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Recall

Recall Date: 03rd September 2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
NEW RANGE ROVER	2023	83

Recall consequence

Wind Noise

Recall Action

JLR owners will be contacted. After inspection if required, the defected part(s) will be replaced for the concerning vehicles listed under the campaign

Contact Data

Contact us at 80062643 for more information

To check the serial numbers of the affected commodities,
please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>


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ACERE

Karwa Motors to build armoured vehicles

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Karwa Motors has signed a manufacturing agreement with TAG Duqm, an affiliate of US-based The Armored Group (TAG). Announced on Saturday, the collaboration intends to launch armoured vehicle production at Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

Dr Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors, informed that the agreement aligns with the company's strategic objective of broadening its production spectrum and leveraging existing manufacturing strengths. "This alliance not only underscores our commitment to bolstering the local industry but also expand our footprint in regional and international markets and invigorate commercial activities within SEZAD."

Since its launch in 1992, TAG has grown to be one of the largest commercial armoured truck suppliers in the world, with multiple manufacturing locations in differ-



ent countries. The company's expertise spans across a spectrum of bullet-resistant vehicles, catering to military units, law enforcement agencies, personal protection and the cash-in-transit sector.

Shedding light on the rationale behind the venture, Tariq al Hamidani, CEO of TAG Duqm, said that the performance of Karwa Motors in recent years inspired TAG Duqm to have a vehicle production deal with it.

"We anticipate that this col-

laboration will elevate the operational capabilities of both entities and fuel our collective ambition to augment investments in Duqm's economic zone," Hamidani said.

Balushi extolled the efforts of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones in attracting investments and ensuring the sustenance and growth of such ventures. He also highlighted the invaluable support of Oman Investment Authority and Mowasalat

Qatar - the state-owned transport company of Qatar - in fortifying Karwa's strategy to consolidate the automotive sector within and beyond the sultanate.

Originating as a collaborative venture between Mowasalat Qatar and Oman Investment Authority, Karwa Motors focuses on bus manufacturing. The state-of-the-art facility, spread over 600,000sqm in SEZAD, boasts an annual production capacity of 600 buses. Commencing operations in 2021, the factory committed its initial phase to producing buses for Qatar World Cup 2022.

Equipped with cutting-edge technology, the facility includes different workshops that cover the entire spectrum of vehicle production, from cutting and welding to final assembly.

In line with the new agreement, Karwa Motors is gearing up to inaugurate a dedicated production line for armoured vehicles, leveraging its sophisticated infrastructure and capabilities.

MHT calls on storytellers, filmmakers to take part in UNWTO competition

Our Correspondent

Muscat



In an effort to commemorate the 25th session of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) General Assembly, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has called on filmmakers, artists and storytellers to make a mark on the world stage with compelling narratives on sustainable tourism.

Scheduled from October 16 to 20, Samarkand, Uzbekistan will host this milestone assembly.

UNWTO is seeking entries from all over the world to encapsulate the essence of sustainable tourism via compelling visual tales in this video competition. Contestants are encouraged to participate in two distinct categories:

Promotion and the Decade of Action: In this category, participants are challenged to produce videos that seamlessly merge promotional content with the

ethos of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, entries should reference at least one of the 17 Global Goals, be it emphasising community growth, championing environmental preservation or heralding economic expansion via tourism. Central to this category is aligning visual content with the collective aspirations of the global populace.

Exceptional Stories of Sustainable Tourism: This section seeks tales that not only touch the heart but also illuminate the vast soci-

etal contributions of the tourism sector. The aim is to underscore the optimism and transformative power of tourism, spotlighting its capability to invigorate communities globally.

Videos should have been released between January 1, 2022 and July 31, 2023. 'UNWTO's extensive membership, encompassing both Member States and Affiliate Members, is strongly encouraged to contribute to both categories. Such inclusive participation serves to accentuate tourism's pivotal role

in sustainable development, employment creation and economic stimulus, while celebrating the array of talent within the UNWTO sphere.'

The winners will be unveiled during the General Assembly in October. Their exemplary work will not only be featured prominently across UNWTO's digital platforms but might also influence the organisation's future initiatives, events and workshops.

Submission deadline is set for September 15, 2023 and participants must forward their pieces to comm@unwto.org and also copy to rdme@unwto.org. Official participation requires the completion of a registration form available on the UNWTO website.

The UNWTO Video Competition for its 25th General Assembly stands as a beacon for proponents of sustainable tourism, urging them to encapsulate tourism's multifaceted impact on societies, ecosystems and economies.



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Dhofar sees over 739,000 visitors for khareef, up 16.3%

Salalah - The number of visitors who experienced the 2023 kharref in Dhofar since the season started until August 15 was 739,884, up 16.3% compared to the corresponding period in 2022, according to National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) data.

NCSI compiles visitor numbers in three categories – citizens, GCC visitors and tourists of other nationalities.

According to the NCSI data, the number of Omani visitors this khareef has increased 16%

to 516,276.

A total of 125,889 visitors from other GCC states have arrived to date this season, compared to 107,804 during the corresponding period in 2022.

The number of visitors of other nationalities has risen from 83,382 to 97,719 this season.

Statistics indicate that 581,723 visitors arrived via land checkpoints, while the number of air travellers was 158,161, registering an increase of 29% over the figures of this segment last year.

OIA unveils programme to nurture tomorrow's leaders

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Recognising the critical need to cultivate and hone leadership capabilities in employees, the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) on Thursday opened a package of programmes dedicated to help 'promising talents' from various sectors become tomorrow's leaders.

'Leadership Development School' - as christened - is a move to empower talented workers from within the OIA, the Ministry of Finance, and select OIA-associated companies with leadership qualities.

The curriculum - shaped in collaboration with Takatuf, an OIA subsidiary specialised in human resource consultancy, and the globally recognised Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) - promises to be both comprehensive and transformative.

Notable people who attended the inauguration ceremony included Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of OIA, senior representatives from the Ministry of Finance, and a distinguished cadre of trainers and HR experts.

The inaugural batch will have 50 carefully evaluated candidates, based on their leadership acumen and personality traits. The candidates will be grouped into two cohorts for an intensive three-module curriculum over



Abdulsalam al Murshidi

approximately four months.

Saud al Yahmadi, OIA's assistant deputy president for People and Change, provided insights into the programme.

"Our goal is to develop effective leaders through a carefully calibrated 10-20-70 learning approach. This pedagogy, shaped with our esteemed partners, ensures a transformative learning experience."

Our goal is to develop effective leaders through a carefully calibrated 10-20-70 learning approach

SAUD AL YAHMADI

The 10-20-70 approach amalgamates a variety of learning paradigms: 10% of structured formal learning through workshops and expert sessions, 20% of interactive social learning via peer and mentor discussions, and a dominating 70% of experiential learning. This innovative mix aims to produce leaders who not only understand leadership in theory but also

excel in its practical application.

The Leadership Development School is a segment of a larger educational blueprint termed the 'OIA Academy'. This ambitious endeavour encompasses diverse training platforms such as the Graduates School, the Board School, the Investment School, and the Operation School.

Last year, OIA's Nomou and Ea'dad programmes integrated 56 and 191 trainees respectively, offering them invaluable real-world business and financial insights. By the close of 2022, OIA boasted a remarkable 93% Omanisation rate among its 314 employees.

Their commitment to nurturing and placing Omani talent in pivotal roles underscores authority's vision for the nation's investment future.

MoL inks MoC with Weatherford for leadership training

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) on Thursday signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with Weatherford Oil Tools Middle East Company to organise training programmes for employees of the State's Administrative Apparatus.

The cooperation deal constitutes a step forward in conducting programmes of the national system for institutional innovation and management of change.

These include the 'Exceptional Leadership Programme' and the 'Programme on Acceleration of Change'.

The MoC was signed by H E Sheikh Nasr Amer al Hosani, Undersecretary for Labour in MoL; and Mohammed Belkacem Murad, Weatherford's deputy chairman for the Middle East and North Africa Region.

The 'Exceptional Leadership Programme' provides the participants with necessary tools to succeed in undertaking leadership roles, irrespective of whether a participant is new to



leadership or having a long experience in the field.

Through this programme, the participants will acquire up-to-date strategies that will help them perform their career functions more effectively.

The 'Acceleration of Change Programme' seeks to hone the skills of leaders by helping them focus their energies, efforts and expertise on seven themes, namely 'leading change', 'forging common goals', 'shaping visions', 'orienting commitment', 'sustaining change', 'monitoring progress' and 'establishing systems and structures'.

The signing of the memorandum stems from the ministry's keenness to consolidate the relations between the public and private sectors to develop human resources.

Dhofar to begin action against invasive birds

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority (EA) will start the second phase of its national campaign to combat invasive bird species in Dhofar on Monday.

This intensified combat against unwelcome avians will cover Sadah from September 4-7, Mirbat from September 10-15, Taqah from September 17-28; and finally Salalah - from October 1-26.

The first phase of the mission saw elimination of 104,073 birds that include 60,320 mynas and 43,753 Indian crows. Both these species have been known for their detrimental impact on local ecosystems.

These invasive species not only disrupt the natural food chain, creating a biological imbalance, but they are also vectors for diseases like bird flu. Their presence has also been associated with the damage of agricultural crops, fruits, and orchards, the authority said.

To tackle this crisis, the EA in April 2022 constituted a team to monitor the proliferation of these invasive species and subsequently plan a national strategy to counter the menace.

As a testament to the campaign's seriousness, an international ornithologist has been enlisted to ensure the implementation of a comprehensive strategy. The aggressive nature of these birds, particularly the myna, has been observed in their attacks on nests of other birds and killing of their fledglings.



Oman participates in first Global Conference on Harnessing Data

Muscat - The Sultanate of Oman, represented by State Audit Institution (SAI), took part in the first Global Conference on Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement held in the United Nations (UN) Office in Vienna from August 31 to September 1.

The conference was held to raise awareness of the work of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), and to contribute to the development of corruption measurement methodologies through discussions and exchange of views.

It discussed, through a set of working sessions, a number of topics that include reviewing the work of the UN Office and the initiative of the (IACA) to build an international index to measure corruption, in addition to discussing countries' comments on the mechanisms and methodology of measuring corruption, as well as discussing views related to measuring the effectiveness of anti-corruption authorities and policies, and the use of data and technology in monitoring and measuring corruption.

The International Anti-Corruption Academy in May 2022 launched the Global Program for Measuring Corruption for cooperation with international organisations, governments, civil society, private sector and academics to design a strong and appropriate approach to measure the depth of corruption.

TENDER NOTICE

The Internal Tender Committee of Port of Duqm Company SAOC., hereby announces the following Tender:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of receiving Specifications	Date of Bid Submission	Suppliers	Tender Fee OMR (Inclusive of VAT 5%)	Place of Submission
ITC/T/007/2023	Supply 4 Units of Terminal Master Tractor 4X2 with 5th Wheel (purchase)	17 th September 2023	01 st October 2023	Only Specialized Companies	58.00/-	Port of Duqm Company 3rd floor

Taking into consideration the following:

All specialized companies that wish to participate in the tender must deposit the tender amount into the bank account of the Company (details of the bank account is set out hereunder) and send the payment receipt of the tender along with a copy of the Commercial Registration Certificate and the contact details of the authorized individual (business card) to the following e-mail address: tenders@portofduqm.om; procurement@portofduqm.om

From 07:00 – 15:00 (Sunday – Thursday).

Payment Information:

1- Bank Transfer:

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Account Number	0423047518510013
Bank Name	Bank Muscat
Branch	Ghala Corporate Branch
Bank ID Code	BMUSOMRXXXX

Complete Tender documents should be submitted in sealed envelope with red wax with tender number and title and addressed to the "Chairman of Internal Tender Committee". The envelope should not make any reference to the bidder's details. All applicants are required to submit the Tender in the Tender box in the main office of Port of Duqm Company at or before 15:00 PM on the assigned date for submission of the Tender. Tenders submitted after the above-mentioned date and time shall not be considered.

* The company is not obliged to accept the lowest offer or any other offer without any justifiable reasons.
* The company reserves the right to issue the order either in part or full for the quoted items without any justifiable reasons.
*The company reserves the right to reject the tenders not complying with the tender documentation requirement.
For any clarification, please contact us through tenders@portofduqm.om

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Recall



Recall Date: 03rd September 2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
DEFENDER	2021 – 2020	5
EVOQUE	2021	3

Recall consequence

Software Updates

Recall Action

JLR owners will be contacted. After inspection if required, the defected part(s) will be replaced for the concerning vehicles listed under the campaign

Contact Data

Contact us at 80062643 for more information

To check the serial numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>



OQGN plans Oman's biggest RO212mn IPO

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's stock market regulator, the Capital Market Authority (CMA), is currently reviewing the prospectus for the long-awaited initial public offering (IPO) of OQ Gas Network Company (OQGN), the sole operator of Oman's gas transportation system.

According to an Oman News Agency report, the size of OQGN's IPO is expected to be approximately RO212mn and the company will offer 49% of the share capital in the IPO. This will mark the largest initial public offering in Oman's capital market history.

OQGN holds a natural monopoly over critical gas transportation infrastructure in Oman as the exclusive owner and operator of the natural gas transportation network.

The company manages over 4,030km of gas pipeline net-



Photograph for illustrative purpose only

work across the sultanate. This extensive network supplies gas to power plants, water desalination plants, cement and aluminum factories, aluminum smelters, fertiliser and methanol plants, refineries, steel and cement factories, oil companies, and more.

Over the last 10 years, OQGN has achieved a gas

availability rate of over 99.99%.

By offering shares through the IPO, OQGN seeks to leverage the financing advantages provided by the capital market for its projects and investment activities, as stated in the Oman News Agency report.

OQGN's initial public offering will be the second major IPO at the Muscat Stock Exchange

this year.

In February, Abraj Energy Services Company offered 49% of its share capital in an IPO with the aim to raise up to RO93.97mn. The IPO received an overwhelming response from both retail and institutional investors and was oversubscribed nearly nine times.

Oman sells 2mn barrels of crude oil via DME auction

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate's Ministry of Energy and Minerals sold a cargo of 2mn barrels of Omani crude via the Dubai Mercantile Exchange's (DME) auction platform, according to a statement issued by the DME.

The barrel cargo of November-loading Oman crude was awarded at a premium of \$0.21 per barrel over the November 2023 official selling price of Oman crude, as stated by the DME.

The DME Auctions platform saw 14 participants with 16 active bids placed during the two-minute period for a cargo of 2mn barrels of Omani crude, according to the statement.

It added that a total volume of 45.6mn barrels was auctioned, generating US\$22.11mn in premiums.

The official selling price of Oman crude is calculated as a volume-weighted average of daily DME Oman Crude Oil (OQD) marker prices over the month.

The DME Auctions platform aims to provide commodity market participants with the flexibility to buy and sell physical commodities via an electronic auction system, offering customers the advantage of a transparent platform for trading commodities for immediate delivery.

Earlier, the DME had reported that physical deliveries of Oman crude on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange recorded a sharp increase during the first quarter of 2023.

DME, the premier interna-



tional energy futures exchange in the Middle East, delivered 63.77mn barrels of Oman crude via its exchange delivery mechanism in the first quarter. This marked an 18% increase from the 54.01mn barrels delivered in the same quarter of 2022.

DME Oman Crude Oil futures are a physically settled contract that serves as a core Middle East crude pricing benchmark. The contract's daily pricing is used by Middle East national oil companies (NOCs) to price oil exports from the Middle East to Asia and acts as a fundamental indicator for crude oil supply-demand in Asia.

Despite steady production, Oman's oil exports saw a 5.7% year-on-year decline in the first seven months of 2023, primarily due to a significant drop in shipments to India.

Oman's total oil exports decreased to 178.9mn barrels during the first seven months of 2023, compared to the 189.7mn barrels recorded in the corresponding period last year, according to data released by the National Center for Statistics and

Information (NCSI).

Oman's oil exports to India, which was the second-largest buyer of Omani crude last year, plummeted by 90.1% to 2.71mn barrels in the January-July period of 2023, compared to 27.37mn barrels during the same period in 2022, as shown in NCSI data.

China accounted for approximately 91% of Oman's total oil shipments from January to July 2023.

Oman's total oil output remained stable at around 223mn barrels during the first seven months of 2023, in comparison to the same period last year, according to NCSI data.

The daily average output increased marginally by 0.2% this year to 1.054mn barrels per day during the January-July period, compared to 1.052mn barrels per day for the same period in 2022.

The average price at which Oman sold its crude during the first seven months of 2023 remained 13.3% lower at \$80.5 per barrel, compared to \$92.8 per barrel achieved in the same period in 2022.

Oil prices rise amid demand optimism

Muscat – Oil prices increased sharply during the week ending September 1 over demand optimism in the US and supply risks triggered by prospective output cuts by the OPEC+ producers.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$87.86 per barrel on Friday, increasing by around 4% relative to the closing price of \$84.48 a barrel on Friday

previous week.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) saw gains while trading at \$84.64 per barrel at the same time, posting a 6% rise from the previous Friday's session that closed at \$79.83 a barrel.

Both benchmarks started the week on Monday with limited declines as investors awaited the

release of economic data from the world's largest oil consumers, the US and China.

However, the threat from Storm Idalia, which was moving towards Florida and posing a danger to oil production in the nearby Gulf of Mexico with possible power outages, limited price declines.

Price increases continued on

Wednesday over demand optimism in the US as prospects of further interest rate hikes in the country eased following economic data released over the week.

The fall in the US crude oil inventory, reflecting strong demand in the country, supported upward price movements.

Agencies

MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSX Index posts 0.48% weekly gain as shares rise

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) closed higher last week amid a rise in stocks across all sectors.

The MSX30 Index increased by 0.48% last week, closing at 4,798.97 points, compared to 4,775.96 points in the previous week. All sectoral indices closed higher for the week, led by the MSX Sharia Index, which rose by 1.65%. The Financial Index, Services Index, and Industrial Index rose by 0.33%, 0.51%, and 0.08%, respectively.

Local market news

►Oman LNG announced the signing of two new binding term-sheet agreements to supply 0.8mn metric tonnes per annum of LNG to Shell International Trading Middle East and 0.75mn metric tonnes per annum of LNG to OQ Trading. These new agreements leverage the strategic partnership between Oman LNG and other energy firms. Based on these agreements, Shell International Trading will receive 0.8mn metric tonnes per annum of LNG from the company for ten years, starting from 2025, whereas OQ Trading will receive 0.75mn metric tonnes per annum of LNG under a four-year deal beginning in 2026.

►Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company disclosed to its shareholders and investors that it has signed an exclusive commercial agency contract for the promotion and distribution of its products (oil and grease) with Now Fuel

Company in Saudi Arabia, with an annual value of not less than RO3mn. The company stated that the agreement will have a positive impact on its revenue, commencing from August 29, 2023 for a period of seven years.

►During the first half of 2023, the Salalah Free Zone, affiliated with the Asyad Group, attracted economic projects by signing five new usufruct agreements, with a total investment amounting to RO727mn. The total cumulative agreements in the Salalah Free Zone reached 127 usufruct agreements, with a total volume of RO4.5bn.

►Sohar Port and Freezone announced the signing of a land lease agreement with Air Care Systems Company (FZC) for the production of industrial and medical gas units in Sohar Freezone. Under the terms of this agreement, Air Care Systems Company is set to produce crucial gases, including liquid oxygen, liquid nitrogen, and liquid argon.

►During the first half of 2023, Oman Housing Bank (OHB) approved more than 2,000 housing loans with a lump-sum value of more than RO86mn. The loans, endorsed in various governorates of Oman, seek to enhance the bank's role in meeting the needs of deserving applicants. In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Musa Masoud al Jadidi, CEO of Oman Housing Bank, said that since its foundation in 1977 and until the end of 2022, OHB approved



more than 52,000 subsidised housing loans worth more than RO1.4bn.

GCC markets

Saudi Arabia's foreign reserves fell by \$16bn in July, according to the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) data. Net foreign assets fell to SAR1.53tn (\$407bn) after increases reported in May and June, according to the central bank's monthly report published last Monday. This is the sharpest decline reported since 2009, according to Bloomberg, following Saudi Arabia slashing oil production in a bid to bolster prices.

Saudi Arabia's trade balance achieved a surplus of about SAR38bn (about \$10bn) during June 2023, according to a report from the Saudi Statistics Authority (GASTAT). The au-

thority stated in its monthly report that the kingdom's merchandise exports decreased by 39.7% on an annual basis in June, reaching SAR88.8bn, while imports fell by 17.1% to SAR51.4bn. It indicated that oil exports declined by 38.3% on an annual basis in June, reaching SAR71.9bn.

Savings deposits held by UAE banks, excluding interbank deposits, amounted to AED268.6bn by the end of June 2023, according to the latest statistics from the Central Bank of the UAE. The apex bank's statistics showed these deposits increased by 5.8% on a monthly basis, or AED14.8bn. The local currency, the UAE Dirham, accounted for the largest share of savings deposits, with about 81.6%, or AED219.17bn. The share of for-

eign currencies was 18.4%, with a value of AED49.44bn. Savings deposits in banks have seen remarkable growth over the past few years. In 2018, these deposits stood at AED152bn.

Inflation in the UAE recorded the smallest growth for 17 consecutive months in July, in line with the trend in the rest of the GCC, where price increases remained significantly lower than counterparts in the Middle East and around the globe. The Dubai Consumer Price Index grew by 1.0% during July 2023, compared to the 5.2% increase it witnessed during July 2022. This was the smallest growth witnessed by the Dubai CPI in the last 17 consecutive months, as reported by Kamco Invest.

Qatar's trade surplus narrowed year-on-year in July

2023 as the value of its gas exports dipped compared to the previous year when disruptions rocked the market. The liquefied natural gas (LNG) producer showed a surplus of QR19.6bn (\$5.4bn), a year-on-year decrease of about QAR15.1bn or 43.5%, compared to July 2022, according to data released by the government's Planning and Statistics Authority. However, on a month-on-month basis, the trade surplus rose by nearly QAR2.2bn or 12.8%, compared to June 2023.

Global news

US economic growth, still racing at a potentially inflationary pace as other key parts of the world slow, could pose global risks if it forces Federal Reserve officials to raise interest rates higher than currently expected. The Fed's aggressive rate increases last year had the potential to stress the global financial system as the US dollar soared, but the impact was muted by largely synchronised central bank rate hikes and other actions taken by monetary authorities to prevent widespread dollar funding problems for companies and offset the impact of weakening currencies.

Russia's economy is set to grow by 2.5% or more in 2023, while inflation is expected to be around 6%, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov was quoted as saying. The economy ministry in April revised its 2023 GDP forecast to growth of 1.2% from

a contraction of 0.8%, although it is expected to revise this again soon. The central bank forecasts GDP growth of 1.5%-2.5% this year. "If, last year, the economy shrank by 2.1%, then this year we expect it to recover by about 2.5%, maybe even more," state news agencies quoted Siluanov as saying in an interview with the CGTV channel.

China will extend preferential tax policies for foreign nationals working in the country through to the end of 2027, the finance ministry said last Tuesday, in a boon to foreign firms struggling to attract talent post-COVID. The government proposed scrapping the provision of non-taxable allowances for foreign workers in 2022 but decided to extend the scheme on a review basis until the end of this year.

Job creation in the United States slowed more than expected in August, according to ADP, a sign that the surprisingly resilient US economy might be starting to ease under pressure from higher interest rates. The firm reported Wednesday that private employers added 177,000 jobs in August, well below the revised total of 371,000 added in July. Economists surveyed by Dow Jones were expecting 200,000 jobs added in August.

China's securities regulator approved the launch of 37 retail funds over the weekend, part of government efforts to revive a stock market struggling for lift-off in an ailing economy.

China's Country Garden wins vote on debt to avoid default

Beijing, China – Chinese developer Country Garden has won approval from creditors to extend a deadline for a key bond repayment, narrowly avoiding a potential default, Bloomberg reported Saturday.

One of China's biggest builders, Country Garden had racked up debts estimated at 1.43trn yuan (\$196bn) by the end of 2022, and this week reported a 48.9bn yuan loss for the first six months of the year.

Its cash flow woes have ignited fears that it could collapse with consequences for China's economy, which is already suffering from record-high youth unemployment and flagging consumption.

The nation's economic rise has in part been fuelled by property and construction, which account for about a quarter of the gross domestic product.

Country Garden's bondholders voted this week to delay repayment on a bond worth 3.9bn yuan (\$535mn), to give it time to recover financially.

Had they voted against the extension, the company faced becoming the biggest Chinese real estate firm to default since rival Evergrande in 2021.

But late Friday, bondholders agreed to postpone Saturday's repayment deadline until 2026, Bloomberg reported.

Country Garden did not confirm the outcome of the vote.

The group – China's largest private developer in terms of sales last year – remains far from



One of China's biggest builders, Country Garden had racked up debts estimated at \$196bn by the end of 2022

in the clear.

Another deadline looms next week for the repayment of \$22.5mn in interest on two loans.

It was unable to deliver that payment in early August and was granted a 30-day grace period that ends Tuesday.

It risks default if it does not deliver the payment.

'Very near default'

Moody's further downgraded Country Garden's credit ratings this week from Caa1 to Ca, indicating obligations that are "highly speculative and are likely in, or very near, default".

The move was an outcome of the firm's "tight liquidity and heightened default risk, as well as the likely weak recovery prospects for the company's bondholders," the ratings

Country Garden's cash flow woes have ignited fears that it could collapse with consequences for China's economy, which is already suffering from unemployment and flagging consumption

agency's Senior Vice-President Kaven Tsang said.

The company is estimated to "not have sufficient internal cash sources to address its upcoming offshore bond maturity", according to Moody's.

Deepening its woes, Country Garden reported a record 48.9 billion yuan loss for the first half of the year.

During the presentation of results Wednesday, the firm

warned that it had "tried its best" to be able to repay its loans and was not ruling out a default on repayment.

"The shrinkage of the property sector, coupled with the not yet restored confidence of the capital market, exerted mounting pressure on the Company's business operation," it added.

Broader risks

Country Garden has four times

as many projects as its rival Evergrande, which defaulted in 2021 and prompted protests and monthly payment strikes last year with its shutdown of construction sites.

Any halt to construction work presents the risk of social instability in China, where homeowners often pay for a property before ground is broken.

Like Evergrande, which holds debt adding up to more than \$300 billion, any collapse of Country Garden would have catastrophic repercussions on China's financial system and wider economy.

Country Garden employed nearly 58,140 "full-time" staff one year ago, according to a comparison of statements on its workforce.

AFP

India records 7.8% GDP growth in June quarter

New Delhi, India – India's GDP grew by 7.8% in the June quarter, official figures showed, despite government fears over the impact of higher consumer prices on household budgets.

The South Asian nation overtook Britain last year to become the world's fifth-largest economy, and recently surpassed China to become the most populous country.

Its growth has rebounded since the Covid-19 pandemic – up 7.2% for the year to March – and has remained near the top of the pack among the world's biggest economies.

Thursday's figure was the highest in four quarters, with official statistics showing on-year growth of 12.2% for the financial, real estate and professional services sectors.

But, like other countries, India has been buffeted by global headwinds including tightening global financial conditions, the war in Ukraine and geopolitical tensions.

India's central bank warned this month that higher food prices had hit household budgets and were expected to get worse.

Inflation edged up to 4.81% in June, still down from a peak of 7.79% last year that prompted a series of rate hikes.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told parliament this month that the government was taking steps "to contain high prices which are hitting common citizens".

Chief among the govern-



Labourers work at the 'Chennai Metro Rail project' construction site in Chennai on Friday (AFP)

ment's concerns is rising food prices, with inclement weather and pest attacks in major production belts hitting staple crops such as tomatoes.

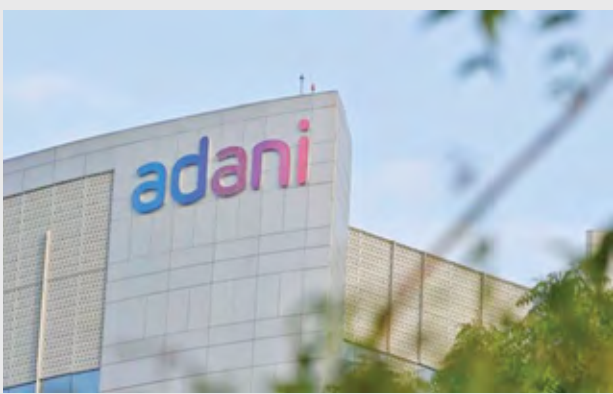
Sitharaman said the government had stepped up food imports and loosened import restrictions to ease price pressures.

India's headline growth has improved despite residual global uncertainty, with the World Bank's India country director Augustine Tano Kouame saying in April the country "continues to show strong resilience to external shocks".

The International Monetary Fund forecasts 6.1% GDP growth for India this year.

"India is a country with growth – very strong and continuing to be strong," IMF research department division chief Daniel Leigh said last month.

AFP



India's Adani hits back at new 'stock manipulation' report

New Delhi, India – India's Adani Group hit back Thursday at a new report investigating alleged manipulation of the conglomerate's share prices, accusing its authors of conspiring to drive down its stocks for profit.

The globe-spanning ports-to-power conglomerate saw around \$120bn wiped from its market value after US short-seller investment firm Hindenburg Research accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud.

On Wednesday, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) said it had uncovered financial documents backing Hindenburg's claims that Adani had used offshore tax havens and related party transactions to drive up its share price.

The report said two men who had served as directors in Adani Group companies had spent years trading stock in the conglomerate "through offshore structures that obscured their involvement".

Adani said in a Thursday statement that it "categorically" rejected the OCCRP's findings and accused the investigative journalism net-

work of seeking to profit by "driving down our stock prices".

"In light of these facts, the timing of these news reports is suspicious, mischievous and malicious."

A meteoric rise in Adani Group's share prices – its main listed unit shot up more than 1,000% in five years – funded the conglomerate's breakneck expansion.

Billionaire founder Gautam Adani, who was until this year the world's third-richest man, lost two-thirds of his net worth in the wake of the Hindenburg allegations.

He is considered a close associate of Hindu-nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a fellow native of Gujarat state.

Opposition parties and other critics say their relationship helped Adani to unfairly win business and avoid proper oversight. His empire's rapid expansion into capital-intensive businesses has raised alarms, with Fitch subsidiary and market researcher CreditSights warning last year that Adani Group was "deeply overleveraged".

AFP

Eurozone inflation stagnates in August

Brussels, Belgium – Eurozone inflation remained unchanged in August, official data showed, leaving the European Central Bank faced with a conundrum over whether to continue hiking interest rates amid fears of a deepening economic downturn.

The ECB has hiked interest rates to their highest level since May 2001 to tame red-hot inflation, but its president Christine Lagarde has suggested there could be a pause at the next rate-setting meeting on September 14.

Analysts don't agree on what the ECB will do. Some avoided making a prediction that the data would not dramatically change the ECB's trajectory, but others said they still expect a hike.

Consumer prices reached 5.3% in August after a smaller drop in energy prices and despite a slowdown in the rise of food and drinks costs, the EU's statistics agency said.

A consensus forecast by analysts compiled by FactSet and Bloomberg had predicted a slight drop in consumer prices to 5.1%.

The figure is far higher than the ECB's two-per cent target.

"The small upside surprise to euro-zone headline inflation in August was entirely due to energy, while the core rate edged down. We don't think these data will tip the balance of opinion at the ECB decisively towards a hike or a hold at the meeting," said



Eurozone inflation is far higher than the ECB's 2% target

Jack Allen-Reynolds, deputy chief eurozone economist at Capital Economics.

Bert Colijn, senior eurozone economist at ING, said he still expected a rate hike.

"Given the ECB mantra over recent months that doing too little is worse than doing too much in terms of hikes, we still expect another 25 basis point rate rise, despite this being a close call," he wrote in a note.

Central bankers will have to weigh inflation woes alongside rising fears over the eurozone economy after worrying figures in August.

A key survey last week showed the eurozone economy is contracting at its fastest rate in three years as a steep decline in manufacturing begins to spread to services.

"The battle between the hawks and the doves is likely to

heat up ahead of the next ECB decision," said Richard Flax, Moneyfarm chief investment officer.

"However, with inflation data still remaining at elevated levels, we cannot rule out further rate hikes before the year is out," he added.

Inflation had been falling uninterrupted since May this year after a rise in April.

There was a smaller dip in en-

Consumer prices reached 5.3% in August after a smaller drop in energy prices and despite a slowdown in the rise of food and drinks costs, the EU's statistics agency said

ergy prices, falling by 3.3% in August on the back of a drop of 6.1% in July.

Capital Economics' Allen-Reynolds said this was due to "base effects and the increase in oil prices over the past few months".

Food and drink prices rose by 9.8% in August compared with 10.8% in July, according to Eurostat.

Core inflation, which strips out volatile energy, food, alcohol and tobacco prices, was down slightly to 5.3% in August from 5.5% in July.

Core inflation is the key signal for the Frankfurt-based ECB.

Among the 20 countries that use the euro, Belgium and Spain had the lowest inflation rate, at 2.4 percent in August, Eurostat said.

AFP

Russia's Gazprom reports sharp fall in profits

Moscow, Russia – Russian gas giant Gazprom reported a 8.5-fold drop in its net income for the first six months of the year as Europe moves away from Moscow's energy supplies over Ukraine.

After President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine last

year European countries, which were heavily reliant on Russian natural gas supplies, raced for other sources.

On Tuesday, Gazprom said its net profit for January-June 2023 fell to 296bn rubles (\$3.1bn) from 2.5tn rubles over the same period last year.

Famil Sadygov, deputy CEO at Gazprom, chalked up the fall to the weakening Russian currency.

"The decline in exports to Europe was partially offset by an increase in supplies to China, which will continue to grow within contractual obligations,

as well as by the efficient operation of the oil business," said Sadygov.

In response to Russia's assault on Ukraine, Germany scrapped the approval for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline which would have deepened European reliance on Russian gas sup-

plies.

Moscow said that instead gas supplies to China last year had doubled compared to the previous year and that it hopes to further increase deliveries after losing its share in the European market.

AFP

National Finance-Sharakah tie up fosters success of Tasleem

The success story of the Tasleem Taxi app is one characterised by diligent effort, determination, and unwavering persistence. The app has firmly established itself as a prominent player within the taxi service sector, eliciting a remarkable response.

Having been established in the year 2022, this platform operates across Muscat and several other cities within Oman. Setting itself apart from its counterparts, the app offers distinct taxi booking functionalities for users of iOS, Android and Huawei platforms, available in both English and Arabic languages.

Notably, Tasleem Taxi stands as an early entrant into the taxi booking app market, boasting a diverse array of cab categories to cater to a wide spectrum of customer preferences.

Emerging as an integral facet of the 'Imtidad' sustainable initiative project by National Finance, the Tasleem Taxi app has become a ubiquitous presence on countless mobile devices. While National Finance's pivotal role in supporting local businesses, it played a crucial part in Tasleem's success, its achievements were further fortified by the robust backing of Sharakah.

The latter extended support through a comprehensive year-long programme, during which Sharakah harnessed its cutting-edge Business Monitoring Performance Tool to gauge the



business's progress and ascertain its prerequisites for sustainable growth.

The 'Imtidad' programme by National Finance embodies a strategic approach aimed at conceptualising and executing enduring, sustainable initiatives. Anchored in National Finance's commitment to evolve in tandem with communities, the programme functions as an effective conduit for societal service, thereby contributing to the overarching socio-economic development of the nation.

Given National Finance's existing collaboration with Sharakah, the partnership has al-

ready played a pivotal role in enhancing the skill sets of over 700 participants. This collaborative endeavour is geared towards nurturing the skills of budding entrepreneurs, thereby empowering them to realise their inherent potential and bring their projects to fruition, as exemplified in the case of Tasleem Taxi.

Tasleem Taxi app has revolutionised the transportation sector by enabling users to easily hail taxis via their phones, streamlining the booking process and enhancing user comfort and overall experience.

The app caters to all, citizens save time on taxi waits, while

new residents find quick rides, often with tour guide drivers in tourist spots.

Driven by market research showing demand for bus services, the app has introduced new features, including the ability to book transport buses, especially for tourism and airport transportation. The app has plans to introduce scheduled tourist trips that can be booked by the hour. Positive user feedback has driven ongoing efforts to improve the app's user experience, incorporating customer opinions for further enhancements.

The founder of Tasleem Taxi expressed gratitude towards Na-

tional Finance and Sharakah for their invaluable support.

"The app is steadfast in its commitment to passenger safety, having instituted a comprehensive Door-to-Door Safety Standard to ensure passengers feel secure throughout their journeys. Tasleem Taxi provides a seamless avenue for commuters to access local services through a singular platform, thus affording them more time to dedicate to their core priorities.

"Tasleem Taxi guarantees passengers a comfortable and cost-effective travel experience, with swift response times available 24/7."



AVOD's Khafeef adds sizzle to Khareef season

Areej Vegetable Oil and Derivatives (AVOD) made an impressive splash this Khareef season in Salalah.

The brand's highly popular Khafeef Light Frying Oil, enriched with essential vitamins A & D, took centre stage as part of a promotion that added to the lushness of the Khareef experience, with popular Omani food blogger and influential social media figure Mohammed al Mukhaini becoming a key driver of the campaign's success.

Addressing the visitors of Khareef festival and his own 1.3mn followers, Mukhaini expressed his sense of honour in being associated with an iconic Omani brand such as AVOD, its Khafeef, the first-ever light frying oil of Oman. He also elaborated on the wholesome goodness of Khafeef Light Frying Oil by highlighting its many benefits.

Enriched with anti-oxidants and Vitamin E, the oil is high on nutritional value. Its stability under high temperatures en-

tures that food retains its flavour.

Moreover, it also does not turn thick and sticky when heated. With no trans-fatty acids, Khafeef is the perfect blend of mono and polyunsaturated fatty acids, making your daily cooking experience not just tasty but also healthy.

Salem Bortmany - CEO, AVOD - expressed his delight over the success of the campaign and said, "I am extremely pleased that through our current Khareef promotion, Khafeef has continued to add a touch of health-conscious satisfaction to kitchens of Oman. Lightness, in taste and in life, is what Khafeef Light Frying Oil brings to the table.

"When we created Khafeef, we not only ensured that it underscored AVOD's 'Eat Right, Live Well' philosophy but also became a key driver of the company's transformation strategy. Along with all our products, Khafeef has forged a bond with our consumers, earning their trust and loyalty."

Keep an eye on your business with CCTV bundles: Ooredoo

To safeguard and protect businesses and employees fully, Ooredoo has brought smart CCTV surveillance systems.

'Ooredoo recognises the need to support SoHos and SMEs with security and safety, and is pleased to introduce new internet-connected CCTV bundles to small business owners,' the company stated.

All CCTV devices are powered by high-speed internet connectivity and with Ooredoo's 5G network now available across Oman, you can be watching your business while on a holiday, staycation, business, or a desert trip! Customers can select from a range of CCTV bundles and combine them with the existing Maktabi plans. The CCTV options start at two basic cameras and go up to a 32-camera bundle. And it's quick and easy to get started,



Saied al Lawati

with options to pay a one-time charge or in easy installments.

With free installation within Muscat, and the flexibility to opt for more than one package or to combine it with an existing Maktabi plan or not, it's a customisable fit for every business.

Saied al Lawati, Director of Business Marketing at Ooredoo, said, "Innovative small businesses are an important part of

our national economy, fuelling growth and diversification and creating jobs while contributing to their communities, which aligns with the objectives of Vision 2040. We aim to unleash the digital potential of these businesses by providing them with access to higher connectivity and internet speeds at a lower cost and integrated services so they can focus on their growth and stability and now also their safety and security."

Maktabi plans offer secure connectivity and reliable internet speeds of up to 60 Mbps, as well as other optional add-ons, which SMEs and SoHos in Oman require to grow and evolve.

It starts at just RO29 per month and includes a one-stop solution that covers a wide range of integrated communication services for businesses.

MoE holds training programme in English

The Directorate-General of Curriculum Development, represented by the Human Sciences Curricula Department, is implementing the training programme for the third and fourth grade curricula from the English language series 'Team Together Oman'.

The programme continues for five days and targets English language trainers at the ministry's General Diwan and the educational directorates in the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The programme aims to introduce participants to the third and fourth grade curricula of the international series, the most important contents of the two curricula and their features.

It also aims to provide participants with the necessary skills to teach the two curricula to the target group of first-year teachers in training programmes in the various educational governorates.

Dr Moza bint Hamdan al



Muqbali, an English language trainer in North Batinah governorate, spoke about her participation in the programme.

"Our benefit from the program lies mostly in forming a deep understanding of the principles on which the new curriculum is based, and the mechanisms of its application with young learners. On the

other hand, the programme relied in its implementation on a group of large number of training activities."

Omar bin Amer al Diffai, assistant trainer at the North Sharqiyah Governorate Educational Training Centre, said, "The English language series programme for the third and fourth grades comes as a continuation of the

program that began last year.

"The programme provides an overview of the new curriculum and the strategies it contains to enhance the learning process for students and facilitate the delivery of content and language. Our role in the next stage is to train teachers and provide the necessary support to help them perform their role to the fullest."

Mezoon Travel celebrates Onam with its multicultural staff members

Like every year, this year too, the celebration of Onam at Mezoon Travel saw the participation of all the employees and their families including children with euphoria and increased enthusiasm starting from the intricate floral carpets (known as pookalams), traditional Diya lightings, singing to the sumptuous Onam Sadhya feast.

Mezoon Travel, a leading TMC that 'specialises in bringing dreams to life through travel experiences', has been celebrating the vibrant Indian festival of Onam with its multicultural staff members for the past four years. This tradition not only showcases the company's commitment to inclusivity but also demonstrates the power of cultural celebrations in boosting

employee morale and camaraderie.

Noting that in today's competitive and globalised world, workplaces often resemble a melting pot of cultures, languages, and traditions, Mezoon Travel asserted that 'acknowledging this diversity and fostering a sense of unity among employees is essential for a harmonious and productive work environment'.

Oman is home to a diverse workforce hailing from various corners of the globe. This culture enriches the company's atmosphere, encouraging the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Mezoon Travels commitment to fostering unity amongst its multicultural staff was evident in the enthusiasm with which employ-



ees and their families participated in the Onam celebration, the company said.

"Regardless of their nationality or background, employees and their families came together and created a vibrant and wholesome festive milestone to remember for another year."

Celebrating cultural festivals in the workplace has been linked to improved employee morale and camaraderie.

Ali al Balushi, Travel Consultant at Mezoon said, "Mezoon Travel's annual Onam celebration injects a dose of festivity and excitement into the work routine. This break from the regular schedule allows us to relax, engage in light-hearted conversations, and builds stronger relationships with our col-

leagues. This positively impacts teamwork, communication, and overall job satisfaction."

Mezoon Travel general manager Shyamaprasad Kallat said that the tradition of celebrating Onam with the company's multicultural staff members exemplifies the power of cultural celebrations in nurturing unity, inclusivity, and camaraderie within a diverse workplace.

"By embracing the essence of the Onam festival, the company not only promotes cross-cultural understanding but also enriches the work experience for its employees. Across the verticals, Company emphasizes and takes pride to include all cultural manifestations into the work ethos to appreciate and spread positivity among staff members."

Russia brands Nobel winner Muratov as a ‘foreign agent’

The move is part of a wider crackdown on critics of assault on Ukraine

Moscow, Russia - Russia on Friday added respected journalist and Nobel Prize co-recipient Dmitry Muratov to its list of foreign agents, a label authorities commonly use to stifle critics.

The move targeting the editor of Russia’s top independent publication *Novaya Gazeta* is part of a wider crackdown on respected civil society institutions that has accelerated with Moscow’s assault on Ukraine.

Muratov ‘used foreign platforms to disseminate opinions aimed at forming a negative attitude towards the foreign and domestic policy of the Russian Federation’, Russia’s justice ministry said to justify the decision.

The ministry also accused Muratov of creating and distributing content from other foreign agents.

“What is there to comment on? For comments, contact the Ministry of Justice”, said *Novaya Gazeta*’s website.

It added the foreign agents list now included 674 ‘worthy’ people and organisations.

The label, which is reminiscent of the term ‘enemies of the people’ of the Soviet era, adds heavy administrative constraints and requires sources of funding to be disclosed.

It also compels foreign agents to mark all publications - including social media posts - with a tag.



This file photo shows Dmitry Muratov looking on following the first Cartooning Award Ceremony in Geneva on May 3, 2022 (AFP)

This put foreign agents and people sharing their content at risk of heavy fines.

The designation is part of an array of legislation the Kremlin uses to silence critics, along with the harsher ‘undesirable organi-

sation’ tag.

Slain journalists

Since launching troops to Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow has stepped up efforts to stamp out dissent.

Most high-profile opponents are behind bars or in exile.

While many independent journalists are working from abroad, Muratov was recently seen in Russia.

He is part of the legal team defending his friend Oleg Orlov, co-chair of Russia’s human rights organisation Memorial.

Orlov is on trial over lone pickets against the assault in Ukraine

Putin’s main opposition politician Alexey Navalny has been in prison since 2021.

Repression has accelerated during the assault in Ukraine, but the space for freedom of expression in Russia has been shrinking for years.

In 2021, when Muratov co-received the Nobel Peace Prize, he dedicated the award to *Novaya Gazeta*’s ‘fallen’ journalists

Dmitry Muratov ‘used foreign platforms to disseminate opinions aimed at forming a negative attitude towards the foreign and domestic policy of the Russian Federation’, Russia’s justice ministry said to justify the decision

and over an op-ed in French publication *Mediapart* titled ‘They wanted fascism, they got it’.

He was charged of discrediting the army, which is part tools Moscow uses against critics of the military operation.

Overall, thousands of ordinary Russians who protested against the Ukraine conflict have been detained.

Many high-profile opposition politicians have been jailed since the offensive began, including Ilya Yashin and Vladimir Kara-Murza.

who ‘gave up their lives for their profession’.

Since 2000, *Novaya Gazeta* has seen six of its journalists and contributors killed, including investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya, who was shot dead in Moscow on President Vladimir Putin’s birthday.

Co-founded by former Soviet leader and another Nobel Peace laureate Mikhail Gorbachev in 1993, *Novaya Gazeta* is one of the few media outlets left in Russia voicing criticism of Putin.

AFP

Nobel Foundation cancels Russian ambassador invite to prize ceremony

Stockholm, Sweden - The Nobel Foundation said on Saturday it was reversing its decision to invite ambassadors from Russia and Belarus to this year’s Nobel award ceremony in Stockholm, after the move sparked anger.

In 2022, the Nobel Foundation, which organises the annual Nobel prize ceremony and banquet in Stockholm, decided not to invite the Russian and Belarusian ambassadors to the Stockholm award event because of the war in Ukraine.

They made the same decision regarding the Iranian envoy over the country’s crackdown on a wave of protests. The Swedish foundation however said on Thursday it was returning to its previous practice of inviting ambassadors from all countries represented in Sweden, sparking a wave of angry reactions.

The foundation said on Saturday that the decision was based on its belief ‘that it is important and right to reach out as widely as possible with the values and messages that the Nobel Prize stands for’.

It noted however that the strong reactions ‘completely overshadowed this message’.

“We, therefore, choose to repeat last year’s exception to regular practice - that is, to not invite the ambassadors of Russia, Belarus and Iran to the

Nobel Prize award ceremony in Stockholm,” the foundation said in a statement.

Last year, the Norwegian Nobel Institute still invited all ambassadors to the Peace Prize ceremony it organises in Oslo, and the foundation said this would be the case again.

“As before, all ambassadors will be invited to the ceremony in Oslo,” it noted.

The decision to once again invite the Russian and Belarusian representatives sparked ire in Sweden and abroad.

Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko wrote on Facebook that the foundation should support efforts to isolate Russia and Belarus as ‘millions of Ukrainians suffer from an unprovoked war and the Russian regime is not punished for its crimes’.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson also said on Friday he disagreed with the Foundation’s decision. “I would not have done it if I were handling invites to an award ceremony and I understand that it upsets many people in both Sweden and Ukraine,” he said in a written statement to AFP.

Several Swedish politicians, including the leaders of the Centre, Green, Left and Liberal parties, said they would boycott the event over the Russian ambassador’s presence.

AFP

Businessman Mohamed Al-Fayed dead: Family

London, UK - Tycoon Mohamed Al-Fayed, a controversial billionaire and the father of Dodi who was killed along with Princess Diana in 1997, has died aged 94 his family said in a statement on Friday.

“Mrs Mohamed Al-Fayed, her children and grandchildren wish to confirm that her beloved husband, their father and their grandfather, Mohamed, has passed away peacefully of old age on Wednesday August 30, 2023,” his family said in a statement released by the football club he once owned, Fulham FC.

“He enjoyed a long and fulfilled retirement surrounded by his loved ones. The family have asked for their privacy to be respected at this time.”

Fayed will be remembered most for his outspoken and often foul-mouthed manner, his revenge on the Conservative party,



This file photo shows Mohamed Al-Fayed arriving at the London High Court for a hearing on July 27, 2007 (AFP)

his controversial purchase of the Harrods department store, and ownership of Fulham football club and the Ritz hotel in Paris.

With a business empire encompassing shipping, property, banking, oil, retail and construction, Fayed was also a philan-

thropist, whose foundation helped children in the UK, Thailand and Mongolia. Fayed bought the Ritz in 1979 with his brother and the pair snapped up Harrods six years later after a long and bitter takeover battle.

AFP

LISA'S BABY



A one-day-old female Sumatran elephant by her 41-year-old mother elephant named Lisa is seen at the Elephant Flying Squad camp in the Tesso Nilo National Park in Pelalawan, Sumatra on Friday (AFP)

Experts blame poor planning for Greek fires’ devastation

Athens, Greece - While the Greek government has been quick to blame global warming for the summer’s devastating wildfires, some experts argue that poor planning is at least as much to blame.

The European Commission has said that the blaze in the Dadia national park, which has been burning for two weeks now, is the largest on record in Europe.

That and other deadly fires across Greece were expected to consume more than 150,000 hectares (370,600 acres) of land, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told parliament this week.

And the flames have so far claimed 26 lives.

“Is the climate crisis the alibi for everything?” said Mitsotakis. “No, it is not an alibi - but it is part



A firefighter sprays water in an attempt to extinguish a wildfire in the Dadia-Lefkimi-Soufli Forest National Park, near Alexandroupoli on Saturday (AFP)

of the interpretation,” he insisted.

Climate change is a theme the government has touched on repeatedly in the context of the wildfires but, as Mitsotakis appeared to at least implicitly acknowledge, it is not the whole story. This year’s fires are certainly stronger than those of previous years because of climate change, said Alexandros Dimitrakopoulos, head of Forest Protection and the Wildland Fire Science Lab at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

But that does not fully explain the extent of the damage, he told AFP, pointing out that 10 per cent of the country’s woodlands had gone up in smoke since 2007.

“Better planning in the fight against fires is needed, as well as better cooperation between the

fire services and the specialists in geomorphology of wooded zones,” Dimitrakopoulos argued - geomorphology being the scientific study of the form or shape of the land. Kostas Lagouvardos, research director at the National Observatory of Athens, made a similar point, arguing that the emphasis should be on adequate measures to prevent forest fires.

But the recurring problem, he said, was the dysfunctional relationship between the state and scientific bodies.

“The scientific tools exist and can help detect and prepare for difficult climatological conditions,” he said - such as the extreme drought that has struck the Evros region near the border with Turkey and other regions.

AFP

Iran pilgrims among 18 dead in Iraq crash

Samarra, Iraq - A collision between two minibuses killed 18 people, mostly Iranian pilgrims, north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, medical officials said on Saturday.

The ‘horrible accident’ occurred between Dujail and Samarra, state news agency INA said, citing Khaled Burhan, director of health services in Salaheddin province.

The minibuses crashed into each other shortly before midnight on Friday, leaving 18 people dead and 15 injured, a medical official in Salaheddin told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to

the press. One of the drivers was believed to have fallen asleep at the wheel, the same source said, citing the accounts of witnesses.

Among the dead were 14 Iranians, two Afghans and two people yet to be identified, another hospital official said, also speaking on condition of anonymity.

The dead included the two drivers, said an official from the area’s traffic authority.

That official, who also referred to reports of a driver falling asleep, said one of the minibuses had veered into the opposite lane.

AFP



This file photo shows Thailand's new Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin greeting media representatives in Bangkok on August 24 (AFP)

Thailand's king endorses cabinet

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand's king endorsed a new cabinet on Saturday, taking the country one step closer to a fully functional administration after months of political deadlock.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn acknowledged the new cabinet led by Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin and the appointment of 34 ministers, according to a statement in the Royal Gazette, including some from the previous deeply unpopular army-backed administration.

May's election led to months of political wrangling, after a popular reformist candidate was rejected by conservative parliamentary blocs - paving the way for runners-up Pheu Thai party to form a controversial coalition government.

"Srettha Thavisin, the prime minister, has selected a qualified cabinet to administer the country further, so the King has commanded a new cabinet," the

statement read.

The new cabinet sees Srettha as Minister of Finance and Anutin Charnvirakul - the former health minister from the previous military-led government - as the deputy prime minister.

Police General Patcharawat Wongsuwan, brother of ex-army chief Prawit Wongsuwan who was closely involved in 2014's coup, has been appointed minister of natural resources and environment. Political analyst Yuttaporn Issarachai said that the royal command indicates the country is one step closer to having a new government.

"The new cabinet needs to take an oath of allegiance before the king, and declare their policies in the parliament. Then, it will be considered fully-functioned," Yuttaporn told AFP.

Some critics have pointed to the new cabinet's similarity to the previous one.

AFP

Pope praises Mongolia but warns of corruption, environmental ruin

The 86-year-old Francis was on the first papal visit to the Asian nation

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia - Pope Francis praised the 'wisdom' of the Mongolian people on Saturday, in harmony with nature and embracing spirituality, while warning the young democracy of risks such as corruption and environmental ruin.

The 86-year-old Francis, on the first papal visit to the Asian nation sandwiched between China and Russia, was feted with an official welcome ceremony that included a phalanx of Mongolian horsemen in metal armour parading past the State Palace.

The pope, who waved to the crowd in front of a massive bronze statue of Genghis Khan as a group of young Mongolian Catholics yelled 'Viva il Papa!', is seeking a neutral ally in the sensitive region as he seeks to improve Vatican relations with both of Mongolia's neighbours.

Welcomed by President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh, who donned the traditional 'deel' tunic, Pope Francis called himself a 'pilgrim of friendship' and extolled the virtues of the country, including its 'ranchers and planters respectful of the delicate balances of the ecosystem'.

Mongolia's Shamanist and Buddhist traditions of living in harmony with nature and its creatures 'can contribute significantly to the urgent and no longer deferrable efforts to pro-



Pope Francis meets with Mongolia's President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh during a courtesy visit at the State Palace in Ulaanbaatar on Saturday (AFP)

tect and preserve planet Earth', he said.

Francis also praised Mongolia for its religious tolerance and nuclear-free policy, but warned that corruption was 'the fruit of a utilitarian and unscrupulous mentality that has impoverished whole countries'.

Religions can 'represent a safeguard against the insidious

threat of corruption, which effectively represents a serious menace to the development of any human community', he said.

Mongolia has been marred by corruption and environmental degradation in recent years, with its capital suffering from some of the world's worst air quality and a scandal over embezzlement by officials sparking street protests

last year.

Vast swathes of the country's territory are also at risk of desertification due to climate change, overgrazing and mining.

Michel Chambon, a scholar of Catholics in Asia, told AFP ahead of the visit that Francis might warn civil authorities of their duty to support democratic principles in more than name.

In the vast Sukhbaatar Plaza, named for a Mongol revolutionary hero, more than 1,000 pilgrims and others hoped to catch a glimpse of the leader of the world's 1.3bn Catholics.

In the crowd was Mongolian Enkhtur Dagvadorj, who said Francis 'seems a great person. He is indeed a global figure'.

AFP

Typhoon Saola weakens to a severe storm as it tracks along southern China

Hong Kong, China - Typhoon Saola swept across southern China on Saturday after tearing down trees and smashing windows in Hong Kong, although the megacity avoided a feared direct hit from one of the region's strongest storms in decades.

Tens of millions of people in the densely populated coastal areas of southern China had sheltered indoors on Friday ahead of the storm.

Saola had triggered Hong Kong's highest threat level on Friday evening - issued only 16 times since World War II - and registered winds of around 210 kilometres per hour at its peak.

It was downgraded before dawn on Saturday as the typhoon passed the city and tracked towards coastal areas of mainland China - where it weakened into a severe tropical storm.

So far, Hong Kong has had no reported casualties and far less damage than that created by 2018's powerful Typhoon Mangkhut, but authorities warned people to stay away from the shoreline as Saola was still whipping up strong gales.

AFP journalists saw multiple fallen trees strewn across Hong Kong roads, broken windows,



Workers check damage caused by Typhoon Saola in Zhuhai, in China's southern Guangdong province on Saturday (AFP)

and crumpled scaffolding from under-construction buildings, while local media reported that solar panels had been ripped off rooftops.

"Yesterday was a bit scary," Angelie said as she ventured out to meet a friend under a blanket of constant rain. "In our (residential) estate, there were a lot of trees fallen, and some windows were broken."

Saola left Thomas Wong, a shopkeeper in Causeway Bay, stranded overnight in his home goods store.

"I didn't leave my shop because the transportation was not running... I had no choice," Wong said, adding that he lived in the northern Hong Kong district of Tai Po.

A resident in Hong Kong's Heng Fa Chuen housing estate - the site of devastation during the 2018 Typhoon Mangkhut - said she felt 'some swaying' in her building during the night.

"But overall, we didn't feel unsafe," she told AFP, contrasting it to 2018's Mangkhut which had temporarily disrupted the supply

of water and electricity in some housing blocks.

The last storm to earn the city's highest typhoon alert, Mangkhut shredded trees and unleashed floods across the city, leaving more than 300 people injured in its wake.

In mainland China, it killed six people and impacted the lives of more than three million others.

Hong Kong's Civil Aid Service said on Saturday more than 500 people were deployed around the city to evaluate the damage.

AFP



Presidential candidate Tharman Shanmugaratnam (centre) meets his supporters while waiting for the Presidential election results in Singapore on Friday (AFP)

Tharman Shanmugaratnam elected as Singapore president

Singapore, Singapore - Singapore's former deputy prime minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam was elected president on Friday, earning a landslide victory in the city-state's first contested vote for the largely ceremonial position in more than a decade.

Singaporeans headed to the polls that were closely watched as an indication of support for the ruling party after a rare spate of scandals, but the longtime stalwart of the party won more than two-thirds of the vote over two rivals.

"I believe that it's a vote of confidence in Singapore. It's a vote of optimism for a future in which we can progress together and support each other as Singaporeans," the former finance minister said in a speech before the results were announced.

"I'm humbled by this vote. It is not just a vote for me, it is a vote for Singapore's future."

He won 70.4 per cent of the vote to win a six-year term.

His main rival Ng Kok Song, a former chief investment officer of Singapore sovereign wealth fund GIC, which manages the country's foreign reserves, conceded after winning only 15.7 per cent of

the vote. "The result is clear," he told reporters, adding Shanmugaratnam 'has indeed earned a mandate from the people of Singapore'. Shanmugaratnam acknowledged the 'changing and evolving' nature of Singapore, notably its diversity, and said he believes the election was seen as 'another milestone in that process of evolution'.

I believe that it's a vote of confidence in Singapore. It's a vote of optimism for a future in which we can progress together

THARMAN SHANMUGARATNAM

There are stringent requirements for the position, which formally oversees the city's accumulated financial reserves and holds the power to veto certain measures and approve anti-graft probes.

While the presidency is a non-partisan post under the constitu-

tion, political lines had already been drawn ahead of the election to replace incumbent Halimah Yacob, who ran unopposed for her six-year term in 2017.

'Decisive margin'

Shanmugaratnam was widely viewed as the favourite for the position and had resigned as a member of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and as a senior minister in the cabinet ahead of the election as all presidential candidates must be independent. The 66-year-old economist is perceived as having the government's backing and was questioned about his independence during the campaign.

The city-state's government is run by the prime minister, currently Lee Hsien Loong of the PAP, which has ruled Singapore continuously since 1959. "Singaporeans have chosen Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam to be our next President by a decisive margin," Lee said in a statement.

The United States sent a congratulatory message to Shanmugaratnam that pointed to 'mutual respect, shared values and common interests' with Singapore.

AFP

North Korea fires multiple cruise missiles: Seoul

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles off its west coast on Saturday, Seoul's military said, the latest in a string of recent Pyongyang military actions.

The launches come three days after the North launched a pair of short-range ballistic missiles as part of a 'tactical nuclear strike drill' prompted by the annual US-South Korean Ulchi Freedom Shield military exercises, which always infuri-

ate the reclusive regime.

Pyongyang views such the drills as a rehearsal for invasion while the two allies say they are defensive in nature.

An unspecified number of cruise missiles were launched at around 4am (1900 GMT) towards the Yellow Sea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said on Saturday in the statement, adding the specifications of the missiles were being evaluated.

"We have stepped up sur-

veillance and monitoring and are maintaining utmost readiness in close coordination with the United States," the JCS said.

On Tuesday, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited a training command post where he detailed future war plans, including 'making simultaneous super-intense strikes' at core military posts in the South.

North Korea has conducted a record number of weapons tests this year, and last week

carried out its second failed attempt to put a spy satellite into orbit. Seoul and Washington have ramped up defence cooperation in response, staging joint military exercises with advanced stealth jets and US strategic assets.

Relations between the two Koreas are at their lowest point, and diplomacy is stalled after failed attempts to discuss Pyongyang's denuclearisation.

AFP

Canada wildfires inflict brutal toll on tourism, other areas of economy

Across Canada, more than 15mn hectares have been scorched, and 200,000 people displaced

Kelowna, Canada - Joanna Schlosser found refuge from advancing wildfires at a winery where she works, but is now dealing with a tourism downturn and other wide-ranging fallout on the business - and Canada's economy.

An inferno jumped Okanagan Lake and was barreling down hills behind her Kelowna home when a knock on the door woke up the family of five, ordering them to leave immediately.

For two weeks, they stayed at a guest house at Quails' Gate winery with other evacuees, some of whom lost their homes. About 200 houses in the valley would be destroyed.

"Your home is your biggest investment and with only five minutes to get out you start to reel about things you left behind that you might not ever see again," Schlosser told AFP.

She also fretted about the grape harvest now underway.

None of the 222 wineries in the region reported any direct fire damage. But they suffered a big drop in revenues as tourists stayed away during the peak

month of August. Kelowna's airport and main highway closed temporarily. Tasting tours, weddings and other events at the wineries were cancelled.

"We're now facing a pretty devastating season in terms of winery traffic and sales," said Schlosser. Across Canada, more than 15mn hectares (37mn acres) have been scorched, and 200,000 people displaced, spanning from Halifax on the Atlantic coast to parts of the Northwest Territories.

Stephen Brown of Capital Economics noted that forest fires do not normally have a measurable impact on the Canadian economy. But this year, he said in a research note, 'with the fires so widespread, we are seeing more of an impact than usual'.

"The worst Canadian wildfires on record appear to be behind much of the recent weakness in GDP and, with more areas now under evacuation orders, the data are likely to remain weak in the coming months," he said.

Statistics Canada on Friday reported a 0.2 per cent contraction in the second quarter and a



This file photo shows residents watching the McDougall Creek wildfire in West Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, on August 17 from Kelowna (AFP)

weak start to the third.

It pointed to wildfire disruptions at mines and oil facilities. Lumber mills were also idled.

Outfitters saw their livelihoods upended by fishing bans. A road to Tofino, a tourist hotspot on Vancouver island with ancient forests and sandy beaches, was cut off.

In the Okanagan Valley, orchards lamented smoke blocking out the sun delaying the ripening of apples.

The toll, however, is 'not as bad as it could have been', said Tony Stillo at Oxford Economics.

"Even though the wildfires are record-setting, they're happening in more remote areas with less of an implication for large population or economic centres or transportation corridors - things that would cut off supply lines," he explained.

Disruptions have also been relatively short.

Oxford Economics in a June report warned that wildfires could slash Canada's economic growth this year by as much as 0.3 to 0.6 percentage points.

AFP

Gabon's strongman vows more democracy

Libreville, Gabon - Gabon's new strongman General Brice Oligui Nguema on Friday vowed the country's institutions would be more democratic, two days after heading a coup that ended 55 years of rule by the Bongo family.

"The dissolution of the institutions" decreed on Wednesday during the coup 'is temporary', he said in a speech. "It is a question of reorganising them in order to make them more democratic."

Oligui also stepped up contacts with national groups and foreign interests, meeting members of civil society a day after a speech to 200 businessmen, whom he lectured on corruption.

Broadcast on state television earlier on Friday, he sternly warned business leaders in the oil-rich state against 'over-billing' and told them to commit to the 'development of the country'.

"It is difficult to perceive, at this stage, your commitment or patriotism when it comes to the development expected by our



General Brice Oligui Nguema (AFP)

compatriots," Oligui said.

He vowed to make sure the overcharged money 'comes back to the state'.

"This situation, for me, cannot continue, and I will not tolerate it".

He also invited foreign donors, diplomats and members of international organisations to meet with him. Details of that meeting remained unclear.

Embassies of countries or organisations that have condemned the coup told AFP that

they did not send their most senior representatives, but rather of officials of a lesser rank.

Bongo overthrown

Oligui, the head of the elite Republican Guard, on Wednesday led officers in a coup against President Ali Bongo Ondimba, scion of a family that had ruled for 55 years.

The ouster came just moments after Bongo, 64, was proclaimed victor in presidential elections at the weekend - a result branded as a fraud by the opposition.

The coup leaders said they had dissolved the nation's institutions, cancelled the election results and closed the borders.

Oligui is due on Monday to be sworn in as 'transitional president'. But other countries have not acknowledged him as Gabon's legitimate leader and he faces pressure to spell out his plans for restoring civilian rule.

AFP

India's PM to attend ASEAN, East Asia Summit meetings

New Delhi, India - Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Indonesia for a two-day visit to attend the 20th ASEAN-India Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit (EAS) on September 6-7, the External Affairs Ministry said on Saturday.

Modi will be in Jakarta at the invitation of the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo.

The prime minister's visit to Indonesia comes ahead of the G20 Summit to be held in New Delhi on September 9-10 under India's Presidency this year. Indonesia is part of the G20 'troika' as it had the presidency of the grouping last year. The forthcoming ASEAN-India Summit will be the first summit since the elevation of ties between India and the Association of South East Asian Nations bloc of countries to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2022.

The foreign ministry said that the summit will review the progress of India-ASEAN relations and chart the future direc-



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (AFP)

tion of cooperation. According to a statement, the East Asia Summit would provide an opportunity for leaders of ASEAN countries and its eight dialogue partners, including India, to exchange views on issues of regional and global significance.

In August, ASEAN-India Economic Ministers met in Indonesia and the main agenda of this year's meeting was the timely re-

view of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) which was signed in 2009.

A joint committee agreed to a regular, quarterly schedule of negotiations, which would conclude the review of the ASEAN-India FTA in 2025.

In 2018, Modi visited Jakarta at the invitation of the Indonesian president.

ANI

Work begins on Iraq-Iran rail link

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraq's prime minister on Saturday inaugurated construction work on what is slated to become the first railway line connecting the country to neighbouring Iran, a major political and economic partner.

The 'Basra-Chalamja connection project' will link the major port city of Basra in southern Iraq to Iran's vast railway network through the Chalamja border crossing, an transport ministry official told AFP.

It is estimated that the project will take 'between 18 and 24 months'.

The goal is to be able to transport 'travellers from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Central Asian countries' to Shiite holy cities, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said in a speech.

He noted that the project had been under discussion for years before an agreement was reached in 2021.

During Saturday's ceremony, Sudani laid a symbolic foundation stone alongside Iran's first vice-president, Mohammad Mokhber.

Sudani thanked Tehran for planned demining operations at the border to clear the way for the train line and for a railway bridge over the Shatt al-Arab waterway, where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers converge before spilling into the Gulf.

Iraq and Iran fought an eight-year war in the 1980s after Saddam Hussein invaded his neighbour in the wake of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution.

Mokhber hailed the 'strategic' project that he said would be completed 'over the next two years', Iranian state media reported him as saying.

AFP

In Rio wasteland, health teams take medical care to homeless

Rio De Janeiro, Brazil - The patients don't have addresses, phone numbers or in many cases even last names. But the addicts and homeless people of this Rio de Janeiro wasteland can count one blessing amid the misery: health care.

Doctor Yasmine Nascimento, 33, could have chosen to work at a private clinic or hospital in an upscale neighbourhood of Brazil's second city. Instead, she spends her days on Rio's poor north side treating patients on the street, under bridges or in a spot her team calls 'The Cave': a squalid squatter camp accessed through a literal hole in the wall. Strewn with trash and raw sewage, it is located beneath an elevated metro track.

Nascimento works on a municipal programme called Consultorio na Rua, or 'Street Clinic', which brings health care to some of the poorest, most margin-



This file photo shows a social worker (left) talking with a homeless woman in north Rio de Janeiro on July 31 (AFP)

alised areas of this city of six million people, known for its staggering inequalities.

"Medicine, for me, is an exchange. My work at the Street

Clinic makes sense to me, because I can create a bond with the patients," she says.

The programme has 13 teams across the city, each with a doc-

tor, psychologist, nurses, social workers and a driver working together to try to make Brazil's promise of universal health care a reality for the city's nearly

8,000 homeless people.

Instantly recognisable in their blue jackets, they are in constant contact with people experiencing homelessness and living with addiction. That creates a sense of trust, enabling them to access parts of the city where no other

graduate explains how he once worked on oil drilling platforms all over the world.

It was there, in the middle of the ocean, that he smoked crack for the first time. "I left the oil platform, looked for the first place I could buy crack and never

The 'Street Clinic' has 13 teams across the city, each with a doctor, psychologist, nurses, social workers and a driver working together

public authorities go, not even the police.

Shirtless and strung out, a crack pipe in hand, one homeless man outside the slum of Jacarezinho tells the story of how he wound up on skid row, as the health team do their rounds.

Speaking perfect English, the 41-year-old robotic engineering

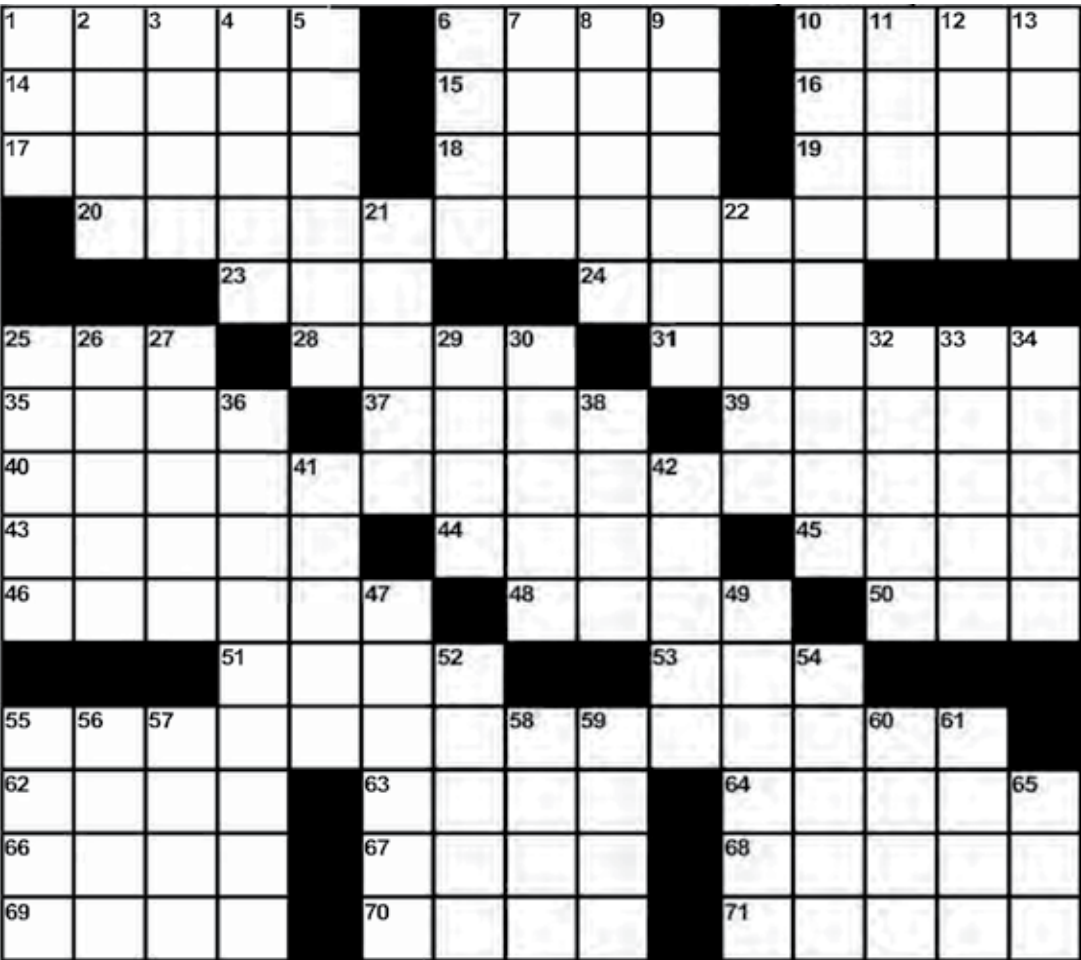
went back to that life," he says.

"When crack came into my life, mate, there's no way out."

The programme 'is reaching where no one wants to go', says nurse Quesia Ferreira, 28, as her team prepares to vaccinate homeless people against COVID-19 and the flu.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Easy out
 - 6) Pitt with roles
 - 10) "Ha!" spot on Broadway? 14) NBA milieu
 - 15) Part of MYOB
 - 16) "How can I thank you?"
 - 17) Beef-filled
 - 18) Guy behind Michael Jackson, once
 - 19) Lady of Lisbon
 - 20) Three birds
 - 23) Yale student
 - 24) Banana peel mishap
 - 25) S&L convenience
 - 28) State with confidence
 - 31) Emotional tension
 - 35) They support females?
 - 37) Certain sword
 - 39) Like the old "Night Gallery" TV show
 - 40) Three birds
 - 43) Advertiser's promotion
 - 44) Certain
 - 45) Like, likes
 - 46) Awful smell
 - 48) "Sight" or "over" ender
 - 50) Word between a married lady's surnames
- 51) Pirate's potato
 - 53) "Dear old" guy
 - 55) Three birds
 - 62) Brightly colored aquarium fish
 - 63) Bar in the fridge
 - 64) Court event
 - 66) Football great Graham
 - 67) "Hold it right there!"
 - 68) Bride's pathway
 - 69) Sound that gets attention
 - 70) Capital of Norway
 - 71) In the altogether

DOWN

 - 1) Legendary actress Grier
 - 2) Popular chocolate cookie
 - 3) Anjou, e.g.
 - 4) Loosen laces
 - 5) Disk-jockey bribe
 - 6) Character in computer-village 7) Muddy up
 - 8) Jammed idlers?
 - 9) Salivates
 - 10) Sheet cover
 - 11) Claim to be true
 - 12) HBO's Dunham
 - 13) Persia, now
 - 21) "Chopped" meat
 - 22) TNT ingredient
 - 25) Helps out in a criminal act
 - 26) Curly hair or color blindness, e.g. 27) "Dirty Dingus..." (1970 film)
 - 29) Grand-scale poetry
 - 30) Picture puzzle
 - 32) Senator of Watergate fame
 - 33) Relentless attack
 - 34) Have a premonition of
 - 36) Goliath killer
 - 38) Ireland, on coins
 - 41) French pen filler
 - 42) Requires
 - 47) Santa's phrase
 - 49) Wicker material
 - 52) Splashy parties
 - 54) Andrea, (ill-fated liner)
 - 55) Gunk
 - 56) Decides on (with "for")
 - 57) Stable food
 - 58) Groundwater source
 - 59) 13-stringed Japanese zither
 - 60) Board game
 - 61) Cabbage relative
 - 65) Took charge

NOTE PAD

OFFAL OKRAS FEB
ALINE PIANO TILL
FUNDAMENTAL RUE
E KING BIPEDS
AFFAIR RECEDES
GAINER SILICA
LUX ROMPS TOMBS
ONES RALES SARA
WADER RASTA GUY
AGENCY RUBENS
SAMOSAS USED TO
PROSIT DUCTS
EMU DAMASKROSES
EEN ENATE IMAGE
DDT STEER ASCOT

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Culture clashes don't have to be negative experiences. Sometimes when you come face-to-face with a different tradition or custom, it makes you reevaluate your own lifestyle in a much more conscientious way. If you meet up with someone from a different country or with a different religion today, ask them more questions about their life. You will definitely learn about your differences, but you'll also be surprised by just how much you have in common.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It might sound like fun, but you can't spend your life going from one adventure to another. You just won't have the energy for it. Plus, if you're always off exploring new things or visiting exotic places, when will you ever be able to establish roots with people? Having excitement in your life can get old after a while, so get ahead of the curve by slowing down today. Quit while you're ahead and remind yourself how nice it can be to stay at home and read a book.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your confidence is growing steadily right now, but you need to be careful that you don't get too cocky! Because while you've scored many wins recently, it's inevitable that you'll come in second place sooner or later. So stay humble and accept your accolades as they come, but don't ask for more. People get annoyed when they're asked to applaud for someone they've already acknowledged. Don't push your luck.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You should step outside your comfort zone today. It won't be scary at all! You have a new wave of bravery coming your way, but you won't be able to ride it until you decide to rely on it. Take a leap and the safety net will be there. Just trust yourself and believe that no matter what happens you can handle the outcome. Exploring new cultures will also be more rewarding for you right now. You're ready to be exposed to new ideas and customs.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Don't just go with the flow today. Not everyone knows as much about the day's situation as you do, so why are you following their instructions? Just because they have the loudest voice doesn't mean they have the best ideas. If something triggers your baloney detector, you owe it to the group to speak up. You don't have to be confrontational. Just ask about the reasons behind the rule. At the very least, you'll understand the plan better.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

That little voice inside of you knows what's good for you, and more importantly, what isn't good for you. Listen to it today and you'll hear some surprising things. It's urging you to have more discipline and structure in your ideas and plans or they'll never come to be. The days of hanging out and sleeping in are over! No one can shape your life as well as you can, so stop looking for outside solutions and roll up your sleeves. Get to work. You can do it!

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Someone you care about is in over their head in a new relationship, new job, or perhaps new and expensive purchase. Take note of their behavior today. Do they seem like they need someone to talk to? If they reach out to you, make yourself available, but don't come down on them with a lecture! Preaching won't get you anywhere except on their list of people to avoid. If they don't ask for help, just let them figure things out on their own.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You need to restore some balance in your social life today. Have you been the fluttering social butterfly who's too popular to stay in any one place for long? Then put down some roots and slow down for a while. Spend more time with fewer people. On the other hand, if you've been attached at the hip to someone for weeks, branch out. Plan a group event and refresh your memory when it comes to what a great variety of people you have in your life.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Be aware that someone you consider to be your equal is starting to act like an authority figure in your life. This behavior isn't something you should ignore. Sure, you might find it funny that they think they can tell you what to do with your life, but you'll see they aren't laughing. Nip this thing in the bud and remind them that you have just as much power as they do, but you don't boss them around. You're not about to do what they tell you to do just because they say so.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

The harmony between you and your coworkers is at an all-time high right now, and it's certainly music to your ears. The camaraderie between you is downright seductive, and it could create a new friendship out of a professional partnership. If you feel like increasing the amount of socializing you do with these people, by all means go for it as soon as possible. But just be careful that you don't get too carried away. There could be complications you haven't considered.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

There's nothing wrong with being generous to the people you love. After all, when you care about someone, you want to do things that show them how valuable they are to you. But today, your extravagant spirit could run the risk of putting your bank account in jeopardy. Cut out the unnecessary gifts for a while, and instead of picking up the check at lunch, split it. The people you're with won't mind, and it will be the start of a very good habit.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

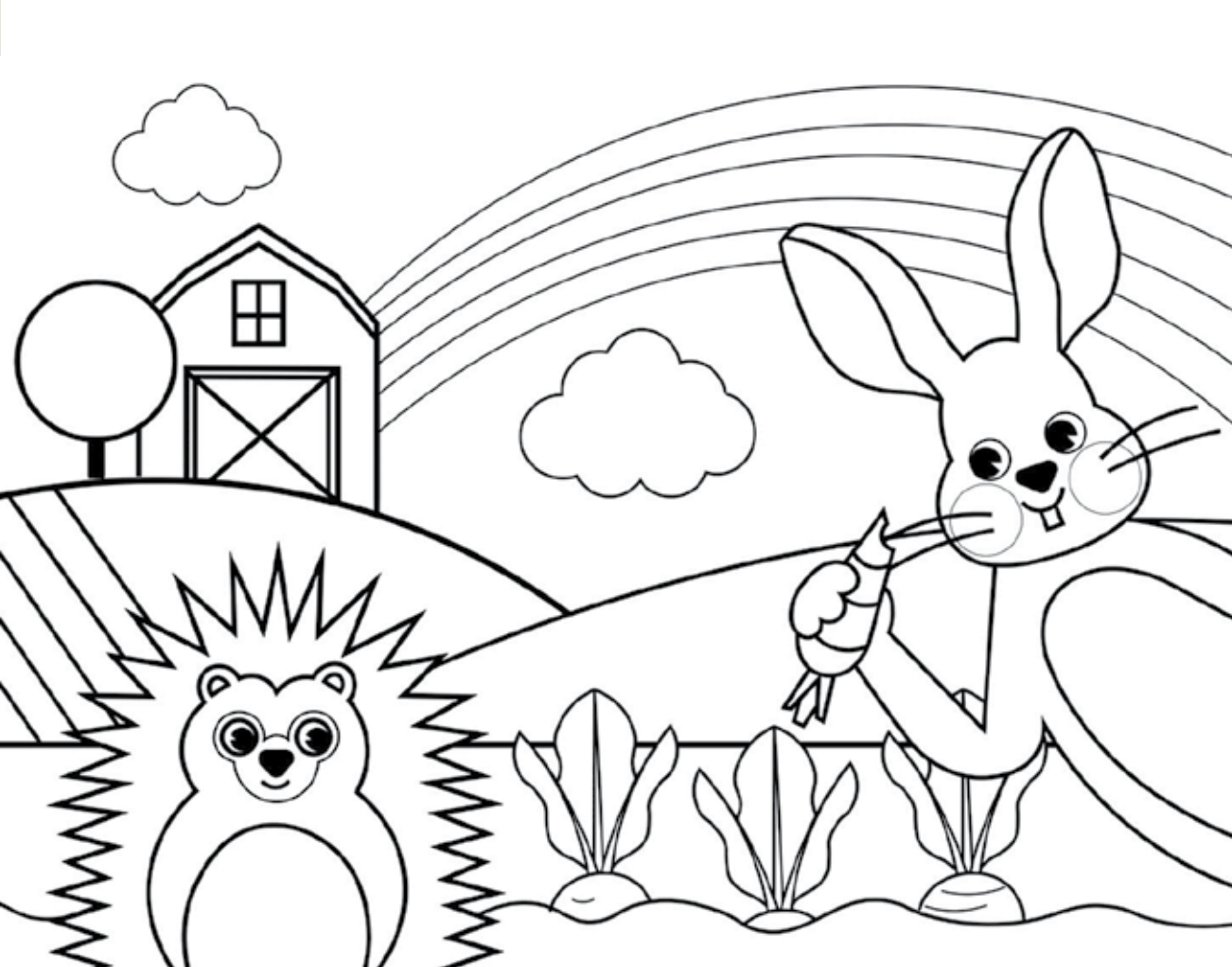
- 01. Who was the first leader of the Soviet Union?**

 - A. Stalin
 - B. Trotsky
 - C. Lenin
 - D. Marx
- 02. What is Archie Panjabi particularly known as?**

 - A. An Indian footballer
 - B. An actor
 - C. A researcher in developing vaccines
 - D. A British politician
- 03. In the 1989 film "Batman", the Joker revealed his real name, which was ... ?**

 - A. Oswald Cobblepot
 - B. Edward Nigma
 - C. Jack Napier
 - D. Harvey Dent
- Answers:** 1. C 2. B 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	S	D	E
A	A	K	E
O	N	H	N
M	Y	S	E

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

BACK FROM THE BRINK

Djokovic into US Open last 16 after five-set thriller

New York, United States - Novak Djokovic conjured a trademark comeback from two sets down to defeat Serbian compatriot Laslo Djere in a five-set thriller and seal his place in the US Open last 16.

Second seed Djokovic recovered from a sluggish start on the Arthur Ashe Stadium to complete a 4-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-1, 6-3 victory in 3hr 45min.

The win marked the eighth time in Djokovic's career that he has overturned 0-2 deficit to win in five sets at a Grand Slam tournament.

"I hope you enjoyed the show," Djokovic told fans in an on-court interview after a match that wrapped up at around 1.30am Saturday local time.

"It was definitely not so enjoyable for me, especially in the first two sets. It was one of the toughest games I've played here for many, many years.

Once again, it was the 36-year-old 23-time Grand Slam singles champion's near-super-human composure under pressure that came to the rescue.

Djere, seeded 32nd in New York, has never been beyond the third round at a Grand Slam tournament, and had fallen in the first round on his last four visits to the US Open.

But the 28-year-old stunned Djokovic in the opening two sets, playing with poise and confidence to open up a 2-0 lead after breaking his compatriot once in

each set.

Yet with the match seemingly there for the taking, Djokovic flipped the switch in the third, fourth and fifth sets.

Suddenly, Djere's serve, which had been virtually impregnable in the opening two sets, began to look vulnerable.

Djokovic broke twice in the third before breaking Djere four times in the fourth set to set up a decider.

From there, there was only going to be one winner and Djokovic broke again and had soon sprinted into a 4-1 lead, before serving for the match at 5-3.

I hope you enjoyed the show. It was definitely not so enjoyable for me, especially in the first two sets. It was one of the toughest games I've played here for many, many years

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

Djere stubbornly saved one match point, but Djokovic sealed victory on the next match point when Djere pulled a backhand wide. Djokovic later revealed he had given himself an angry pep talk in the locker room after falling two sets behind.

"I did a little pep talk in the mirror," he revealed. "I laughed at myself because I was so pissed off with the way I played, to try and lift my spirits up."

AFP



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates his win against Serbia's Laslo Djere at the US Open on Friday (AFP)

Comeback kid Gauff battles into last 16

New York, United States - Sixth seed Coco Gauff kept her hopes of a maiden Grand Slam title alive on Friday, reaching the last 16 of the US Open after a battling three-set defeat of Belgium's Elise Mertens.

Gauff, tipped as one of the favourites for the title after tournament wins in Washington and Cincinnati last month, came from behind to down the 32nd seed 3-6, 6-3, 6-0.

The 19-year-old American will face Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki in the fourth round on Sunday.

Friday's win marked the ninth time Gauff has come back to win a Grand Slam match after dropping the opening set.



USA's Coco Gauff returns a shot to Belgium's Elise Mertens

"After I lost the first set I told myself there's still a lot of the game left, and a lot of the match to play," Gauff said.

"I try my best to win in straight sets. I was winning in straight sets the past few weeks. But a win is a win."

Rybakina crashes out

Fourth seed Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan crashed out on Friday, losing a three-set third-round battle to Romania's Sorana Cirstea. The Russian-born 2022 Wimbledon champion was beaten 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 6-4 by Cirstea, who will now face Switzerland's Belinda Bencic in

the last 16 on Sunday.

Hijikata's wild ride

Rinky Hijikata's improbable ride at the US Open continued on as the Australian wildcard entrant powered into the last 16.

The 22-year-old world No.110 from Sydney - who has never been past the second round in his two other Grand Slam appearances - reached the fourth round with a 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 win over China's Zhang Zhizhen.

Zhang, who stunned last year's US Open finalist Casper Ruud in the previous round, was unable to reproduce the quality of that performance against a fired-up Hijikata.



Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki celebrates winning her match against USA's Jennifer Brady

Wozniacki 'not surprised' by her run at US Open

New York, United States - Caroline Wozniacki said she always believed she could return to the top level after reaching the last 16 of the US Open on Friday in her first Grand Slam appearance in over three years.

The former world number one kept her fairytale comeback run in New York going with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 win over Jennifer Brady, setting up a potential meeting with the in-form Coco Gauff.

Wozniacki retired after the 2020 Australian Open to start a family, and the mother-of-two is playing just her third event since returning to the tour in Montreal last month.

"Honestly, not really (smiling)," she responded when asked if she was surprised by her level at a tournament where she first reached the fourth round as a teenager in 2008. I guess I always had the belief in myself. It takes a little time just to get back into the match rhythm."

"All of that I knew, knowing what I've experienced throughout my career, I knew where I was at. Obviously day by day I feel like I'm getting a little bit better," she continued.

"Would I have been surprised had I lost in the first round? No. Would I be surprised if I keep winning? Also no."

Wozniacki, who was handed a wild card into this year's tournament, trailed Brady by a set and a break but won 12 of the final 14 games.

"If I play my best tennis, I know I'm tough to beat. Someone really has to play well," said the Dane, a US Open finalist in 2009 and 2014. "At this point I'm just happy to be in the fourth round, and anything can happen from now on, as well."

Wozniacki will play Gauff, the sixth seed, in the fourth round.

The 33-year-old said last week the chance to return the sport was one she couldn't turn down, but is unsure as to her long-term plans.

Iga Swiatek routs 'best friend' Juvan to reach round of 16

New York, United States - World number one Iga Swiatek demolished "best friend" Kaja Juvan in straight sets on Friday to march into the last 16 at the US Open.

Swiatek, who has been a close friend of Juvan since her youth tennis playing days, showed no mercy to the Slovenian world No.145 with a 6-0, 6-1 victory on the Louis Armstrong Stadium.

"For sure I didn't like the fact I was winning with my best friend," Swiatek said afterwards. "It was like playing against a sister because I've known her for so long. I don't have many friends but she's my best friend."

The 49-minute drubbing sends defending champion Swiatek into a fourth-round meeting with Latvian 20th seed Jelena Ostapenko.

"With Jelena, it's a little bit like one day she can play a perfect match and just put everything in even though she's really risking, and the other day can be differ-



Poland's Iga Swiatek embraces Slovenia's Kaja Juvan after their match (AFP)

It was like playing against a sister because I've known her for so long. She's my best friend

IGA SWIATEK

ent," Swiatek said. "You never know what to expect."

On Friday's form, Swiatek will take some stopping if she is to be denied a place in the quarter-finals.

The 22-year-old from Warsaw was utterly ruthless from the outset against Juvan, racing through the first set in just 24 minutes after four straight breaks of serve.

She kept up the barrage in the second set, reeling off 13 straight points on the way to opening up a 3-0 lead. Juvan earned some well-deserved applause by holding her serve to make it 3-1, but the respite was fleeting.

Swiatek held and then broke Juvan again for a 5-1 lead before easily holding to complete a quickfire win.

"I knew that it was going to be a little bit harder for me to focus because she's my best friend, (so) I was actually more focused than usual," Swiatek said.



Frances Tiafoe celebrates his victory against Adrian Mannarino

Tiafoe spearheading the American challenge

New York, United States - Frances Tiafoe is eyeing another deep run at the US Open after surging into the last 16 on Friday with victory over French veteran Adrian Mannarino.

American 10th seed Tiafoe, beaten in five sets in last year's semi-finals by eventual champion Carlos Alcaraz, has another golden chance to advance to the last four after his 4-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) victory.

The 25-year-old faces Australian wild card entrant Rinky Hijikata in the fourth round on Sunday, with the possibility of an all-American quarter-final against Ben Shelton or Tommy Paul awaiting him if he can overcome the world No.110 from Sydney.

The charismatic Tiafoe is among a contingent of American men who have fared well at this year's US Open, which no American man has won since Andy Roddick's victory in 2003.

Tiafoe, Shelton, Paul and Taylor Fritz all advanced to the fourth round on Friday.

AFP

PARIS CALLING!

PSG complete signing of Frenchman Kolo Muani on transfer deadline day in Europe

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain completed the signing of France striker Randal Kolo Muani from Eintracht Frankfurt in the biggest deal to go through on transfer deadline day in Europe on Friday.

The 24-year-old forward, who hails from the Paris suburbs, had been a target for PSG all summer and the club confirmed shortly after the transfer window closed that he had signed a five-year contract at the Parc des Princes.

Media reports in France said the Ligue 1 champions had agreed a fee totalling 90 million euros (\$97m) to complete the signing. He missed training with Frankfurt this week, with the German side confirming "his desire to be transferred to another club before the transfer window ends on Friday evening".

Kolo Muani, who signed for the Bundesliga club from Nantes only a year ago, played no part in Eintracht's 2-0 home win over Bulgarian side Levski Sofia on Thursday that saw them seal a place in the Europa Conference League group stage.

However, up until Friday morning Frankfurt had rejected PSG's proposals for the player.

It was understood that the Ligue 1 side had attempted to offer their out-of-favour forward Hugo Ekitike to Eintracht as part of any deal, as they looked to team Kolo Muani up with fellow French internationals Kylian Mbappe and Ousmane Dembele

in their attack. Any chances of Mbappe leaving PSG in this transfer window faded after he returned to Luis Enrique's team in August, ending a contract dispute that had dominated headlines all summer in France. Mbappe's contract expires at the end of this season and PSG had previously said the 24-year-old must agree to be sold in the window unless he signed a new deal.

"Kylian is a PSG player. We are having really good discussions with him," club president Nasser al Khelaifi told broad-

nounced the signing of attacking prospect Bradley Barcola from Lyon, who said they had sold the player for 45 million euros plus five million euros more in possible bonuses.

Saudi impact

Qatar-backed PSG have spent comfortably the most of any club in Europe outside the Premier League since the transfer window opened in June.

That is despite Bayern Munich dishing out a Bundesliga record of a reported 100 million euros to

Kylian is a PSG player. We are having really good discussions with him. He is a magnificent player, as a person and as a professional. We're going to work on it and try to do something

NASSER AL KHELAIFI

caster RMC on Thursday in Monaco after attending the draw for the Champions League group stage. "He is a magnificent player, as a person and as a professional. We are going to work on it and try to do something," Khelaifi added, before saying he did not want to talk about Mbappe possibly signing a contract extension.

Kolo Muani's arrival means PSG have spent in the region of 350 million euros on new signings in this window.

Late on Thursday they an-

sign Harry Kane from Tottenham Hotspur, having earlier signed centre-back Kim Min-jae from Italian champions Napoli.

The other major transfer of the European summer saw Real Madrid spend 103 million euros to sign Jude Bellingham from Borussia Dortmund.

As well as the usual drain of talent from the rest of Europe to the far wealthier English Premier League, clubs in major leagues on the continent have also had to deal with the new competition coming from Saudi Arabia.



Randal Kolo Muani

Barcelona sign Portuguese duo Felix and Cancelo on loan

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona signed Atletico Madrid forward Joao Felix and Manchester City defender Joao Cancelo on loan until the end of the season, the Spanish champions said Friday.

"Barcelona and Atletico Madrid have reached an agreement for the loan of player Joao Felix until June 30, 2024. There is no option to buy," said the Catalan club in a statement, before then announcing Cancelo's arrival.

Barcelona loaned winger Ansu Fati to Brighton and defender Clement Lenglet to Aston Villa earlier Friday to help create room to accommodate their new arrivals on the wage bill and register the players with La Liga, who have strict financial fair play rules.

The Catalans also sold winger Ez Abde to Real Betis for 7.5 million euros (\$8.1 million), keeping an option to buy him back and 50 percent of the value of his next sale, and loaned defender Eric Garcia to Girona.

Felix became one of the most



Joao Felix (R) and defender Joao Cancelo (L) with Barcelona President Joan Laporta during their official presentation

expensive players in history when Atletico Madrid signed him from Benfica in 2019 for 126 million euros (\$136 million) at just 19 years old.

The Portuguese forward, 23,

failed to find consistent form in the Spanish capital and Atletico loaned him to Chelsea last season, where he also struggled.

Felix has spoken out about his desire to play for Barcelona in the

past.

"The club publicly expresses their gratitude to the player for the financial effort made (to join) and his desire to wear the Barca shirt," added Barcelona.

Atletico said Felix has signed a two-year contract extension, until 2029.

Barcelona then confirmed the arrival of Cancelo on loan from Manchester City, also with no option to buy.

The club needed a specialist right-back, using central defender Jules Kounde in that position for the majority of last season.

Cancelo, 29, fell out of favour at Manchester City last season, joining Bayern Munich on loan in January.

The Portugal international was pivotal for City coach Pep Guardiola in previous years as he played an important role in two Premier League triumphs.

Cancelo signed a five-year deal with City in February 2022 but less than a year later Guardiola sent him to Bayern.



Ryan Gravenberch

Gravenberch completes Liverpool's midfield overhaul

Liverpool, United Kingdom - Liverpool signed Dutch international Ryan Gravenberch on Friday to complete an overhaul of Jurgen Klopp's midfield options in recent months.

The 21-year-old joins from Bayern Munich for a reported £34 million (\$43 million). Gravenberch is Liverpool's fourth signing of the transfer window, all of whom have been midfielders.

Alexis Mac Allister, Dominik Szoboszlai and Wataru Endo had previously been brought to Anfield to help compensate for the departures of Jordan Henderson, Fabinho, Naby Keita, James Mil-

ner and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

"Very happy that the deal is done and I'm finally here," said Gravenberch. "If you see it from the outside, it's one of the biggest clubs in the world. Also the fans, the stadium, I think everything from the outside is top."

Gravenberch was a product of the Ajax academy system and made 103 appearances for the Amsterdam club before joining Bayern last year.

But he struggled to make an impact at the German giants, making only six starts in 34 appearances.



Wayne Rooney

Rooney 'frustrated' at no new deal contact by DC United: report

Washington, United States - Wayne Rooney is "disappointed and frustrated" that DC United has not contacted him in two months about a contract extension to his expiring MLS deal, the Washington Post reported Friday.

The 37-year-old former England national team and Manchester United striker is in his second season as manager of DC United, a team he led into the playoffs in 2018 and 2019 as a player.

Rooney's current contract expires in December and while it has a two-way option for 2024, both he and the club must agree on continuing for the deal to activate - and Rooney hasn't heard from DC United since an initial outreach by Rooney and his agent about two months ago.

"I am slightly disappointed and frustrated there has been no contact for two months," Rooney told the newspaper. "We asked about a new deal. We can sit down and talk about it. We haven't heard back."

Manchester United sign Amrabat, Bayindir and Reguilon on deadline day

London, United Kingdom - Manchester United secured the loan signing of Moroccan midfielder Sofyan Amrabat, while Turkish goalkeeper Altay Bayindir and left-back Sergio Reguilon also arrived at Old Trafford on Friday.

Amrabat, who starred in Morocco's run to the World Cup semi-finals last year, joins from Fiorentina for a reported 10 million euro (\$11 million, £8.6 million) loan fee.

United then have an option to

buy the 27-year-old for a further 25 million euros next year.

"I've had to be patient for this moment but I'm someone who always listens to my heart and now I am representing the club of my dreams," said Amrabat in a United statement. "I am a passionate player; I want to bring that energy to the squad, and I will put everything into every action I take for the team."

Amrabat previously worked under United boss Erik ten Hag

at Utrecht and brings some much-needed bite to the Red Devils' midfield.

"His committed, high-energy approach to the game fits perfectly with the group that we are building here," said United's football director John Murtough.

"We know that Sofyan's mentality, dynamism and technical qualities will help the squad as we look to achieve success in all competitions this season."

Bayindir joined in a deal worth

a reported £4 million from Fenerbahce to back-up United's first-choice keeper Andre Onana, following Dean Henderson's move to Crystal Palace this week.

When Bayindir makes his United debut, he will become the first Turk to play for the club.

"It is a huge honour to join Manchester United and become the first Turkish player to represent this incredible club," Bayindir said.

AFF



Sofyan Amrabat

DOUBLE TREBLE

Haaland, Son hit hat-tricks as Man City and Tottenham win big

Manchester, United Kingdom - Erling Haaland scored a hat-trick as Manchester City maintained their perfect Premier League start with a 5-1 thrashing of Fulham on Saturday, as Son Heung-min's also netted three times in Tottenham's 5-2 victory at Burnley.

But Chelsea's huge investment in the transfer market is still to reap reward as the Blues were beaten 1-0 at home by Nottingham Forest.

In keeping with the early weeks of the season, City were good enough for the three points without ever hitting top gear.

The English champions were without manager Pep Guardiola as he recovers from back surgery in his native Catalonia.

The home side had not had a shot on target until Julian Alvarez turned home Haaland's cross to open the scoring on 31 minutes.

Fulham, who were missing influential midfielder Joao Palhinha after his deadline day move to Bayern Munich collapsed on Friday, responded immediately when Tim Ream tapped in from a corner.

City needed a set-piece of their own to restore the lead in controversial circumstances.

Nathan Ake's header was allowed to stand despite Manuel Akanji, who was in an offside position, jumping over the ball.

Haaland then exploded after the break. He became the fastest player to reach 40 Premier League goals, in just 39 appearances, with a cool finish from Phil Foden's through ball.

The Norwegian then put his missed penalty at Sheffield



Manchester City's Erling Haaland (L) and Tottenham's Son Heung-min celebrate their hat-tricks on Saturday

The English champions, who were without manager Pep Guardiola as he recovers from back surgery in his native Catalonia, had not had a shot on target until Julian Alvarez turned home Haaland's cross to open the scoring on 31 minutes.

United last weekend behind him to slot home from the spot.

And he made it six goals in five games this season by completing his hat-trick in stoppage time.

Spurs sit just two points behind City as their sparkling start under Ange Postecoglou continued.

Burnley had taken the lead after just four minutes at Turf Moor through Lyle Foster.

But Son, who was moved into a more central role by Postecoglou in place of Richarlison, soon proved his manager had pulled off another masterstroke. The Tottenham captain's

deft chip levelled before a thunderous strike from Cristian Romero put the visitors in front in first-half stoppage time.

James Maddison's curling finish from the edge of the box made it 3-1 before Son took centre stage to score twice in three minutes to complete his hat-trick.

Chelsea's spending on deadline day took their total splashed on new players in just over a year under a consortium fronted by Todd Boehly to over £1 billion (\$1.3 billion).

Moises Caicedo's move from Brighton that could rise to £115 million broke the British transfer record last month.

But the Ecuador international was at fault for the only goal at Stamford Bridge to leave Mauricio Pochettino's men embarrassed.

Anthony Elanga slotted home three minutes into the second-half after Caicedo gave the ball away inside his own half.

New signing Cole Palmer was thrown on to try and turn the game around, but Chelsea's lack of a natural goalscorer, despite their huge outlay, was again exposed. Pochettino has won just one of his first four games in charge to leave Chelsea already eight points adrift of City.

Bournemouth were denied their first win under Andoni Iraola as Bryan Mbuemo snatched a 2-2 draw for Brentford.

Sheffield United and Everton secured their first point of the season after a pulsating 2-2 draw in the lunchtime kick-off.

Cameron Archer's debut strike and a Jordan Pickford own goal put the Blades in front after Abdoulaye Doucoure's early opener for Everton.

Arnaut Danjuma levelled early in the second-half, but Everton eeded some heroics from Pickford in stoppage time to prevent slipping to a fourth straight defeat.



Ten-man Milan maintain 100 percent start at Roma

Rome, Italy - AC Milan continued their perfect start to the new Serie A season with Friday's straightforward 2-1 win at Roma who struggled even after Romelu Lukaku made his debut from the bench.

An early Olivier Giroud penalty and Rafael Leao's stunning volley two minutes after half-time gave Milan a deserved victory at the Stadio Olimpico and took their points tally to nine after three games.

Stefano Pioli's side were worthy winners in the Italian capital despite having to play the final half an hour with 10 men after central defender Fikayo Tomori was sent off for two bookable offences.

Milan have brought in a host of new faces over a busy summer and Christian Pulisic, Ruben Loftus-Cheek and Tijjani Reijnders



AC Milan's Rafael Leao tries to get past AS Roma's Gianluca Mancini during their Italian Serie A match on Friday

all performed well again as Milan moved three points ahead of Verona, Inter Milan and Napoli.

Champions Napoli host Lazio on Saturday night while Inter take on Fiorentina at the San Siro on Sunday with the two Milan giants facing off in the first derby of the season straight after the coming international break.

"Every match is a test that needs to be passed, and that will be a tough test because they're a worthy opponent," said Pioli to DAZN. "The derby has come early in the season... we both want the second star (for 20 league titles) on our shirt and it will be a good chance to get a measure of ourselves."

Leonardo Spinazzola netted in stoppage time for Roma who have a single point from their first three matches and have dropped into the relegation zone.

Kubo ignites Real Sociedad season against Granada

Barcelona, Spain - Takefusa Kubo hit a brace to help Real Sociedad earn their first win of the season in La Liga, beating promoted side Granada 5-3 in San Sebastian.

Imanol Alguacil's side drew their opening three league games in a frustrating domestic start, as the club look forward to their Champions League return after a decade away from Europe's premier competition.

Kubo struck either side of Robin Le Normand's own goal to give Real Sociedad the lead at the break. The Japan international was a persistent

threat for the Basque side.

Martin Zubimendi and Ander Barrenetxea helped pile on the misery for Granada with further strikes, as the Andalusians suffered their third defeat in four games.

Kubo's cross deflected in off Miki Bosch for the fifth, before Lucas Boye pulled one back for the visitors and Bryan Zaragoza blasted home deep in stoppage time.

Real Sociedad face Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu after the international break, before hosting Inter Milan as they get their European campaign underway.

Heidenheim hold stunned Borussia Dortmund after late penalty drama

Berlin, Germany - Promoted Heidenheim claimed their first points in the Bundesliga on Friday, coming from two goals down to draw 2-2 at Borussia Dortmund after a controversial and bizarre late penalty decision.

Dortmund looked in full control early, taking a commanding lead just 15 minutes with a goal from Julian Brandt and an Emre Can penalty.

The home side wasted several chances to land a killer blow and allowed Heidenheim back into the game, Eren Dinkci scoring a stunner early in the second half to give the visitors hope.

Heidenheim equalised from the spot late in the second half, Tim Kleindienst scoring after a long VAR delay.

Having originally awarded a



Heidenheim's Tim Kleindienst celebrates with teammates after scoring against Borussia Dortmund on Friday (AFP)

penalty which was overturned by VAR for offside, the referee approached the box and again overturned the decision, sending Kleindienst to the spot.

Dortmund protested but the goal stood, continuing a worryingly poor start from last year's runners up, who now have one win and two draws in the league

this season.

"We pretty much beat ourselves in the second half" Brandt told DAZN. "We conceded two goals after safely having possession of the ball. We urgently need to protect the ball - goals like that break our necks."

Dortmund manager Edin Terzic refused to blame the late controversy, telling DAZN "we completely gave the game away... you have to say that we beat ourselves today."

His Heidenheim counterpart Frank Schmidt credited his side's fightback.

"We were 2-0 behind after 15 minutes and I think everyone thought it was over, but then we took risks and provoked mistakes - you can say we should have won."

Aleix Espargaro denies Bagnaia to claim Catalunya MotoGP sprint

Montmeló, Spain - Aleix Espargaro made handsome amends for an embarrassing error last year at his home Montmelo circuit by claiming Saturday's Catalunya MotoGP sprint race.

World champion Francesco Bagnaia took second to extend his lead in the riders' standings with Maverick Vinales completing the podium.

Espargaro, born a few kilometres from the Barcelona track, nipped past Bagnaia at the halfway stage, quickly pulling half a second clear.

The Aprilia rider, who had lit up Friday's practice, was not to be denied in front of his local fans.

He crossed the line over two seconds in front to follow up his win in the British Grand Prix at Silverstone. The win also helped erase the memory of his howler



Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro (L) leads Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia (C) and Aprilia's Maverick Vinales in the sprint race of Catalunya Moto GP

at the circuit last year.

Setting off from pole, he was running second to Fabio Quartararo when he celebrated making the podium one lap too early.

By the time he realised his

mistake, three riders had passed him and he finished in fifth.

With the slogan "One more lap" painted on his helmet on Friday, he made amends in style on Saturday.

SHAH SHOW IN VAIN

Rain plays spoilsport as India-Pakistan clash ends in no result

Kandy, Sri Lanka - Rain forced a no result in the blockbuster Asia Cup clash between India and Pakistan after just one innings of play on Saturday.

Pakistan bowled out India for 266 in 48.5 overs with pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi returning figures of 4-35, but no further play was possible due to persistent rain in Pallekele.

Babar Azam's Pakistan have made the Super Four stage of the tournament as they won their opening match of the 50-over tournament, a key event in the build-up to the World Cup in India later this year.

The points on Saturday were shared.

Rain stopped for a short time and groundstaff took off the covers as umpires discussed a reduced target for Pakistan but another spell of showers brought



Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi (L) celebrates after taking the wicket of India's Virat Kohli

the curtain down on the match.

India next play Asia Cup debutants Nepal in the final Group A fixture on Tuesday at the same venue.

India elected to bat in their opening match of the tournament but slipped to 66-4 after a devastating opening spell by left-arm quick Shaheen.

Ishan Kishan (82) and Hardik Pandya (87) hit back in a stand of 138 to hand their team a fighting total but rain had the final say after interrupting play for the third time.

Shaheen rattled the opposition top order, taking the key wickets of skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli - both the batsmen bowled.

"I think both (Virat and Rohit) were crucial wickets," Shaheen told broadcasters Star Sports before the match was called off.

He added: "Every batter is the same for me. But I think I liked Rohit's wicket better."

Shaheen bowled to Rohit on a length around the off and the ball nipped back in to beat the opener's defence and rattled the off stump.

Shaheen got able support from fellow quicks Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah, both of whom picked up three wickets each.

The left-handed Kishan counter-attacked with boundaries to take the fight back to the opposition bowlers with Pandya.

Shaheen was given a two-over burst to break the stand but the batsmen stood firm and Kishan reached his fifty to loud cheers from the crowd and frustration from Pakistan, whose on-ground fielding remained sloppy.

Earlier Rohit swung Shaheen for a couple of fours, but the pace spearhead had his revenge on the first ball following a 33-minute stoppage to bowl the Indian captain for 11.

He then silenced the largely Indian crowd with the wicket of Kohli (4), who inside-edged an incoming delivery onto his stumps. Rauf bowled the returning Shreyas Iyer as India slipped to 48-3 and soon lost opener Shubman Gill for 10 after a second rain interval.

He also finally sent Kishan back with the batsman caught out after his 81-ball knock, including nine fours and two sixes.

AFP

Marsh and Short power Australia to T20 series win over South Africa

Durban, South Africa - Matthew Short and captain Mitchell Marsh powered Australia to a series-clinching eight-wicket win over South Africa in the second Twenty20 international at Kingsmead on Friday.

Seamers Sean Abbott and Nathan Ellis took three wickets each as South Africa were restricted to 164 for eight after being sent in.

It was nowhere near enough as Short (66) and Marsh (79 not out) took Australia to victory with 31 balls to spare. The pair put on 100 for the second wicket off 47 balls.

Abbott, who took three for 22, was named man of the match.

"The pitch probably suited the bowlers tonight. A lot of credit has to go to the batsmen, it wasn't easy for batting," he said.

Marsh played his second unbeaten innings after scoring a career best 92 not out in his side's 111-run win in the first game at the same venue on Wednesday.

He made his runs off 39 balls with eight fours and six sixes.

Opening batsman Short hit seven fours and four sixes off 30 balls in his second international match.

"A series win in South Africa isn't easy to come by," said Marsh.

"All our bowlers were fantastic."

AFP

England thrash New Zealand in second T20

Manchester, United Kingdom - England debutant Gus Atkinson took four wickets as the hosts hammered New Zealand by 95 runs in the second Twenty20 international at Old Trafford on Friday.

The fast bowler finished with excellent figures of 4-20 - the best by an England debutant at this level - and wrapped up the game by taking three wickets in an over as New Zealand, set a

stiff chase of 199, collapsed to 103 all out. Victory left T20 world champions England 2-0 ahead in the four-match series, this win following their equally emphatic seven-wicket success at Chester-le-Street on Wednesday.

Jonny Bairstow and Harry Brook laid the foundations for Friday's overwhelming result. Bairstow batted through the innings for 86 not out and Brook

made a dashing 67 in England's 198-4.

An elated Atkinson told the BBC: "I didn't know those were the best figures by an England bowler on T20 debut - that's lovely to hear."

He added: "I've sorted out my run-up, I'm running in a bit harder and that's giving me the confidence to put in a bit more effort."

Bairstow and Brook put on 131 for the third wicket in just 65

balls after Buttler won the toss.

Bairstow struck eight fours and four sixes in 60 balls faced.

Brook, controversially omitted from reigning champions England's squad for the upcoming 50-over World Cup in India, struck five sixes in his 36-ball innings.

New Zealand captain Tim Southee conceded 23 runs in one over, with the paceman returning figures of 1-48.



New Zealand's Lockie Ferguson is clean bowled by England's Gus Atkinson

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COMMERCIAL WHALING



Blue whale awaiting slaughter at the Hvalur hf whaling station in Hvalfjörður Iceland

OCEAN HUNT

Iceland to resume whaling under stricter conditions

Iceland's government said that whaling could resume Friday with stricter conditions and monitoring, after it decided not to extend a temporary two-month ban imposed amid animal welfare concerns.

Iceland is one of just three countries that allow commercial whaling, along with Norway and Japan, in the face of fierce criticism from environmentalists and animal rights' defenders.

"Whaling can resume tomorrow (with) detailed and stricter requirements for hunting equipment and hunting methods, as well as increased supervision," the fisheries ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

Animal protection charity Humane Society International called it 'a devastating and inexplicable decision'.

Iceland suspended its whale hunt on June 20 after a government-commissioned report concluded the hunt does not comply with the country's Animal Welfare Act.

Recent monitoring by Iceland's Food and Veterinary Authority on the fin whale hunt, in which explosive harpoons are used, found that the killing of the animals took too long based on the main objectives of the Animal Welfare Act.

Shocking video clips broadcast by the veterinary authority showed a whale's agony as it was hunted for five hours.

A working group established in July and made up of experts from the Food and Veterinary Authority and the Directorate of Fisheries concluded that it was possible to improve whaling methods, the ministry said.

"There is a basis for making changes to the hunting method that can lead to the reduction of irregularities during hunting, and therefore improve the animal welfare aspect," the ministry said Thursday. But the Humane Society rejected those conclusions.

"It is inexplicable that Fisheries Minister Svandís Svavarsdóttir has dismissed the unequivocal scientific evidence that she herself commissioned, demonstrating the brutality and



Whalers cut open a 35 tonne Fin whale



It is inexplicable that Fisheries Minister Svandís Svavarsdóttir has dismissed the unequivocal scientific evidence that she herself commissioned

RUUD TOMBROCK
Executive director for Europe

cruelty of commercial whale killing," its executive director for Europe, Ruud Tombrock, said.

The country has only one remaining whaling company, Hvalur, and its licence to hunt fin whales expires in 2023. Another company hung up its harpoons for good in 2020, saying it was no longer profitable.

Annual quotas authorise the killing of

209 fin whales - the second-longest marine mammal after the blue whale - and 217 minke whales, one of the smallest species. But catches have fallen drastically in recent years due to a dwindling market for whale meat.

Growing opposition at home

The Humane Society's Tombrock said there was 'no way to make harpooning whales at sea anything other than cruel and bloody, and no amount of modifications will change that.'

"Whales already face myriad threats in the oceans from pollution, climate change, entanglement in fish nets and ship strikes," he said. "Iceland had a chance to do the right thing and it chose not to."

The country's whaling season traditionally ends in late September or early October. Opposition to whaling has been on the rise in Iceland with a majority now in favour of dropping the practice.

A survey published in early June indicated that 51% of Icelanders were opposed to the hunt and 29% in favour, with over-60s those most in favour. Iceland has depended heavily on fishing and whaling for centuries.

In the past two decades, however, Iceland's tourism industry, including whale watching tours, has blossomed - and the two key sectors of the economy have diverging interests.

AFP

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Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
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SPACEFARING INDIA

FROM THE MOON TO THE SUN

THE LATEST MISSION IN INDIA'S AMBITIOUS SPACE PROGRAMME BLASTED OFF SATURDAY ON A VOYAGE TOWARDS THE CENTRE OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM, A WEEK AFTER THE COUNTRY'S SUCCESSFUL UNMANNED MOON LANDING

Aditya-L1 launched shortly before midday, with a live broadcast showing hundreds of spectators cheering wildly against the deafening noise of the rocket's ascent.

"Congratulations to our scientists and engineers," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on X. "Our tireless scientific efforts will continue in order to develop better understanding of the Universe."

The mission is carrying scientific instruments to observe the Sun's outermost layers in a four-month journey.

The United States and the European Space Agency (ESA) have sent numerous probes to the centre of the solar system, beginning with NASA's Pioneer programme in the 1960s. Japan and China have also launched their own solar observatory missions into Earth's orbit.

If successful, the latest mission from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will be the first by any Asian nation to be placed in orbit around the Sun.

"It's a challenging mission for India," astrophysicist Somak Raychaudhury told broadcaster NDTV on Friday.

Raychaudhury said the mission probe would study coronal mass ejections, a periodic phenomenon that sees huge discharges of plasma and magnetic energy from the Sun's atmosphere.

These bursts are so powerful they can reach the Earth and potentially disrupt the operations of satellites. Aditya will help predict the phenomenon and alert everybody so that satellites can shut down their power, he said.

"It will also help us understand how these things happen, and in the future, we might not need a warning system out there."

Aditya, the name of the Hindu Sun deity, will travel 1.5 million kilometres to reach its destination that is yet only one per cent of the vast distance between Earth and the Sun.

At that point, the gravitational forces of both celestial bodies cancel each other out, allowing the mission to remain in a stable halo orbit around our nearest star.

Aditya is travelling on the ISRO-designed, 320-tonne PSLV XL rocket that has been a mainstay of the Indian space programme, powering earlier launches to the Moon and Mars.

The mission also aims to shed light on the dynamics of several other solar phenomena by imaging and measuring particles in the Sun's upper atmosphere.

Budget programme

India has been steadily matching the achievements of established spacefaring powers at a fraction of their cost.

The South Asian nation has a comparatively low-budget space programme, but one that has grown considerably in size and momentum since it first sent a probe to orbit the Moon in 2008.

Experts say India can keep costs low by copying and adapting existing technology, and thanks to an abundance of highly skilled engineers who earn a fraction of their foreign counterparts' wages.

Last month's successful landing on the lunar surface - a feat previously achieved only by Russia, the United States and China - cost less than US\$75mn.

The touchdown was widely celebrated by the public, with prayer rituals to wish for the mission's success and schoolchildren following its final descent from live broadcasts in classrooms.

India became the first Asian nation to put a craft into orbit around Mars in 2014 and is slated to launch a three-day crewed mission into the Earth's orbit by next year.

It also plans a joint mission with Japan to send another probe to the Moon by 2025 and an orbital mission to Venus within the next two years.

AFP



Students celebrate as they watch the live streaming of the launch of PSLV XL rocket carrying the Aditya-L1 spacecraft



Aditya-L1 spacecraft takes off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, on a voyage to the centre of the Sun



People watch as the PSLV XL rocket carrying the Aditya-L1 spacecraft, the first space-based Indian observatory to study the Sun lifts off



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