



SULTANATE WOOS WORLD CUP FANS

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman will offer free multiple-entry 60-day visas to World Cup fans having Hayya Card - the personalised fan ID required to attend any FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 match - the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism announced at a media briefing on Wednesday.

Besides the football fan visa, there will be fast lanes at Muscat International Airport, a 9,000sqm World Cup festival village at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and a host of other activities held across Oman.

Lt Col Ahmed bin Saeed al Ghafri, Director of Administrative and Financial Affairs in the Directorate General of Passports and Civil Status, informed that Hayya Card holders can be accompanied by first-degree relatives for stay in Oman. The visa can also be changed to another category while in the sultanate.

Elaborating on the preparations at Muscat International Airport to facilitate movement of fans through special lanes for both departure and arrival flights, Saud bin Nasser al Hubaishi, chief of operations at Oman Airports Company, said, "The airport will have dedicated gates for aircraft flying World Cup fans, while dedicated customs counters and special staff will guide travellers through the designated fast lanes."

Special bus stops will be established for the smooth flow of fans to and from the airport, Hubaishi added.

Fan village

Shabib al Maamari, Director General of Visit Oman - the travel booking gateway of the sultanate powered by Omran Group, revealed plans to host tourists and fans. "We are making tourism offerings through 20,000 hotel rooms and more than 200 tourism products in cooperation with more than 35 local operators and ten land transporters. Additionally, 52 airlines from around the world will operate flights to the sultanate."

The fan village at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre will



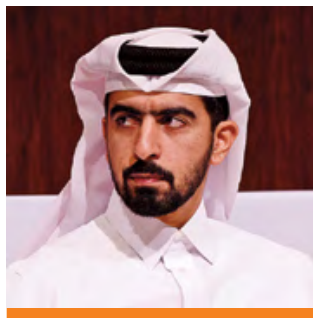
Hayya Card holders can be accompanied by first-degree relatives for stay in Oman

LT COL AHMED AL GHAFRI



Tourism offerings through 20,000 hotel rooms and over 200 tourism products

SHABIB AL MAAMARI



Oman's acceptance of Hayya Card as a valid document for issuing visas is an honour for us

SAEED AL KUWARI



(Image for illustrative purpose)

FREE MULTIPLE ENTRY 60-DAY VISA
FAST LANES, GATES AT AIRPORT

DEDICATED CUSTOMS COUNTERS
9,000SQM FAN VILLAGE IN OCEC

20,000 HOTEL ROOMS
SPECIAL BUSES FROM AIRPORT

host a variety of activities and events during the World Cup in cooperation with international companies, details of which will be announced soon, Maamari added.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Saeed al Kuwari, CEO of Hayya Platform, said, "The sultanate's

acceptance of Hayya Card as a valid document for issuing visas is an honour for us. We are looking forward to further cooperation between Oman and Qatar, as this event is a legacy for Qatar and the region."

The media briefing was chaired by H E Azzan bin Qas-

sim al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and chairman of the Steering Committee to manage the programmes for the World Cup in Oman, with participation of representatives of organising bodies.

MTCIT considers mass transport for govt staff

Mabelah residents could be transported to Al Khuwayr by Mwasalat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) is working on a pilot project to mass transport government employees between Al Khuwayr and Mabelah in efforts to reduce traffic congestion in the city.

An official of MTCIT said, "The ministry recently held a workshop to review the preliminary results of a survey to mass transport government employees residing in Mabelah to their offices in Hay al Wazarat (Ministries' District) in Al Khuwayr in cooperation with Mwasalat."

He added that the ministry is considering launching the pilot project "as positive results emerged from the primary survey".

The initiative evoked a strong response from citizens. Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Nasser al Hosni, director of Happy Line Trans-



portation, said that many countries are implementing such initiatives to reduce traffic congestion in their cities.

"Muscat suffers traffic congestions most of the day and particularly during office hours. We definitely need this project and other initiatives like mass transit systems, besides spreading the culture of using public transport and expanding some roads to solve the problem of traffic congestion," Hosni said.

He noted that a large number of citizens who work in government and private sectors live outside the capital. "The number of cars on roads in central Muscat, including Muscat Expressway, has witnessed a sharp increase. We need to widen some lanes to accommodate the increased traffic."

Marhoon al Saeed, a private sector employee, said, "The government has built many bridges over the past years to reduce traffic congestion, and also set up

signals at important junctions to ensure smooth flow of traffic. But I hope a mass rapid transit system, like metro trains, is started soon in order to help ease traffic. An accurate survey of the number of cars in Muscat is needed to plan an efficient road network in the city."

Describing the plan as excellent, Mabelah resident Sultan al Rawahi said, "Large private sector companies should also provide such mass transport service to their employees to reduce traffic congestion within the capital."

He observed that the main entrance to Mabelah witnesses traffic jams every day. "I hope they find a solution to the traffic congestion at the entrance to Seeb, too, and expand some internal streets in Mabelah."

There were 1.51mn registered vehicles in Oman at the end of March 2022, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

MHUP offers 5 sites for private investment in 5 governorates

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of the national initiative of integrated residential neighbourhoods - Sorouh - the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) will offer five sites for private investment in five governorates to stimulate the real estate sector.

The initiative aims to achieve the objectives of population and economic growth, while enabling the private sector to attract investments in the governorates to contribute to the development of integrated and sustainable urban communities.

A ministry statement said,



"Five new sites will be opened for real estate developers in Musandam, Dhofar, South Sharqiyah, North Batinah, and South Batinah in September. The new neighbourhoods will be developed on a partnership contract system with real estate developers."

MHUP is factoring in areas of high population density as well as the residential land applications

registered with it in this initiative.

Masoud Said al Hashmi, director general for Real Estate Development in the ministry, said, "The Sorouh integrated projects are equipped with all the necessary and modern services for residential neighbourhoods. The Al Naseem neighbourhood is the first project Sorouh implemented. It has 1,000 housing units, including 320 apartments, 120 villas and 475 twin villas, on an area of 350,000sqm. The real estate developer is responsible for the infrastructure and services within the project boundaries."

The housing units will be delivered to citizens in Al Naseem in May of 2023.

H M issues Royal Decree

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued Royal Decree No 58/2022 granting Oman Tower Company a first-class licence to establish and operate the inactive infrastructure of telecommunication towers on Wednesday.

Article 1 grants a first-class licence to Oman Tower Company to establish and operate the inactive infrastructure of telecommunication towers, in accordance with the provisions of the licence attached to this decree.

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

ONA

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN GCC, CENTRAL ASIAN NATIONS MEETING



Oman took part in the first joint ministerial meeting of strategic dialogue between GCC states and Central Asia countries in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Wednesday. The meeting, held at the GCC Secretariat General in Riyadh, stressed the importance of enhancing mechanisms of joint action based on values, joint interest and cooperation in various areas. The Omani delegation was led by H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister. The meeting saw the participation of the GCC foreign ministers and their counterparts in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, in addition to the GCC Secretary General. The second meeting will be held next year in the Uzbek capital Tashkent (ONA)

Digital transformation to boost governance in governorates

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) organised a joint meeting with governors to discuss the Government Digital Transformation Programme on Wednesday.

Digital transformation is an executive programme under the National Digital Economy Programme and one of the main enablers to fulfil the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. It envisages creation of a flexible and innovative government agency, which will provide high quality, smart government services.

The vision of the digital transformation programme stems from the need of enabling the government sector to work innovatively to provide smart services, adopt proactive measures, and offer a seamless digital experience to the electronic community.

H E Said Homoud al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, informed that 26 per cent of the targeted digital transformation plan has been completed.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, an official of MTCIT said, "The meeting aimed to activate linking, integration and alignment between the governorates' plans for digital transformation."

H E Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology in the ministry, said, "We need several things to create a digital economy, including creat-



(Supplied photo)



We need several things to create a digital economy, including creation of national industries and sustainable opportunities, enhancing local added value and empowering economic sectors

H E DR ALI BIN AMER AL SHIDHANI

ion of national industries and sustainable opportunities, enhancing local added value, establishing strategic partnerships with private sector institutions, and empowering economic sectors."

According to H E Shidhani, the ministry will focus on a number of

important aspects, such as the growth of data centres and cloud services and the use of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies to empower economic sectors. These are in addition to stimulating the digital content industry, the cybersecurity industry, and

attracting investments to the sultanate.

The meeting came out with several recommendations, including governorates reclassifying services and procedures to ensure conformity with administrative changes after restructuring of the state's administrative apparatus, in addition to implementing the controls adopted in the digital transformation plan.

In January 2022, the sultanate announced that it will invest RO170mn over the next few years in the Digital Transformation Programme.

The programme includes a roadmap for utilising modern techniques to develop public sector functioning, notably by creating digital platforms for services, as well as a legal and regulatory climate that empowers digital transformation.



(Supplied image)

19% of Adam fish market construction work complete

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman, is constructing a fish market in the wilayat of Adam in Dakhliyah.

Yahya bin Khalfan al Hadidi, director of MAFWR's Fish Markets Regulatory Department, said, "The market is being built on an area of 920sqm and includes 14 fish display and sale tables, hall for cutting fish with seven tables, waiting hall for customers, café, special hall for auction, storage for equipment and a plant for ice production.

According to Hadidi, the market will have central air conditioning, modern drainage, a special room for collecting and storing fish waste, a special platform for loading and unloading fish, and administrative offices for market employees, among

Built on an area of 920sqm, the market is expected to be ready for launch in July 2023

YAHYA AL HADIDI

other facilities.

He added that 19 per cent of construction work is complete. The market is expected to be ready for launch in July 2023.

"Through the establishment of fish markets, the ministry seeks to provide a healthy and comfortable environment for sellers and consumers, raise the quality of products offered, increase consumer satisfaction, provide additional job opportunities for citizens, and supply nearby fish shops and markets their requirement of fish products."

EA starts satellite tracking of turtles in South Sharqiyah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority's department in South Sharqiyah governorate launched a turtle tracking project on Wednesday to study the nesting conditions and natural habitat of sea turtles.

The project also aims to train 20 specialists on how to install satellite tracking devices in the nature reserves of Ras al Hadd and Ras al Jinz in South Sharqiyah.

Aida bint Khalaf al Jabriya, marine environmental specialist of EA and head of the project, told ONA, "The satellite tracking of turtles aims to monitor the migration of sea turtles, apply best practices to protect them, study their nesting conditions and natural habitats, as well as understand their behaviour in nesting and feeding areas."



(ONA)

The project includes the participation of specialists of the Department of Marine Environment Conservation, Office for Conservation Environment, Environmental Monitoring Office, environmental monitors and supervisors from the coastal governorates, and specialists from Five Oceans Environmental Services.

Sea turtles are among the most important marine creatures that characterise the sultanate's conservation credentials. Oman is home to four of the seven species of turtles found in the world, including the world's second largest population of Loggerhead sea turtles. Others include the Green Turtle, Hawksbill Turtle and Olive Ridley Turtle, which nest in Oman. Leatherback Turtle, a fifth species, can sometimes be found visiting Omani waters for feeding or whilst migrating.

3 poachers arrested for killing gazelles in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Wildlife rangers of Environment Authority (EA) and Royal Oman Police (ROP) arrested three poachers for killing gazelles in Dhofar on Wednesday.

EA stated, "The Environmental Control Unit in the wilayat of Shaleem and Hallaniyat Islands in Dhofar, in cooperation with Royal Oman Police, arrested three citizens in possession of a number of slaughtered wild gazelles."

Legal procedures have been initiated against them, it added.

"We confirm that these actions are in clear violation of the Law on Nature Reserves and Wildlife Conservation, and the act is punishable by imprisonment and a fine for anyone who causes disruption in nature conservation areas," EA also tweeted.



(Supplied photo)

The authority added that violation of the law is unacceptable. "We call on all visitors to these areas to report any violation on the hotline 80071999."

According to Royal Decree No 6/2003 on the Law on Nature Reserves and Wildlife Conservation, anyone who intentionally kills, hunts or smuggles any animal or bird, including Arabian Oryx, Arabian leopard, Arabian tahr, reem or sand gazelle, Nubian ibex, striped hyena, Arabian gazelle, houbara bustard and caracal, or their genetic material, will be imprisoned for a period not less than six months and not exceeding five years and fined not less than RO1,000 and not more than RO5,000 or any one of the two penalties.



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MUSCAT DAILY

Bids invited to repair roads damaged in recent rains

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Implementing Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to accelerate repair work of infrastructure damaged by recent rains which resulted in overflowing wadis in some governorates, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) floated several tenders on Wednesday.

"The tenders have been floated in coordination with the committee tasked with accelerating the repair of damages caused by recent torrential rains and flooded wadis in some governorates," MTCIT stated.

The tenders will be awarded to companies specialised in road projects by the end of September.

"The tenders are for repair of damaged roads in North Batinah, South Batinah, North Sharqiyah,



The tenders are for repair of damaged roads in N Batinah, S Batinah, N Sharqiyah, Musandam and Dakhliyah

KHAMIS AL SHAMAKHI

Musandam and parts of Dakhliyah," Khamis Mohammed al Shamakhi, Undersecretary for Transport, said.

Musandam bore the brunt of the adverse weather conditions, following damages in Wadi Sah-tan, Wadi Bani Aouf and Wadi Mastal. The road linking the wilayats of Nakhal and Al Awabi in South Batinah was also damaged. He informed that repair works will include maintenance of the Batinah Road.



80% of Khad to Sham road in Sohar complete

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar Municipality in North Batinah governorate is close to completing the Khad-Sham mountain road project in Wadi Hibi, Sohar.

Mohammed bin Hamad al Kindi, Director of Projects and Maintenance Department in Sohar Municipality, said, "Eighty per cent of the road is complete. The 7km project is vital to the mountainous area as it will reduce accidents."

According to Kindi, the new all-weather road has concrete barriers for safety at 14 locations,

besides metal barriers at 45 locations of varying lengths. The project also includes 25 water drainage outlets, in addition to drainage channels along the sides of the road.

Kindi informed that two companies have been assigned work to complete the rest of the project. One contractor will instal iron safety barriers on the sides of the road, construct concrete channels to drain rainwater, and also instal lighting equipment.

The second contractor's work will ensure the mountain road doesn't collapse using modern technology, Kindi informed.

Researchers develop device for Alzheimer's detection

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A medical device called Ganglio-Nav has been developed for early detection of Alzheimer's disease in Oman.

Ganglio-Nav has been created by a team headed by Dr Sherimon PC, faculty of Computer Studies, Arab Open University, with researchers from Royal Oman Police Hospital and University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Muscat.

The team includes, Dr Vinu Sherimon (UTAS, Muscat), and Dr Rahul V Nair, Dr Renchi Mathew Kurian and Dr Khalid Sheikh of ROP, supported and funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

Powered by artificial intelligence, the device assists in detecting signs of dementia and Alzheimer's in patients. It is designed to conduct a series of cognitive tests that evaluate

language, direction, attention, memory, and visual-spatial abilities of patients suspected to have Alzheimer's. Scores are calculated by the system and correspondingly the patient's current situation is determined.

A demonstration of the technical aspects of Ganglio-Nav and how it can be used in a beneficial manner was also held during a presentation at Crowne Plaza Hotel on Tuesday.

"The device helps in detecting

and devising treatment for the ailment early on. About 60 per cent of dementia cases are caused by the degenerative, irreversible neurological disorder known as Alzheimer's disease. AI technologies have been utilised in this domain to help doctors in diagnosing Alzheimer's. Researchers have found out that constant stress can affect the brain's immune system leading to dementia symptoms," Dr Sherimon PC said.

He added that age is the biggest risk factor for Alzheimer's and it mainly affects people over 65. An individual's risk of developing Alzheimer's disease doubles about every five years after 65.

According to the latest data released by WHO, Alzheimer's and dementia associated deaths in Oman have reached 323 or 2.18 per cent of the total deaths. Age adjusted death rate in the country is 22.46 per 100,000 of the population.

REGIONAL WEATHER			PRAYER TIMINGS	
	Max	Min	Fajr	4.35am
Abu Dhabi	40	29	Sunrise	5.51am
Doha	40	29	Duhr	12.10pm
Kuwait City	39	29	Asr	3.37pm
Manama	39	30	Maghrib	6.24pm
Riyadh	42	26	Isha	7.35pm

Citizen drowns in Salalah, body recovered



Our Correspondent
Muscat

A citizen drowned in Ayn Jarzeez in the wilayat of Salalah, Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) stated on Wednesday.

CDAA said that rescue teams in Dhofar responded to a report of a citizen drowning in Ayn Jarzeez. 'The teams later found the body of the deceased.'

Drowning incidents in Oman rose 44.3 per cent in 2021. According to CDAA, 521 cases of drowning accidents were reported from different parts of the sultanate in 2021, compared to 361 in 2020.

"CDAA water rescue teams dealt with 521 calls related to drowning accidents in 2021. Swimming requires caution and expertise. It should not be practised in undesignated sites, and unsupervised in case of children," an official said.

In a statement, CDAA urged people to be cautious, follow safety measures and avoid hazards while swimming. 'People going out for adventure trips and swimming in wadis must follow guidelines, including wearing life jackets and going out only with well-known tourism companies who provide the necessary tools and equipment. We urge parents to teach their children to swim.'

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Advertisement No.(31 / 2022)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated abelow.

Tender No.	No E-Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/22/108	2022/MM/QS-50	Supply of Safety Barriers (E- Tender)	Rail 25	26/09/2022	16/10/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/104	2022/MM/QS-51	Consultancy Services for Design of Muttrah Touristic Path (E- Tender)	Rail 25	26/09/2022	16/10/2022	First
PRE/22/040	2022/MM/QS-34 Re-Call-01	Rehabilitation of Rainwater Drainage at Burj AL-Sahwa (Re-Tender) (E- Tender)	Rail 25	26/09/2022	16/10/2022	First
PRE/22/076	2022/MM/QS-37 Re-Call-01	Construction of Proposed Solution to Resolve Water Stagnation at Bousher in Alkhawair area (E- Tender)	Rail 25	17/09/2022	29/09/2022	second
PRE/22/106	2022/MM/HQ-10	Design and Construction of Internal Road Al Mubaila South	Rail 35	26/09/2022	16/10/2022	First

Tender Conditions :-

1- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.

- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (csnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+96824402200/24402330).

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,522.19
Sensex	59,028.91
FOREX RATES	
(RO1 equals)	
Indian	207.27
Pakistan	457.78
Bangladesh	246.91
Philippines	148.42
Sri Lanka	935.40

*Rates as on September 07
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

US trade gap drops sharply in July on lower imports

A steep drop in imports, especially of consumer goods, narrowed the US trade deficit in July to its lowest level since October, the government reported Wednesday.

Exports rose only slightly, boosted by an increase in international travel, but the gain was enough to set yet another record, the Commerce Department reported.

The overall trade deficit fell by more than US\$10bn to US\$70.6bn compared to June, almost entirely due to the decline in imports, the report said.

Companies in recent months rushed to replenish depleted inventories amid strong demand from American shoppers - but sky-high inflation has raised concerns that consumers will pull back, causing firms to become more cautious.

Higher interest rates have strengthened the US dollar, making American goods relatively more expensive.

Ras Markaz oil storage to be commissioned by year-end

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's Ras Markaz oil storage facility, which is located in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), is likely to be commissioned by the end of this year, according to the CEO of operator Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO).

The Ras Markaz facility will have an initial capacity to store 5.2mn barrels of crude for the Duqm Refinery project (OQ8), OTTCO CEO Ard Van Hoof told S&P Global Commodity Insights in a recent interview.

"We are going to commission Ras Markaz crude facility by the end of this year but the operation itself is dependent or subject to the OQ8 refinery start-up," Van Hoof said. "The crude source will be decided by the refinery."

The Ras Markaz oil storage terminal is set to receive the first cargo for the Duqm Refinery in November amid talks with customers to store their crude in the project, Van Hoof said, as reported by S&P Global.

The Duqm Refinery project is a joint venture between Oman's OQ Group and Kuwait Petroleum International.

Van Hoof noted that Ras



Markaz has sufficient land and will provide blending services to develop itself into a true regional crude oil hub.

"We can increase the number of SPMs in the water as per the requirement from the market in that sense the location of Ras Markaz provides numerous up-sides to develop a crude facility in Oman next to Fujairah," he told S&P Global.

In December 2021, Aramco Trading Company, a unit of Saudi Aramco, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with

OQ to potentially store crude at Ras Markaz and supply feedstock to Duqm Refinery. Aramco Trading Company already has an office in Fujairah to handle gaso-line and fuel oil storage and blending activities, according to S&P Global report.

"The MoU between OQ and Aramco Trading Company expressed the intent to jointly assess several opportunities, which include obviously storage of crude oil in in Ras Markaz," said Van Hoof. "As the refinery, it is designed to receive and handle

different types of crude grades. It depends on the crude slate the refinery wants to use and that could be Saudi crude."

OTTCO, as per S&P Global report, plans to have some 26mn of oil storage capacity at Ras Markaz in its first phase, but has its eyes on eventually storing some 200mn barrels.

"OTTCO is currently in talks with potential regional and international companies to store their crude at Ras Markaz," Van Hoof said.

"We are currently negotiating

and discussing with different third parties who are interested in having a crude oil position in Ras Markaz. We hope to be able to announce during the first half of next year a final investment decision to develop and construct additional tank capacity," he added.

Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals recently signed a framework agreement with OTTCO to develop a new oil pipeline for the export of Oman blend crude from Ras Markaz crude oil terminal in Duqm.

CBO issues RO40mn treasury bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of the government treasury bills (issue number 565) was issued by the Central Bank of Oman this week.

Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO40mn, for a maturity period of 91 days, from September 7, 2022 until December 7, 2022.

The average accepted price reached RO99.419 for every RO100 bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.270. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 2.3313 per cent and 2.3453 per cent, respectively.

The current interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 3.00 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the central bank is 3.5 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (repo).



Oil tumbles to pre-war level on recession fears

London, UK - Oil prices tumbled back to pre-war levels Wednesday as recession fears returned to the forefront.

Stocks were also hit by the negative outlook for the global economy, while currency markets were gripped by the prospect for interest rate hikes.

Oil prices briefly climbed on Wednesday as Russia's President Vladimir Putin said his country would stop delivering oil and gas supplies to countries that introduce price caps.

G7 industrialised powers have vowed to move urgently towards implementing a price cap on Russian oil imports to cut off a major source of funding for Moscow's military action in Ukraine.

But oil prices then turned sharply lower, with Brent crude, the main international contract, passing under US\$90 per barrel for the first time since February.

Brent North Sea crude dropped 3.1 per cent at US\$89.92 per barrel, while US benchmark West Texas Intermediate fell 3.5 per cent at US\$83.86 per barrel.

OPEC and its allies earlier this week cut production targets for the first time in more than a year in a bid to lift prices.

"While the 100,000 barrel cut wasn't fundamentally significant, it was clearly intended as a warning not to drive the price lower or face further cuts," said OANDA

trading platform analyst Craig Erlam.

"Unfortunately, it seems traders are in no mood to be told what to do and growth fears are instead dictating the price direction."

Recession concerns also dampened sentiment towards equities, with European indices lower, although Wall Street managed small gains at the open.

"Investors appear reluctant to buy anything in this macro environment, where inflation is soaring, global growth is weakening, and central banks are tightening," said City Index and FOREX.com analyst Fawad Razaqzada.

"Something must fundamentally change before we see the onset of a serious recovery," he added. Recession fears are being driven in large part by central banks moving aggressively to rein in surging inflation.

The dollar continues to gain strength from expectations of a third-straight blockbuster hike to US interest rates later this month.

US Federal Reserve officials have lined up in recent weeks to say their main focus is bringing inflation down from four-decade highs, even if that means tipping the economy into recession.

The different pace in lifting rates taken by central banks is fuelling swings in currency values.

The European Central Bank is Thursday forecast to deliver another bumper rate increase, mirroring aggressive moves by the Fed and Bank of England.

Nevertheless, it has moved slower and the euro remains lodged below parity with the dollar.

Meanwhile, the dollar rose to 144.99 yen - the Japanese currency's weakest showing since 1998.

"The reason that we are seeing this much strength in the dollar against the yen is purely because of the difference in two central banks' policies," noted Naeem Aslam, chief market analyst at AvaTrade.

"The Fed is as hawkish as it can be, and the BoJ still doesn't seem to be bothered much about inflation or changing its stance on monetary policy."

Japan's finance minister, Shunichi Suzuki, on Wednesday expressed concern about the yen's drop.

"For now, we're monitoring with a sense of urgency how it's developing, but if this continues, it makes sense that we will take necessary measures," he said, without detailing what the measures might be.

The greenback also struck 37-year peak against sterling, plagued by recession fears on the eve of new Prime Minister Liz Truss's economic stimulus plan. AFP

Asyad signs partnership with UK's Evri

Muscat - Asyad Express, part of Asyad Group, has entered into a strategic partnership with Evri, the UK's largest e-commerce delivery company.

The partnership aims to explore strategic collaboration in terms of setting up a regional courier express parcel (CEP) network serving the Middle East through Evri/Asyad Express and partner networks.

The partnership seeks to develop a unique value proposition serving Oman and select Middle East countries from the UK, Europe and US markets, using Asyad Group network capability and infrastructure.

In a press release, Nasser al Sharji, CEO of Oman Post & Asyad Express, said, "This important partnership is in line with our extensive efforts to position Oman as a global logistics hub by tapping into a pool of more than 2bn potential e-commerce customers and providing global access to the GCC through our extensive sea, road and air networks."



"This agreement provides local and regional traders access to key European and American markets through Evri's expansive network."

It also connects Evri's clients with the Asian and Middle East markets through leveraging Asyad's world-class logistics services and its network, covering more than 220 destinations globally," he added.

Speaking on behalf of Evri, John Sansby, director of interna-

tional network and partnership development, stated, "We are excited to start this collaboration and believe that using the Evri Global e-commerce network, will support the capability build of both networks in the UK, Middle East, the US and Asian markets."

"This partnership will give Oman and GCC regional cross-border sellers, a 'best in class' global e-commerce delivery product. Our agreement with Asyad Express demonstrates our

commitment to increasing Evri's network and service capability growth in the Middle East region," he added.

Asyad Group is continuing the strategic expansion of its e-commerce capabilities in the key markets of UK, China and the US. The key aim is to attract more international brands to take advantage of Oman as a potential e-commerce hub for expanding their service offering throughout the region.

EU seeks closer ties with gas-rich Qatar

Doha, Qatar - The European Union opened an office in Qatar on Wednesday in a sign of the Gulf state's growing influence in solving the international energy crisis.

EU council president Charles Michel was to meet the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, and other top officials in Doha later in the day. Michel arrived from Algeria where he also discussed supplies of natural gas.

Qatar is one of the world's top suppliers of liquefied natural gas and growing requests have been made by Germany and other European nations.

Michel said his visit was "an important signal of our political will to strengthen ties with Qatar", as he opened the EU mission.

The EU wants closer ties on



(From right) Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani meeting with European Council President Charles Michel and his accompanying delegation at the Amiri Diwan in Doha on Wednesday (AFP)

"the energy sector, economic development, security challenges", he told reporters.

Michel's talks with Qatari leaders were also to focus on Russia's invasion of Ukraine,

which led to the gas shortages now hitting Europe. AFP

Putin warns 'no gas, no oil' to countries that cap oil prices

Moscow, Russia - Russia will stop delivering oil and gas supplies to countries that introduce price caps, President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday.

Capping prices, as some Western countries are considering, "would be an absolutely stupid decision," Putin told the Eastern Economic Forum in the Pacific port city of Vladivostok.

"We will not supply anything at all if it is contrary to our interests, in this case economic (interests)," he said. "No gas, no oil, no coal, no fuel oil, nothing."

G7 industrialised powers on Friday vowed to move urgently towards implementing a price cap on Russian oil imports, in a bid to cut off a major source of funding for Moscow's military action in Ukraine.

Putin denied that Moscow was using its energy exports as a "weapon" after Russia halted natural gas deliveries via a key pipeline to Europe.

The Nord Stream pipeline has been closed for several days after Russia said it would be under repair for an indefinite period of time, reinforcing fears of an energy price crisis in Europe with winter approaching.

Europe, which is heavily dependent on Russian supplies, has accused Moscow of using energy as blackmail in response to sanctions over Russia's military campaign in Ukraine.

"They say that Russia uses energy as a weapon. More nonsense! What weapon do we use? We supply as much as required



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok on Wednesday (AFP)

according to requests" from importers, Putin told the Eastern Economic Forum.

Russian gas giant Gazprom said Friday that Nord Stream -- due to reopen last the weekend after three days of maintenance -- would remain shut for repairs after oil leaks were found in a turbine.

The Kremlin insists sanctions have prevented the proper maintenance of Russian gas infrastructure and, in particular, blocked the return of a Siemens turbine that had been undergoing repairs in Canada.

"Give us a turbine, we will turn Nord Stream on tomorrow", Putin said at the Vladivostok forum.

"We are ready to do this tomorrow, just need to press a button. But we were not the ones who introduced sanctions," Putin added.

Speaking about the possibility of a price cap on Russian natural gas, Putin said it was "another stupidity" and "another non-market solution with no prospects".

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday proposed that

member states agree a price cap that would "cut Russia's revenues" used to finance military action in Ukraine.

Putin said Russia would respect its contractual obligations and hoped other countries would do the same.

"Those who are trying to impose something on us are in no position today to dictate their will," Putin said.

"They should come to their senses."

Pointing to rising energy prices in Europe ahead of winter, Putin insisted Russia would sup-

ply nothing outside of existing contracts, quoting a Russian fairy tale: "Freeze, freeze, the wolf tail".

Following the imposition of economic sanctions over the Kremlin's offensive in Ukraine, Russia has reduced or halted supplies to different European nations, causing energy prices to soar.

The EU has looked to reduce its dependence on Russian energy resources and has agreed a plan to decrease natural gas consumption across the bloc.

AFP



Paolo Gentiloni

Europe recession risk 'rising' as energy shock bites

Brussels, Belgium - The threat of recession is rising in Europe, a top EU official warned on Wednesday, as skyrocketing energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine punish the economy.

"Uncertainty remains exceptionally high and the risk of a recession is rising," EU economics affairs commissioner Paolo Gentiloni told a conference at Bruegel, a think tank in Brussels.

"We may well be heading into one the most challenging winters in generations," he added.

Gentiloni, a former Italian prime minister, said "a number of warning lights are flashing red" all while the "Russian war continues".

"Energy prices have shattered new records, inflation has continued to climb and economic sentiment is deteriorating," he said.

However, the economic picture was not all "doom and gloom", Gentiloni said, with employment in Europe still

strong and supply chain problems stemming from the coronavirus pandemic beginning to get solved.

Crucially, Gentiloni said the European economy had outperformed expectations in the second quarter of 2022.

According to the latest data from the EU's Eurostat agency, eurozone GDP grew by 0.7 per cent in the first quarter and 0.8 per cent in the second quarter.

The EU as a whole grew 0.8 per cent in the first quarter and slowed only slightly to 0.7 per cent in the following April to June period. Faced with such challenges, Gentiloni urged EU countries to "intervene as needed in a spirit of solidarity" -- a veiled reference to old battles that pitted richer nations against poorer and more vulnerable ones.

"If we remain united ... we can ensure that the coming months will not be remembered as the winter of our discontent - but as the harbinger of a new European spring," he added.

AFP

EU proposes measures to face Russia war energy shock

Brussels, Belgium - The European Commission proposed a series of measures on Wednesday to control skyrocketing energy prices in Europe and punish Moscow for invading Ukraine, including a price cap on Russian gas.

EU countries are scrambling to face up to a challenging winter ahead, with European consumers facing eye-watering heating bills with natural gas and electricity prices hovering at record levels.

Friday's announcement by Russian energy giant Gazprom of a complete shutdown of the crucial Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany has increased fears of hard months ahead for European households.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, warned that any country that introduces a price cap will receive no Russian energy supplies at all: "No gas, no oil, no coal, no fuel oil, nothing."

Against this threatening backdrop, European energy ministers are to meet on Friday to discuss action, and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said she had proposed them a series of measures, including a price cap.

"We are facing an extraordinary situation, because Russia is an unreliable supplier and is manipulating our energy markets," she warned.

"Our unity and our solidarity will ensure that we will prevail," she added.

Laying out her plan, von der Leyen urged that member states agree a price cap on Russian gas imports, a measure that Putin has warned would be "an absolutely stupid decision".

"The objective here is very clear. We must cut Russia's revenues which Putin uses to fi-



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen gives a press conference on energy at EU headquarters in Brussels, (AFP)

nance this atrocious war against Ukraine," von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission told reporters.

Von der Leyen also said that certain European power companies that are benefiting from high power prices would see a levy on their revenue and profits.

Crisis in Europe

She said this will target firms that are producing electricity at low cost, such as wind or nuclear energy companies, but benefitting from the sky-high prices caused by the war in Ukraine.

"Low carbon energy sources are making unexpected revenues, which do not reflect their production costs," von der Leyen told reporters.

The EU executive will also ask member countries to "re-channel" profits of fossil fuel companies that are seeing historically high revenues thanks to the energy shock caused by the war.

"Oil and gas companies have also made massive profits. We

will therefore propose a solidarity contribution for fossil fuel companies," she said.

The EU's energy ministers are set to debate the commission's ideas, with many countries expected to come to the table with their own proposals.

The rotating EU presidency is held by the Czech Republic, and industry minister Jozef Sikela, who will chair Friday's talks, warned that any price cap on gas could be a distraction from efforts to secure energy supply.

"I think it's not a constructive proposal," he told the Czech senate on Wednesday.

"This is rather another kind of sanctions against Russia than an actual solution to the energy crisis in Europe. And we don't want to prepare further sanctions now, we want to tackle the energy situation."

Energy policy in the 27-member European Union remains largely a national competence despite deep interdependence among many of the countries.

AFP



NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIES LTD. SAOG

DIRECTORS REPORT

Dear Shareholders,
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the thirty nine Annual General Meeting of your Company.

Revenue and Profits
The company recorded a Net Revenue of RO 11,832,010 in the financial year 2021-22 compared to RO 12,672,581 in the financial year 2020-21. The Management focuses to maintain the market leadership position in Oman, expand export markets, endeavor of improving margins, efficiencies as advised by the board.
The NABIL brand along with the new value added portfolio of products enjoys a significant brand image in Oman market and has a good brand presence across the GCC markets and other regions as well. However, due to an increase in commodity prices, overheads and sharp increase in freight costs across all markets, the company bottom line has declined over the previous year. Thus, the company has achieved a net profit of RO 234,027 for the financial year 2021-22 as compared to RO 784,089 in the financial year 2020-21.

Dividend
The Board of Directors proposes a cash dividend of 25% on the paid up share capital of RO 1,000,000 amounting to RO 250,000/-. There are no other appropriations.

Compliance with CMA
Your Company has been constantly monitoring and upgrading its internal control procedures and systems in compliance with local laws and regulations. As a part of this process, the internal controls, procedure manuals and guidelines as recommended by the Capital Market Authority, have been implemented from 2003 onwards. The Board through a process of internal audits, audit committees' regular involvement in the review process, ensures that the internal controls and procedures adopted by your company are effective.

Corporate Governance
Your company confirms its compliance with the code of corporate governance for Public Listed Companies issued in July 2015, as updated in December 2016 and a separate note on Corporate Governance forms a part of this report.

Future Outlook
Unlike the previous years' of COVID uncertainty, the challenges for 2022-23 are well established. The overall external environment looks encouraging with the COVID restrictions being lifted. Certain channels of consumption have started opening up which will help regain some of the lost volumes of the previous two years. With the expansion done in the last year, we will be launching an entirely new range of value added products which will increase our presence in the premium range of cookies. However, the strong headwinds of raw material and packing material cost increase are likely to challenge the bottom line outlook. The new range of products being launched this year will help bridge some portion of profit gap. We are also looking at opening up newer export markets to increase our product presence globally.

Acknowledgement
The Board expresses its gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq, May Allah protect him and guide him for the benefit of Oman and its people. Board sincerely thank and appreciate all the Ministries and Government Departments for their continued support to your Company. Board also likes to convey sincere thanks to the shareholders of National Biscuit Industries Limited SAOG for the confidence they have reposed in the company and it's Board. Finally, the Board thanks the Management and Staff members for their support in the financial year 2021-22 and looking forward to continued progress for your company.

For and On behalf of the Board of Directors of National Biscuit Industries Limited SAOG

NOOH BIN MOHAMMED AL- ZIDJALY
CHAIRMAN

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022

	30 June 2022 RO	30 June 2021 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	5,868,942	4,967,869
Intangible assets	128,571	148,751
Right-of-use assets	284,202	324,539
Wakala deposits	755,260	-
Total non-current assets	7,036,975	5,441,159
Current assets:		
Inventories	2,682,705	2,031,233
Trade and other receivables	3,603,087	2,348,206
Wakala deposits	-	2,727,879
Cash and bank balances	142,529	249,135
Total current assets	6,428,321	7,356,453
Total assets	13,465,296	12,797,612
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity:		
Share capital	1,000,000	1,000,000
Legal reserve	333,333	333,333
Retained earnings	6,241,263	6,157,236
Total equity	7,574,596	7,490,569
Non-current liabilities:		
Staff terminal benefits	417,771	502,819
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	314,636	334,002
Deferred tax liability	45,909	51,511
Total non-current liability	778,316	888,332
Current liabilities:		
Trade and other payables	5,046,116	4,243,777
Current portion of lease liabilities	10,670	16,799
Provision for tax	55,598	158,135
Total current liability	5,112,384	4,418,711
Total liabilities	5,890,700	5,307,043
Total equity and liabilities	13,465,296	12,797,612

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2022

	Year ended 30 June 2022 RO	Year ended 30 June 2021 RO
Sales	11,832,010	12,672,581
Cost of sales	(10,330,300)	(10,572,316)
Gross profit	1,501,710	2,100,265
Other income	143,702	208,888
Selling and distribution expenses	(649,620)	(649,496)
General and administration expenses	(686,762)	(699,758)
Profit from operations	309,030	959,899
Finance costs	(34,569)	(38,977)
Profit before tax	274,461	920,922
Income tax expense	(40,434)	(136,833)
Profit for the year	234,027	784,089
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	234,027	784,089
Earnings per share	0.234	0.784

Ayur Onam Utsav organised by Art of Living concludes



The first Ayur Onam Utsav organised by Art of Living, Muscat concluded in a mega celebration attended by many dignitaries, including the Indian Ambassador.

According to a press statement, Indian Ambassador to Oman H E Amit Narang and his wife Divya Narang attended the event as the chief guests. The celebration began with the traditional lighting of the lamp followed by a cultural programme that comprised dance performances and song presentations.

A discussion by expert Ayurveda doctors, Dr Madhu Harihar and Dr Ratna Hiremath, a senior Medical officer in Sri Sri Tattva Panchakarma, Muscat found a place place in the celebration.

The event ended with 'sumptuous Onam Sadya - traditional Kerala feast arranged to mark the harvest festival of Kerala.

Bank Muscat inaugurates sports field in Rustaq



Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in Oman, has announced the opening of the Al Mahadir Sports and Culture Team sports field in the wilayat of Rustaq as part of its flagship

Green Sports CSR programme.

The event was held in the presence of Khalifa bin Hamad al Sakhbouri, Head of the Al Mahadir Sports and Culture Team in the wilayat of Rustaq and Team Manager Abdullah Mohammed al Abri.

On this occasion, Abdul Rahman bin Abdullah al Shezawi, Regional Manager - South Batinah, Bank Muscat, said, "We are pleased to inaugurate the Al Mahadir Sports and Cultural Team's sports field within the Green Sports programme which is implemented by the Bank as part of its strategy to enhance its leadership role in the field of corporate social responsibility and sustainability.

"On this occasion, the bank is pleased to congratulate the team's management and appreciate their efforts during the various stages of the project. We would also like to wish them further growth, development and success as well as excellent contribution to local sports."

He added that Bank Muscat would be opening a number of new Green Sports fields across the Sultanate of Oman for different youth teams in the coming months.

Ooredoo partners with MoHUP for CSAT solution

Continuing to support the country's digital transformation, Ooredoo has partnered with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) for the provision of a Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) solution.



The dynamic and tailored solution will enable the ministry to send automated SMSs to its customers across the country asking for feedback on their experience with the ministry. The data from it will then be used to improve its services. It's one of a number of long-term partnerships Ooredoo has with the government sector as it strives to support capacity building, maximise efficiency, and carve out a path towards digital innovation.

Mahmood Khamis al Khuzairi Director of Customer Service Department at Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, said, "We continue to take steps to support our strategy and fast-track our digital transformation, and this marks one of a range of initiatives we have lined up for the year. With Ooredoo's data leadership, we will be able to serve all governorates from one centralised point, and gain important feedback about our services, in turn significantly enhancing the efficiency and productivity of our daily operations."

Saied Sadiq al Lawati, Director of Business Marketing & ICT Solutions at Ooredoo, said, "CSAT is a tried and trusted metric... Our locally hosted and fully managed solution will support the ministry in streamlining its processes and improve its customer experience. It's part of a long-running relationship with the government sector."



ahli islamic launches Al Shumookh Banking for high-net-worth customers

As part of its continuous endeavour to provide premium banking services to high-net-worth individuals, ahli islamic has launched 'Al Shumookh' Banking segment, targeting its growing base of elite clients. Tailored for premium, private and wealth management clients, it offers a range of exclusive products and services to enhance their everyday banking experience.

The new Al Shumookh banking segment is open for existing and prospective Omani, and expatriate customers, whose monthly incomes - RO3,500 and above - are transferred to the bank or have a total deposit of RO35,000 and more.

Under this segment, customers of Al Shumookh Premium Banking, Al Shumookh Private Banking, and Wealth Management, will enjoy the facilities of a designated service centre and will be attended by dedicated relationship managers who will assist them in their investments and financial planning. In addition, they will be offered exclusive rates on financing and will have special access to the airport lounges.

Speaking about ahli islamic's strategic growth initiatives, against the backdrop of the new banking segment, Yousuf al Rawahi, DGM, and Head of ahli islamic said, "Al Shumookh reflects our commitment to create and implement banking solutions that are convenient and suitable for the current market conditions. We believe innovation is the key to progress, and our value-added approach to banking has helped us en-

Al Shumookh reflects our commitment to create and implement banking solutions that are convenient and suitable for the current market conditions. Designed for our elite customers, it promises to protect and manage wealth in the best interests of its customers

YOUSUF AL RAWAHI

hance our product portfolio with segments tailored to meet the needs and requirements of our growing base of clients. Al Shumookh, designed for our elite customers, is a testament to the bank's commitment to protect and manage wealth in the best interests of its customers."

"We are aware of the newfound global popularity of Islamic banks and are capitalising on this wave with our top-class service standards, where the focus is on partnering with customers," the DGM further said.

"Our Sharia'a-compliant banking solutions have, and will continue to shape, the fortunes of our customers and pave the path of our progress in the local and regional banking sector. The recent past has demonstrated our strong intent to enhance our presence in the country with newer branch networks, and to meet everyday banking needs of our growing customer base with relevant and timely products."

Reiterating similar sentiments, Noora

Sabah Sultan - AGM, Head of Retail, ahli islamic, said, "We rely on customer feedback and market trends in conceptualising new products. As a key player in the Omani banking sector, we have strengthened our wealth management portfolio to meet specific requirements of our growing client base, empowering them with financial flexibilities designed to enhance their wealth - for now, and in the future. We expect this to bolster Oman's economic and social development further."

Al Shumookh clients will have access to a bundle of investment options via Wealth Management; they will have dedicated Relationship Managers at selected branches at their disposal; they will be provided with a branded platinum debit card for (premium banking) and a signature debit card for (private banking) with an increased daily withdrawal limit of up to RO1,000 - branded cheque book, with the quickest turnaround time.

Credit card holders of Al Shumookh

Private and Al Shumookh Premium banking will earn higher Pearl Points (8 and 6 for every RO3 spent for Private and Premium, respectively). They will be eligible for 1 per cent cash back, chauffeur, concierge services, a dedicated service centre, relationship manager, multi-travel insurance, and access to more than 1,000 airport lounges worldwide.

Explaining Al Shumookh Wealth Management further, Noora pointed out that the Bank would offer a range of Sharia'a-compliant investment solutions to meet its customers' current and future needs.

"We are following global banking standards in providing wealth management as an investment advisory service, combining other financial services to address the specific needs of our wealthy clients. Our wealth management advisors will help clients develop comprehensive investment strategies to cover various Islamic investments. They will also coordinate with them to incorporate an optimal tax planning strategy into their wealth planning," she added.

ahli islamic continues to provide innovative products and services structured to increase its market presence, catering to customers keen to adopt sharia-compliant products. The Bank facilitates customers to operate their businesses under Sharia'a principles by providing a wide array of Sharia'a-based financial products and ensuring the highest level of service standards that focus on 'partnering' with its customers.

Papa John's opens new outlet in Qurm

Papa John's, a leading pizza chain, has launched a new store at Al Asfoor Plaza in Muscat's Qurm area to provide customers with a vibrant ambience in addition to the highest standards of quality and food safety.

Customers can now enjoy a new dining experience at the Alasfoor outlet, which prides in having three new Indian flavour pizzas that Papa John's added to its menu. The Indian flavour pizzas are - Paneer Makhani, Paneer Garden Party and Chicken Makhani.

"We're loving the Indian party



vibes with colourful vegetables, spiced tikka paneer cheese and Makhani sauce," said Papa John's about the Paneer Garden Party

that has the right proportion of onion, green pepper, tomatoes, black olives and mushrooms.

Paneer Makhani offers one

experience the taste of northern India with fresh spicy paneer, makhani sauce, onion, green pepper, tomatoes and special garlic drizzle. Chicken Makhani goes with golden grilled chicken, makhani sauce, onion, green pepper, tomatoes and special garlic drizzle.

Joseph Joseph, the general manager of Papa John's Qatar & Oman, said on the concept of the brand said that 'better ingredients, better pizza' has proved to be popular in Oman for creating a better pizza with the freshest ingredients.

MHD launches 'explore the world' campaign for MG customers

Following the massive success of MG Motors' previous campaigns, the MG returns with something excitingly different. Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC (MHD), the sole MG Motors dealership in Oman, has announced the 'Explore the world with MG' campaign, where all participants can win a trip to their dream destinations, besides other prizes.

Every new MG owner will get free insurance, free registration, free service, and free window tinting. Also, MG offers up to ten

years of warranty for its vehicles - the country's first-ever warranty of this length.

All new MG car buyers will participate in a draw where they will get the chance to win travel vouchers.

To enjoy the benefits of this offer, customers can choose from the exceptional range of MG models. This range consists of the rebellious MG GT, the stylish MG 6, and the exciting MG 5 sedans. If you prefer SUVs, you may choose among MG's largest 7-seater SUV RX8, the dynamic

MG HS, the adventurous MG RX5, and the ambitious MG ZST.

This all-new fleet of MG vehicles will satisfy almost all the needs and tastes of modern customers.

MHD is offering a range of MG cars and vehicles with each one having unique interior, exterior and over all design. Some to name are: MG GT - the coupé-like fastback sedan; MG 5 - one of the most popular MG sedans in Oman; the MG 6, which is like a 'brother' of MG 5 but with a more adventurous character.

UN gives Gaza children tablets to connect with world

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - The United Nations said on Wednesday it was helping connect Palestinian children in the blockaded Gaza Strip to the outside world by distributing tablets to hundreds of pupils.

Children make up nearly half of Gaza's population of 2.3mn. Most of them have never been able to leave the coastal territory, which is ruled by the Islamist movement Hamas.

Some 890 tablets are being handed out this week at schools run by UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, following a pilot that saw a few dozen devices given to children last year.

"We're very conscious that for children as they grow, they're going to have to be able to engage with an increasingly digitalised world," Thomas White, the agency's Gaza director, said.

The 15-year blockade of the enclave led by Israel has crippled Gaza's economy, leaving 74 per cent of young graduates unemployed, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

The European Union-funded project to boost children's computer skills is seen by UNRWA as a way to increase their chances of getting a job in the growing tech sector, either locally or remotely.

This could 'provide opportuni-



Students at a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees use tablets in class, in Gaza City on Wednesday (AFP)

I feel that Gaza is behind in programming. I hope to learn programming and have a programming company in Gaza

SALMA SHAMIAH

ties for young Gazans to make an income and get ahead', White said, standing in a school yard in

Gaza City. The project could help young Gazans go into coding, providing

back office IT support for companies or customer support online, he added.

But Gazans still have to contend with frequent power cuts and Internet access limited to 2G.

Thirteen-year-old Salma Shamiah was among those to receive a new tablet, after excelling at a tech summer school.

"I hope to learn programming in the future and have a programming company in Gaza," she said in a classroom filled with computers.

"I feel that Gaza is behind in programming. I expect in the future programming will be dominant in the world and we will do useful and beautiful things."

AFP



Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama (AFP)

Albania cuts ties with Iran over 'cyberattack'

Tirana, Albania - Albania broke diplomatic ties with Iran on Wednesday, Prime Minister Edi Rama said in a statement, as the leader accused Iran of launching a massive cyberattack against the country this summer.

"The Council of Ministers has decided on the severance of diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran with immediate effect," said Rama.

The Prime Minister accused Iran of directing a cyberattack against Albanian institutions on July 15 in a bid to 'paralyse public services and hack data and electronic communications from the government systems'.

"The said attack failed its purpose. Damages may be considered minimal compared to the goals of the aggressor. All systems came back fully operational and there was no irreversible wiping of data," Rama added.

The prime minister went on to say that Iranian diplomats and support staff had 24 hours to leave the country following the announcement.

Albania and Iran have been bitter foes for years, stemming from Tirana's hosting of the Iranian opposition group the People's Mujahedeen of Iran (MEK) on its soil.

'Threats and conspiracies'

Albania agreed in 2013 to take in members of the exiled group at the request of Washington and the United Nations, with thousands settling in the Balkan country over the years.

Following the collapse of its communist government in the

early 1990s, Albania has transformed into a steadfast ally of the US and the West, with the country officially joining NATO in 2009.

The MEK backed Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in the 1979 revolution that ousted the shah but rapidly fell out with the new Islamic authorities and embarked on a

The said attack failed its purpose. Damages may be considered minimal

EDI RAMA

decades-long campaign to overthrow the regime.

The MEK regularly hosts summits in Albania that have long attracted support from conservative US Republicans, including former vice president Mike Pence who delivered a keynote address at an event in June.

A month later, the group postponed another summit citing unspecified security threats targeting the event.

The summit was called off 'upon recommendations by the Albanian government, for security reasons, and due to terrorist threats and conspiracies', the MEK said in a statement released in late July.

The gathering was supposed to be attended by or joined online by various high-profile political delegations, including hundreds of lawmakers from six continents, organisers said.

AFP

Israel unveils 'extremely rare' Iron Age papyrus note

Jerusalem - Israel's Antiquities Authority displayed Wednesday a rare papyrus note in ancient Hebrew dating back 2,700 years, recently brought back to Jerusalem after its chance discovery in the United States.

The letter fragment, written in the Palaeo-Hebrew used during the First Temple era, constitutes four lines beginning 'To Ishmael send', with the rest of the words incomplete. "We don't know exactly what was being sent and to where," said Joe Uziel, director of the antiquities authority's Judean Desert scrolls unit.

In the Iron Age, Hebrews used clay fragments to scrawl short notes and animal hide for scriptures, with papyrus reserved for official correspondence, said



An Israel Antiquities Authority conservator views under a magnifying glass a papyrus fragment at a lab in Jerusalem on Wednesday (AFP)

Eitan Klein, deputy director of the authority's antiquities theft prevention unit.

Papyrus left in the dry climate of the Judean desert could have survived the ages, but there

were only two other papyruses from the First Temple era known to researchers before the latest discovery, Klein said.

"This papyrus is unique, extremely rare," he said.

Its serendipitous journey to the Israel Antiquities Authority's conservation laboratory began when Shmuel Ahituv, one of Israel's top ancient Near East scholars, was tasked in 2018 with completing the work on a book about ancient Hebrew script by the recently deceased Ada Yardeni. Ahituv was surprised to see in the book's draft a picture of the 'To Ishmael' papyrus, which he had not been familiar with.

He contacted Klein, and with the help of Yardeni's daughter, managed to locate the US academic who had connected Yardeni to the owner of the fragment - a man in Montana.

The owner had inherited the papyrus from his late mother, who in 1965 purchased or re-

ceived it as a gift from Joseph Saad, curator of the then Palestine Archaeological Museum.

Saad had obtained it from legendary Bethlehem antiquities dealer Halil Iskander Kandou, who Klein said had most likely bought it from Bedouin who found it in a Judean Desert cave.

Back in the United States, the woman had framed the papyrus below a picture of Saad and Kandou, and hung it in her home.

Klein invited the Montanan to visit Israel in 2019, showing him the Antiquities Authority's facilities to persuade him that the rare artefact would be preserved best there. "He was convinced," Klein said, without providing further details.

AFP

Three killed in Israeli strikes on Syria airport

Beirut, Lebanon - Israeli airstrikes have killed at least three people and damaged Aleppo airport in northern Syria for the second time in a week, a war monitor said Wednesday.

The strikes carried out on Tuesday evening caused damage to the main runway of Syria's second largest airport, taking it out of service, the state news agency SANA reported.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based group that monitors the conflict, said among the targets of the strikes was a warehouse in the airport compound used by Iran-affiliated militia. "Three people were killed and five were wounded," it said, adding that a total of six missiles were fired.

The identities and nationalities of those killed could not be immediately confirmed.

AFP

Iranian film about disabled father to open Asia's top film festival

Seoul, South Korea - An Iranian film about a disabled father who looks after his paralysed son will open Asia's biggest film festival next month, organisers said on Wednesday as the event returns to 'fully normal' for the first time since the pandemic started.

The Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) will run from October 5 to 14 and feature 243 movies from 71 countries, including 89 that will have their world premiere.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival was reduced to a fraction of its usual scale in 2020 while last year's edition took place with social distancing measures.

But next month, the annual event in the South Korean port city will be 'fully normalised for the first time in three years since COVID-19', festival director Huh Moon-young told reporters.

"We feel fortunate to be able to play the role of Asia's best film festival again."

The upcoming edition will open with Iranian filmmaker Hadi Mohaghegh's *Scent of*



This photo provided by the Busan International Film Festival shows a scene from *Scent of Wind*

Wind, which tells the story of a father and a son - both of whom have disabilities - living in a remote village.

Mohaghegh's film is 'very small and quiet, but it's really a great movie that has a tremendous amount of resonance and

emotion that cannot be compared to its size', Huh said.

Japanese director Kei Ishikawa's drama *A Man*, about a widow who discovers unexpected truths about her late husband, will close the edition.

The film is 'elegant and calm',

festival director Huh said, while offering a memorable exploration of identity and belonging.

Honouring Tony Leung

This year's festival will honour Hong Kong's acclaimed actor

The upcoming Busan International Film Festival will open with Iranian filmmaker Hadi Mohaghegh's Scent of Wind, which tells the story of a father and a son - both of whom have disabilities - living in a remote village

Tony Leung, having selected him as the recipient of its 'Asian Cineaste of the Year' prize.

It will screen six films featuring Leung, who will visit Busan to receive the award and meet with the viewers.

Leung (60), who is best known for his collaborations with famed director Wong Kar Wai, picked the six films himself - which include Wong's *In the*

Mood for Love (2000) and *Happy Together* (1997).

Other anticipated screenings include Korean-Canadian director Anthony Shim's *Riceboy Sleeps*, which tells the story of a Korean immigrant single mother, said festival's programmer Nam Dong-chul.

The film is garnering comparisons to *Minari*, Nam said - a 2020 drama about South Korean immigrants in the United States, which received rave reviews and a slew of awards, including the best supporting actress Oscar.

A documentary film about late BIFF chief programmer Kim Ji-seok - who died in 2017 while attending the Cannes festival - will also get a world premiere during the upcoming festival, Nam said.

One of the most respected film programmers in the South, Kim founded BIFF with two others in 1996 and is largely credited as one of the most critical guiding forces behind its success.

AFP

UK's new PM vows action on energy crisis

Truss told parliament that she favoured a 'negotiated settlement' with the EU on N Ireland

London, UK - At her first parliamentary grilling as British Prime Minister, Liz Truss on Wednesday confirmed plans to stem huge rises in the cost of energy that threaten to plunge her new government into a winter of discontent.

Jousting with opposition Labour chief Keir Starmer for the first time since she succeeded Boris Johnson, Truss also revelled in her status as the UK government's third female prime minister, noting Labour has still to elect a woman leader.

Truss ruled out a windfall tax on energy firms' gargantuan profits, but said details of her plan would be released on Thursday to ensure consumers and businesses can still afford heating in the coming months.

Whereas Johnson used the



Prime Minister Liz Truss leaves 10 Downing Street to take part in her first Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) session on Wednesday (AFP)

weekly session of 'Prime Minister's Questions' to theatrically attack Starmer, Truss was more business-like as she pledged a rightwing programme of tax cuts to revitalise the UK economy.

Starmer cast Truss as the inheritor of 12 years of Tory government leading up to the present crisis in inflation, which is tied to Russia's war in Ukraine,

and said there was 'nothing new' about her policies.

"There's nothing new about a Labour leader who is calling for more tax rises," Truss retorted, earning roars of approval from Conservative MPs - most of whom had initially backed her leadership rival, Rishi Sunak.

Johnson's predecessor Theresa May archly asked Truss

why only the Conservatives had managed to elect women leaders - May herself, and Margaret Thatcher. One Tory backbencher shouted '3-0!'

Starmer's deputy Angela Rayner looked on with a pained expression as Truss said it was 'extraordinary' that Labour could not find a woman leader, or one who did not live in left-leaning

North London.

Earlier on Wednesday, Truss convened her new-look Cabinet, which includes the most diverse top team in British history: Kwasi Kwarteng as finance minister, James Cleverly as foreign secretary and Suella Braverman as interior minister. Under the costly plans developed by Truss and Kwarteng, gas and electricity

bills for both households and businesses are expected to be capped near current levels for the coming winter at least.

The government would lend or guarantee private-sector loans to energy providers to make up the difference they pay from soaring global wholesale prices, which have driven UK inflation above ten per cent.

The spike in inflation to 40-year highs has stoked a wave of strikes, including by railway workers and criminal lawyers, with more sectors threatening to

There's nothing new about a Labour leader who is calling for more tax rises

LIZ TRUSS

walk out in an early challenge to Truss' administration.

On the eve of Truss' energy plan announcement, the British pound slumped to its lowest dollar level since 1985, tanking to US\$1.1406 at about 1400 GMT.

Along with the urgent issue of energy prices, Truss' government must also navigate the combustible problem of post-

Brexit trading arrangements in Northern Ireland.

In her first contacts with foreign leaders, the new Conservative leader spoke late on Tuesday by phone to Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky and then US President Joe Biden. According to Downing Street, she agreed with Biden 'on the importance of protecting' peace in Northern Ireland.

In parliament, Truss said she was 'determined' to break through the impasse, and favoured a 'negotiated settlement' with the EU.

To Zelensky, Truss vowed to maintain the full-throated support for Ukraine against Russia given by Johnson before he was forced out following a series of scandals.

Truss (47) won an internal ballot of Tory members on Monday, securing 57 per cent of the vote, after a gruelling contest against former finance minister Sunak that began in July.

She now faces a tough challenge reuniting the ruling Tories following the leadership battle, but observers noted that she had expelled almost every Sunak supporter from the Cabinet. Ex-soldier Johnny Mercer said he was 'disappointed' to be sacked as veterans affairs minister.

AFP



German Minister of Economics and Climate Protection Robert Habeck (centre) addresses a press conference, in Berlin (AFP)

Germany's stay on nuclear plants fails to quell debate

Frankfurt, Germany - Germany's decision to keep two atomic plants on standby through the winter amid a power crunch has exposed cracks in the government and unleashed criticism from economic and energy experts.

The major u-turn in government policy was made after a second stress test to assess Germany's energy security as Russia reduces gas supplies to Europe.

Germany's three remaining nuclear plants were set to be retired at the end of the year.

Instead, two of the fleet will be kept in reserve 'until mid-April 2023 in case needed', Economy Minister Robert Habeck said on Monday.

But the decision has become a 'stress test for the coalition' of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats, Habeck's Greens and the liberal FDP, according to the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* daily.

Finance Minister Christian Lindner of the FDP has made no attempts to hide his push for the three plants to remain in use rather than just kept on standby.

"We shouldn't be too picky, but instead do everything that makes our lives easier," he told the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* on Monday ahead of the nuclear announcement.

That included 'the continued operation of the nuclear power plants until at least 2024', the FDP boss said.

In a sign that he has not shifted his position, Lindner also retweeted several voices in his party criticising Monday evening's decision as not going far enough.

'Kept running'

Habeck's decision partly delays the nuclear exit decided under former chancellor Angela Merkel after the Fukushima disaster in 2011. He said the subject of nuclear energy was 'bound with a lot of emotions' but that the partial extension was needed to avoid an 'extremely unlikely' electricity crisis.

But in light of skyrocketing

We shouldn't be too picky, but instead do everything that makes our lives easier

ROBERT HABECK

electricity bills, all possible resources needed to be mobilised, according to Veronika Grimm, a member of the government's council of economic advisors.

"That means not just coal plants but nuclear power plants too," she told daily *FAZ* on Tuesday. "The plants should be kept running, not just be on standby, as is currently planned, because only then will it lower the price of electricity," she said. The government should examine extending the lifetime of the plants by five years and even bringing recently closed plants back online to keep prices 'within limits', she said.

The financial daily *Handelsblatt* wrote that the partial extension was simply 'the worst of all possible decisions'.

AFP

Ukraine backs UN peacekeeping force at nuclear plant

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine's nuclear operator said on Wednesday it would support the deployment of UN peacekeepers at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia plant, a day after the UN atomic watchdog called for a security zone around the site.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a report on Tuesday saying the situation at the nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, was 'untenable'. The agency sent a team to the site last week.

It called for a demilitarised security zone to be established at the plant in southern Ukraine, which the Russians took over in March.

There has been repeated shelling around the site, sparking fears of a nuclear disaster.

Ukraine's nuclear operator Energoatom said on Wednesday it would support the deployment of UN peacekeepers to the facil-



A woman stands inside a bunker in Kramatorsk, Donetsk on Tuesday (AFP)

ity and called for Russian troops to leave.

"One of the ways to create a security zone at the (plant) could be to set up a peacekeeping contingent there and withdraw Russian troops," Energoatom chief Petro Kotyn said in remarks broadcast by Ukrainian TV.

Ukraine and Russia have traded blame for shelling at the

site, which continued on Tuesday even as the IAEA report was released.

The head of Ukraine's nuclear security agency warned Wednesday that a nuclear accident at the site could affect neighbouring countries.

Damage to the active zone of the reactor would 'have consequences not only in Ukraine, but

also definitely beyond its borders' Oleg Korikov told reporters.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday there was 'no military equipment' at the plant in southern Ukraine, adding that he 'certainly trusts' the IAEA report.

But earlier, Moscow had said it wanted 'clarifications' from the IAEA. "There is a need to get additional clarifications because the report contains a number of issues," Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told Interfax news agency.

"I will not list them but we requested these clarifications from the IAEA Director General."

'Fukushima-like'

A 14-strong team from the IAEA visited Zaporizhzhia last week, and at least two members of the team were to remain there on a permanent basis to ensure the facility's safety.

But on Monday, the last work-

ing reactor was disconnected from the grid after shelling caused a fire.

Karine Herviou, the head of the Institute for Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety in France, warned of the risk of a 'Fukushima-type scenario', referring to the 2011 Japanese nuclear disaster. "We are not immune to strikes (at the plant) which, even if they do not directly affect the reactors, could lead to radioactive releases into the environment," she told FranceInfo radio on Wednesday.

As the war rages into its seventh month, with tens of thousands killed and millions displaced, the global cost of the crisis is unfolding. Countries are confronted with skyrocketing energy prices and serious grain shortages.

Europe in particular is bracing for a tough winter ahead.

AFP

BeReal photo app claims to capture authenticity

San Francisco, US - It's not all sunsets and selfie smiles - people are flocking to a new social network app that calls on users to share true glimpses of their lives rather than cherry-picked moments.

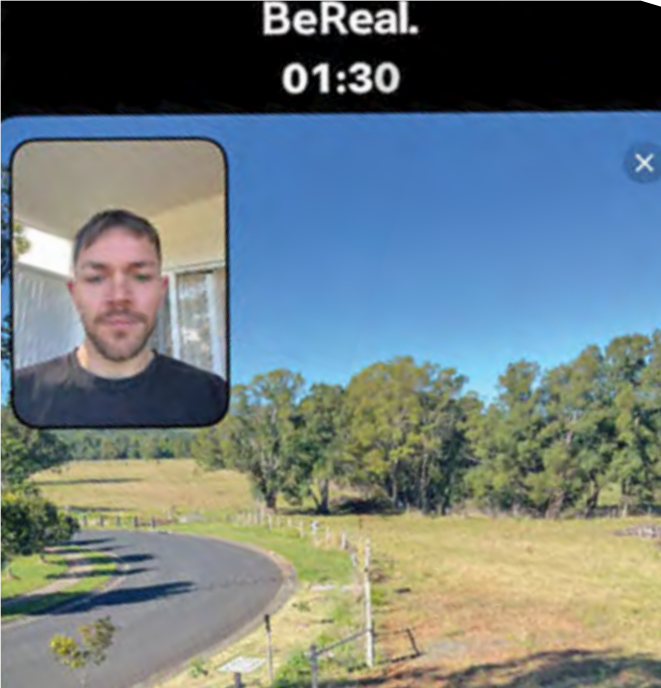
Once a day, BeReal simultaneously prompts users to take photos of what they are doing, giving them two minutes. The app uses front and rear facing cameras on phones, putting shared 'selfies' into context.

The app shuns software filters that add glossy special effects or touch-up effects.

The approach is a sharp contrast to the carefully cultivated images common on Instagram and Facebook that often focus on parties, holidays, fancy food and perfect weather.

"The ideal of BeReal is you are just in a moment - where are you and what are you doing right now," said Jennifer Stromer-Galley, a professor at Syracuse University school of information studies in the United States. "Our lived lives, not our best lives - maybe you are walking the dog or in your pajamas eating cereal."

Launched two years ago by



French entrepreneurs, BeReal has seen its popularity surge in recent months.

The most downloaded app in the United States at start of September, and ranked among the top three in Britain and France, according to figures provided by market tracker Data.ai.

BeReal has been downloaded nearly 35mn times worldwide

and is proving popular with Gen Z, people born between the late 1990s and about 2010, Data.ai figures showed.

"It does seem to have really taken off as the next potential social media application," Stromer-Galley said of BeReal, though cautioning that the same was once said for ephemeral photo sharing app Snapchat.

BeReal creator Alexis Barreyat was at a mountain bike event when it struck him how social media users focused more on perfecting content than what was happening around them, according to venture capitalist Jean de La Rochebrochard, who invested in the startup.

'While he was in the moment, he was surprised to see so many influencers busy staging their life with multiples shots, stories, trying out dozens of filters while completely missing the show,' the investor wrote in a blog. 'It was even making some of them and their audience miserable.'

Done with perfect?

BeReal's rise in popularity signals that people are tired of polished online images that don't reflect actual life, Creative Strategies tech analyst Carolina Milanesi told AFP.

"I think the younger generation is done with fake and perfect, because life isn't," Milanesi said. "Gen Z seems a bit of a sweet spot; the fact they want to be who they are and they want to be portraying how real life is and how they navigate through it."

One BeReal user posted a playful video of her scrambling about her home in a frenzy to stage a flattering photo with just two minutes to get ready. Another lamented on Twitter about a friend abruptly ending a phone call to take a selfie after getting a BeReal alert.

'The app is called BeReal NOT wait until I think I look cute enough to post,' read a tweet by the account of @garrett_parker1.

It remains to be seen whether BeReal's popularity will endure.

"It is not quite clear what there is to stick around for after you get the voyeurism of seeing other people's lived experiences," Stromer-Galley said.

BeReal's use of front and back smartphone cameras also raises questions of privacy and risk of stalkers or hackers.

"Let's say the back camera shows a friend or your children or where you live - or your desk or computer screen at work," Stromer-Galley said.

Linkln profiles show that BeReal was founded by Barreyat and Kevin Perreau, and has 126 employees.

AFP

Eyeing Asia pivot, Putin says 'impossible' to isolate Russia

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday said it was 'impossible' to isolate Russia and hailed Asia's growing global influence, as Moscow looks east in the face of unprecedented Western sanctions over Ukraine.

Washington and Brussels have pummelled Moscow with a barrage of economic and personal sanctions after Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24.

Facing deteriorating ties with Western capitals, Moscow is seeking to pivot the country towards the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

"No matter how much someone would like to isolate Russia, it is impossible to do this," Putin told the Eastern Economic Forum in Russia's Pacific port city of Vladivostok.

He said the coronavirus pandemic has been replaced by other global challenges 'threatening the whole world', including 'sanctions fever in the West'.

Putin blamed the 'elusive dominance' of the United States and 'the stubborn refusal of Western elites to see and recognise objective facts'.

He added that Russia is 'coping with the technological, financial and economic aggression of the West', insisting the economic situation in Russia is 'stabilising'.

Putin has repeatedly said that Russia's economy is weathering the barrage of sanctions well, as the Kremlin's ties with the West sink to new lows.

As Moscow seeks to instead bolster ties with Asia - especially key ally China - Putin welcomed the growing role of the



Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok on Wednesday (AFP)

The role... of the countries of the Asia-Pacific region has significantly increased... partnerships will create colossal new opportunities for our people'

VLADIMIR PUTIN

Asia-Pacific region in global affairs.

"The role... of the countries of the Asia-Pacific region has significantly increased," he said at the forum, adding that partnerships will create 'colossal new opportunities for our people'.

Putin was joined at the forum by China's top legislator Li Zhanshu - who ranks third in the Chinese government hierarchy - with a bilateral meeting scheduled for later in the day.

Putin also met Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, whose government is facing diplomatic isolation as well.

Putin hailed Myanmar as a 'long-standing and reliable partner', while Min Aung Hlaing called the Russian president 'a leader of the world'.

Putin-Xi meeting

Putin's participation in the forum in the Far East - a region with close geopolitical and eco-

conomic ties to Russia's Asian neighbours - comes a day after the Russian president oversaw large-scale military drills there.

The week-long manoeuvres, called Vostok-2022, were concluding on Wednesday and involved several Kremlin-friendly countries, including China.

Putin is expected next week to hold an in-person meeting with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, who has not left China since 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The two leaders will meet at a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) held in Uzbekistan on September 15 and 16, a Russian diplomat said on Wednesday.

Beijing and Moscow have drawn closer in recent years,

ramping up cooperation as part of what they call a 'no limits' relationship, acting as a counterweight to the global dominance of the United States.

Beijing has refused to condemn Moscow's intervention in Ukraine and provided diplomatic cover by blasting Western sanctions and arms sales to Kyiv, heightening tensions between China and the West.

Tensions were further strained during the August visit of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to self-ruled, democratic Taiwan, which China considers its territory.

Moscow was in full solidarity with Beijing during the visit, with Putin accusing Washington of 'destabilising' the world.

AFP



This file photo shows Ronson Chan (left) releasing the annual report 'Freedom in Tatters' in Hong Kong on July 15, 2021 (AFP)

HK police arrests journalist union chairperson

Hong Kong, China - The head of Hong Kong's journalist union was arrested on Wednesday, just weeks before he was set to leave the city and begin an overseas fellowship.

Ronson Chan, chairman of the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA), was arrested for allegedly obstructing a police officer and disorderly conduct in a public place.

Channel C, the online news outlet Chan works for, said the veteran reporter was taken away by police officers who asked to check his identity while he was reporting on a meeting of public housing flat owners.

Police said a 41 year old man surnamed Chan was arrested after he refused to show officers his ID card and behaved in an 'uncooperative' way despite multiple warnings.

Chan was set to leave Hong Kong at the end of September for the six-month Reuters Institute fellowship programme at Oxford University.

Authorities have used a national security law and colonial-era sedition charges to crack down on dissent in Hong Kong after democracy protests three years ago.

Local media deemed critical of

the government have faced a surge of police investigations and the city has plummeted down global press freedom rankings.

Like many now-shuttered civil society groups and pro-democracy unions, both Chan and the HKJA have faced repeated criticism from media outlets that answer to Beijing's Liaison Office in the city.

Police action has often followed such media coverage.

Local tabloid *Apple Daily* and online news platform StandNews - which Chan used to work for - were forced to close last year after executives were charged with national security violations, leaving hundreds of journalists out of work.

When Reporters Without Borders (RSF) released its annual press freedom ranking in May, Hong Kong had plunged 68 places to 148th in the world.

In RSF's first report in 2002, Hong Kong had some of the freest media in Asia and ranked 18th worldwide.

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Hong Kong gave up Asia's largest annual human right press awards earlier this year, citing risks posed by the security law.

AFP



The Urban Search And Rescue team works at the site, in Hong Kong on Wednesday (AFP)

Three dead, six injured in Hong Kong crane collapse

Hong Kong, China - Three men were killed and six others injured after a Hong Kong crane collapsed at a construction site on Wednesday with rescuers trying for hours in vain to reach a victim trapped under the wreckage.

One man was certified dead at the site in Kowloon after suffering a skull fracture while another died after being rushed to hospital, authorities said.

Dozen of workers from the city's Urban Search and Rescue Team worked around the crumpled tower crane, which had fallen onto multiple cargo containers used as temporary offices, trying to retrieve a third victim.

"We can only see the lower half of his body, and he was unresponsive when we tried to

communicate with him," fire services official Yim Ying-kit told reporters.

"(The crane) is quite heavy so we need various tools and risk assessment before we can rescue the trapped worker."

Police later confirmed that the man was also killed.

The crane was in operation when it collapsed shortly before 11.00 am (0300 GMT) but was not carrying any load at the time, Yim said.

Some construction workers were in the cargo containers when the crane fell onto them, he added.

After inspecting the site, Secretary for Labour and Welfare Chris Sun told reporters in Hong Kong that there was a clear problem with the crane's base and ordered work to be

suspended at the site.

Hong Kong leader John Lee said the labour department would investigate the incident and inspect construction sites using cranes to ensure they complied with safety standards.

Lawmaker Kwok Wai-keung, who represents the labour sector in Hong Kong, said crane collapses are rare in the city and called the accident a 'major blow' to the industry.

The crane was installed in August and had been in use before Wednesday's accident, authorities said.

The scene of the accident was part of a massive construction site for a subsidised public housing project that aimed to create 19,000 homes, the *South China Morning Post* reported.

AFP

Germany resumes UN-led patrols in Mali

Berlin, Germany - Germany has resumed reconnaissance patrols in eastern Mali as part of a UN peacekeeping mission, the military said on Wednesday, after suspending the operations last month when the Malian government denied flyover rights.

"Reconnaissance operations outside the city of Gao resumed yesterday, Tuesday," a military spokeswoman said in a state-

ment. Most German forces in Mali are based close to Gao.

On August 12, the defence ministry said it had suspended reconnaissance and related operations after Mali's ruling junta denied permission for flights to support personnel rotation under the UN's MINUSMA mission.

In Wednesday's statement, the military said that a unit

which recently arrived in Gao, 'was now fully ready to work, and had taken over the task of securing the camp'.

The row erupted as Mali's junta turns away from France and toward Russia in its fight against extremism.

The long-running insurgency has claimed thousands of lives and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes.

The relationship between Bamako and Paris, its former colonial power and traditional ally, has deteriorated in recent months.

The arrival of Russian paramilitaries in the country on the invitation of the government was a key factor in France's decision to pull its military forces out.

AFP

Japan bound reprocessed nuclear fuel reaches France from Hague

Cherbourg, France - A shipment of reprocessed nuclear fuel arrived in the early hours of Wednesday at the French port city of Cherbourg, according to an AFP photographer, bound for Japan to be used in a power plant.

Japan lacks facilities to process waste from its own nuclear reactors and sends most of it overseas, particularly to France.

The load of highly radioactive MOX, a mixture of reprocessed plutonium and uranium, was transported overnight from a plant in the Hague in secure containers on two trucks, the French nuclear technology group Orano said.

The convoy arrived around 3:45am at the port surrounded by law enforcement vehicles, according to an AFP photographer.

Shortly after 6.00am, the fuel package was loaded aboard a specially designed ship from



A container of radioactive Mixed Oxide Fuel (MOX) is charged onboard of a ship in order to be sent to Japan, at the harbour of Cherbourg-Octeville in northwestern France on Wednesday (AFP)

British company PNTL, which has extensive experience with this type of transport, Orano said.

It will take a little more than two months for the ship to reach Japan, it said, the eighth such shipment from France since 1999.

The previous transport of

Mox fuel to Japan was in September 2021 and drew protests from environmental group Greenpeace.

"Transporting such dangerous materials from a nuclear proliferation point of view is completely irresponsible," said Yannick Rousselet of Greenpeace France about the latest

planned shipment.

MOX is composed of 92 per cent uranium oxide and 8 per cent plutonium oxide, according to Orano. The plutonium 'is not the same as that used by the military', it said.

The group has said the plutonium in Mox .

AFP

TOUCH OF GENIUS

Kylian Mbappe, Erling Haaland shine in PSG; Man City wins as Chelsea lose in Zagreb

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe and Erling Haaland starred Tuesday as Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City made winning starts in the Champions League group stage, but big-spending Chelsea suffered a shock 1-0 defeat away to Dinamo Zagreb.

Real Madrid rode their luck at times before demonstrating their class to kick off their title defence with a 3-0 win at Celtic despite the loss of Karim Benzema to injury.

Mbappe showed why PSG were so desperate to keep him at the end of last season when he seemed set to depart for Real by scoring both goals in PSG's 2-1 victory at home to Juventus, to launch the French champions' quest for the biggest prize in European club football.

"We played well and we got a win in a tremendous atmosphere at home," Mbappe told Canal Plus.

"We always want to play against big teams - that's why you play in the Champions League. It's that sort of atmosphere we love; matches like this, in which you have to show character."

The France forward volleyed Neymar's delightful scoop past Mattia Perin in the fifth minute at the Parc des Princes before adding another brilliantly-worked goal midway through the first half.

Substitute Weston McKennie headed Juventus back into the



Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe scores against Juventus in their Champions League Group H match in Paris on Tuesday (AFP)

game but PSG held on and are level with Benfica in Group H. The Portuguese side beat Maccabi Haifa 2-0 courtesy of goals from Rafa Silva and Alex Grimaldo.

Pep Guardiola has warned Haaland alone cannot lead City to Champions League glory this season, but the Norway striker kept up his scintillating form for his new team with two goals in their 4-0 rout of Sevilla.

"He has an incredible sense of goal. We have incredible numbers in scoring goals, so we want to continue like that," said Guardiola.

Having already scored 10 times in six Premier League outings, Haaland put City in front on 20 minutes in Spain as he poked in a Kevin De Bruyne cross.

Phil Foden doubled the lead on the hour before Haaland struck again. Ruben Dias bagged

a fourth to compound the misery for a struggling Sevilla side.

Haaland faces a reunion next week with old club Borussia Dortmund, who eased to a 3-0 win over FC Copenhagen earlier in Group G.

First-half goals from Marco Reus and Raphael Guerreiro had the hosts cruising, with 19-year-old England international Jude Bellingham delivering a late third.

Real up and running

Scottish champions Celtic were left to rue not making the most of a bright start against Real in Glasgow.

Vinicius Junior opening the scoring on 56 minutes and Luka Modric soon doubled the advantage. Eden Hazard, who came on for the ailing Benzema, netted his first goal for the club since January to seal victory.

AFP

Chelsea show Tuchel the door after poor start to the season

London, United Kingdom - Chelsea on Wednesday sacked manager Thomas Tuchel just seven games into the new season, hours after they suffered a chastening Champions League defeat at Dinamo Zagreb.

The former Borussia Dortmund and Paris Saint-Germain boss leaves Stamford Bridge after a tumultuous period at the club, which included a Champions League triumph and the end of Roman Abramovich's reign.

Chelsea said they would move "swiftly" to appoint a replacement, with former Tottenham and PSG boss Mauricio Pochettino and Brighton manager Graham Potter among the early favourites.

"On behalf of everyone at Chelsea FC, the club would like to place on record its gratitude to Thomas and his staff for all their efforts during their time with the club," the Premier League club said in a statement.

"Thomas will rightly have a place in Chelsea's history after winning the Champions League, the Super Cup and Club World Cup in his time here."

The Stamford Bridge club, bought by Todd Boehly's consortium in late May, defended the timing of the decision, which is understood to have been made before the loss in Croatia.

"As the new ownership group reaches 100 days since taking over the club, and as it continues its hard work to take the club forward,



Thomas Tuchel

ward, the new owners believe it is the right time to make this transition," the statement said.

Chelsea are sixth in the Premier League table after three wins, one draw and two defeats in their opening six matches - already five points behind leaders Manchester City

Tuchel, who was in charge for less than 20 months at Chelsea, admitted "everything is missing" after their shock 1-0 defeat on Tuesday.

"Too much to analyse," he said. "I'm a part of it. We are clearly not there, where we need to be and where we can be. So it's on me, it's on us, we need to find solutions."

AFP

PSG coach Galtier sorry for 'joke in bad taste'

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain coach Christophe Galtier on Tuesday apologised for mocking a question about his club's decision to travel to a game by private jet, saying he had made "a joke in bad taste".

"Believe me when I say I am concerned about climate change and about our planet. I am aware of the responsibility we have," Galtier told Canal Plus after PSG beat Juventus 2-1 in the Champions League.

"It was a badly timed joke in bad taste and I regret it."

"It wasn't the right time. It was a poor quality joke at a bad moment," he added, insisting that PSG are "aware of the importance of climate change issues".

Galtier and Mbappe were asked at a press conference on Monday whether they had discussed an offer from the French state railway group SNCF to provide travel for them to away



Christophe Galtier

games.

Galtier initially smirked at the idea while Mbappe bent double in laughter over the suggestion - with the clip quickly going viral on social media.

"We had a chat with our travel organisers earlier to see if we can travel by sand-yacht," Galtier replied sarcastically, referring to sail-powered beach buggies that are popular on some French beaches.

AFP

RB Leipzig sack coach after Shakhtar thrashing

Berlin, Germany - Domenico Tedesco was fired by German side RB Leipzig on Wednesday, a day after a 4-1 home thrashing by Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk in their opening Champions League group match.

It comes months after he led them to German Cup success but a dreadful start to their league campaign has yielded five points from five matches in the Bundesliga. "RB Leipzig have parted company with Domenico

Tedesco with immediate effect," the club tweeted.

Even before Tuesday's humiliation, there were rumours that Leipzig had lined up former Borussia Dortmund coach Marco Rose. Rose won two Austrian titles with sister club Red Bull Salzburg.

Italy-born Tedesco, 36, only took over last December when Leipzig sacked American Jesse Marsch after a poor run of results which left them 11th in the table,

seven points off Champions League qualification.

Tedesco turned their fortunes around, guiding them to a Champions League spot, the Europa League semi-finals and their maiden domestic trophy, beating Freiburg on penalties in the German Cup final.

However, a 4-0 defeat away at Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday and the Shakhtar result proved to be the breaking point.

AFP

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BUSY MAKING HISTORY

Tunisia's Ons Jabeur becomes the first African woman in history to reach US Open semi-finals, to meet Caroline Garcia

New York, United States - Tunisia's Ons Jabeur became the first African woman in history to reach the semi-finals of the US Open on Tuesday as France's Caroline Garcia ended the hopes of American teenager Coco Gauff to advance to the last four.

Jabeur, who also claimed a notable first in July as the first woman from Africa to reach the final at Wimbledon, scored a 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) win over Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic.

The 28-year-old will now face Garcia in the semi-finals after the in-form 17th seed dispatched the 18-year-old Gauff 6-3, 6-4 in Tuesday's other quarter-final.

Tomljanovic had landed in the

quarter-finals after a run which included a third-round victory over Serena Williams, in what was most likely the 23-time Grand Slam champion's final singles match before retirement.

But the Croatia-born Aussie's battling campaign came to a grinding halt against the dynamic fifth-seeded Jabeur, the Tunisian attacking from the outset and never letting up.

Jabeur said she had been infused with belief since reaching the Wimbledon final, where she was beaten in three sets by Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina.

"I believe more in myself," Jabeur said. "After Wimbledon it was very positive. Even though I

lost the final, I knew I had it in me to win a Grand Slam. And here I am in the semi-finals of the US Open."

Jabeur is known affectionately as the "Minister of Happiness" by fans in Tunisia for the joy that her progress on court has brought to her homeland.

However Jabeur admitted she had let her frustration get the better of her on Tuesday, when she banged her racquet in frustration several times after coughing up multiple service breaks in the second set.

"I think I'm gonna be fired from my job as Minister of Happiness," she joked. "It is tough to manage my frustration. I apologise for my

behavior. I really wanted to keep calm but the racquet kept slipping away from my hand."

Tomljanovic admitted she had been outfoxed by an opponent she described as "crafty."

"When she's playing well, it's very hard to find where to go," Tomljanovic said. "Just really impressed with her game."

Jabeur will head into her semi-final against Garcia aiming to extend an unbeaten record against the Frenchwoman after wins at the 2019 US Open and 2020 Australian Open.

Garcia reached the first Grand Slam semi-final of her career after an ultimately emphatic win over American hope Gauff.

"My head is buzzing, I can't describe how I feel," Garcia said after a quarter-final she dominated almost from start to finish.

Garcia arrived in New York fresh from winning the Cincinnati Masters, and Tuesday's win was her 13th straight singles victory.

The 28-year-old said she was flourishing after regaining full fitness. She took a two-month break from tennis leading up to the French Open in June to recover from an ankle problem.

"I always played very aggressive and the last couple of months I feel healthy again and I've been able to move and practice the way I want," said Garcia.

AFP

Khachanov downs Kyrgios to set-up Ruud duel for a place in the US Open final

New York, United States - Karen Khachanov set-up a US Open semi-final duel with Casper Ruud on Tuesday when he battled past "devastated" Nick Kyrgios in a big-hitting five-setter, shattering the Australian crowd-pleaser's dreams of a maiden Grand Slam title.

Russian 27th seed Khachanov triumphed 7-5, 4-6, 7-5, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4 over the Wimbledon runner-up to make the last-four at a major for the first time.

Earlier Tuesday, Norwegian fifth seed Ruud defeated Italy's Matteo Berrettini 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) to make his second Slam semi-final of 2022 having finished runner-up to Rafael Nadal at the French Open.

Khachanov fired 30 aces and a total of 63 winners past Kyrgios.

"I did it, guys. Finally, you are showing me some love," Khachanov told the mostly pro-Kyrgios crowd on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"It was a crazy match I was expecting it would be like this. I'm ready to run, to fight to play five sets. We played almost four hours and that's the only way to beat Nick." The Russian said he had "nothing to lose" when he faces Ruud on Friday.

"I would like to win it," said Khachanov who lost to the Norwegian on clay in Rome in 2020 in their only previous meeting.

"But as deep as you go the expectations rise up. I did the step forward, I made my first semi-final and I think I have nothing to lose.

"I just want to go for it and be ready for the next match and hopefully it will be a good one."



Karen Khachanov celebrates after defeating Nick Kyrgios in the US Open quarter-final on Tuesday (AFP)

Kyrgios, who had knocked out defending champion Daniil Medvedev in the last-16, hit 31 aces in his 75 winners.

However, his unforced error count of 58 was almost double the 31 of Khachanov.

'Walk on water'

Ruud reached the US Open semi-finals for the first time after breaking Berrettini five times while saving seven of nine break points.

He raced through the first two sets under the roof of Arthur Ashe Stadium before 2019 semi-finalist Berrettini stopped the rot with a break for 2-0 in the third.

At 2-5 down, the 23-year-old Ruud saved two set points before recovering and going on to dominate the tiebreak.

"It was a better start to a match than I ever had before. Everything was going my way plus Matteo didn't serve as well as he usually does," said seventh-ranked Ruud who could finish the US Open as the new world number one.

AFP

'Devastated', says Kyrgios after loss

New York, United States - Nick Kyrgios said he was "devastated" after suffering a "heartbreaking" defeat to Karen Khachanov in the US Open quarter-finals on Tuesday. Russian 27th seed Khachanov triumphed 7-5, 4-6, 7-5, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4 over the Wimbledon runner-up to make the last four at a major for the first time.

"I'm obviously devastated. But all credit to Karen. He's a fighter. He's a warrior," said Kyrgios, who had knocked out defending champion Daniil Medvedev in the last-16.

"I'm just devastated. Just feel like it was either winning it all or nothing at all, to be honest. I feel like I've just failed at this event right now. That's what it feels like."

Kyrgios is scheduled to play in Tokyo at the start of October but he admitted he was finding it hard to summon enthusiasm to return to the grind of the tour.

AFP

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Gary Kirsten Cricket to hold high-performance camp in Oman

Muscat - It is not often that young cricketers and coaches in Oman get lessons and training sessions from one of world's renowned cricket academies. Oman Cricket's endeavour to get the local talent and coaches high-class coaching and training has led them rope in Gary Kirsten Cricket Academy for a high-performance camp at the Oman Cricket Academy in Al Amerat from October 5-9.

The five-day camp will have three days devoted to youngsters (age group from 14-19) and a course for Oman coaches. With an aim to have a strong foundation, the visiting team from Gary Kirsten Cricket will also organise a day-long grass-

roots camp.

Evert Laubscher, Oman Cricket Academy manager, said that a team of three high-performance coaches from Gary Kirsten Cricket (GKC) will be conducting the camp.

Among the GKC coaches expected to arrive in Oman are Ryan Cook, Jimmy Cook, Ryan Van Niekerk, Garreth Von Hoesslin, Murray Ranger, Justin Kemp and Russel Symcox.

Laubscher said the inaugural camp will be organised by three GKC coaches but in the future there may be more coaches coming down. GKC founder Gary Kirsten is also likely to pay a visit to Oman in the future.

In a video message, Kirsten



Gary Kirsten with an aspiring cricketer

said: "We can't wait to share our best thinking with Oman's best talent. This camp is only the beginning of some exciting things to come, I look forward to seeing and meeting everyone as this partnership grows."

Laubscher said: "We at Oman cricket are delighted to be hosting a coaching camp of this quality for the first time in Oman. It will definitely be a great opportunity for all aspiring young cricketers in Oman to im-

prove their skills under the guidance of Gary Kirsten Cricket Academy's professional team."

"It won't just be the players who will be benefitting from the camp, but also our coaches who will be attending a workshop conducted by CoachEd."

World Cup-winning coach and South African legend Gary Kirsten in a household name among cricket fans across the world. Since his retirement in 2004, the former opening batter has devoted his time coaching international teams and franchises and tasted tremendous success, leading India to a World Cup title in 2011 and more recently as a mentor of Gujarat Titans in IPL 2022.

Arjun Dhiman named skipper of U19 squad

Muscat - Arjun Dhiman has been named captain of the Oman squad for the forthcoming ICC Men's U19 Cricket World Cup Division 2 Qualifiers. The eight-nation tournament will be played at the Oman Cricket Academy grounds from September 29-October 7.

Oman are placed along with Bhutan, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia in Group A. Hong Kong, Thailand, Qatar and Singapore are in Group

B. The two finalists of Division 2 will progress to the final round of Asia Qualifier. Team: Arjun Dhiman (C), Aditya Gurumukhi, Aryan Bisht, Ahmed al Zadjali, Lakshmi Narayana, Rahil Habibulla, Glen Menezes, Mohammed Arafat Islam, Siddh Mehta, Ashish Kumar, Chaitra Thanki, Tanuj Sivakumar, Prateish Ramesh, Devansh Loya. Coach: Adeel Shafique. Manager: Sher Mohammed.



Pakistan's Naseem Shah celebrates after hitting a six to beat Afghanistan in their Asia Cup Super Four match in Sharjah on Wednesday (AFP)

IT'S SHAH TIME!

Naseem Shah's consecutive sixes put Paksitan in final

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates - Naseem Shah hit two straight sixes to help Pakistan pull off a thrilling one-wicket win over Afghanistan on Wednesday and set up an Asia Cup title clash with Sri Lanka.

Chasing 130 for victory, Pakistan were in deep trouble at 118-9 before number 10 Naseem smashed Fazalhaq Farooqi over the fence in successive balls in the final over in Sharjah.

It was a second Super Four defeat in a row for Afghanistan, and one that also eliminated reigning champions India from the run-

ning for a place in Sunday's final.

Earlier, fast bowler Haris Rauf led an inspired Pakistan bowling attack that limited Afghanistan to 129-6.

Rauf took 2-26 after Pakistan elected to field first knowing victory would secure a place in Sunday's final against Sri Lanka and knock India out of the T20 tournament.

Afghanistan struggled to put together any significant partnerships, with Ibrahim Zadran (35) the lone batsman to put up some genuine fight. Rahmanullah Gurbaz started cautiously before hit-

ting pace bowler Mohammad Hasnain for two straight sixes at the end of the second over.

Hazratullah Zazai joined in with a few boundaries but soon lost his partner after Rauf bowled Gurbaz with an angling delivery that clipped the off stump.

Zazai's innings was cut short by Hasnain who bowled the left-handed opener on 21.

Ibrahim and Karim Janat attempted to rebuild against a disciplined Pakistan spin attack, which kept the scoring to under seven an over.

Janat looked to launch left-

arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz into the stands but succeeded only in skying to long-on.

Afghanistan kept losing wickets and fast bowler Naseem Shah bowled Mohammad Nabi for a first-ball duck in the captain's 100th T20 international as Afghanistan slipped to 91-5.

Ibrahim took Afghanistan past 100 but soon fell caught behind to Hasnain.

Rashid Khan added some runs to the total, hitting Rauf for a four and six in the final over to finish unbeaten on 18 off 15 balls.

AFP

'Chilled' India not worried about Asia Cup defeats: Rohit

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - Rohit Sharma played down concerns about India's form ahead of next month's T20 World Cup after successive Asia Cup defeats, insisting the dressing room atmosphere remained "relaxed and chilled".

India lost their second Asia Cup Super Four match to Sri Lanka with a ball remaining in Dubai on Tuesday to leave their dwindling final hopes at the mercy of other results.

"You don't worry if you lose two matches," Rohit, who smashed a 41-ball 72 in India's 173-8, told reporters.

"We don't talk like this in the dressing room, because we have played so many matches after the (last) World Cup and won. I don't think it's a cause of worry."

If fierce rivals Pakistan - who similarly overhauled India with a ball to spare on Sunday - beat Afghanistan on Wednesday, they will knock India out and go on to face Sri Lanka in Sunday's final.

"There is no gadbad (Hindi for disarray)," said Rohit.

"From the outside it looks gadbad but we have no such feeling.

"I know how the media reacts when you lose a match and there are questions raised, that is normal.

"You can look inside the dressing room that the boys are relaxed and chilled."

Sri Lanka chased down their victory target of 174 after veteran seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar leaked 14 runs in the 19th over, leaving seven needed off the final six balls.

Kumar had given away 19 runs in the 19th over in India's defeat to Pakistan, who needed 26 off the final two overs, but Rohit de-



Rohit Sharma

There is no gadbad (Hindi for disarray). From the outside it looks gadbad but we have no such feeling

ROHIT SHARMA

faced a torrent of social media abuse, largely because he is from the Sikh minority, after dropping Asif Ali on nought in the 18th over against Pakistan.

Ali went on to smash a match-winning 16 off eight balls, but Rohit insisted the 23-year-old had been unaffected.

"Honestly guys here guys don't look too much into social media these days.

Few losses here and there, one dropped catch, we don't look too much into it," said Rohit.

"Yes, he was himself disappointed because it was a catch that could have been taken but again if you saw his confidence when he came and bowled that last over... he is a confident lad."

AFP

Tendulkar backs under-fire Arshdeep

New Delhi, India - Cricket great Sachin Tendulkar called on Indians to keep sport "free from personal attacks" after a Sikh player from the national team suffered a torrent of online abuse for dropping a catch in a match against Pakistan.

Most of the vitriol directed against Arshdeep Singh, after he dropped an easy catch at a crucial moment in the Asia Cup clash on Sunday, focused on the fact that he is from India's Sikh minority.

His Wikipedia entry was briefly altered to link him to the Khalistan Sikh separatist movement and Twitter users accused him of having ties to Pakistan.

There were also large numbers of tweets supporting him.

Former player Tendulkar, the top run-scorer of all time who still enjoys huge adulation in India, tweeted on Tuesday that



Sachin Tendulkar

all "athletes representing the country give their best and play for the nation always.

"They need our constant support & remember, that in sports you win some & you lose some. Let's keep cricket or any other sport free from personal attacks," he wrote.

Tendulkar, 49, who is from India's Hindu majority, also



Arshdeep Singh

tagged 23-year-old Singh, telling him to "keep working hard".

It is not the first time that cricketers from Hindu-majority India's religious minorities have faced such attacks.

Last year Muslim player Mohammed Shami became a target of abuse after India were thrashed by Pakistan in the T20 World Cup.

Sri Lanka prove a World Cup point with India win

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - Batsman Bhanuka Rajapaksa said Sri Lanka have shaken off their underdogs tag and proved they can challenge at next month's T20 World Cup, after beating India to stand on the verge of the Asia Cup final.

Rajapaksa's side bounced back from a crushing opening defeat against Afghanistan to register three straight wins in the Twenty20 tournament, which was moved from Sri Lanka to the United Arab Emirates because of political unrest and an economic crisis.

Skipper Dasun Shanaka and Rajapaksa put on unbeaten stand of 64 to help Sri Lanka chase down 174 to beat pre-tournament favourites India by six wickets in the Super Four match in Dubai on Tuesday.



Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka (L) and team-mate Bhanuka Rajapaksa urge each other during their Asia Cup match against India

"We were underdogs from the time that we came to the UAE. We all know how Pakistan and India are on their day," said Rajapaksa, who hit an unbeaten 25. "So we had less pressure and all we wanted to was prove

a point, especially to our nation because with all the crisis happening back home this is the only thing with which we could bring smile to their faces."

Sri Lanka, who won the 50-over World Cup in 1996 and the

T20 World Cup in 2014, have enjoyed success on the field this year despite the country reeling from fuel and food shortages and rolling blackouts.

"After the statements that we have made, I don't think we could be called underdogs any more," said Rajapaksa.

"I think so far we have done it quite well and we have really good chance of clinching the World Cup."

The team won rich praise for the win over India with former captain Mahela Jayawardene, tweeting: "Great win boys!!! Attitude was brilliant. Never gave up... keep it going."

Rajapaksa added: "No matter what state we come to UAE, the end goal is to win the trophy, we want to clinch the title."

AFP



14

COOK-UP
Try these recipes for attractive finger food that are always well received



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IN TOWN
Al Bustan Palace introduces the 'Mexican Night'



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ENTERTAINMENT
A peek into tinsel town in Hollywood and Bollywood

IN FOCUS: WADI KABIR



Al Wadi Al Kabir is one locality in the capital endowed with serenity and silence that makes it quite different from the rest of the city. Besides marked trails for hiking and mountain-biking and the popular Wadi Kabir Park, this locality now has added avenues for health and fitness with a brand new jogging and cycle track laid along the arterial road to Al Bustan

SERENITY & SILENCE

Hubert Vaz
Photos: Syed Fasiuddin

Frollicking parrots around the skies all day as they take breaks from feeding on the tender buds on date palms while pigeons, turtledoves, mynahs, butterflies and dragon flies add their own charm to the serene precincts. That's Wadi Kabir, where nature greets you all day and every breath of fresh air is purified by neem trees.

This is, indeed, an ideal place to reside, far from the hustle and bustle of traffic and trade. And if the vast stretches of date palms and neem trees along all internal streets, as well as manicured lawns along the main road, add a refreshing feel to the atmosphere here, the Wadi Kabir Park serves as a green lung amid the residential buildings. Its not uncommon to be refreshed with fragrances of jasmine, desert rose, periwinkle as you move around here.

Wadi Kabir is dotted with low rise buildings, old one-two storey apartment blocks and villas which extend right upto the foot of the mountains on both sides. It also has an industrial area lined with automobile garages and workshops, old shops selling spare parts/tyres and used accessories, and a car graveyard where written off vehicles are dumped. A number of commercial establishments also exist here but they are tucked away from the residential localities where expatriates as well as Omanis have been residing for generations.

Most of the constructions around were completed a few decades ago, including the wide, clean road that winds itself through the mountains to Al Bustan Palace hotel and Barr al Jisrah Resort and Spa via Qantab beach. However, residents of Wadi Kabir can now take delight in a brand new jogging and cycling track that has been laid along the main road to promote health and fitness.

Even before the tracks were laid, one could see people of all ages and nationalities walking/jogging along the footpaths every morning and evening. Now with the new track in place, the urge to hit the outdoors for health reasons has picked up momentum and you need to an early bird to enjoy unhindered walks or runs. The lush green lawns adjacent to the tracks is also ideal for people to relax or toddlers to enjoy playing outdoors.

The jogging tracks were laid over a year ago and were very popular among residents even during the restricted hours of lockdown when people venture out early and hurried back home before lamplight. Currently, the civic authorities are coating the tracks with a rubber solution to make it more user-friendly, workers at the site said, adding that it would prevent minor mishaps like slipping or skidding while walking or riding bikes.

Wadi Kabir also has a string of humble restaurants which cater to varied tastes of residents - from Shawarma outlets to dining halls that serve Indian/Arabic fast food and meals. However, even more popular is

a street-corner mishkak stall, near the Wadi Kabir Club which does roaring business every evening. As the aromas of freshly grilled meat on skewers rises, there is a beeline here for kebabs, burgers and other grilled items which sell like hotcakes as well as add a new dimension to the mood here.

Wadi Kabir is also well known for its weekend flea market, known as Souq al Jumma wherein vendors come in from different parts of the capital and outside every Friday to sell varied items, from garments and footwear to Frankincense and local produce, used appliances and tools to electronics and cars. The market has been operational for decades on end, except when it was shut for over 18months during the pandemic since vendors and buyers communicate in close proximity to strike good bargains.

If Wadi Kabir lacks something, it is medical facilities and good restaurants. There is no hospital here, except for the Wadi Kabir Health Centre and the Hala Medical Center. But then, these are available in adjacent Ruwi which is just minutes away.

Whether you hit the jogging track, take a 2km stroll towards Al Bustan, enjoy mishkak by the street, or spend time relaxing in the Wadi Kabir Park, Wadi Kabir offers the ideal serene setting for residing in peace. Many residents also regularly enjoy a cool evening drive around the mountains towards Qantab as well as Sidab since there is hardly any traffic or other disturbance around the locality.



- LANDMARKS**
- Indian School Wadi Kabir
 - Sri Lankan School Muscat
 - National Hospitality Institute
 - Lulu Hypermarket
 - Nesto Hypermarket
 - 'Pencil building'
 - Wadi Kabir Park
 - Oman Skate
 - Muscat Sports Club
 - Hotel Golden Oasis
 - Wadi Kabir Post Office
 - Kuwaiti Mosque
 - Souq al Jumma



cook-up

FINGER FOOD

LORD OF THE rings

When you want to pep up your party, one sure way to do so is to serve unique finger food that attracts attention. Try these recipes for attractive finger food that is always well received and make you the 'lord of the rings', quite literally



Calamari Rings

Ingredients

400g frozen squid rings, 2 large eggs, ½ cup all purpose flour
2 cups seasoned bread crumbs, ½ lemon – for garnish

Method

Preheat oven to 200° C. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
Completely defrost the squid rings. In a small bowl, whisk the eggs and set aside. In a separate bowl, add the flour. In a third bowl, add the bread crumbs.
Lightly coat a squid ring in flour, tapping ring against side of the bowl when finished so that any excess flour comes off. Dip the squid ring in egg to coat and then also tap it a few times to get off any excess egg drippings. Roll the squid ring a few times in the crumbs until fully coated. Place squid ring onto baking sheet. Repeat with remaining rings.
Bake for about 15-20 minutes until outer coating turns a golden brown. Flip rings over and bake an additional 10 minutes or until both sides are crunchy. Squeeze fresh lemon juice over finished calamari just before serving. Serve warm with tomato ketchup.

Onion Rings

Ingredients

2 large white onions
3 slices mozzarella cheese
2 cups flour, 5 eggs
2 cups breadcrumbs
Oil for deep frying
Marinara sauce – to serve

Method

Peel and cut onions into 1cm rings. Separate the rings. Slice the mozzarella into 1cm thick strips.
Place a smaller onion ring in the center of a larger one and fill the gap between the rings with the mozzarella strips. For extra cheesiness, use two layers of cheese.

Repeat with remaining onion rings and freeze for about an hour.
Place the flour, eggs, and breadcrumbs into three separate bowls. Coat each prepared ring in the flour first. Then dip into the egg, then the breadcrumbs, then the egg again, and one last time into the breadcrumbs. Repeat with the remaining onion rings and place in freezer.
Heat oil for deep frying in a wok until it is smoky. Fry the rings until golden brown, in batches. Be careful not to fry them for too long as the cheese may ooze out completely. Drain on a paper towel, then serve with marinara or any favourite dip.
Avoid the cheese layer, if preferred.



Alu Vadi

Ingredients

18 Colocasia leaves (available in Oman)

For the batter

2tbsp thick tamarind pulp, 100g jaggery
300g gram flour, 1tsp red chilli powder
1tbsp coriander powder, 2tsp cumin powder
½tsp turmeric powder, 1tsp garam masala
2tbsp sesame seeds, 1tbsp fennel seeds
1tsp ginger paste, ½tsp asafoetida, 1tbsp oil
¼tsp baking soda, 1tsp lemon juice, 1tsp salt

For tempering

½tbsp cumin seeds, ½tbsp mustard seeds
½tbsp sesame seeds, ½tsp asafoetida
3 dried red chillies, 3tbsp oil

For garnish

2tbsp desiccated coconut, 2tbsp chopped cilantro

Method

First prepare a sweet chutney for the gram flour paste. Take tamarind and jaggery in a saucepan and add ½ cup of water. Heat it till it comes to a boil. Stir occasionally. Switch off the flame and let it cool down.

Then prepare the colocasia leaves. Rinse the leaves and wipe them dry.

Work with one leaf at a time, place it upside down, and using a knife remove the thick stem and veins without tearing the leaf. Cut the thick stem and gently slide the knife along the vein to remove it. you can do this a few times till the vein is almost flat as the leaf. Prepare all the leaves in the same way.

Now, prepare the gram flour paste. Sieve the flour into a big mixing bowl. Add salt, chilli powder, coriander-cumin powder, garam masala, turmeric powder, sesame seeds, fennel seeds, ginger paste, asafoetida, oil, and jaggery tamarind pulp. Mix everything well.

Add ½ cup of water, a little at a time, and make a lump-free thick paste. The paste has to be smooth and easily spreadable – neither runny nor too thick.

Now add baking soda and lemon juice over the baking soda. Give the paste a really good stir.

Divide the leaves into three batches of 6 each to make three rolls. For the first roll, take the largest leaf on a working surface, with the vein sides facing you. Apply a thin layer of the batter using hands all over the leaf. Place another leaf upside down again but in an alternate way to the first. Spread the batter evenly and thinly on top of the second leaf as well. Then place the third leaf upside down in the same way as the first, and repeat these steps for all 6 leaves.

To form a tight roll, bring in the left side to touch the middle line, apply some batter, then fold the right side to touch the middle line, and apply some batter. Begin to tightly roll the leaves from bottom to up. Keep applying a thin layer of paste with each fold on the top. Keep the roll aside. Take another batch of 6 leaves and make the rolls the same way.

Now, take 5 to 6 cups of water in a steamer. Cover the steamer and let the water boil. Grease a steamer plate with oil and place the prepared rolls seam side down on it. Steam for 25 to 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Remove and let the rolls cool.

When cooled, take a roll on a cutting board and cut into 1cm thick slices. Set aside.

For tempering the Alu Vadi slices, heat oil in a frying pan and add the mustard seeds and cumin seeds. Wait till they start spluttering. Add the sesame seeds, red dried chillies, curry leaves, and asafetida. Give it a quick stir. Add the Alu Vadi slices and cook on both the sides for 5-6 minutes until the wadis are golden brown and lightly crispy.

Serve onto plates and garnish with shredded coconut and cilantro. Serve with sweet chilli chutney or green cilantro chutney.

Colocasia leaves are large green heart-shaped leaves found in Indian groceries. These leaves must be cooked and are best suited for steaming, frying or sauteing

take a break

IN TOWN

AL BUSTAN PALACE

MEXICAN

Nights

'Mexican Night', introduced by Al Bustan Palace, every Thursday at the Beach Pavilion, has become a big draw among those seeking interesting experiences with new cuisines in Muscat





YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

- 

ARIES

MARCH 21-APRIL 19

When it comes to love, there's just no way you can answer anyone's questions without getting into trouble of some kind. Just smile sweetly, give them that one look you know always works, and tell them you need time to think things through to give it all the brainpower it deserves. Don't be hasty.
- 

TAURUS

APRIL 20-MAY 20

After spending too long waiting on some flare-up between family members to resolve one way or the other (preferably for the better, of course), you're finally ready to make your big announcement. It's all good, and you might be in the right, but for time being, don't say anything to anyone if you can help it.
- 

GEMINI

MAY 21-JUNE 21

There are many aspects of your life that are somewhat hard for you to deal with now. Relatives and neighbours, anything that involves travel or technology, and anything that could get you lost are all red-flagged. They're just unlikely to go well for you, sadly. Sit tight, stay home, ignore the phone, and postpone any big decisions for a day.
- 

CANCER

JUNE 22-JULY 22

Financial issues have never been at the top of your list of things you find simple to deal with (with romance, of course, coming in a close second). That's extra true right now, and especially so if you are in the hot seat. If someone brings you a document and claims it must be signed immediately, put them off for a bit, and then find out what the rush is all about.
- 

LEO

JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Now and then you get the feeling that absolutely nothing you do is going to go right no matter how hard you try or how much reconnaissance you do in advance. This is definitely one of those times, so remember not to be too tough on yourself. It's not just you! Lots of people around the world are going through the same thing.
- 

VIRGO

AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

While the rest of us worry about what to do next regarding the latest series of messes the Universe has made, you're having a far easier time. That is, unless you consider the fact that you're having a hard time deciding whether you want to be by yourself or just alone with a loved one who really gets you.
- 

LIBRA

SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

After too much time spent trying everything from semaphore to ESP to emailing your mutual friends, you had almost given up on actually reaching someone. Just as soon as you make that decision, though, the Universe gives way, and suddenly there they are! As soon as you get over the shock, you might actually recall what was so important that you had to talk about it so long ago.
- 

SCORPIO

OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

That boss who has been going out of their way to make not just work hard on you but seemingly everything else too (right down to the way you pound the keyboard) has it coming, right? Still, before you give it to them, make sure there's no hidden reason underlying all this. Maybe they're scoping you out to see what you're really made of, or maybe they're considering you for a new gig.
- 

SAGITTARIUS

NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

There's never been a time when you haven't at least been thinking about travel. It could be that you just saw a great foreign film and now have to see the location where it was filmed. Or maybe you read about the Eiffel Tower in a book and want to see it for yourself. You need to wait a bit before you make any plans if you want it to go well!
- 

CAPRICORN

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You hate being told what to do with your money. It's easily number one on your list of peeves. Just now, though, you've got to deal with it like a grown-up, because someone who cares is just about to tell you that the deal you think is all kinds of perfect may not be what you think it is. You're bright, so you can wait. Just don't pound your head all the way through the wall while you're waiting!
- 

AQUARIUS

JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If it seems as if your partner isn't putting much energy into your relationship, be sure to ask what the problem could be. You can't find out if you don't say something, because they might not feel like bringing it up if you don't ask. It's always a good idea to clear the air, and you might be quite surprised by what you discover in the end.
- 

PISCES

FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're known for your easygoing nature and general willingness to cooperate. Don't let your reputation keep you from letting at least one person who's in your way know that you're not going to take it any more. Right now, you need to assert yourself and let the whole world know that though you can be a sweetheart sometimes, you do have your limits, and you've just reached one.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is a Saanen?

A. A kind of bell
B. A goat
C. A chocolate
D. A wolf

02. Who has hosted the US series *Power of 10*, *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* and *The Price Is Right*?

A. Larry King
B. David Letterman
C. Regis Philbin
D. Drew Carey

03. An operation known since prehistory, to relieve pressure inside the skull or remove splintered bone is known as what?

A. Trepanging
B. Trepidating
C. Treponemation
D. Trepanning

Answers: 1.B 2.D 3.D

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

BOGGLER

C	V	E	T
R	G	O	R
K	S	A	E
O	G	A	H

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

entertainment



FANS RAVE AT LEA MICHELE'S 'FUNNY GIRL' PERFORMANCE

Lea Michele had the audience's full attention on the night of September 6 when she made her long-awaited debut as Fanny Brice in the Broadway version of 'Funny Girl', and received four standing ovations, according to Deadline.

The actress didn't hold back as she sang her heart out in the main role, which was first made famous by the iconic Barbra Streisand in the 1964 original Broadway debut, and it brought on deja vu for fans who thought back on her *Glee* character Rachel Berry fictitiously taking on the same role in the hit Fox television show.

Despite a rough few years full of not-so-great headlines about herself, Lea made quite a lasting impression when she stepped out on the stage of the August Wilson Theater in New York City to take on the role of a lifetime, and it didn't take long for fans to share their thoughts on social media.

Brad Pitt sued by Angelina Jolie's former company

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's messy court battles continue as reports suggest that a new lawsuit has been filed against the actor by his ex-wife's former company. As reported by *Page Six*, a company founded by Jolie has filed a USD 250 million lawsuit against her ex-husband over taking control of the French winery that the duo had bought together.

The lawsuit claims that Brad and a gang of cronies launched a campaign to 'seize control' of the French winery that they bought as a couple 'in retaliation for the divorce and custody proceedings' and to 'ensure Jolie would never see a dime' of its vast profits. The court papers were filed on Tuesday in Los Angeles.

Tyra Banks shines on runway show at Berlin Fashion Week

Tyra Banks was the special guest at Berlin Fashion Week on Tuesday. The runway veteran, 48, looked alluring as she struck a pose in a pair of black leather skinny pants and a black lace trimmed top. A sheer yellow lace coat with a black belt and black wedge sandals completed the ensemble. The *Dancing with the Stars* host was the special guest of Marc Cain CEO Helmut Schlotterer at the line's Spring/Summer 2023 fashion show.



STYLISH SUPERSTARS LIGHT UP VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

The 79th Venice Film Festival, which is currently underway till September 10, has seen the presence of stylish superstars who have been turning up in fine abandon for various screenings everyday giving shutterbugs a gala time with their lenses.

Florence Pugh brought the drama in a glittering sheer Valentino gown and feathered heels. Appearing at the premiere of *Don't Worry Darling*, the stylish superstar donned a starry haute couture outfit.

The look, which came from Valentino's autumn /winter 2022 collection, featured a sheer black corset-like bodice that extended out into an extravagant cape. Dotted with glimmering confetti, the dress formed oversized sleeves and a long train of fabric.

Florence, who was styled by Rebecca Corbin-Murray, paired the dress with black heels that featured feather detailing. Her glittering silver jewellery, which coordinated perfectly with the overall look, came from Tiffany and Co.



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: **BEAST**
Genre: Horror, thriller
Starring: Idris Elba, Sharlto Copley, Leah Jeffries, Iyana Halley

WILD VENGEANCE

Director Baltasar Kormákur's *Beast* is one of the better releases in August which smartly executes its wild-animal-gone-rogue premise in just under 90 minutes.

Beast opens with poachers gunning down a pride of lions, followed by a brief glimpse of a lion exacting the first of many attacks. The big cat is presumably furious that the poachers have killed his entire pride, therefore it's his mission to execute every human he encounters with extreme prejudice.

As the film progresses, we'll see his handiwork in more graphic detail, first on the body of an injured man who stops Martin Battles' Jeep seeking help. When Martin goes to a nearby village to seek help, he discovers the place littered with mutilated bodies.

"Lions don't do this," Martin tells Dr Nate Samuels (Idris Elba). Well, one lion does, and to prove his point, the lion traps Samuels and his two daughters in their Jeep after causing them to crash during the attack. From here, *Beast* is all about Dr Nate protecting his daughters by any means necessary. The task is a little harder than one might expect, considering it felt at times that Norah and Meredith were secretly in cahoots with their predator.

It's worth noting that *Beast* and the recent, far-superior film, *Prey* both have messages about hunters ravaging the animal kingdom and paying dearly for it. They also have in common the examination of a sibling bond and the message that protecting one's family is the ultimate goal of survival.

The rest of the movie has Dr Nate, Martin, the girls, the poachers and the lion engaged in a grim battle for survival, learning whatever life lessons available along the way. Sit on edge to watch this film.

Rating ★★★★★

COMING SOON

SEE HOW THEY RUN

A desperate Hollywood film producer sets out to turn a popular play into a film.

Genre: **Mystery comedy**

Starring: **Sam Rockwell, Saoirse Ronan, Adrian Brody, Harris Dickinson**

Language: **English**

BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: **BRAHMASTRA**
Genre: Fantasy Starring: Amitabh Bachchan, Alia Bhatt, Ranbir Kapoor



POWER OF FIRE

Bollywood buffs have been waiting long for the big-budget *Brahmastra*, starring the young, lovey-dovey leads - Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt - who recently tied the knot. It is one of Bollywood's most talked-about flicks which will release in theatres this weekend after being delayed due to the current pandemic which hampered the production for very long.

Besides being Ranbir and Alia's debut movie together, it also marks Ayan Mukerji's third directorial after superhits like *Wake Up Sid* and *Yeh*

Jawaani Hai Deewani.

Initial feelers, which have also come across from the trailers released in recent weeks, indicate that the movie is loaded with VFX. And, if earlier initiatives with VFX - like the Shah Rukh Khan starrers *Ra-One* and *Fan* both of which bombed on the box office - are any indicator, the fate of *Brahmastra* could be hanging in balance.

Shots in the dark by some 'smart alecs' who have analysed the movie before seeing it say the cinematography and production design is superb though the screenplay is

lacklustre. However, the fact that the music is already making waves - songs like *Kesariya* have become an instant hit - is evidence of a treat in store.

The story is set in modern-day India, against the premise of a secret society called the Brahmanish, who generation after generation have protected many divine 'Astras' (weapons) that were created in ancient India, and safe-guarded them from the eyes of the world. *Brahmastra* (Part 1) is the story of Shiva (Ranbir) - the young protagonist - who is in love with a girl named Isha

(Alia). However, their world turns upside down when Shiva learns that he has a mysterious connection to the *Brahmastra* and a mysterious power within him - the power of fire.

The movie portrays the first offering of Shiva's adventures with his unique powers and paves the way for sequels. And if Indian audiences, especially the younger generation, lapped up Rakesh Roshan's *Krrish* with an unusual appetite and begged for more, *Brahmastra* might be on the same path. Go watch it!

Rating ★★★★★

مزون
mazoon

حياة أحلى
Taste for life

Savour
nature's
flavours

100% JUICE



No Added Sugar

f @ t in /MazoonDairy