

Tender Announcement

**The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Mada'ayn)
announces the following Tender:**

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Type of work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
8/2022/PEIE/HQ-8	Construction of Reverse Osmosis Plant at Mazyunah Free Zone	04-01-2023	30-01-2023	Construction and Electromechanical	First, Excellent	250

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. **Tender Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.
2. **eTendering System Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtict.gov.om and +968 24402200 Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be added in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening.

Mada'ayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers has no right to claim for any compensations.

@madaynoman

OVER 92,000 VISITORS
FROM OMAN AND ABROAD

5,800 LARGEST SINGLE
MATCH ATTENDANCE

7,100 LARGEST SINGLE
DAY ATTENDANCE

90 SMALL AND MEDIUM
FIRMS PARTICIPATED

OMAN'S FOOTBALL FAN FESTIVAL A RECORD SUCCESS

Muscat - Right from the moment it opened its doors on November 20, till the final match of the World Cup on Sunday, the Football Fan Festival, a part of the 'Oman World Cup Programme', has proven itself to be a major success story.

The festival exceeded all expectations, drawing in just over 92,000 football fans from across the country and abroad, with the semi-final and final matches getting booked weeks in advance. Of the 64 World Cup matches broadcast at the festival, the largest single match attendance was for the final between France and Argentina on Sunday, which saw over 5,800 fans cheering for their favoured teams.

However, the largest number of visitors to the festival in a single day was on December 6, with just under 7,100 fans attending the pair of 'Round of 16' matches - Morocco vs Spain and Portugal vs Switzerland.

Commenting on the success of the World Cup Programme, H E Azzan Qassim al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Head of the Steering Committee overseeing the Oman World Cup Programme, said, "I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Qatar for hosting such a successful tournament. It is a matter of great pride not only for the host nation but also for each and everyone of us that a historical event of this magnitude was seamlessly hosted in our region with such care and professionalism."

On the other hand, he pointed out, "the Football Fan Festival, which is one of the main pillars of the Oman World Cup Programme, was able to transfer the amazing atmosphere of the World Cup to the Sultanate of Oman, drawing thousands of visitors daily to watch matches, participate in activities and enjoy accompanying events in a family-friendly atmosphere.

"A perfect blend of entertainment and sport-related activities proved to be the festival's greatest asset, and the reaction from the fans has been far greater than we expected," he added.

Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, reiterated that sports



"has always been one of the main factors that contribute to enriching the tourism sector and maximising the benefit from the tourism potentials that the sultanate enjoys".

"This historic hosting of the World Cup in the region, coupled with the popularity of football in Oman, drove us to organise this unique festival that brought together a family and sporting event in one. We are happy with the great turnout we got daily and for the thoroughly enjoyable atmosphere that it had created."

While designing and implementing the festival, the Steering Committee of the World Cup Programme was keen to involve small and medium enterprises (SMEs) so as to help them gain some benefits from this event. It paved the way for more than 90 SMEs to participate at various stages in organising several fun events, entertainment activities, and operating stalls at the Food Zone - all of which received a great response from the participants and visitors alike, the organisers said.

The Football Fan Festival was di-

vided into several zones, each catering to one core aspect of the celebrations, starting with the Sponsors Zone, followed by the 'Food zone' showcasing cuisine and tastes from all corners of the globe. Two 'Activity Zones' that featured over 22 interactive football-themed mini-games and a dedicated five-a-side football pitch, as well as the 'Football Theatre' with giant screens where all the 64 matches of the World Cup were broadcast live.

A special e-Sports Tournament was also organised in partnership with



A perfect blend of entertainment and sport-related activities proved to be the greatest asset... the reaction from the fans has been far greater than we expected

H E AZZAN QASSIM AL BUSAIDI

Golden Joystick, which saw the participation of over 140 gamers from across the country and had the final broadcast live on the big arena screen on December 18. Taking the cup at the tournament was Farhar al Kindi, with Saleh al Ghasani and Wisam al Rawahi coming in second and third place, respectively.

In addition, the festival sponsored and hosted the award ceremony of the Football Fan Festival Championship for Students of Muscat Governorate Schools 2022. The tournament was organised in collaboration with the Directorate General of Education in the Governorate of Muscat. Ninety-six teams (960 students) from all Muscat government KS1 schools participated in that tournament.

Hai Al-Dhahir Public School lifted the trophy, with Dagmar Public School coming second and Muscat International Private School third.

"I would like to extend my thanks to

all members of the Oman World Cup Programme Steering Committee, foremost among them the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, our sponsors, all SMEs and businesses involved, the multiple teams and individuals, and the nearly 300 volunteers from Oman Tourism College and other volunteering teams and entities for their dedicated support in the organisation and operations of the festival," said Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi.

"I also extend my sincere thanks to our partners Oman Air, Oman Airports, and to the ROP, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, the on-site health and safety specialists, and security guards for helping us maintain the safety and security of everyone who attended. Last but not least, I would like to thank the football fans whose dedicated participation helped make the Football Fan Festival a tremendous success. We couldn't have done it without them."

Over the past few days, a diversified programme of activities and events included a visit by several players of the Oman National Football Team as well as the National Youth Football Team.

In a continuation of the thrilling surprises at the festival, the audience was treated to a special performance by The Steel Music Band of the Royal Guard of Oman and a concert by singer Salah al Zadjali, who performed on the closing day of the festival.

Celebrating 50 years in Oman

Keeping your business on track since 1972

GAC Oman provides professional and expert solutions for all your shipping and logistics needs to support diverse sectors across Oman and beyond.

gac.com/oman

GAC Oman

GAC Building, Dohat Al Adab St. Al Khuwair, 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
E: muscat@gac.com | T: +968 2447 7800

[linkedin.com/company/gacoman](https://www.linkedin.com/company/gacoman)



Delivering your strategy.

World-class Quality.
**UNBELIEVABLE
PRICE**



RAO CELEBRATES GRADUATION OF OFFICER CADETS



Royal Army of Oman (RAO) celebrated the passing out of officer cadets after a graduation course at Sultan Qaboos Military College on Wednesday. The ceremony was presided over by H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs. The celebration at Al Murtafaa Garrison began with the graduates giving the military salute to the chief guest. Later, H H Sayyid Shihab presented the Sword of Honour to RAO Cadet Officer Mohammed Hamad al Shibli, who won first place in the cadet officer's course (ONA)



Lab to address challenges facing industrial sector

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in cooperation with the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and the Academy of Industrial Innovation, will hold 'Laboratory for Manufacturing Industries and Future Industries' starting January 2, 2023.

The four-week lab will address the challenges faced by projects, impediments to investment opportunities in the industrial sector, and find practical solutions for their implementation. It will also involve the private sector in studying the challenges facing investments in the manufacturing sector.

The lab and its details were announced at a press conference organised by MoCIIP on Wednesday.

H E Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce



The industrial sector has witnessed steady growth since the 1970s, and an increase in its contribution to the gross domestic product, amounting to about 9.1 per cent in 2021

H E DR SALEH BIN SAID MASAN

and Industry in MoCIIP, said, "The lab seeks to achieve the goals of the industrial sector, improve its performance, raise its contribution to the gross domestic product, and listen to the opinions of partners and stakeholders to overcome the challenges of the sector and attract investments."

He informed that the lab will discuss more than 160 projects in medium and high technology, oil and gas and other natural resources, health, environment, minerals and metals, and food.

According to H E Masan, topics to be addressed include evaluation of the Industrial Strategy 2040, investment opportuni-

ties, governance, and future industries. It will host experts from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting, and the Arab Planning Institute, in addition to a group of planning professionals engaged in the manufacturing sector and partners from both the public and private sectors.

"The industrial sector has witnessed steady growth since the 1970s, and an increase in its contribution to the gross domestic product, amounting to about 9.1 per cent in 2021. The value of manufacturing industries in Oman at the end of June 2022

grew by 67.4 per cent compared to the same period in 2021," H E Masan said.

He informed that the ministry launched several initiatives with the aim of developing the industrial sector in the last quarter of 2021.

According to the undersecretary, the industrial sector has been made one of the most attractive sectors for investment and employment through legislation and incentives, establishment of free and economic industrial zones with integrated infrastructure, and strategic policies for industrial development within the objectives of the Industrial Strategy 2040.

Meet held to improve Oman's performance in innovation index

Muscat - The technical committee tasked with the project of improving Oman's performance in the Global Innovation Index held its first periodic meeting on Tuesday.

The committee discussed various aspects of the project and cooperation with the departments concerned, including the National Competitiveness Office and Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

H E Dr Saif Abdullah al Hadabi, Undersecretary for Re-

search and Innovation in the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and head of the committee, chaired the meeting, which also considered devising a national plan for the improvement of Oman's performance in the Global Innovation Index.

The Global Innovation Index, issued by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) since 2007, is aimed at helping policy makers around the world improve their understanding of the strengths

and weaknesses of their national innovation systems. It also seeks to define ways to draft informed approaches to national policies.

The Global Innovation Index for the year 2022 show that Oman ranked 79th among 132 countries evaluated in the report. Oman's highest performance was in the 'human capital and research' criteria, while the country's lowest performance was in the 'business environment' category.

ONA

Camping permits now offered online: Municipality

Our Correspondent Muscat

Adventure seekers looking to camp in Muscat now have the option to apply for a permit online.

Muscat Municipality has stated that it recently issued a circular on the requirements of camping in the governorate. 'Due to an increase in demand for camping permits, specially at this time of the year, the municipality has created an online portal for individuals wishing to obtain camping permits in the Muscat governorate,' it stated.

Permits can be obtained by applying through <https://eservices.mm.gov.om/Home/Service/MTA> and filling out the required form.



vices.mm.gov.om/Home/Service/MTA and filling out the required form.

The municipality has also developed an interactive map allowing campers to choose from

a list of sites in Muscat.

'It is worth mentioning that Article 1 of the requirements states that camping is not allowed, whether in a caravan or tent, for more than 48 hours, without obtaining a prior permit from the competent directorate, and paying a security deposit of RO100, which is valid for seven nights,' the civic authority stated.

Article 7 states that anyone who violates the controls and requirements will be punished with an administrative fine of RO200 when camping without a permit, while an administrative fine of RO50 will be imposed in case of non-compliance with any of the rules or regulations for camping.

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDER NOTICE

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
857/2022/MAF WR/HQ-86	Consultancy Services for Design & Supervision for the construction of a harbor and Fishermen Village at Surab in Wilayat Mahoot and Fishermen Village at Ras Mudrika in Wilayat Duqm, at the Governorate of Al Wuista	100/-	First	Thursday 29/12/2022	Thursday 19/1/2023

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources. And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +96824402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

new

Move over mayo!

PERinaise has arrived!

Distributed by

Please contact
+968 22060236/237

GCC growth prospects reviewed at Muscat meet

GCC's total GDP projected to be close to \$2tn in 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The GCC states' total GDP is projected to be close to US\$2 trillion in 2022 and if the GCC continued business as usual, their combined GDP would grow to an expected US\$ 6 trillion by 2050, according to a World Bank report.

However, if the GCC countries implemented a green growth strategy that would help and accelerate their economic diversification, GDP could have the potential to grow to over US\$ 13 trillion by 2050, it added.

The growth prospects were highlighted at the 24th Annual Meeting of Officials Responsible for Preparing Development Plans in the GCC states in Muscat on Wednesday.

H E Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Mawali, undersecretary in the Ministry of Economy, reviewed the most important topics for the growth of GCC economies.

"The meeting aims to enhance joint coordination between the GCC states and exchange knowledge and experiences regarding best practices in the field of preparing national plans and future visions," stated H E Dr Mawali.

"It is high time now to preserve the various resources for



future generations and to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development."

Oman submitted its First Voluntary National Review in 2019 to the United Nations and is now re-constituting its National Committee and National Working Group concerned with following up on the implementation of the sustainable development goals. Preparations are ongoing for the issuance of the second voluntary report on the progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

"Since the 1960s, until today, the GCC States have put their

development plans at the heart of economic and social developments in order to achieve qualitative leaps in their economies. We must continue efforts to achieve economic growth that balances social, environmental and institutional dimensions and objectives," he added.

The economies of the GCC are projected to expand by 6.9 per cent in 2022 before moderating to 3.7 per cent and 2.4 per cent in 2023 and 2024, according to the new World Bank Gulf Economic Update (GEU).

Easing of pandemic restrictions, and positive developments in the hydrocarbon market drove

strong recoveries in 2021 and 2022 across the GCC. Strong economic recovery and supply chain bottlenecks raised inflation in the GCC to an average rate of 2.1% in 2021 — up from 0.8% in 2020, the GEU stated.

Supported by higher hydrocarbon prices, the GCC region is expected to register strong twin surpluses in 2022 and continue over the medium term.

The regional fiscal balance is projected to register a surplus of 5.3 per cent of GDP in 2022 — the first surplus since 2014 — while the external balance surplus is expected to reach 17.2 per cent of GDP.

Upsurge in capital demand to fuel performance of Saudi banks

Riyadh - Banks in Saudi Arabia are expected to continue to prioritise their liquidity demands for the coming year despite enhanced earnings, through focusing on raising Tier I capital in the form of debt issuances, notably Sukuk, according to KPMG, a leading provider of audit, tax and advisory services in Saudi Arabia.

In the first nine months of 2022, issuances of US\$3.8bn have been conducted and this is expected to grow in coming months as banks are fuelling the increased demand in the public and private sector.

"An upsurge in Tier I capital issuance has been noted across the banking participants as banks are further strengthening their equity base," commented Khalil Ibrahim al Sedais, Office Managing Partner - Riyadh at KPMG in Saudi Arabia.

The regulatory agenda is also ensuring a robust capital base through the implementation of Basel 4 as final rules have emerged. While the implementation was delayed due to the pandemic, global regulators are now pushing ahead for a 'full and consistent' framework implementation.

"Banks could face significant challenges as they refresh their Basel 4 programmes," said Ovais Shahab, Head of Financial Services at KPMG in Saudi Arabia, noting that banks in the kingdom will need to ensure that they are well prepared to achieve compliance within the required time-



An upsurge in Tier I capital issuance has been noted across the banking participants

KHALIL IBRAHIM AL SEDAIS

lines of Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) in a cost-effective manner.

In its Q3 2022 'Banking Pulse' report, KPMG highlighted the latest developments in the Kingdom's banking sector.

An analysis of the nine-month financial performance of the banking sector reflected a robust industry performance, particularly highlighted by an increase in net profit by 26.21 per cent year-on-year, to SAR46.41bn (US\$12.33bn) in the first nine months of 2022, with total assets rising 9.76 per cent year-on-year to SAR3,329bn.

"We have witnessed continued growth in the economic ac-

tivities during the nine-month period in 2022. While global supply chains have been under pressure due to challenges including geopolitical apprehensions, oil prices being consistently on the higher side has helped the Saudi economy to thrive and expand on its Vision 2030 ambitions," Sedais added.

"As we look to the next three years, risks are more interconnected than ever; emerging technology rises as the top risk and greatest threat to organizational growth, while operational risk, regulatory changes and reputational concerns are the other risks jumping in priority," Shahab added.

UK borrowing surges in November



UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

London, United Kingdom - UK state borrowing surged last month on fallout from sky-high inflation, notably government financial help for consumers and businesses struggling to afford soaring energy bills, official data showed Wednesday.

Public sector net borrowing hit £22 billion (\$27 billion) in November, up £13.9 billion from a year earlier, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The government of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has maintained subsidies for household energy bills introduced by his predecessor Liz Truss after prices rocketed in the wake of Ukraine's invasion by key producer Russia.

Despite easing in November, UK inflation remains close to 11 percent. Interest rates have also risen, pushing up interest repayments for the government.

"We have a clear plan to help halve inflation next year, but that requires some tough decisions to put our

public finances back on a sustainable footing," finance minister Jeremy Hunt said following the latest data.

UK ambulance workers readied to walk out on Wednesday, a day after nurses staged their second stoppage, in a widening dispute with the government which is refusing to cede to above-inflation wage hikes.

The series of walkouts has intensified in the run-up to Christmas, with industrial action by railway workers and passport control officers threatening to ruin festive holiday getaways.

The statistics office added that total UK debt rose in November to almost £2.48 trillion, or 98.7 percent of gross domestic product.

"November's public finances data saw a significant year-on-year overshoot in UK public sector net borrowing, reflecting the impact of support schemes to help households and businesses pay their energy bills," noted EY analyst Martin Beck.

AFP

Crypto could cause next financial crisis: India

Mumbai, India - India's central bank governor warned Wednesday that cryptocurrency markets risked causing the next global financial crisis, saying the recent collapse of FTX was proof of the sector's "inherent risks".

The comments close out a challenging year for India's millions of crypto owners, who are already reeling from a global market collapse and steep domestic taxes.

"Unlike any other product, our main concern about crypto is that it doesn't have any underlying (value) whatsoever," Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das said at an industry event.

"Our view is that it should be prohibited because ... if you try to regulate it and allow it to grow, please mark my words: the next



FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried (C) is led away handcuffed at the Nassau, Bahamas, courthouse on December 19, 2022 (AFP)

financial crisis will come from private cryptocurrencies."

Cryptocurrencies have been under the scrutiny of Indian regulators since first entering the local market nearly a decade ago, with a rise in fraudulent transac-

tions leading to a central bank ban in 2018.

India's Supreme Court lifted the restrictions two years later and the market surged, backed by burgeoning local trading platforms and glitzy celebrity en-

Twitter timeline: From Musk's entry to his planned exit

Paris, France- Since buying Twitter, Elon Musk has made radical changes that have sparked fears for the future of the platform, from firing half the staff to restoring ex-president Donald Trump's account and temporarily suspending those of several journalists.

On Tuesday, he said he would step down as CEO after a Twitter poll he launched on his leadership found that most users wanted him to go.

A look back at a rollercoaster two months at "the bird".

Enter Elon

Musk, the world's second-richest man and CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, buys Twitter in late October for \$44 billion after months of on-off negotiations.

"Let the good times roll," he tweets after the deal is sealed on October 28. He becomes the sole director of the company after dissolving its corporate board.



Content moderation council

In one of his first moves, the self-declared free speech absolutist announces he will form a "content moderation council", in a nod to concerns that Twitter could become a free-for-all platform for disinformation and hate speech.

Monthly charge

On November 1, Musk announces the site will charge \$8

per month to verify the accounts of celebrities and companies -- a service that used to be free. But the November 6 launch of the Twitter Blue subscription plan goes awry. Musk is forced to suspend the move after an embarrassing rash of fake accounts alarm advertisers.

Brands step back

Top global companies, including General Mills and Volkswagen, suspend their advertising on

dorsements.

But the introduction of a 30 percent tax on profits from trading "private currencies" this year has resulted in trading volumes shrinking to a tenth of their previous size.

A sharp fall in the prices of leading tokens like bitcoin -- dubbed a "crypto winter" -- has wiped out more than \$2 trillion from their global market value since its peak of \$3 trillion in November 2021, further spooking traders. The sudden collapse of FTX -- a cryptocurrency exchange worth \$32 billion before it filed for bankruptcy last month -- and US fraud charges against its one-time billionaire founder Sam Bankman-Fried has intensified scrutiny of the sector.

Das said the fall in crypto prices and recent developments

around FTX validated his long-held view that cryptocurrencies have "huge inherent risks for our macroeconomic and financial stability".

The Reserve Bank of India this year introduced its own digital rupee based on blockchain technology, intended to bring down the costs of commercial transactions as the Indian economy becomes less reliant on paper currency.

Last month, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for increased regulation of private currencies to stamp out terror funding.

Modi also said last year that bitcoin presented a risk to younger generations and could "spoil our youth" if it ended up "in the wrong hands".

AFP

Twitter on November 3 as they monitor the new direction the company will take.

Massive layoffs

On November 4, half of Twitter's 7,500-strong staff are made redundant, sending shockwaves through Silicon Valley.

Musk tweets that "unfortunately there is no choice when the company is losing over \$4mn/day".

Regulator's concern

The chaos draws a rare warning on November 10 from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the US authority that oversees consumer safety.

"We are tracking recent developments at Twitter with deep concern," said an FTC spokesperson.

Ultimatum to staff

Musk delivers an ultimatum to Twitter staff on November 16, asking them to choose between being "extremely hardcore" and

working long hours, or losing their jobs. He gives them a day to decide. Large numbers of staff quit.

Trump reinstated

Musk reinstates the account of banned former president Donald Trump after conducting a poll of users, a narrow majority of whom support the move. A few days later he announces an "amnesty" for all banned Twitter accounts.

COVID controversy

In late November, Twitter says it is no longer enforcing a policy of combatting COVID-19 disinformation. Musk had fiercely opposed COVID restrictions.

Twitter Blue take two

In mid-December Musk re-launches Twitter Blue. This time, Twitter conducts a review of the account before giving it the coveted blue check mark.

AFP



President Vladimir Putin attends the launch ceremony of the Kovykta gas field via video link at the Kremlin in Moscow, on Dec 21 (AFP)

Putin inaugurates key Siberian gas field for China exports

Moscow, Russia - President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday inaugurated the Kovykta natural gas field in eastern Siberia that will allow Russia to increase its exports to China amid soaring tensions between Moscow and the West.

"We are launching the unique Kovykta gas field, the largest in Eastern Siberia. Its recoverable reserves are 1.8 trillion cubic metres of gas," Putin said during a televised ceremony, taking part by video-link.

He said the launch of the field will "give a serious boost to the socio-economic development" of Russia's eastern regions.

"The Kovykta gas field has been put into service," said the CEO of Russian energy giant Gazprom, Alexei Miller, after Putin gave the green light for the inauguration.

Bringing Kovykta into produc-

tion comes as Russian gas exports to Europe decreased following soaring tensions since the beginning of Moscow's offensive in Ukraine.

Russia does not have pipelines to transport gas from its Western Siberian and Arctic gas fields that have served Europe to China -- but around a decade ago began efforts to develop new fields and build the Power of Siberia pipeline to deliver to the rapidly expanding market.

The first Power of Siberia pipeline went into operation and began to ship gas from eastern Siberia to China at the end of 2019.

Moscow plans to build a Power of Siberia 2 pipeline, yet another sign that Russia is looking to China in the face of Western sanctions.

AFP

World Bank approves \$610mn for Ukraine's essential services

Washington, United States - The World Bank said Tuesday that it has approved a fresh \$610 million package for Ukraine, with financing aimed at sustaining essential services and supporting health care as war rages on.

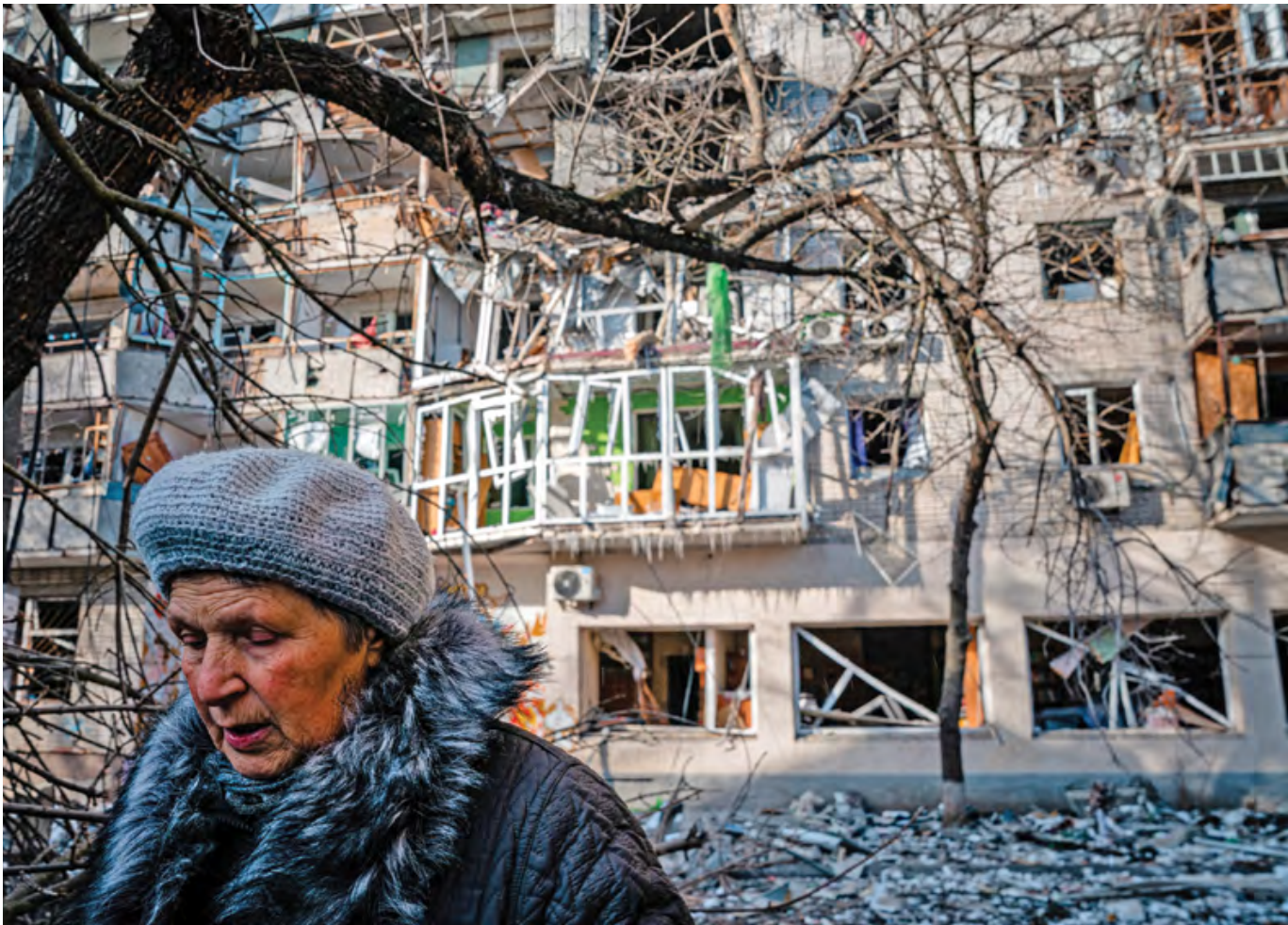
This comes as Russia's invasion "continues to have devastating economic and humanitarian consequences," World Bank President David Malpass said in a statement.

The war has hit Ukraine's health sector, critical energy infrastructure, as well as transport networks, he added.

Of the added financing, \$500 million comes through a loan to help Ukraine's government with expenses relating to child and family benefits, public employee salaries, as well as utility payments.

"Maintaining these critical public services is essential to limiting the loss of human capital and rebuilding the country and its economy after the war," said the World Bank.

The remaining financing goes into a project meant to boost primary health care and address increased demand for mental health and rehabilitation services due to the war, among other needs, the bank said.



A pedestrian walks past a residential building damaged by Russian shelling in Kherson on December 20, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

As of early December, around 5.5 percent of public healthcare providers have been destroyed or damaged in Ukraine, the statement said.

Since Russia's invasion, the Washington-based development lender has mobilized \$18 billion in emergency financing to help Ukrainians, of which \$15

billion has been disbursed, it said. The new funds add to earlier packages including two rounds of grant financing provided by the US government in

recent months, each amounting to \$4.5 billion, as well as another \$530 million in loan guarantees in September.

AFP

Berlin opposes Lufthansa bosses' bonuses

Frankfurt, Germany - The German government said Wednesday it opposed reported multi-million-euro bonuses for executive board members of airline giant Lufthansa, which received huge state support to survive the pandemic.

When the coronavirus closed borders in 2020, Berlin took a 20-percent stake in Lufthansa under a nine-billion-euro (\$9.5-billion) deal to save it from bankruptcy.

Lufthansa has bounced back strongly as air travel recovers, and in September the government sold off its remaining stake, putting the group back in private hands.

But on Tuesday, financial daily Handelsblatt reported that six board members are set to receive bonuses of millions of



File photo of Carsten Spohr, CEO of German airline Lufthansa AG

euros for 2021 and 2022, at a time the airline was receiving state aid.

The supervisory board approved the bonuses during a meeting at the start of Decem-

ber, it said, citing sources close to the company. It did not report the exact amount of the bonuses.

Asked about the payouts, government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said the government believed they would "violate the agreements" for the aid package.

"Now we have to discuss these different legal positions with Lufthansa, and then we will have to see what the outcome is," he told a regular press briefing.

A company spokesman previously told AFP that payments to the board were under discussion, and would only be handed out in 2025 at the earliest.

According to Handelsblatt, some employee representatives voted against the bonuses, as

they saw them as a violation of the terms of the rescue deal.

Unions have reacted angrily since reports of the hefty bonuses emerged.

"Lufthansa employees gave their all during the pandemic and accepted tough cuts to do their part to save the company," said Daniel Kassa Mbuambi, from the flight attendants' union UFO. To recognise the "decisive part" played by all staff, "the Lufthansa executive board should now also give bonuses or special payments to employees," he added.

Last week, the group -- which includes Eurowings, Austrian, Swiss and Brussels Airlines -- significantly raised its profit outlook for 2022, citing continued "strong demand for air travel".

AFP

Tanzania signs \$2.2bn railway deal with China



Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of Tanzania, attends US Africa Leadership Summit on Dec 14, in Washington, DC (AFP)

Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania - Tanzania on Tuesday signed a \$2.2bn contract with a Chinese company to build the final section of a railway line aimed at linking the country's main port with its neighbours.

The 2,561-kilometre (1,600-mile) line will link the Indian Ocean port of Dar es Salaam to Mwanza on Lake Victoria, with eventual spurs to Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan, who witnessed the signing, said the construction of the final section of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) from Tabora to Kigoma in western Tanzania would be completed in 2026, nine years after it began.

"Upon completion of the SGR,

Tanzania will be in a better position to utilise its strategic geographical positioning to facilitate cross-border trade," she said.

Hassan said Tanzania's investment in the SGR had now reached \$10.04 billion, including the latest contract.

"We have to borrow for this important infrastructure and other sustainable development projects because we don't have enough local resources," she said, dismissing criticism that the country was taking on too much debt. She said the new railway would reduce cargo transportation costs between the Dar es Salaam port and the DRC from a minimum of \$6,000 per tonne to about \$4,000 once it becomes fully operational.

AFP

European Commission approves German state takeover of gas giant Uniper

Brussels, Belgium - The European Commission on Tuesday conditionally approved the nationalisation of troubled German gas giant Uniper after it was pushed to the brink of collapse following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Commission also gave the green light to the nationalisation of the German subsidiary of Russian gas giant Gazprom in order to save the gas supplier from bankruptcy.

Starved of Russian deliveries, Uniper was left facing bankruptcy following a 40-billion-euro (\$42.5 billion) net loss for the first nine months of the year, one of the biggest losses in German corporate history.

That prompted the German government to announce it would nationalise the firm over fears its failure could send shockwaves through Europe's top economy.

Shareholders on Monday backed the deal "by a large majority" in a vote at an extraordi-



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (C) and other German officials attend the opening ceremony of the Uniper LNG terminal in Germany on Dec 17

nary general meeting, Uniper said in a statement.

The Commission said in agreeing to the recapitalisation of Uniper it was recognising the "serious disturbance" caused to the European energy market by the war in Ukraine which had threatened Uniper's viability.

The aid package "aims at restoring the financial position and liquidity of Uniper in the ex-

ceptional situation caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the subsequent disruption of gas deliveries, while maintaining the necessary safeguards to limit competition distortions," the Commission stated.

"The Commission found that the aid amount does not exceed the minimum needed to ensure the viability of Uniper, and it will

not go beyond restoring its capital position compared to before the energy crisis."

Credible exit strategy

Conditions attached to the deal include Uniper divesting parts of its business, notably the Datteln IV power plant in Germany and the Gonyu power plant in Hungary. It will also have to make parts of its gas storage and pipeline capacity bookings available to competitors.

Furthermore, the Commission said Germany has committed to producing a "credible exit strategy" by the end of 2023, with the aim of reducing its shareholding in Uniper to not more than 25 percent plus one share by end 2028 at the latest.

Ahead of Monday's vote, company CEO Klaus-Dieter Maubach said that "by stabilising the company, the federal government recognises the central role that Uniper plays for the security of supply in Germany and Europe". The vote was seen as a formality

after the majority shareholder, Finnish state-owned energy company Fortum, had agreed to the measures in September. Earlier Monday, the German government and Uniper, which employs some 7,000 people, had concluded a framework agreement related to the rescue package.

Berlin initially agreed to an eight-billion-euro (\$8.5 billion) cash injection for Uniper, but the debt-laden company said last month the government would need to spend an additional 25 billion euros.

Berlin is proposing to finance the rescue out of a 200-billion-euro fund designed to cushion the impact of the energy crisis on households and businesses.

The firm is seeking damages at an international tribunal from Gazprom over what it claims is the Russian energy giant's failure to deliver contractually agreed gas supplies. Gazprom says it does not recognise the legitimacy of the claims.

AFP

JOB VACANCY

wanted in a leading industrial company in the Sultanate of Oman

- Finance Manager for Marble company
- Finance Manager for Mobile and electronics company
- Collection

Send CV to oman.docu@gmail.com

New Infiniti QX60 SUV launched in Oman

Infiniti Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, unveiled the all-new Infiniti QX60, the seven-seater luxury family SUV in Oman.

It turns out that Infiniti QX60 is as much a powerful performer as it is a premium and advanced crossover. The three-row SUV - Infiniti QX60 with a 9-speed automatic gearbox paired with a powerful V6 engine offers a confident and responsive performance. Given its immense power and capability, aspiring owners might be surprised to learn that the Infiniti QX60 is also quite fuel efficient.

A senior spokesperson at Infiniti Oman said, "The model features intuitive technology and impressive driveline dynamics with an award-winning, 279hp 3.5L V6 engine, paired with a 9-speed automatic transmission. The powertrain duo delivers a responsive drive that's quiet, confident, and poised. Intelligent all-wheel Drive is available and significantly enhanced."

With the Infiniti QX60, designers created a new expression for the premium brand by combining powerful athleticism with harmony and simplicity. The combination is a hallmark in Infiniti's design language, underscored by the available brilliant Moonbow Blue shade that reproduces deep blues and violets that blanket the summer sky at dusk. An understated character line runs the length of the QX60, bisecting its equally appealing, available two-tone black roof from its lower body.

A significant model for Infiniti,



the QX60 delivers luxury that should be lived in. The next generation model ushers in a refined, modern look for Infiniti with an upright stance, bold available color-contrast roof, and exceptional Japanese-inspired details including an origami-inspired signature mesh grille, kimono folds in 'digital piano key' lighting signatures and the aesthetic of ripples on a pond interpreted in the leather-appointed seats

The car has generous standard equipment to complement

its soothing interior and sleek exterior. The stunning model is magnificent outside, its interior is peaceful and is full of technology that takes the stress out of driving, all of which allow its owners to conquer life in style.

The direct coupling all-wheel-drive system almost instantly engages when it detects wheel slip for a confident driving experience. Up to 50 per cent of the available power can be sent to the rear wheels for increased grip. Infiniti's Active Brake Lim-

ited Slip functionality can brake individual wheels to redirect torque to the wheels that do have grip almost instantly.

Exquisite details, curated materials and tailored artistry adorn the interior of the Infiniti QX60. Available Saddle Brown semi-aniline leather appointments showcase the subtle curves with handsome, double-stitch contrast accents and piping. For the QX60, an autograph grade level features quilted semi-aniline leather accouterments in the first

two rows of seating with embossed seatbacks and rich open-pore wood accents.

The three-row SUV features Infiniti's InTouch 12.3-inch Interactive Display touchscreen for infotainment with wireless Apple CarPlay and USB-based Android Auto compatibility. An available Infiniti 12.3-inch Dynamic Meter Display in front of the driver renders beautifully crisp information such as speed, navigation information and more, and can be paired with a sharp 10.8-inch

head-up display which provides vital information to the driver while keeping their eyes on the road.

In the centre console, an available wireless charging mat, large enough to support an iPhone Pro Max, makes keeping devices connected and charged easy.

All QX60s feature ergonomically designed 'zero gravity' seats in the first row - developed in a joint study with Yamazaki Laboratory at Keio University to reduce pressure on the hips - to carry the driver and front passengers more comfortably. In addition, in-seat massagers in the first row with climate-control are available on selected grades. The QX60 offers plush seating for up to seven passengers on most grade levels. Exclusive to the QX60 Autograph grade level, are standard captain's chairs, providing first-class seating accommodations in the second row.

QX60 includes enhanced features that made the nameplate a bestseller for Infiniti. For example, the QX60 keeps its ingenious sliding and tilting seats for the child seat-ready second row, allowing easy access to the third row without removing an already-installed child safety seat.

Available on the QX60 and standard on select grade levels, a premium Bose Performance series 17-speaker sound system faithfully replicates beautiful audio and nuanced notes in the cabin. Specifically designed for the QX60 SUV and its audio profile, the Bose Performance Series audio system executes a rich and broad range of audio, no matter

the source.

Infiniti's ProPILOT Assist makes use of a camera and radar to support the driver. It is designed to reduce the stress of stop-and-go driving by helping control acceleration, braking and steering during single-lane highway driving.

Active safety features such as Rear Automatic Braking, Predictive Forward Collision Warning, and Forward Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection are available on the QX60. Adaptive Front Lighting and Auto-Leveling Headlights are available to light the road ahead brilliantly. The Smart Rear View Mirror provides an unobstructed view behind the QX60 when passengers or cargo obstruct rearward vision.

SBA is largely committed to supporting Infiniti Oman's growth in the Sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman. SBA has further built upon its legacy of trust, excellent customer service and providing value for money to each of its customers.

Infiniti Motor Company is headquartered in Yokohama, Japan with operations around the world including regional offices based in the Americas, China and Infiniti International Markets based in Dubai.

The Infiniti brand of premium automobiles are assembled in manufacturing facilities in Japan and North America. Infiniti design studios are located in Atsugi-Shi near Yokohama, London and San Diego.

National Finance participates in discussion on sustainability

Revered as Oman's largest finance company, National Finance recently participated in an event hosted by Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on December 20 at the Sheraton Oman Hotel.

In line with MSX's commitment to the UN Sustainable Stock Exchange (SSE), the event witnessed the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between MSX and the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Environment Authority in Oman.

Showing active support, the company's general manager of Risk and Controls, Bikram Monga, took part in an interactive session themed 'Fundamentals of ESG and Sustainability'.

Commenting on the company's participation, Monga said,



"Customers in a continuously evolving market have become increasingly conscious about companies embracing sustainable practices, promoting transparency and contributing to the welfare of society as a whole.

"We at National Finance are committed to establishing relevant policies for our internal operations and working in tandem with a clearly defined sustainability framework that is in sync

with ongoing ESG demands. At the same time, the company continues to improve and look for sustainable solutions for all stakeholders."

He added saying, "Our participation in the panel discussion reiterates our commitment to driving meaningful dialogues in the area of ESG and sustainable development. Through the discussion facilitated by MSX, where industry leaders who are

passionate about the cause were able to interact, engage and share ideas for further development."

The panel discussions highlighted the importance for companies to adopt ESG whilst simultaneously diving deeper into the reasons and benefits of its integration and the ways it can improve investor relations. The conversation also evoked an interesting debate on its impact on company returns.

Seasonal flu: What we need to know

Flu is a very contagious viral infection that affects the air passage of children from nose to lungs. It is one of the most severe and common viral illnesses during the winter season.

Most of the children affected by flu improves in less than one week but some children may get more seriously ill, which may need treatment in a hospital. Severe infections are more common in children less than two years of age, also in children with chronic conditions such as recurrent wheezing, heart diseases.

Flu virus is often passed from child to child through coughing or sneezing, by the way of droplets. This virus can survive for several hours on surfaces like doorknobs, toys and furniture and can get transferred through physical contacts.

During the flu infection, the children are most contagious about 24 hours before the onset of symptoms to five to seven



Dr Pankaj Sharma
Specialist Pediatrician
Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar

days of symptoms so it is easy to pick up virus as it can transfer even before the onset of symptoms.

Clinically, flu infection presents as cold/cough with high grade fever, headache and severe body aches. Most of the children improves with sympto-

matic treatment for fever and cold along with proper rest and consumption of plenty of fluids.

Some children can get worse in the form of pneumonia which may need hospital care.

Serious signs include age below three months, breathing difficulty in the form of wheezing or severe cough, restlessness, refusal of feeds, vomiting, less urination, continuous fever or rebound of fever.

Flu infection can be diagnosed with appropriate clinical examination along with lab testing, which are readily available in Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar. Sick children can be admitted and managed properly in hospital.

Flu infection can be prevented by hand hygiene, preventing droplet spread and use of influenza vaccine. Flu vaccine is highly recommended in children less than two years of age as well as those with chronic health conditions like heart disease, asthma.

A wonderland of festivities at Kempinski Hotel Muscat

'An unbelievable wonderland of festivities awaits at Kempinski Hotel Muscat. During this period, parents and their little ones can experience a variety of activities to take part in, from a festive Afternoon Tea at Amwaj Lounge to a special afternoon tea with Santa at Café One,' the hotel said.

A lavish Christmas Eve dinner as well as Christmas Day brunch will be held at The Kitchen restaurant, where guests can enjoy a festive buffet of culinary delights and a variety of festive goodies hand-crafted by the hotel's culinary team, including assorted Christmas cookies and even the hotel's signature classic Christmas Turkey. For a more intimate experience, Zale Lounge



offers a special dinner under the stars with a live musical performance for Christmas Eve and a set menu crafted by Spanish chef David Pastor for Christmas Day, perfect for friends and loved ones.

Ring in 2023 with an extravagant New Year's Eve dinner as well as New Year's Day brunch, with live cooking stations, fresh

seafood, international flavours, and decadent pastries at The Kitchen restaurant.

Also for New Year's Eve, an exclusive beachfront celebration awaits at Zale Lounge, featuring a dazzling performance by an international singer, premium house beverages with Japanese twists and tapas, guaranteed to be a fabulous evening.

Other New Year festivities will continue throughout the hotel's various restaurants. Bukhara showcases the diversity of India with a fun-filled celebration in a colourful and authentic atmosphere. Kick off the New Year in Soi Soi and experience a boasting, vivacious fusion of Thai flavours and aromas straight from the streets of Bangkok.

Oman Air, Jordan Tourism Board sign deal

Oman Air Holidays has announced a strategic partnership with the Jordan Tourism Board to undertake joint promotional activities in Oman and Jordan.

The partnership will include a series of co-branded tactical campaigns that aim to position Oman Air Holidays as a preferred provider of international travel packages and encourage those in Oman to visit Jordan during peak season.

Oman Air currently operates seven flights a week from Muscat to the Jordanian capital, Amman, which is popular amongst travellers for its spectacular landscape and ancient treasures.

Mundher al Shaikhani, senior manager Holidays and Loyalty Programme at Oman Air, said, "Oman and Jordan already enjoy a warm relationship and this



partnership seeks to increase value creation for both countries and contribute to our respective tourism agendas.

"We look forward to working with the Jordan Tourism Board

as we continue strengthening our presence across the region, while creating amazing itineraries that offer something completely different to our guests," Shaikhani added.

Dr Abed al Razzaq Arabiyat, managing director of Jordan Tourism Board, added, "As we strive to increase Jordan's competitiveness as a global tourism destination, we are expanding our reach to new and more targeted markets. Our growing touristic relationship with Oman offers many mutual opportunities, and our partnership with Oman Air Holidays is sure to add considerable momentum to our goals."

Oman Air Holidays excels in creating extraordinary travel experiences to some of the world's most exciting destinations. With a string of recent partnerships, it is strengthening its growing portfolio of packages, which provide excellent value and choice, complemented with the award-winning service and hospitality of Oman Air.

Banned by Taliban, Afghan women stopped from entering universities

Kabul, Afghanistan - Hundreds of young women were stopped by armed guards on Wednesday from entering Afghan university campuses, a day after the nation's Taliban rulers banned them from higher education in another assault on human rights.

Despite promising a softer rule when they seized power last year, the hardline Islamists have ratcheted up restrictions on all aspects of women's lives, ignoring international outrage.

A team of AFP journalists saw groups of students gathered outside universities in the capital, Kabul, barred from entering by armed guards and shuttered gates.

Many, dressed in hijabs, were also seen standing in groups on roads leading to the campuses.

"We are doomed. We have lost everything," said one Kabul student, who asked not to be identified.

The Taliban authorities wanted to 'suppress' women, said Setara Farahmand, 21, who was studying German literature at Kabul University.

"They only want women to stay at home and give birth to children. That's it, they don't want anything more for them."

Male students also expressed shock at the latest edict, with some in the eastern city of Jalalabad boycotting their exams in protest.

"It really expresses their illiteracy and low knowledge of Islam and human rights," said one male university student, asking not to be named.

Most private and government universities are closed for a few weeks over winter, although campuses generally remain open to students and staff.

'Deeply alarmed'

The decision to bar women from universities came late on Tuesday in a terse announcement from Neda Mohammad Nadeem, the minister for higher education.

"You all are informed to immediately implement the mentioned order of suspending education of females until further notice," it said.

Washington condemned the decision 'in the strongest terms', while United Nations Secretary-



Afghan female university students stopped by Taliban security personnel stand next to a university in Kabul on Wednesday (AFP)

General Antonio Guterres was 'deeply alarmed', his spokesman said.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also denounced the ban, saying it was 'seriously denting the credibility of the government'.

The ban comes less than

After the Taliban takeover in August last year, universities were forced to implement new rules including gender-segregated classrooms and entrances, while women were only permitted to be taught by professors of the same sex, or old men.

condition of anonymity.

In a cruel U-turn, the Taliban in March blocked girls from returning to secondary schools on the morning they were supposed to reopen.

Several Taliban officials maintained the secondary education ban was only temporary, but have wheeled out a litany of excuses for the closure - from a lack of funds to the time needed to remodel the syllabus along Islamic lines.

Since the ban, many teenage girls have been married off early - often to much older men of their father's choice.

Several families interviewed by AFP last month said the school ban, coupled with economic pressure, meant securing their daughters' future through marriage was better than them sitting idle at home.

Women have also been pushed out of many government jobs - or are being paid a fraction of their former salary to stay at home. They are also barred from travelling without a male relative and must cover up outside of the home, ideally with a burqa.

International pressure

In November, women were pro-

hibited from going to parks, fairs, gyms and public baths.

The international community has made the right to education for all women a sticking point in negotiations over aid and recognition of the Taliban regime.

Afghanistan's neighbour Pakistan said that engagement with the Taliban was still the best path forward.

"I'm disappointed by the decision that was taken today," Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Tuesday while on a visit to Washington.

But, he added: "I still think the easiest path to our goal - despite having a lot of setbacks when it comes to women's education and other things - is through Kabul and through the interim government."

In the 20 years between the Taliban's two reigns, girls were allowed to go to school and women were able to seek employment in all sectors, though the country remained socially conservative.

The authorities have also returned to public floggings and executions of men and women in recent weeks, as they implement an extreme interpretation of Islamic sharia law.

AFP



A woman and a girl stand at a camp for those displaced by conflict in the countryside near Syria's northern city of Raqa on Monday (AFP)

Children 'trapped' in Syria camps at risk, says aid group

Beirut, Lebanon - About 7,000 children of suspected foreign militants housed in overcrowded detention camps in northeast Syria are at risk of attack and must be repatriated, an aid organisation warned on Wednesday.

Since the Islamic State group's 2019 territorial defeat in Syria, around 56,000 relatives of defeated militants have been detained in the Kurdish-controlled Al-Hol and Roj camps.

"These children are trapped in desperate conditions and put at risk on a daily basis," said Matt Sugrue from Save the Children, a charity working in the camps.

"There is no time to waste."

The camps are administered by the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces, with more than 10,000 foreigners from around 60 countries held in a separate section.

In 2021, 74 children died in Al-Hol, eight of them killed, according to Save the Children.

Last month, the United Nations condemned the 'brutal murder' of two Egyptian girls whose bodies were found in sewers at Al-Hol, and the charity Doctors Without Borders described the camp as 'a giant open-air prison'.

AFP

Iran FM says held 'friendly' talks with Saudi counterpart

Tehran, Iran - Iran's foreign minister said on Wednesday he held a 'friendly conversation' with his Saudi counterpart in Jordan, despite Tehran's repeated accusations that Riyadh has fanned months-long protests in the Islamic republic.

Jordan hosted the 'Baghdad II' conference on Tuesday, bringing together key Middle East and international players - including rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia - in a bid to defuse regional tensions.

"On the sidelines of the meeting, I had the opportunity for a friendly talk with some of my counterparts, including the foreign ministers of Oman, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in an Arabic-language post.

"The Saudi minister assured me of his country's readiness to



Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (AFP)

continue dialogue with Iran," he added.

Protests have rocked Iran since the September 16 death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, after her arrest in Tehran for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's dress code for women. Officials in the country say hundreds of people have been killed in the months-long street violence.

AFP

Iran court orders retrial for protester on death row

Tehran, Iran - Iran's Supreme Court has ordered a retrial for a young Iranian sentenced to death for his part in protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, the judiciary said on Wednesday.

Mahan Sadrat was one of nearly a dozen Iranians sentenced to death after being convicted of capital offences during the protests that erupted following Amini's death in custody on September 16. The 22-year-old Iranian Kurd had been arrested in Tehran for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's dress code for women.

"The accused's request for a retrial was found to be in accordance with the law... and so the case was referred to the court for retrial," the judiciary's MizanOnline news website reported.

Sadrat, who is in his early 20s, had been found guilty of 'moharebeh' - or 'enmity against God' - an Islamic sharia law offence that can carry the

death penalty in Iran.

His conviction was based on allegations he had drawn a knife, causing fear and insecurity, state news agency IRNA said earlier this month.

At a court hearing on November 3, Sadrat pleaded not guilty to the knife charge, but admitted setting a motorbike on fire, the news agency added.

Officials in Iran say hundreds of people have been killed in the months-long street violence, including dozens of security force personnel. Thousands more have been arrested.

The judiciary has said it has handed down 11 death sentences in connection with the protests. Two of those have been carried out.

Majidreza Rahnnavard, 23, was hanged in public on December 12 after being sentenced to death by a court in second city Mashhad for killing two members of the security forces with a knife. Four days earlier, Mohsen Shekari, also

23, was executed for wounding a member of the security forces.

Campaigners say a dozen other defendants are charged with offences that could see them receive the death penalty too.

Also on Wednesday, Mizan Online reported that a reported death sentence against medical doctor Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou was not yet final.

"No definitive verdict has been issued yet and the case... is being investigated in the Supreme Court," it said.

Amnesty International had said that Ghare-Hasanlou, a doctor, and his wife Farzaneh were on their way to the funeral of a protester who had been killed when they were 'caught up in the chaos' of a deadly assault on a security force member. Reformist newspaper Etemad reported on Wednesday that 'Ghare-Hasanlou's death sentence has been cancelled'.

AFP

Mayor's ban: Turkey's Erdogan fires back at Western criticism

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday fired back at Western criticism of a political ban imposed on Istanbul's popular opposition mayor ahead of next year's general election.

A court last week sentenced Ekrem Imamoglu to more than two years in prison and barred him from holding office for the same length of time for 'insulting a public official' in 2019.

The case stemmed from a hugely controversial election in which Imamoglu's initial victory was annulled.

Imamoglu has emerged as one of the more likely opposition leaders to beat Erdogan in a presidential election due by next June.

The 52-year-old will continue to serve as mayor while his appeal winds its way through the courts.

But a top election official said Imamoglu would not be allowed to serve as president should he win the election and the ruling is upheld.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan delivers a speech during his party's group meeting in Ankara, on Wednesday (AFP)

The official said a re-run presidential vote would then be called.

The United States led an international chorus of condemnation of the trial.

'Manipulate politics'

The State Department said it was

'deeply troubled and disappointed' while Germany called it 'a heavy blow to democracy'.

Erdogan told his ruling party faithful and cheering supporters that foreign powers were trying to use the case to manipulate Turkish politics ahead of the vote.

"Are you looking for political engineers?" Erdogan asked his supporters.

"Are you looking for foreigners who use an individual crime to manipulate politics in our country?" he asked.

The mayor's conviction brought tens of thousands of supporters out on the streets of Istanbul.

Some analysts believe it could enervate the stuttering campaigns of Turkey's opposition parties - still arguing among themselves about who to field against Erdogan next year.

The Turkish leader uncharacteristically refrained from commenting about the conviction for three days.

He then distanced himself from the verdict and pointed out that it could still be appealed.

Erdogan's latest comments suggest that he intends to play up his nationalist credentials by aligning the opposition with foreign forces during the election campaign.

AFP

COVID deaths: China changes criteria

Beijing, China - China said on Wednesday that not a single person had died of COVID-19 the previous day, after changing the criteria for recording virus deaths to mean most are no longer counted.

Hospitals are struggling, pharmacy shelves have been stripped bare and many crematoriums are overwhelmed in the wake of the Chinese government's sudden decision to lift years of lockdowns, quarantines and mass testing.

China had recorded a total of seven deaths - all in Beijing - since the decision to lift the zero-COVID policy, but removed one death from its official tally on Wednesday.

The removal followed a government announcement that only those who had directly died of respiratory failure caused by the virus would be counted under COVID death statistics.

Previously, people who died of an illness while infected with the virus were counted as a COVID death. This way of recording COVID deaths accounts for huge numbers of fatalities in other countries.

"At present after being infected with the Omicron variant, the main cause of death remains underlying diseases," Wang Guiqiang of Peking University First Hospital told a press conference.



An elderly woman receives a COVID-19 vaccine in Danzhai, in China's Guizhou province on Wednesday (AFP)

ence of the National Health Commission (NHC) on Tuesday.

"Old people have other underlying conditions, only a very small number die directly of respiratory failure caused by infection with COVID," he said.

One expert told AFP that because the prevalent Omicron variant does not affect the lungs as much as other strains of COVID-19, the changing definition will mean a great many

more cases will now go unrecorded.

"The definition that focuses on respiratory failure (which develops when the lungs can't get enough oxygen into the blood) will miss a large number of COVID deaths," Yanzhong Huang, a senior fellow for global health at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, said.

"The new definition is a reversal of the international norm adopted since mid-April during the Shanghai outbreak, which counts a COVID death as anyone who died with COVID," he added.

And Singapore-based infectious disease expert Leong Hoe Nam said the new definition meant 'many, many deaths will go unreported'.

"Massaged low death rates... add shine to (China's) healthcare

system and policies," he added, saying they 'will validate their retreat from zero-COVID'.

'Particularly busy'

From the country's northeast to its southwest, crematorium workers have told AFP they are struggling to keep up with a surge in deaths.

Beijing last week admitted the scale of the outbreak has become 'impossible' to track following the end of mandatory

of Xi'an saying they were 'particularly busy'.

In the central city of Changsha, two companies specialising in burial clothing said they had seen an uptick in customers.

One proprietor said a COVID outbreak was having 'a slight effect' on his business, adding that he had been taking more orders for deceased 'older people' than normal. Others presented a more varied picture, with a staff member at a funeral services firm in the southern city of Guangzhou telling AFP that the number of customers 'was always a little higher in winter'.

And some were cagey when asked about the impact of COVID, with another such employee in the megacity of Chongqing saying it was 'not easy to talk too much about this' at present.

'We must act quickly'

A leading Chinese health expert warned on Tuesday that the capital will face a surge in cases over the next two weeks, which will continue until the end of January.

"We must act quickly and prepare fever clinics, emergency and severe treatment resources," Wang Guangfa, a respiratory expert from Peking University First Hospital, told the state-run *Global Times*.

AFP

Director Hodges dies aged 90: Media

London, UK - Mike Hodges, the British director of gritty 1970s crime drama *Get Carter* and 1980 film *Flash Gordon*, has died at the age of 90, media reported on Wednesday.

He passed away last Saturday at home in Dorset, southwest England, his long-time friend and producer Mike Kaplan told *The Guardian* and US trade publication *Variety*.

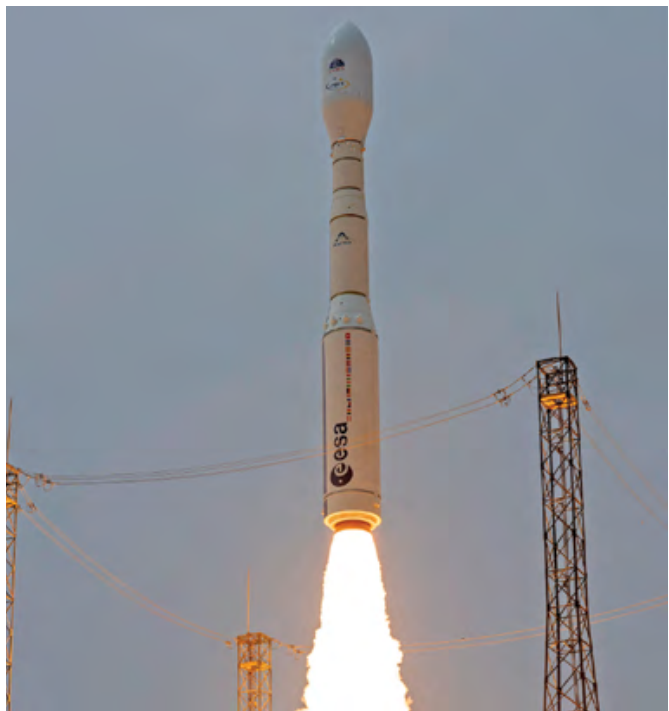
Hodges first shot to recognition writing and directing 1971 British gangster film *Get Carter*, which also helped establish Michael Caine as an emerging acting star.

Both men immediately collaborated again in the 1972 comedy thriller *Pulp*.

Eight years later Hodges directed arguably his biggest film, *Flash Gordon*, about the comic-strip character created in the 1930s.

Other notable credits during his decades-spanning career include *The Terminal Man*, *Croupier* and *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead*.

AFP



This file photo shows the Vega-C rocket being lifted off for its inaugural flight VV21, at Kourou, French Guiana on July 13, 2022 (AFP)

Europe's new Vega-C rocket lost after lift-off

Kourou, France - Europe's new Vega-C rocket was lost shortly after lift-off from French Guiana overnight with two satellites on board, in the latest blow to European space efforts.

The failure on Tuesday night threatens to ground the Vega-C, which would leave Europe without a short-term way to launch satellites into orbit after delays to the Ariane 6 rocket and cancelled Russian cooperation over the Ukraine war. The rocket had been trying to bring into orbit two Earth observation satellites built by Airbus, which were intended to join an existing network capable of capturing high-quality images of any point on the globe several times a day.

If it had been successful, it would have been the first commercial launch of the Vega-C since its inaugural flight on July 13. "The mission is lost," Stephane Israel, head of commercial launch service provider Arianespace, said from the Kourou Space Centre in French Guiana, a French department on South America's northeast coast.

Ten minutes after lift-off, at 10:47pm local time (0147 GMT Wednesday), the launcher's trajectory deviated from its programmed route and communications were lost, Arianespace said.

grammed route and communications were lost, Arianespace said.

An 'anomaly occurred' in the second stage of the launcher, 'ending the Vega-C mission', the company said.

The rocket was launched over the Atlantic Ocean and had shot past 100km (62 miles) altitude and was more than 900km north of Kourou.

No debris

It was not immediately clear whether the rocket's destruction device was activated or whether it crashed into the sea.

Arianespace found there was no debris fallout after lift-off.

"Data analysis is under way to determine the reasons for this failure," it added.

A press briefing is scheduled for noon on Wednesday in Kourou. Airbus did not comment when contacted by AFP.

Peter Beck, the CEO of US launch service provider Rocket Lab, said he was sorry to hear of the failed launch.

"Small launch is way harder than most people think. I am sure the excellent Vega team will resolve the issue quickly," he tweeted.

AFP

Fiji's ruling party refuses to accept election defeat

Suva, Fiji - Fiji's ruling party on Wednesday refused to accept election defeat and signalled it would fight for the country's leader of 16 years Frank Bainimarama to remain in office.

In the government's first public comments since a contentious December 14 election, Bainimarama's Fiji First party claimed a deal among opposition parties to form a government was illegitimate. "Prime Minister Josia Voreqe (Frank) Bainimarama is still the prime minister, so get that right," said Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, the party's general-secretary who doubles as Fiji's attorney-general.

Long-time opposition leader, Sitiveni 'Ramb' Rabuka - a former rugby international and coup leader-turned-democrat - on Tuesday reached a deal with a minor party, the Social Democratic Liberal Party, that would give him a parliamentary majority. The government, while accepting results that showed Bainimarama and Rabuka's alliance neck-and-neck, painted opposition efforts to form a new administration as trying to stoke unrest.



This file photo shows Fiji's PM Frank Bainimarama leaving after casting his vote at a polling station in capital city Suva on December 14 (AFP)

cratic Liberal Party, that would give him a parliamentary majority. The government, while accepting results that showed Bainimarama and Rabuka's alliance neck-and-neck, painted opposition efforts to form a new administration as trying to stoke unrest.

"They are creating disquiet in the community, their motivation is not humble, their motivation is not trying to create stability," Sayed-Khaiyum claimed.

He also said the coalition agreement was 'legally immaterial', and insisted parliament would have to vote to elect the

prime minister.

Sayed-Khaiyum added that the government would try to unpick the coalition agreement by wooing the Social Democratic Liberal Party to form its own parliamentary majority, while also raising the prospect new elections may be needed.

He also claimed that 'the level of racism in this country has heightened' since Tuesday, raising the prospect of inter-communal violence targeting Fiji's large Indo-Fijian minority - a group that has tended to support Bainimarama. "Have you seen the toxic environment that has been created since yesterday on social media?" Sayed-Khaiyum said.

Earlier on Wednesday a police commander appointed by the government expressed concern about post-election 'stoning incidents' and anti Indo-Fijian violence.

lence. The force later admitted that reports of such incidents had not been investigated.

There has been no widespread unrest since the election.

So far, only New Zealand's foreign minister Nanaia Mahuta has offered Rabuka her 'congratulations' on forming a coalition to lead the country - a statement that Sayed-Khaiyum called 'unfortunate' and ill-informed.

Wellington later tempered that statement to say the dust had yet to settle from the troubled poll. Bainimarama - who took power in a 2006 coup but has since won two democratic elections - has not spoken in public since casting his vote.

Although he has previously vowed to respect the election result, Fiji has been upended by four coups in the past 35 years.

AFP

Peru lawmakers move up elections to April 2024

Lima, Peru - Peru's Congress on Tuesday voted to move up general elections from 2026 to April 2024 in a bid to ease tensions and head off deadly protests sparked by the ouster and arrest of president Pedro Castillo.

The political maelstrom has also touched off a diplomatic row with Mexico, which has voiced its support for Castillo, a leftist onetime schoolteacher.

Lawmakers voted 93-30 with one abstention to approve the change in the electoral calendar. The measure also stipulated that current President Dina Boluarte hand power to the winner of those elections in July 2024.

The leader of the legislature, Jose Williams, said for the measure to take effect, it would need to be ratified in another vote in the coming months.

Castillo was removed from office and detained earlier this month after seeking to dissolve Congress to rule by decree. His ousting was criticised by his leftist Latin American allies including Mexico, and brought thousands of his supporters into the streets.

A subsequent security clampdown, including the deployment



The Session of the Plenary, in which Peruvian lawmakers voted in favour of early general elections next April 2024 instead of 2026 as scheduled, is seen under way in Lima on Tuesday (AFP)

of armed soldiers during a state of emergency declared under Boluarte, followed. Officials say at least 21 people have died in the unrest. More than 650 others have been injured.

Demonstrations rattled the country, with roadblocks and airport disruptions, and thousands of tourists were left stranded, including at the famed Inca citadel of Machu Picchu.

Polls show that 83 per cent of citizens are in favour of bringing

elections forward to resolve the crisis roiling the South American nation. On Tuesday, a delegation from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights arrived in Lima to meet with authorities as part of a fact-finding mission.

Instability

Castillo, a 53-year-old former union leader, unexpectedly took power from Peru's traditional political elite in elections last year.

He immediately came under

fire, surviving two early impeachment bids, and soon also found himself in the cross-hairs of prosecutors looking into numerous graft claims.

He is the subject of six separate criminal investigations.

Castillo's brief term in power was plagued by instability, with three prime ministers and seven interior ministers coming and going in just over a year.

He has been ordered held in pre-trial detention for 18 months.

Castillo was arrested as he made his way to the Mexican embassy in Lima to request asylum - sparking a diplomatic row between the two countries.

The government in Lima, which felt slighted by Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's support of Castillo, on Tuesday declared the Mexican ambassador persona non grata and gave him 72 hours to leave the country. Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard called Peru's decision 'unfounded and reprehensible.' "The conduct of our ambassador has been in accordance with the law and principle of non-intervention. Mexico will not change its position," he wrote on Twitter.

Mexico City meanwhile said it was recalling the ambassador, Pablo Monroy Conesa, 'in order to ensure his safety' while adding that its mission would continue to operate normally. Peru however has granted safe passage for Castillo's wife and two children to leave the country, in accordance with international diplomatic conventions, and they were at Mexico's embassy in Lima, having been granted asylum.

AFP

INDIA

Rahul asked to follow COVID protocol

New Delhi, India - Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has written a letter to Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot asking to follow the COVID-19 guidelines strictly during the party's Bharat Jodo Yatra.

"Follow the COVID guidelines strictly during Bharat Jodo Yatra which is going on in Rajasthan. Use of masks/sanitiser should be implemented. Only vaccinated people should participate," the Health Minister said in the letter written on Tuesday.

Mandaviya has also requested to postpone the foot march if the following protocol is not possible.

"If following COVID protocol is not possible then the Bharat Jodo Yatra be postponed in the national interest, taking note of the public health emergency," the letter further stated.

Reacting to the Union Health Minister's letter to Congress, party MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said: "I want to ask BJP did PM Modi follow COVID protocols during Gujarat Polls? I think Mansukh Mandaviya is not liking Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra but people are liking it and joining it. Mandaviya has been deputed to divert the public's attention."

Notably, the Yatra observed



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi interacts with the young supporters while leading the party's Bharat Jodo Yatra, in Alwar on Tuesday (ANI)

its last day in Rajasthan on Tuesday and entered Haryana today.

Mansukh Mandaviya, according to the sources will hold a meeting with senior officials

and experts on the COVID-19 situation in the country today.

The physical meeting will start at 11:30, sources told ANI. He will also review meetings on COVID-19 situations in other

countries.

In view of the sudden spurt of cases being witnessed in Japan, USA, Korea, Brazil and China, it is essential to gear up whole genome sequencing of positive

case samples to track variants through the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) network, writes Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan to States and Union

Follow the COVID guidelines strictly during Bharat Jodo Yatra. Use of masks/sanitiser should be implemented. Only vaccinated people should participate

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA

Territories.

"All states are requested to ensure that as far as possible samples of all positive cases, on a daily basis, are sent to the designated INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) that are mapped to the States and UTs," said Union Health Secretary.

Amid the rising COVID cases in China, a top Indian health expert on Tuesday cautioned the people while asking them to keep a close vigil on the situation in the country.

However, the expert said that there is nothing to panic about as the country's system is 'vigilant'.

The remarks were made by Dr NK Arora, Chairman of the COVID-19 working group NTAGI.

ANI

NIA conducts searches on premises of gangsters

New Delhi, India - The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out searches at multiple locations in gangster-terror nexus cases and seized large quantities of illicit weapons and ammunition from the premises of gangsters.

The anti-terror agency conducted these searches at two locations in Haryana's Sirsa to dismantle and disrupt the emerging nexus between terrorists, gangsters and weapon suppliers based in India and abroad. Joint Searches, alongwith Haryana Police, were conducted during the night of Tuesday and Wednesday at the premises of Chhotu Bhaat of Chautala village and Jagga Sarpanch of Takhatmal village- both in Sirsa. During the searches, four illicit weapons (one Rifle, one Gun, two Pistols), over a hundred pieces of ammunition of different calibres, a number of blank and fired cartridges and sharp-edged weapons have been seized, the NIA said.

The present searches were aimed at dismantling the illegal arms support infrastructure, apart from the hideouts of absconders of the Bamba-led terror-criminal syndicate. They were taking advantage of the border location of their hideout with Punjab.

A few of the most desperate gang leaders and their associates based in India and abroad were identified and booked by the NIA in August, 2022.

ANI

Sonia slams Centre for not discussing China border issue

New Delhi, India - Taking note of the recent faceoff between Indian and Chinese armies in Tawang, former Congress Party president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday lashed out at the Central government accusing it of being 'adamant' and not holding any discussion on the issue in the Parliament.

Sonia Gandhi while speaking at the parliamentary party

meeting that was held on Wednesday, expressed concerns over Chinese transgression. "Government is being adamant and not holding a discussion on it. The public and the House are unable to know the real situation. Why is the Government not responding to the Chinese transgression?"

Meanwhile, opposition leaders including Sonia Gandhi held



United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi (ANI)

a protest in front of the Gandhi statue inside the Parliament premises, demanding a discussion on the India-China faceoff at Tawang. The Opposition led by Congress is continuing to corner the government over the latest India-China clashes in Arunachal Pradesh and demanding a discussion in the Parliament.

Despite the Defence Minis-

ter's statements in both Houses of Parliament assuring that 'our forces are committed to protecting our territorial integrity and will continue to thwart any attempt made on it', Congress MPs Manickam Tagore and Manish Tewari gave Adjournment Motion notice in Lok Sabha to discuss the border situation with China.

ANI

Nepal court orders release of serial killer Charles 'The Serpent' Sobhraj

Kathmandu, Nepal - Nepal's top court ordered on Wednesday the release and deportation of Charles Sobhraj, the French serial killer portrayed in the Netflix series *The Serpent* who was responsible for a string of murders across Asia in the 1970s.

The Supreme Court ruled Sobhraj, 78, who has been in prison in the Himalayan republic since 2003 for murdering two North American tourists, should be freed on health grounds. "Keeping him in the prison continuously is not in line with the prisoner's human rights," read a copy of the verdict seen by AFP.

"If there is not any other pending cases against him to keep him in the prison, this court orders his release by today and... the return to his country within 15 days."

Sobhraj needed open heart surgery and his release was in keeping with the law allowing the compassionate discharge of bedridden prisoners who had already served three-quarters of their sentence, the verdict added. The notorious murderer underwent a five-hour cardiac operation in 2017 and the verdict said he remained in regular treatment for heart disease.

Sobhraj will likely be freed from Kathmandu's Central Jail on Thursday, an official at the



This file photo shows Charles Sobhraj being escorted by Nepalese police at a district court in Bhaktapur on June 12, 2014 (AFP)

prison told AFP.

He will first have to appear in a lower court for administrative formalities before he can walk free, the official added.

Backpacker murders

After a troubled childhood and several prison terms in France for petty crimes, Sobhraj began travelling the world in the early 1970s and wound up in the Thai capital Bangkok. His modus operandi was to charm and befriend his victims - many of them starry-eyed Western backpackers on a quest for spirituality - before drugging, robbing and murdering them.

Suave and sophisticated, he was implicated in his first murder, that of a young American woman whose body was found on a beach in Pattaya wearing a bikini, in 1975.

He was eventually linked to more than 20 killings.

His victims were strangled, beaten or burned, and he often used the passports of his male victims to travel to his next destination. Sobhraj's sobriquet, 'The Serpent', came from his ability to assume other identities in order to evade justice. It became the title of a hit series made by the BBC and Netflix that was based on his life.

He was arrested in India in 1976 and ultimately spent 21 years in jail there, with a brief break in 1986 when he escaped and was caught again in the Indian coastal state of Goa.

Released in 1997, Sobhraj retired to Paris but resurfaced in 2003 in Nepal, where he was spotted in Kathmandu's tourist district and arrested.

AFP

Ukraine's Zelensky to meet Biden, address Congress in Washington

Washington, US - Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky will meet US leader Joe Biden and address Congress in Washington on Wednesday, a visit the White House said will send Russia a strong message of Western unity.

The secretly arranged trip comes on the same day Russian President Vladimir Putin plans to meet his top military officials to assess the conflict in Ukraine and set goals for next year in what the Kremlin described as an 'important, voluminous speech'.

The visit will 'underscore the United States' steadfast commitment to supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes', White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

It will be Zelensky's first trip outside Ukraine since Russian forces invaded in February, when they planned for a rapid takeover of Kyiv and much of the country.

Instead, the visit to Washington comes on the 300th day of a war that has seen Russian forces halted by a stubborn Ukrainian army backed by Western arms, forced to retreat from captured territory and struggling to avoid further setbacks.

"On my way to the US to strengthen resilience and defense capabilities of (Ukraine)," Zelensky tweeted, also confirming that he will make a speech to Congress.



Volodymyr Zelensky attending an award giving ceremony to Ukrainian servicemen in Bakhmut on Tuesday (AFP)

Patriot missiles for Ukraine

Zelensky will visit the White House where Biden is to announce a new arms package worth almost US\$2bn that a senior administration official said includes Patriot air defense missiles. Patriot missiles are seen as crucial to help Kyiv fend off Russia's missile and drone attacks on its infrastructure.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday that new weapons deliveries would lead to an 'aggravation of the conflict' and do not 'bode well for Ukraine'.

He added that Moscow does not expect Ukraine to change its stance on peace talks - including

refusing to negotiate while Putin is in power - during the visit.

Zelensky is also expected to address a joint session of Congress, which House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said would be 'a very special focus on democracy'.

The visit was quietly planned, beginning with a phone call between Biden and Zelensky on December 11, followed by a formal invitation one week ago and confirmation of the visit on Sunday.

Details of the visit leaked on Tuesday afternoon, with officials stressing to US media that there were still security concerns over Zelensky's travel.

In White House talks, Biden

and Zelensky will discuss the arms and training provided by the United States and allies, sanctions and other pressure on Russia, and economic and humanitarian aid that Ukraine needs, the senior White House official said. "They will discuss every element of this conflict, including the situation on the battlefield and including the question of where the war goes from here."

The visit will send Putin 'a strong message of unity and resolve from the White House, from Washington, from the free world, on behalf of all the nations supporting Ukraine,' the official added.

AFP

THE KEY FACTOR

England cap a year of remarkable revival in Tests with Pakistan whitewash

London, United Kingdom - The completion of England's 3-0 series success over Pakistan on Tuesday was the latest chapter in a remarkable revival, all the more extraordinary for the woeful run of red-ball results that preceded the 'Bazball' era.

Inflicting the first home whitewash suffered by Pakistan in Test history, courtesy of an eight-wicket win in Karachi on Tuesday, was striking enough in itself.

It also gave England their ninth win in 10 matches at this level, with Test world champions New Zealand, India and South Africa also among the vanquished, since captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum took charge in May. When they joined forces, however, England had won just one of their 17 previous Tests.

So how to explain the stunning turnaround?

The answer begins in April, when the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) appointed Rob Key, a former England batsman with a modest Test record, as their new director of cricket.

The 43-year-old, previously a television pundit, has since seen his judgement vindicated repeatedly.

As New Zealand captain, McCullum provided the template for England's resurgence in 50-over cricket that culminated in their 2019 World Cup final win.

Key backed him to have a similar impact on the Test side when he named him as a permanent replacement as coach for Chris Silverwood was sacked after England's 4-0 thrashing in Australia.

Star all-rounder Stokes, 31, not long back from a mental health break, replaced close friend Joe Root as England captain, with the outstanding batsman drained by leading a losing side playing under severe Covid restrictions.

'Get ready for the ride'

Numerous observers noted how the form of England all-rounders Ian Botham and Andrew Flintoff had slumped during their un-



England's players pose with the trophy after winning the Test series against Pakistan at the National Stadium in Karachi on Tuesday (AFP)



I believe in Brendon and Ben Stokes... Time for us all to buckle up and get ready for the ride

ROB KEY

successful spells as Test captain.

Nevertheless Key, preferring his opinion to the weight of history, said: "I believe in Brendon and Ben Stokes... Time for us all to buckle up and get ready for the ride."

And what a ride to date, with Stokes and McCullum capitalising on the feel-good mood created by the end of 'bubble' life.

In the new environment players are encouraged to enjoy cricket and not fear failure.

England's attacking approach, dubbed 'Bazball' in honour of McCullum's nickname, although he dislikes the term, has been based on aggressive run-scoring that allows bowlers the time to take the 20 wickets needed to win a Test.

McCullum has realised advances in limited overs run-scoring - on show in England's recent T20 World Cup win under white-ball coach Matthew Mott - can be applied to Test cricket.

That expanded range of strokeplay, allied to classical shot-making, saw England become the first team to score 500 runs on the first day of a Test when Zak Crawley, rising stars Harry Brook and Ollie Pope, as well as Ben Duckett, all made hundreds in the Pakistan series opener in Rawalpindi.

England's new attitude is also evident in Stokes' willingness to risk losing a match in pursuit of a win.

In Rawalpindi, Stokes' bold

declaration, that left Pakistan needing 343 to win in four sessions, was rewarded with victory shortly before bad light threatened to end the match.

England's willingness to defy their traditional conservatism was equally visible when 18-year-old leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed became the youngest Test debutant from any country to take five wickets in an innings during the Karachi finale.

Have England changed Test cricket? Perhaps not but former captain Michael Atherton, noting how the current England team's approach had faced scepticism at every turn, wrote in The Times on Tuesday that Stokes' men had won in Pakistan by "playing with more verve and attacking intent than any England team, surely, has ever done".

For some the acid test remains next year's Ashes series at home to arch-rivals Australia.

AFP

India to go for kill in second Test vs Bangladesh

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Stand-in skipper KL Rahul would be eager to overcome his lean patch as India are expected to go for the kill in the second Test against Bangladesh, beginning in Mirpur on Thursday, to strengthen their position in the World Test Championship.

The race for the top-two spots in the WTC standings has become more interesting with India (55.77 PCT) moving up to the second position following South Africa's (54.55 PCT) heavy loss to Australia (76.92 PCT) in two-day Gabba Test.

The upcoming home series against Australia will be decisive in India's bid for a second straight WTC final but they also can't afford any slip-ups

before the Australia series.

Cheteshwar Pujara, who made a comeback with the one-off Test in England, has consolidated his number three position with a 90 and an unusually attacking 102 not out in the series-opener.

The stage will also be set for Virat Kohli to score his first Test hundred since November 2019.

India batted at more than four runs per over in the second innings and it remains to be seen if that positive approach was only the need of the hour or a sign of things to come.

Considering the conditions, the bowlers will once again be looking to target the stumps.

Kuldeep, playing his first

Cheteshwar Pujara, who made a comeback with the one-off Test in England, has consolidated his number three position with a 90 and an unusually attacking 102 not out in the series-opener.

against Bangladesh, who showed plenty of fight in the first Test after a poor first innings with the bat.

With regular skipper Rohit Sharma yet to recover from his thumb injury, no changes are expected in the Indian playing eleven.

Had Rohit been fit for the game, it would have been extremely difficult to drop Gill following his maiden Test hundred in Chattogram. However, that situation did not arise and Gill will be keen to cash in on another opportunity.

Rahul too would look to lead from the front after the disappointment of his two innings in the first Test. Like Chattogram, the pitch is expected to be slow and decent for batting, providing Rahul an ideal platform to get runs under his belt

Test since February last year, flaunted his artistry with a match haul of eight wickets. Compared to lead spinner R Ashwin and Axar Patel, he was slightly under-bowled in the second innings but the left-arm wrist spinner still managed to take three wickets.

Bangladesh too will be confident of their chances given how they batted on day four. Rookie opener Zakir Hasan has shown he belongs at this level. Senior batters including Litton Das and Mushfiquur Rahim will be aiming to learn from their mistakes and make big hundreds.

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan did not bowl in the second innings due to an injury and that is why Bangladesh have added left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed to the squad.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Lady media professional with PG Diploma in Journalism and Photography and experience in digital marketing and content writing, currently on visit visa, requires suitable placement.

Email: joysyoj@gmail.com,

Contact: +968-99654604

Indian male, 28, Petroleum Engineering graduate staying in Oman, having knowledge of LWD, MWD and DD Services. Urgently looking for a suitable opportunity.

Email:

shahrukh.chikhalkar@yahoo.com

Contact: +968-99897741

Are you looking for Professional Accounting, Book-Keeping & VAT Services?

We provide:
Accounting, Book-Keeping & VAT Services.
Backlog Accounting
VAT Consultation & Return Filing
Accounting Software / ERP Solutions
Periodic visits to the Clients office

Contact Us Placement 1st Accounting Outsourcing Solutions
Call / WhatsApp – 97971205 / 97971057



Email – accounts@placement1st.com

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



FOR RENT

Available 2100 sq meter best in class Warehouse cum office Space, fully furnished ready to use, Located at Prime area of Ghala in the heart of the city having easy access to airport & express Way.

Contact: Girish Sewani - 93893596

FOR RENT

- State of the Art warehouse and office in Misfah
- Centrally located with ease of access to Muscat-Nizwa-Sohar
- 13 loading/unloading bays, with state of the art racking and centrally air conditioning @21 degree
- Office**
650 sq mts of office space, centralized air conditioning ready to use.
- Warehouse**
□ 6000++ pallets space available on monthly/per pallet rental bases.
- Cold room and Chiller room**
□ 600 pallets space available on monthly/per pallet rental bases.
- 02 loading/unloading bays, with 10 mts high state of racking.
- Temp zone 05 Degree, -25 Degree Frozen.

for more details call: 95616835

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

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

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

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



Car Rental & Lease



Kilian Mbappe

Mbappe returns to PSG training days after World Cup disappointment

Paris, France - France star Kylian Mbappe returned to training with Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday just three days after he ended up on the losing side despite scoring a hat-trick in the World Cup final.

The 24-year-old cast a despondent figure in the aftermath of France's loss to Argentina -- led by his PSG team-mate Lionel Messi - in a penalty shootout, despite his goals twice bringing the 2018 champions level. However, although PSG players have been given 10 days off Mbappe was pictured at the French champions training ground.

"Kylian Mbappe returned to training on Wednesday," tweeted PSG.

Mbappe, who finished top scorer at the World Cup with eight goals, was not expected back till January and PSG did not say whether he would be available for selection for their Ligue 1 match with Strasbourg on December 28.

His return to training comes the day after a documentary on France's campaign shows

Mbappe giving his team-mates a rousing half-time talk in Sunday's final following a limp first-half which saw them trail 2-0.

"It is the World Cup guys, it is the match of a lifetime!" says Mbappe in French broadcaster TF1's documentary.

"In any case we could hardly play worse than we have already done. We are going back on the pitch and either we carry on playing like idiots or we up the intensity.

"It is the World Cup Final! We are losing 2-0 but we can come back. Hey guys, this only comes around once every four years."

Although Mbappe led the fightback it took till the 80th minute - when he scored a penalty to make it 2-1 - for the team to really find the fighting spirit.

Mbappe was to go on and score his penalty in the shootout but, with Kingsley Coman and Aurelien Tchouameni both missing, Argentina were not to be denied, Gonzalo Montiel tucking away the winning spotkick.

AFP



Supporters light flares and cheer as Morocco's national football team arrives at the centre of capital Rabat on Tuesday after their heroic performance at the World Cup (AFP)

PRIDE OF ARAB WORLD

Morocco arrive home to heroes' welcome after their scintillating run in the World Cup

Rabat, Morocco - Tens of thousands of Moroccans thronged the capital on Tuesday to welcome home their national football team, the first Arab or African squad ever to reach the semi-final of a World Cup.

The team and their coach Walid Regragui waved from an open-topped bus as they were driven from the airport and around central Rabat, accompanied by dozens of police cars and motorbikes.

The crowd cheered and some waved flares as fireworks crack-

Morocco finished top of a group including Croatia and Belgium, who came third at the 2018 World Cup, before knocking out Spain and Portugal to reach the last four

led in the sky over the seaside capital, AFP correspondents said.

"I'm so proud of our team. Who knows - maybe next time they could win the cup," said Adam Najah, a 27-year-old waiter from the city of Meknes. He said he had travelled over

150 kilometres (90 miles) to "experience this historic day" and "celebrate the beautiful story of Morocco at the World Cup".

Many supporters, clad in the team's kits and waving red flags, had waited hours to see their heroes.

"I can't describe my joy! They made us Moroccans, Arabs and Africans proud," said Abdeljabbar Bouroua, 54, as the bus passed through central Rabat.

Morocco finished top of a group including Croatia and Belgium, who came third at the 2018 World Cup, before knocking out Spain and Portugal to reach the last four. The Atlas Lions lost Saturday's third place play-off 2-1 against 2018 runners-up Croatia, but captured the imagination in Qatar.

"I would have liked to take

them in my arms and kiss them," said 19-year-old law student Leila Messour, who came to watch the team with her friends.

The team later headed to the royal palace, where they were received by King Mohammed VI "in recognition of the historic achievement".

The king, alongside crown prince Moulay Hassan, handed out awards to the president of the Moroccan football federation, the team coach and the players, country's national news agency MAP reported.

Venus accepts wildcard for Aus Open

Wellington, New Zealand - Venus Williams will roll back the years next month, with the 42-year-old accepting wildcards to play in the main draws of both the Australian Open and the Auckland WTA tournaments, it was announced on Wednesday.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion, who last took the court at September's US Open playing doubles with her sister Serena, will be in the singles field in Auckland ahead of the Australian Open, which starts January 16.

It will mark Venus Williams's 22nd appearance at Melbourne Park, where she made her Australian Open debut 25 years ago and reached the finals in 2003 and 2017.

Her most recent appearance was a second-round exit in 2021.

"I am very excited to be returning to Melbourne to compete at the Australian Open," Williams said in a statement.

AFP

'The nights were atrocious' - emotional Becker recounts prison experience

Berlin, Germany - Former tennis superstar Boris Becker said he relied on "blood brothers" to protect him in a British prison and said his life was threatened twice in his first interview since being released.

The 55-year-old German was deported to Germany after being released last week having served eight months of a two and a half years sentence for flouting insolvency rules by hiding £2.5 million (\$3.1 million) of assets and loans to avoid paying debts.

He had been declared bankrupt in June 2017, owing creditors £50m over an unpaid loan of more than £3m on his estate on the Spanish island of Majorca.

In an often emotional three-hour interview with German broadcaster Sat.1 the former tennis world number one said the nights in Wandsworth Prison - not far from where he won the Wimbledon title three times - were "atrocious."

He said he was fortunate to have forged close ties with a



Boris Becker

group of inmates he termed "blood brothers" as two prisoners he called 'John' and 'Ike' on separate occasions had threatened him. 'John', serving 25 years for multiple murders, threatened to harm him if he did not give him money.

'Ike' got him on his own and Becker says 10 prisoners "saved

my life" rescuing him when he yelled out. "And then the next day Ike asked if I would accept his apology," said Becker.

"I could have rejected it.

"I encountered him in the laundry. He threw himself down to the ground and begged me for forgiveness.

"I raised him to his feet and

hugged him. And I told him that I had great respect for him," added a tearful Becker.

Becker says he would remain in contact with those who protected him.

"When you have fought for survival together, that brings you together," he said.

"We needed each other."

Becker says the sound of the cell door closing will stay for him for the rest of his life.

"When the cell door closes, then there is nothing left. The loneliest moment I've had in my life."

"The nights were atrocious.

"You could hear the screams from people trying to kill themselves or harm themselves, and people trading swear words.

"You don't sleep."

He described the prison as "extremely dirty and extremely dangerous . . . there were murderers, child abusers, drug dealers, every kind of criminal you can imagine".

AFP

oman OASIS

SIFR

mai alkaline

THIS SEASON

BUY MORE WIN MORE

Get a chance to win amazing prizes when you shop from your nearest hypermarket.

Find the raffle coupon inside the carton/pack and register the unique number at

www.omanoasis.com/winmore

OFFER VALID FOR

Oman Oasis : 1.5 Ltr, 500 ml, 330 ml carton & pack, 200 ml pack

SIFR : 200 ml carton, 1.5 Ltr & 500 ml pack

Mai Alkaline : 1.5 Ltr & 500 ml pack

400 PRIZES ON RAFFLE DRAWS

Offer valid from 1st October to 31st December 2022. Raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Azaliba with a total of 3 raffle draws. Dates: 3rd November, 5th December 2022 and 4th January 2023. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary. Promotion at Lulu, Nesto, Carrefour, Maskah Hypermarkets & The Sultan Center.

MM/06/10/28/2022
C.R. No. 1365452

SCAN & REGISTER

CALL TOLL-FREE
800 71 222
or GSM: 9275 5522

mai alkaline

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

✓ Ultra-hydrating

✓ Revitalizing

✓ Energizing

pH 9.1 to 9.5

Toll-free
800 71 222 or
9275 5522

C.R. No.: 1365452



An Argentinian fan clings to a pole and cheers as the World Cup champions parade on board a bus in Buenos Aires on Tuesday (AFP)

ABRUPT END

Aborted World Cup bus parade a snapshot of Argentina's charm and vice

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Millions of Argentines who crammed the streets of Buenos Aires to celebrate an unforgettable moment with Lionel Messi and his World Cup winning teammates instead found themselves at a giant party bereft of its hallmark bus parade.

Friends, families, even rival fans travelled from across the country to the capital to bask in the glory of a first world title in 36 years. Yet most ended up missing the main show after the chaotic bus trip was aborted nearly five hours after it began, with police deciding it could not go on for security reasons.

Despite the disappointment, the festivities continued for many, with the day becoming an

exhibition of Argentines' effervescent passion for football.

With almost everyone dressed in the team's distinctive blue and white jersey on a baking hot day, a unified presence masked the deep social fissures and economic inequality of a country grappling with years of financial turmoil.

It was an unprecedented party with an estimated five to six million people taking to the streets of Buenos Aires.

"I can't explain this (feeling) with words but with emotion," Paola Zattera, 43, who works in administration, said.

She was six years old the last time there was a World Cup victory parade in Buenos Aires, when the late Diego Maradona



I don't care if I only see them from afar. I'm here and this is historic!

was the people's champion.

She said she "didn't understand much" about what was going on back then but this time was determined to make the most of it. "I don't care if I only see them from afar. I'm here and this is historic!"

From early morning there was a constant swarm of people flow-

ing down every road leading to the iconic Obelisk monument in central Buenos Aires, where the World Cup winners were due to end their 30-kilometer (18-mile) victory parade. The fans had come from far and wide.

"We made the decision yesterday at five o'clock in the afternoon. We booked a hotel at the

Obelisk and got on an airplane at four in the morning," 42-year-old night club owner Cristina Vazquez, from the southern tourist hub of Bariloche, said.

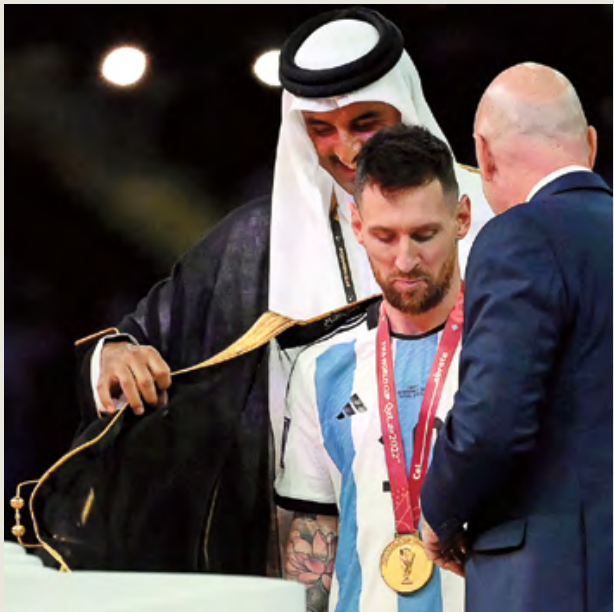
"There is hope at every World Cup but this team is very close to the Argentine people who identify a lot with them," said merchant Luciano Peralta, 41.

It was one party no one was prepared to miss, even after celebrating long into the night on Sunday after Argentina won the World Cup by beating France on penalties. And yet, as so often before in Argentina, there was a sting in the tail.

Safety concerns were raised after some fans tried to jump into the bus from a bridge, and the remainder of the trip was cancelled.

A hastily arranged helicopter tour that took Messi, Scaloni and midfielder Rodrigo De Paul over the main parade sites was little consolation for those who had hoped to see them in the flesh.

AFP



Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani helps Lionel Messi put on a 'bisht' as FIFA chief Gianni Infantino looks on (AFP)

World Cup boom for maker of Arab cloak given to Messi

Doha, Qatar - Watching Sunday's World Cup final, Ahmed al Salem was more emotional than most football fans when Qatar's emir placed a black and gold cloak over the shoulders of Argentina's victorious captain Lionel Messi.

The garment Messi wore as he lifted the football trophy was a \$2,200 'bisht', a traditional gown worn by men for weddings, graduations and official events - and it was made by Salem's family company.

The gesture has sparked debate on social media over whether it was appropriate.

Salem watched Argentina beat France in a cafe near the family's store in Doha's Souq Waqif market, having earlier handed two of the delicate handmade cloaks to World

their "Muchachos" (mates) anthem and take pictures of themselves while wearing a fragile bisht and carrying a copy of the World Cup trophy.

Bisht boom

A stream of fans came into the shop as Salem spoke to AFP, and all of them applauded the emir's gesture.

"We were all happy when we saw that, it was a gift from one king to another king," said Mauricio Garcia as he tried on the cloak, but decided the price tag was too high to buy.

Some commentators, predominantly European, criticised Messi's shirt being covered for the trophy presentation. But the moment was welcomed by Arabic social media users.

Salem and other Arab commentators explained the intention was to "honour" Messi and that the gesture had been misunderstood.

"When a sheikh dresses a person in a bisht, this means honouring and appreciating this person," Salem said.

It was a "very important moment" for Qatar as it seeks a World Cup publicity boost, said Carole Gomez, a professor of sports sociology at the University of Lausanne, in Switzerland.

"These pictures are widely spread about, conserved and reissued," she said.

Salem said when World Cup officials went to his store "they wanted the lightest and most transparent fabric".

"I was surprised because we are in winter, so it seems that the goal was to show the Argentine uniform and not cover it," he said.

Each bisht takes a week to make and goes through a seven-stage completion, with different workers adding different lines of gold braid to the front and arms.

For Messi's bisht, the gold thread came from Germany and the Najafi cotton fabric was imported from Japan.

AFP

We were all happy when we saw that, it was a gift from one king to another king

Cup officials - one in Messi's diminutive size and one to fit the taller French captain Hugo Lloris.

"We did not know who they were for and I was stunned," he said of the moment when the emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, dressed Messi in the cloak.

Salem recognised his company tag and is now celebrating his own World Cup victory.

The Al Salem store, a long-standing bisht supplier to Qatari royalty, normally sells eight to 10 garments a day.

On Monday, the day after the final, sales shot up to 150, including three copies of the top-of-the-range bisht made famous by Messi, said Salem.

"At one stage there were dozens waiting outside the store", he said.

"They were nearly all Argentinians," he added as he watched eight supporters of the new world champions sing

Brighton boss De Zerbi hails World Cup hero Mac Allister

London, United Kingdom - Brighton manager Roberto De Zerbi spoke of his pride in Alexis Mac Allister after he helped Argentina win the World Cup, saying the Seagulls midfielder was one of the best players at the tournament.

Argentina lifted the trophy for the first time since 1986 following a dramatic final win over France on penalties on Sunday.

De Zerbi has no plans to pitch Mac Allister straight back into first-team action at the Premier League club, with the 23-year-old

granted a two-week break.

"Yes, we are very proud for him," said De Zerbi ahead of Wednesday's fourth-round League Cup tie against third-tier Charlton.

"I think he was one of the best players in the World Cup, his style of play was clear, he didn't make mistakes, he understood (what to do) before the play."

Mac Allister has played for Brighton this season in a deep-lying midfield role but Lionel Scaloni used him further forward for Argentina.

Mac Allister started all six of Argentina's matches in Qatar after being an unused substitute in the shock opening defeat by Saudi Arabia.

"I wrote many message to him. I am very happy for him and for us, for him now there are two weeks of holiday and we wait for him to continue in our competition," added De Zerbi.

"After one month of the World Cup where he has had to be strong because of the pressure and emotion, he needs a break."

AFP



Argentina's Angel Di Maria (R) celebrates with Alexis Mac Allister after scoring against France in the World Cup final (AFP)

Bring Home your Exchange

Download our App Today!





PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE

شركة برشوتم كانجي للصرافة



99101314, 99849289

customersupport@pkexchange.net

www.pkexchange.com

pkexch @pkexchange1





14

COOK-UP

When the mercury begins to dip, it's time to slurp and sip...some soups



15

IN TOWN

Bahrain National Day and Christmas party by British Business Forum



16

ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town in Hollywood and Bollywood

SNOW OMAN



Ice Rink

Offers skaters a safe place to skate with the capacity for 30 people, covering an area of 475sqm

Snow Blocks

Here guests can work together as a team to construct a magnificent igloo.

Penguin Show

The Penguin Show demonstrates a variety of penguins' natural behaviours with lighthearted storytelling.

Penguinarium and Ice Cave

Guests can get up close and personal with 'king' and 'gentoo' penguins.

Frozen Lighthouse

Standing before guests as they enter the snow park is the astonishing Frozen Lighthouse, one of the signature visual icons of the Snow Park.

Party Rooms

Party Room with a balcony view, is a perfect nautically-inspired space for entertaining parties and hosting private events.

Roller Glider

The Roller Glider is an aerial ride, which combines the thrill of free falling and hang gliding into one ride.

Frozen Shipwreck

Adventurous guests can attempt to climb aboard the ship via a net bridge, or take a more easily accessible route.

Cloud Climber

A space for parents to watch as their kids climb a series of beautifully customised, gently undulating, snowflake-like platforms securely suspended.

Other attractions

The other attractions include Family Sled Hill and Family Sled Run, Cold Town Muscat, Mountain Thriller, Zorbs and Sled Hills,

Tariff

The tariff begins at RO12.5 per person - many packages are available.

WINTER
CHRISTMAS

Anirban Ray
Photos: V K Shafeer

You can see your own breath pour out in rhythmic gusts (in much the same way as in peak winter in Europe), your palms freeze within woollen gloves, and you've got to be careful to maintain your stance amid the snow ridden terrain... You are in Oman... Snow Oman, to be precise!

On Christmas eve (December 24), this much-awaited, thrilling expanse, providing an out-of-Arabia experience within Mall of Oman, will open up to the public to usher in the winter in Oman. And from what a preview of this first of its kind 'snow park' revealed to the media yesterday, it's going to be a big hit with people in Oman (who have experienced temperatures touching 50° C), to walk in a precinct with sub-zero temperatures and snow flakes to boot.

In the distance, you see children play around shimmering igloos and pine trees. Penguins swim around a pool of chilly waters, and snow flakes slowly cover the area, forming a blanket of white, in much the same manner as in the Alps. For many, it can be the right place to enjoy Christmas festivities in a new way.

Snow Oman is the biggest indoor snow entertainment park in the region, spanning an area of

Spread over nearly 15,000sqm, Snow Oman - Oman's first and only 'snow park', nestled within Mall of Oman - throws open its doors to the public this Christmas eve (December 24), offering patrons a unique opportunity to enjoy all the trappings of Europe's wintry weather



14,830sqm. It is also the largest indoor snow park in the MENA region, featuring a total of 21 rides and attractions, including family-friendly rides such as the Mountain Thriller, Snow Bullet, Slide Winder, Cloud Climber, and Zorb Ball, unique attractions such as Cold Town Muscat, Frozen Shipwreck, Lighthouse, and a 475sqm ice rink.

Mohammad el Etri, vice president, Global Snow, Majid al Futaim Leisure, Entertainment and Cinemas said, "With a staff of 170 round the clock, Snow Oman is the

new edutainment facility of the country. Made with latest technologies and innovation, the park can accommodate as many as 2500 people in a day. People need a reason, these days, to come to the malls, and along with shopping, it is always a pleasure to have some fun and gain some knowledge."

Unlike other snow parks in many parts of the world, the snow here is real. Made with air and water with the help of 15 snow-guns, real soft snow creates the real feeling of being amid cold mountains. To add to the facilities, the park has two indoor restaurants with heaters and party rooms with views of the penguins.

Niamh Queeney, Corporate Communications manager from Majid al Futaim Leisure, Entertainment and Cinemas, said, "Like its sister brands Ski Dubai and Ski Egypt, Snow Oman appeals to a wide range of audiences including kids, teens and families. The first ever snow park was opened in 2005 in Dubai called Ski Dubai. In 2017, Ski Egypt opened in the Mall



With a staff of 170 round the clock, Snow Oman is the new edutainment facility of the country

MOHAMMAD EL ETRI

of Egypt, and now its Snow Oman.

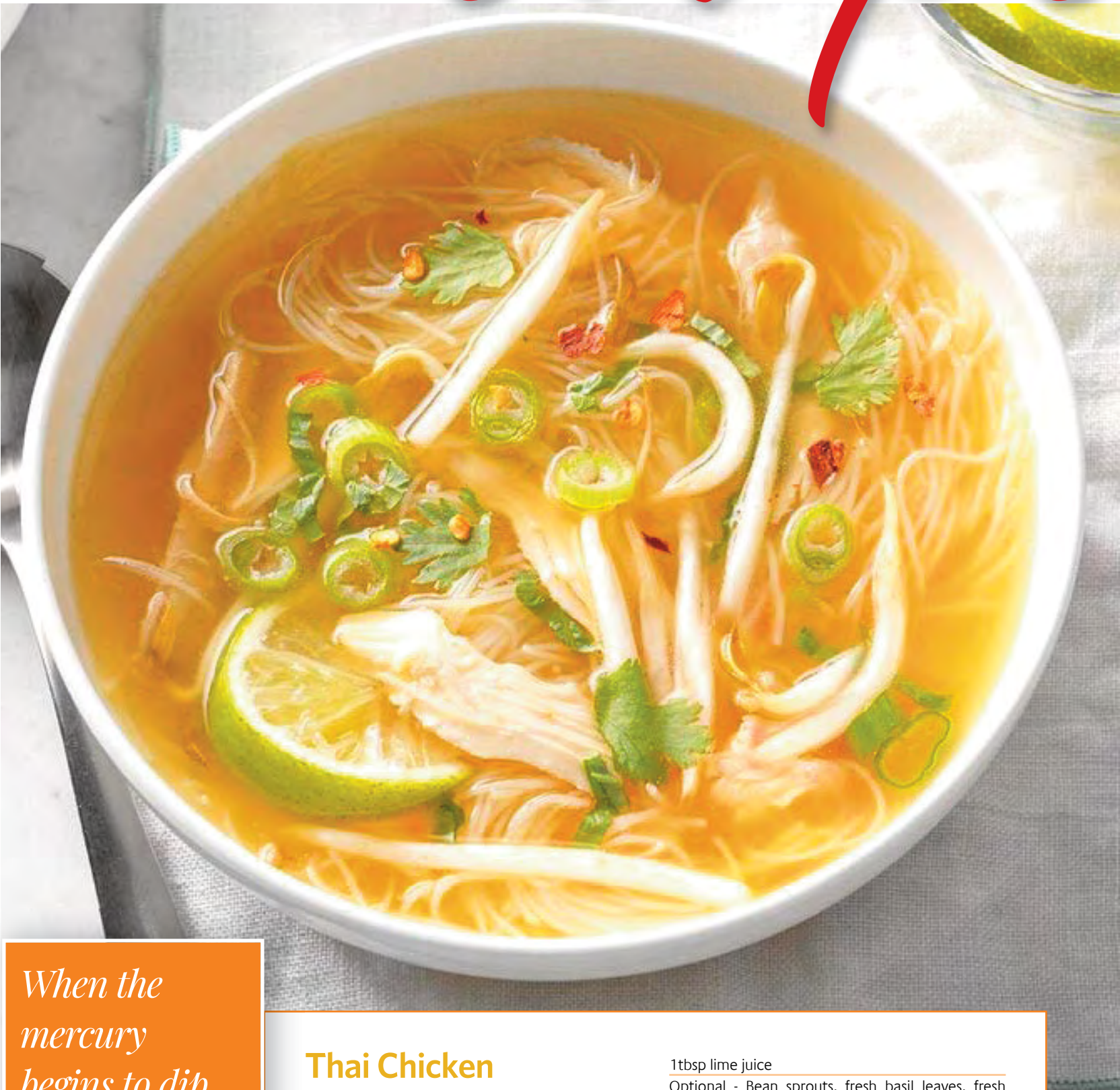
"In 2023, we will continue to expand our footprint with the opening of Snow Abu Dhabi," she added with much promise.



cook-up

WINTER KITCHEN

TIME FOR soups



Potato Soup

- Ingredients**
- 1kg potatoes - peeled and cut into cubes
 - 1 large onion - chopped
 - 200g roasted sweet red peppers - drained and chopped
 - 1 small celery rib - chopped
 - 6 cups chicken broth
 - ½tsp garlic powder
 - ½tsp seasoned salt
 - ½tsp pepper
 - 1 / 8tsp rubbed sage
 - 1 / 3 cup all-purpose flour
 - 2 cups heavy whipping cream - divided
 - 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese - divided
 - 8 strips of beef bacon – fried and crumbled
 - 2tbsp minced fresh cilantro

Method

Place first 9 ingredients in an electric pressure cooker and cook on high for 15 minutes. Quick-release pressure. Select saute setting and adjust for low heat. Mix flour and 1 cup cream until smooth - stir into soup. Stir in ¾ cup Parmesan cheese, bacon, cilantro and remaining cream. Cook and stir until slightly thickened, 6-8 minutes. Serve with remaining cheese.



French Onion Soup

- Ingredients**
- 5tbsp olive oil - divided
 - 1tbsp butter
 - 8 cups thinly sliced onions
 - 3 garlic cloves - minced
 - ½ cup grape juice (optional)
 - 1 litre beef broth (4 cups)
 - ½tsp pepper
 - ¼tsp salt
 - 24 slices French bread baguette (2cm thick)
 - 2 large garlic cloves - peeled and halved
 - ¾ cup shredded Gruyere or Swiss cheese

Method

In a Dutch oven, heat 2tbsp oil and butter over medium heat. Add onions and cook until softened, 10-13 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until deep golden brown. Add minced garlic - cook 2 minutes longer.

Stir in grape juice. Bring to a boil and cook until liquid is reduced by half. Add broth, pepper and salt, and return to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 180° C, place baguette slices on a baking sheet, brush both sides with remaining 3tbsp oil and bake until toasted. Rub toasts with halved garlic.

To serve, place bowls or mugs on baking sheets, and place 2 toasts in each. Ladle with soup and top with cheese. Broil until cheese is melted.

When the mercury begins to dip, it's time to slurp and sip from bowls of winter delights — soups that warm you up instantly

Thai Chicken Noodle Soup

- Ingredients**
- 1 large onion - halved
 - 5cm piece of ginger - halved lengthwise
 - 1tbsp canola oil
 - 1 rotisserie chicken
 - 2 sticks of cinnamon – 5cm each
 - 5 whole cloves
 - 3 whole star anise
 - 1tsp coriander seeds
 - 1tsp fennel seeds
 - 1 litre chicken broth
 - 300g rice noodles
 - 2tbsp brown sugar
 - 2tbsp fish sauce

1tbsp lime juice

Optional - Bean sprouts, fresh basil leaves, fresh cilantro leaves

Method

Preheat broiler. Place onion and ginger in a foil-lined baking pan and drizzle with oil. Broil until well browned, 8-10 minutes. Meanwhile, remove chicken from bones, reserve carcass, and shred meat. Place carcass, onion, ginger, spices and broth in a slow cooker and cook on low 2-3 hours.

Cook noodles according to package instructions. Strain soup and keep warm; discard carcass, vegetables and spices. Stir in brown sugar, fish sauce and lime juice. Place noodles and chicken in soup bowls. Ladle broth into soup bowls.

Add toppings of your choice.



Tomato Soup

- Ingredients**
- 2tsp canola oil
 - ¼ cup finely chopped onion
 - ¼ cup finely chopped celery
 - 450g (2 cans) diced tomatoes
 - 1½ cups water
 - 2tsp brown sugar
 - ½tsp salt
 - ½tsp dried basil
 - ¼tsp dried oregano
 - ¼tsp coarsely ground pepper
 - Minced fresh basil, croutons - optional

Method

In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and celery and cook until tender - 2-4 minutes. Add remaining ingredients, except for optional fresh basil. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes to allow flavours to blend.

Puree soup using an immersion blender and return to pan and heat through. Top with fresh minced basil and croutons. You can freeze cooled soup in freezer containers. To use, partially thaw in refrigerator overnight and heat through in a saucepan.

take a break

IN TOWN

BAHRAIN NATIONAL DAY



Embassy of Bahrain hosted a reception to mark its National Day (December 16)
Photos: V K Shafeer



Christmas Get-together



British Business Forum organised a Christmas Get-together last week. Photos: V K Shafeer

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner starred in what TV series, first broadcast from 1966 to 1969?
A. Star Trek
B. Blakes 7
C. Red Dwarf
D. Star Wars
02. "Aegrotocattellus jaggeri" an extinct marine arthropod which disappeared about 250 million years ago, is named after whom?
A. A German rifleman
B. Jagger Cates
C. Mick Jagger
D. A native American tribe from the Florida coast
03. Which river, the world's deepest on record and the second largest river in the world by discharge volume, rises in the highlands and mountains of the East African Rift?
A. Niger
B. Nile
C. Congo
D. Zambezi

Answers: 1.A 2.C 3.C

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

BOGGLER

D	O	N	K
D	E	U	I
S	D	E	C
C	E	L	A

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Better keep some tissues handy, because you're about to become unusually sentimental. Nostalgic, even. And maybe in the mood to reminisce. No, that isn't at all like you, but that won't matter. Whatever you're feeling at the moment will emerge regardless of whether you're comfortable about letting others see it.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your pioneering spirit is back and looking for something-or someone-new to discover! This is going to push the level of excitement in your life up a notch, which will be fun. Sure, you might have to juggle some plans around, but no one is going to mind. Follow any loose threads that pop up today.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If anyone can mingle, it's you. You can chat with anyone about anything, mostly because you know just enough about almost everything to carry on a convincing conversation. You'll be especially believable now, so if you're out with friends and someone new thinks you're a doctor, or scientist, go with it and have fun.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're ordinarily far more concerned with home and family matters than with anything that involves your outer life, but right about now, you really are thinking about only one thing: how to let the powers that be know that you're entirely capable of getting the job done. Fortunately, you've been working so hard lately. Someone needs to take notice.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Enough is enough. It's time to break your routine in a very big way. You're thinking that even if you have to look elsewhere, it might be worth it, and "elsewhere" could mean another city, state, coast, or even country. If a long-distance move has been in the back of your mind for a while, then start doing more than just think about it.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Life is working out just fine at the moment, and you're ready to celebrate. Now, when things go along this well, it's usually because two particular categories are as close to perfect as possible, and those categories are love and money. If that's the case, how about letting everybody else in on your secret?



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Throughout your life, pleasing the one you love has always been at the very top of your priority list, but now you need to find some time for yourself. There's a personal matter that you really need to tend to, and while it might end up being something of a balancing act, if anyone can manage it, you can.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

This day could be centered around your relationships, specifically the people who have helped you the most. As for the fair-weather friends, they will show their true colours soon. There is a realignment on in your social circle, and it's going to become evident very quickly that certain people don't treat you as well as you treat them.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You've always been drawn to strong, fiery people, the kind who make exciting company, because you're never quite sure what they might say or do next. Just that type (your type) could be coming along shortly. But if you don't give yourself some time off from that job or task or project you've taken on, you'll never know.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Your road to romance could take a little bit of a detour today, but it will be a fun one! Just roll with the changes and keep a positive attitude. You're in for some interesting surprises and delightful adventures. Even if a date you were looking forward to gets canceled, it will be for the best. You have to believe that! Stay hopeful and you'll stay cheerful.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Subtlety has never been your strong suit, but then you've never wanted it on your list of main qualities, so that isn't a problem. You much prefer being known for the ability to cut to the chase and having very strong intuition when it comes to reading others' faces. So if what you're thinking emerges immediately from your mouth, you won't be all that upset about it. However, if you're not careful, your audience might need some consolation.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Every now and then we all need to spend some time alone and think about what's really important to us. You might want to take that time now, and you really shouldn't let anyone convince you otherwise. Cancel your appointments and sit down quietly in a place where you know you won't be disturbed. Take your time. When you're done, you'll want to share your thoughts with the ones you love.

entertainment



AMBER HEARD TO PAY \$1MN FOR DEFAMATION

Johnny Depp and Amber Heard have settled their acrimonious defamation case, they said Monday, with the actress agreeing to pay her former husband US\$1mn over claims he physically abused her.

In a post on Instagram, Heard said she was dropping an appeal against the US\$10mn payout

she had been ordered to make by a jury because she simply cannot go through another trial.

"After a great deal of deliberation I have made a very difficult decision to settle the defamation case. I make this decision having lost faith in the American legal system, where my unprotected testimony served as entertainment and social media fodder,"

she said, adding, "I have made no admission. This is not an act of concession."

In a legal battle involving suits and countersuits, a Virginia jury found Depp and Heard both liable for defamation - but sided more strongly with the *Pirates of the Caribbean* star following an intense six-week trial riding on bitter allegations.



The comeback queen of 'Emily in Paris'

To Netflix viewers, she is among the most famous French faces of the moment, appearing in three hits - *Call My Agent*, *The Crown* and *Emily in Paris*, which returns for a third season on Wednesday.

It is quite a turnaround for Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu, 59, who never expected this level of international fame. She credits Cedric Klapisch, a director on *Call My Agent*, with pulling her 'out of the coffin' after her career stalled in her forties.

But it is her role as Sylvie Grateau, boss of a luxury marketing agency who takes on a naive American, that has turned her into a star.

Angelina Jolie steps down as UN refugee agency envoy

Angelina Jolie announced Friday that she is stepping down from her role as the UNHCR's special envoy after more than 20 years of working with the United Nations' refugee agency.

The Hollywood actress, 47, has carried out more than 60 field missions with UNHCR, shining a spotlight on the plight of millions of people displaced from their homes over the past two decades.



"After 20 years working within the UN system I feel it is time for me to work differently, engaging directly with refugees and local organisations, and supporting their advocacy for solutions," Jolie said in a statement.



Spielberg regrets 'Jaws' impact on sharks

Film-maker Steven Spielberg has said he truly regrets the decimation of the shark population following the success of his 1975 film *Jaws*.

Spielberg's Oscar-winning thriller told the story of a man-eating great white shark that attacked a US seaside town, prompting a rise in sports fishing across America.

"I truly regret the decimation of the shark population because of the book and the film," Spielberg, 75, told BBC Radio's Desert Island Discs programme. A study showed, the world's population of sharks has fallen by 71 per cent since.

NEW RELEASE



MINDCAGE

In this spellbinding thriller, detectives Jake Doyle (Martin Lawrence) and Mary Kelly (Melissa Roxburgh) seek the help of an incarcerated serial killer named The Artist (John Malkovich) when a copycat killer strikes.

Genre: Thriller
Starring: Martin Lawrence, John Malkovich, Melissa Roxburgh
Language: English



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW:
REDEMPTION: DETECTIVE KNIGHT 2
Genre: Action
Starring: Bruce Willis, Corey Large, Lochlyn Munro



RISKY REDEMPTION

Bruce Willis is Detective James Knight in this trilogy's second film. He deals out both mercy and justice - on his terms - when the city is terrorised by 'The Christmas Bomber'.

While *Detective Knight: Rogue* was released seven weeks ago, marking the beginning of a trilogy from writers Corey Large and Edward John Drake, *Detective Knight: Redemption* hopes to continue the story of the eponymous cop and his hazily defined reason for rage. It seems the three movies were all shot at the same time, trying to take advantage of star Bruce Willis's limited working capabilities due to a medical condition.

The movie opens with a bank robbery and a shootout between the police and a group of well-armed and mask-wearing Santas. NYPD Captain Anna Shea has been chasing this gang and their leader Conlan known as 'The Christmas Bomber' with no success.

Meanwhile, James Knight (Bruce Willis), Casey Rhodes (Beau Mirchoff), and Mercer (Corey Large) are all still behind bars after the events of *Detective Knight: Rogue*. But not for too much longer because Rhodes and Mercer get caught up in a mass escape and find themselves in with Conlan's gang. Running out of options, Captain Shea has to make a deal with Knight, the man she put behind bars.

While the film's action scenes may be of the blink-and-you'll-miss-it variety, the psychotic Conlan giving monologues about poverty and social injustice much to the distaste of the audience. Also, you get to listen to Fitzgerald (Lochlyn Munro), Knight's partner from the first film, tell Shea what a shitty cop she is for arresting Knight merely because he killed a couple of suspects - O Come on!

Don't expect the second installment of this trilogy to get better than the first for it doesn't seem like the makers of this trilogy really know what they are upto and deliver a mediocre second helping.

Worth a skip.

Rating ★★★★★



BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: **CIRKUS**
Genre: Comedy
Starring: Jacqueline Fernandez, Ranveer Singh, Varun Sharma



If you want to spice up your Christmas holiday with a few good laughs, *Cirkus* is what you need to destress and unwind.

Produced and directed by Rohit Shetty and based on William Shakespeare's play *The Comedy of Errors*, the movie is scheduled for worldwide release on December 23.

And knowing the premise of the movie is enough assurance on what to expect. It's like going to see the movie *Titanic* knowing fully well what the climax is all about.

The story of *Cirkus* is about two

sets of twins who are separated after they are born and are nurtured in two different cities, not knowing of each others existence.

Ranveer Singh plays the main role along with upcoming comedian Varun Sharma and together they deliver some spirited melodrama peppered with Ranveer's histrionics. This is the first double role of his film career and his initial tryst with full-out comedy.

Bollywood has attempted similar flicks based on the Shakespearean play in the past. In 1982 Gulzar's *An*

goor, starring Sanjeev Kumar and Deven Verma as a Master-servant duo, had been well received. In fact, it was a remake of Gulzar's 1968 film *Do Dooni Char*, starring Kishore Kumar and Asit Sen in twin roles. And now, Ranveer and Varun hope to give audiences a fresh dose of old wine in new skins.

Ranveer says he is extremely grateful to Rohit Shetty for giving him an opportunity in *Cirkus* as he has always wanted to do an out-and-out comedy. This comedy film marks his third collaboration with

Rohit Shetty, after *Simmba* and *Sooryavanshi*.

The film is a merry-go-round laugh riot, and has some peppy numbers to spice up the fare. Its first single, titled '*Current Laga Re*' was released two weeks ago while the second single '*Sun Zara*', sung by Papon and Shreya Ghoshal is out this week. Enjoy this holiday masala, and don't miss the cameos by Ajay Devgn and Deepika Padukone - Shetty's lucky charms.

Rating ★★★★★

THURSDAY, 22 DECEMBER 2022

MUSCAT DAILY

SEASON'S

SUPPLEMENT

Special



It's the season for celebration and celebrate you must.

Join us at W Muscat for an eventful time to welcome 2023 in style.

We are ready to make a mark and create unforgettable moments for our guests with a thoughtfully curated festive season experience.

Indulge in gourmet feast, sweet treats, festive decorations, and live entertainment.

Connect with us

📱 WMuscat 📞 7191 9156

✉️ wmuscat.rr@whotels.com

Wishes for a spectacular festive season
from W Muscat family

Scan here for the
full list of offers



W MUSCAT





AL BUSTAN PALACE
A RITZ-CARLTON® HOTEL

DEC

1^{to}

31

FESTIVE AFTERNOON TEA

The Atrium | Meet Santa on every Friday & Saturday from 3:30 - 4:30 PM
OMR 13.5 net per person | OMR 25 net for two

1^{to}

31

FESTIVE GOODIES FROM THE PALACE

The Atrium | From 10 AM till 10 PM
Exclusive gourmet takeaways for a merrier Festive Season

23

FESTIVE BRUNCH AT THE PAVILION

Live Entertainment
OMR 32 inclusive of soft beverages | OMR 52 inclusive of selected house beverages | OMR 16 net per child 6-12 years old

24

CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER AT CHINA MOOD

Set menu & A' la carte menu available
OMR 45 net per person | OMR 22.5 net per child 6-12 years old

CHRISTMAS EVE BUFFET DINNER AT AL KHIRAN KITCHEN

Live Entertainment
OMR 32 net per person | OMR 16 net per child 6-12 years old

CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER AT THE PAVILION

Set menu | Live Entertainment
OMR 45 net per person | OMR 22.5 net per child 6-12 years old

25

CHRISTMAS DAY BRUNCH AT THE PAVILION

Live Entertainment
OMR 40 net inclusive of soft beverages
OMR 60 net inclusive of selected house beverages
OMR 20 net per child 6-12 years old

31

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT CHINA MOOD

Set menu & A' la carte menu available
OMR 52 net per person | OMR 26 net per child 6-12 years old

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT THE PAVILION

Set menu | Live Entertainment
OMR 58 net per person | OMR 29 net per child 6-12 years old

NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA DINNER AT THE LAWN

Countdown celebration under the stars at 12:00 am
Live Entertainment
OMR 135 net per person with open bar until 1.00 am
OMR 75 net per child 6-12 years old

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RESERVATION

+968 2476 4444 +968 9855 9333



نقطة السفرات

TravelPoint



ESCAPE TO WONDEROUS WINTER DESTINATIONS



Air Tickets | Holiday Packages | Hajj & Umrah
Corporate Travel | Tour Oman | Luxury Concierge
Rent-a-Car | Visa Assistance | Chauffeur Services
Travel Insurance | Meet & Greet Airport Services

CONTACT US

First floor, Said Plaza, Opp Salam Stores, Qurum
Tel: +968 24661800 | Email: info@travelpoint.om | Website: www.travelpoint.om

     @travelpointoman

AL FALAJ HOTEL
MUSCAT

SATURDAY
31ST
DECEMBER

2023

NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

Under the midnight sky

LIVE BAND : MIRAGE

(All the way from Srilanka)

DJ & DANCE

Lets blast the night with

Hindi, English, Sinhala & South Indian beats

DINNER BUFFET | RAFFLE DRAW

DRESS IN YOUR BEST BLUES

VENUE: OUTDOOR POOLSIDE

DOORS OPEN: 8PM

Single: 20RO net
Couple: 35 RO net
Kids: 10 RO net



MM02/1380/2022

97986443 | 95514719 | 24702311



BOSE



**Designed to be the
world's best soundbar.**

NEW

BOSE SOUNDBAR 700

Ready to experience an unmatched combination of sophisticated design and exceptional sound? The Bose Soundbar 700 lets you feel the full power in every moment of your favorite music, movies, and TV shows. Featuring premium materials and exquisite craftsmanship, the soundbar is designed to look as good as it sounds.



Bose Soundbar is a trademark of Bose Corporation.



AVAILABLE NOW AT:

Bose Showroom at City Center Qurum

Tel: 24470497 / 92311039 / 95096843



CELEBRATE THE EXCEPTIONAL AT RADISSON COLLECTION MUSCAT

CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER

Celebrate Christmas with our specially curated 4 course menu at OMNY with luxury setting.
Price starting OMR 29 net per person

CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH

Feast in style on Christmas Day with our exceptionally selected spread at the Straits.
Price starting from OMR 32 net per person

NEW YEAR'S EVE DINNER

Add a sparkle to your evening and indulge in a delicious and elegant 5 course menu at OMNY.
Price starting OMR 35 per person

DINE UNDER THE STARS

Ring in the New Year under the stars with the latest hits by "50 degrees" band while enjoying our signature international buffet at our Oasis terrace
Price starting OMR 35 net per person

WELCOME 2022 WITH A BANG

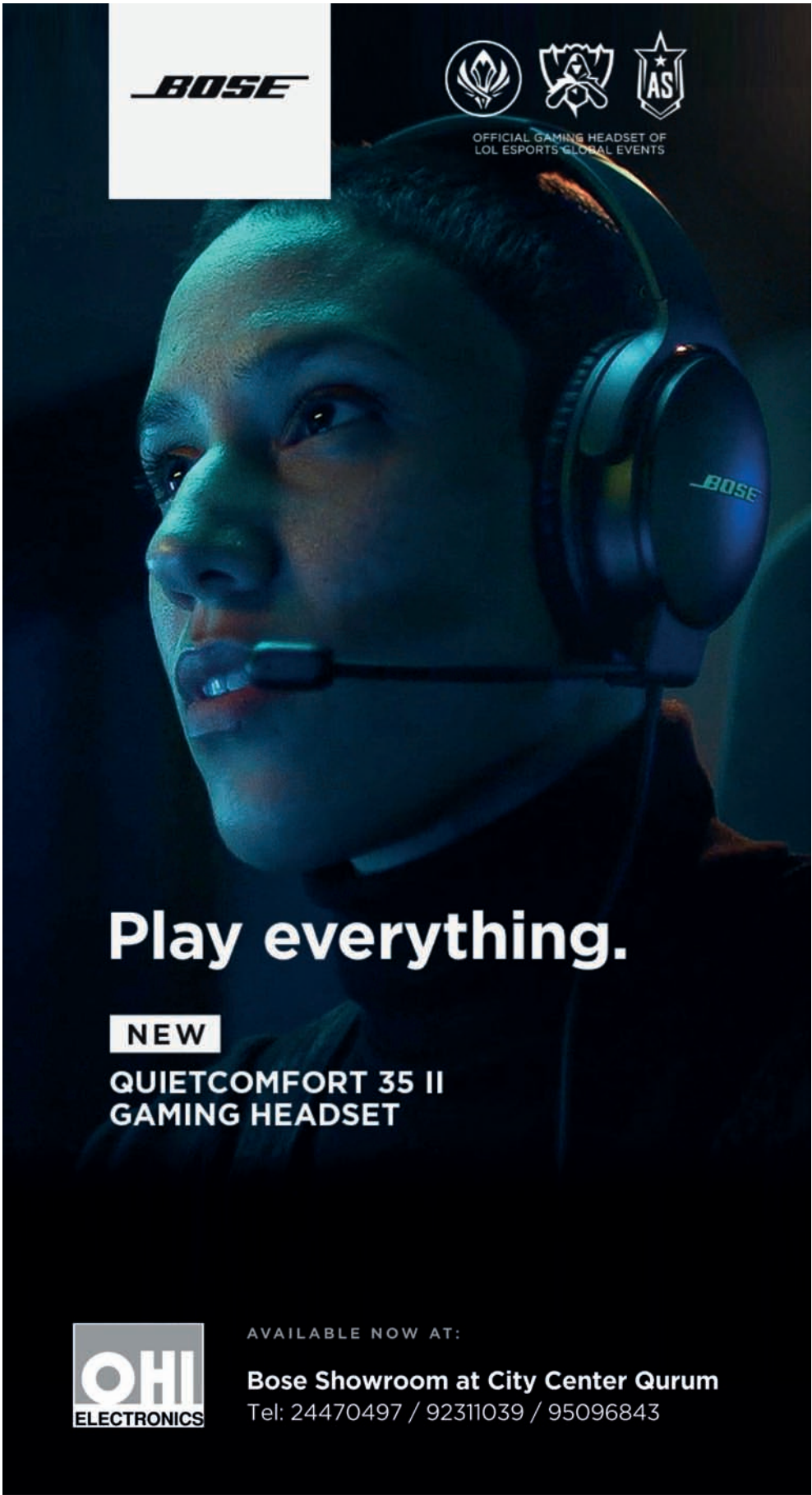
Start the New Year with a truly Arabian experience in our Ballroom. Indulge in our buffet while singers Iwan, Mohamed Attieh & Nour entertain you all night.
Price starting OMR 45 net per person

For reservations, call or WhatsApp 99529741

A RADISSON COLLECTION HOTEL

radissonhotels.com/collection

*Terms and Conditions apply



BOSE



OFFICIAL GAMING HEADSET OF
LOL ESPORTS GLOBAL EVENTS

Play everything.

NEW

**QUIETCOMFORT 35 II
GAMING HEADSET**



AVAILABLE NOW AT:

Bose Showroom at City Center Qurum

Tel: 24470497 / 92311039 / 95096843


فنادق عُمان
OMAN HOTELS


Aitken Spence
HOTELS & RESORTS

NEW YEAR'S EVE BUFFET

31st
DEC
2022

10 OMR
+TAX



At
SUR PLAZA HOTEL
WITH **DJ ASIM**



 94303204/ 95503246

 www.omanhotels.com

MODERN
EXCHANGE



الصرافة
الحديثة



Transfer Fees

3.5OMR

and No Backed
charges

TRANSFER MONEY EASILY AROUND THE WORLD

Use our Modern Exchange Mobile app
and pay by any Debit card

GET IT ON
Google play

Available on the
App Store



@modernexchangeoman



98082703 / 98082705 / 98082709

www.modernexchange.com



MUSCAT

celebrate with us

Christmas Eve

Enjoy Christmas Eve buffet dinner with family and friends at RBG Grill for OMR 13.5 net per person.

Christmas Day

Join us for a very special Sunday roast themed lunch buffet at RBG Grill for OMR 13.5 net per person.

New Year's Eve

Ring in the New Year with our buffet dinner including starters, soup, live station, desserts, unlimited sips and live entertainment at RBG Grill. OMR 20 per person and OMR 36 per couple.

To book in advance, call or WhatsApp 95531606

radissonhotels.com/parkinn

Terms & Conditions apply

BOSE

**Astonishing sound.
Wherever life takes you.**

LIMITED EDITION COLOUR

SOUNDLINK FLEX BLUETOOTH® SPEAKER

The SoundLink Flex Bluetooth speaker is an ultra-portable, highly versatile speaker that plays clear, deep sound and powerful bass, and is rugged enough for all your adventures. Now in Carmine Red.



Bose and SoundLink are trademarks of Bose Corporation. The Bluetooth® word mark and logos are registered trademarks owned by Bluetooth SIG, Inc. and any use of such marks by Bose Corporation is under licence.



AVAILABLE NOW AT:

Bose Showroom at City Center Qurum
Tel: 24470497 / 92311039 / 95096843



Ring in the New

31st December | 8 PM Onwards

جراند حياة مسقط
GRAND | HYATT
MUSCAT

TUSCANY

Indulge in a sophisticated Italian
affair specially curated by our
Chef Giuseppe Liocce
OMR 50 ++ per person

Mokha
Cafe

Welcome 2023 in grandeur and bid
adieu to the year gone by in style

OMR 50 ++ per adult | OMR 25++ (6-12)

Enjoy and be excited about the What's Band?

نقطة السفریات
TravelPoint



Your One-Stop Shop For All Travelling Needs

Air Tickets | Holiday Packages | Hajj & Umrah
Corporate Travel | Tour Oman | Luxury Concierge
Rent-a-car | Visa Assistance | Chauffeur Services
Travel Insurance | Meet & Greet Airport Services



CONTACT US

First floor, Said Plaza, Opp Salam Stores, Qurum

Tel: +968 24661800 | Email: info@travelpoint.om | Website: www.travelpoint.om

     @travelpointoman



Season's Greetings

*Whatever is beautiful,
whatever is meaningful,
whatever brings you happiness;
may it be yours this holiday season
and throughout the coming year.*

*From our home to your heart,
we wish you a season of joy and cheer
and an inspired new year!*

Call : 94295831 Email : [reservations @ desertnightscamp.com](mailto:reservations@desertnightscamp.com)

Website : www.desertnightscamp.com

 TITAN

Upgrade Now

Exchange your
old watch & get

40% off
on select brand new
Titan watches.



For more information call **98018510**

Offer valid from 1st December 2022 to 10th January 2023 at Khimji's Aalami stores in Al Khuwair & Salalah, Titan Kiosks at Nesto Hypermarket in Al Wadi Al Kabir & Barka and All authorised Titan Retailers in Oman.

  **khimjislifestyle**

The Grand Festive Season



GRAND
HYATT



24TH DECEMBER | 7:00 PM TO 10:30 PM

Enjoy an exotic Christmas Eve Dinner Buffet
with turkey festive pudding at OMR 22++ per person

25TH DECEMBER | 1:00 PM TO 4:30 PM

Jingle all the way to our winter wonderland brunch.
enjoy live stations and many more delicacies at
OMR 34++ per person