

HOTEL REVENUES RISE OVER 120%

With hotels performing exceptionally well in H1 2022, second half looks promising too

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Revenues of hotels rated from 3 to 5 stars in Oman witnessed a significant increase of 121.4 per cent until the end of June 2022, reaching RO83.36mn, compared to the same period in 2021.

The monthly statistical bulletin of tourism indicators issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) shows that the number of guests in 3-5 star hotels increased by 44.6 per cent to 770,000 in H1 2022, while occupancy rate in these hotels recorded a growth of 20.1 per cent.

The number of visitors from GCC states recorded the biggest growth of 875.7 per cent, reaching 61,863 guests, compared to 6,340 in H1 2021. This was followed by guests from Europe, whose number grew by 756 per cent to 185,297 in H1 2022 from 21,648 in H1 2021.

The number of Omani guests decreased by 7.5 per cent to 348,788 from 376,970.

Guests from the Americas increased by 199.9 per cent to 27,281, while guests from the African continent reached 3,921, a growth of 94.6 per cent. Asian guests increased 21.4 per cent to 92,637 until June 2022, from 76,328 in June 2021.

With hotels performing exceptionally well in H1 2022, the second half looks promising too. According to Alpen Capital's GCC Hospitality Industry Report, Oman's hospitality sector is expected to record a year-on-year growth of 90.9 per cent, the fastest in the region, to reach US\$700mn in 2022.



1,343% surge in visitors from Oman to Dubai

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Visitors from Oman have contributed significantly in Dubai attracting 7.12mn international overnight visitors in the first six months of 2022 - 183 per cent more than the 2.52mn tourists during the same period in 2021.

Visitors from Oman to Dubai increased a whopping 1,343 per cent to 787,000 in H1 2022 compared to H1 2021, becoming the second largest source market for the emirate after India.

Visitors from India recorded a growth of 109 per cent to 858,000 from 409,000 in H1 2021, according to the latest data from Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism.

Oman was followed by Saudi Arabia, the UK and Russia making the top five source market.

The positive trend in H1 2022 places the city firmly on track to achieve its tourism goals for 2022 and beyond, and further reinforces its position as an international destination of choice.



Visitors from Oman to Dubai increased to 787,000 in the first six months of 2022 while visitors from India increased to 858,000

The number of tourists recorded in H1 2022 was close to the numbers achieved in the first six months of 2019, which saw 8.36mn tourists. The emirate's ability to quickly return to near pre-pandemic tourism levels is even more remarkable given the impact of unprecedented

challenges and other macroeconomic factors on the global economy and tourism sector.

Regional market share

Western Europe accounted for a significant share of tourist arrivals, comprising 22 per cent of

total international visitors in H1 2022. MENA and GCC continued to make an impact, collectively contributing 34 per cent of the total international visitors and highlighting Dubai's strong appeal to visitors from surrounding markets as a trusted and preferred destination.

These regions were followed closely by South Asia with a share of 16 per cent and Russia, CIS and Eastern Europe together accounting for 11 per cent of total visitors in H1 2022.

World's highest hotel occupancy levels

The wide range of hotel establishments in Dubai presented yet another stellar performance across all hospitality metrics during H1 2022. Average occupancy for the hotel sector stood at 74 per cent, one of the world's highest, compared to 62 per cent in H1 2021, a difference of 12 percentage points and just short of the 76 per cent occupancy level registered during the pre-pandemic period of H1 2019.



(Front L) H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said and (front 2L) H E Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti during their visit to Sultan Qaboos Hospital on Tuesday (ONA)

SQH Salalah to be ready by 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Work on the new Sultan Qaboos Hospital (SQH) project in Salalah is progressing rapidly with completion of 75 per cent of the structural work and 33 per cent overall.

Built at a cost of RO138mn and considered to be one of the most vital projects for the health sector in Dhofar governorate, the 700-bed hospital will be built on a total area of 850,000sqm.

H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, paid a visit to the hospital project on Tuesday accompanied by H E Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The visit aimed to inspect progress of construction work. The project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2024.

H H Sayyid Marwan praised the way the project is being implemented in accordance to approved technical and medical standards, adding that the project will enhance the health sector in Dhofar.

Jamal bin Salem al Shanfari, Director General of Directorate General of Projects and Engineering Affairs in the Ministry of Health, made a presentation to the visitors in which he talked about the features of the hospital, which will have a total built up area of 222,000sqm.

Continued on Page 03

Tropical depression likely in Arabian Sea

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has informed that there are chances of formation of a tropical depression in the Arabian Sea by Thursday.

In a statement, CAA said, 'The latest analysis of the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre indicates a tropical depression is forming in the eastern part of the Arabian Sea.'

However, there will be no direct impact on the sultanate's weather in the coming days, the authority added.

Masoud bin Saeed al Kindi, a meteorologist at CAA, said the

National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre is continually following the developments in the Arabian Sea. "In the event of formation of a tropical depression, the necessary reports will be issued by the centre," he said.

According to Jason Nicholls, international forecasting manager at AccuWeather, another low pressure could bring heavier rain and a renewed flood threat to Gujarat in western India and southern Pakistan on Wednesday into Friday.

Kindi said the weather is partly cloudy in the coastal areas and in Dhofar governorate, with chances of scattered rains in the next two days.

NEWS BRIEF



BARAKAT STRIKES BRONZE AT ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY GAMES

Konya, Turkiye - Barakat al Harthy, Oman's fastest sprinter, has won the bronze medal in the 100m sprint at the 5th Islamic Solidarity Games being held in Konya, Turkiye.

Harthy is the only athlete from the sultanate to break the ten-second barrier in 100m.

04



Govt measures insulate Oman from rising inflation



GAMES CHILDREN PLAY IN WAR ZONES

Children play at the symbolic cemetery of cars shot by Russian troops, some painted by local artists, in Irpin, on Tuesday, amidst the Russian invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

Agreement signed to upskill women for Oman job market

Muscat - The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) signed a cooperation agreement on SHE STEMs programme with the Ministry of Labour and Oman Cables Industry on Tuesday that will facilitate women's access to the labour market.

The programme seeks to develop the skills of 20 Omani women so as to qualify them to work in industry or in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Oman.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Rahma Ibrahim al Mahrooqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, H E Sayyid Salim Musallam al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Human Resources Development in the Ministry of Labour, and Cinzia Farise, CEO of Oman Cables Industry.



On the occasion, H E Rahma said that the initiative launched by Oman Cables Industry is aimed at developing the potential of Omani women, offering them new opportunities in the labour market.

MoHERI is pursuing cooperation with several sectors to ensure the quality of women's empowerment programmes and upskilling them to meet labour market demands, locally and internationally, H E Rahma added.



533 candidates vie for 51 govt jobs

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Labour conducted tests for jobs in various government units in North Sharqiyah at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Ibra on Tuesday. A total of 533 male and female candidates are vying to fill 51 vacancies.

Salem bin Khalfan al Wahaibi, head of Tests and Personal Interviews Department in the Ministry of Labour, informed that the tests will be conducted over two days.

"These jobs are in the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development," Wahaibi said.

He added that the tests are multiple-choice questions conducted electronically.

"The examination system approved by the Ministry of Labour was designed in various governorates of the sultanate by ministry employees in cooperation with government higher education institutions and Sultan Qaboos University," he said, adding that questions are continually reviewed and updated by professors and academics.

Tests and interviews to fill vacancies in Musandam governorate will be held on August 12 and 13.

Floral carpet competition planned for Onam on Aug 26

Our Correspondent Muscat

A floral carpet design competition will be held at Golden Oasis Hotel on August 26 on the occasion of Onam, the harvest festival celebrated in the Indian state of Kerala.

This is the first time such a competition is being planned, organised by Indian Media Forum (IMF) with support from Modern Exchange. IMF is a platform for Indian journalists based in Oman that was formed ten years ago.

The competition was announced at a press conference held at Ananthapuri Restaurant on Tuesday.



"The contest is open to all nationalities and age groups. Individuals as well as teams of maximum five members can take part. The first 25 contestants who register will compete in the finals on August 26," Jayakumar Vallickavu, general secretary of IMF, said addressing the press conference.

A team of judges will evaluate the floral carpet creations based on design, style and theme to select three winners and two consolation prize winners.

The competition will be held from 8am to 11am and winners announced the same day. Registration started on Tuesday and will end on August 23.

Lijo John, general manager of Modern Exchange, said, "We are happy to be associated with IMF for the first of its kind floral carpet competition. As part of our CSR activities, Modern Exchange has been actively engaged in several such events with the aim of giving back to the people of Oman, including free insurance."

Also present at the press conference were Mohammed Iqbal and Abbad Cheruppa, coordinator and treasurer of IMF, respectively. Those interested to participate can register by calling 78550544.

WEATHER WATCH			PRAYER TIMINGS	
	Max	Min		
Muscat	33	27	Fajr	4.20am
Abu Dhabi	41	30	Sunrise	5.40am
Doha	41	31	Duhr	12.17pm
Kuwait City	47	33	Asr	3.43pm
Manama	39	30	Maghrib	6.49pm
Riyadh	45	30	Isha	8.05pm

Jumeirah Muscat Bay now open, sees good pick-up

Our Correspondent Muscat

Jumeirah Muscat Bay has opened its doors to guests. Part of the luxury hospitality chain Jumeirah Group, this is the first resort of the brand in Oman located at Bandar Jissah.

Speaking exclusively to *Muscat Daily*, Zeki Ozal, general manager of the property, said, "Jumeirah Muscat Bay is a haven of tranquility, exceptional dining and the perfect setting to discover the natural wonders and cultural heritage of Oman. The property offers 195 spacious rooms, suites villas and summerhouses, all assuring breath-taking ocean views."

Ozal informed that the pandemic delayed the opening. "COVID-19 had a huge impact on the hospitality industry worldwide, but Jumeirah Group maintained a strategy of proactive investment throughout the pandemic, the expansion into Oman being one of its new developments. We opened recently and have seen a good pick-up. We also expect a good influx of tourists during World Cup Qatar 2022 though November is peak season here."



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ZEKI OZAL



Attractions at Jumeirah Muscat Bay include celebrated pedicure and manicure experts at The Cure Studio by Bastien Gonzalez, the award-winning Talise Spa and the five dining options - and Brezza Restaurant and Rooftop Lounge, all with sea facing views.

The property also has secluded summerhouses in two- and four-bedroom configurations as well as villas, with private pools, dedicated butler service and access to exclusive private beaches.

"The resort is stamped with the Jumeirah signature - innovative dining concepts, great service and exhilarating experiences - elevating the resort landscape in the sultanate. We place our guests at the heart of all we do and we are focused on making the ordinary, extraordinary for our guests," Ozal added.

Highlighting the uniqueness of the property, he went on saying that "surprising design and architecture with modern arabesque design features throughout the resort ensure that Oman's natural beauty takes centre stage and its interiors elegantly blend traditional Omani craftsmanship with light and modern hotel design".

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S Sharqiyah invites bids for development projects

Muscat - South Sharqiyah Municipality is inviting bids for investment in development projects in the wilayats of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Masirah and Sur in the governorate.

In Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, the municipality is inviting bids for investment in and development of Asilah Park, a commercial market, a park in North Al Ashkharah and a café in a taxi parking lot in the wilayat.

In Masirah, bids are invited for establishment of an integrated traditional market, a commercial building project and a multi-purpose hall, while in Sur, the municipality is inviting bids to establish service facilities in the Khor Jarama area.

The tender documents can be collected starting August 25,

while the last date for submission of bids is September 15.

The projects are envisaged within the Governorate Development Plan. In it, each governorate is allocated RO20mn during the 2021-2025 Five-Year Plan period serving as incentive for competi-

The governorate, represented by South Sharqiyah Governor's Office, also signed a pact with Omran Group in May to develop several tourism projects

tiveness and economic growth.

The governorate, represented by South Sharqiyah Governor's Office, also signed a pact with Omran Group in May to develop several tourism projects.

The signing aligns with

Omran's endeavours to work in tandem with various stakeholders in order to stimulate the growth of the sultanate's tourism sector.

Under the pact, Omran will provide technical support as well as supervise the execu-

tion of multi-phased projects being developed in the governorate. Phase 1 will see development of two parks, one in Al Suwaih spread over an area of 65,000sqm, and the other in Al Ashkharah on

14,000sqm of land. The two parks will provide a variety of tourism and entertainment facilities, including dining areas, retail outlets, children's playgrounds and camping sites.

"The governorate draws plenty of domestic and inbound tourists owing to its rich and diverse destinations, which we seek to exploit, jointly with various stakeholders, to further stimulate the governorate's tourism," said Yahya bin Badr al Mawali, Governor of South Sharqiyah.

"Our collaboration with Omran aims at upgrading tourism services and products within those destinations, which in turn will open prospects and promising opportunities for local businesses and SMEs in the governorate."

MoH, Oman LNG sign pacts to finance two health projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) signed two agreements with Oman LNG on Tuesday to finance the purchase of an ultrasound machine for the radiology department of Sinaw Hospital and a training programme for infection control and sterilisation staff set to international standards.

The two agreements were signed by H E Dr Fatma bint Mohammad al Ajmiya, Undersecretary for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs in MoH, and Alahnaf bin Ahmed al Zubaidi, director general of Business Development at Oman LNG.

The first agreement reflects the keenness of the Ministry of Health and Oman LNG to enhance the services provided at Sinaw Hospital. The agreement to finance the training programme for infection control and sterilisation personnel is the first



of its kind between the two. It will help staff qualify of international accreditation in infection prevention and control and sterilisation of medical and surgical instruments.

H E Dr Fatma stressed the importance of strengthening strategic partnership between the public and private sectors for the good of society in accordance with plans and guidelines issued by the government, which would facilitate advancement and development in all sectors in Oman.

On his part, Zubaidi affirmed Oman LNG's keenness to activate partnerships and cooperation between the organisation and various government institutions to serve the development of the country.

He noted that the signing of the two agreements with MoH translates the company's efforts to strengthen partnership and community relations with various government entities to touch people's lives and meet their needs.

SQH Salalah to be ready by 2024

Continued from Page 01

Shanfari explained that the main building will include specialised units for accidents and emergencies, medical imaging, rehabilitation and chemotherapy, besides a dialysis unit, burns unit, day clinics, pediatric care department, adult intensive care and cardiac care. It will also have a unit for premature babies, operating rooms, delivery rooms and VIP suites.

An annex building will consist of a lecture hall, health education department, pathology laboratories and a central sterilisation unit.

Dr Ali bin Abdullah al Muqbali, Director General of Directorate General of Health Services in the Governorate of Dhofar, said that the new hospital will bring about a qualitative leap in health services in the governorate.

Citizen missing from Mabela found after 40 days

Muscat - Royal Oman Police announced on Tuesday that a citizen who went missing 40 days ago has been found.

In a statement, ROP said, 'Citizen Badr bin Issa bin Omar al Houti left his home in the Mabela area on Sunday, June 6, 2022. He was found in good health.'

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tenders:

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	63/2022	Supply and Installation of 2No., 12kv VACUUM 630 A Circuit Breaker and 1 No. VT at 220 kV New Barka Grid Station.	25/08/2022	20/09/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration.	26.25
2	64/2022	Carry Out Stocktaking for OETC Stores (Muscat, Misfah and Salalah) for the Year of 2022.	25/08/2022	20/09/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration	26.25
3	65/2022	Supply and Installation of Office Furniture for LDC Building.	25/08/2022	20/09/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration	26.25
4	66/2022	Supply of IT equipment with Associated Software for 5 Years.	25/08/2022	20/09/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration	105.000

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering
Buying the Tender:	By E-Tendering System.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 99105413-93201558-92217856 -91777378-93515198
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx

إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية :

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	ثمن الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (دع)
١	٢٠٢٢/١٣	توريد وتركيب عدد 2 قواطع كهربائية جهد 12 كيلوفولت. 630 امبير النوعية المفرغة من الهواء مع محول قياس عدد 1 محطة كهرباء بركاء الجديدة.	٢٠٢٢/٠٨/٢٥	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/٢٠	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل جاري سارية المفعول .	٢٦٢٥
٢	٢٠٢٢/١٤	جرد مخازن الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء (مسقط والسفلة وصلالة) لعام 2022	٢٠٢٢/٠٨/٢٥	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/٢٠	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل جاري سارية المفعول .	٢٦٢٥
٣	٢٠٢٢/١٥	توريد وتركيب أثاث لمبنى مركز توزيع الاحمال.	٢٠٢٢/٠٨/٢٥	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/٢٠	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل جاري سارية المفعول .	٢٦٢٥
٤	٢٠٢٢/١٦	توريد معدات واجهزة تكنولوجيا المعلومات مع البرامج المرتبطة بها لمدة 5 سنوات.	٢٠٢٢/٠٨/٢٥	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/٢٠	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل جاري سارية المفعول .	١٠٥.٠٠٠

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة بعد تقديم الطلب عن طريق نظام التناقص الإلكتروني.
طريقة الشراء	من خلال استخدام نظام التناقص الإلكتروني
الرسوم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد . (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العروض	يتم تسليم النسخة الأصلية فقط من الضمان البنكي للعطاء في الصندوق . أما العرض فيتم تسليمه من خلال نظام التناقص الإلكتروني.
الشروط و الضمانات	•عدم تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف. •أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. •إرفاق تأمينا في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (٪١) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعنوناً باسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء . •كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه . •الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقبدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع الضمان البنكي العطاء فقط في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الموالج رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣٠ تفاصيل التواصل: ٩٣٥١٥١٩٨-٩١٧٧٧٣٧٨-٩٣٢٠١٥٥٨-٩٩١٠٥٤١٣٠٩٢٢١٧٨٥٦
البريد الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الإلكتروني	www.omangrid.com https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx



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MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,650.25
Sensex	58,853.07
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
Indian	206.93
Pakistan	583.49
Bangladesh	246.32
Philippines	144.53
Sri Lanka	936.14

*Rates as on August 09
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Mubadala Capital to acquire Canada Cartage

Mubadala Capital, the asset management subsidiary of Mubadala Investment Company, announced the entry into a definitive agreement to acquire Canada Cartage, a leading Canada-based logistics platform. The transaction is subject to customary closing conditions, including receipt of Canadian regulatory approvals, and is expected to close in the next 60 days.

Canada Cartage currently operates through a network of 33 facilities across Canada and is comprised of two business segments, Dedicated Transportation and Logistics.

The Dedicated Transportation business provides its customers with expert management of their transportation needs, allowing them to realise cost efficiencies and reallocate resources towards core operations. This segment secures essential transportation and distribution services that are embedded into customer operations and are predominantly comprised of contracted partnerships with customers that in many cases span decades and multiple economic cycles.

Government measures insulate Oman from rising inflation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Households in Oman and other GCC countries have been insulated from rising global inflation due to government measures that capped prices of fuel and essential commodities and diversified food import sources.

Most of advanced and emerging market economies are dealing with soaring fuel and food prices this year. Global inflation has sharply increased driven mainly by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and supply problems due to COVID-19 related restrictions implemented in 2020 and 2021.

Inflation in Oman and the GCC has been significantly lower than most of advanced and emerging market countries.

'The GCC countries, despite importing up to 90 per cent of their food supplies, have weathered the Russia-Ukraine conflict-related food supply chain disruption mainly by having varied food import sources. Government price caps on essential food items and fuel also insulated households from steep food and fuel price rises,' Kamco Investment said in a research note.

Inflation rate in Oman increased by 2.9 per cent year-on-year during June 2022. Comparatively Oman's inflation rate stood at 4.4 per cent at the beginning of this year.

'In contrast with the global in-



In contrast with the global inflationary trend, Oman's inflation has been decreasing thanks to the stability in prices of fuel, rent, water, and electricity

flationary trend, Oman's inflation has been decreasing thanks to the stability in prices of fuel, rent, water, and electricity. Oman introduced and implemented a set of measures such as social protection measures, economic stimulus, and support for small and medium sized businesses which greatly eased upward inflationary pressures from soaring,' Kamco Investment said.

The sultanate's marginal inflation growth in June (against May) was mainly attributed to the rise in food price index (up 6.1 per cent), education index (up 5.1 per cent), and transport index (up 4.2 per cent).

'GCC households have been insulated from sharp price increases by food and fuel price caps, more limited stimulus in the last two years that forestalled

the build-up of domestic price pressures, and the strength of US dollar-pegged currencies which have dampened import costs,' Oxford Economics said in a recent report.

Oxford Economics raised its inflation forecast for the GCC to average 3.2 per cent this year, up from its projection of 2.8 per cent six months ago. 'However, the GCC's rate of inflation will remain below that of most advanced and emerging markets, as we expect inflation to average 7.5 per cent globally this year,' the economic advisory firm added.

With inflation in the US and European countries reaching

many decades' high, some GCC countries have witnessed a moderate rise in inflation in recent months. In the US, consumer price index increased 9.1 per cent year-on-year in June, its highest increase in 40 years. Similarly, the inflation rate in the European Union jumped 8.6 per cent year-on-year in June.

'Government policies have insulated GCC countries from rising inflation. The moderate inflation rate rise in GCC countries is mainly attributed to improved economic activity in the region as higher oil and gas prices strengthened government coffers and investments,' Kamco Investment said.

Inflation outlook remains moderate

Despite the growing global inflationary pressures, inflation outlook in Oman remains moderate and does not pose any imminent concern for financial stability in the sultanate, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) recently said in its Financial Stability Report 2022.

As per the CBO, inflation expectations for over half of the consumer basket in Oman remain low.

Moreover, higher oil revenues have provided more fiscal space to the government for targeted intervention [such as subsidies] to offset any inflationary pressures to complement monetary actions taken by CBO.

In its latest Regional Economic Outlook, the International Monetary Fund said GCC inflation rate will witness a growth of 3.3 per cent in 2022 and 2.3 per cent for 2023. The IMF expects Oman's inflation to average 3.7 per cent this year, which is well below the global average.

The sultanate's central bank noted that the gains from higher oil prices have dwarfed the inflationary pressures.

It said due to ample supply, housing costs in Oman are not expected to rise sharply in the near term. Moreover, the prices of utilities (water, gas, and electricity) are administered and the price of fuel for the year 2022 has been capped at the October 2021 level.

UAE's public spending rises 20% to AED87bn in first quarter

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The UAE's public spending in the first quarter of 2022 totalled AED87.4bn, an increase of 19.6 per cent and equivalent to AED14.34bn, compared to AED73.7bn in the same period of the previous year, according to statistics from the Ministry of Finance.

The figures also highlighted the fact that the country's public spending in the first quarter of 2022 included some AED28.7bn for employee compensation payments, compared to AED24.6bn in the same reporting period in 2021, an increase of 16.6 per cent and equivalent to AED4.1bn.

Employee compensation is the sum of cash and in-kind rewards payable to government employees, which include wages or salaries, allowances, bonuses and other benefits, as well as social contributions paid to social insurance programmes on behalf of employees.

Furthermore, the public



spending included goods and services usage worth AED30.9bn, as well as AED14.1bn for social benefits, AED6.4bn for financial aid, AED1.7bn for interest, AED1.6bn

for fixed capital expenditure, AED304mn for grants, and AED3.8bn for other expenses.

The statistics also showed that public revenues amounted to AED123.8bn in the first quar-

ter of 2022, an increase of 39.1 per cent or equivalent to AED34.8bn, compared to AED88.9bn in the same period of 2021.

The distribution of first quarter revenues included taxes on companies extracting oil and producing natural gas, banks operating in the country, customs fees, and other fees worth AED56.7bn, while social contributions amounted to AED4.9bn and other revenues to AED62.2bn.

The Ministry of Finance said the government's financial statistics are reports of national and international interest, as they highlight the total value of government operations in the country, as well as the government sector's contribution to the national economy and the allocation of resources by the government for various purposes.

WAM

CBO issues RO55mn treasury bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of government treasury bills (issue number 564) was issued this week by the Central Bank of Oman on behalf of the Ministry of Finance.

Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO55mn, for a maturity period of 91 days, from August 10, 2022 until November 9, 2022. The average accepted price reached RO99.300 for every RO100 bill, while the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.290.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 2.8076 per cent and 2.8274 per cent, respectively. The interest rate on the repo operations with CBO is 3.00 per



cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the central bank is 3.5 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman acts as the issue manager and pro-

vides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (repo).

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. The government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

Abu Dhabi's IHC posts record AED10bn profit in H1

Abu Dhabi, UAE - International Holding Company (IHC), a diversified Abu Dhabi-based conglomerate, has posted new record profits in the first half of 2022, as the company continues its aggressive investment strategy through a focused, high-conviction approach, targeting local and international business acquisitions with sustainable earnings and cash flow growth.

The solid business performance across all IHC subsidiaries has resulted in a significant strengthening of the conglomerate's balance sheet. Its revenue grew by 121 per cent to

AED21.93bn in the first six months of 2022, compared to the same period last year, while net profit rose 137 per cent to AED10.35bn as compared to first half of 2021, according to a press release.

IHC's strategic acquisition of companies in the first half of 2022 had a positive impact on the organization's net worth, as the total assets exceeded the company liabilities, increasing from AED88.98bn by the end of December 31, 2021, to AED163.69bn at the end of June 30, 2022 - an immense 84 per cent growth.



Syed Basar Shueb, IHC's chief executive officer, said, 'There remains much to be done to capture our strategy's full potential, strengthening the group's performance even further, as other mega acquisition deals present themselves in the second half of this year, locally and globally.

It will continue for many quarters.'

In the second quarter of 2022, IHC completed a US\$2bn strategic investment deal in the green energy sector with India's Adani Group, one of the largest deals between the UAE and India, representing 4.87 per cent of the

total trade between the two countries.

In the first half of 2022, the net profit margin stood at 47 per cent, growing by 137 per cent compared to same period last year. Total assets by end of second quarter of 2022 were AED163.69bn - an increase of AED74.71bn from December 31, 2021.

IHC's board has approved the acquisition of three new companies, Cyber Gate, Reach, and Emircon, subject to the authority's approval.

While IHC continues to deliver on its strategic growth

plans, expanding its portfolio to 372 subsidiaries, an increase of 49 up from 323 in the first quarter of 2022, the workforce is now measuring 52,345 employees, growing by over 30,000 since the first quarter of last year.

IHC comprises eight listed subsidiaries: Alpha Dhabi, Multiply, ESG, Palms Sports, Al Seer Marine, Ghitha, EasyLease, and Q Holding, with a capital of AED1.8bn in a wide array of sectors, including real estate, agriculture, healthcare, food and beverages, utilities, industrial, IT and communications, retail, entertainment, leisure, and capital.

Micron to invest \$40bn on US chip manufacturing

Washington, US - Capitalizing on grants and credits in new legislation President Joe Biden will sign Tuesday, US semiconductor firm Micron announced plans to invest US\$40bn on domestic chip production by the end of the decade.

Micron President and CEO Sanjay Mehrotra, who will join Biden at the White House for the signing of the CHIPS and Science Act, called the legislation "an important step toward solidifying American semiconductor leadership for decades to come."

A global shortage of computer chips in recent months caused by production and transportation snags due to the pandemic has been a significant drag on economic activity.

The components are vital for everything from smartphones to cars to 5G technology, as well as defense systems.

The White House hailed the Micron announcement and noted that Qualcomm and GlobalFoundries are announcing a new partnership that includes US\$4.2bn to manufacture chips in an expansion of GlobalFoundries' upstate New York facility.

"The law will also ensure the United States maintains and ad-



US President Joe Biden (right) shakes hands with Joshua Aviv, founder and CEO of SparkCharge, during a signing ceremony for the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, at an event on the South Lawn of the White House in (AFP)

vances its scientific and technological edge," the White House said in a statement.

The legislation provides tens of billions of dollars in funding for research and development, as well as tax credits to offer incentives for investment.

Micron said it expects to begin production in the second half of the decade and the massive investment "will ensure US national security and supply chain resilience as demand for

memory grows."

The spending on US production is part of the company's planned US\$150bn global investment in manufacturing and R&D over the next decade.

The company has plants in Boise, Idaho and Northern Virginia, but most of the operation is in Asian countries such as Japan, Singapore and Taiwan, where costs are lower.

Micron said it expects to create up to 40,000 new American

jobs. More details on the US expansion plans will be announced "in the coming weeks."

"This legislation will enable Micron to grow domestic production of memory from less than 2 percent to up to 10 percent of the global market in the next decade, making the US home to the most advanced memory manufacturing and R&D in the world," Mehrotra said.

AFP



Protestors participate in an anti-government demonstration in Colombo on Tuesday (AFP)

Sri Lanka raises electricity tariffs by up to 264%

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka's state-run electricity monopoly will raise tariffs by a stinging 264 per cent for people consuming the least, it announced Tuesday, while higher users will face a smaller increase.

The loss-making Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) said the regulator had allowed it to carry out the sharp increases, the first in nine years, from Wednesday to recoup part of its accumulated losses of US\$616mn.

The CEB had asked for a bigger tariff increase of over 800 per cent, but the regulator

capped it at a maximum of 264 per cent, officials said.

Two-thirds of the 7.8mn households using less than 90 kilowatts a month will be affected by the highest increases, while bigger consumers will pay about 80 per cent more, according to official records.

The smallest consumers, currently charged 2.50 rupees a unit, will be charged 8.0 rupees. Bigger consumers, being charged 45 rupees a unit, will have to pay 75 rupees (US\$0.20).

Sri Lanka is facing its worst

economic crisis after running out of foreign exchange reserves to finance even its most essential imports such as food, fuel and medicine.

The country is also facing hyperinflation and lengthy electricity blackouts after the CEB was unable to buy oil for its thermal generators.

Unable to repay its US\$51 billion foreign debt, the government declared it was defaulting in April and is negotiating with the International Monetary Fund for a possible bailout.

AFP

Russian oil transit via Ukraine halted due to sanctions

Moscow, Russia - The supply of Russian oil to three European countries through Ukraine has been halted as the transit payment cannot be processed due to sanctions, Russian firm Transneft said Tuesday.

"On August 4, the delivery of Russian oil via the territory of Ukraine was halted," the oil pipeline operator said in a statement, adding that this had affected deliveries to Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

The company said the Ukrainian side stopped the oil transport "due to not receiving funds for these services".

However, deliveries to Poland and Germany via Belarus were continuing "as usual", Transneft added.

Since President Vladimir Putin



sent troops to Ukraine, Washington and Brussels have pumelled Moscow with unprecedented sanctions, cutting Russia off from international financial institutions.

The EU has looked to reduce its dependence on Russian en-

ergy resources and has agreed to ban more than two-thirds of Russian oil imports.

The United States banned Russian oil and gas days after the start of Russia's military campaign on February 24.

AFP

Stock markets lower on eve of US inflation data

London, UK - Stock markets were lower and the dollar fell on Tuesday as investors nervously awaited the release of key US inflation data later this week, traders said.

If the data, scheduled for publication on Wednesday, came in above analysts' forecasts, the markets could enter into a sharp sell-off, analysts warned.

With inflation already at the highest level in 40 years, expectations are growing that further monetary tightening by the world's major central banks could go too far and tip the global economy into recession.

The inflation data "could effectively set the mood for the rest of the summer," said OANDA analyst, Craig Erlam.

"That seems quite dramatic, but if we fail to see a drop in the headline rate... it could really take



the wind out of the sails of stock markets as it would be very difficult for the (US Federal Reserve) to then hike by anything less than 75 basis points in September," the expert said.

The US central bank has already raised borrowing costs by three-quarters of a percentage

point twice in recent months in a bid to tame runaway prices.

Swissquote Bank analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya said the recent drop in energy and commodity prices "should have a cooling effect... but higher labour costs could keep inflation sticky at undesirably high levels".

Oil prices rose, but remain around six-month lows as recession fears mount and investors fret over the impact on demand.

The markets are also keeping an eye on Iran nuclear talks after the European Union submitted a "final text" at negotiations to salvage a 2015 deal.

An agreement could open the way for Tehran to resume sales of crude on international markets, partly filling the gap left by the ban on Russian exports following the invasion of Ukraine.

Edward Moya, analyst at OANDA trading group, said "it seems unlikely a breakthrough will happen anytime soon."

"Tehran seems like they are willing to negotiate, but an imminent decision to agree to the EU's proposal seems unlikely", he said.

AFP

Developed countries keen to sign trade deals with India: Minister

New Delhi, India - Before 2014, the Indian economy was considered to be fragile and investors had their doubts about doing business but now the developed countries are keen to sign trade deals with India as they see it as an engine of economic growth, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.

Addressing the Vyapari Udyami Sammelan in New Delhi, Goyal said developed countries are very keen to sign trade deals with India now. "Before 2014, the Indian economy was considered to be fragile and investors had their doubts about doing business with India," he said.

Stressing the need for transparency and ease of doing business, the minister assured traders and entrepreneurs that the government will fully support traders who raise their voices against harassment by any authority.

He called upon traders to



Piyush Goyal

work with the government to reduce the compliance burden of people and businesses, but asked that they strictly follow ethical trade practices. Unnecessary, cumbersome and counter-productive laws and regulations must be uprooted to improve the ease of doing business, he added.

He asked traders to give priority to the quality of goods and services that India offered. He also underscored the need to en-

courage youngsters to come forward and lend a youthful energy to India's growth story with new ideas.

The clarion call of 'vocal for local' given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi must be taken up by the youth of the nation, the minister said.

"We must also encourage more and more women to become traders and entrepreneurs," he said.

Applauding the Prime Minister's visionary welfare policies, Goyal said that these policies have been helping the poor

Stressing the need for transparency and ease of doing business, the minister assured traders and entrepreneurs that the government will fully support traders who raise their voices against harassment by any authority

emerge as consumers and have successfully transformed India's population into its greatest strength.

He added that the Prime Minister's tireless work had ensured that every household in the country gets access to basic amenities such as cooking gas, drinking water, electricity and toilet and every village gets access to the Internet.

Goyal said that the policies of

the government had also given every Indian the courage to be ambitious and the confidence to aspire to become entrepreneurs.

The minister also emphasised that traders should benefit from the demand for goods by beneficiaries of the Prime Minister's welfare schemes.

He asked all traders, entrepreneurs, and businesses, both big and small, to take a collective resolve to work together to take forward the dream of a self-reliant India by promoting more and more Indian products.

ANI

Embassy of India Muscat Vacancy for the post of "Arabic Interpreter/translator"

Applications are invited for the post of Arabic Interpreter/translator in the Embassy of India, Muscat. The pay scale of Interpreter/translator is RO 600-18-870-26-1130-34-1470 with starting salary of OMR 600.000 per month. The candidate should be of age group 25-35 years and should be holding a postgraduate degree in Arabic from a recognized university preferably with degree/diploma in Arabic translation. Applicant should possess sound knowledge of English, Hindi and Arabic languages, should have good communication and translation/interpretation skills and also conversant with computers & social media platforms. Apart from Translation / Interpretation skills, the applicant is expected to carry out protocol duties and liaise with Govt and civic bodies. Candidates with prior working experience would be preferred. Interested candidates meeting the required criteria may visit Indian Embassy website and fill out an application form and send their detailed CV along with scanned copies of educational degree/ experience, Oman residence visa (mandatory) and copies of reference provided by previous employer, if any at secondsecadmn@gmail.com latest by August 25, 2022

Oman's Ali al Habsi joins 'Team of the Century'

The former Oman national team goalkeeper has announced that he has joined the 'Team of the Century', featuring celebrities from around the world, with the aim of helping to spread awareness in sustainability programmes during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and make it clean and free of environmental pollutants.

The team was announced as an initiative by Hyundai Motor Company, one of the sponsors and partners of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. The players, whose names will be announced later, were selected by a neutral body.

Former Omani national team goalkeeper Ali al Habsi was chosen to be a member of this global team based on his track record in the world of football as the only Arab from the Middle East and

the Gulf region to be selected.

He is the first Gulf Arab player to play in the English Premier League, and has a lot of great achievements both with the English clubs in which he played or with the Saudi team Al-Hilal, or with the Oman national team that he represented in many international competitions and tournaments, and helped it to win the Gulf Cup in 2009 for the first time. Habsi is also one of the ambassadors of the FIFA World Cup - Qatar 2022.

Within the framework of its social responsibility around the world, Hyundai Motor Company plays a leading role in the global efforts to reduce plastic waste, fight pollution of the seas, promote the recycling process, support sustainability programmes and its initiative with the launch of 'Team of the Century' is a



global initiative that was launched with the start of the countdown of the State of Qatar

to the hosting of the World Cup, with the aim of educating the public, visitors and fans of teams

during the World Cup to reduce pollution, reducing the plastic waste and intensify efforts to

protect the land from damage.

Commenting on his joining the 'Team of the Century' and his participation in this initiative, Habsi expressed his happiness "to join the team of the century and to be among world celebrities in order to spread awareness of the need to preserve the environment". The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 is a great occasion and important global event to start implementing this initiative launched by Hyundai Motor Company, he added.

Jeong Jong-im, Head of Hyundai Motor Company Middle east and Africa, said, "We believe in the importance of football in the effort to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals through this world's most popular game and the FIFA World Cup - Qatar 2022, to strengthen the bonds

that bring us together with various cities and communities around the world."

"The initiative gives us the opportunity to engage with the members of the Team of the Century and enable them to continue their work towards a more sustainable future, we are very pleased to do our part in finding a platform that supports this initiative on a global level," Jeong added.

"It is great to be able to inform the global community about our sustainability initiative linked to the hosting of the World Cup, sustainability has been and will remain at the heart of our global goals, infrastructure projects and operational plans for the tournament, and based on this initiative we look forward to hosting a fully carbon-neutral FIFA World Cup-Qatar 2022."

OOMCO opens 7th KSA service station in Mecca



Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has opened its seventh service station in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Located in Mecca, the facility features an exciting range of on-the-go shopping, branded food and beverage offerings, in addition to essential automotive services.

The fuel marketing company also has six other service stations in the country, including its first mega station in Dammam, which opened in 2019, and Al Manar Station in Jeddah. Popular for their warm and friendly customer service approach and wide range of amenities that add value to the daily lives of commuters, the service stations are part of OOMCO's commitment

to go 'beyond the pump'.

Ali Muqail, General Manager - International Relations at Oman Oil Marketing Company, said, "We're delighted to open our seventh service station in KSA, which marks another milestone in our global expansion and shows our commitment to strengthening the friendly bi-lateral relations that exists between our two countries."

"We strive to continue adding value to the Saudi market by contributing new employment opportunities and rewarding business ventures for local suppliers, while offering customers innovative products that provide them with the utmost convenience and pleasure in their journey. We continue to transform

the industry by providing much more than only fuel," Muqail added.

The latest addition is part of OOMCO's ambitious strategic global expansion. Continuing to expand its footprint in Oman's neighbouring countries, the company also currently operates nine sites in Tanzania.

In the coming months, it also plans to add another five service stations around Jeddah to its portfolio in the Kingdom, with 15 sites operational overall by the end of 2022, as per the company's 2022-2026 strategy.

Meanwhile, OOMCO continues to work on its customer-centricity with an aim to be among the top five fuel marketers in the GCC by 2027.

ahli islamic's 18th branch opened in Nizwa

With Islamic banking expanding as one of the fastest growing segments of the worldwide financial system, ahli islamic is on a mission to expand its footprints in the local banking sector.

It recently inaugurated its 3rd branch in Al Dakhliya governorate, bringing the total number of its branches in Oman to 18.

The new branch, situated in the historically vibrant wilayat of Nizwa, is designed to meet the requirements of its growing number of customers outside the capital area.

Its prime location, will enhance customers' ease and convenience of banking with ahli islamic. Equipped with state of the art amenities, it reflects the bank's commitment to provide highest level of service, with



focus on 'partnering' with customers.

Expressing delight at the new launch, Yousuf Salim al Rawahi, DGM - Head of ahli islamic said, "This marks yet another glorious milestone in our expansion process," adding that "our concerted efforts to bring the Bank

closer to our customers has set us on the right growth curve".

"We are committed to meet and exceed our customers' requirements and will continue enhancing our network to make banking with ahli islamic the best option for all. Our streamlined operations is what sets us apart

in the industry; our Sharia'a-compliant banking solutions have been rewarding for customers who seek to operate their business under Sharia'a principles.

"The new branch marks our third entry within Al Dakhliya governorate. And with Nizwa being the regional centre of Dakhliya, our renewed presence at the branch is primed to create a new buzz among patrons and potential customers who now have easy access to a host of banking services in their vicinity."

Featuring contemporary design and modern infrastructure facilities, ahli islamic branch in Nizwa will encapsulate the bank's mission to be a vibrant and innovative centre of banking. It will be manned by a team of qualified personnel, the bank said.

Maserati starts 10-year warranty programme

Maserati has introduced the new 'Extra10 Warranty Program' to extend the coverage of powertrain components - engine, gearbox, transmission - until the car turns ten years old.

Offered in addition to the existing programme to extend the warranty to four or five years (known as 'Extended Warranty'), the service is available worldwide, for all customers who own any Maserati model.

While announcing this, the company said, 'Flexibility, innovation and personalisation: these are the fundamental factors that guide the Maserati Personal Service Lab in the development



of new services dedicated to its customers'.

This new service enables Maserati to provide all its customers with an innovative offer, adding value in terms of unparalleled flexibility in the automotive

world. A major new feature for the brand, aimed at consolidating the value of its cars over time, guaranteeing total peace of mind by combining top performance and the driving pleasure typical of every Trident car.

'Visit any Maserati dealer to check whether your car is included in the scheme, and to receive all the information you need to activate the service. The dealer will also tell you more about all the additional services that can come with the Extra10 Warranty programme,' the company said.

With the Maserati Personal Service Lab, a department devoted to creating services and offers focused on customers' requirements, the pleasure of driving a Maserati becomes even more immersive, supported as it is by a wide range of styles to meet every need a customer could have.

Bank Muscat extends 'strong support' to School Beach Games Championship

In line with its role in strengthening national development and extending support to sports activities and tourism promotion initiatives, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider has extended its strong support to the School Beach Games Championship that is underway in Salalah.

Organised by the Oman School Sports Association at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, the event began on August 5 and is drawing to an end on Wednesday.

Over 150 students in the 13-16 age group are participating in the event, which includes beach volleyball and beach handball.

Also, a blood donation campaign and awareness lectures in sports, nutrition and health are being held on the sidelines of the two games.

Founded by the Ministry of



Culture, Sports and Youth in 2016, the Oman School Sports Association is a non-profit entity established for the community's benefit, and organises a number of events, tournaments, and competitions throughout the ac-

ademic year.

The School Beach Games Championship, which is being held during the khareef in Dhofar, will be helpful in creating a pipeline of future national and international players for Oman's

sports teams. School sports tournaments like these aim to boost the physical, mental, social, and psychological strengths of students and provide them the ability to face various challenges with confidence and patience.



Such events are also helpful in promoting domestic tourism, sports activities as well as improving positive behaviour and a healthy lifestyle amongst young people, the bank said. Over the past many years, Bank Muscat

has successfully supported a number of initiatives and events as a means of facilitating national development goals. The bank successfully supported the inaugural Tour of Salalah in 2021, and the Tour of Oman in previous

years as part of its efforts to contribute to successful Public-Private partnership. It also regularly supports the Muscat Festival and the Salalah Festival along with several other events hosted by Oman to help promote tourism.

Sohar International conferred with 'Best Retail Banking - Oman' award

Sohar International has recently been awarded the coveted title of 'Best Retail Banking - Oman 2022' in the latest round of awards by World Economics Magazine, a press statement said.

With innovation, agility and excellence governing all aspects of its operations, Sohar International has been maintaining an undisputed leadership stance in the retail banking segment in Oman, the bank said, adding that the latest award 'is a testimony to the same'.

Following stringent selection criteria, these awards acknowledge the efforts of institutions that have demonstrated utmost dynamism and pushed their boundaries to effectively engage with and serve prospective customers while demonstrating effective environmental, social, and governance strategies.

Sohar International's resilient growth strategy, unfaltering efforts toward digital transformation and keen focus on continuously enhancing its product and service portfolio have been critical factors in helping the bank increase its gross retail revenue.

Despite the various hurdles posed by the pandemic, the bank was able to record phenomenal growth across different parameters such as overall customer base growth, increase in asset size, expansion in network and enhanced performance.

Commenting on the award, Khalil Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Sohar International said, "To be recognised by the World Economics Magazine is an incredible validation of our endeavours. It also attests to the unfaltering dedication of our team who have remained steadfast in their ambition to set new benchmarks in the sector."



According to him, Sohar International has built a robust infrastructure that focuses on delivering premium banking services to its customers. "The bank has remained at the forefront of continuously conceptualising transformational, unique, and industry-first solutions that not only compliment the various lifestyle needs of our customers but add value to society while also contributing to the socio-economic progress of the nation underpinned by environmental,

social, and governance strategies," Hedaifi added. Sohar International's retail banking is a fast-growing segment with a comprehensive portfolio of world-class products and services that have gained much reverence in the country. Complementing the bank's extensive network of state-of-the-art branches and ATMs/CDMs is the bank's investment in the digital realm.

Sohar International has been a pioneer in leveraging its digital banking channels to provide a seamless, secure, and convenient banking experience for customers. The bank has therefore been able to drive meaningful engagement with clients and fortify its bonds.

While the bank has recorded an upward trajectory in revenues, showcasing consistent profitability and growth, Sohar International has also placed keen emphasis on sustainability.

Taking a holistic approach to growth, the bank maintains the highest levels of operational efficiency, adheres to international best banking practices, and observes transparency in all its offerings.

While the bank has recorded an upward trajectory in revenues, showcasing consistent profitability and growth, Sohar International has also placed keen emphasis on sustainability. Taking a holistic approach to growth, the bank maintains the highest levels of operational efficiency, adheres to international best banking practices, and observes transparency in all its offerings.

Sohar International was recently ranked the 'Fastest Growing Bank' in the Large Banks Category and 'Excellence in Digital Transformation' by the highly coveted Best Banks Survey at the Oman Banking and Finance Awards. The Global Business Review Magazine Awards 2022 honoured Sohar International with the title of 'Best Corporate Banking - Oman 2022'.

In addition, the bank was conferred with the title of the 'Best Campaign to Promote Tourism' at the Second Arab Forum for Tourism and Heritage for the bank's initiative in 2021 and 2022 titled 'In Oman We Win' and 'Take It From Us' respectively.



Suite offers from Alizz Islamic Bank to 'Hiyya' card holders

Alizz Islamic Bank has continued a suite of exclusive sharia'a compliant banking services for female customers that have the 'Hiyya' card that was designed exclusively for women.

'Hiyya' is designed to meet all the investment, health and financial needs of female customers and will provide customers with a tier based savings account to enhance their profits, the bank stated.

The Sharia'a compliant account is based on the principle of Mudaraba where you will be Rabb-ul-mal, and the Bank will be the Mudarib.

"Your funds will be invested in the common pool along with the other Mudaraba-based accounts. The generated profit will be shared between you and the bank according to a profit sharing ratio specified earlier," the bank said in a statement.

Profits will be shared between customers and the bank according to the previously agreed distribution ratios.

Instant debit cards will be offered with exclusive benefits to ensure an open platform for women to enjoy a host of discounts and special offers at spas, beauty salons and beauty products, while availing deals from health clubs, fitness centres and perfume stores.

Exclusive stores and branded outlets for clothing and accessories, home décor, restaurants and flower shops are all pegged onto the account, which also includes priority express service at all Alizz Islamic Bank branches.

Women who opt for the Hiyya account will also get free Takaful insurance services - this is designed specifically for women, as it covers some of the most common cancers that affect women and will also include insurance cover to obtain a second medical opinion.

Ooredoo lauds LoRa Alliance members for World Expo

An active player in setting the pace for digital transformation, Ooredoo congratulated the LoRa Alliance Board and members for a successful LoRaWAN World Expo in Paris.

Hosted by the LoRa Alliance, the two-day event featured some of the world's most powerful names in technology and business, highlighting the transformational power of the LoRaWAN ecosystem for Internet of Things (IoT) and devices management platforms.

As the first telecoms operator in Oman and the GCC to have joined the open, non-profit association, LoRa Alliance, in 2019, the membership enables the company to collaborate with other IoT service providers, chip

manufacturers, solution developers and other businesses serving the industry's requirement to push the technology forward.

The Expo presented a unique opportunity for Ooredoo, its partners and clients, to discover new partnerships, meet other LoRa Alliance members, create new business opportunities, and learn how to advance its IoT solutions to drive return on investment.

As the leading LoRaWAN network provider in Oman, Ooredoo has supplied clients in the utilities sector with cutting edge IoT technologies since 2018, securely hosted by its Data Centre in Muscat. Ooredoo continues to hit new milestones on its journey to position Oman as a society in line with Oman's 2040 Vision.

PSM students excel in FBISE exams this year

SSC-I TOPPERS

First (491/520)	Second (490)	Third (472)
Syeda Pareesay Fatima	Maheen Amjad	Sana Arsalan

Pakistan School Muscat has achieved another landmark by producing 100 per cent results in the FBISE SSC-II annual examination 2021-22.

Raneem Ishtiaq came first by securing 1052/1100 marks, while Fatima Zehra and Muhammad Basim Khan secured second position with 1048 marks. Arooj Shahzad secured third position scoring 1045 marks in the FBISE SSC-II annual examination this year.

In SSC-I, the school said Syeda Pareesay Fatima secured first position with 491/520 marks, Maheen Amjad came second with 490 marks and Sana Arsalan third with 472 marks.

PSM, one of the prominent institutions in the region, has been implementing cutting-edge strategies to increase students' achievement level since its inception. It aims to spark a pursuit of knowledge in students so that they may keep on learning and

SSC-II TOPPERS

First (1052/1100)	Second (1048)	Second (1048)	Third (1045)
Raneem Ishtiaq	Fatima Zehra	Md Basim Khan	Arooj Shahzad

become a valuable part of society. In this connection, the school induces the latest tools and technology-based plans to cater to the contemporary needs of learners, a PSM statement said. Owing to its timely planning and up-to-date strategies, the students of PSM Federal Stream have produced marvelous academic results in their FBISE annual examination, 2021-22 by scoring significantly high grades. "They have made a history by

scoring the highest-ever results at SSC-II level", the school said. "These outstanding grades make up 44% A*, 24% A, 20% B and 12% C grades of the total result at SSC-II level which is an outstanding record-breaking performance in the history of PSM and a significant proof of the very high standard of studies being followed, untiring efforts of the faculty, hard work of the students, concern of the parents and above all the unconditional

academic support by the school management and governing authorities. Pakistan School System has achieved overall grades 41% A* and 25% A at SSC-II level and 26% A* and 26% A at SSC-I."

This result has all been possible by the joint team work under the dynamic guidance and supervision of the Senior Principal Nasir Nawaz, the Central Coordinator Gul Rahim and the back-stage support by the Pakistan School Management.

Dubai promotes theme parks as summer adventure venues

Dubai is aggressively promoting its theme parks and water parks as the region enters deep into the summer months with temperatures touching as high as 48 degrees in some places such as Kuwait City.

"Liven up your summer getaway by visiting the best indoor theme parks and water parks across Dubai," said a statement, inviting people from across the region to beat the summer heat in Dubai's parks.

"Whether you're looking for a heart-pumping experience, or simply want to beat the heat, there are exciting options to choose from to guarantee an epic holiday," it added.

Indoor Theme Parks

Kids and young-at-heart will surely have loads of fun at Motiongate Dubai. Located at Dubai

Parks and Resort, this theme park lets you enjoy thrilling rides and attractions based on the most successful and beloved Hollywood movie franchises.

Guests can get a chance to meet and take photos with their favourite movie characters from Kung Fu Panda, Shrek, and Madagascar. Expect to relive a few fantastic cinema moments here, including those from Ghostbusters, The Smurfs, and Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs.

Ideal for a fun day with families and friends, Motiongate Dubai also features exhilarating rides. Scream your heart out on rollercoasters such as The Green Hornet's High-Speed Chase and the Madagascar Mad Pursuit, or drop down vertically in the high-speed Zombieland Blast-Off. It also has the world's fastest single-car spinning rollercoaster,



themed after the Now You See Me thriller.

Offering year-round entertainment and recreational experiences, IMG Worlds of Adventure is one of the world's largest indoor theme parks in Dubai.

The park features six zones: Marvel, Cartoon Network, Lost Valley - Dinosaur Adventure, The Haunted Hotel, IMG Boulevard, and IMG Kids Zone, all spread

over 1.5mn square feet in a temperature-controlled environment. There is a great range of rides and attractions for all ages, including 22 thrill rides and kiddie rides, and as well as photo opportunities with Marvel superheroes like Iron Man and Captain America, and well-loved characters like The Powerpuff Girls.

This summer, the park presents IMG Worlds' SummerFest featuring themed décors and dazzling entertainment including Hawaiian Dance, African Drummers, Bollywood Dance and more!

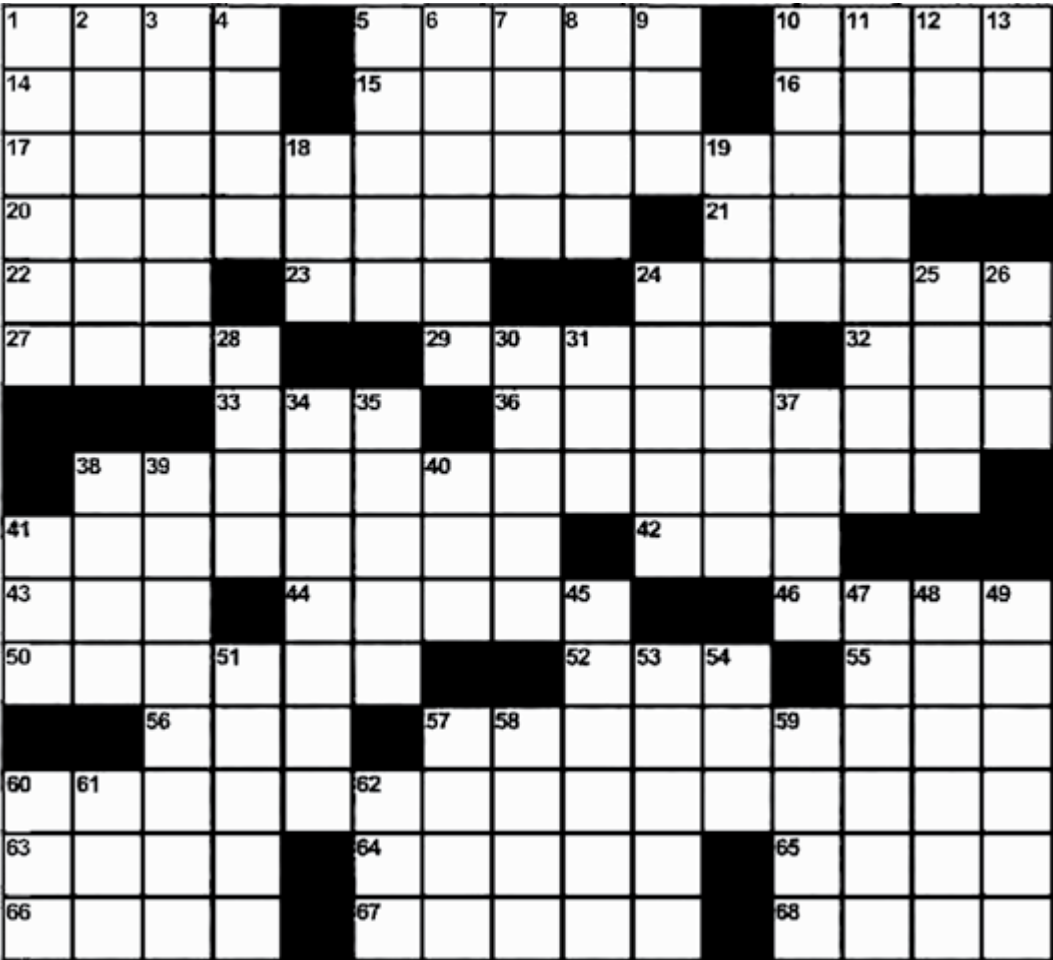
Waterparks One of the best ways to beat the summer heat is to spend a day at one of Dubai's world-class waterparks. Dubai's original splash zone, Wild Wadi Waterpark offers an

exciting collection of rides and attractions, which are continually updated over the years. The waterpark's features are themed around Juha, a beloved character from Arabian folklore. Relax along the lazy river, chase for adrenaline rush at the tornado-themed Tantrum Alley, or simulate a surfing experience at Wipeout.

Located at Dubai Parks and Resorts, there's plenty of fun in store at Legoland Water Park for children aged two to 12 years. Most rides and slides allow little ones to ride together in groups or race against one another.

Aquaventure at Atlantis The Palm is one of the most popular waterparks not just in Dubai, but also in the world. The park has different heart-racing options such as Poseidon's Revenge and the Leap of Faith.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Weakens, as support
5) Naval Academy new-corner
10) Yemen's Gulf of_
14) Group of shops
15) Sans_ (print font)
16) "I never_ man I didn't like" (Will Rogers)
17) Introduced
20) Begged
21) U.N. body dealing with worker's rights
22) What some people are stuck in
23) Barnyard parent
24) Thin lung membrane
27) Urban pollution problem
29) Honey badger
32) Underwater vessel, for short
33) Cleopatra's biter
36) Rose Bowl Parade site
38) Bad thing to give to a child
41) Makeup component
42) Baden twice
43) It " suits" Santa
44) It brings out the child

18) "Aw" follower
19) Wick holder
24) Mexican coins
25) Ancient inscription
26) Atty.'s organization
28) Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading_"
30) Informal British abbreviation of assent
31)_ Heel (North Carolinian)
34) Adept
35) Kind of colony or code
37) "_ M For Murder"
38) Tournament passes
39) Giant conifers
40) Bird's beak
41) Stat for a pitcher
45) Spoiler or destroyer
47)_theHun
48) Oklahoma football player
49) Did a sheepdog's job
51) Clean the chalkboard
53) Down and out
54) Shoo-_ (certain winners)
57) "Green Gables" girl
58) A rich supply
59) Baby's nurse, in China

60) Baseball club
61) "Messenger" com-pound
62) Aquatic shocker

NOTE PAD

W	A	C	O	S	N	O	B	E	G	G	A	R
O	L	I	O	T	O	R	E	B	O	R	N	E
M	O	T	H	E	R	H	E	N	B	L	O	N
B	E	E	V	I	I	S	T	O	D	G	E	S
S	E	P	T	S	R	U	E					
S	A	R	T	R	E	T	A	U	T	N	E	S
I	D	I	O	T	C	O	R	N	G	A	L	A
T	O	G	O		C	H	I	C	K		O	R
A	R	I	L		E	A	C	H		C	O	T
R	E	D	P	A	N	D	A		S	A	S	H
					I	N	S		L	I	T	R
E	L	E	G	I	E	S		A	R	E		S
V	I	D	E	O		L	A	M	E	D	U	C
E	N	D	O	N		A	L	B	S		P	A
N	O	O	N	S		M	E	S	S		S	T

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You are usually quite direct about what you want and completely unafraid of going out there and getting it. Today is a little different, though. Your mental energy is much more geared toward introspection than to your normal exuberance. Use this time to examine any feelings that might be holding you back. Once you do a little psychic gardening, you should find it easier to enjoy your life.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Ambition is everything today, so go right ahead and flex those muscles to let everyone know that you're a major player. Be careful, though. You don't want anyone in a powerful position to view your actions as disrespectful. Go out of your way to convey the depth of your ideas and the passion behind your actions, and they are sure to be on your side.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Turn up the volume on that inner dialogue and really listen to what you're trying to tell yourself. The message may not be crystal clear yet, but your guiding wisdom is trying to tell you something very important, so stop and listen before you miss it. Try meditation of some sort to access this part of yourself. It's definitely worth the effort. Getting in tune with your inner self can help resolve some issues you're having in the outside world.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your normally placid exterior might be a bit more turbulent thanks to various stings, even those not directed at you! Your energy makes you able to feel things below the surface that you would otherwise miss, but the flip side of that ability is that you see slights that might not actually be intended as such. Take as little as possible personally today, and remember that you can't know everything that's going on with someone else.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You've got way more options than you might realize, and a much wider range of opportunities than you give yourself credit for. It might seem unfathomable, but you need to give yourself a chance to explore every avenue available to you before settling on one. Just be brave and consider the road less traveled. The present time is perfect for making connections and expanding your boundaries.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You need to dive deep, and fast! Whatever you're doing, dig in as deeply as possible until you think you're close to hitting bottom. This applies whether you're in a yoga class or trying to work the kinks out of a personal relationship. You can't settle for surface solutions or superficial answers today, no matter how quick and easy they seem. And you really understand the value of building things that last.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Your mental energy brings you extra insight and compassion, an extremely useful pair! Someone close needs a helping hand, and you're just the one to supply it. You should be able to settle down and really listen to what they've got to say. These altruistic impulses can be addictive. Soon you might want to extend your aid not just to people in your immediate social circle but also to the community at large.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your desires are close to the surface now. You're like a snake shedding its skin, somewhat vulnerable but ready to shuck off anything that inhibits or restricts you. That might mean purging your wardrobe of items that don't fit or look right, showing a jerk the door, or just ridding yourself of a bad habit that is holding you back. You're feeling rebellious and ready to rock, but it's no pose. These impulses come from a deep and trustworthy place.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Performing in front of an audience doesn't usually faze you much. Today, however, you might be feeling just a bit exposed to all and sundry in the face of some very deep, very private issues going on in your life. If you feel like you're being pushed too far beyond your comfort zone at work or at play, just say the word and pull back to consider your emotions in the privacy of your own home.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You need to take some time and really contemplate where you are and what you've accomplished of late before launching your next big project. Isolate yourself and think about all the milestones you've reached until you fully appreciate your current situation. If someone tries to push you into starting another project before you're ready, firmly tell them that you'll move when you say so and no sooner.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

The spotlight is definitely on you as your personal energy amps up your already considerable magnetism and makes you practically irresistible. Expect crowds to gather as you leave the house. You're just that fascinating, both to folks you know and those you haven't even met yet. While it's tempting for some people to rest on their laurels in the middle of all this adoration, you have no interest in just lying around doing nothing.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Is there a lifeguard on duty? If not, you might want to call on someone close to stand watch while you hold your nose and dive in to some deep emotional waters. Old business that you thought was forever sunk from sight might be making a nuisance of itself. Be as brave as you can while exploring what's coming up. You might come back up from the depths with a few flawless pearls!

01. Camelot was the legendary court of whom?

A. Ozymandias
B. Attila the Hun
C. King Arthur
D. Kublai Khan

02. An oologist studies what?

A. Reptiles
B. Marsupials
C. Reptile eggs
D. Birds' eggs, nesting, and breeding behaviour

03. What is the main seed used in the traditional British seed cake?

A. Poppy
B. Caraway
C. Nasturtium
D. Parsley

Answers: 1. C 2. D 3. B

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

E	S	S	A
A	L	S	Qu
U	R	S	I
E	B	L	A

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Russia launches Iranian satellite amid Ukraine war allegations

Almaty, Kazakhstan - An Iranian satellite launched by Russia blasted off from Kazakhstan early on Tuesday and went into orbit amid controversy that Moscow might use it to improve its surveillance of military targets in Ukraine. A live feed from Russian space agency Roscosmos showed the launch of the Soyuz-2.1b rocket carrying the Khayyam satellite from the Russia-controlled Baikonur cosmodrome at the scheduled time of 0552 GMT. The Russian mission control confirmed its subsequent entry into orbit. Iran, which has maintained ties with Moscow and refrained from criticism of the Ukraine invasion, has sought to deflect suspicions that Moscow could use Khayyam to spy on Ukraine.

Last week, US daily *The Washington Post* quoted anonymous Western intelligence officials as saying that Russia 'plans to use the satellite for several months or longer' to assist its war efforts before allowing Iran to take control.

But the Iranian Space Agency said on Sunday that the Islamic republic would control the Khayyam satellite 'from day one'.

'No third country is able to access the information' sent by the satellite due to its 'encrypted algorithm', it said. The purpose of Khayyam is to 'monitor the country's borders', enhance agricultural productivity and monitor water resources and natural disasters, the space agency said.



The Soyuz-2.1b rocket carrying Khayyam satellite blasting off at the Baikonur Cosmodrome on Tuesday (AFP)

In a pre-launch statement on Monday ISA praised 'the high reliability factor of the Soyuz launcher'. "Due to Khayyam satellite's weight of more than half a ton and the very high success rate of the Soyuz launcher, the launch of the Khayyam satellite has been entrusted to Rus-

sia," the statement on the space agency's website noted.

As Moscow's international isolation grows under the weight of Western sanctions over Ukraine, the Kremlin is seeking to pivot Russia towards the Middle East, Asia and Africa and find new clients for the country's em-

battled space programme.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran last month - one of his few trips abroad since the invasion began.

'Long-term

cooperation'

Khayyam, apparently named after the 11th-century Persian polymath Omar Khayyam, will not be the first Iranian satellite that Russia has put into space - in 2005, Iran's Sina-1 satellite was deployed from Russia's Plesetsk cosmodrome.

Iran is currently negotiating

The controversy is that Moscow might use the satellite to improve its surveillance of military targets in Ukraine

with world powers, including Moscow, to salvage a 2015 deal aimed at reining in Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The United States - which quit the landmark Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA under then-president Donald Trump in 2018 - has accused Iran of effectively supporting Russia's war against Ukraine while adopting a 'veil of neutrality'.

During his meeting with Putin last month, Iran's Khamenei called for 'long-term cooperation' with Russia, and Tehran has refused to join international condemnation of Moscow's invasion of its pro-Western neighbour.

AFP



Grandchildren of Fidel Ramos carry his urn during the state funeral at the Heroes Cemetery in Taguig, metro Manila on Tuesday (AFP)

Hero's burial for former Philippine leader Ramos

Manila, Philippines - Former Philippine president Fidel Ramos, a soldier regarded as one of the country's most effective leaders ever, was interred at the National Heroes Cemetery on Tuesday in a sombre state burial.

A low-flying military helicopter dropped flowers as a wagon bearing the flag-draped coffin containing an urn with his ashes rolled through the leafy cemetery grounds, lined with white crosses marking the tombs of dead soldiers also buried at the site.

Incumbent President Ferdinand Marcos Jr joined the ex-leader's widow and relatives as the silver urn with the cremated remains was lowered into the ground after a military parade and a 21-gun salute.

A career soldier who oversaw a rare period of steady growth and peace in the turbulent years that followed the dictatorship of Marcos Jr's father and namesake, Ramos died late last month aged 94. The cause of death was

not specified.

Known as 'Steady Eddie' for his unflappable demeanour during the country's regular moments of upheaval, he was frequently pictured chewing unlit cigars as he guided the Philippines with a sure hand from 1992-1998.

His widow Amelita Ramos thanked Filipinos in a brief address at the end of the state burial, saying soldiers like him lived a 'hard life'.

"It entailed difficult adjustments. He would be at home for two years and in the province two years after that," she said, apart from overseas deployments in the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

A graduate of the prestigious West Point military academy in the United States, Ramos also saw combat against communist guerrillas back at home. He was later commander of the paramilitary Philippine Constabulary.

AFP

Top Pakistan Taliban commander killed

Peshawar, Pakistan - A senior commander of Pakistan's Taliban was killed by a blast in eastern Afghanistan, a militant source told AFP.

Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) said an announcement would be made regarding 'the martyrdom of a central leader', but a source told AFP it was Abdul Wali, a notorious commander who used the alias Omar Khalid Khorasani.

His death may bring an end to a shaky indefinite ceasefire the TTP reached with the Pakistan government in June as peace talks mediated by Afghanistan's Taliban progressed. Pakistan's military said on Tuesday four soldiers were killed in a suicide attack on a military convoy in North

Waziristan, where the TTP are prominent, bordering Afghanistan.

The Pakistan and Afghan Taliban are separate groups, but share a common ideology.

The TTP source who asked not to be identified told AFP that Wali and two other commanders were killed when their car was 'targeted' in Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province. "When we reached his vehicle it was on fire, but the nature of the explosion is not yet clear," he said, adding Wali was returning from a meeting with TTP chief Noor Wali Mehsud.

Wali has been a thorn in the side of Pakistan authorities for over a decade.

AFP

Donald Trump says Florida home 'raided' by FBI

Palm Beach, US - Former US president Donald Trump said on Monday that his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida was being 'raided' by FBI agents in what he called an act of 'prosecutorial misconduct'.

The FBI declined to comment on whether the search was happening or what it might be for, nor did Trump give any indication of why federal agents were at his home - a situation that adds to the legal pressures on the ex-president. Multiple US media outlets cited sources close to the investigation as saying that agents were conducting a court-authorised search related to the potential mishandling of classified documents that had been sent to Mar-a-Lago.

In a statement posted on his Truth Social network, Trump said his 'beautiful home, Mar-A-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, is currently under siege, raided, and



A police car is seen outside former US President Donald Trump's residence in Mar-A-Lago, Palm Beach, Florida on Monday (AFP)

occupied by a large group of FBI agents'. Aerial footage of Mar-a-Lago showed police cars outside the property. Supporters of the ex-US leader also gathered outside, waving banners with Trump's name or American flags emblazoned with his face.

"It is prosecutorial miscon-

duct, the weaponisation of the Justice System, and an attack by Radical Left Democrats who desperately don't want me to run for President in 2024," said Trump, who was not present during the raid, according to *The New York Times*.

"Such an assault could only

take place in broken, Third-World Countries. Sadly, America has now become one of those Countries," he said, adding: "They even broke into my safe!"

Some senior Republicans also took to social media to criticise the raid and accuse the Justice Department of overreach.

The National Archives said in February it had recovered 15 boxes of documents from Trump's Florida estate, which *The Washington Post* reported included highly classified texts, taken with him when he left Washington following his reelection defeat. The documents and mementos - which also included correspondence from ex-US president Barack Obama - should by law have been turned over at the end of Trump's presidency but instead ended up at his Mar-a-Lago resort.

The recovery of the boxes raised questions about Trump's

adherence to presidential records laws enacted after the 1970s Watergate scandal that require Oval Office occupants to preserve records related to administration activity. The Archives had requested then that the Justice Department open a probe into Trump's practices.

White House staff also regularly discovered wads of paper clogging toilets, leading them to believe Trump was trying to get rid of certain documents, according to a forthcoming book by New York Times reporter Maggie Haberman. Since taking his last Air Force One flight from Washington to Florida on January 20 last year, Trump has remained the country's most polarising figure, continuing his unprecedented campaign to sow falsehoods that he actually won the 2020 election.

AFP

Third fuel tank collapses as helicopters battle Cuban blaze

Matanzas, Cuba - Helicopters scrambled on Monday to contain a days-old blaze that felled a third tank at a fuel depot in Cuba, as the search continued for 16 missing firefighters.

According to an official update, the confirmed toll from the fire was one 60-year-old fireman dead, with 24 people hospitalised - five of them in critical condition.

More than 100 others were injured, most suffering burn wounds, and some 5,000 people have been evacuated from around the disaster zone, authorities reported.

The fire on the outskirts of Matanzas, a city of 140,000 people 100km east of Havana, broke out late on Friday after lightning struck one of eight tanks at the depot.

On Monday, the governor of

the western Matanzas province said the blaze had spread to a third tank, which collapsed like two others before it did over the weekend.

'The third tank also collapsed, after the second spilled its fuel' as it caved in on Sunday, governor Mario Sabines told state TV.

He said the blaze area was 'very big' and the containment effort 'very complex'.

Deputy fire chief Alexander Avalos Jorge said later on Monday that as a result of that collapse, a fourth tank has also been affected.

"It's been a chain reaction," he said.

Aircraft, firefighters and other specialists and equipment arrived in Cuba from Mexico and Venezuela on Sunday after the island nation asked for help from 'friendly countries'.



A firefighter helicopter drops water on a massive fire at a fuel depot in Matanzas, Cuba, on Monday (AFP)

Sabines said the teams were preparing an operation to douse the flames with foam, 'but this could take a while'.

Efforts 'intensifying'

"Work is intensifying to combat the fire," the Cuban presidency said on Twitter, adding Monday

would be a 'decisive day' for the effort.

Family members of the missing firefighters met President

Miguel Diaz-Canel on Sunday at a hotel in Matanzas, where they were given access to doctors and psychologists. "My son was doing his duty, he stepped forward," said the distraught mother of one 19-year-old fireman who was at the depot when the second fuel tank caught fire.

Health officials said they were monitoring the air quality, and advised at-risk people to wear masks in smoke-affected areas and to avoid being out in the rain.

After the first tank caught fire late on Friday, the blaze spread to a second tank by the early hours of Saturday. The first two tanks collapsed overnight Sunday, causing three more reported injuries and spilling their oil.

According to the Cupet state oil company, the first tank had contained about 26,000 cubic metres of crude, about half its ca-

capacity. The second contained 52,000 cubic metres of fuel oil. It was not clear how full the third tank - also with a capacity of 52,000 cubic metres - was.

Firefighters had been battling to prevent the third tank from catching fire, dousing it with water to keep it cool, but ultimately to no avail.

The depot, built in the 1980s and modernised several times, supplies the Antonio Guiteras thermoelectric plant, the largest in the communist nation.

The plant features five docks to receive ships of up to 180,000 tonnes, according to the *Granma* official newspaper. The disaster comes at a time when the island - with an outdated energy network - has faced mounting difficulties in meeting energy demands.

AFP

Taiwan accuses China of preparing invasion

After Chinese war games, Taiwan held an artillery drill simulating defence against a possible attack

Fenggang Township, Taiwan - Taiwan held an artillery drill on Tuesday simulating defence against an attack as its top diplomat accused Beijing of preparing to invade the island after days of massive Chinese war games.

China launched its largest-ever air and sea exercises around Taiwan last week in a furious response to a visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the highest-ranking American official to visit the self-ruled island in decades.

Taiwan lives under the constant threat of invasion by China, which views its neighbour as part of Chinese territory to be seized one day, by force if necessary.

"China has used the drills in its military playbook to prepare for the invasion of Taiwan," foreign minister Joseph Wu told a press conference in Taipei on Tuesday, accusing Beijing of using Pelosi's visit as a pretext for military action. "China's real intention is to alter the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and entire region."

The Chinese military said its Taiwan drills continued on Tuesday and involved air and sea units.

The Eastern Theater command of the People's Liberation Army said in a statement that it was conducting training exer-



Taiwan military soldiers fire the 155mm Howitzer during a live fire anti landing drill in the Pingtung county, southern Taiwan on Tuesday (AFP)

cises around the island, 'focusing on joint blockade and joint support operations'.

Taipei's drill in the southern county of Pingtung included the firing of target flares and artillery, lasting just under an hour, said Lou Woei-jye, spokesman for Taiwan's Eighth Army Corps.

Soldiers fired from howitzers

tucked into the coast, hidden from view of the road that leads to popular beach destination Kenting.

The drills, which will also take place on Thursday, included the deployment of hundreds of troops and about 40 howitzers, the army said.

Tuesday's exercise attracted

a crowd of onlookers.

"We need to have some countermeasures against mainland China's blockade," said one of the spectators, who only gave his surname Chen.

"Conducting military drills will also let them know Taiwan is prepared. I hope both sides can have some restraint."

On Monday, spokesman Lou told AFP the drills were previously scheduled and were not in response to China's exercises.

The island routinely stages military drills simulating defence against a Chinese invasion.

But the latest drill prompted an ominous warning from Beijing, which regularly unleashes

fiery rhetoric against Taiwan's independence hopes. "Any conspiracy to go against the trend of history and resist reunification through arms... will end in failure like a mantis trying to stop a chariot," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a regular briefing on Tuesday.

'Not worried'

The anti-landing exercise took place after China extended its own joint sea and air drills around Taiwan on Monday, but Washington said it did not expect an escalation from Beijing.

"I'm not worried, but I'm con-

cerned they're moving as much as they are. But I don't think they're going to do anything more than they are," Biden told reporters at Dover Air Force Base.

Taiwan's Wu on Tuesday condemned Beijing for pressing on with military exercises around the island, accusing them of trying to control the Taiwan Strait and waters in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

"It is conducting large-scale military exercises and missile launches, as well as cyberattacks, a disinformation campaign and economic coercion in order to weaken public morale in Taiwan," he said.

Wu went on to thank Western allies, including the US, for standing up to China.

"It also sends a clear message to the world that democracy will not bow to the intimidation of authoritarianism," he said.

Taiwan has insisted that no Chinese warplanes or ships entered its territorial waters - within 12 nautical miles of land - during Beijing's drills. But its defence ministry said on Tuesday the extension of the drills showed China's 'threat of force has not diminished' around the island and all of its units would 'maintain combat readiness'.

AFP

China has used the drills in its military playbook to prepare for the invasion of Taiwan. China's real intention is to alter the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and entire region

JOSEPH WU

Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake dies at 84

Tokyo, Japan - Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake, whose global career spanned more than half a century, has died aged 84, an employee at his office in Tokyo told AFP on Tuesday.

"He died on the evening of August 5," she said over the telephone, without giving further details of his death and declining to be named.

Miyake's funeral had already taken place, with 'only relatives participating' in line with his wishes, and there were no plans for a public ceremony, she said.

Public broadcaster NHK and other Japanese media reported the news of his passing, with the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper and other outlets saying he had died of liver cancer. Miyake - who pioneered high-tech, comfortable clothing - was part of a wave of young Japanese designers who made their mark in Paris from the mid-1970s.

His fashion house nurtured many talented young designers, and was known for innovative and dazzling catwalk shows. After two years of showcasing collections online or with installations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the brand made its live comeback at Paris Fashion Week in June with a men's show featuring models, dancers and acrobats.

Born in Hiroshima in 1938, he was seven years old when the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the city in August 1945.

He survived the blast, which killed an estimated 140,000 people on impact and led to the end of World War II after the bombing of Nagasaki three days later.

"I have never chosen to share my memories or thoughts of that day," Miyake wrote in the *New York Times* in 2009. "I have



Issey Miyake (AFP)

tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to put them behind me, preferring to think of things that can be created, not destroyed, and that bring beauty and joy."

The designer studied at an art school in Tokyo, and moved to Paris in 1965, where he studied at the elite Ecole de la Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne.

Miyake was part of a wave of Japanese designers who made their mark in Paris from the mid-1970s

He established the Miyake Design Studio in Tokyo in 1970, and soon afterwards opened his first Paris boutique. By the 1980s, his career was in full swing as he experimented with materials from plastic to metal wire and even artisanal Japanese paper. Among his inventions were the 'Pleats Please' line, permanently pleated items which do not crease, the futuristic triangles of his 'Bao Bao' bag, and his 'A-POC (A Piece Of Cloth)' concept - using computers to cut whole garments with no seams.

AFP

PNG premier Marape re-elected

Port Moresby, PNG - Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape was sworn in for a second term on Tuesday, after an election hit by violence and alleged corruption that also ended a five-year absence of women in parliament.

Marape won support from a majority of members in the Pacific island nation's newly elected parliament.

In a wide-ranging first speech to the new parliament, he reiterated his pledge to make Papua New Guinea the 'richest black Christian nation on Earth' and welcomed the unanimous parliamentary vote that secured his leadership.

"We are one, one people, one country, one nation," Marape said.

"And I just want to appreciate the fact that today, the parliament came in total union."

Addressing concerns - raised by Commonwealth election ob-



Papua New Guinea's PM James Marape speaks in parliament after he was sworn in for his second term in Port Moresby on Tuesday (AFP)

server teams - over bribery allegations and missing names from voter rolls, Marape also flagged a review of polling.

"We must reform our electoral processes. It is evident that maintaining the status quo on this is no longer an option."

Among the newly elected members were Rufina Peter and Kessy Sawang, the first female

candidates confirmed to have secured a seat in parliament.

Their victories marked a return of women to national politics after none won seats in the previous election in 2017.

It is a 'proud moment', said Peter O'Neill, leader of the People's National Congress - of which Rufina Peter is a member. "Our mothers, girls and

Solomons PM proposes to change constitution

Honiara, Solomon Islands - Solomon Islands' pro-Beijing prime minister has proposed changing the constitution to delay scheduled elections, officials confirmed on Tuesday, fuelling concerns for the future of democracy in the Pacific nation.

After months of speculation, Manasseh Sogavare has formally put a Constitution Amendment Bill to parliament that would delay next year's election - citing the burden of hosting the Pacific Games, a sporting event, in the same year.

The proposal, obtained by AFP, seeks to suspend the dissolution of 'the eleventh Parliament on December 31', meaning the general election would not happen until 2024 at the earliest.

The Solomon Islands parliament is expected to discuss the constitutional changes on September 5, a parliamentary official told AFP. Sogavare, a four-time prime minister who has twice been ousted by votes of no confidence, is facing another challenge to his premiership, this time over his increasingly close



US Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman posing with Solomon Islands PM Manasseh Sogavare (right) in Honiara, Solomon Islands on Sunday (AFP)

ties with China.

After widespread rioting in the capital Honiara demanding his ouster late last year, Sogavare signed a secretive security pact with Beijing that - according to a leaked draft - would allow him to call in Chinese security forces to quell further unrest.

Western powers are wary that, in return, Sogavare could provide China with a military foothold in a strategically important part of the world.

Senior US diplomat Wendy Sherman this week visited the nation of 800,000 people to mark the 80th anniversary of World War II's Battle of Guadalcanal. During the visit she pointedly warned her hosts about a new struggle against 'leaders who believe that coercion, pressure, and violence are tools to be used with impunity'.

"It is up to us to decide if we want to continue having societies where people are free to

women in PNG and in fact the whole Pacific region have a true champion, an experienced woman in Parliament," O'Neill said in a statement.

Voting ended on Friday but the count is still underway for some seats in the mountainous, forest-covered country, which is rich in resources but suffers from widespread poverty.

About 10,000 police, army and corrections services personnel were mobilised for the vote.

In one politically motivated attack on July 26, a machete-wielding gang chased down two victims outside a counting centre, leaving one with a traumatic brain injury and another with a wounded limb.

In an ethnically diverse country with more than 800 languages, voters traditionally focus on the material benefits candidates can bring to their communities.

AFP

Turkish defence delegation to visit US

Ankara, Turkey - A Turkish delegation will visit Washington next week to follow up on US President Joe Biden's pledge to deliver F16 fighter jets for Turkey's ageing air force, Ankara said on Tuesday.

Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said the team would arrive in Washington on Monday on the invitation of unnamed US officials.

But he stressed that Ankara remained firmly opposed to conditions on the sale imposed by leading members of Congress who worry about Turkey's tense relations with Greece.

AFP

PM Soga has submitted the Constitution Amendment Bill to postpone the dissolution of the 11th parliament

MATTHEW WALE

speak their minds," she said.

'Like dictators through history'

At home, Sogavare's detractors see the effort to change the constitution as another move by a leader who has become increasingly autocratic since his latest stint in power began in 2019.

"So it's happening. PM Soga has submitted the Constitution Amendment Bill to postpone the dissolution of the 11th Parl (parliament)," Matthew Wale, leader of the Solomons opposition, wrote on Twitter Tuesday.

"I encourage all citizens to use the Bills Committee process to

air their views." Moves to muzzle the country's public broadcaster have only fuelled concerns about the trajectory of Sogavare's rule.

The 67-year-old insists he only wants to defer the elections because the Solomon Islands 'do not have enough funds' to host both the Pacific Games and an election in the same year.

"We are simply moving the national elections to after we host the Pacific Games 2023," he said in a speech last month.

China is financing a national stadium complex reportedly worth US\$53mn to host the Games and Australia on Tuesday announced it would help with funding.

Australia 'can't keep pretending Sogavare wants a democracy in the Solomon Islands', said Michael Shoebridge of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

"He's used Chinese money and will use Chinese security forces to stay in power. Now, like dictators through history, he's changing the Constitution to avoid elections."

AFP



Cars damaged by flood water are seen on the street in Seoul on Tuesday (AFP)

Record rainfall, flooding in Seoul kill seven

Seoul, South Korea - Subway stations and major roads were underwater in the South Korean capital Seoul after record-breaking rains caused severe flooding, with at least seven people dead and seven more missing, officials said on Tuesday.

Authorities warned there was more rain to come even as emergency workers struggled to clear the hulks of flooded cars, which AFP reporters saw strewn across major intersections throughout the city.

Dramatic images shared on social media late on Monday showed people wading through waist-deep water, metro stations overflowing, and cars half-submerged in Seoul's posh Gangnam district, which was particularly hard-hit when torrential rain battered the city.

The downpour that began on Monday is the heaviest rainfall in South Korea in 80 years, according to Seoul's Yonhap News Agency.

"At least seven people died in the Seoul metropolitan area,

while seven others are missing, due to heavy rain," an official at Seoul's interior ministry told AFP.

Local reports said three people living in a banchiha - cramped basement flats of the kind made famous in Bong Joon-ho's Oscar-winning *Parasite* - including a teenager, died as their apartment was inundated by floodwaters.

Climate change

President Yoon Suk-yeol blamed the record rainfall on climate change and said the government needed to adapt.

"The government must review the current disaster management system from square one, given that abnormal weather caused by climate change is becoming a part of everyday life," he said.

"We should respond all out until the situation is over in order to protect the precious people's lives and property and take steps until the end, until the people feel that they are enough."

AFP

Three Palestinians killed, 69 shot in Israeli West Bank raid

Nablus, Palestinian Territories - Three people were killed and dozens wounded on Tuesday, the Palestinian health ministry said, as Israeli forces raided the occupied West Bank city of Nablus.

The Israeli military said a senior militant commander was among the dead.

The latest violence comes two days after deadly fighting between Israel and Islamic Jihad fighters in the coastal enclave of Gaza was halted by a truce.

In the old city of Nablus, an AFP correspondent reported Palestinians trading gunfire with Israeli security forces.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said its medics treated 69 people for gunshot wounds across the Nablus area, at least four of them in critical condition.

"The terrorist Ibrahim al-Nabulsi was killed in the city of Nablus," the Israeli army said in a statement, adding that 'another terrorist who was staying in the house' also died.

Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid hailed the raid as a 'highly successful, precise action without casualties' among the security forces. Israeli forces said they launched a shoulder-fired missile at the house and detained four suspects in the raid.

Nabulsi was a commander of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, one of the main fighter groups present in the West Bank operating under the ruling Fatah party.

Following the deadly raid, the fighter group said 'the response will fit the crime'. Hundreds of mourners gathered in Nablus for



A Palestinian protester runs during clashes with Israeli security forces in the old town of Nablus, in the occupied West Bank, on Tuesday (AFP)

The army was in the old city. My son went ahead of me to the market. He was carrying his food. There was shooting and four of us were injured

JAMAL TAHA

the funeral procession of the three dead, with some fighters firing in the air as the bodies were carried through the crowd.

Teen killed

The Palestinian health ministry named those killed as Nabulsi, Islam Sabbouh and Hussein Taha.

Jamal Taha said his 16-year-

old son was killed while they were walking to work.

"The army was in the old city. My son went ahead of me to the market, he was carrying his food. There was shooting and four of us were injured," he told AFP.

Heavy gunfire was heard as dozens of Israeli military vehicles brought traffic in one of the West Bank's largest cities to a stand-

still. Clashes with the Israeli army also broke out in other parts of the city, as Palestinians hurled stones at the troops.

"A violent clash developed with dozens of rioters who threw stones and threw explosives at the forces, who responded by means of crowd dispersal and shooting. Several injuries were confirmed," the army said.

Security forces have conducted near-daily and often deadly operations in the West Bank in recent months, focusing on fighters from the Islamic Jihad group.

On Friday, Israel launched what it called a 'pre-emptive' aer-

ial and artillery bombardment of Islamic Jihad positions in the Gaza Strip, leading fighters in the coastal enclave to fire more than a thousand rockets in retaliation, according to the army.

An Egypt-brokered ceasefire reached on Sunday ended three days of intense fighting that killed 46 Palestinians, 16 of them children, and wounded 360, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Israel's Lapid spoke by telephone with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on Monday, with the premier praising Cairo for its role in 'preserving regional stability and security'.

AFP

ONE YEAR UNDER TALIBAN - PART 1

Inside Afghanistan's secret schools, where girls defy the Taliban

Kabul, Afghanistan - Nafeesa has discovered a great place to hide her schoolbooks from the prying eyes of her disapproving Taliban brother - the kitchen, where Afghan men rarely venture.

Hundreds of thousands of girls and young women like Nafeesa have been deprived of the chance of education since the Taliban returned to power a year ago, but their thirst for learning has not lessened.

"Boys have nothing to do in the kitchen, so I keep my books there," said Nafeesa, who attends a secret school in a village in rural eastern Afghanistan.

"If my brother comes to know about this, he will beat me."

Since seizing power a year ago, the Taliban have imposed harsh restrictions on girls and women to comply with their austere vision of Islam - effectively squeezing them out of public life.

Women can no longer travel on long trips without a male relative to escort them.

They have also been told to cover up with the hijab or preferably with an all-encompassing burqa - although the Taliban's stated preference is for them to only leave home if absolutely necessary.

And, in the cruellest deprivation, secondary schools for girls in many parts of Afghanistan have not been allowed to reopen.

But secret schools have sprung up in rooms of ordinary houses across the country.

A team of AFP journalists visited some of these schools, interviewing students and teachers whose real names have been withheld for their safety.

This is their story.



Girls are seen studying in various secret schools at undisclosed locations in Afghanistan last month. Hundreds of thousands of girls and young women have been deprived of the chance of education since the Taliban returned to power a year ago, but their thirst for learning has not lessened (AFP)

'We want freedom'

Decades of turmoil have played havoc with Afghanistan's education system, so Nafeesa is still studying secondary school subjects even though she is already 20.

Only her mother and older sister know about it.

Her brother fought for years with the Taliban against the former government and US-led forces in the mountains, returning home after their victory imbued with the hardline doctrine that says a woman's place is the home.

He allows her to attend a madrassa to study the Q'uran in the morning, but in the afternoon she sneaks out to a clandestine classroom organised by the Revolutionary Association

of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA).

"We have accepted this risk, otherwise we will remain uneducated," Nafeesa said.

"I want to be a doctor... We want to do something for ourselves, we want to have freedom, serve society and build our future."

When AFP visited her school, Nafeesa and nine other girls were discussing freedom of speech with their female teacher, sitting side-by-side on a carpet and taking turns reading out loud from a textbook.

To get to class, they frequently leave home hours earlier, taking different routes to avoid being noticed in an area made up mostly of members of the Pashtun ethnic group, who

form the bulk of the Taliban and are known for their conservative ways.

If a Taliban fighter asks, the girls say they are enrolled in a tailoring workshop, and hide their schoolbooks in shopping bags or under their abaya and burqa overgarments.

They not only take risks, but also make sacrifices - Nafeesa's sister dropped out of school to limit any suspicions her brother might have.

No justification in Islam

Religious scholars say there is no justification in Islam for the ban on girls' secondary school education and, a year since taking power, the Taliban still insist classes will be allowed to re-

sume.

But the issue has split the movement, with several sources telling AFP a hardline faction that advises supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada opposed any girls' schooling - or at best, wanted it limited to religious studies and practical classes such as cooking and needlework. The official line, however, remains that it is just a 'technical issue' and classes will resume once a curriculum based on Islamic rules is defined.

Primary girls still go to school and, for now at least, young women can attend university - although lectures are segregated and some subjects cut because of a shortage of female teachers.

Without a secondary school

certificate, however, teenage girls will not be able to sit university entrance exams, so this current crop of tertiary female students could be the country's last for the foreseeable future.

"Education is an inalienable right in Islam for both men and women," scholar Abdul Bari Madani told AFP.

"If this ban continues, Afghanistan will return to the medieval age... an entire generation of girls will be buried."

Lost generation

It is this fear of a lost generation that spurred teacher Tamkin to convert her home in Kabul into a school.

The 40-year-old was almost lost herself, having been forced to stop studying during the Tal-

iban's first stint in power, from 1996 to 2001, when all girls' schooling was banned.

It took years of self-study for Tamkin to qualify as a teacher, only for her to lose her job at the education ministry when the Taliban returned last year.

"I didn't want these girls to be like me," she told AFP, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"They should have a better future."

With the support of her husband, Tamkin first turned a storeroom into a class.

Then she sold a family cow to raise funds for textbooks, as most of her girls came from poor families and couldn't afford their own.

Today, she teaches English and science to about 25 eager students.

On a rainy day recently, the girls trickled into her classroom for a biology lesson.

"I just want to study. It doesn't matter what the place is like," said Narwan, who should be in grade 12, sitting in a room packed with girls of all ages.

Behind her, a poster on a wall urges students to be considerate: "Tongue has no bones, but it is so strong that it can break the heart, so be careful of your words."

Such consideration by her neighbours has helped Tamkin keep the school's real purpose hidden.

"The Taliban have asked several times 'what's going on here?' I have told the neighbours to say it's a madrassa," Tamkin said.

Seventeen-year-old Maliha believes firmly the day will come when the Taliban will no longer be in power.

"Then we will put our knowledge to good use," she said.

AFP

FELAFEL VS DAL VADA

Crunch and munch

Felafel



If you live or reside in the Middle East, Felafel is a household name for a cheap snack, prepared from ground chickpeas, herbs and spices, at home as well on the street. They are golden brown and crispy on the outside, and spongy and beautifully green on the inside.

Parsley and cilantro add a rich flavour to the falafels as well as give them a vibrant hue within, while spices (mainly cumin and cayenne) add an earthy flavour. And baking keeps the interior fluffy. It can be prepared in advance and frozen, and baked/deep fried whenever required in minutes.

Ingredients

- 1 cup uncooked dried chickpeas – soaked overnight
- ½ cup onion - chopped
- 1 cup fresh parsley leaves – chopped
- 1 cup fresh cilantro leaves - chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, 1tsp cumin
- 1tsp coriander powder
- ½tsp cayenne, 1tsp salt
- ½tsp black pepper, 1tsp baking powder
- Vegetable oil - for deep frying
- Salad, ketchup – to serve

Method

Add the chickpeas to a food processor along with the onion, parsley, cilantro, garlic, cumin, coriander, cayenne, salt and pepper, and baking powder. Process until the mixture has a rough consistency (not pasty) that holds together when you squeeze it in your hands. Refrigerate the mixture for at least an hour. Now, heat oil for deep frying in a saucepan. Form the falafel mixture into balls or into pellets using a 'falafel scoop'. Carefully add the balls into the oil and fry for 2 to 4 minutes until golden brown. Fry in batches and remove on paper towel to drain excess oil and cool. Serve with ketchup or any favourite dip and diced cucumber-tomato salad.

TIPS

- Never use canned, cooked chickpeas - raw, soaked chickpeas form better
- Use different spices to suit your own taste
- Make sure the oil is well heated, before frying, for best crunchy results

Dal Vada



The debate whether the Middle Eastern 'Felafel' and the Indian 'Dal Vada' are one and the same thing is yet inconclusive. But, if you love these crunchy vegan snacks, don't get caught in the crossfire – just enjoy the punch delivered in every munch!

Dal Vada is made with chana dal which is derived from brown chickpeas, also known as Bengal gram. Hence, it is called Dal Vada – since it is a very popular snack in southern India, it is also known as 'Parippu Vada' wherein parippu means lentils. Dal Vada is a popular evening snack at home as well as commonly available on street food carts in India.

Prepared with coarsely ground chana dal (leaving behind some whole dals) and chopped onions, herbs (also curry leaves) and spices, Dal Vada is much appreciated for its nutty flavour as well as appetising aroma.

Ingredients

- 1 cup chana dal – soaked overnight
- ½tsp salt, 2cm piece cinnamon
- 1 or 2 dried red chillies, ¾tsp cumin seeds,
- ¾tsp fennel seeds, 1 onion – minced,
- Handful of mint leaves, 1 sprig curry leaves - chopped, 1¼tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 to 2 green chillies - chopped
- Oil for deep frying

Method

Reserve 2 tbsp soaked chana dal. Add cin-

namon, red chilli, cumin seeds and fennel seeds to a blender jar and blend it to get a coarse mixture. Set aside. Now add the chana dal and salt, and pulse it a few times to get a coarse dough. Add the uncrushed chana dal and transfer to a bowl. Add finely chopped mint, curry leaves, onion, and the masala powder which was made earlier. Also add green chillies and ginger garlic paste. Mix everything well. Taste and add more salt if needed. Take a handful of the dough & check if it binds well. Form a ball and flatten it to form a thick vada. Sprinkle a few drops of water for binding, if required. (Alternatively, a small portion of dough can be ground to a paste and added to the mixture for binding well.)□

Now, heat oil in a deep pan for frying. Make small balls of desired size and flatten them into vadas. Place on a greased plate or sheet of butter paper. When the oil is nice and hot, add the vadas, few at a time. If they rise quickly, without browning, then the oil temperature is right. Fry till golden brown on both sides and remove on paper towels to drain excess oil. Serve hot with ketchup or green chutney.

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Beyond hummus

PALESTINIAN CUISINE



PALESTINIANS COOK UP NEW FOOD TRENDS, WITH EUROPEAN INFLUENCE, EVIDENT IN RESTAURANTS AS WELL AS IN FOOD TOURS AND BOOKS



Tour guide Izzeldin Bukhari, who runs Jerusalem food tours and cooking classes, with a dish in a restaurant during a guided tour

From the ancient alleys of Jerusalem's Old City to kitchens around the world, Palestinians are stirring new trends in cooking while abiding by traditions. The trend has whipped up a growing appetite for specialised books and food tours.

"It's changing for the better, I think. Many Palestinians are keen on promoting their foods," said Nassar Odeh, as oven aromas wafted over a Jerusalem street.

The Palestinian entrepreneur has spent the past few months watching gourmands drift in and out of his new eatery, Taboon, named after the traditional clay oven.

Customers are tucking into dishes such as Armenian lahmajoon, a thin pizza with ground meat and spices which Odeh remembers being sold to

hungry crowds in the Old City decades earlier.

"Armenian dishes are part of the Palestinian culture," said Odeh. "This is extremely important because this emphasises the Palestinian presence and the entrepreneurship. We need to be proud of our products."

New concept, new ideas

Opened last year in what was once the family's souvenir store, Taboon is part of a string of new Palestinian cafes and restaurants.

Beyond those within the Old City walls, they have sprung up in other areas of annexed east Jerusalem such as the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, or further afield in Ramallah, in the West Bank.



It's changing for the better, I think. Many Palestinians are keen on promoting their foods

NASSAR ODEH

They range from a fine dining experience to fusion menus, blending Palestinian ingredients with European dishes, according to Izzeldin Bukhari, who runs Jerusalem food tours and cooking classes.

"It's a great start; we're really in the beginning," said Bukhari, who plans to offer consulting services to business owners wanting to revitalise their restaurants.

"Everyone was doing kind of the same thing, but lately, I see people

stepping up and doing a new concept, new ideas," he said.

Showcasing the breadth of Palestinian dishes and produce remains central for Dalia Dabdoub, who manages Taboon and owns bars in the West Bank cities of Bethlehem and Jericho. "We want to change the industry, in doing more food that people don't know," she said.

A variety of aubergines renowned locally, which come from Battir, a village in the Bethlehem area, will soon be hitting the Taboon menu, while some produce is imported from Gaza.

"I always try to choose the tomatoes; when they come from Gaza they're really red and they're tastier," said Dabdoub. Gazan green chillies, meanwhile, are particularly fierce.

The advent of new eateries builds on the Old City's history of hole-in-the-wall spots, specialising in a single dish like falafel.

Palestinian chef Sami Tamimi grew up with home cooking, such as school packed lunches of cauliflower fritters stuffed in pita, and went out for certain foods.

"I remember carrying a plate and going to the hummus guy," said Tamimi, talking avidly about beloved dishes including stuffed vine leaves and courgettes.

Such traditional foods and contemporary takes were compiled in the chef's 2020 cookbook: 'Falastin'.

"Just 10 years ago, if you went to a publisher and said I want to publish a

book about Palestinian food, they would say, 'Who's going to buy it?'" said Tamimi, who moved to London more than two decades ago.

A wonderful thing

A growing interest in Palestinian food abroad is tied to a shift away from presenting Mediterranean or Middle Eastern cuisine as one set of recipes.

"Nowadays, you see more focus on the country, or the place and their food... I think it's a wonderful thing," said Tamimi, who has a series of cookbooks and runs restaurants with Israeli business partner Yotam Ottolenghi.

Israelis have proven more successful than Palestinians in branding local cuisine, noted Bukhari, including an image of an Israeli flag atop falafel at Tel Aviv airport.

"They are very good at marketing it," said the SacredCuisine founder. "We are leaving a gap for the Israelis to talk about our food."

But Palestinians are catching up internationally, with Bethlehem chef Fadi Kattan set to open a London restaurant later this year.

Tamimi himself is due to return briefly to Jerusalem for a residency at the historic American Colony Hotel in October. His two-week menu follows a previous event there when the chef saw just how much has changed on the city's food scene.

"It was the first time that I worked with a whole team of Palestinians," he said.

AFP



A cook holds a tray of vegan 'lahmajun' (meat on dough) popular Middle Eastern flatbread next to a stone oven at the Taboon restaurant



Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza celebrates after scoring a century in the first one-day international against Bangladesh in Harare on Friday (AFP)

RAZZMATAZZ!

Pakistan-born Sikandar Raza's red-hot form helps Zimbabwe get their mojo back

Harare, Zimbabwe - With all the noise going on elsewhere in the wealthy world of white ball cricket, it is easy to miss a small revolution taking place in a territory that since 2003 has become something of a backwater.

On Sunday, Zimbabwe pulled off a great run chase, for the second time in three days, to beat Bangladesh by five wickets and take a winning 2-0 lead in a three-match one-day international series, which closes in Harare on Wednesday.

It followed hard on the heels of a 2-1 T20I series win against the same opponents and a convincing qualification for the T20 World Cup later this year.

At the heart of these successes is one man, a 36-year-old all-rounder whose boyhood dream lay not on the cricket field but in the skies, as a fighter pilot in the Pakistani Air Force (PAF).

"The things that Sikandar Raza has been doing in recent weeks with the bat deserve wider recognition. Back to back ODI cen-



Sikandar Raza celebrates after scoring a century in the second ODI against Bangladesh in Harare on Sunday (AFP)

turies. #ZIMvBAN," tweeted former West Indies fast bowler Ian Bishop, suggesting that Raza is the new (not quite so young) kid on the block.

Batting in the middle-order, Raza has been in outstanding form. On Sunday, he creamed 117 not out and shared a match-winning partnership of 201 with Regis Chakabva, who made 102. Two days earlier Raza struck 135 not out and shared a 192-run partnership with the inexperienced Innocent Kaia who hit his maiden ODI century.

But that is only half the tale. In the space of four weeks, Raza has rattled up 607 runs across formats at an average of 101.16, with four half-centuries to add to

those two hundreds.

With his off-spin, he has also picked up 11 wickets at 22.18 apiece, and took 4 for 8 against the Netherlands in the final of the T20 World Cup qualifiers.

At the age of 36, when many players are considering retirement, Raza has become an 'overnight' success.

Born in Pakistan and arriving in Zimbabwe with his parents in 2002, he never had thoughts of a cricket career, instead spending three years training to be a fighter pilot.

He did not make the final cut because of a glitch in his eyesight but he credits the experience for his resilience on the pitch and ability to deal with pressure.

"There's pressure to do well and win the game, I won't lie," Raza told ESPNcricinfo last week.

"Of course, it helps that I am from an Air Force background. We don't give up. I get hit, I get hurt, broken fingers, toes, etc. I don't care.

"I personally feel it helps spending the three-and-a-half years in PAF college. I will always be a fighter within myself. I couldn't become a fighter pilot. But I think as a person, I will always be a fighter. The training mentally and physically is paying dividends now."

That toughness also helped when he had to undergo bone marrow surgery in his right shoulder last year.

Fortunately, it was not cancerous but he has had to alter his bowling action, although as recent returns show that does not seem to have posed a problem.

Raza's rise, which may well lead to the riches of T20 franchise competitions around the world, coincides with the return of the doughty Dave Houghton as coach, an experienced head who played a key role in helping elevate Zimbabwe from Associate to Test status in the 1980s and 90s.

With this key combination, the future is looking up for Zimbabwe.

AFP

Registrations open for Oman Cricket's new season

Muscat, Oman: Oman Cricket announced that its 2022 season will start with division leagues in October. The team registrations for the season opened on August 9.

Oman Cricket Chief Development Officer Duleep Mendis invited the teams to register for the new season.

"We are delighted to begin the preparations for the domestic tournaments for all starting in October. On behalf of the Board

We are delighted to begin the preparations for the domestic tournaments

DULEEP MENDIS

of Directors of Oman Cricket, we invite teams willing to play qual-

ity cricket to register for the new season. We extend our sincere regards to all corporates, institutions and sponsors who form the backbone of all teams participating in the domestic season."

Registrations for the Premier Division and Senior Division leagues are open now while for Junior Leagues and Women's League the registrations will start in September. The final groupings for the Divisional Leagues will be confirmed once

the registrations are closed.

The last date of team registration confirmation (registering along with fee payment) for all divisions is August 28. The last date for player registrations is September 4 upon team confirmation.

Teams can register at www.omancricket.org > registrations. Oman Cricket can also be reached on +968 92204745 (Zeeshan Siddique) for any queries to registrations.



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Rudi Koertzen

Former South African umpire Koertzen dies in car accident

Johannesburg, South Africa - Former South African umpire Rudi Koertzen, labelled the 'slow finger of death' by the media, has died in a car accident, a family member said on Tuesday. He was 73.

"Rudi suffered fatal injuries after an accident near Stilbaai between Cape Town and Gqeberha," said the family spokesperson, who requested anonymity.

"My father went to a golf tournament with some friends and they were expected to come back on Monday, but it seems they decided to play another round of golf," his son Rudi said.

The South African team will wear black armbands on Wednesday in honour of Koertzen when they face England at Lord's in London in a Test match.

Koertzen first umpired in 1981 and retired in 2010 after a Test between Australia and Pakistan in Leeds, England.

AFP

Virat Kohli has been out of form for quite a while and will be keen to be among the runs

Virat Kohli returns for India at Asia Cup in UAE

New Delhi, India - India named out-of-form star batsman Virat Kohli in their T20 squad for an Asia Cup campaign which begins later this month with a showdown against arch-rivals Pakistan.

Vice-captain KL Rahul also returns for the tournament in the UAE from August 27 to September 11 after missing all of India's fixtures since the end of the Indian Premier League in May with Covid and injury.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was however ruled out with injury, national selectors said, naming a strong 15-man squad.

Bumrah, who is reported to

be suffering from back spasms, is undergoing rehab at the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore.

Three players - Shreyas Iyer, Axar Patel and Deepak Chahar - were named as standbys in the Asia Cup squad.

Kohli, 33, was rested for the recent tour of the West Indies and has not scored a century in any format since 2019. Last year he was replaced by Rohit Sharma as all-format skipper.

The last edition of the Asia Cup was a 50-over contest but this time the format will be Twenty20.

Defending champions India

are the most successful team, having won the trophy on seven occasions.

India's first match in the six-team competition is against Pakistan on August 28, seeking revenge for their defeat in the T20 World Cup last year.

India squad for Asia Cup: Rohit Sharma (captain), KL Rahul (vice-captain), Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Deepak Hooda, Rishabh Pant, Dinesh Karthik, Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, R Ashwin, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan.

AFP



Serena Williams during her match against France's Harmony Tan at the 2022 Wimbledon (AFP)

MOM KNOWS BEST

Serena wants to focus on family, spiritual goals, says 'countdown' to retirement has begun

Paris, France - US tennis great Serena Williams announced on Tuesday that "the countdown has begun" to her retirement from the sport.

Williams, 40, won the last of her 23 Slams at the 2017 Australian Open when she was already pregnant with daughter, Olympia.

However, she has failed to add a 24th major which would take her level with Margaret Court's all-time record.

Her final attempt will come at the US Open in New York later this month.

"There comes a time in life when we have to decide to move in a different direction," she said on Instagram.

"That time is always hard when you love something so much. My goodness do I enjoy tennis. But now, the countdown has begun.

"I have to focus on being a mom, my spiritual goals and finally discovering a different, but just exciting Serena. I'm gonna relish these next few weeks."

Williams stepped onto a hard-court for the first time in a year and a half on Monday in the WTA Toronto tournament where she reached the second round

I'm here to tell you that I'm evolving away from tennis, toward other things that are important to me

SERENA WILLIAMS

with a straight sets victory over Spaniard Nuria Parrizas Diaz.

It was her first singles victory since the 2021 French Open, 14 months ago.

The former world number one had played her first singles match in a year following a lengthy injury layoff during a first-round defeat at Wimbledon in June.

Earlier on Tuesday, Williams wrote in the September edition of Vogue magazine where she featured on the cover that she was "evolving away" from the sport after the US Open.

"Unfortunately, I wasn't ready to win Wimbledon this year," she said in the publication.

"And I don't know if I will be ready to win New York. But I'm going to try. And the lead-up tournaments will be fun. I know

there's a fan fantasy that I might have tied Margaret that day in London, then maybe beat her record in New York, and then at the trophy ceremony say, 'See ya!' I get that. It's a good fantasy.

"But I'm not looking for some ceremonial, final on-court moment. I'm terrible at goodbyes, the world's worst."

Williams won her first Grand Slam title at the 1999 US Open, when she was 17.

She has won the Wimbledon and Australian Open singles title seven times each, along with six US Open trophies and three French Open successes.

"I have never liked the word retirement. It doesn't feel like a modern word to me," she said.

"I'm here to tell you that I'm evolving away from tennis, toward other things that are important to me.

"A few years ago I quietly started Serena Ventures, a venture capital firm. Soon after that, I started a family. I want to grow that family. But I've been reluctant to admit to myself or anyone else that I have to move on from playing tennis. Alexis, my husband, and I have hardly talked about it; it's like a taboo topic."

AFP



Ozzy Osbourne performs during the CWG closing ceremony

Osbourne closes Commonwealth Games as Birmingham parties

Birmingham, United Kingdom - Legendary Black Sabbath frontman Ozzy Osbourne brought the curtain down on the Commonwealth Games in spectacular style on Monday as dominant Australia celebrated finishing top of the medals table yet again.

Athletes swarmed Birmingham's Alexander Stadium for a closing party that also featured UB40, Dexys and a tribute to Peaky Blinders, the global hit TV show about the city's most notorious gang.

Birmingham-born Osbourne, known as the "Prince of Darkness", brought the ceremony to a climax after emerging as the surprise act.

Earlier, Australia wrapped up their campaign in style, hammering India 7-0 in the men's hockey final to end up with 67 golds overall. Hosts England ended in second place with 57 golds, ahead of Canada on 26 and India on 22.

AFP

Mike Tyson slams 'slave master' Hulu series for 'stealing' life story

Los Angeles, United States - Former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson has accused an unauthorized television drama of stealing his life story, comparing the streaming platform behind the upcoming series to a "slave master."

"Mike," which premieres on US streamer Hulu August 25, is a scripted drama that re-enacts moments from the controversial fighter's life, from his early childhood and through his 1992 rape conviction. "Hulu is the streaming version of the slave master. They stole my story and didn't pay me," wrote Tyson on Instagram.

He added: "I don't support their story about my life. It's not 1822. It's 2022. They stole my life story and didn't pay me."

"To Hulu executives I'm



Mike Tyson

just a n****r they can sell on the auction block," he wrote, using asterisks in place of letters.

Hulu, which is only available in the United States, is majority-owned by Disney.

The show depicts Tyson being bullied as a young child with a lisp, his teenage years in and out of prison after joining a Brooklyn street gang, and his early start in boxing.

AFP

British athletics coach Minichiello gets life ban for sexual misconduct

London, United Kingdom - Toni Minichiello, one of Britain's leading track and field coaches, has been given a life ban after an investigation found he had engaged in "sexually physical behaviour" with athletes.

But Minichiello, who coached Jessica Ennis-Hill to heptathlon gold at the 2012 London Olympics, responded to Tuesday's announcement from UK Athletics (UKA) by saying he had been subjected to an "unfair" process.

Minichiello was also deemed to have made inappropriate sexual references and gestures to athletes and engaged in "inappropriate and sometimes aggressive behaviour, bullying and emotional abuse".

None of the female athletes allegedly abused by Minichiello has been named in a report published by UK Athletics on Tuesday.

Both the Guardian and Daily Telegraph newspapers said they understood Ennis-Hill was not one of the athletes involved.

UK Athletics said the findings,



Toni Minichiello

which amount to multiple breaches of its coach licence terms over a 15-year period, "constitute gross breaches of trust" and are of the "utmost seriousness".

But the 56-year-old Minichiello insisted: "I have been a coach for over 30 years and while I have been robust and demanding, I have not behaved inappropriately towards any of my

athletes as many of them would confirm."

Minichiello's coaching licence expired during the disciplinary process, which means he cannot be suspended or subject to a sanction by UK Athletics.

However, the national governing body has said it will not consider any future application made by Minichiello for a coach licence.

AFP

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Ancelotti's habitual winners eye Super start to season

European champions Real Madrid motivated ahead of Super Cup clash against Eintracht Frankfurt

Helsinki, Finland - Real Madrid are determined not to be knocked off their perch at the summit of European football this season as they prepare to start their campaign, with the UEFA Super Cup against Eintracht Frankfurt in Helsinki on Wednesday.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who is the only manager to win the Champions League four times, said his side's 1-0 victory over Liverpool in last season's final made him "feel like no one should ever take your place".

"And that's a pretty strong motivation to keep winning," he said in an interview with UEFA.com.

Ancelotti returned for a second spell in charge of Real ahead of last season and led them to their 35th Spanish title.

However, it was in Europe where Real really impressed, pulling off comeback victories over Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City before beating the heavily favoured Reds in the final.

"All the comebacks we made were achieved in our stadium, thanks to that boost which came from the stands. Always believe, never give up. After all, we played



Real Madrid players during a team training session

All the comebacks we made were achieved in our stadium, thanks to that boost which came from the stands. Always believe, never give up

CARLO ANCELOTTI

against very strong teams. It was inevitable that we would suffer," he said.

The Italian coach said he saw

echoes of Real's fighting spirit in their underdog opponents Frankfurt, and was aware not to take last season's Europa League win-

ners lightly.

"Last year, Eintracht achieved something special because they weren't among the favourites," added Ancelotti, whose side recently returned from a pre-season tour to the United States.

Wednesday's game will be played at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki, where Frankfurt will make their Super Cup debut in their first competitive meeting with Madrid since the legendary

1960 European Cup final which the Spanish giants won 7-3.

Real will be making their eighth Super Cup appearance, having lifted the trophy four times.

Ancelotti himself is unbeaten in Super Cup finals. He won two with AC Milan in 2003 and 2007, as well as with Real in 2014.

While Real will take on a side which qualified for the final on the

back of winning their first European trophy in 42 years, Ancelotti said Frankfurt had the advantage going into Wednesday's clash in Helsinki.

"We have a few more disadvantages than Eintracht, who start their season earlier, but we'll play to win," he said.

Although Madrid's La Liga campaign will not start until Sunday when they take on newly-promoted Almeria, Frankfurt fans

may question how much of an advantage they have in the wake of Friday's 6-1 thrashing at the hands of Bayern Munich in their Bundesliga season opener.

Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp said his side would not be overawed against Madrid and were relishing the experience ahead of what will be their maiden Champions League campaign this year.

AFP



Amadou Onana

Everton sign Belgium's Onana from Lille

London, United Kingdom - Everton have signed Belgium international Amadou Onana for an undisclosed fee from Lille, the Premier League club announced Tuesday.

The 20-year-old midfielder has agreed a five-year contract at Goodison Park and becomes the Toffees' fifth signing of the current transfer window after James Tarkowski, Ruben Vinagre, Conor Coady and Dwight

McNeil.

"It feels great to join Everton," he told the Merseyside team's official website. "I know it's a big, big club, one of the biggest in England. It's something I want to be part of for many years."

Onana said another attraction in moving to Goodison Park was the chance to work with Everton manager Frank Lampard, the former Chelsea and England midfielder.

"He played at the highest level, won many things and was a midfielder, too."

"It means a lot to have interest from him and I think he can teach me many things."

Born in Senegal, Onana played youth football in Belgium. He moved to Germany in 2018 and represented both Hoffenheim and Hamburg before moving to French club Lille last year.

"Amadou is a player we were really keen to bring to Everton," said Lampard. "He has many great qualities to help strengthen our midfield and, at just 20 years old, has massive potential to get even better."

Earlier on Monday, England centre-back Coady joined Everton on a season-long loan from Premier League rivals Wolves.

The Toffees were left short of defenders after both Ben God-

frey and Yerry Mina were injured during a 1-0 defeat by Chelsea in their opening match of the new league season on Saturday.

This move sees Wolves captain Coady, 29, returning to his home city eight years after leaving Liverpool, where he came through the Anfield club's academy.

"It's incredible to join Everton," Coady told his new club's website.

AFP

Sassuolo dumped out of Italian Cup by Modena

Milan, Italy - Sassuolo were knocked out of the Italian Cup on Monday after falling to a 3-2 second round defeat at local rivals Modena.

Nicola Mosti scored once in each half in a deserved victory for Serie B side Modena, who took the lead in the 11th minute thanks to Diego Falcinelli's deflected strike from the edge of the area.

Domenico Berardi netted for Sassuolo from the penalty spot in the second minute of first half stoppage time.

Although Kaan Ayhan pulled another one back with three minutes remaining Sassuolo were unable to find the leveller which would have taken the match into extra-time and became the fifth Serie A team to exit the cup.

AFP

Galatasaray relaunch with Napoli icon Mertens and Arsenal's Torreira

Istanbul, Turkey - Struggling Turkish giants Galatasaray announced they had signed Belgium's Dries Mertens and Uruguay midfielder Lucas Torreira on Monday.

Saddled with heavy debts and a tight budget Galatasaray struggled to 13th in the league last season.

Fans of the record 22-times Turkish champions welcomed the two players at an airport on Sunday as they arrived for final medical checks.

Mertens is 35-year-old but joins after nine influential seasons with Napoli, where the versatile winger became the club's record goalscorer.

"It was an honour to get an offer from Galatasaray," Mertens said in a Twitter post. "I'm happy and excited."

Torreira, 26, won an FA Cup with Arsenal and then La Liga on loan with Atletico Madrid.

He also impressed in Serie A last season where he played 35-times on loan at Fiorentina.

Torreira said he was sure the move would be a success for him and the club.

"Everyone at Arsenal thanks Lucas for his contribution during his time with us. We wish Lucas and his family the best of health and happiness in their new chapter with Galatasaray," Arsenal said in a statement.



Galatasaray's Dries Mertens during a training session on Tuesday (AFP)

Sanchez leaves Inter after ending contract

Milan, Italy - Alexis Sanchez is no longer an Inter Milan player after the Serie A club announced on Monday an agreement to terminate the Chile forward's contract.

In a statement Inter said that they had "reached an agreement for the consensual termination" of Sanchez's contract, opening the door to a potential move to Marseille.

According to Italian media Inter will pay Sanchez five million euros (\$5.1 million) to end his time at the San Siro.

In return Inter get Sanchez's seven million euro salary, one of the highest at the club, off their books as they try to cut their wage bill.

The 33-year-old, who signed for Inter in 2019 but never established himself as a starter, was not part of Simone Inzaghi's plans after the return of Romelu Lukaku this summer.



Alexis Sanchez

Marseille president Pablo Longoria said on Sunday that he was interested in bringing Sanchez to Ligue 1, saying to Prime Video that he was "the sort of profile we want".

AFP