifically in values-based investing. The next generation's enthusiasm for Islamic and sustainable investing, and their keenness to work with expert financial advisors that share their values, is very encouraging."

He added, "We also observed a keen focus on regional investing, highlighting the sheer opportunity the Middle East offers for maintaining and accumulating greater wealth. At Lombard Odier, helping businesses to plan, organise, protect and transfer their wealth is shaped by half a century's experience in the Middle East. We look forward to using that experience to help the next generation plan their future with confidence."

Tech giant Huawei joins global digital alliance

Shenzhen, China - Huawei has signed a global commitment to join the International Telecommunication Union's Partner2Connect digital alliance, which will bring connectivity to about 120mn people in remote areas in more than 80 countries by 2025.

Liang Hua, chairman of Huawei, announced the decision at the company's 2022 Sustainability Forum, Connectivity+: Innovate for Impact. The forum explored how ICT innovation could unleash the business and social value of connectivity and drive sustainability in the digital economy era.

Speakers at the event included senior leaders from the ITU and United Nations, tele-



Huawei chairman Liang Hua

com ministers and regulators in Cambodia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, and business leaders, partners, experts, and customers from China, South Africa, Belgium, and Germany.

"It is clear connectivity alone

is not enough. It must be affordable, the content must be relevant and in the local language, and users must have the skills to make best use of it," said ITU Deputy Secretary-General Malcolm Johnson. "Thank you to

Huawei for their support of the Partner2Connect (P2C) Digital Coalition, and for their announced P2C pledges in the key areas of rural connectivity and digital skills."

Siddharth Chatterjee, United Nations resident coordinator in China, called for "multi-stakeholder partnerships" of policymakers, the private sector, academia, and civil society to close "the sobering reality" of a digital divide which excluded a third of the global population.

Cao Ming, president of Huawei Wireless Solution, said, "As an enterprise with the most complete ICT capabilities, Huawei integrates the full-technology innovation potential of equipment, sites, energy, trans-

mission, and antennas to address the difficulties faced by traditional site deployment, such as high costs, restricted transportation, lack of power, and maintenance challenges. We have continuously upgraded the RuralStar and RuralLink solutions to extend quality coverage to remote areas, enabling more people, community hospitals, schools, local governments, and small- and medium-sized enterprises to enjoy the same high-speed broadband connectivity experiences as those in cities."

The RuralStar series solutions have provided connections for more than 60 million people in remote areas in more than 70 countries.



EU sets high bar on gas price cap

Brussels, Belgium – The EU unveiled its proposed price cap on wholesale natural gas Tuesday, but set it so high that it was unclear if or when it might ever be called upon.

The cap, or “safety ceiling” as the European Commission called it in its proposal, was fixed at 275 euros per megawatt hour and, if adopted, would come into force in January.

The suggested price cap was reached after months of wrangling between EU countries as they grapple with high energy prices spurred by Moscow's war in Ukraine and its decision to limit gas exports.

It runs alongside a plan by EU member states to voluntarily cut natural gas use by 15 per cent over the northern hemisphere winter.

But the conditions meant the cap would only kick in when gas prices in the European Union breach that threshold for two weeks running, calculated on advance purchases through the Title Transfer Facility (TTF), the EU's main gas price benchmark.

Also, the cap was contingent on the TTF price for liquefied natural gas -- an easily transportable form of gas that can be shipped anywhere in the world -- going above 58 euros for 10 days within that same two-week period. By way of reference, the TTF was running at around 120 euros in trading on Tuesday.

The only time it has gone above the 275-euro limit was between August 22 and 29 this year.

That was a time of high global

energy demand and a race by EU countries to fill gas storage ahead of winter.

Yet even that August period would likely not have triggered the cap as set out by the European Commission, notably because the spike lasted less than two weeks.

EU energy commissioner Kadri Simson said the proposed price cap was designed for next year's gas storage “filling season” ahead of winter in a year's time.

That, she said, would be a “challenging situation where we have to fill our underground gas storage without that access to Russian gas”.

The commission believes, she said, that the sort of circumstances that led to the spike in August this year “will never be repeated” but the cap was needed to confront “risks we might face next year”.

Russian gas imports into the European Union have fallen from 45 per cent of total gas imports to less than 10 per cent.

While they are not sanctioned by Brussels, they have dropped off precipitously because the Kremlin has cut volumes to pressure Europe and many EU companies shun them.

The push for an EU-wide gas price cap has the backing of 15 European Union countries.

But Germany - the EU's export motor - and the Netherlands have voiced scepticism, saying they feared it might push suppliers to sell gas outside Europe, in more lucrative markets, thus worsening the energy crunch.

AFP

US, allies to set Russia oil price cap in 'next few days'

Washington, US – Washington and its allies are planning to finalise a price cap for Russian oil in “the next few days,” as they seek to cut off a critical source of funding for Moscow, the US Treasury Department said Tuesday.

The price cap would be the basis for a ban set to take effect on December 5 that will prohibit firms to transport or provide insurance for Russian oil shipments sold above the fixed price.

The Group of Seven wealthy nations, European Union, and Australia will impose the measure which aims to deprive Moscow of a key source of funds to pay for its war in Ukraine - as well as helping to cool high global



energy prices.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine early this year caused energy

prices to soar, providing windfall profits that helped cushion the impact of Western sanctions on

Moscow.

A senior US Treasury official told reporters Tuesday that the European Union is consulting with its members on the price level, and the broader coalition will take steps to implement the cap once the EU's process is complete.

“We expect the next few days for them to complete their consultations on price setting, and for us as a coalition to move forward ... implementing the price cap ahead of December 5,” the official added.

The official said there was no reason to believe Moscow would retaliate against the new policy, as “it's not in their interest.”

“Any action they take to drive

up prices will have an impact on their new customers, customers like India and China,” the official said.

Treasury officials have maintained that the price cap would allow Russia to earn a profit, but deny them excess revenues from inflated prices.

The Treasury Department issued guidelines Tuesday for shippers and financial firms involved in the transactions on requirements for abiding by the price cap.

The cap likely will be reviewed on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, due to the need to provide certainty to the marketplace, the official said.

AFP



Eurozone economy shrank more slowly in November

Brussels, Belgium – Business activity in the eurozone continued to contract in November but the rate of decline has slowed, according to PMI data published on Wednesday by S&P Global.

The keenly watched output index rose from 47.3 in October to 47.8 in November, but remained under 50 - signifying a contraction - for the fifth month in a row.

Inflation remains high in almost all economies in the single currency bloc, but S&P said cost pressures on firms are now rising more slowly and business confidence, while still “gloomy”, is up.

“A further fall in business activity in November adds to the chances of the eurozone economy slipping into recession,” warned Chris Williamson, S&P's chief business economist.

“So far, the data for the fourth quarter are consistent with GDP contracting at a quarterly rate of just over 0.2 per cent.”

But he noted that “supply constraints are showing signs of eas-

ing, with supplier performance even improving in the region's manufacturing heartland of Germany.”

Despite improved supplies to businesses, industrial giant Germany remains in the eurozone's steepest downturn, with a PMI of 46.4.

Fellow large economy France has been performing better but still fell into output contraction in November, the first drop in business activity since February 2021.

Jack Allen-Reynolds, senior economist at Capital Economics, said a tentative increase in manufacturing lay behind the better-than-expected figure.

“All told, these surveys suggest that the contraction in GDP in the fourth quarter might be a bit smaller than the decline of 0.5 per cent quarter-on-quarter that we have pencilled in,” he said.

“But they are still very weak and suggest that the region's inflation problem is far from over.”

AFP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors (“the Board”) of SMN Power Holding SAOG (“the Company”), I have the pleasure to present the unaudited consolidated financial statements for the nine-month period ended 30 September 2022.

Corporate Governance

The Company has complied with the Code of Corporate Governance and applicable circulars issued from time to time by the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

Operations

Providing a safe working environment is a key priority and the Board is pleased to share that during the nine months period of 2022, the Health & Safety (“H&S”) performance was excellent with no Lost Time Accident (“LTA”) in line with previous years.

The commercial performance of both plants, SMN Barka Power Company SAOC (“SMN Barka”) and Al Rusail Power Company SAOC (“Al Rusail”), is measured by their reliability which is the ability to deliver the declared capacity as per the P(W)PA agreement.

In the third quarter of 2022, the reliability at SMN Barka Plant was 96.6% (96.2% in 2021) for power and 96.1% (98.2% in 2021) for water. The reliability at Al Rusail Power Plant was 98.5% (99.9% in 2021) for the same period.

The Company produced over the nine-month period of 2022 an aggregate net power volume of 1,942 GWh (3,081 GWh in 2021) and a total volume of 25,025,000 m³ of potable water was delivered (22,955,000 m³ in 2021).

All necessary annual maintenance activities of key equipment, including major inspections of gas turbine 1 and gas turbine 2, were performed in accordance with Original Equipment Manufacturers’ (OEM) recommendations, while applying the best industry standards and practices for health & safety and maintenance, during the 2021-2022 winter period. Various upgrades were implemented to gas turbine 1 and gas turbine 2 in line with OEM recommendations to improve the performance of the machines.

The Company and the plants’ operator, Suez-Tractebel Operation and Maintenance Oman (STOMO), team are closely monitoring the performance of the plants to ensure plant availability and reliability.

Financial Results

Total consolidated Revenues for the nine-month period of 2022 amount to RO 53.43 million (RO 70.70 million in 2021), representing a decrease of RO 17.3 million compared to 2021, primarily due to reduction in capacity of Al Rusail plant from approx. 665 MW to approx. 186 MW. Total Revenues include variable revenues (Fuel Charge and Variable Operating & Maintenance Charge) and fixed revenues (Fixed Capacity Fees).

The Company generated a **consolidated net profit** of RO 8.42 million during the nine-month period of 2022 compared to a net profit of RO 8.78 million for 2021. The decrease in net profit of RO 0.36 million is mainly due to the following unfavorable variances compared to the same period in 2021:

- Al Rusail Gas Turbine 1 to Gas Turbine 6, have retired from operation on 30th September 2021. The revised installed capacity of Al Rusail Power Plant has gone down from approx. 665 MW to approx. 186MW.
- Lower commercial availability at SMN Barka power plant compared to last year due to higher forced outages on power and water plant.

These downsides were partially offset by the following positive variance compared to 2021:

- Reduction in finance costs following the scheduled repayments of the term loan facilities.

The reduction in **Non-Current Assets** is driven by the depreciation of the plant (fixed assets).

The decrease in **Current Assets** is due to the receipts of the finance lease and the payment received from OPWP of the outstanding Fuel Charges for the year 2021 under the fuel settlement arrangement agreed with OPWP for both SMN Barka and Al Rusail plants. These receipts from OPWP under the fuel settlement arrangement have been utilized to settle the fuel charges with Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) under the back-to-back contractual arrangements resulting in a similar and corresponding reduction in trade and other payables.

Future Outlook

The Company will continue its focus on H&S and maintain the excellent plant reliability at both plants. During last year management had several meetings with all stakeholders on plant cycling. The Authority for Public Services Regulations (APSR) confirmed a change in dispatch methodology which has resulted in a reduced cycling. This reduction is expected to continue in 2022. Management will continue to proactively liaise with Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP), APSR and the Load Dispatch Centre on this key matter.

In terms of the latest development on the progress of the initiatives taken to prepare for the future of Al Rusail and SMN Barka power plants:

- After successful completion of trial period, the spot market started operation from January 2022. While both Al Rusail and SMN Barka are participating in the spot market as required by generation license, such participation has no impact on the Company's cash-flows until the time Al Rusail and SMN Barka remains under the P(W)PA framework. Al Rusail has withdrawn its participation in the spot market and the market operator has consent the withdrawal notice. This comes as a result of the PPA first extension expiration on 31st of October 2022.
- Al Rusail has received a firm offer from OPWP to extend the PPA to 31 December 2023. The offer has been accepted by the Company and the extension agreement has been formally signed with OPWP.
- For SMN Barka, the Company will continue working closely with APSR, OPWP and all stakeholders of the power and water sector to extend the P(W)PA agreement. OPWP 7 years statement (2021-2027) indicates that, Power 2024 and Water 2024 rounds are planned. SMN Barka is closely monitoring the evolution of these initiatives and should utilize these opportunities to achieve business continuity beyond March 2024.

In terms of dividend distribution, as previously disclosed and in line with the financing arrangements during the IPO, the excess cash generated by SMN Barka is now paid to the lenders and will not flow to the Shareholders until the loans are fully settled or until the time the loans are restructured. The P(W)PA extension for SMN Barka will be a key factor to potentially restructure the debt in the coming years, remove or defer the cash sweep and allow further dividend distribution. Al Rusail has repaid all its debt outstanding, and any dividend distribution will be contingent on end of term and site restoration obligations on the expiry of the PPA.

As Chairman of the Board, I would like to thank our Shareholders, not only for their confidence, but also for their continued support and for the expertise they bring into the Company. The Board of Directors expresses its gratitude to OPWP, APSR, CMA and other governmental and non-governmental bodies for their guidance and support.

I also take this opportunity to thank all the operational staff working at SMN Barka and Al Rusail plants as well as the team at our corporate office for their remarkable efforts to ensure reliable power and water supply to the residents of Oman.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I would like to extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Government for their continued support and encouragement to the private sector by creating an environment allowing us to contribute effectively to the growth of the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr. Abdullah Al Yahya'ey
Chairman of the Board

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SMN POWER HOLDING SAOG

Unaudited Consolidated Financial Statements For the Nine-Month Period Ended 30 September 2022

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 September 2022 (Unaudited)

	Parent Company		Consolidated	
	30 Sep 2022 RO '000	31 Dec. 2021 RO '000	30 Sep 2022 RO '000	31 Dec. 2021 RO '000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	-	-	133,454	139,459
Right-of-use-assets	-	-	317	285
Long-term prepayment	-	-	-	27
Investment in subsidiaries	27,405	27,405	-	-
Goodwill	-	-	14,952	14,952
	27,405	27,405	148,723	154,723
Current assets				
Inventories	-	-	3,058	2,901
Trade and other receivables	78	54	9,305	44,069
Finance lease receivables	-	-	-	316
Derivative financial instruments	-	-	72	-
Fixed term cash deposits	-	-	3,450	7,390
Cash and bank balances	50	24	1,561	3,067
	128	78	17,446	57,743
	27,533	27,483	166,169	212,466
Total assets				
EQUITY AND RESERVES AND LIABILITIES				
EQUITY AND RESERVES				
Share capital	19,964	19,964	19,964	19,964
Statutory reserve	6,522	6,522	6,691	6,691
Retained earnings	923	923	50,458	42,036
Hedging Reserve	-	-	16	(2,560)
Net equity	27,409	27,409	77,129	66,131
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities				
Term loan	-	-	45,822	64,832
Lease liabilities	-	-	375	353
Derivative financial instruments	-	-	54	1,529
Provision for end of service benefits	-	-	76	84
Provision for site restoration	-	-	3,644	3,558
Deferred Operating Income	-	-	808	808
Deferred tax liability	-	-	15,581	15,447
	-	-	66,360	86,611
Current liabilities				
Term loan	-	-	14,705	13,795
Lease liabilities	-	-	53	20
Derivative financial instruments	-	-	-	1,484
Trade and other payables	124	74	5,664	41,517
Current tax payable	-	-	2,258	2,908
	124	74	22,680	59,724
Total liabilities	124	74	89,040	146,335
Total equity and liabilities	27,533	27,483	166,169	212,466
Net assets per share (RO)	0.137	0.137	0.386	0.344

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 September 2022 (Unaudited)

	Parent Company		Consolidated	
	30 Sep 2022 RO '000	30 Sep 2021 RO '000	30 Sep 2022 RO '000	30 Sep 2021 RO '000
Revenue	-	-	53,435	70,705
Operating costs	-	-	(40,399)	(56,405)
GROSS PROFIT	-	-	13,036	14,300
General and administrative expenses	(234)	(183)	(819)	(879)
(LOSS)/PROFIT FROM OPERATIONS	(234)	(183)	12,217	13,421
Finance charges	-	-	(2,616)	(3,408)
Other income	234	183	404	402
PROFIT BEFORE TAX	-	-	10,005	10,415
Income tax	-	-	(1,583)	(1,634)
NET PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	-	-	8,422	8,781
<i>Other comprehensive income</i>				
Items that may be reclassified to profit or loss in subsequent periods:				
Fair value of cash flow hedge adjustments – net	-	-	4,319	4,408
Reclassification to profit or loss - gross	-	-	(1,288)	(2,124)
Deferred tax liability – current period change	-	-	(455)	(342)
Other Comprehensive Income/ expense for the year, net of tax	-	-	2,576	1,942
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	-	-	10,998	10,723
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	-	-	0.042	0.044

ISWK organises sports day for junior students

Indian School al Wadi al Kabir organised Kindergarten and Classes I and II Sports Day 2022 this month, claiming it to be 'one of the most awaited events after the COVID-19 pandemic'. 'It was an evening filled with a walk past, drill displays, fun games, and relays by the little tots,' the school said in a press statement. The chief guest for the evening Ahmed Feisal Ali al Jhdhamy, Secretary General Oman Golf and Golf Association, graced the event with his benign presence. The event was opened with the torch relay by the children of KG I, KG II, Class I, and Class II. 'Sports day cannot end without games. We had fun games with our little ones. It was a memorable evening for the children as well as their parents.

Stassen joins hands with Oman Cricket

Oman Cricket (OC) signed a partnership agreement with Stassen Tea, one of the best-known tea companies from Sri Lanka, to support the game of cricket in the sultanate. Stassen was named the associate sponsor of the national team. OC chairman Pankaj Khimji and Srinith De Silva, CEO of Aitkin Spence Hotels – Oman, which represents Stassen Group in Oman, signed the deal at the Oman Cricket headquarters recently. "Stassen is delighted to be associated with Oman Cricket as an Associate Sponsor of the national team," De Silva said. Khimji said that the involvement of corporates and private players to support the game is a very encouraging development.

Lex Mundi admits Said Al Shahry & Partners

Lex Mundi, the world's leading global network of independent law firms, has announced the admission of Said Al Shahry & Partners (SASLO). The firm's admission to the network as the exclusive member firm for Oman was effective as of November 1. Established in 1992 by Said al Shahry, SASLO is a full-service law firm based in Muscat, and was one of the first legal firms to be established in the Sultanate of Oman. The firm has grown to become a leading, globally recognised, Omani law firm - connecting its 'on-the-ground' legal expertise to international markets.

KIMSHEALTH's Seha for senior citizens

KIMSHEALTH has launched Seha, a special programme for senior citizens living in Oman. The programme aims at providing senior citizens, aged 65 and above, with an access to quality healthcare with a host of medical benefits within KIMSHEALTH's medical institution network in Darsait, Al Khuwair and Duqm. Upon enrolment, senior citizens can avail a Seha Card which entitles them to special benefits across - consultation, laboratory and radiology services, inpatient packages, physiotherapy, homecare services and room rent. Dr Muhanna Nasser al Muslahi, Director General of Private Health Establishment, Ministry of Health, inaugurated the Seha programme at a recently held event at the KIMSHEALTH Hospital in Darsait in the presence of KIMSHEALTH's team.

W Muscat prepares for 'sun chasers'

'It's time to sip, chill, cool and sun chase!' W Muscat announced, while making arrangements for 'Sun Chaser' event on every Friday between 2.00pm and 7.00pm. 'Scheduled at the Wet Deck, guests can enjoy fusion of bevies, great eats, and a vibrant ambience amidst a beautiful Muscat view,' it said. Priced at RO12, the day pass includes one welcome bevvy and access to experience a great music session by renowned DJs Jennifer Dons, Arun and Aitor Robles on the deck. Additionally, guests who buy three passes for the Sun Chaser, get the fourth one free. "We are delighted to invite guests to soak up the sun and sounds at the Sun Chasers pool event," W Muscat general manager Gerald Chevasson said.

Sailors from 19 countries arrive in Oman

Oman Sail welcomed 39 teams from 19 nations to the Barceló Mussanah Resort for the 2022 RS Venture Connect World Championships, the first exclusively para sailing event to be held in Oman.

Over the next six days, sailors in both the para and open categories - including Oman Sail's own SailFree squad - will compete in the ultra-versatile RS Venture Connect boat, before a grand final on 27 November will decide the 2022 World Champion.

Six two-person teams will represent Oman in the para category; Hassan al Lawati and Sami al Sulaimi, Sultan al Wahaibi and Ahmed al Balushi, Adil al Siyabi and Naser al Rahbi, Malik al Qar-toubi and Ghalya al Jabri, Raiyan al Mujaini and Hamed al Subhi, and Zaher al Atbi and Ali al Ghasaini.

Feras Asqul, Project Manager at Oman Sail, said, "This is a first for Oman and a first for the region. We are delighted to be able to welcome so many talented and determined sailors to the Barceló Mussanah Resort for a milestone event. Conditions are perfect for great sailing, and we look forward to making history here together. The practice days brought exceptional conditions and amazing sailing, with light winds allowing the athletes to show their best form. Already we have seen how talented the para sailors are and this promises to be an incredibly close but exciting championship. We look forward to great racing tomorrow and the chance to show the potential of para sailing."

Barceló general manager Dermot Birchall said, "We are delighted to host



the first parasailing competition in Oman at Barceló Mussanah Resort. Oman Sail has done a phenomenal job with the recent sailing competitions in the sultanate, and we are grateful to be a part of their ongoing journey. It is a true testament to the sailors' determination and strong will, inspiring people to overcome challenges and extraordinary circumstances to pursue their goals in life as the world watches on. We would like to wish all participants of the RSS Venture Connect World Championships the very best of luck and look forward to welcoming them to Barceló Mussanah Resort as the hospitality destination of choice."

Birchall continues, "Oman is abundantly blessed with picturesque landscapes and a culturally enriched

FULL EVENT PROGRAMME

Date of Event	Time	Remarks
Sunday, November 20	09.00-14.00	Paralympic Development
	15.00-19.00	Programme (PDP) Day 1
Monday, November 21	09.00-14.00	PDP Day 2
	15.00-19.00	
Tuesday, November 22	09.00-14.00	PDP Day 3
	15.00-19.00	
Wednesday, November 23	09.00-14.00	Practice race
	15.00-18.00	Classification/Registration
	19.30	Competitor Briefing
Thursday, November 24	12.00	Fleet-based racing day 1
Friday, November 25	12.00	Fleet-based racing day 2
Saturday, November 26	12.00	Group Finals
Sunday, November 27	12.00	Grand Final (Medal Race)
	18.00	Awards Ceremony

Bank Muscat helps 200 families through Tadamun programme

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, has successfully concluded the 2022 edition of its landmark Tadamun programme, which is implemented annually in line with the bank's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility and community service.

The bank executed the programme for the 10th consecutive year, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development, with a joint team distributing household appliances to over 200 social welfare families across different governorates in the sultanate. A number of volunteers from the bank participated in the programme and distributed over 800 household appliances including air conditioners, refrigerators and other appliances to the beneficiary families.

The Tadamun programme has so far benefitted 1,880 families since being launched in 2013.

This year too, the programme was implemented in cooperation with specialists from the Ministry of Social Development, who received applications and finalised the list of families entitled for the benefits.

The bank has been particularly encouraged by its partnership with the ministry on a number of initiatives including Tadamun in line with its commitment to Public-Private Partnership.



Bank Muscat also took the opportunity to thank the Ministry of Social Development and members of its volunteer team for the successful implementation of the programme.

Bank Muscat, which is Oman's leading financial services provider, runs several long-term social responsibility projects including Green Sports, Al Wathbah SME Academy, the Maliyat financial literacy programme and Irshad financial coaching, which are all aimed at supporting different segments of Omani society.

This year, the bank extended its support to 20 youth sports teams as part

heritage, and has rapidly grown to become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. At Barceló Mussanah Resort we are proud to support the continuous enhancement of the tourism and hospitality sectors in the country."

The next leg of the nationwide Oman Sailing Festival also kicks off on Thursday at Barceló Mussanah Resort, with professional instructors from Oman Sail offering free sessions to Try Sailing, Try Windsurfing and Try Kitesurfing, as well as the RS Venture Connect for people with disabilities. There will also be a showcase of local SMEs during the three-day event and a beach clean up event has been organised in partnership with Be'ah to protect the local environment.

In a pivotal year for para sailing when the decision as to whether the sport is reinstated to the Paralympics for LA28, World Sailing, the global governing body for the sport, held a three-day Para Sailing Development Program (PDP) Clinic prior to the start of the RS Venture Connect World Championships to provide essential training for coaches and race officials.

The PDP also included a full International Classification Seminar which saw four candidates from Al Amal Occupational Therapy successfully complete a final assessment and become International Classifiers, joining 11 International Classifiers worldwide and taking another giant step forward for global para sailing. Oman Sail, World Sailing, and national federations around the world remain committed to the long-term success of para sailing.

Hearing loss in children

Most children with hearing loss are born to parents with normal hearing. Hearing loss can be diagnosed at birth or later in childhood. The most important thing to do is to get the right treatment as early as possible. If diagnosed and treated early you can help your child learn, play and keep up with other kids of their age.

The most common cause of hearing loss in children is otitis media or middle ear infection. The middle ear infection is common in children because the tubes that connect the middle ear to the nose called as eustachian tubes are not fully formed. Fluid build up behind eardrum can get ears infected. In severe cases otitis media can lead to permanent hearing loss. Besides otitis media, hearing loss at birth can happen when a pregnant woman has diabetes or high blood pressure and also if a baby is born prematurely. Some illnesses like meningitis, encephalitis, measles, chickenpox, flu and head injuries can also cause hearing loss in young children.

Early signs and symptoms of hearing loss in children include if your child is not reacting to loud noises or not responding to your voice. A child with otitis media may also pull or rub an ear, will not pay attention, have little energy, often ask for TV to be louder, have ear pain frequently.



Dr Rehan Mahmood
Specialist ENT
Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar

Hearing loss due to otitis media can be diagnosed with impedance audiometry. Conditions causing hearing loss at birth can be diagnosed using OAEs and ABR tests.

Early diagnosis and treatment in children can avoid trouble with language. The most common treatment for otitis media is through medication as the condition often goes away with administration of medicines. If the problem does not go away with medicines then your child will need a minor surgery to put ear tubes into the eardrums which allow fluid in middle ear to drain and help prevent infections and improve hearing. The ENT department at Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar is well equipped with facilities for diagnosis and treatment of hearing loss in children.

SBA comes up with special service offer for Renault adventure

Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, has announced an attractive after-sales service promotion to mark Oman's 52nd National Day celebrations. The Renault after-sales promotion which has already begun will go on till December 31, said a press release.

The unique offer boasts of a host of advantages for owners of the efficient Renault models. Renault care service benefits includes 50 per cent to 70 per cent on selected parts; free interior cleaning for service packages; flat 20 per cent discount on window film; flat 20 per cent discount on body polish and ceramic coating; 50 per cent to 90 per cent discount on selected accessories.

To avail the benefits, Renault own-



ers have to drive into the nearest Renault service centre with prior appointment and enjoy the exciting offer.

A spokesperson for SBA said, "We are delighted to mark the sultanate's 52nd National Day with a special after-sales service offer. We have a team of

dedicated after-sales and service experts who are adept in handling all customer care-related services."

Renault Oman serves its esteemed customers at its state-of-the-art after-sales facilities. Only professional technicians work on the Renault using genuine parts which ensure safety and the superb condition of the car.

Renault is a world-class brand today, focusing mainly on the important aspects such as safety, style, performance, value and reliability - keeping alive the motoring heritage of Renault. The Renault principle of safety is outlined in four basic points: Prevent, correct, protect and educate. Renault provides equipment that performs auxiliary tasks automatically to promote the responsibility of drivers

by warning them when they are not in a position to control their vehicle or when they put themselves in a position of potential danger.

For example, the visual and audible seatbelt reminders and tyre pressure monitoring. The inherent handling and braking qualities of a vehicle are fundamental factors of its overall dynamic, active safety and accident avoidance performance. Moreover, Renault is also known to have the maximum number of Euro-NCAP Five Star rated models globally.

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

Bank Nizwa makes home ownership easy

In an effort to enable customers to own their dream homes, Bank Nizwa has announced that it has made ethical, sharia'a-compliant home finance more affordable. Bank Nizwa Property/Home Finance, based on the sharia'a concept of Ijara, Murabaha, Forward Ijara and Diminishing Musharakah, offers quick and hassle-free solutions designed to help lighten one of the most demanding commitments. Through the service, customers will be able to finance lands or purchase a ready or under-construction property. Locals and residents working in the public or private sectors who make a minimum monthly salary of RO400, in addition to self-employees are all eligible for Bank Nizwa's Home Finance. Flexible payment options are available for up to 25 years. To avail of the service, customers who have not yet identified a house to buy can visit any Bank Nizwa branch and speak to a customer service representative.

ISG marks National Day with fervour

Indian School Al Ghubra celebrated the 52nd National Day of the Sultanate of Oman with great enthusiasm. The school premises wore a festive look adorned with flags and streamers in the colours of the national flag of Oman. Staff and students greeted each other cheerfully with extra warm smiles reserved for the Omani nationals. A special assembly was conducted by the Department of Arabic in the presence of chief guest Sunil K, convenor of the school management committee. The programme commenced with the singing of the Royal Anthem of Oman followed by the National Anthem of India. Alina Muskan of Class 10 dressed in traditional attire, welcomed the gathering in Arabic and English. Safah Khanum (Class 10) delivered a speech highlighting the beauty and cultural heritage of Oman which was translated in English by Laaibah Mujahid (Class 10).

PSM celebrates Oman's National Day

PSM celebrated the 52nd National Day of Oman with high spirit and extended sincere wishes to Omani people on this auspicious occasion. The programme started with the recitation of the Holy Quran. Chief guest Sheikh Malik bin Hilal al Yahmadi, guests of honour Saeed al Saqlawi and Sheikh Khalfan al Tuki, Salim Khalfan al Khatri, chairman of the Board of Directors Ameer Hamza, Pakistan Embassy officials, Senior Principal Nasir Nawaz, central coordinator junior section Saniya Mirza graced the occasion with their kind presence along with other dignitaries. Ameer Hamza presented the welcome note and illustrated the brotherly relationship between Oman and Pakistan. The students exhibited their love and wishes for the beloved country of Oman by holding the Omani flag high which creates a sense of belonging. They dressed up in beautiful Omani dresses and sang Omani national songs to wish prosperity and sovereignty to the Omani nation.

National Finance to digitalise through Tasdeed



Oman's largest finance company, National Finance, has collaborated with 'Tasdeed for Electronic Services LLC' to digitalise its payments and enhance the entire customer experience with seamless transaction flow. Expanding its technological capabilities to reach customers all across the sultanate, the signing of the agreement is also a testament of National Finance's commitment to its digitalisation goals. The new initiative will make it even easier for customers to carry out their transactions through a reliable, secure, and convenient channel. "We are delighted to bring on board one of the top payment platforms, Tas-

deed. In our experience, integrating digital payment options for customers increases the overall consistency and efficiency of the collection process and drives customer self-service," said Chief Executive Officer Tariq al Farsi. "An ongoing relationship also means regular collaboration to address mutual business and market requirements. This will not only help us keep pace with continuous developments in the industry but will also go a long way in promoting digital payments across different sectors. Through our ongoing initiatives, National Finance has proven that it is strongly aligned with Oman

Vision 2040 and the national digital transformation agenda." On his part, Abdullatif al Shaqsi, Chief Executive Officer of Tasdeed for Electronic Services, expressed his pleasure on the collaboration with National Finance, stating it to be a pioneer financing company in the Sultanate. He also said that Tasdeed is a simple, effective and user-friendly electronic platform for determining due payments and settling them instantly. Individuals can use Tasdeed to pay at ease from the comfort of their homes or offices through several electronic payment channels, including those offered by banks, mobile wallets,

mobile payment applications, payment service providers, their online portal, and ONEIC branches located throughout the Sultanate of Oman, where one can pay via bank accounts, debit cards or credit cards. Mirroring National Finance's values of providing transparency and security to customers, the system provided by Tasdeed also ensures optimum built-in security and stringent authentication features. With the country placing increased emphasis on fostering a cashless economy, National Finance has been at the forefront of integrating the latest technological advancements into all its operations. This has been instrumental in

creating a sustainable ecosystem that is robust, dynamic and capable of handling market complexities. At the same time, it has remained unwavering in its commitment to its clients, ensuring that customer convenience takes priority. Established in 1987, National Finance has built a strong reputation as a pioneer in the segment and has earned the trust of thousands of customers across the Sultanate. Through its well-knit network of branches and cutting-edge digital solutions, it offers a wide range of tailor-made products that address the varying needs of the evolving market.



Mercedes-Benz collaborates with Avatar, 20th Century

Mercedes-Benz is entering the next phase of its strategic brand collaboration with *Avatar: The Way of Water* and 20th Century Studios that aims to embed themes such as sustainability, mobility of the future, technology and innovation within an emotional brand experience. A global co-promotion campaign started for the much-anticipated movie *Avatar: The Way of Water* from 20th Century Studios which opens in theatres on December 16. Building upon the campaign idea of 'Earth is our Pandora', the messaging focuses on responsibility to our planet - reinforcing the central Mercedes-Benz corporate messaging 'Every action counts. Join our journey to a fully electric future'. Exclusive film footage shows *Avatar: The Way of Water*'s vibrant environmental imagery and locations on earth to evoke a dreamlike sense of otherworldliness. Campaign assets such as the TVC depict fully electric vehicles from Mercedes-EQ including the new EQE SUV. The campaign will play out across

key Mercedes-Benz markets worldwide, with assets covering TV, cinema, digital and social media. Co-promotional campaign assets are available in 30, 20, 15 and 10-second lengths. The co-promotion campaign completes a circle which debuted with the VISION AVTR concept vehicle, which was inspired by the world of Avatar. "Avatar is one of the most successful film franchises in the world with a message that is also central to the Mercedes ethos and the targets set out in our 'Ambition 2039'. We share the belief that we need a more respectful approach to nature and that we must conserve its resources. This co-promotion with *Avatar: The Way of Water* is part of our journey as a company, and we salute the narrative of the Avatar story on the need to strike a balance between environmental, economic and social interests. It is a source of inspiration as we pursue our sustainable business strategy," says Ola Källenius, Chief Executive Officer of Mercedes-Benz Group AG.

Bank Nizwa launches Oman's first sharia'a-compliant cards

In line with its core values, innovative mindset and commitment to sustainability, Bank Nizwa became the first Islamic bank in Oman to introduce sharia'a-compliant eco-friendly credit and debit cards. The cards were unveiled at an event under the patronage of H E Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority at Oman Aquarium, Mall of Muscat on Tuesday. Designed to cater to different segments of customers' needs by offering consumer-driven solutions that deliver value, the newly-launched cards bring the best of sustainable practices, exclusive rewards and unparalleled convenience in one card. Bank Nizwa strongly endorses the Oman Vision 2040, which advocates protecting the environment and conserving Oman's biodiversity. The brand-new card collection is made from Polylactic Acid (PLA), typically derived from fermented plant starch, like corn. PLA bioplastics are environmentally friendly benefits since they are biodegradable compared to traditional plastic manufacturing. Switching to eco-friendly cards demonstrates the bank's commitment to sustainability. Commenting on the newly launched cards, Bank Nizwa's Chief Executive Officer Khaled al Kayed said, "As the leader in the Islamic financial services industry, Bank Nizwa recognised the importance of sustainability and formed a strategy that deeply focuses on the same. The approach was created to promote sustainable development in the Islamic banking domain by considering environmental, social and economic objectives. The next phase of our journey will heavily involve sus-



tainable practices and we are dedicated to introducing products and services that have a long-term, positive impact on society." Bank Nizwa's newly released products reflect as well its dedication to digitalisation. With technology, the cards unlock infinite privileges that match the lifestyles of the bank's premium customers, creating a seamless experience that is secure and hassle-free for cardholders. The eco-friendly cards provide a bespoke value proposition with benefits categorised under travel, lifestyle, and providing peace of mind. By offering a comprehensive suite of benefits, Bank Nizwa seeks to make adopting eco-friendly products easier, convenient and more attractive for customers. Purpose-driven in its approach, Bank Nizwa has been at the forefront of conceptualising, implementing and

promoting sustainable practices in society. The bank is also in close alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has been playing a key role in helping the sultanate achieve its vision of being listed among the top 20 countries in the worldwide Environmental Performance Index. Bank Nizwa will continue to focus on deploying the highest levels of customer service, innovative products and sharia'a-compliant financial solutions whilst advocating sustainable growth and development. As an Islamic bank emphasising ethical practices, Bank Nizwa has launched a sustainability-linked financing initiative, yet another sign of the bank's commitment to helping the country transition to Net Zero emissions. Through the programme, companies will be further encouraged to adopt sustainable practices.

Ooredoo dazzles with spectacular fan experience at World Cup opening ceremony

Ooredoo - Official Middle East & Africa Telecommunications Operator of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 - has shared details of its support for the event's opening ceremony, resulting in a never-before-seen experience for fans. The opening ceremony of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 took place at Al Bayt stadium on Sunday, with a phenomenal capacity crowd packing the venue. Ooredoo's ground-breaking 5G network and its state-of-the-art fibre ensured superfast, reliable connectivity and superior-quality voice calling, enabling a vastly enhanced fan experience for all those attending the once-in-a-lifetime event. Connectivity extended beyond the stadium, allowing fans to

share their experience with friends and loved ones right from their journey from home. A team of experts on the ground monitored networks and operations from hours before the event and beyond the final whistle of the first match, to ensure seamless service. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla al Thani, CEO at Ooredoo said, "The opening ceremony of this momentous tournament could not have gone better, both for Qatar and for Ooredoo. Our years of preparation and significant investment in technology meant we were more than ready to step up and deliver; to our visiting fans, to our Qatari citizens and residents, and to those integral to operations."



The first 5G-powered FIFA World Cup tournament saw a mobile data traffic global record of a phenomenal 36TB, with fans connecting to friends and loved ones both in Doha and across the world as viewers everywhere watched the spectacular opening. An incredible 620,000 voice calls were made during the amazing event, with voice call accessibility greater than 99.8 per cent and a VoLTE call drop rate of just 0.12 per cent. 5G speeds crossed an awesome peak of 2Gbps. Snapchat was the most preferred app in the stadium, followed by Instagram and WhatsApp. Ooredoo's Service Operation Centre was ready with more than 100 experts and the latest

innovative solutions for AI real-time monitoring of network performance to ensure the best possible customer experience, with on-ground teams available in the stadium and its surrounding areas. "The atmosphere at the opening ceremony was befitting such an incredible global celebration and set the stage for the coming days and weeks as we continue to enjoy the greatest sporting spectacle on Earth. We look forward to continuing to provide an out-of-this-world fan experience, and of course to seeing some incredible football. Best of luck to all the teams joining us here in their pursuit of the legendary World Cup trophy," Sheikh Mohammed al Thani concluded.

Turkey determined to secure Syrian border

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey said on Wednesday it was more determined than ever to secure its Syrian border from attacks by Kurdish forces, threatening a ground operation 'at the most convenient time'.

Ankara launched an air strikes campaign across Iraq and Syria on Sunday as part of Operation Claw-Sword following a bombing in Istanbul on November 13 that killed six people.

"Our operations with planes, cannons and drones are only the beginning. Our determination to secure all our southern border... with a safe zone is stronger today than ever before," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told lawmakers in parliament.

"While we press ahead with air raids uninterrupted, we will crack down on terrorists also by land at the most convenient time for us," he told lawmakers from his AKP party.

Turkey blamed the Istanbul attack on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is blacklisted as a terror group by the European Union and the United States.

The PKK, which has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984, denied any role in the bombing - the deadliest in five years after a spate of attacks in Turkey between 2015 and 2017. Turkey has intensified air raids and artillery fire on the PKK and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) targets in northern Iraq and Syria.

Ankara considers the YPG a terror group linked to the PKK. But the YPG - the dominant force within the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is seen



as crucial in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) extremist group.

Can't keep their word'

The YPG denied a role in this month's attack. A Kurdish military official told AFP that a Turkish drone strike hit a Kurdish position inside a Russian base in northeastern Syria on Wednesday killing one Kurdish fighter and wounding three.

The casualties were all fighters of the Kurdish-led SDF, the SDF officer said.

Erdogan accused Western states backing Kurdish forces in Syria of failing to deliver on their promise of no attacks on Turkish soil, pointing to the Istanbul bombing. "If they can't keep their word," he said, "then we have the right to take care of ourselves."

Russia and the United States have called for de-escalation.

Nuri Mahmoud, YPG spokesman, late on Tuesday deplored 'the timid and weak statements by the guarantor countries and International Coalition' which relied on the group to counter IS militants. Erdogan has repeatedly called for a 30km (19-mile) 'safe zone' to protect Turkey against cross-border attacks from Syrian territory.

On Wednesday, he vowed Turkey would complete the zone

ing year.

A Turkish official told AFP the air campaign was 'likely to continue for a while' and when the conditions were ripe, Turkish troops inside Syria would start the land incursion, referring to the presence of Turkish military units on the Syrian side of the border for three years.

Ankara has launched waves of attacks on Syria since 2016 targeting Kurdish positions as well as IS militants.

Gas plant

Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said the military had hit 471 Kurdish targets across Iraq and Syria as part of its latest offensive, adding '254 terrorists were neutralised.'

A British-based monitoring group and Kurdish authorities have reported Turkish drone strikes on many locations in Hasakah province including a domestic gas plant and an oil pumping station.

Turkish artillery fire also hit near the Jerkin prison in Qamishli, which holds Islamic State group detainees, according to both sources.

Akar insisted on Wednesday that Turkey's military campaign targeted only 'terrorists' and their structures. "We have no problem with any ethnic or religious group, with our Kurdish or Arab brothers."

Turkish border towns have come under rocket fire from Syria in recent days. At least three people, including a child, were killed in a Turkish border town on Monday.

AFP

At least 50 hurt after earthquake in Turkey

Istanbul, Turkey - A magnitude-6.1 earthquake struck northwest Turkey during Wednesday's early hours, injuring at least 50 people.

The shallow tremor struck about 170km (105 miles) east of Istanbul, the country's largest city, where it was strongly felt.

National authorities said the quake was at a magnitude of 5.9 - lower than the 6.1 given by the US Geological Survey - and its epicentre was in Duzce province's Golyaka district, though it also shook other nearby cities. "We were woken up with a big noise and tremor," Duzce resident Fatma Colak told AFP.

"We got out of our homes in panic and now we are waiting outside." Interior Minister Suleyman Soyly, who visited Golyaka, said one person was seriously hurt after jumping from a balcony out of panic.

Initial images showed people covered in blankets outside their homes during the early morning. Some were seen placing blankets on the floor outside, and lighting fires for warmth.

Authorities said schools would be closed on Wednesday in Duzce and Sakarya provinces.

Soyly said that, apart from a few ruined barns, there were no reports of heavy damage or building collapses, but inspections were continuing.

He said authorities would check 8,000 buildings for any damage.

AFP

Teen killed in twin Jerusalem bus stop bombings, 14 wounded

Jerusalem - Explosions hit two bus stops in Jerusalem on Wednesday, killing a teen and wounding 14, in unclaimed attacks cheered by Palestinian fighter group Hamas.

The first bombings to hit Jerusalem since 2016, according to security officials, targeted an area frequented by ultra-Orthodox Jews at the western exit from Jerusalem.

A 16-year-old boy was killed and 11 other people wounded in the first blast, before a second hit a stop nearby, wounding three people, hospitals treating the casualties said.

An AFP photographer said the blast had ripped a hole through a metal fence behind the bus stop, with an electric scooter and a hat lying on the ground.

The photographer heard the second blast, which he said tore through the side of a bus.

The twin blasts struck half an hour apart, police said. Explosives experts were at the scene



with police and forensic scientists collecting evidence.

Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek hospital said a 16-year-old Israeli boy died of his wounds from the first explosion.

Doctors at the hospital were treating five people wounded in the blasts, while Hadassah medical centre said it had admitted nine wounded.

The Israeli foreign ministry named the boy killed as Aryeh Shchoupik.

AFP

Iran blames Israel after bomb kills Guards colonel

Tehran, Iran - An improvised bomb has killed an Iranian colonel from the aerospace division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps near Syria's capital Damascus, Iranian media reported on Wednesday, blaming arch foe Israel.

The Islamic republic regularly calls for the destruction of the Jewish state, which in turn sees Iran, with its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and its regional proxies, as its biggest security threat.

"Colonel Davoud Jafari, one of Iran's military advisers in Syria and a member of the Guards' aerospace arm, was killed with a makeshift bomb planted by the roadside," the Tasnim news agency reported citing a Guards statement.

The IRGC's aerospace department manufactures drones, missiles and satellites.

Tasnim said Jafari was killed on Monday 'by associates of the Zionist regime' - its term for Israel, a country with which Iran has waged a shadow war of attacks, assassinations and acts of sabotage for years.

It vowed that 'undoubtedly, the criminal Zionist regime will receive the adequate response for this crime'.

Tehran accuses Israel of a campaign of assassinations, including of scientists involved in what Iran insists is a peaceful nuclear programme.

The Israeli air force destroyed what it said was an Iranian drone manufacturing plant located on Syrian territory on October 24.

Syrian authorities had not yet confirmed the killing of Jafari.

Britain-based war monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on sources in the county, reported Jafari was killed with his Syrian bodyguard when the bomb blast hit their vehicle.

The attack took place near Sayyida Zeinab, a south Damascus district that hosts a shrine revered by Shiite Muslims and is home to many Iranians.

AFP

Strike kills Ukraine newborn and hits Kyiv infrastructure

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russian strikes killed a newborn baby at a maternity ward in southern Ukraine and targeted energy infrastructure in the capital Kyiv on Wednesday, the latest in a series of systematic attacks that has caused nationwide blackouts.

The European Parliament meanwhile recognised Russia as a 'state sponsor of terrorism' over its nine-month invasion of Ukraine and urged the 27-nation EU to follow suit.

Ukrainian emergency services said the Russian rockets smashed into a hospital in Vilniansk, a town in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, that houses Europe's largest nuclear power

plant under Russian control.

President Volodymyr Zelensky denounced the strikes as Russian 'terror and murder'.

Emergency service workers were shown in official footage wearing protective helmets with head lamps attached trying to dig out a man trapped waist-deep from rubble.

"The two-storey building of the maternity ward was destroyed," the emergency services said in a statement, adding that there was a woman, baby and doctor in the building at the time of the attack.

"The baby... died. The woman and doctor were rescued from the rubble," they added. Nobody



else was trapped under the debris. "Grief fills our hearts," said Oleksandr Starukh, the head of the Zaporizhzhia region.

The strikes are only the latest to hit Ukrainian medical facilities

since Russia invaded on February 24.

The World Health Organisation has warned that recent systematic attacks on the energy grid are causing severe disruptions at Ukrainian hospitals.

An infamous attack last March on a hospital in the war-battered coastal city of Mariupol left at least three dead in an attack widely condemned by Ukraine and its allies and that Moscow insisted was 'staged'.

Russian strikes were also targeting the Ukrainian capital Kyiv Wednesday, with the city's mayor Vitali Klitschko saying important infrastructure had been hit. "The enemy is launching mis-

sile strikes on critical infrastructure in Kyiv city. Stay in shelters until the air alert ends," Kyiv city administration said on social media. The western city of Lviv was also left without power after being targeted by strikes, the mayor said.

In the eastern region of Kharkiv, Russian strikes on a residential building and a clinic left two people dead, the governor said. "Kupiansk was shelled. A nine-storey residential building and a clinic were damaged. Unfortunately, two people died: a 55-year-old woman and a 68-year-old man," the official, Oleg Syneubov, said.

AFP

Indonesia quake survivors appeal for supplies

Heavy rain and aftershocks hampered rescue efforts among the rubble of devastated villages

Cianjur, Indonesia - Survivors of an Indonesian earthquake that killed at least 271 people, many of them children, appealed for food and water on Wednesday as heavy rain and aftershocks hampered rescue efforts among the rubble of devastated villages.

The calls for help came as authorities warned that debris from landslides caused by the strong quake near the town of Cianjur in West Java needed to be cleared as rains forecast for the coming weeks threatened a second disaster.

Two days after the quake flattened their homes, residents were still trying to retrieve priceless belongings including family photos, religious books and marriage certificates.

"Although some supplies have arrived, it is not enough. We got rice, instant noodles, mineral water but it's not enough," Mustafa, a 23-year-old resident of Gasol village, told AFP.

Mustafa had just dug through the rubble of an elderly neighbour's house at her request, appearing from the destroyed facade carrying a pile of clothes before returning to collect rice, a gas stove, canisters and frying

pans.

In Talaga village, some residents put signs on the windows of damaged houses and the front of tents that read 'We need help!'

In the streets, at least three people held up cardboard boxes, asking for donations. Evacuees crammed under flimsy tents, unable to move inside from the rain in case buildings collapse from an aftershock.

A shallow 3.9-magnitude aftershock sent panicked evacuees running from shelters on Wednesday, according to an AFP reporter at the scene. Authorities had recorded 171 aftershocks as of Wednesday evening.

More than 61,000 people have been displaced by the quake, around 2,000 are injured and 40 missing, the national disaster mitigation agency (BNPB) said on Wednesday.

Around a third of those found dead so far are believed to be children, BNPB chief Suharyanto, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told a press conference, without providing an exact figure.

The government has dispatched tents and other supplies



Residents move to a safer place after a 3.9-magnitude aftershock in Cugenang, Cianjur on Wednesday (AFP)

to Cianjur for the displaced, and the military deployed 12,000 personnel on Wednesday, officials said.

Heavy rain was hampering those efforts in about a dozen villages where more than 22,000 houses had been destroyed.

"For the refugees... their basic life necessities must be guaranteed - water, food, that's non-negotiable," Suharyanto said.

Hamlet buried

Two villages remain isolated, said Henri Alfiandi, head of Indonesia's search and rescue authority Basarnas, in a video posted to social media.

He said he had received reports of villagers trapped without food and water, and some forced to sleep alongside dead bodies.

"The people there can't even ask for help," he said, adding that

three helicopters were being sent to drop aid.

Another hamlet in Cugenang district, the worst-hit by the quake, was buried by a landslide, Muhammad Wachyudin, an official from the Cianjur disaster mitigation agency, told AFP.

Rescuers believed some bodies were buried in Kampung Pos but they have not been able to

reach them. Indonesia is vulnerable to landslides and flash floods in the rainy season, which has already begun and peaks in December in West Java.

The country's meteorology agency warned that Cianjur is prone to another catastrophe.

"We have to be vigilant over a potential second disaster,

she said.

'Praise God!'

On Tuesday, Cianjur's residents began mourning loved ones, laying them to rest in accordance with their Islamic faith after authorities released them from morgues. Some searched the wreckage for belongings.

For one couple, there was a glimmer of hope.

Mimin, 52, and her husband Rosyid, 67, scrambled through their destroyed home looking for one item only - a treasured two-gram gold ring.

They pulled clothes from the concrete, patting and shaking them, until the gleaming piece of jewellery that represented their savings popped out.

"Praise God! I found the ring!"

Mimin yelled. Indonesia experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific 'Ring of Fire', where tectonic plates collide.

Monday's tremor was the deadliest in the archipelago nation since a 2018 quake and resulting tsunami killed more than 4,000 people on the island of Sulawesi.

AFP

Although some supplies have arrived, it is not enough. We got rice, noodles, mineral water

MUSTAFA



PM Anthony Albanese last week unveiled a bid to host the 2026 COP summit, seeking to repair Australia's reputation as a climate change laggard

Report lays bare Australia's 'sobering' climate challenge

Sydney, Australia - Rising temperatures are fuelling widespread environmental degradation across Australia and supercharging natural disasters, according to a government report released on Wednesday in the wake of flash floods on the country's east coast.

The State of the Climate report found global warming was also slowly melting Australia's fragile alpine regions while contributing to ocean acidification and rising sea levels.

Climate researcher Ian Lowe said the report was a 'frightening' wake-up call for Australia, which relies heavily on coal and gas exports for economic growth.

"The scale of changes demonstrates that cleaning up our energy use is an urgent priority," Lowe said.

"We also need to reduce our exports of coal and gas."

The report, a joint effort between the government's weather bureau and national science agency, found Australia's climate had warmed by an average of 1.47 degrees Celsius since records began in 1910.

Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek said it was 'sobering' reading.

"For our environment, for our communities, this report reinforces the urgent need for climate action," she said.

'Record-breaking extremes'

Australia has in recent years experienced a series of extreme weather events linked to rising global temperatures.

Flash floods swept through parts of inland New South Wales

earlier this month, tearing entire homes from their foundations in some country towns.

Tens of thousands of Sydney residents were ordered to evacuate in July when floods swamped the city's fringe.

An east coast flooding disaster in March - caused by heavy storms in Queensland and New South Wales - claimed more than 20 lives.

Catastrophic bushfires swept through huge chunks of New South Wales in the 'Black Summer' of 2019 and 2020, while the Great Barrier Reef has suffered four separate mass coral bleaching events since 2016.

"These changes are happening at an increased pace," the State of the Climate report found.

"The past decade has seen record-breaking extremes leading to natural disasters that are exacerbated by anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change."

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese last week unveiled a bid to host the 2026 COP summit, seeking to repair Australia's international reputation as a climate change laggard.

Albanese's centre-left government introduced a 2050 net zero emissions target following its election earlier this year but has faced calls domestically to do more. University of Melbourne climate scientist Andrew King said Australia needed to rapidly cut its carbon emissions.

"The consequences of our continued use of fossil fuels are clear in Australia like elsewhere," he said.

AFP

S Africa's Ramaphosa demands climate aid from rich world

London, UK- South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Tuesday urged rich nations to help save vulnerable ones from climate change, as he made the first state visit of King Charles III's reign.

Gun salutes were fired across London as Charles and Queen Consort Camilla were joined by heir to the throne Prince William and his wife Catherine to greet Ramaphosa for a ceremonial welcome at Horse Guards Parade. The monarch and Ramaphosa, both dressed in dark overcoats against the November chill, inspected the guard of honour together.

In a carriage procession escorted by mounted soldiers from the Household Cavalry, the parties then travelled to Buckingham Palace. The two-day visit sees Charles finally presiding over proceedings after decades playing a supporting role to his mother, Elizabeth II, who died in September.

For Ramaphosa, a protege of anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela, however, it comes amid political difficulties and a threat of impeachment at home.

Addressing UK parliamentar-



South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa talks with Britain's King Charles III during a State Banquet at Buckingham Palace in London on Tuesday (AFP)

ians in the ornate Royal Gallery of the Palace of Westminster, Ramaphosa nodded at the corruption endemic in his country - including, for his critics, in the presidency itself. He said his government was striving 'to rebuild our economy in the wake of the pandemic and the era of state capture', as he urged the UK government to let in more South African students ahead of talks Wednesday with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Following the recent COP27 climate meeting in Egypt, Ramaphosa said an agreement to create a fund for poor and developing nations needed to be turned into cash. "This should not be seen as charity," he said.

"It is compensation for the harm done - and the harm yet to be done - to people in developing economies as a consequence of the industrialisation that wealthy countries have had over many years."

The king, long known for his advocacy on issues relating to the climate, said 'we must find and implement practical solutions to the twin, existential threats of climate change and biodiversity loss'.

Ahead of the speech in parliament, Ramaphosa toured nearby Westminster Abbey including a memorial stone for Mandela, who served as president of South Africa between 1994 and 1999.

AFP

Court ordering to return to jail is 'cruel', says Zuma

Johannesburg, South Africa - A South African court ruling that found former president Jacob Zuma was unlawfully granted medical parole and ordered his return to prison to complete his sentence, is 'cruel' and 'degrading', his representatives said on Tuesday. Zuma, 80, had been handed a 15-month term in June 2021 for contempt of court, a move that triggered deadly unrest.

But he served only two months before being given parole for medical reasons that remain unclear.

Parole was granted by the head of South Africa's prison service, despite an opinion by the service's medical committee that Zuma did not meet the required conditions.

On Monday the Supreme court of appeal ruled that the parole was 'unlawful', that Zuma had not finished serving his sentence and must return to jail.

In a late night statement, Zuma's foundation described the court's decision as 'an act of injustice. It is nothing but an

exercise in cruelty and degrading punishment'.

The prison authorities last month announced that Zuma's 15-month term was formally over.

"On what legal basis can an expired and fully served sentence be resurrected from its grave by a court of law?" the foundation asked.

"To impose further imprisonment after the expiry of a jail term is totally unheard of and it is indeed a textbook case of judicial overreach," it added.

A prominent figure in the fight against apartheid, Zuma became president in 2009. He was jailed for refusing to testify to a high-level inquiry into massive state corruption that unfolded under his presidency.

He was forced to step down in disgrace by the ruling ANC in 2018 following mounting corruption allegations.

When his jail term was announced, violent protests broke out that spiralled into looting, leaving 350 people dead.

AFP

Walmart employee kills six in US mass shooting

Washington, US - A Walmart employee shot dead six people at a store bustling with Thanksgiving holiday shoppers, before turning the pistol on himself, police said on Wednesday, in the country's second mass shooting in four days.

Four other people remained hospitalised in unknown condition following the Tuesday night rampage in the Walmart in Chesapeake, Virginia, police chief Mark Solesky said.

Solesky told a news conference the gunman was believed to have died of a 'self-inflicted gunshot wound,' and that the motive behind the latest attack in America's gun violence crisis was not immediately known.

The assault two days before Thanksgiving, the quintessential American family holiday marked this year on November 24, followed a weekend gun attack at



This file photo shows the Walmart logo outside a Walmart store in Burbank, California on August 15, 2022 (AFP)

an LGBTQ club in Colorado that killed five people.

It was also the second mass shooting in the state of Virginia this month: three students at the University of Virginia who played on its football team were killed November 13 by a classmate after a field trip.

Emergency calls were first

made just after 10pm Tuesday (0300 GMT Wednesday) while the store was still open. Officers arrived in a matter of two minutes and entered the Walmart two minutes later, Solesky said.

US media reported that the gunman opened fire in a room where employees take meal breaks but the police chief said

he could not confirm this.

In the hours afterwards, news footage showed a major police presence around the Walmart, which is located about 150 miles (240km) southeast of the US capital Washington.

'Senseless violence'

Chesapeake police officer Leo Kosinski said officers and investigators were carefully sweeping the store and securing the area.

Walmart, the largest retailer in the United States, issued a statement early Wednesday saying: "We are shocked at this tragic event." The company added that it was 'praying for those impacted, the community and our associates. We're working closely with law enforcement, and we are focused on supporting our associates'.

Virginia state Senator Louise Lucas, who represents the

Chesapeake region, said she was 'heartbroken that America's latest mass shooting took place... in my district'. "I will not rest until we find the solutions to end this gun violence epidemic in our country that has taken so many lives," she wrote on Twitter.

Congressman Bobby Scott of Virginia tweeted: "Tragically, our community is suffering from yet another incident of senseless gun violence just as families are gathering for Thanksgiving."

The incident occurred three nights after a gunman opened fire inside an LGBTQ nightclub in Colorado Springs, killing five people and injuring at least 18, in what is being investigated as a possible hate crime.

Authorities said that suspect, identified as 22-year-old Anderson Lee Aldrich, had used a long rifle at the club.

AFP

INDIA

'Aaftab will kill me, cut me into pieces', Shraddha told police in 2020

Mumbai, India - In the latest twist in Shraddha Walker murder case, a letter has surfaced that Shraddha wrote in 2020 at the Tulji police station in Maharashtra's Palghar, in which she complained that Aaftab Poonawala, the accused in the murder case, had beaten her and threatened to kill her.

The letter in question has reportedly been shared by Shraddha's neighbour in Vasai with whom Shraddha had gone to file the complaint. The Maharashtra police have confirmed that the deceased had written a complaint letter on November 23, 2020, at the Tulji police station. The Maharashtra police also confirmed the authenticity of the said complaint letter shared by Shraddha's neighbour as to have been written by Shaddha.

In the complaint, Shraddha said that she 'did not have the guts to go to the police' because Aaftab had threatened to kill her. However, she added that Aaftab tried to kill her on the day she was writing the letter, and he also threatened to kill her and cut her into pieces and throw her away.

"It's been six months he has been hitting me," the letter read.



Students and members of various organisations holding placards stage a protest demanding justice in the Shraddha Walker murder case, outside the DC office, in Shimla on Tuesday (ANI)

The letter further claimed that Aaftab's parents were aware that he beat her up and that he tried to kill her.

"I lived with him till date as we were supposed to get married anytime soon and had the blessings of his family. Henceforth, I am not willing to live with him. So any kind of physical damage should be considered coming from him as he has been blackmailing me to kill me or hurt me whenever he sees me anywhere," the letter read.

The letter surfaces a day after Aaftab told a Delhi court that he

murdered his girlfriend in the 'heat of the moment'.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Police said they had begun an investigation based on the complaint in 2020, 'but the case was closed after she gave a written statement to withdraw the case'.

DCP of Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar (MBVV) Commissionerate, Suhas Bavache said that Shraddha in her written statement had stated that 'the dispute between herself and Aaftab Poonawala was resolved'.

"Whatever necessary action had to be taken in that matter was done by police at that time. The application that was given by the complainant was also investigated. After the investigation, the complainant herself gave a written statement that there is no dispute. Her friend's parents also cajoled her to resolve the dispute. She gave the written statement and after that the case was closed," said Bavache.

The Delhi Police on Wednesday, also recorded the statements of Aaftab's family.

According to sources, Aaftab's family may be called in for questioning again.

"Aaftab Poonawala's family is in Delhi. Their statements were recorded. Based on the facts that have come to light about the family, they may be questioned again. Shraddha had filed a complaint in 2020 that his family knows he wants to kill her," said sources. Delhi Police had previously said Aaftab, following his arrest in the case, confessed to killing his live-in partner in their apartment in West Delhi's Chhatrapur and chopping her body into 35 pieces.

He was produced before the Saket court in the national capital on Tuesday after his five-day police custody expired.

"What happened that happened in heat of the moment," Aaftab told the court.

However, Apollo Hospital, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist, Dr Sandeep Vohra, while reacting to Aaftab's statement, said it cannot be a case of 'heat of the moment'. "If there is something which happens in the heat of the moment you immediately feel guilty, if not immediately then later on," Vohra told ANI.



BJP supporters attend the public meeting addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in Mehsana on Wednesday (ANI)

Gujarat polls: BJP suspends 12 more rebels

Surat, India - The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has suspended twelve rebels in disciplinary action, who had filed their nominations as independent candidates after being denied tickets by the ruling party in the upcoming Gujarat Assembly elections.

This is the second list of rebels who have been suspended after the party suspended seven rebels on Sunday.

"These MLAs have been suspended for six years for having indulged in antiparty activities," a BJP communication reveals quoting state president C R Paatil.

Of those BJP leaders who have been suspended include

Dinubhai Patel from Padra, Madhubhai Shrivastav from Vaghodia and Kuldeep Singh Raul, all three from the Vadodara district.

B Pagi from Shahera in Panchmahal district, Dhawal Singh Jhala from Aravalli district and Ram Singh Thakor from Mehsana have also been suspended.

Two each have been suspended from Anand, Banaskantha and Mahisagar districts. Manavijibhai Desai and L Thakor are from Banaskantha, SM Baant and JP Patel are from Mahisagar and Ramesh Jhala and Amarshi Bhai Jhala have also been suspended from Anand district.

ANI

UK top court rejects Scottish independence vote plans

London, UK - Britain's highest court on Wednesday rejected a bid by the devolved Scottish government in Edinburgh to hold a new referendum on independence without London's consent.

The unanimous ruling by the Supreme Court torpedoed the Scottish nationalist government's push to hold a second plebiscite next year. The Scottish National Party (SNP) had said that in that event, it would turn the next general election into a de-facto vote on splitting from the rest of the United Kingdom, threatening constitutional chaos.

First Minister and SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon said she re-

spected the ruling but was 'disappointed'.

If Scotland cannot 'choose our own future without Westminster consent', the idea of the UK as a voluntary partnership was exposed as a 'myth', she tweeted.

Outside the court, David Simpson, 70, who first voted for the SNP in 1970, said he was still hopeful of achieving independence in the future. "This is not the end of the road," he told AFP. "There is nothing impossible."

Alister Jack, the UK government's secretary of state for Scotland, welcomed the ruling.

"People in Scotland want both their governments to be concen-



A Scottish independence supporter poses with the flag of Scotland outside the Supreme Court in London on Wednesday (AFP)

trating all attention and resources on the issues that matter most to them," he said in a state-

ment. The Supreme Court's Scottish president, Robert Reed, said the power to call a referen-

dum was 'reserved' to the UK parliament under Scotland's devolution settlement.

Therefore 'the Scottish parliament does not have the power to legislate for a referendum on Scottish independence', Reed said. Sturgeon's SNP-led government in Edinburgh wanted to hold a vote in October next year on the question: "Should Scotland be an independent country?"

The UK government, which oversees constitutional affairs for the whole country, has repeatedly refused to give Edinburgh the power to hold a referendum.

It considers that the last one - in 2014, when 55 per cent of Scots rejected independence - settled the question for a generation. But Sturgeon and her party say there is now an 'indisputable mandate' for another independence referendum, particularly in light of the UK's departure from the European Union.

Most voters in Scotland opposed Brexit.

Scotland's last parliamentary election returned a majority of pro-independence lawmakers for the first time.

Opinion polls, however, indicate only a slight lead for those in favour of a split.

At the UK Supreme Court last month, lawyers for the government in London argued that the Scottish government could not decide to hold a referendum on its own.

Permission had to be granted because the constitutional make-up of the four nations of the United Kingdom was a reserved matter for the government in London.

Lawyers for the Scottish government wanted a ruling on the rights of the devolved parliament in Edinburgh if London continued to block an independence referendum.

AFP

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Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories: Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35) Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346

take a break

IN TOWN

MUSCAT DAILY BRAND PROMOTION



Staff of Muscat Daily undertook a brand promotion exercise, distributing free copies and candy to people in different locations in the capital to mark Oman's 52nd National Day - Photos: V K Shafeer



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. "Solitaire" is known as a card game in many countries; what is used to play another game known as "Solitaire" in the UK?

A. Board with 64 squares & 8 red & 8 black counters
B. Board with pegs and holes
C. Round ball and 1 hoop
D. Rings made of rope

02. What is the name of a Japanese dish consisting of noodles and broth?

A. Sashimi
B. Ramen
C. Nori
D. Sushi

03. Which of these was famous as a maker of pianos?

A. Ataturk
B. Montezuma
C. Santa Anna
D. Nicholas

Answers: 1.B 2.B 3.A

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

BOGGLER

C	P	A	R
K	N	E	S
G	S	L	A
O	P	I	P

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Intensity is the order of the day, and you won't settle for anything less. So if you have turmoil, intrigue, and secrets to deal with, you'll be more than up for the challenge. If there isn't, however, don't be surprised if you find a way to create some. Before it all happens, be very sure that you can handle the repercussions.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

No matter what you're spending your money on now, you'll definitely want it to be worth your while. That means you won't settle for anything less than what you expect, and why would you even try to? You should have exactly what you're after, whether it's for you or for a dear one.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Whatever you're asked to voice your opinion about now will mean a great deal to you. In fact, even if you didn't have a strong opinion when you started, you'll certainly have one by the time you finish making your case. That goes double for any issues you already feel adamantly about, like politics, religion, or education.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your family members and dear ones might be up to their eyeballs in tough situations now, and because of how much you care, you'll feel as if you're involved too. But if you can manage to stay objective and unbiased, you'll end up doing a far better service for you both. That may mean clearing your mind (and your throat).



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

The younger folks in your life, including children, younger relatives, and friends who look up to you, will take up quite a bit of your time today. In fact, their needs will probably override your own. That's fine. In fact, you'll feel good about helping them out, but be sure that you're passing out the right advice.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Whatever you're up to today, let's just say you're going to be quite into it and very involved with it. That means your dear ones will have to take a back seat to what you're doing, but that isn't a bad thing. Every now and then we all get to focus on what we're really into, and today just happens to be your day. Don't feel guilty. Do become completely immersed in what you love.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Holding hands with someone will be a very major thing for you at this point. In fact, no matter what you plan to do with another person, it won't happen if you don't feel it right down to your toes. That means you might need to pull back a bit, regardless of how your companion feels about it. Don't be shy about saying no, and don't feel obligated to say or do anything you don't feel like.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You'll be quite ready to become intimate with someone today, on a variety of levels. Whether you choose a conversation, an exchange of secrets, or a physical encounter, rest assured that you'll find a way to become up close and personally involved with someone you love, and they'll be equally delighted about becoming more personally involved with you.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Long-distance communications will take on an added tone of urgency now, as will all your dealings with teachers, mentors, and counselors. Of course, the tables could also turn, causing you to become the one who's asked for advice, but you'll be more than up for the exchange. You'll also be willing to go out of your way to help someone.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

If you find yourself in a public situation now, you'll probably feel a bit uncomfortable, but for nothing but pleasant reasons. Others will want to know more about you, to examine your life and what you've done, but the good news is that they're only looking because they want to find a way to reward you for your accomplishments. Don't be shy! Talk about yourself. Just this once!



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Your friends will want a lot more from you now than just platonic, casual chitchat. They'll be asking for depth, intensity, and a level of focus you probably haven't invested in your encounters for quite some time. This is a good thing, and that's going to become apparent soon. For now, don't hesitate to let them in on your secrets or to listen to theirs.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your urge to spend some time in private with someone near and dear to you won't be easily dismissed. In fact, you'll be willing to cut yourself loose from anyone or anything to do just that. Don't even try to fight it. You need to get some very intimate issues ironed out, and you can't do that in public situations. Grab whatever time you can away from the crowds and have that chat.

entertainment

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW:
BLACK PANTHER: WAKANDA FOREVER
Genre: Action, thriller
Starring: Letitia Wright, Lupita Nyong'o, Danai Gurira, Winston Duke, Florence Kasumba, Dominique Thorne



CHASING THE HERB OF HOPE

The center of Black Panther: Wakanda Forever - the sequel to the hugely popular Black Panther, and a tribute to the late Chadwick Boseman - is sincere, even if the overall film feels manufactured. It begins with a funeral for the recently deceased King T'Challa.

Apart from being a heartfelt and organic tribute to Boseman, who passed away in 2020 of colon cancer, Black Panther: Wakanda Forever also checks all the MCU's DNA markers. The 30th film in the MCU and a sequel to 2018's extraordinary Black Panther, this film is gloriously thrilling, lithe and light on its feet, just like its namesake.

The aching absence of Boseman, who played King T'Challa in the first flick, is not something that can be filled in a sequel. And wisely, returning director Ryan Coogler doesn't try to do so. He feeds his own and the public's grief into the story, infusing the movie with sombre notes of family loss and collective mourning.

There is also a sense of the disorder that follows in the wake of a charismatic, unifying leader.

And while not everything works - the Wakanda nation is threatened by a cerulean-hued aquatic warrior race, led by a mutant god called Namor (Tenoch Huerta) who is rather bewildering and inconsistent in his motives for conflict - the emotional core is raw, credible and affecting. This is largely thanks to the commanding work of a magnificent Angela Bassett, as the queen who must balance her bereavement against her duty to her people and Letitia Wright, excellent as T'Challa's younger sister, Shuri.

The movie, like all Marvel movies, has too much plot that the audience struggle to keep track of, besides heavy action, vehicle chases, underwater and mid-air battles and seat-rattling explosions. Enjoy the great rhythmic music, interesting cinematography and the thrilling scenes which keeps viewers engaged throughout. A good watch.

Rating ★★★★★

COMING SOON

SHE SAID
New York Times reporters Meghan Twohey and Jodi Kantor break one of the most important stories in a generation - one that launched the #MeToo movement and shattered decades of silence on sexual assault in Hollywood.

Genre: Social drama
Starring: Carey Mulligan, Tom Pelphrey, Samantha Morton
Language: English

DREW BARRYMORE ON SOBRIETY



Actress Drew Barrymore said that giving up alcohol let her escape an 'awful cycle'. The 47-year-old *E.T.* actress opened up about being three-and-a-half years sober in an essay published in *Take Care of Yourself*, the December edition of her monthly *Drew* magazine.

Drew, who is a single mother to her two daughters Olive (9) and Frankie (8), after she divorced her husband Will Kopelman, 44, in 2016, said, "One of the bravest things you can do is slay those dragons and finally change an awful cycle in which you've found yourself stuck."



ELTON JOHN STAGES FINAL US CONCERT

Clad in a sequined bathrobe, Elton John signed off the final US concert of his farewell tour Sunday with a typically flamboyant show in Los Angeles, the city that helped launch him to global fame half a century ago. John took to the stage of the Dodger Stadium - the baseball arena that played host to two of his most celebrated, career-defining shows in 1975 - for what he said was a "very special, very emotional" concert live-streamed on Disney+.

"As you know, I am stopping touring and this will be my last concert in America and Canada," he announced before bringing on stage his husband David Furnish and their two sons, with whom he plans to spend more time.

The 75-year-old British musician has had a long, deeply reciprocated love affair with Los Angeles.

MEXICO'S 'BLACK PANTHER' STAR FIGHTS RACISM AT HOME



In Hollywood, he's the rising star of the sequel to *Black Panther*, the first major Black superhero movie. In his homeland Mexico, Tenoch Huerta, however, is leading a fight against racism on the screen.

The 41-year-old aims to use his growing fame to break the tradition of Mexican actors of Indigenous origin being cast in the roles of thieves and villains. Playing the character of Namor the Sub-Mariner in Marvel Studios' *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, Huerta joins a small club of international Mexican stars such as Salma Hayek, Gael Garcia Bernal and Diego Luna.

"Like thousands of dark-skinned people, I've been called names, such as 'dirty Indian', he wrote in his new book *Orgullo Prieto* (Brown Pride).



'BACK TO THE FUTURE' STAR GETS HONORARY OSCAR

Michael J Fox was awarded an honorary Oscar Saturday for his campaign to fund Parkinson's research since being diagnosed with the neurodegenerative disease at the peak of his acting career. Fox received the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' annual statuette for humanitarian work by a film industry figure at a black-tie gala crammed with Hollywood's biggest stars in Los Angeles.

"You're making me shake, stop it," joked Fox as he received a standing ovation, before describing his award as "a wholly unexpected honour."

Canadian actor Fox, 61, shot to stardom in the *Back to the Future* films while portraying time-traveling high-school student Marty McFly.

Seen here with Fox (second from left) are Honorees director Euzhan Palcy, songwriter Diane Warren and director Peter Weir during the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' 13th Annual Governors Awards at the Fairmont Century Plaza in Los Angeles on November 19.

BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: **BHEDIYA**
Genre: Comedy
Starring: Varun Dhawan, Kriti Sanon, Deepak Dobriyal, Paalin Kabak

WOLF IN PRINTED SHORTS

If you are conversant with the modern 'Nagin' sagas on the small screen as well as the erstwhile celluloid flicks on the same theme, *Bhediya* now takes the creature tale of Indian cinema to another level on the big screen.

With all latest VFX and stereophonic sound effects, that make you sit up every now and then, this, however, is India's first 'creature comedy' and you enter the theatre fully aware that you're gonna need a whole tub of popcorn to get this down.

Set in the mesmerising forests of Arunachal, *Bhediya* tells the story of Bhaskar, a man who gets bitten by a mythical wolf and begins to transform into the creature himself. As Bhaskar and his ragtag buddies try to find answers, a bunch of twists, turns and laughs ensue.

Directed by Amar Kaushik,

Bhediya is India's first creature comedy starring Varun Dhawan and Kriti Sanon in the lead roles. The director has been credited with low-budget hits like *Stree* and *Bala* in the past - movies with a message. But this rabbit from his sleeve is as noteworthy, as it is amusing, in offering Indian audiences something new.

And, if you thought there are any similarities with the *Twilight* series in English, you'd be mistaken,

though Varun does share the same boyish charm as Taylor Lautner.

Bhaskar keeps frantically telling his friends about the terrifying changes in his physique and behaviour much to their mirth as well as horror. And, if there is little they can do to help him out of his predicament, they also amuse the audience with their innocent one-liners and expressions which, though not intended, does evoke humour.

The movie is not a smart flick but it does have its enjoyable moments. And if you do remember anything as you walk out, it surely will be the variety of Varun's printed shorts.

Rating ★★★★★





FIFA WORLD CUP

Qatar2022



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2022 MUSCAT DAILY 13

SAMURAI SURPRISE

Late goals from Ritsu Doan, Takuma Asano help Japan stun wasteful Germany in dramatic comeback

Doha, Qatar - Japan stunned Germany 2-1 in their World Cup opener on Wednesday, punishing the four-time champions for not taking their chances after they dominated the first half.

The German team covered their mouths for the team photo before the match in a powerful protest against FIFA's decision to ban rainbow-themed armbands.

Germany came to Qatar under huge pressure to avoid the disaster of 2018, when they failed to make it out of the group stage in Russia as World Cup holders.

Hansi Flick's side took the lead through a first-half penalty from Ilkay Gundogan and should have been out of sight after creating a host of chances.

But Japan hung on and equalised through substitute Ritsu Doan in the 75th minute.

Takuma Asano then completed a remarkable turnaround eight minutes later, smashing the ball home to send the Japanese bench and their boisterous fans wild.

To add to the storyline, both Doan and Asano play in the German Bundesliga.

"The players came together as one team, we prepared well and we stuck in there, and that's what led to the win," said Japan manager Hajime Moriyasu.

"Lots of our fans have come to Doha and they were behind us pushing us on. I want us to keep a level head after this and look at what we could have done better and look to win the next match."

Germany's World Cup future is now once again on the line, with



Japan's Takuma Asano (C) scores against Germany in their Group E match at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on Wednesday (AFP)

games to come in Group E against Spain and Costa Rica.

"We made it too easy for Japan. I don't know if an easier goal has ever been scored at a World Cup," Gundogan told Germany's ARD TV network.

"This must not happen to us."

Thomas Mueller told Germany's Magenta TV it was "ludicrous that we are now standing here with a defeat."

Japan meanwhile are eyeing a place in the knockout round after a dramatic comeback that scarcely looked possible at half-time.

The Blue Samurai made a positive start, with Daizen Maeda putting the ball in the net as early as the eighth minute only for the linesman to flag for offside.

German chances

But it was to prove a false dawn for

Japan as Antonio Ruediger headed past the post from a corner, before Joshua Kimmich tested goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda, with Gundogan blasting the rebound over the bar.

Gundogan peppered the Japan goal with shots, with Gonda keeping him out before Maya Yoshida threw his body in the way of another effort.

Gundogan put the Germans ahead after they were awarded a

penalty when Gonda tripped David Raum, coolly slotting his kick down the middle.

Jamal Musiala gave a glimpse of his immense talent when he turned and flashed a shot over the bar on the stroke of half-time.

Kai Havertz had the ball in the net before the interval, only for VAR to rule the goal out for offside.

Musiala returned to torment Japan after the break, skipping

GROUP E		
	GERMANY	1
	JAPAN	2

through the defence before blazing over.

The 19-year-old then turned provider, laying the ball off for Gundogan to lash against the post.

Japan brought on livewire forwards Asano and Kaoru Mitoma to try to inject some energy into the four-time Asian champions.

But Germany kept up their pressure and only a string of last-ditch saves from Gonda prevented Japan from falling further behind.

Hiroki Sakai had a golden chance to equalise but blazed wildly over the bar after Manuel Neuer had parried the ball into his path.

Doan showed him how it was done just minutes later, converting after Neuer had palmed away Takumi Minamino's effort.

Asano then put the Japanese fans in dreamland, racing away before lashing home a shot that Neuer was powerless to stop.

Germany threw everyone forward in a desperate search for an equaliser but it was too little, too late.

"It wasn't just the players who started the game but also the substitutes who came on and helped us close it out," said Moriyasu.

"We were able to show our strength. The players did what they needed to get the win."

AFP

Brazil looking forward to seeing the best of Neymar at World Cup

Doha, Qatar - Brazil are hoping a fully fit and firing Neymar, and a well-balanced squad around him will allow the five-time winners to live up to their status as World Cup favourites in Qatar.

They begin their bid to win a record-extending sixth title on Thursday when they play Serbia - and the world's most expensive player is coming into the tournament in ominous form.

In 2014, Neymar's World Cup ended in agony as he suffered a fractured bone in his back in the quarter-final win over Colombia before the hosts were humiliated by Germany in the semi-finals, losing 7-1. Four years later Neymar raced to recover from injury in time for the tournament in Russia, but Brazil never hit the expected heights before losing to Belgium in the last eight.

This time around, a 30-year-old Neymar arrives fresh from a fantastic start to the season with Paris Saint-Germain in which he has scored 15 goals in 20 games.

"I think Neymar is coming into this competition in great form," veteran Brazil captain Thiago Silva, now with Chelsea but a former teammate of Neymar's in Paris, told reporters on Wednesday.

"His preparation this time has been different. In 2014 he got injured just as he was playing so well, and in 2018 he came into the tournament in a different way because



Brazil's Neymar (C), Marquinhos (L) and Thiago Silva take part in a training session at the Al Arabi Stadium on Sunday

I think Neymar is coming into this competition in great form. He is a lot better prepared

THIAGO SILVA

he had a serious injury so hadn't played much. This time is different and he has not been injured. Neymar is a lot better prepared."

With Brazil also facing Switzerland and Cameroon in Group G, Neymar will be hoping to get the two goals he needs to equal Pele's

all-time record tally of 77 goals for the Selecao. But the responsibility in attack is not all his - coach Tite can also call on a raft of other exciting attackers, including Real Madrid pair Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo.

"In my opinion, these players will help Neymar because they can di-

vide up the responsibility and create space for him," added Silva, who was the captain in 2014 and is still going strong aged 38.

This tournament has already seen a heavily fancied Argentina lose in their opening match while Germany have been beaten too.

But Brazil are hoping for a strong start and a repeat of what happened in the only other World Cup to be held in Asia, when they won their last title in Japan two decades ago.

AFP



Spain's Ferran Torres (R) celebrates his goal with Gavi (AFP)

Spain smash seven past sorry Costa Rica

Doha, Qatar - Spain shredded Costa Rica 7-0 on Wednesday in a brutal destruction in their Group E opener which launched their bid to lift a second World Cup.

Avoiding the fate of giants Argentina and group rivals Germany, who lost 2-1 to Japan earlier on, Luis Enrique's fancied side sparked at Doha's Al Thumama Stadium, dominating possession and taking their chances mercilessly.

Ferran Torres netted twice and Marco Asensio, Dani Olmo, Gavi, Carlos Soler and Alvaro Morata were also on the score-sheet for the Euro 2020 semi-finalists in an emphatic romp.

In the past the 2010 World Cup winners have paid the price for profligacy but all three forwards Luis Enrique selected netted in the first half to pay

GROUP E		
	SPAIN	7
	COSTA RICA	0

back his trust in them.

Luis Enrique placed Asensio at false nine, flanked by Olmo and Torres, starting with Morata and Ansu Fati on the bench.

The coach opted to deploy Manchester City midfielder Rodri Hernandez in central defence, alongside club teammate Aymeric Laporte, correctly anticipating his team would monopolise the ball.

It took only 11 minutes for La Roja to open the scoring, with Gavi finding Olmo who made it look so easy.



FIFA WORLD CUP

Qatar2022



Croatia's Dejan Lovren (top) and Mario Pasalic fight for the ball with Morocco's Nayef Aguerd and Sofyan Amrabat (bottom)

GOALLESS YET GLEEFUL

Solid Morocco hold Luka Modric's Croatia to boost their chances of progressing into second round

Al Khor, Qatar - Morocco held Croatia to a 0-0 draw in their opening game of the World Cup on Wednesday, producing a spirited display against the 2018 runners-up led by Luka Modric.

Backed by Qatar's large Moroccan community at the Al Bayt Stadium, the Atlas Lions followed up north African rivals Tunisia's strong performance against dark horses Denmark a day earlier to frustrate Croatia.

"This was an extremely difficult game," said Croatia captain Modric. "I do believe as the tournament goes on we'll be better and we'll adopt a more proactive attitude."

Modric insisted Croatia is capable of making another deep run despite a sluggish start in the early afternoon heat.

"We've not come here to just play and get out the group," said Modric.

"Our ambitions are a bit greater on the basis of our Russia achievement, but we need to take it one step at a time."

"Even before the 2018 World Cup, we said our primary goal was to make it out of the group. If we manage to do that we can be a dangerous opponent for any team."

Coach Zlatko Dalic had urged Croatia to exercise caution following Saudi Arabia's shock win over Argentina, a result Morocco captain Roman Saiss said had "opened the door" for the tournament's less-fancied teams.

Morocco took the game to a Croatia side featuring four players who started the 2018 final but struggled to create genuine chances against a defence marshalled by the experienced Dejan Lovren.

Azzedine Ounahi strangely opted against shooting when well placed inside the area, with Hakim Ziyech and Achraf Hakimi heavily involved down the right without ever truly threatening Croatia.

Ivan Perisic fired just over from distance for Croatia after intercepting a

dreadful pass from Selim Amallah, while goalkeeper Yassine Bounou blocked well with his legs to deny Nikola Vlasic from close range.

Modric, the former Ballon d'Or winner appearing at his fourth World Cup at the age of 37, then hammered over from the edge of the box.

Morocco lost Noussair Mazraoui early in the second half after his diving header was saved, the Bayern Munich full-back injuring himself when he tumbled awkwardly to the ground.

Sofyan Amrabat poked Lovren's goal-bound effort away off the line after a scramble at a corner, while Hakimi's free-kick at the other end was beaten to safety by Croatian keeper Dominik Livakovic.

Only once have Morocco gone beyond the group stage, in 1986, but they will rate their chances of advancing with games to come against an ageing Belgium team and Group F outsiders Canada.

AFP



France's Olivier Giroud (2ndL) celebrates with team-mates after scoring against Australia on Tuesday (AFP)

Giroud scores brace, equals Henry's record as holders France sink Australia

Doha, Qatar - Olivier Giroud joined Thierry Henry as France's all-time leading goalscorer with a brace as the holders roared back to beat Australia 4-1 and get their defence of the World Cup off to a flying start Tuesday.

Australia took a shock lead at Al Janoub Stadium in Qatar with the game just nine minutes old when Craig Goodwin scored.

France, whose build-up to the tournament was marred by injuries, saw left-back Lucas Hernandez come off hurt in the move that led to the goal.

However, they recovered to equalise through Adrien Rabiot before Giroud put them ahead with an easy finish in the 32nd minute for his 50th international goal.

Kylian Mbappe got his name on the scoresheet in the second half and Giroud sealed the win to equal Henry's record tally of 51 goals for France.

The win leaves them top of Group D after Denmark and

Tunisia drew 0-0.

"It is nice to score four goals, even if we could have had more, and it's a really good start for us," said France coach Didier Deschamps.

At the age of 36, veteran AC Milan striker Giroud, who has 115 caps, is the oldest player to score for France at a World Cup.

Yet he almost certainly would not have been playing here had Karim Benzema been fit.

Instead, the withdrawal of the Ballon d'Or winner with a thigh injury on the eve of the tournament has played into the hands of Giroud, who was a key player for Deschamps in France's triumphant 2018 World Cup campaign but didn't score in Russia.

"He deserves respect for performing at the very highest level for so many years and delivering even when nobody seemed to believe in him," said teammate Benjamin Pavard.

"I am so pleased for him be-

cause he is a great guy. I hope he keeps going and beats more records."

It is not just Benzema who is missing for Les Bleus, with Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante - their starting midfield duo four years ago - out of the tournament.

Centre-back Raphael Varane was not risked having not played since suffering a leg injury playing for Manchester United a month ago.

That meant Dayot Upamecano and Ibrahima Konate - with nine caps between them - played together in central defence while Rabiot joined Aurelien Tchouameni in midfield.

Australia stunned the world champions by scoring an early opener. Mathew Leckie controlled the ball on the right and escaped Lucas Hernandez before delivering a low ball across the face of the goal for Goodwin to finish into the roof of the net.

AFP

MOMENT IN TIME



Morocco fans make the stands of Al Bayt Stadium look covered in red before their match against Croatia on Wednesday (AFP)

TODAY'S MATCHES



SWITZERLAND
VS
CAMEROON
2 PM



URUGUAY
VS
SOUTH KOREA
5 PM



PORTUGAL
VS
GHANA
8 PM



BRAZIL
VS
SERBIA
11 PM



Pickford plays down Kane injury fears

Doha, Qatar - Jordan Pickford revealed on Wednesday that **Harry Kane** is “fine”, easing fears the England captain could miss Friday’s World Cup clash with the United States with an ankle injury.

Kane went for a scan on Wednesday after he hurt his right ankle early in the second half of England’s 6-2 win over Iran in their Group B opener on Monday.

“I think he’s good, probably a bit sore but he’s fine. He’s out on the grass today,” Pickford told reporters at England’s training base in Doha.

“Obviously Harry is an unbelievable player. He sets the example in the squad, he is leader, the captain. He is very unselfish and we all look up to him.”

FIFA launches case over Ecuador fans’ chants on the opening day

Doha, Qatar - FIFA launched disciplinary proceedings on Tuesday over chants by Ecuador fans during their World Cup opener against hosts Qatar.

Football’s world governing body did not say what the chants were but said it came under article 13 of its disciplinary code, which includes discriminatory or abusive words.

Ecuador beat Qatar 2-0 on Sunday to launch the World Cup.

“The FIFA disciplinary committee has opened proceedings against the Ecuadoran Football Association due to chants by Ecuadoran supporters during the Qatar v. Ecuador FIFA World Cup match played on 20 November,” it said.

It is the first such disciplinary measure of the Qatar World Cup, which ends on December 18.



South Korea’s Son Heung-min sports a mask as he takes part in a training session

South Korea’s Son fit enough to play against Uruguay, says coach

Doha, Qatar - Son Heung-min will be able to play in South Korea’s opening World Cup match against Uruguay on Thursday despite wearing a mask after facial surgery, coach Paulo Bento said.

The Spurs attacker and South Korean skipper had surgery earlier this month after suffering a fracture around his left eye in a collision during a Champions League game.

“Son can play and will be able to play,” Bento said on Wednesday.

It remains to be seen to what extent the South Korean talisman features, with the Portuguese boss cautioning: “He knows and we know that after this injury we cannot take any risks.”

The 30-year-old Son has been training in Qatar in a mask and South Korean fans have been eagerly awaiting updates on his fitness. At one training session in Doha the mask appeared to be troubling Son as he went through fitness drills with the rest of the squad.

Bento insisted the mask was “natural” for the player, who has scored 35 times in more than 100 internationals and shared

the Premier League Golden Boot last season with Liverpool’s Mo Salah.

“The fact he will be wearing a mask is not inconvenient for him,” said Bento.

“We have stuck to the plan since we arrived here, also the way we integrated him into our group shows he has been natural.

“We will see tomorrow how it will be. Our hope is that he will feel comfortable as far as possible.”

Uruguay wary

Uruguay, who boast veteran attackers Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani, plus younger talents such as Federico Valverde and Darwin Nunez, will be favourites to win the opening Group H match.

But coach Diego Alonso said the two-time winners would be wary of South Korea whether or not Son is involved.

“Obviously Korea do not only have this player,” he said. “I have lots of respect for Son, but Korea also have other players, they are very well trained, have a good coach, a very good XI, we respect everyone.”

AFP

Another blow for France, Hernandez out of World Cup

Doha, Qatar - France defender **Lucas Hernandez** will miss the rest of the World Cup after injuring his knee in the defending champions’ opening victory against Australia, the team said on Wednesday.

The Bayern Munich defender tore an anterior cruciate ligament in the 4-1 win over the Socceroos on Tuesday, the French Football Federation said, and joins a growing injury list.

Coach Didier Deschamps must now juggle his options as his squad is reduced to 24 players.

Deschamps said in a statement: “Like all of the group, the players and the staff, I am extremely upset for Lucas.

“We are losing an important player. Lucas is a fighter and I have no doubt he’ll do everything possible to get back to full fitness.”

France captain Hugo Lloris said: “Honestly, it’s starting to become a big deal.

“We sensed immediately it was serious,” the Tottenham Hotspur goalkeeper added after the match.

“It’s the latest blow but we have to continue moving forward. It’s going to make us stronger.”



He (Olivier Giroud) deserves respect for performing at the very highest level for so many years and delivering even when nobody seemed to believe in him

BENJAMIN PAVARD

Cult hero Ochoa saves day again for Mexico

Doha, Qatar - Mexico fans and players would have only wanted one man standing between their goal and Robert Lewandowski’s impending penalty - and cult hero Guillermo Ochoa duly did the business.

The 37-year-old goalkeeper, called up for his fifth World Cup, turned the Polish striker’s effort away to earn Mexico a point in their goalless World Cup clash on Tuesday.

The curly-haired Ochoa appeared to say something to Lewandowski in the run-up to the spot-kick and it might have distracted the usually deadly striker, whose effort was tame.

Lewandowski came into the tournament in top form, with 18 goals in his first 19 games for Barcelona after moving from Bayern Munich in the close-season. The 34-year-old is his country’s all-time record scorer with 76 goals and he netted 344 times in eight seasons with Bayern.

But on Tuesday, Ochoa had the measure of him.

“‘Memo’ (his nickname) is a goalkeeper with a lot of history, five World Cups - you can say that easily -- but behind it is a lot of sacrifices, a lot of work and that is reflected in a moment in a crucial game,” said Mexico forward Alexis Vega.

Club America stopper Ochoa made brilliant saves against hosts Brazil in the 2014 tournament to make his name on the international stage. He described the 0-0 draw as the “match of my life”.

Ochoa also kept a clean sheet in a



Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa saves Poland striker Robert Lewandowski’s penalty on Tuesday (AFP)



He was the hero, if he had not saved the penalty we’d have gone one down. ‘Memo’ always appears when you need him to

JORGE SANCHEZ

1-0 win over Germany at the 2018 World Cup, putting in another outstanding performance with a string of saves. Although the Poland match

won’t be remembered for long, it was another impressive contribution from Ochoa at the World Cup.

The Guadalajara-born goalkeeper

has played in France with Ajaccio and in Spain for Malaga and Granada, but he is largely known for his heroics in this competition.

“He was the hero, if he had not saved the penalty we’d have gone one down. ‘Memo’ always appears when you need him to,” said defender Jorge Sanchez.

“The save was a real boost at that moment, we know what a great stopper he is, what a great leader he is,” added midfielder Charly Rodriguez.

AFP



esday (AFP)

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Cristiano Ronaldo seeks new club after dramatic Manchester United exit

London, United Kingdom - Cristiano Ronaldo is searching for a new team after a tumultuous few hours at Manchester United, during which they announced the superstar forward was leaving and the club could be sold.

The veteran Portugal forward set the stage for his Old Trafford exit last week with an outspoken interview on TalkTV, in which he said he felt “betrayed” by the club and had no respect for new manager Erik ten Hag.

There was clearly no way back for Ronaldo and United issued a statement on Tuesday confirming they were parting ways with one of the greatest players in their history by “mutual agreement, with immediate effect”.

Ronaldo, currently at the World Cup in Qatar, issued a statement of his own, declaring his love for the club and saying it “feels like the right time” to seek a new challenge.

As well as lashing out against United and Ten Hag, the 37-year-old was scathing about the club’s unpopular US owners in his interview with Piers Morgan.

Ronaldo said the Glazer family, who loaded the club with huge debts when they bought it in 2005, cared more about the money-making potential of United than results.

Hours after the statement

confirming Ronaldo was exiting the club, United issued another bulletin saying the Americans were considering selling up.

The Glazers have been unpopular with supporters ever since a £790 million (\$934 million) leveraged takeover in 2005 burdened the club with huge debts.

Former Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand, who played alongside Ronaldo at United, said both parties had got what they wanted.

Cristiano obviously did that interview with the mindset that he wasn’t happy and wanted to get out. I think Erik ten Hag got what he wanted in this situation as well

RIO FERDINAND

“Cristiano obviously did that interview with the mindset that he wasn’t happy and wanted to get out of the club,” Ferdinand told the BBC. “He made that very clear. “I think Erik ten Hag got what he wanted in this situation as well. Both parties are happy and we can move on.”

Future options?

The problem for Ronaldo is that leading English and European clubs opted against moving for

him in the summer transfer window despite his desire to leave Old Trafford.

They will likely be even more wary now, having witnessed his erratic behaviour.

The five-time Ballon d’Or winner, who recently scored his 700th club goal, is a fading force yet still commanded a huge reported weekly pay packet at United of around £500,000 (\$595,000).

He has reportedly held talks with Bayern Munich and has

ford, developing from a raw but prodigiously gifted teenager into one of the world’s deadliest forwards.

He won three Premier League titles and the Champions League at United but left in 2009 after six years for Real Madrid, where he became the club’s greatest goalscorer, winning the Champions League four more times.

Ronaldo spent three years at Juventus from 2018 before a sensational return to Manchester last year.

But he joined a club that had long lost its status as top dogs in England and has been trophyless since 2017.

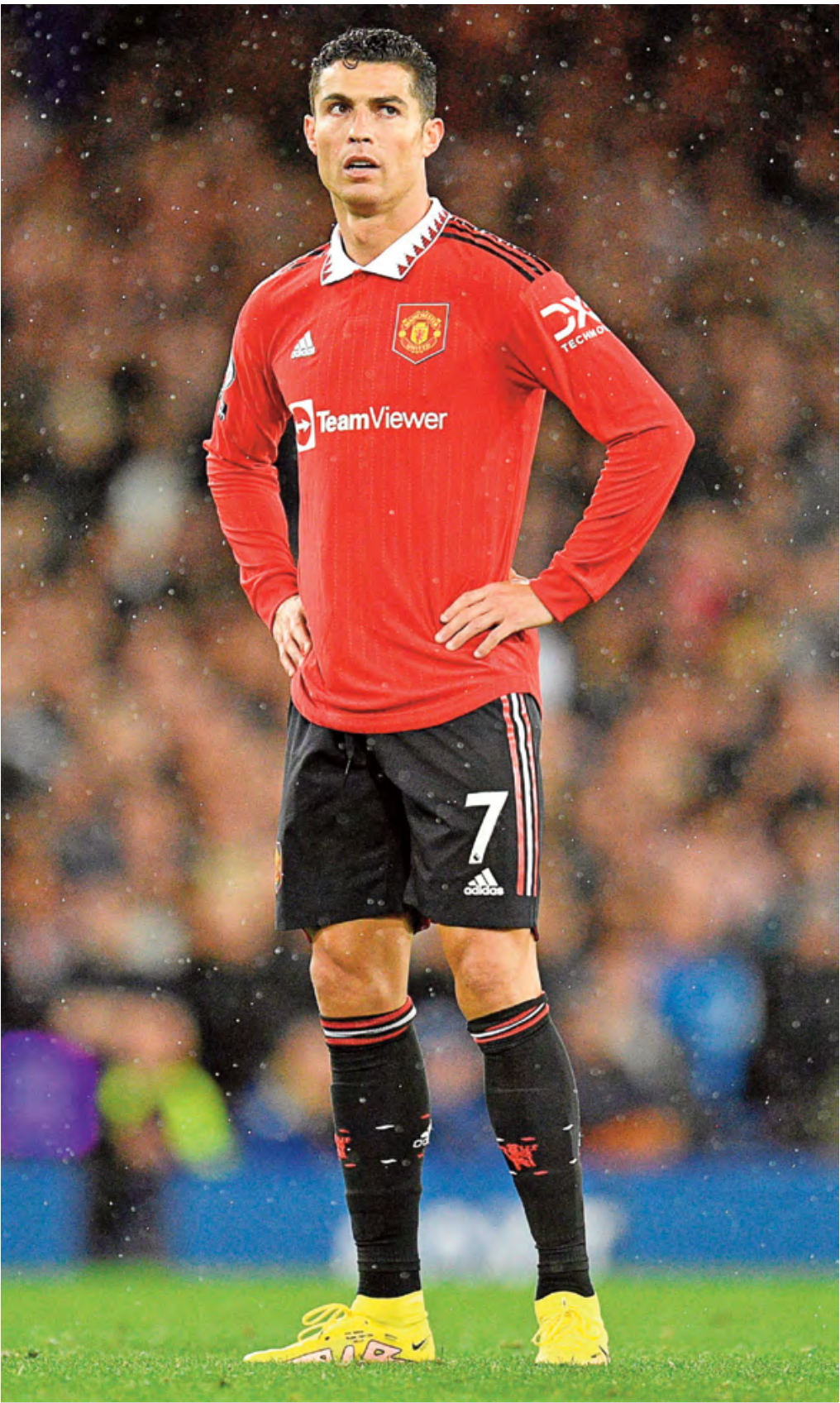
Ronaldo finished third in the Premier League goalscoring charts with 18 goals but has been a peripheral figure this season, scoring just three times in all competitions.

He was recently disciplined for refusing to come on as a substitute as the relationship began to unravel.

The World Cup, where Portugal launch their campaign on Thursday against Ghana, is surely Ronaldo’s last chance to win the trophy and crown a glorious career.

It could also be his final opportunity to show he can still perform at the highest level.

AFP



Cristiano Ronaldo

Guardiola ‘cannot be in a better place’ as he extends Man City deal until 2025

Manchester, United Kingdom - Pep Guardiola said “I cannot be in a better place” as he announced he had agreed to a two-year contract extension that will keep him at the Premier League champions until 2025.

The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager, 51, has won nine major trophies, including four Premier League titles, since taking charge at City in 2016.

“I am so pleased to be staying at Manchester City for another two years,” said Guardiola in a club statement issued Wednesday. “I can’t say thank you enough to everyone at the club for trusting me. I am happy and comfortable, and I have everything I need to do my job as best as possible.”

The Spaniard added: “I know the next chapter of this club will be amazing for the next decade. It happened over the last 10 years, and it will happen in the next 10 years because this club is so stable.

“From day one I felt something special being here. I cannot be in a better place.”



Pep Guardiola

City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak said: “I am delighted that Pep’s journey with Manchester City Football Club will continue.

“He has already contributed so much to the success and fabric of this organisation, and it’s exciting to think what might be possible given the energy, hunger and am-

bition that he clearly still has.”

Guardiola’s current deal at the Etihad Stadium is due to expire at the end of the season. He has already extended his contract twice during his time at the club.

Guardiola, who has 271 wins from 374 matches in all competitions as City manager, said talks over his latest contract extension

started soon after the team had retained the Premier League title in May.

As for feeling he could “not be in a better place”, he added: “The moment I don’t feel that - for family reasons, or I have achieved everything I want to achieve, or I don’t feel comfortable with the team, or it’s not a pleasure to fight

for another Premier League - when these feelings disappear, I will step aside.

“That is normal in life. I am not eternal. Every day we are here, we are closer to the end. That is normal.

“But still I have this feeling there is something more to do. That is my feeling right now. And that is why we continue together.”

City are currently second in the Premier League table, five points behind leaders Arsenal, and will face RB Leipzig in the Champions League last 16 when elite club football resumes after the break for the ongoing World Cup in Qatar.

As well as the league triumphs, Guardiola’s trophy haul at City also includes one FA Cup and four League Cups.

But Guardiola, who guided Barcelona to two Champions League titles, has still to win European club football’s greatest prize at City, although they were runners-up when losing 1-0 to English rivals Chelsea in the 2021 final.

AFP

Australia ease past Dutch to reach Davis Cup semi-finals



Alex De Minaur returns the ball to Botic Van De Zandschulp (AFP)

Paris, France - Australia became the first team to advance to the last four at the Davis Cup finals in Malaga, Spain, beating the Netherlands 2-0 on Tuesday. Both Jordan Thompson and then Alex de Minaur fell a set down before fighting back to win.

Thompson beat Tallon Griekspoor 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 in 2 hours 24 minutes. The Australian saved break points in three service games in the

second set before breaking at 5-5. De Minaur then beat Botic van de Zandschulp 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 in 2 hrs 40 minutes.

De Minaur’s decisive service break at 4-4 in the third gave Australia victory and saved the doubles pairs from coming out for a late-night decider.

“We’ve got a great team, a lot of belief and a lot of passion,” said De Minaur.

AFP

Sri Lanka penalise Chamika

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lankan bowler Chamika Karunaratne has been fined \$5,000 and issued a one-year suspended ban for misconduct during this month’s T20 World Cup, the island nation’s cricket board said Wednesday.

Sri Lanka Cricket did not give detail on the 26-year-old’s transgressions beyond saying that he had breached “several clauses” in a player agreement during his time in Australia.

A three-member inquiry panel recommended that the board

“strongly warn the player to refrain from further violations and to impose a punishment that will not have an impact on his crick- eting career”, the statement added.

Karunaratne is the second player to be sanctioned by Sri Lanka Cricket for T20 World Cup misconduct.

Danushka Gunathilaka was suspended earlier in November after he was charged with four counts of sexual assault by Australian authorities.

AFP

Swiatek speaks out over Polish tennis chief abuse claims

Warsaw, Poland - World number one Iga Swiatek spoke out Tuesday after sexual harassment accusations against Poland’s tennis federation president Miroslaw Skrzypczynski.

On Monday, Polish parliamentarian Katarzyna Kotula told media she had suffered abuse as a young teenager from Skrzypczynski, her then coach.

Swiatek, the reigning US and French Open champion took to Twitter to demand action.

“As the current leader of women’s tennis I can’t remain



Iga Swiatek

silent,” the 21-year-old wrote.

“I consider the reports involving the Polish Tennis Association’s president as something serious.

“We need to think about them (the victims) first of all,” she said, listing helplines for those seeking advice.

She urged the federation “to find out what went on”.

“It’s not my job to do the work of the association’s directors or reporters as the case is too serious involving the lives and well-being of others.”

Swiatek thanked her father for having protected her during her young career, adding that she had never been a victim of abuse.

Kotula described Skrzypczynski as a “sexual predator”.

She said he had molested her “at least a dozen times in three years” when she was attached to a club in the north-east of Poland in the 1990s.

Kotula suggested she was not the only one to be abused by Skrzypczynski.

AFP