



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 07, 2022

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► NEWS BRIEF

AUFI PARTICIPATES IN COP27 SUMMIT

Cairo, Egypt - Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Salim Nassir al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, took part in the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) 2022 on Sunday.

The session is being held in Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt from November 6 to 18.

Aufi said that Oman's participation in this important event stems from its conviction in the significance of endorsing coordinated measures in partnership with the world to reduce global warming to levels below 2°C, namely the endorsement of the Paris Agreement by 196 countries, which became effective November 4, 2016.

He added that the pact also aims to achieve a climate-emission-neutral world by mid-century.

Coastline in wilayats of North and South Batinah receding 90cm/yr

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The coastline in some wilayats in North Batinah and South Batinah is receding by up to 90cm yearly, according to the latest survey of the Environment Authority (EA).

Rising sea levels create stress not only on the physical coastline, but also on coastal ecosystems. Saltwater intrusions lead to contamination of freshwater aquifers, many of which sustain municipal and agricultural water supplies and natural ecosystems.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Mohammed Juma al Ruzaiqi, head of EA's Coastal Zone Management Department, said the survey's results show an irregular rise in sea level in the wilayats of Barka and Musannah in South Batinah and Sohar and Shinas in North Batinah.

"There is erosion along the coastline in the Batinah region in general. The results show coastal erosion by 85cm to 90cm per year in Barka, Musannah and



The beach behind Grand Hyatt Muscat retreated further following heavy rains earlier this year (VK Shaefer)

Sohar, while in Shinas, the coastline has eroded 37cm this year."

A study conducted by Sultan Qaboos University in 2014 titled 'Coastal Erosion in Al Batinah' found the sea level rise (SLR) problem to be severe in the Bati-

nah coast, retreating at a rate of about 60cm/year.

Another 2014 SQU study - 'GIS-based Framework for the Simulation of the Impacts of Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding on Oman' - found that Oman is

highly vulnerable to climate change-induced SLR.

'At the national scale, nearly 400km² of total land area is projected to be inundated under the smallest SLR scenario, while under the highest SLR scenario,

over 900km² will be potentially inundated. An assessment of the vulnerability of productive land use showed that the Batinah and Muscat governorates are the most vulnerable under all SLR scenarios,' the study stated.

Ruzaiqi informed that in 2021, EA launched a programme to combat coastal erosion in the governorates of North Batinah and South Batinah, and held workshops to develop plans to reduce the phenomenon.

'Decarbonisation may need to involve profound reorganisation of economy'

Muscat - Oman has announced various initiatives to achieve its net zero emissions target by 2050, including the National Net Zero Plan and an ambitious green hydrogen strategy, which targets investments worth RO54bn and creating 70,000 permanent jobs.

However, transitioning away from carbon will not be simple for Oman, according to H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister.

Delivering the keynote speech at the 31st Annual Arab-US Policymakers Conference, organised by the National Council on US-Arab Relations in Washington DC on Thursday, H E Sayyid Badr said, "(For Oman) It is not simply a matter of making a transition away from the consumption of fossil fuels, it is about transforming the very basis of our present prosperity."

He added that Oman doesn't have the comparative luxury of societies whose relationship to fossil fuels is essentially a matter of consumption. For them, the



Our green hydrogen potential is ten-fold our current oil and gas production. I urge you all to come and partner with us

H E SAYYID BADR AL BUSAIDI

transition may turn out to be mainly a transition from one model of energy use to another, he said.

"We have to work out how we can continue to provide our citi-

zens with work, with incomes, with public services, with health-care, with education, and with the good life they have come to enjoy in a world beyond fossil fuels," he said.

This means, he added, that as the Arab states of the Gulf look to the future, the complex process of decarbonisation may need to involve a "profound reorganisation of our entire economy and social relations".

Some of the outlines of this reorganisation are already coming into focus in Oman, he said, adding that he can already see that what lies ahead may be very exciting.

Oman, for example, has some of the world's highest potential for the generation of solar and wind energy. Year-round sunshine and a long coastline turn out to be more than just an appealing holiday proposition. "One study concludes our green hydrogen potential is ten-fold our current oil and gas production. I urge you all to come and partner with us to realise this potential."

H E Sayyid Badr acknowledged that much work has to be done. "Storage capacity and effective technologies for energy

export will be required. Oman is building partnerships with some of the world's leading research and development organisations to make this happen. I want to see more American firms among them."

About technological developments, which will be crucial elsewhere too as Oman moves to diversify its economy, he said, "We want to build partnerships with the technology innovators of the future, inviting them to bring their ideas and their business to Oman."

He noted that the new economy, towards which Oman is planning its transition, should be an economy that offers all its citizens the opportunity to flourish. "In Oman, we believe that this can be best achieved by developing and maintaining the highest levels of social inclusion.

"The path to stability and security goes via social inclusion and solidarity between people and families. That is the path that Oman has chosen."

Oman to host World Travel Awards Gala on Nov 11 at Al Bustan

Muscat- Oman is set to host the World Travel Awards (WTA) Grand Final Gala Ceremony 2022, now in its 29th edition, which will be held at Al Bustan Palace, A Ritz-Carlton Hotel on November 11.

"With a view to supporting the efforts of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to promote the country and position Oman on the global tourism map as a key player, Oman Airports is once again sponsoring the WTA Grand Final Gala Ceremony. The event will be attended by hundreds of senior airline, hotel and tourism industry officials," Oman Airports stated.

On the important event, Sheikh Aimen Ahmed al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports, said, "Having hosted the 26th edition of this prestigious global event with great success, we are pleased to once again invite major players in the tourism industry to visit Oman and attend the WTA Grand Final Gala Ceremony."

He added that Oman is confident that the presence of the best travel and tourism companies from around the world, and the accompanying media coverage, will reflect positively on the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism's efforts to promote the country as a global tourism hub.

Graham Cooke, founder of WTA, said, "It is an honour to host our Grand Final Gala Ceremony in Muscat for the second time. Our first ceremony in Oman, in 2019, was a great success that prompted us to repeat



The event will reflect positively on the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism's efforts to promote the country as a global tourism hub

SHEIKH AIMEN AL HOSNI

the experience and return to this beautiful country again. In recent years, the Sultanate of Oman has emerged as one of the top destinations for millions of travellers, as well as a major regional hub. It will be an honour for me to welcome top decision makers from major travel and tourism companies to the beautiful capital city of Oman."

Each year WTA covers the globe with its Grand Tour - a series of regional gala ceremonies to recognise excellence within each continent, culminating in a Grand Final at the end of the year. The winners of these regional ceremonies will compete in the Grand Final in Oman on November 11 when the winners of the prestigious World categories will be unveiled.

19 DEAD AS PLANE CRASHES INTO LAKE VICTORIA, TANZANIA



Rescuers search for survivors after a Precision Air flight that was carrying 43 people plunged into Lake Victoria as it attempted to land in the northwestern lakeside town of Bukoba, Tanzania on Sunday. Nineteen people died in the crash-landing (AFP)

UN chief praises Oman's efforts for world peace

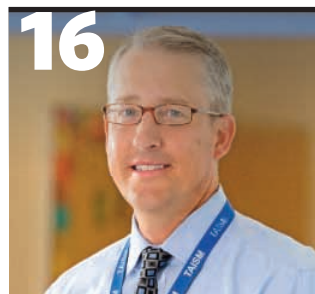
New York, United States - The Secretary-General of the United Nations has praised Oman's efforts in supporting peace and stability in the world.

ONA stated that during Antonio Guterres' visit to the headquarters of Oman's permanent delegation to the UN in New York, the Secretary-General said that the world knows the history of Oman, the role of Omanis, and the culture of tolerance and co-existence that they spread in the world.

Speaking on the occasion, H E Dr Mohamed bin Awad al Hassan, Permanent Representative of Oman to the UN, expressed his appreciation of the Secretary-General's visit to the headquarters of the delegation of Oman.



Senegal's Sadio Mane - The mean machine



Peter Lee - A principal and a gentleman



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is in the process of formulating new plans to make Oman a unique tourism destination.

In the first phase of the plans, the ministry is developing tourist sites in the governorates of Muscat, Dakhliyah, South Sharqiyah, Dhofar and Musandam, which will be followed by the remaining governorates.

According to H E Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, the plans include implementation of priority projects in accordance with the current needs of the tourism market. These form part of the recovery plan.

Muscat Daily asked its readers which tourist sites they would like to see developed with better amenities. Here is what they said:

Reema Bhatia
Teacher

Although domestic tourism has been high on the agenda, many tourist hotspots are bereft of basic facilities. Most of the beautiful destinations are not equipped for tourists as they lack adequate basic facilities like shops, wash-rooms, cafes, sitting areas etc. Popular attractions like Wadi Bani Khalid, Wadi Hoqain, Nakhal, Wadi Shab and Wadi Tiwi lack facilities and the attention they deserve. We have to choose between expensive five-star hotels and the very basic ones; there doesn't seem to

MORE TOURIST FACILITIES - THE NEED OF THE HOUR



be much in between. This gap must be filled. Convenience stores and small cafeterias are not enough to cater to the holiday crowd. Additionally, there should be theme-based entertainment options to attract tourists. Lots of indoor recreational facilities like theme parks or fun sports are needed.

Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

Wadi al Arbeen and Wadi Shab should be developed in such a way that common people can reach there easily. The Tomb of Bibi

Mariam and the Bat Beehive Tombs are significant archaeological and UNESCO sites. Entry tickets/fees to such sites should be subsidised to encourage better understanding of Oman's rich history.

Khalid al Busaidi
Businessman

Reasonably priced hotels should be set up in places of interest. In Muscat, there are options, but if one goes to the interiors, there are very limited or only expensive options. The government needs look into this urgently.

Sameer Khan
Accountant

There are many places in the country to enjoy, however there must be washrooms and changing rooms near seashores. Also, there should be clear markings for camping and non-camping sites.

Abdullah Hinaï
Tourist guide

Oman is a country with several inbound tourism options. Here there are wadis, moun-

tains, deserts and waterfalls. However, there haven't been enough developments in these areas. Oman has lovely places and it is high time we capitalised on these.

Salman Balushi
Private sector employee

First and foremost there must be proper guides for every tourist site. Often people with almost no or little knowledge of these places become part-time guides. Also, there must be an institute for local guides as they are the backbone of inbound tourism.

? NEXT ON
YOUR SAY

How can Oman reach its net zero emissions goal by 2050? How important are the sultanate's green hydrogen plans for the environment and its economy?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by Muscat Daily. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram

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JOB VACANCIES



Aligned with the national recruitment campaign of the Oman Investment Authority and its subsidiaries and in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, Oman Electricity Transmission Company is pleased to announce a number of job opportunities as per the following details:-

Oman Electricity Transmission Company SAOG (OETC) has a vital role in the Oman Electricity Sector, as it owns and operates the main transmission network as well as transmission network in Dhofar through which electricity is transmitted from the generating stations to the distribution load centers in all governorates of the Sultanate. The main electricity transmission network operates at high voltage of 132kV and above. Also, OETC has the responsibility of balancing generation and demand at all times as part of its responsibilities for the economic dispatch of power in the Sultanate, and are currently looking for motivated Omani candidates for the following position:

Job Title	Job Code
1- Senior Security System Engineer	IRC16390

Interested candidates may apply for this post through www.omangrid.com by not later than 12 Nov 2022.

Please attach the following when applying:

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- University Degree
- Transcript

Note: only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.



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وظائف شاغرة

ضمن حملة التوظيف الوطنية لجهاز الإستثمار العماني والشركات التابعة له وبالتسيق مع وزارة العمل، يسر الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء الإعلان عن عدد من الفرص الوظيفية وذلك حسب التفاصيل المذكورة أدناه:

إن للشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء ش.م.ع دورًا حيويًا في قطاع الكهرباء بالسلطنة. حيث أنها تمتلك وتشغل شبكة النقل الرئيسية وكذلك شبكة النقل في محافظة ظفار، حيث تقوم الشركة بنقل الأحمال الكهربائية من محطات الإنتاج إلى مراكز توزيع الأحمال في جميع محافظات السلطنة، وتعمل شبكة نقل الكهرباء الرئيسية بجهد عالي 132 كيلو فولت فما فوق. كما أن الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء مسؤولة عن خقيق التوازن بين إنتاج الكهرباء والطلب عليها في جميع الأوقات كجزء من مسؤوليتها عن لتحقيق التوزيع الاقتصادي في السلطنة. وتبحث حاليًا عن المرشحين العمانيين المحمسين للوظيفة التالية:

الوظيفة	رمز الوظيفة
١- مهندس أول أمن الأنظمة	IRC16390

على من لديه الرغبة في التقدم الى الوظيفة أعلاه، يرجى زيارة موقع الشركة www.omangrid.com في موعد أقصاه 12 نوفمبر 2022م.

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VOX Cinemas closes five theatres in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

VOX Cinemas has stopped screening films at five theatres across Muscat, Sur and Sohar.

Closure of theatres in Ruwi, Panorama Mall, Shatti Qurum, Sur and Sohar came at the end of a five-year agreement between VOX Cinemas and Jawad Sultan Group.

Speaking about the closure, an official of VOX Cinemas said, "These halls belong to City Cinema and were taken over by

Since my bachelorhood, when VOX Cinema Ruwi was Al Nasr Cinema, I was a regular. After getting married and becoming a father, I continued to watch movies in the hall with friends and family

AAKASH KUMAR

VOX five years ago. The contract is over and we have decided not to renew it. However, we do not want to disappoint people and so VOX Cinemas in City Centre Muscat and Qurum, Azaiba Mall, MGM and Mall of Oman

are open."

A senior Jawad Sultan Group official told *Muscat Daily* that several options are being considered. "Information will be provided soon."

The closure of the halls has

come as a blow to movie buffs. For many, VOX Cinemas Ruwi was an affordable venue for entertainment.

Aakash Kumar from India said, "Since my days of bachelorhood, when VOX Cinema Ruwi was Al Nasr Cinema, I was a regular. After getting married and becoming a father, I continued to watch movies in the hall regularly with friends and family. I have so many memories associated with the theatre. I hope the management decides to continue this gem of a place."

Japan celebrates 50 years of diplomatic ties with Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) band performed two shows last week in Muscat to commemorate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Oman and Japan. These were the first time the band performed in Oman.

Close to 50 personnel of JGSDF's Western Army Band performed at an event called 'Military Music: Oman and the World' at Royal Opera House Muscat on Thursday evening, prior to which it played for a select gathering at Crowne Plaza Muscat.

About the performance, Jota Yamamoto, Japanese Ambassador, said, "Oman has long played an important role for the JGSDF to operate in the Middle East as the sultanate is located in the vital area of the Indo-Pacific re-



gion. The peace and stability of the region is crucial to the prosperity of the international community, including Japan."

As symbolised by the historic visits to Oman in 2014 and 2020 by the late Shinzo Abe, former prime minister, bilateral relations have continued to grow. "The Memorandum on Defence Cooperation between Japan and Oman was signed in 2019, which bolstered our defence ties," Yamamoto said.

He informed that November 1

is observed as JGSDF Day and November 3 as Culture Day in Japan. "November is a celebratory month in Oman, too, and as it begins, I would like to renew my wishes for the health and continued prosperity of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and of the people of Oman."

'Military Music: Oman and The World' was performed at Royal Opera House Muscat from November 3 to 5. The performance included drills, songs and Japanese drums.

SAYYID KHALID RECEIVES QATARI AMBASSADOR



H E Sayyid Khalid Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, received in his office H E Sheikh Jassim Abdulrahman al Thani, Ambassador of Qatar to Oman, on Sunday. The two sides reviewed the advanced bilateral relations between Oman and Qatar and ways of enhancing these in various fields (ONA)

Feeding birds in public squares a risk to health, environment



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has urged citizens and residents to refrain from feeding birds in public squares as the activity spoils the aesthetics of the city and also has consequences on public health.

'Muscat Municipality works constantly to address issues which adversely affect public health, the environment and urban aesthetics. Some activities are still seen and practised in certain neighbourhoods of the governorate, such as feeding birds in public squares,' the civic body stated.

Feeding birds in public

The stench from the toxic mix of food and bird droppings bothers people who want to spend time outdoors and those who exercise or practise sports in public squares

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

squares leaves behind grains and other food waste which over time rot resulting in bad odour. 'The stench from the toxic mix of food and bird droppings bothers

people who want to spend time outdoors and those who exercise or practise sports in public squares.'

Grain and food waste in public squares and footpaths left for birds also attract insects, which in turn, need extra effort of the municipality's waste removal staff, the civic body cautioned.

Additionally, regularly feeding birds in an area leads to nesting in the neighbourhood buildings - in balconies, air conditioner units and communications towers.

'Bird droppings have uric acid which can destroy almost any material, including wood, steel and iron over a long period of time,' the municipality warned.

Regional cybersecurity week kicks off

Muscat - The 10th Regional Cybersecurity Week kicked off on Sunday in Muscat. The event is being held simultaneously with the 10th Regional Cybersecurity Drill for Arab States and Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The event is organised by the Arab Regional Cybersecurity Centre in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT). As many as 400 specialists from 45 countries are taking part in the event themed 'Overview of Rapidly Developing Cybersecurity Threats'.

The agenda includes the 10th Regional Cyber Drill (November 6-7), the 10th Regional Cybersecurity Summit, ITU-ARCC Regional Symposium for Africa and Arab Regions, and the 14th Annual Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation-CERT on November 8-9.

The event aims at enhancing communication and honing the skills of cyber-emergency response teams.

The drill includes simulation of four scenarios developed by the Arab Regional Cybersecurity Centre and the International Telecommunication Union. The inaugural ceremony of the drill was held under the auspices of H E Dr Ali Amer al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology. ONA

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MOH No: 558/2022

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,418.09
FOREX RATES	
(RO1 equals)	
Indian	213.41
Pakistan	567.10
Bangladesh	262.35
Philippines	151.84
Sri Lanka	931.12
*Rates as on November 06 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Moody's changes Qatar outlook to positive

Moody's Investors Service has changed the outlook on the government of Qatar to positive from stable and affirmed its long-term issuer and foreign currency senior unsecured debt ratings at Aa3.

Moody's also affirmed the government of Qatar's (P)Aa3 foreign-currency senior unsecured medium-term note program rating.

The change of outlook to positive reflects the prospect that the improvement in Qatar's debt metrics, observed in 2021-22 as a result of elevated energy prices, can be sustained in the medium term even if oil and natural gas prices moderate over the next few years.

Meethaq assets reach RO1.7bn as it celebrates 10th anniversary

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat announced that its total assets reached RO1.71bn at the end of third quarter of 2022, thanks to robust and consistent growth recorded over the past ten years.

Since its inception in 2012, Meethaq's total assets grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 19 per cent. The leading Islamic banking services provider in Oman has been contributing to changing the landscape in the sultanate's banking sector.

The successes and achievements of Meethaq in partnering in the growth and development of Oman were highlighted during a media visit which was organised on Sunday at Bank Muscat head-office to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

Total financing by Meethaq has hit RO1.5bn mark as of the end of third quarter this year,



Senior officials of Meethaq Islamic Banking speak during a media visit on Sunday

achieving nearly 30 per cent market share in Oman's total Islamic financing activities. Its total financing grew by a CAGR of 18 per cent since inception.

Meethaq's total deposits reached RO1.26bn in the end of third quarter of 2022, recording a CAGR of 47 per cent since inception. Bank Muscat's Islamic banking window reported a net profit of RO9.9mn for the first

cat across the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Sami Arfah Bait Rashid, assistant general manager - Meethaq Personal Banking, explained about the products, services and banking facilities that Meethaq offers to its retail customers. He said that Meethaq is committed to continuous investments in the latest technologies to increase the efficiency of services, products and improved customer services, with a focus on a multi-channel approach to enhance efficiencies and to launch new products and services which meet both the current and future needs of customers.

Speaking about Meethaq's contributions to the corporate banking space, Ali Ahmed al Lawati, assistant general manager - Meethaq Corporate Banking, explained how Meethaq is playing an essential role in supporting the economic sector in general and the industrial sector in particular.

He said, "Meethaq is the pre-

ferred choice for companies whether in the investment side or benefiting from the banking facilities. Meethaq's large suite of cutting-edge Islamic banking offerings include project financing, working capital facilities, trade financing, access to the largest Islamic banking branch network in the sultanate, and digital banking facilities."

As part of its alignment to Oman Vision 2040 and the 10th five-year development plan, Meethaq is providing banking and financial services and facilities to diverse and vital sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, fisheries, mining, logistics, education, and scientific research.

Lawati also stressed on the importance of SMEs and sustainable development for Oman. He said Meethaq's Shariah-compliant SME solutions are well designed by keeping in mind the essential role that SMEs play in supporting the sultanate's economy and Oman's 2040 Vision.

Galfar wins RO32mn contract

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company, the largest construction firm in the sultanate, has been awarded a RO32mn new contract by Shell Development Oman.

"We are pleased to inform our esteemed shareholders that Shell Development Oman has awarded the design, build and operate contract for the field operating base in Block 10 to the joint venture of Galfar and Catering & Supplies Co," Galfar said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Sunday.

Shell is the operator of Block 10. The value of this contract for



Galfar's share is approximately RO32mn with an execution period of 12 months from the date of works to be commenced for Galfar scope of works, Galfar

company added.

In December 2021, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed a concession agreement with Shell and its partners to develop and produce natural gas from the sultanate's Block 10 of the Saih Rawl gas field.

The concession agreement established Shell as the operator of Block 10, holding a 53.45 per cent working interest, with OQ and Marsa Liquefied Natural Gas holding 13.36 per cent and 33.19 per cent, respectively.

Block 10 - which covers an area of approximately 1200 sqkm - is located in Saih Rawl in the Al Wusta Governorate of Oman, around 400km from Muscat.



The agreement was signed by Tarik al Junaidi (left) and Yousif al Saadi

OOMCO signs agreement with Tamiyoz for Saudi expansion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Tamiyoz, a Saudi-based real estate investment and development company, to facilitate the expansion of OOMCO's service stations across Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was signed by Tarik al Junaidi, chief executive officer of Oman Oil Marketing Company, and Yousif al Saadi, chief executive officer of Tamiyoz.

OOMCO currently operates 10 sites in eastern and western Saudi Arabia, with 16 stations in the pipeline across the country. The agreement will see further

growth of OOMCO's footprint in the eastern and western, and southern regions of Saudi Arabia.

Earlier this year OOMCO opened its newest facility in Mecca, as well as plans for five additional sites within the greater Jeddah area, offering an exciting range of on-the-go shopping, branded food and beverage offerings, in addition to essential automotive services as OOMCO continues to go 'beyond the pump'.

In a press statement, Junaidi said, "We're delighted to partner with Tamiyoz to grow our footprint in Saudi Arabia. This is an important step in our global expansion and advancing our plans to operate a total of 26 fuel stations across the kingdom by the

end of 2023."

"We look forward to working with Tamiyoz to create new employment opportunities and rewarding business ventures for local suppliers, as well as offering customers innovative products that provide them with convenience, variety and joy, and offer much more than only fuel to become a highly-anticipated element of each journey," he added.

OOMCO continues to expand its global footprint and strengthen bilateral ties to Oman's neighboring countries. In addition to the 10 service stations in operation in Saudi Arabia, the company also operates nine sites in Tanzania, and a comprehensive network across Oman.

Saudi's real GDP grows by 8.6% in Q3

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The real gross domestic product (GDP) of Saudi Arabia continued to grow by 8.6 per cent in Q3 2022 compared to Q3 2021, according to flash estimates by the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (GAS-TAT). This growth is mainly due to the increase in oil activities by 14.5 per cent in Q3 2022. Non-oil activities grew by 5.6 per cent and government services activities by 2.4	per cent year-on-year in the reference period, reported Saudi Press Agency (SPA). The seasonally adjusted real GDP increased by 2.6 per cent in Q3 2022 compared to the previous quarter.	Oil activities grew by 5.8 per cent, government services activities by 1.1 per cent, and non-oil activities by 0.2 per cent on quarter-on-quarter basis. WAM
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Twitter starts rolling out new paid subscription

San Francisco, US - Twitter began rolling out a controversial new paid subscription system on Saturday that the social network's unpredictable new owner, billionaire Elon Musk, ordered staff to build after taking over last week.

Days into the Tesla boss's stewardship of one of the world's leading platforms for discourse and activism, his promises and provocations are prompting a wave of reactions - including warnings from the United Nations and an apology from Twitter's co-founder.

His plan to dial back content moderation on the site is causing such concern that UN rights chief Volker Turk on Saturday urged him to make respect for human rights central to the social network.

"Twitter has a responsibility

to avoid amplifying content that results in harms to people's rights," Turk said in his open letter. Reports of Musk laying off the platform's entire human rights team were "not, from my perspective, an encouraging start," he said.

Jack Dorsey, who co-founded Twitter in 2006 and stepped down as CEO last year, tweeted to apologize for growing the site too quickly a day after roughly half the company's 7,500 employees were fired by Musk.

"I realise many are angry with me," he wrote.

The remaining employees are witnessing an upheaval in their company's culture. As early as last Friday, Musk launched his first flagship project, the redesign of the Twitter Blue subscription option.

He has reportedly told his



In this illustration photo taken on October 4, 2022, a phone screen displays a photo of Elon Musk with the Twitter logo shown in the background (AFP)

team the redesign must be ready for potential activation by November 7 - the day before the US midterm elections - or their jobs will be on the line.

'Sprint' to launch

On Saturday the platform's mobile app began offering an update that will allow users to sign up for

the new version of Twitter Blue, which Musk has said will cost US\$8 a month, and is set to grant users a blue checkmark and perks such as less advertising in their feeds.

"Starting today, we're adding great new features to Twitter Blue," says the update, only on iPhones for now. "Get Twitter Blue for US\$7.99 a month if you sign up now."

In a tweet, the California-based company's director of product development Esther Crawford specified that the new service had yet to go live.

"The new Blue isn't live yet - the sprint to our launch continues but some folks may see us making updates because we are testing and pushing changes in real-time," she posted.

The current version of the service, which costs US\$5, con-

tains premium features, such as a more comfortable reading mode.

Musk wants to add a blue tick that until now has symbolized account verification, though he has not explained how the paying accounts will be verified. Verification has been free and serves as proof of authenticity for the accounts of users such as governments, journalists, celebrities and sports figures - a system put in place to prevent misinformation, but which Musk has derided as "lords & peasants."

Ad spend suspended

The California-based company needs to diversify its income, heavily reliant on advertising.

And with concerns that Musk's tinkering with content moderation will flood the site with hate speech and misinfor-

mation, several advertisers have reportedly suspended their spending on the platform since he bought it. Musk has insisted that content moderation remains a priority, that the rules had not changed, and that he would create a council dedicated to this task. But he also blamed "activist groups" for pressuring advertisers.

"We did everything we could to appease the activists. Extremely messed up! They're trying to destroy free speech in America," he tweeted on Friday.

The social network is losing more than US\$4mn a day, he said, to justify the layoffs.

He promised Saturday that Twitter would evolve, with more convenient sharing and search tools, and ways to monetize content for creators.

AFP

Europe must act immediately to avoid gas shortage: IEA

Paris, France – Europe must act immediately to prevent a shortage of natural gas next year as Russia slashes deliveries in the wake of the Ukraine war, the International Energy Agency warned.

The IEA said the shortfall would occur if Russia stops pipelines deliveries completely and China steps up its imports of liquefied natural gas, which Europe has relied upon to replace Russian supplies.

The region could lack 30bn cubic metres that it needs "to fuel its economy and sufficiently refill storage sites during the summer of 2023, jeopardising its preparations for the winter of 2023-24," the Paris-based agency said in a report.

IEA executive director Fatih Birol said he would hold talks on Friday with several European governments.

"We believe Europe needs to take immediate action to avoid risks of natural gas shortage next year," Birol told reporters.

"We're ringing alarm bells for the European governments and for the European Commission for next year," he said.

'Danger of complacency'

Russia has drastically cut sup-



Europe could lack 30bn cubic metres of gas that it needs to fuel its economy and sufficiently refill storage sites during the summer of 2023, jeopardising its preparations for the winter of 2023-24

plies to Europe in suspected retaliation against Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine, but the region was able to fill

storage sites for this upcoming winter.

The IEA said Moscow delivered 60bn cubic metres of gas

to Europe this year but that it was "highly unlikely" that Russia would provide the same amount in 2023 and could cease deliveries entirely.

And while Chinese LNG imports were lower in the first 10 months of this year, the world's second biggest economy could grab 85 per cent of the expected increase in global LNG supplies if its purchases recover next year.

European Union governments have urged business and households to conserve energy this winter in efforts to lower demand and scrambled to find alternative suppliers.

Norway has overtaken Russia as Europe's main natural gas supplier. The region has also shipping LNG from other countries at a rate that has caused bottlenecks at ports. Gas prices, meanwhile, have fallen sharply.

But Birol said Europe's gas storage sites may only be 65 per cent full in 2023, compared to 95 per cent this year.

"With the recent mild weather and lower gas prices, there is a danger of complacency creeping into the conversation around Europe's gas supplies, but we are by no means out of the woods yet," Birol said in a separate statement.

Birol warned that Europe will face "an even sterner challenge" next winter.

"This is why governments need to be taking immediate action to speed up improvements in energy efficiency and accelerate the deployment of renewables and heat pumps - and other steps to structurally reduce gas demand," he said.

AFP



India allows sugar exports of up to 6mn tonnes for 2022-23

New Delhi, India – Indian government on Sunday allowed exports of up to 6mn tonnes of sugar on quota basis during the sugar season 2022-23.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution on Sunday announced the measure to balance the price stability of sugar in the country and the financial positions of sugar mills.

The government has prioritised availability of about 27.5mn tonnes sugar for domestic consumption, about 5mn tonnes for diversion to ethanol production and to have a closing balance of 6mn tonnes as on September 2023.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade already notified to extend the inclusion of sugar exports under 'Restricted' category up to October 31, 2023.

Balance quantity of sugar produced by sugar mills in the country would be allowed for exports.

Since at the beginning of sugar season 2022-23, initial estimates of sugarcane production

are available, it has been decided to allow the export of 6mn sugar, according to the official statement.

The sugarcane production in India will be reviewed periodically and based on the latest available estimates, quantity of sugar exports to be allowed could be reconsidered, the government said.

In the sugar export policy for sugar season 2022-23, the government has announced sugar mill-wise export quota for all sugar mills in the country with an objective system based on average production of sugar mills in last three years and average sugar production of the country in last three years.

During sugar season 2021-22, India exported 11mn tonnes sugar and became the second largest exporter of sugar in the world. Timely payment and low carrying cost of stocks for sugar mills also resulted in early clearance of cane arrears of farmers, the statement added.

ANI

Turkish inflation jumps to over 85% in October

Istanbul, Turkey – Turkey's annual inflation rate accelerated to 85.51 per cent in October, its highest level since 1997, official data showed, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has defended unorthodox policies to combat a cost-of-living crisis.

Central banks worldwide are raising borrowing costs in efforts to tame soaring consumer prices, but Turkey has bucked the global trend, with Erdogan calling higher interest rates his "biggest enemy".

Last month, Turkey's central bank cut its policy rate for a third consecutive time, bringing it down to 10.5 per cent from 12 per cent.

With an election looming next year, Erdogan argues that high interest rates are the cause of inflation, not the opposite, in defiance of orthodox economic theories.

Consumer prices reached 83.45 per cent in September.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

On Wednesday, Erdogan praised the state of economy, in an address to his ruling AKP lawmakers in the parliament.

"Thank God, the wheels of the economy are turning," he said.

"Our economic model, which we have summarised as growth through investment, employment, production, export and current account surplus, is bearing fruit."

Many Turks question the credibility of the official government data.

According to a respected monthly study released by independent economists from Turkey's ENAG research institute, the annual rate of consumer price increases reached 185.34 per cent in October.

AFP

ECB chief says 'mild recession' not enough to fight eurozone inflation

Frankfurt, Germany - European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde said that a "mild" eurozone recession was looming but would not be enough to bring down record-high inflation.

Inflation in the 19-nation currency club surged to 10.7 per cent in October, more than five times the ECB's two-per cent target, as Russia's war in Ukraine drives energy prices higher.

Speaking at a banking conference in Riga, Lagarde said "a mild recession" was possible in late 2022 and in early 2023, as soaring consumer prices and the continent's energy crisis dampen economic activity.

"But we do not believe that that recession will be sufficient to tame inflation," she warned, indicating that more interest rate hikes were coming.

The ECB last week unveiled another jumbo interest rate hike of 75 basis points, the second



ECB president Christine Lagarde

such move since September and the third rate increase since July, after a decade of historically low borrowing costs for the euro region.

Lagarde has warned that higher borrowing costs could deepen the pain of an economic downturn, but the ECB - like

other central banks - is for now prioritising the fight against inflation.

In the United States, the Federal Reserve on Wednesday lifted its rates to their highest level in 15 years and signalled that further increases would follow.

"We have to be mindful of each other and we have to be attentive to potential spillovers and spill backs, as I think the Fed is also mindful of," Lagarde said.

ECB board member Fabio Panetta cautioned that the Frankfurt institution had to pay "close attention" to the impact of more expensive borrowing costs on households and consumers as the economic outlook darkens globally.

"A bigger-than-expected rate increase may heighten volatility and have a stronger impact in the current highly leveraged environment after a decade of very low rates and ample liquidity," he said at a finance conference in Frankfurt.

"When calibrating our stance, we need to pay close attention to ensuring that we do not amplify the risk of a protracted recession or trigger market dislocation," Panetta added.

AFP

US tech titans buffeted by economic headwinds and TikTok

San Francisco, US – US tech titans looking to the future are seeing growth take a beating in the face of foreign competition and a tough economy.

Apple's and Amazon's quarterly earnings have disappointed investors hoping for rays of sunshine on a dark economic landscape.

Meanwhile, shares of Meta and Google-parent Alphabet have tanked recently after disappointing financial results last week.

"The last week will go down in the history books of earnings season as one of Big Tech's worst and ultimately could be a 'fork in the road moment' for the stalwarts looking ahead," Wedbush analyst Dan Ives said in a note to investors.

Management teams will need to "quickly adjust to a much different background" or risk losing

their luster for investors who have bet on them for the past decade, he said.

Amazon predicted that sales could grow as little as 2 per cent during the year-end holiday shopping season.

And while sales grew in the recently-ended quarter, bringing the company back to profit after two consecutive quarters of losses, they were still lower than a year ago as online shoppers sought bargain prices, the company reported.

"The realities of a much tougher market where demand is more muted and the costs of doing business remain elevated is taking its toll on the business," said GlobalData managing director Neil Saunders.

Apple reported solid profits on rising revenues, but the tech giant's iPhone sales missed estimates while it saw slowing



growth in services revenues.

In the case of Facebook-parent Meta, the decline comes as chief Mark Zuckerberg rolls the dice on building up the metaverse long-term.

"Facebook shifted to Meta, so they took their eye off the ball," tech analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group said.

"In a way they shot themselves in the foot, and allowed

TikTok to advance."

Meta, already facing stagnating user numbers and cuts in advertising budgets, said its profit had more than halved in the third quarter from a year earlier,

and that it plans "significant changes" to bolster efficiency.

Zuckerberg, while admitting the company is navigating "some challenging dynamics," said on an earnings call that "our product trends look better from what I see then some of the commentary I've seen suggests."

He said priorities will include artificial intelligence that powers recommendations at offerings such as its short-form video feature Reels, launched in response to TikTok, which is owned by China-based ByteDance.

TikTok is eating into ad revenue at Meta and Google, but the US tech giants are still way ahead in that market - for now, according to analysts.

Party over?

Alphabet last week reported quarterly earnings that fell short

of market expectations as belts tightened in the digital ad market that drives its revenue.

The company said ad revenue that grew just 6 per cent when compared with the same period of last year.

Aside from one period at the start of the Covid pandemic, that would mark the weakest revenue growth at Alphabet for any quarter since 2014. The earnings report showed that ad revenue at YouTube was slightly lower than it was in the same quarter a year earlier, despite a hot trend of people watching video on-demand and snippets on TikTok.

Alphabet and Google chief Sundar Pichai said on an earnings call that he sees this as a moment when "you take the time to optimize the company to make sure we are set up for the next decade of growth ahead."

AFP

Zubair Corp appoints Sharifa to head Human Capital Centre



The Zubair Corporation has announced the appointment of Sharifa al Balushi as the group head of its Human Capital Centre of Excellence. This appointment is in line with The Zubair Corporation's (TZC) vision and strategy to empower promising Omani talent and high potential employees to take over leadership, supervisory, and specialised positions in line with their potentials and expertise in various fields, a press release said.

Supported by the Taskforce for Empowering High-potential Omani Talents that was launched in 2021, this appointment continues the commitment of TZC and its various business sectors to provide talented employees with career advancement opportunities across the Group. Sharifa, the first Omani woman to lead the Human Capital (HC) Department at The Zubair Corporation, will be responsible for managing all human capital activities, workforce planning, talent management, performance management and all other HC related projects and initiatives.

NBO participates in OCGS annual members' meeting

National Bank of Oman (NBO) recently participated in the Oman Center for Governance and Sustainability's (OCGS) annual members' gathering.



The event was attended by Sayyid Hamid Sultan al Busaidi, executive director of OCGS, Amal Suhail Bahwan, chairperson of NBO, and a number of key personalities and experts. Panelists discussed three main topics related to Omani women representation on corporate boards, sustainability, and evaluation of boardrooms and their efficiency, a press release said.

Amal participated in the first session titled 'Representation of Omani Women as Board of Director in Companies', which was moderated by Jawaher al Tamami, NBO Board Secretary. The session highlighted the impact of female board members on the decision-making and performance of companies among other topics. Amal shed light on NBO women's role in contributing to the nation and the opportunities the bank provides to empower women.

Al Ahlia awarded 'Most Innovative Insurer - Oman'



Al Ahlia Insurance, one of Oman's leading insurance companies, has added another prestigious award to its list of growing accolades by winning 'Most Innovative Insurer - Oman' at this year's International Business Magazine (IntIBM) Annual Awards, held in Dubai.

The IntIBM awards are considered a hallmark of excellence and outstanding achievements from across industries internationally. The 'Most Innovative Insurer' award not only commemorates best-in-class business achievements and technology disruptions but also recognises the brand's vision for the insurance industry, the focus on customer-centricity throughout the organisation, and the leadership influence it has for others to follow suit, a press release said.

KR Eshraqa supports 'Ana Aqdar' programme



In an effort to create a better future for Omani women from different walks of life and to make them financially independent and self-reliant, Khimji Ramdas's (KR) Eshraqa recently conducted 'Ana Aqdar' - a tailoring and fashion design training programme, in partnership with the Omani Women Association, Muscat.

This support is part of Eshraqa's 'Qudurat initiative', which focuses on women's empowerment and employability, a press release said.

The two-month training programme, which began in September, mentored ten women on various tailoring techniques using the sewing machines and tailoring tools provided by Eshraqa. The initiative culminated with a fashion show held at the Omani Women's Association in Muscat, under the patronage of H H Sayyida Hujjah bint Jaifar al Said, chairperson of the Association for the Welfare of Handicapped Children. The fashion

Eshraqa appreciates the value women bring to society as leaders, innovators, and accelerators of change. Through our support of programmes like the 'Ana Aqdar' programme, we remain committed to Oman's Vision 2040 by creating an environment of equality and inclusivity

Nailesh Khimji



show showcased costumes that were designed and sewn by the participants themselves. Some of the best participants received top honours and were felicitated by the chief guest at the event.

Highlighting Eshraqa's role in women empowerment initiatives across the sultanate, Nailesh Khimji, director, Khimji Ramdas Group, said,

"Eshraqa appreciates the value women bring to society as leaders, innovators, and accelerators of change. Through our support of programmes like the 'Ana Aqdar' programme, we remain committed to Oman's Vision 2040 by creating an environment of equality and inclusivity. We will continue to encourage Omani women from different walks of life to build a better tomorrow

for themselves and their families, and the society at large."

H H Sayyida Alia bint Thuwaini al Said, chairperson of the Omani Women's Association, said, "KR Eshraqa's support is creating new livelihood opportunities for the Omani women who have participated in the 'Ana Aqdar' programme. Skill workshops such as these go a long way in supporting women to become powerful agents of change."

KR's Eshraqa has been established on the premise that the private sector has a responsibility towards the development of local communities and empowering talented individuals in the sultanate.

By working towards nation-building at the grassroots, Eshraqa aspires to contribute meaningfully to socio-economic progress by building infrastructure and talent that will lead to the enhancement of knowledge, skills, and capabilities in society.

Ahlibank participates in OCA Walkathon



In line with its Corporate Social Responsibility, and as part of its 'Ahli cares' initiative, Ahlibank joined the Oman Cancer Association in its 18th annual Walkathon to raise awareness on Cancer prevention in general and Breast Cancer in particular under the slogan (Towards life), aiming to support cancer patients, survivors and their families.

Since its inception in 2013, the

walkathon has garnered the support of more than 8000 participants who walk together to raise funds and awareness on cancer prevention in support of the association, encouraging volunteerism and community engagement, giving a sense of togetherness to those affected by cancer; the event saw participation from companies from various sectors, schools, universities, families, social clubs, and

many other individual and organisational volunteers, a press release said.

Jumana Afrah al Hashmi, Ahlibank's deputy head of Marketing and Corporate Communications, said, "We are proud of the Ahlibank team members who joined this noble cause and also encouraged each other to participate in the walkathon, seeing the community come together and garner support in an

uplifting and beneficial way is inspiring.

"Annually, Ahlibank employees participate in various initiatives to showcase our commitment to the community in which we operate. Such support for community impact programmes falls under the 'Ahli cares' initiative, and is in line with our values. We are honoured to be able to be a part of the walkathon."



ISG holds 32nd Founder's Day celebrations on Oct 20

Indian School Al Ghubra held its 32nd Founder's Day on October 20 in the school auditorium.

The Chief Guest of the event was H E Dr Saeed Bin Hamad al Rubaie, vice chancellor, University of Technology and Applied Sciences - Muscat. The dignitaries who graced the occasion were Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman Board of Directors Indian Schools in Oman, officials from the Ministry of Education,

officials from the Embassy of India, Ahmed Rayees, president of the School Management Committee, and others.

Papri Ghosh, principal, welcomed the gathering and thanked the officials of the Ministry of Education and the officials of the Indian Embassy for their constant support. She expressed her gratitude to the chairman and other members of the Board of Directors Indian

Schools in Oman and her fellow Principals for their spirit of collaboration throughout the pandemic. She also thanked the parents for their steadfast support and cooperation.

P Mohammed Ali, founder, said it was always a great pleasure to visit the school and hear of the many achievements of the students and the alumni, and hoped that the school will continue to be the best CBSE school.

Kelon FIFA campaign receives positive response



Khimji Ramdas - Air Conditioning and Appliances Division (KR AC & Appliances), part of the Khimji Ramdas Group, a leading business conglomerate in Oman, stirred up the excitement for football fans earlier this month by launching an exciting campaign that offers Kelon customers an opportunity to win match tickets to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

In line with the same, the company concluded the third round of match ticket winners on November 3, a press release said.

Khimji Ramdas Conditioning and Appliances team visited Izki Nights Trading, Izki, Juma Ali Hamad Electronics, Nizwa, and Dawood Al Ajmi trading, Sohar, and handed over the tickets to the delighted winners in presence of the dealers.

The campaign, which began last month, will run until November 16 when the last draw will take place. Those who wish to take part in the draw and win match tickets to enjoy the thrilling FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 have one more chance to do so.

BankDhofar announces winners of FIFA package



BankDhofar has announced the winners of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 package, courtesy of Visa.

The Bank had announced the offer earlier where customers who spent a minimum of RO50 got the chance to be one of the two winners of a covered expenses trip to attend the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa, a press release said.

Bilal Faiz al Raisi, AGM- Cards and Bancassurance at BankDhofar, said, "The offer was well received with our Visa credit card holders. At BankDhofar, we always keep up with various events and customise our products and services to our customers. We were glad to work with Visa to introduce this special offer for our customers." The winners are Al Moatasim Khalfan al Zakwani, from Izki branch, and S A S from Muscat Grand Mall branch. The package includes, two guests per package, tickets for two to FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 with pre-match hospitality, 2-night stay at a 5-star hotel in Doha - all courtesy of Visa.

'The Sidemen' partners with IO Kitchens Oman

One of the most globally renowned and popular fried-chicken brands globally, 'Sides', will be launching in Oman this November in an exclusive partnership with the first and leading Omani Cloud Kitchen- IO Kitchens.

There are over 100 Sides kitchens operating globally, but this will be the brand's second physical unit, alongside BOXPARK Wembley, London, United Kingdom, a press release said.

Sides was developed by legendary YouTube collective The Sidemen, arguably the most popular and engaged content creators in Europe with over 20 million followers. Since launching in 2021, Sides have received over a quarter of a million orders across the UK.

Sides will be available for dine-in at the IO Kitchen's premises in Al Mouj Street, and for delivery via local food delivery app Talabat to all other areas in Muscat, facilitated by IO Kitchens. Customers can also order online and pick up their orders directly from IO Kitchens in Al Ghubra, Al Mouj Street, and soon from Al Qurum.



Oman Sailing Festival 2022 heads to Salalah

The Oman Sailing Festival gets underway in Salalah this week with professional instructors from Oman Sail offering free sessions to free Try Sailing, Try Windsurfing and Try Kitesurfing.

Kicking off on November 8 at the Beach Front, Dahariz Beach, the festival runs until November 12 with a showcase of local SMEs and local craftspeople also on offer every day, a press release said.

Musab al Hadi, Oman Sailing Festival Project Manager, said, "The ancient trading port city of Salalah has a long history on the water. As one of the most important ancient cities in the region, its prosperity was dependant on the sailing skills of generations of mariners and traders. The Oman Sailing Festival aims to reintroduce competitive sailing to this area and inspire a new generation of sailor to head out onto the water and learn the basics. We have free Try Sailing, Try Windsurfing and Try Kitesurfing sessions on offer during the festival and look forward to welcoming the community to discover a new hobby.

"We are also carrying an important



We are also carrying an important environmental message with us at every stop during the Oman Sailing Festival. Each of us has a responsibility to care for the local environment and preserve the beaches and seas so that they can be enjoyed for years to come

environmental message with us at every stop during the Oman Sailing Festival. Each of us has a responsibility to care for the local environment and preserve the beaches and seas so that they can be enjoyed for years to come and have a positive impact on the native plant and marine life our beautiful country is blessed with," he added.

The Oman Sailing Festival returns on November 24-26 at the Barcelo Musanah Resort offering Try Sailing, Try Windsurfing, Try Kitesurfing, a showcase of local SMEs and a beach clean-up. The event coincides with the RS Venture Connect World Championships, Oman's first exclusively-para sailing event, and will also feature the chance to learn how to sail using the versatile RS Venture boat designed for people with disabilities.

The festival will be supported by the office of the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, Beach Front, Oman Air, Tanuf, Environment society of Oman, and National University of Science and Technology.

OBA bowling tournament concludes

The Oman Banks Association, in coordination with the Central Bank of Oman, organised its four-day tournament this year at the Al Seeb Bowling Centre, with the participation of 17 banks operating in the sultanate, including the Central Bank of Oman.

The tournament started on October 17, and concluded on October 26, with competitions in various categories - singles, doubles, triples, and team rounds, a press release said.

A grand ceremony marked the closing of the event with various activities, held under the patronage of H E Tahir Salim al Amri, executive president at Central Bank of Oman, and in the presence of some Bank CEOs. The winners across all categories were honoured with trophies and medals - Central Bank of Oman (first place), Bank Muscat (second place), Ahli Bank (third place). Prizes were distributed to all players participating in the tournament, along with certificates of appreciation to the referees and the venue.



W Muscat announces new promotions

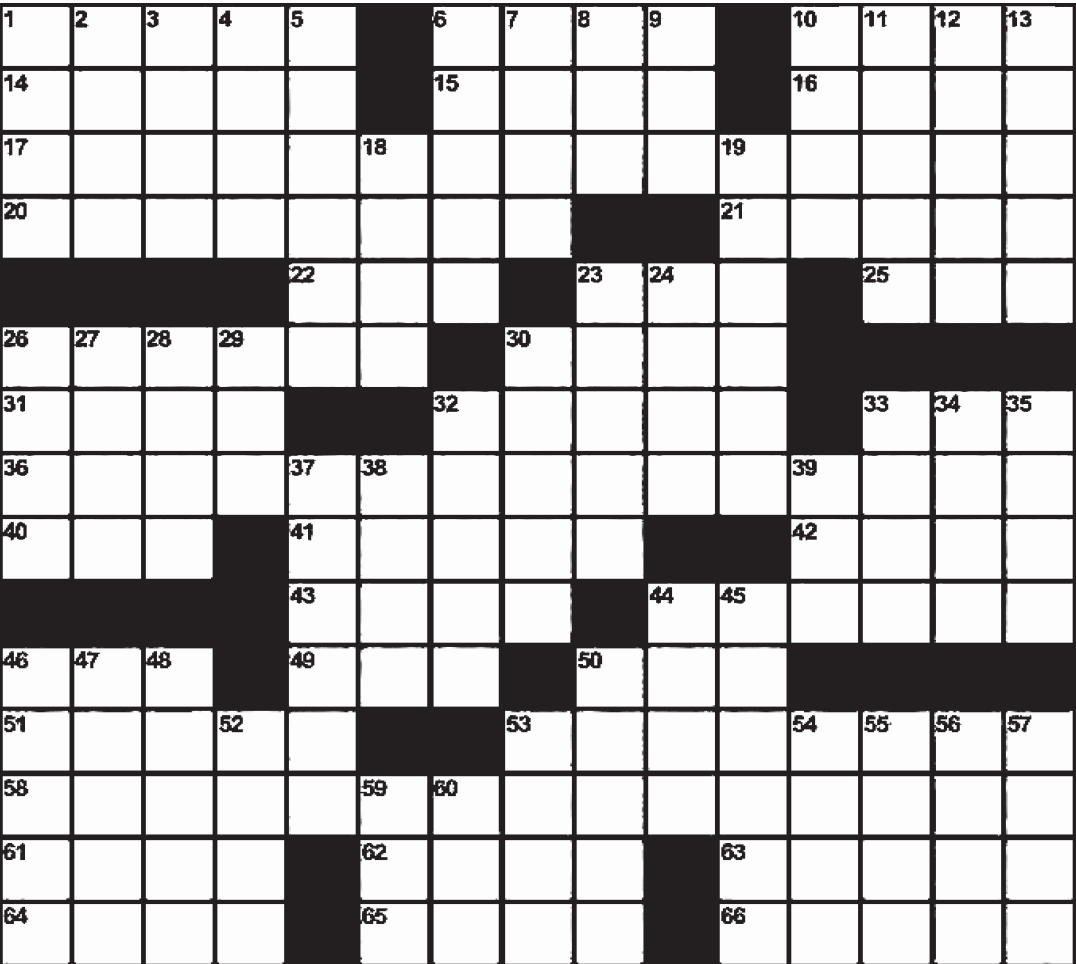
W Muscat is inviting its guests to elevate their stay in Oman's capital with an enticing new promotion that includes great rates on Wonderful Rooms and a wealth of added extras.

The Wonderful Room with MIXBAR features elements of Oman's culture. As inspiring as the name suggests, Wonderful Room features subtle Arabic features, presented in true W style. The corner Majlis seating showcases Zanzibar-inspired print, reminiscent of the Omani Kumma, set against an inviting coffee table in celebration of Qahwa, a press release said.

In keeping with the theme of "travel", the room boasts a saddle-like leather chair, a bold mustard stool, and a faux fur feature wall. Stacked luggage trunks comprise the Mixbar as well as a trunk closet lined with exotic silks, linking back to the narrative of the Nomad. Interchangeable pieces in the majlis area indicate Omani hospitality, with some rooms offering a camping-style mat, as a part of the magnetic journey.

The promotion is valid for a maximum of two people and children under six years, while children aged six to 12 receive 50% off on breakfast. It is valid until December 23.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Footnote abbr.
- 6) Meet activity
- 10) Type of solo performance
- 14) Go no further
- 15) Button on a deli scale
- 16) Archaeology projects
- 17) You can do this when you're 13
- 20) Cheap way to travel
- 21) Throw forcefully
- 22) Play for a sap
- 23) Mangy mutt
- 25)" Miz"
- 26) Tight spot
- 30) "The Elder" of Rome
- 31) Screwdriver or gimlet
- 32) Kitchen wrap brand
- 33) Lobbying org.
- 36) You can do this when you're 17
- 40) Small, in Dundee
- 41) Autobahn autos
- 42) Nash's "one-1" fellow
- 43) Fingerboard ridge
- 44) Colorer's need
- 46) Riled, with "up"
- 49) "Go on ... "
- 50)_ Carangi (Jolie title

role)

- 51) Affair of the heart
- 53) Disney movie with dancing hippos
- 58) You can do this when you're 18
- 61) Buckwheat's affirmative
- 62) Stadium shape
- 63) Formal decree
- 64) Cartoon collectibles
- 65) Circus safety gear
- 66) Indian metropolis

DOWN

- 1) Phil who sang "Draft Dodger Rag"
- 2) Bog growth
- 3) Spelunker's hangout
- 4) Words of understanding
- 5) Rip to shreds
- 6) Old West transport
- 7) Suffix with "soft" or "hard"
- 8) Vaccine spot
- 9) Louvre Pyramid architect
- 10) Wood-dressing tool
- 11) Match in ability
- 12) Brushoff to a solicitor

- 13) Volcanic spew
- 18) High-pH substance
- 19) Restroom seat, slangily
- 23) Golfers' transports
- 24) Zion National Park state
- 26) Slow-cooked fare
- 27) Gelato holder
- 28) Casting director's offer
- 29) "Aladdin" prince
- 30) "Shut up!"
- 32) Aligned oneself (with)
- 33) Make an appeal
- 34) Shells, but not ziti
- 35) Printer's blue hue
- 37) Serengeti outing
- 38) Go sour
- 39) Cotton State (Abbr.)
- 44) Pres.'s military title
- 45) Sang to the cops
- 46) Mass destruction
- 47) Overplay one's part
- 48) Wreck completely
- 50) Iona College athletes
- 52) 180-degree turns, slangily
- 53) Tuned too low

- 54) Errand runner
- 55) Flower pot filler
- 56) Ruler marking

- 57) Sparkling wine town
- 59) _ sequitur
- 60) Genesis outcast

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Follow any urge you have to seek alone time right now. Even if everyone else is in the mood to paint the town red or plan an elaborate outing, you don't necessarily need to join in. Listen to what your heart is telling you to do, then do it. Yes, it sounds too simple to work, but it isn't. Try it out early today when a friendly yet unwanted invitation arrives. Politely say no, and remind yourself that you and only you are in charge of your time.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Sometimes the best way to understand something is to teach it. That may sound counterintuitive, but if you try to explain something confusing to someone else today, the subject could suddenly make more sense to you as well. Saying it out loud gives you a new perspective. There are many layers to what you're dealing with right now, and you're only through the very beginning stages. Each time you have a new experience, you're peeling away another layer and gaining greater understanding.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Today, you're given a rare opportunity to make a difference in someone else's life just by being yourself. Are you ready to make such an impact? If you are, then open your heart to as many people as you can. Go beyond making simple small talk. Skip chatting about the weather and touch on more substantial topics. If you can make an emotional connection, you can encourage a positive change for someone you might never even meet again.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You'll be the most graceful juggler on earth today, but if the circus life isn't something you're aiming for, you'll have to find some other use for this remarkable skill. After all, you don't want it to go to waste, right? If you search among your friends, you'll quickly find chaos in need of being tamed, and you're the one to do it! Step right up and make a few suggestions. Your organization, wisdom, and quick thinking will save the day.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Kudos! You've been on quite an impressive roll lately, but right now you should turn off your engine and coast for a while. Don't push yourself to start anything new, and give yourself a lot of time to do simple tasks. Be careful with every movement today, and consider the effects of your behavior. This may require being extra considerate of strangers, so hold open a few doors, turn off your phone, and don't be impatient in the checkout line.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Every action has a consequence, and today's happenings remind you of that fact in several ways. Sometimes you're the one acting, while other times you're the one suffering the consequences. Today, generosity can be a mixed blessing. Your act of giving could create a consequence of too much unwanted attention. There are people who are waiting for your approval, and they could interpret things the wrong way. Just be mindful that everything you do has a reaction.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Cherish your objectivity today. It will help you sort through the many (suddenly overwhelming) choices that are put in front of you. From something as small as deciding what type of coffee drink you want in the morning to something as major as finalizing a wedding date, making choices isn't so easy right now. Let your emotions take a back seat while your brain looks at things more analytically. Turn a deaf ear to the persuasions of friends and family.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your life is more intertwined with the lives of other people than you probably realize right now. Investigate a few of your relationships today. If you poke hard enough, you might discover some powerful connections. These relationships might not necessarily assist you in a professional context, but they could help you push your personal growth in a new direction that you've been working toward for quite a while. Strike up a few random conversations.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

The only thing you should focus on today is making new plans. Cast your mind forward five years and imagine where you want to be and who you want to be with. If you can solidify your goals, you'll have a better chance of reaching them. Finalize any travel plans today if you can. Seating charts, itineraries, passports, and a possible upgrade are all things you should be thinking about. You don't want to get caught unprepared, do you?



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Like a karmic Santa Claus, you're handing out gifts of goodwill to everyone you know, love, and work with today. Don't bother to check your "naughty or nice" list. Those things don't really matter. Your energy is high and you're feeling selfless. Could it be that you finally realize how very lucky you are? As soon as you totally understand the possibilities of your situation, your movement regarding the issue could stall, so be patient.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Today, you finally find that point of least resistance you've been searching for so tirelessly. The realization of one simple fact readjusts your entire perspective, just like when you wash your windshield after driving through a buggy spot on the road. Things are suddenly clearer in your relationships, and an argument from yesterday seems like a silly misunderstanding today. Put your best foot forward and extend the olive branch.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You may have a hard time focusing on what's on your plate right now. The tantalizing events coming down the road are a big distraction. It's a wonderful thing to have something to look forward to, so don't begrudge yourself that joy. However, the tasks of today are important too, so try to focus on them. A wise strategy might be to tackle your to-do list as early in the day as possible. That way you can spend the rest of the day getting excited about the future.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01.What measurement has been used for the magnitude of earthquakes?

- A. Torino Scale
- B. Beaufort scale
- C. Richter scale
- D. TORRO scale

02. The Hindu temple complex of Angkor Wat, built for the king Suryavarman II in the early 12th century as his state temple and capital city, is in which country?

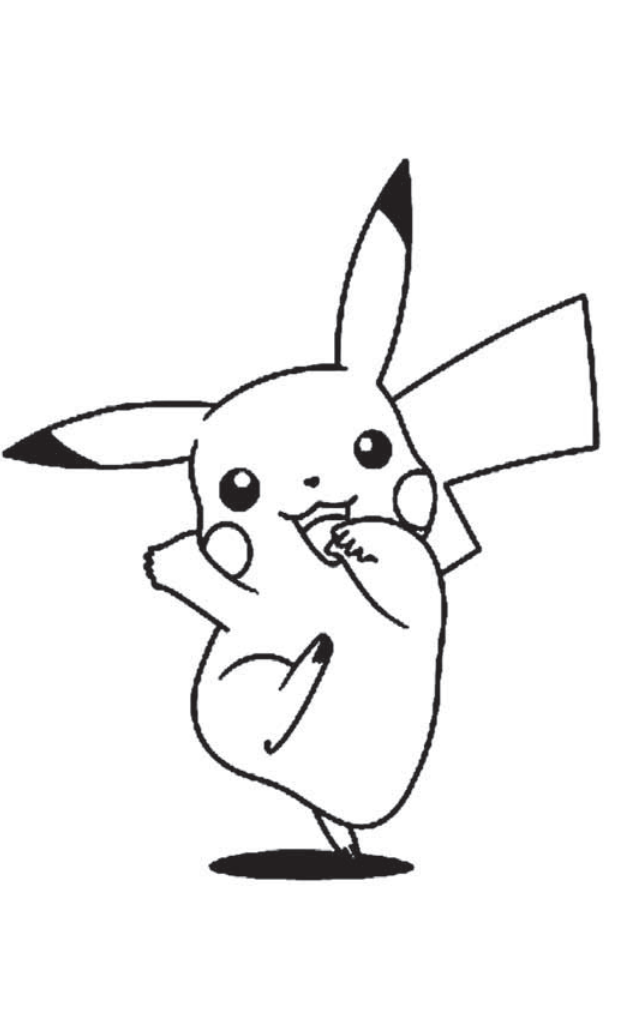
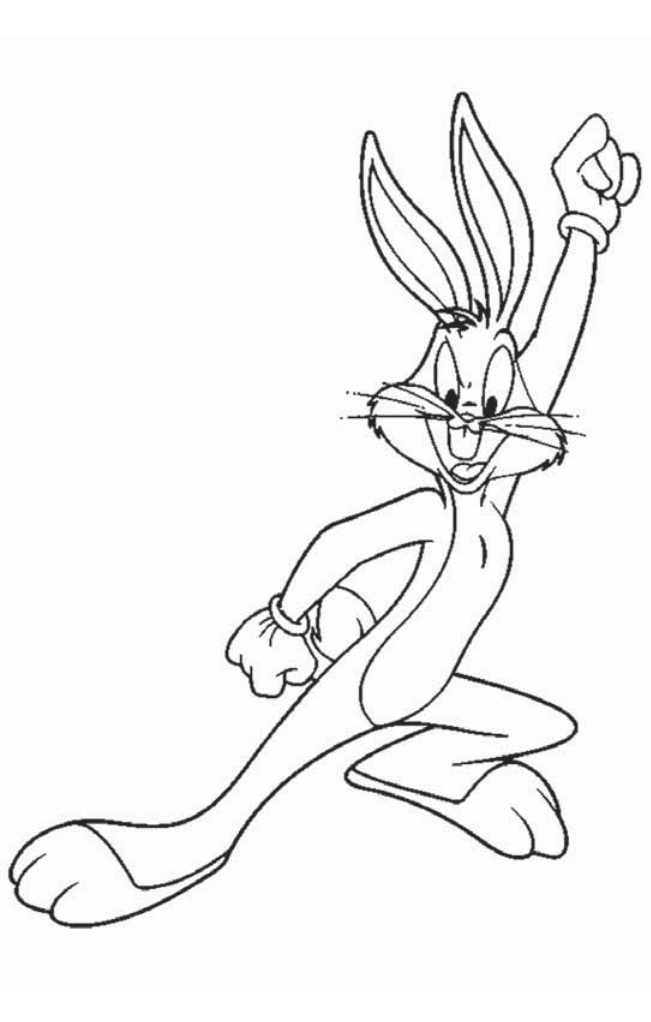
- A. Thailand
- B. Myanmar
- C. Cambodia
- D. Sri Lanka

03. What was the title applied by the Ottoman Empire and, later, Turkey, to their viceroy of Egypt?

- A. Aga
- B. Rajah
- C. Panjandrum
- D. Khedive

Answers: 1.C 2.C 3.D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

B	U	H	F
F	A	A	G
E	R	A	E
T	S	E	R

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long. **Solution** 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Biden, Obama warn of democracy threat in final midterm elections countdown

Philadelphia, US - President Joe Biden, Democratic superstar Barack Obama and Republican firebrand Donald Trump all converged on Saturday on Pennsylvania to push their parties to the finishing line in a race Biden said marks a 'defining' moment for US democracy.

The battle of the serving and two former presidents marked the start of a final crescendo before Tuesday when Americans will decide who controls Congress during the last two years of Biden's first term.

Polls put Republicans well ahead in the fight for the House of Representatives and also show them gaining momentum in the Senate races as voters, riled up by culture wars around gay rights and abortion, seek to take out frustration over four-decades-high inflation and rising illegal immigration. With Pennsylvania one of the handful of swing states that will decide the overall balance of power, both sides brought out their big guns - and the contrasts were dramatic.

Biden and Obama rallied in Philadelphia alongside Senate hopeful John Fetterman and governor candidate Josh Shapiro.

Trump - who was defeated by



Attendees gather for a 'Save America' rally ahead of the midterm elections at Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, on Saturday (AFP)

Biden in 2020 but has spent the interval promoting conspiracy theories and plotting a possible White House comeback - flew to Latrobe to boost Fetterman's opponent, TV celebrity doctor Mehmet Oz, and Shapiro's far-right opponent Doug Mastriano. Speaking to thousands in a Philadelphia arena, Biden and the Democratic candidates labeled the Republicans as the party of

the wealthy and emphasised their support for trade unions, social security and abortion access. Voters face 'a choice between two vastly different visions of America,' Biden said. But citing Trump Republicans' growing support for conspiracy theories, Biden said an even bigger agenda is at stake. "Democracy is literally on the ballot. This is a defining moment

for the nation and we all, we all must speak with one voice," Biden said. In a rambling speech, Trump claimed the country is run by 'communists' and repeatedly said that his attempts to overturn the 2020 election were justified, before urging Republicans to deliver 'a humiliating rebuke'. "If you want to stop the destruction of our country and save the 'American Dream', then this

Tuesday you must vote Republican in a giant red wave," he said.

Democratic star

Obama, who had also addressed an earlier rally in Pittsburgh, got the loudest cheers of the night in Philadelphia, repeatedly urging supporters to make sure they vote. "A lot of folks don't pay a ton of attention to politics the way they do in a presidential

year. Maybe they don't think Congress matters as much. Maybe they don't think their vote will matter," he said.

But 'fundamental rights..., reason and decency are on the ballot', he said, attacking Republicans as increasingly averse to everything from science to respect for rules.

Democracy is literally on the ballot. This is a defining moment for the nation and we all must speak with one voice

JOE BIDEN

"Democracy itself is on the ballot. The stakes are high," Obama said in an echo of Biden's warning, his voice going hoarse.

Still the party's most bankable star six years after leaving the White House, Obama hopes his support will give Fetterman the crucial extra shove.

Although Fetterman faces the added challenge of recovering from a serious stroke, he and Oz

are in a dead heat.

Trump's comeback bid

In Latrobe, Trump was tapping into support from a working class region that delivered him big margins in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections.

Success for candidates he supports on Tuesday would help Trump launch his own comeback campaign, despite facing serious legal threats over attempts to overturn his 2020 defeat and the hoarding of top secret documents from the White House at his Florida golf resort.

In a speech laden with immigrant baiting, lies about supposed election fraud, and lurid claims that he and his supporters are victims of a 'police state,' Trump also continued to drop hints that he will soon declare a new presidential run.

In a 'very, very, very short period' his fans will be 'so happy', he said. One supporter in Latrobe, Shawn Ecker, 44, voiced excitement about a possible Trump candidacy for 2024 'because we need our country back. We really do. And it's not going to happen if someone doesn't stand up like he is'. AFP

Thousands march in Peru calling for President Castillo's removal

Lima, Peru - Thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of Lima on Saturday to call for the removal of President Pedro Castillo, the subject of an unprecedented six investigations for corruption.

Opponents of Castillo's government marched through the capital's centre until dozens of riot police used tear gas to prevent them from reaching Parliament and the government palace.

"I come to the march to get that corrupt man out. Castillo must leave, that's what this march is for, to get him out," protester Nancy Huaracaya told AFP.

"We are here representing millions of Peruvians. Peru can't take it anymore. We are on the edge of the precipice, economically everything has stagnated," Carola Suarez, holding a Peruvian flag, told AFP. Similar



People opposing the government of Peruvian President Pedro Castillo hold a demonstration to demand his resignation in Lima, on Saturday (AFP)

demonstrations called by political groups and civil associations took place in other cities around the country, two weeks before the arrival of a delegation from the Organization of American States to 'analyze' the political

crisis. At the same time, a mobilisation of collectives and unions marched in support of the president in Lima's San Martin square. Castillo, a former rural school teacher, has been under nonstop fire since unexpectedly taking

power from Peru's traditional political elite in elections last year. He has survived two impeachment attempts since taking office in July 2021 and is the target of six criminal investigations for alleged graft and plagiarising his university thesis.

In addition to these, Peru's attorney general last month filed a constitutional complaint accusing Castillo of heading a criminal organisation involving his family and allies. Castillo, serving a five-year term that ends in 2026, cannot be criminally tried while in office. "They will have me until the last day of my term because my people have decided so," Castillo said on Saturday morning at the government palace.

He denies that his family has committed crimes and says he is the victim of a campaign to remove him from power.

AFP

Japan to boost military capacity

Sagami Bay, Japan - Prime Minister Fumio Kishida pledged on Sunday to beef up Japan's naval and military capacity, warning that nations must prepare to face aggressors.

Kishida also condemned Russia's war in Ukraine and denounced North Korea's recent blitz of missile tests, one of which flew over Japan for the first time since 2017 and prompted a rare evacuation warning.

"We must prepare ourselves for an era when actors emerge to disobey rules and use force or threats to destroy the peace and safety of other nations," Kishida said as he addressed Japan's international fleet review.

The leader's remarks come as Tokyo is drafting security plans that may call for doubling the nation's defence spending within five years. That would represent a sea change in Japan, where the pacifist constitution limits its



Japan's PM Fumio Kishida receives an honorary salute aboard the Japanese helicopter carrier JS Izumo, in Sagami Bay on Sunday (AFP)

military capacity.

"We will accelerate realistic discussions on what's needed to defend our people by keeping all options on the table," Kishida said.

"The enhancement (of Japan's naval capacity) cannot wait, including construction of new naval ships, bolstering our missile defence capacity and improvement of the work condi-

tions and compensations for our (military) personnel," he said.

He did not name China but said that 'the national security environment surrounding our nation is growing more severe including the East China Sea and South China Sea', where Beijing has taken assertive positions in territorial disputes with countries including Japan.

AFP

Britain: Public holiday for King's coronation in May

London, UK - A public holiday will be held to mark the coronation of King Charles III in May, eight months after the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II, the British government said on Sunday.

The national holiday will be held on Monday May 8, two days after the ceremony at Westminster Abbey, Downing Street said in a statement.

The government said that as with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, the royal event would be an opportunity for 'families and communities across the country to come together and celebrate'. King Charles, 73, will be formally crowned at London's Westminster Abbey, following a long tradition dating back more than 900 years.

The monarch's wife, Queen Consort Camilla, 75, will also be crowned. Prime Minister

Rishi Sunak said it would be 'a unique moment for our country'. "In recognition of this historic occasion, I am pleased to announce an additional bank holiday for the whole United Kingdom next year," he said, according to the statement.

The coronation traditionally takes place some months after a new sovereign has ascended to the throne, following a period of national and royal mourning as well as intense preparation.

Buckingham Palace has said the coronation will reflect the monarchy's historic traditions and its modern role.

Charles immediately became king when Queen Elizabeth died on September 8. He also took over as head of state of 14 Commonwealth countries, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

AFP

COP27 summit opens, warns against 'backsliding'

Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt - The UN's COP27 climate summit kicked off on Sunday in Egypt with warnings against backsliding on efforts to cut emissions and calls for rich nations to compensate poor countries after a year of extreme weather disasters.

Just in the past few months, climate-induced catastrophes have killed thousands, displaced millions and cost billions in damages across the world.

Massive floods devastated swaths of Pakistan and Nigeria, droughts worsened in Africa and the western United States, cyclones whipped the Caribbean, and unprecedented heatwaves seared three continents.

The conference in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh comes in a fraught year marked by Russia's war on Ukraine, an energy crunch, soaring inflation and the lingering effects from the COVID pandemic.

But Simon Stiell, the UN's climate change executive secre-



Delegates arrive at the Sharm El Sheikh International Convention Centre, in Egypt's Red Sea resort, on Sunday, for the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) (AFP)

tary, said he would not be a 'custodian of backsliding' on the goal of slashing greenhouse emissions 45 per cent by 2030 to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius above late-19th-century levels.

"We will be holding people to account, be they presidents, prime ministers, CEOs," Stiell said as the 13-day summit opened.

"The heart of implementation is everybody everywhere in the

world every single day doing everything they possibly can to address the climate crisis," he said.

Current trends would see carbon pollution increase 10 per cent by the end of the decade

and Earth's surface heat up 2.8C, according to findings unveiled last week.

Promises made under the 2015 Paris Agreement would, if kept, only shave off a few tenths of a degree.

"Whilst I do understand that leaders around the world have faced competing priorities this year, we must be clear: as challenging as our current moment is, inaction is myopic and can only defer climate catastrophe," said Alok Sharma, British president of the previous COP26 as he handed over the chairmanship to Egypt.

"How many more wake-up calls does the world - and world leaders - actually need?" he said.

The COP27 summit will focus like never before on money - a major sticking point that has soured relations between countries that got rich burning fossil fuels and the poorer ones suffering from the worst consequences of climate change.

AFP

Pope prays for ‘suffering peoples’ on final day in Gulf

Manama, Bahrain - Pope Francis said on Sunday he was praying for ‘suffering peoples of the Middle East’, at the end of a Bahrain visit promoting dialogue with Islam but marked by accusations of rights abuses in the Gulf state.

In a final address before boarding a flight to Rome, he also urged congregants to pray ‘for Ukraine, which is suffering so much’, and for an end to the war.

He told Lebanese congregants he was praying for ‘your beloved country, so weary and sorely tried, as well as (for) all peoples suffering in the Middle East’.

The 85-year-old Argentinian used his four-day visit to Muslim-majority Bahrain to meet both senior Muslim officials and Catholic residents of the Gulf, home to a large migrant labourer community.

On Saturday he held an open-air mass for about 30,000 people, many of them moved to tears by the occasion.

Bahrain, which established formal ties with the Holy See in 2000, has around 80,000 Catholic residents. Most are workers from the Philippines and other Asian countries.

On Sunday, the final morning of the first ever papal visit to the island nation, Francis visited Sacred Heart church in Manama and urged Catholics to be ‘tire-



Pope Francis meeting with Bahrain’s King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa during a farewell ceremony at the Sakhrir airbase in Awali, south of the Bahraini capital Manama, on Sunday (AFP)

less promoters of dialogue’ with other faiths.

Call for unity

“Let us seek to be guardians and builders of unity... in the multi-religious and multi-cultural societies in which we find ourselves,” he said, at the Gulf’s oldest church which opened in 1939.

His words came a day after police briefly detained relatives of Bahraini prisoners on death row who had protested and

asked to meet with the pontiff, according to a London-based rights group - although authorities denied there had been ‘apprehensions’.

Rights groups have long cited discrimination, repression and harassment by Bahrain’s Sunni Muslim rulers against Shiite opposition figures and activists.

Human Rights Watch has accused Bahraini courts of issuing death sentences based on ‘manifestly unfair trials’.

In his first speech, on Thursday, the pontiff had spoken of the ‘right to life’ and the ‘need to guarantee that right always, including for those being punished, whose lives should not be taken’.

Finance Minister Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa told AFP that Bahrain had ‘robust and wide-ranging human rights and criminal justice protections’, and that the pope’s comment on the death penalty had not singled out Bahrain.

This was the pontiff’s second trip to the Gulf following a 2019 visit to the United Arab Emirates. He met in Bahrain with Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Cairo’s prestigious Al-Azhar mosque.

He also used the trip to warn that the world was on a ‘delicate precipice’, decrying the ‘opposing blocs’ of East and West - a

Let us seek to be guardians and builders of unity... in the multi-religious multi-cultural societies

POPE FRANCIS

veiled reference to the standoff over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

“A few potentates are caught up in a resolute struggle for partisan interests, reviving obsolete rhetoric, redesigning spheres of influence and opposing blocs,” he said. The pope, who uses a wheelchair and walking stick due to knee problems, was to leave for Rome at around 1pm (1000 GMT). He was expected to talk to journalists during the flight.

AFP



Personal objects are scattered on the floor of a shack, following reported regime shelling on the camp of Maram in Idlib province, on Sunday (AFP)

Nine killed in Syria regime rocket strike: War monitor

Kafr Jales, Syria - Syrian regime rocket fire killed nine people including three children at makeshift camps for displaced people in the country’s last major rebel-held bastion early on Sunday, a war monitor said.

The dead included three children among seven civilians, and two unidentified individuals, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which has a broad network of sources on the ground.

An earlier Observatory toll reported six civilians dead, including two youngsters.

It said another 75 people were wounded when more than 30 rockets exploded in several areas, including the camps, west of the city of Idlib in Syria’s north-west. Shelling continued later in the morning at several locations in the area, and rebels targeted government positions in retaliation for the strikes, according to the Observatory.

A police spokesperson told AFP that officers responded to Carter’s home at 10:58am and found a deceased body, but were

“We didn’t know where to go. It wasn’t one rocket or two, but a dozen. The shrapnel was flying from every direction. We didn’t know how to protect ourselves.”

The last pocket of armed opposition to President Bashar al-Assad’s regime includes large swathes of Idlib province and parts of the neighbouring Aleppo, Hama and Latakia provinces.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), headed by ex-members of Syria’s former Al-Qaeda franchise, is the dominant group in the area but other rebel groups are also active. According to the Observatory, the rocket fire came the day after five Syrian forces members died in shelling by a group affiliated with HTS.

The Idlib region is home to about three million people, around half of them displaced.

They are among the millions displaced internally and abroad by the war in Syria since 2011. Nearly half a million people have been killed.

With Russian and Iranian support, Damascus clawed back much of the ground lost in the early stages of Syria’s conflict, which erupted in 2011 when the government brutally repressed pro-democracy protests.

Despite periodic clashes, a ceasefire reached in 2020 by Moscow and Turkey - which supports anti-Assad rebels - has largely held in the northwest.

AFP

Ameican singer Aaron Carter dies aged 34

Los Angeles, US - Aaron Carter, the American singer who soared to fame at the turn of the millennium with his hit album *Aaron’s Party (Come Get It)*, died on Saturday, TMZ said. He was 34 years old.

The entertainment outlet reported that the brother of Backstreet Boy Nick Carter was found dead in his tub at his residence in Lancaster, California.

A police spokesperson told AFP that officers responded to Carter’s home at 10:58am and found a deceased body, but were



Singer Aaron Carter (AFP)

not yet able to publicly identify the person. Carter’s manager did not immediately respond to an AFP query.

The artist born December 7, 1987 in Tampa, Florida began performing at age seven, releasing his debut album at age nine in 1997.

His sophomore effort *Aaron’s Party (Come Get It)* sold three million copies stateside, propelling him to teen heartthrob status. He became a regular on preteen Nickelodeon and Disney shows, including an appearance

on the popular *Lizzie McGuire*.

Carter toured with the boy band The Backstreet Boys - his elder brother is a member - as well as Britney Spears, and saw his next album, *Oh Aaron*, go platinum.

As he aged the musician’s star began to fade but Carter remained in the public eye, appearing on a number of reality shows and off-Broadway productions, and releasing some new music online.

But his personal life struggles became tabloid fodder, including

apparent strife among the five Carter siblings and family fights over money.

In 2011 it was revealed that Carter had entered a treatment facility, with the star telling his fans that ‘the main thing in life is not to be afraid of being human’.

After leaving rehab the artist began doing one-off shows, and later a Canadian tour. He released another album in 2018.

He had filed a bankruptcy petition in 2013 over millions in debt, much of it tax-related.

AFP

Somalia: 5 killed in attack on military training camp

Mogadishu, Somalia - Five people were killed in a suicide bombing targeting a military training camp in Somalia, army officials told AFP on Sunday, in an attack claimed by Al-Shabaab militants one week after twin blasts left 116 dead.

Saturday’s attack on the camp in Somalia’s capital Mogadishu came as the government intensifies its fight against the Islamists who have led a 15-year insurgency in the troubled Horn of Africa nation.

“The suicide bomb explosion occurred at the entrance and five new recruits died in the blast, more than ten others were wounded,” military officer Mohamed Abdullahi told AFP.

Army official Adan Yare also said five people had died in the attack, which left several injured.

‘Among the casualties are civilians who stayed near’ the Xero Nacnac training camp for army recruits, he told AFP.

There was no official statement from the government about the attack, which was claimed by Al-Shabaab.

The Al-Qaeda-linked fighters have stepped up their at-

tacks in Somalia since President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud took office in May and vowed an ‘all-out war’ against the militants.

On Friday, the ministry of information said the army had killed more than 100 Al-Shabaab fighters in an operation in central Hirshabelle state.

Last weekend, the militants carried out twin car bombings targeting the education ministry in the deadliest assault on the country in five years.

The attack took place at the same junction where a truck packed with explosives blew up on October 14, 2017, killing 512 people and injuring more than 290, the deadliest attack in Somalia.

In August, the group launched a 30-hour gun and bomb attack on the popular Hayat hotel in Mogadishu, killing 21 people and wounding 117.

The insurgents, who have been seeking to overthrow the fragile foreign-backed government in Mogadishu, were driven out of the capital in 2011 by an African Union force.

AFP

Italy accepts vulnerable migrants, not others

Rome, Italy - Italy readied on Sunday to allow vulnerable migrants off a second charity rescue vessel in Sicily, but sources close to firebrand minister Matteo Salvini warned those not eligible to remain would be forced back into international waters.

Minors and the sick were let off the German-flagged *Humanity 1* in the early hours at the port of Catania, but 35 adult male migrants were refused permission to set foot on Italian soil, charity SOS Humanity said.

Fellow humanitarian vessel *Geo Barents*, run by Doctors Without Borders’ and sailing under a Norwegian flag, said it too has been summoned so authorities could ‘evaluate vulnerable cases’ among the 572 rescued people on board.

Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi earlier said those who do not ‘qualify’ would have to ‘leave territorial waters’, after refusing requests by four charity vessels for a safe port.

The *Geo Barents*, *Ocean Viking* and *Rise Above* are still carrying 900 migrants between them.

Italy’s new far-right government, which was sworn in last month, has vowed to crack down on boat migrants attempting the perilous crossing from North Africa to Europe.

Over 87,000 people have



The rescue ship *Humanity 1* of German organisation SOS Humanity, which carries 179 rescued migrants, is seen docked after it arrived at the port of Catania, Sicily overnight on Sunday (AFP)

landed in Italy so far this year, according to the interior ministry - though only 14 per cent of those were rescued at sea and brought to safety by several charity vessels.

Sources close to far-right transport minister Matteo Salvini, who controls the ports, said on Sunday that the *Geo Barents* was only being allowed in temporarily.

“Those who remain on the vessel will be provided with the assistance necessary to leave territorial waters,” the sources said.

‘Extremely depressed’

The 35 migrants refused permission to leave the *Humanity 1* were ‘extremely depressed’, SOS Humanity’s press officer Petra Krischok told AFP.

It was not clear whether the ship would be ordered to leave.

“For now, we stay here and wait,” she said.

The leader of the main opposition party, Democratic Party chief Enrico Letta, accused the government on Twitter of breaking international law.

Piantedosi should explain his

actions to parliament, the party said. Member of parliament Aboubakar Soumahoro, present as those chosen from the *Humanity 1* were disembarked, slammed the ‘selection of shipwrecked migrants’.

He said far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s government was treating ‘the worn-out bodies of shipwrecked people, already exhausted by cold, fatigue, trauma and torture... as objects’.

“If the remaining castaways are rejected... we will challenge this decision in all appropriate institutions,” he said on Twitter.

‘No responsibility’

Piantedosi said on Saturday those migrants not allowed to disembark would have to be ‘taken care of by the flag state’ - a reference to the national flags under which the vessels sail.

The *Humanity 1* and Mission Lifeline charity’s *Rise Above* sail

If the remaining castaways are rejected, we will challenge this in all appropriate institutions

ABOUBAKAR SOUMAHORO

under the German flag.

The *Geo Barents* and SOS Mediterranean’s *Ocean Viking* are registered in Norway.

The Norwegian foreign ministry said on Thursday it bore ‘no responsibility’ for those rescued by private Norwegian-flagged ships in the Mediterranean.

Germany insisted in a diplomatic ‘note’ to Italy that the charities were ‘making an important contribution to saving human lives’ and asked Rome ‘to help them as soon as possible’.

AFP

‘We have made this Gujarat’: India’s Modi launches new election slogan in home state

Valsad, India - India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a new election slogan ‘We have made this Gujarat’ in Assembly poll-bound Gujarat.

“We’ve been working continuously for the development of Gujarat. Every Gujarati is full of self-confidence, which is why when Gujaratis speak, a sound emanates from within them - we have made this Gujarat,” said Modi in Valsad.

Addressing a public rally in Valsad, ahead of the Gujarat state polls he said: “Dharampur is known for many works of the past. It is a lucky moment for me that my first election meeting starts with the blessings of my tribal brothers and sisters.”

Modi lauded the work done in the state and said that Gujarat created many records in terms of development. “It has brought the state forward by removing the days of riots every now and then.

“Neither Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel nor PM Modi is contesting this election. Dear brothers and sisters of Gujarat



India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves to supporters during a public meeting at Kaprada, in Valsad district on Sunday (ANI)

are fighting this election. The opportunity has come to develop the entire Gujarat and society by standing shoulder to shoulder and living together,”

he said while addressing the rally.

Recalling the time when ‘several areas in the state lacked doctors, hospitals and basic in-

frastructure’ he said that it was due to the hard work of every Gujarati that the state today has one of the best healthcare facilities. “Every Gujarati has

worked hard, blood and sweat to make Gujarat. Once upon a time, we used to hunt for doctors, today there are hospitals and medical colleges in tribal

Neither Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel nor PM Modi is contesting this election. Dear brothers and sisters of Gujarat are fighting this election. The opportunity has come to develop the entire Gujarat and society

NARENDRA MODI

areas.

“Earlier, if a tank were built, the drum would be played for a month and if a hand pump were installed, the village would distribute Penda.

“Today, due to projects like Estol, we are working to deliver water to my tribal villages by raising water up to 200 floors,”

Modi added.

This is the Prime Minister’s first visit to his home state after the Assembly elections were declared.

An intensive campaign is on in Gujarat as Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the ‘Gujarat Gaurav Yatra’ in Ahmedabad on October 13.

The term of the Gujarat Assembly ends on February 18, 2023.

The elections in Gujarat will be held in two phases on December 1 and 5. The counting of votes will take place on December 8. The BJP has won six consecutive Assembly polls in Gujarat. The Congress is keen to take an early decision on candidates to give them more time for campaigning and is seeking to bolster its campaign through yatras.

Unlike previous elections, this year the Aam Aadmi Party is also fighting the election with full might, led by Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, which has made it a triangular contest. ANI



A convoy of vehicles carrying Pakistan’s former prime minister Imran Khan, leaves from a hospital in Lahore on Sunday (AFP)

Pakistan’s former PM Imran Khan leaves hospital after being shot

Islamabad, Pakistan - Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan left hospital on Sunday, a senior aide said, three days after being shot in the legs in a failed assassination attempt.

The shooting - and Khan’s accusation that his successor Shehbaz Sharif was involved - have significantly raised the political temperature in a country that has been on the boil since he was ousted in April. Former information minister Fawad Chaudhry told AFP that Khan ‘has been discharged’ and a local TV channel showed him wearing a blue hospital gown as he left the Lahore clinic by wheelchair. Khan, 70, was wounded by gunfire aimed at his open-top container truck as he led a political party convoy through thick crowds in the eastern city of Wazirabad on Thursday. One man is in custody following the attack, which government officials have said was the work of a lone gunman and ‘a very clear case of religious extremism’. In an apparent confession video leaked by police to media, the sole suspect said he tried to kill Khan because his convoy was interrupting the call to prayer, which summons Muslims to mosques. Khan, however, insists two shooters were involved, and speaking to reporters from hospital on Friday claimed Sharif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, and a senior intelligence officer were behind the plot.

The government and military have dismissed those claims as

lies and fabrications, and threatened to sue Khan for defamation.

Khan, a former cricketing superstar, became prime minister in 2018 on a ticket promising to block the dynastic families that have historically ruled Pakistan, and to end corrosive corruption. He was ousted by a vote of no confidence in April as the economy languished and he lost the backing of the all-powerful military, considered the kingmakers in the south Asian nation.

Since then Khan has campaigned for a snap election, with

One man is in custody following the attack, which the government officials have said was the work of a lone gun man

a series of raucous marches and rallies, while claiming he was pushed out of power in a conspiracy orchestrated by the United States. Analysts say the assassination attempt and Khan’s accusations have pushed Pakistan into a ‘dangerous phase’. “It is a perilous situation,” said academic and political analyst Tauseef Ahmed Khan, who is also a board member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

AFP

Kenya Airways pilots extend strike

Nairobi, Kenya - Kenya Airways pilots on Sunday extended their strike and warned of ‘major flight disruptions’, forcing fresh cancellations as the carrier’s deadline for disciplinary action against those participating lapsed.

Thousands of passengers were stranded as a result of the strike by the Kenya Airline Pilots Association (KALPA), which earlier said that no Kenya Airways flight flown by its members had departed Nairobi’s Jomo Kenyatta International Airport from 6am (0300 GMT) onwards on Saturday.

The pilots announced the strike in defiance of a court order against industrial action and have given no indication of how long it would last.

On Saturday, the airline’s managing director and CEO, Allan Kilavuka, had urged the protesting pilots, who make up 10 per cent of the workforce, to return to work by 10:30am on Sunday.

“Failure to do so will lead to



Kenya Airways staff help passengers to book flights and hotels, at the Jomo Kenyatta International airport in Nairobi on Sunday (AFP)

immediate disciplinary action,” he warned.

But KALPA said on Sunday that its members would remain on strike ‘until their voice is heard.’

“The public should expect major flight disruptions to continue,” it said on Twitter, blaming the airline’s management for failing to resolve the stalemate.

The airline, part owned by the government and Air France-KLM, is one of the biggest in

Africa, connecting multiple countries to Europe and Asia, but it is facing turbulent times, including years of losses.

The pilots’ strike has thrown over 9,000 passengers’ plans into disarray, according to the airline, with travellers turning up to the Nairobi airport on Sunday, only to find out that their flights were cancelled.

“I came here at around 5:25 in the morning... but I have been informed that the flight has been

cancelled,” passenger Erick Muhanda, who was due to travel to South Africa’s port city of Cape Town, told broadcaster Citizen TV.

“It’s quite inconveniencing,” he said.

Ground staff strike called off

But in a measure offering some relief to the travel sector, the Kenya Aviation Workers Union (KAWU) announced on Sunday that it would withdraw a planned strike by ground staff over a separate, long-running dispute with the Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) over salary increases.

“We backtracked on our decision because it was being construed as KAWU joining KALPA in their strike action,” the union’s secretary general Moss Ndiema told reporters at the Nairobi airport.

KAWU had earlier said that ground staff would strike from 2pm onwards on Saturday. AFP

‘ Hamas arrests two over Gaza rockets’

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - Gaza rulers Hamas arrested two people over firing rockets at Israel last week, a security source in the Palestinian enclave told AFP.

Israel’s army said rockets were launched on Thursday from Gaza.

The incident prompted Hamas’s internal security services to detain two people ‘directly related to the firing of four rockets’, said a security source.

“The Palestinian factions have nothing to do with these rockets, which are aimed at giving the occupation (Israel) an excuse for continuing the aggression,” the source told AFP. AFP

19 killed after plane plunges into lake in Tanzania

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - The death toll from Sunday’s plane crash in Lake Victoria in Tanzania has jumped to 19, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa said, after the Precision Air flight with dozens of passengers aboard plunged into water while approaching the north-western city of Bukoba.

“All Tanzanians are with you in mourning the 19 people who lost lives during this accident,” Majaliwa told a crowd after arriving at Bukoba airport, where the flight had been scheduled to land from financial capital Dar es Salaam.

Regional authorities and the airline earlier said that 26 survivors out of the 43 people on board flight PW 494 had been pulled to safety and taken to hospital in the lakeside city in Kagera region.

It was not immediately clear if the 19 victims included rescuers who drowned or whether the 48-seater aircraft had more people on board than previously disclosed, a regional official said.

“We are continuing to investigate, there is a possibility that



Local residents gather as rescuers search for survivors after a Precision Air flight that was carrying 43 people plunged into Lake Victoria as it attempted to land in the lakeside town of Bukoba, Tanzania on Sunday (AFP)

two people were not onboard but died during the rescue effort,” said Kagera regional commissioner Albert Chalamila.

Precision Air, a publicly-listed company which is Tanzania’s largest private airline, said it had dispatched rescuers to the scene.

“An investigation team consisting of Precision Air technical staff and TAA (Tanzania Airports Authority) has also departed to join the rescue team on the ground,” the airline said in a

statement. “Precision Air sincerely understands the anxiety for confirmed information and will therefore do its best to issue more details,” the company said.

It said the aircraft was an ATR 42-500, manufactured by Toulouse-based Franco-Italian firm ATR.

Video footage broadcast on local media showed the plane largely submerged as rescuers, including fishermen, waded through water to bring people to safety.

Emergency workers attempted to lift the aircraft out of the water using ropes, assisted by cranes as residents also sought to help.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan expressed her condolences to those affected by the accident.

“Let’s continue to be calm while the rescue operation continues as we pray to God to help us,” she said on Twitter.

‘Hearts and prayers’

The African Union Commission

chair Moussa Faki Mahamat also shared his condolences, as did the secretary general of the regional East African Community bloc, Peter Mathuki.

“Our hearts and prayers go to the families of passengers onboard a plane that crashed into Lake Victoria, with our full solidarity to the Government & people of #Tanzania,” Faki wrote on Twitter.

“The East African Community joins and sends our condolences to Mama Samia Suluhu Hassan, families and friends of all those who were affected by the Precision Air plane accident,” Mathuki said, also on Twitter.

Precision Air, which is partly owned by Kenya Airways, was founded in 1993 and operates domestic and regional flights as well as private charters to popular tourist destinations such as the Serengeti National Park and the Zanzibar archipelago.

The accident comes five years after 11 people died when a plane belonging to safari company Coastal Aviation crashed in northern Tanzania.

AFP



MANE

THE MEAN MACHINE

Berlin, Germany - When Bayern Munich signed Sadio Mane in June, the 32-time German champions knew they were getting a leader and a winner at both domestic and international level.

In addition to Premier League and Champions League triumphs with Liverpool, Mane led Senegal to the 2022 Africa Cup of Nations title, scoring the winning penalty in the shootout to help the Lions of Teranga secure their first major silverware.

That they did it against his then Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah's Egypt - the most successful team in the history of the tournament - must have made the victory sweeter.

The win saw Mane pick up his second consecutive African Player of the Year trophy and contributed to his second-place finish in this year's Ballon d'Or.

Mane also played a crucial role in carrying his team to the World Cup, converting the decisive penalty in the shootout - again against Egypt - just a month after the AFCON triumph.

When Mane swaps the red of

Senegal need vintage Sadio Mane to break African World Cup barrier

Bayern for Senegal green in Qatar, the focus of his side - and around 18 million Senegalese - will again turn to him.

Switching from Bayern to Senegal is a major adjustment for the 30-year-old.

While in Senegal Mane is unquestionably the main man up front and the team's biggest name, at Bayern he is one of several attacking stars including Germans Jamal Musiala, Serge Gnabry, Thomas Mueller, Leroy Sane and Cameroonian striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting.

While Mane has at times struggled at club level since making the switch to the Bundesliga - he has been benched a handful of times this season by Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann due to a lack of confidence - he will spearhead Senegal.

In late October, after scoring

once and assisting twice in a 6-2 win over Mainz, Mane said he would play any role necessary to help the team.

"I've played left wing my whole life," Mane said. "(But) if the team needs me as a striker or a right winger, I'll be there."

Despite his domestic and international success, Mane said he was still trying to get better as a player.

"I'm someone who wants to learn every day. I think I can still improve a lot. Offensively, defensively. I can still do more."

Bringing Bayern to Qatar

Bayern have won the past 10 Bundesliga titles and Senegal fans will hope Mane brings Bayern's winning culture with him to Qatar as his side looks to break a cycle of underachievement at in-

ternational level for African sides.

Despite providing some of the most talented players in football, no African team has ever reached the semi-finals of the tournament.

Only three nations - Cameroon (1990), Senegal (2002) and Ghana (2010) - have reached the last eight before.

Senegal look well placed to break that record, particularly considering their World Cup group includes an unpredictable Netherlands alongside Ecuador and hosts Qatar.

Mane however is making sure his side do not get ahead of themselves, saying in October Senegal were well behind the world's best footballing nations.

"I don't see Senegal as a favourite because there are other nations very far ahead of Senegal like France, Spain," Mane said.

"We will go there...and try to do what we are used to doing."

"Argentina, Brazil, Germany, France, England, I think there are few teams that can win the World Cup."

AFP



Sadio Mane

FACTFILE (GROUP A)



QATAR

Best World Cup performance: **FIRST APPEARANCE**

Other honours: **Asian Cup winners 2019**

Main clubs: **Al Sadd, Al Duhail, Al Rayyan**

How they qualified: Automatic qualification as hosts

COACH

Felix Sanchez, 46, moved to Qatar in 2006 after 10 years coaching Barcelona youth teams. The Spaniard guided Qatar to the Asian Cup title in 2019 and now has a mission to get the World Cup hosts past the first round. He started at the Aspire Academy, training young athletes, but was under-19 coach and under-23 coach before taking on the national side. Sanchez helped Qatar win the Asian under-19 title in 2014 and has brought many of the players into the national side.

KEY PLAYER



Qatar are counting on **Akram Afif** for the goals needed to get the victories required in the group. Afif, who will be 26 two days before the November 20 start of the World Cup, was born in Doha to a Tanzanian footballer father and Yemeni mother. He played for the Qatari-owned Eupen team in Belgium as well as Sporting Gijon in Spain before joining Al-Sadd, who were Qatari champions in 2021 and 2022.



NETHERLANDS

Best World Cup performance: **Runners-up in 1974, 1978, 2010**

Other honours: **European champions in 1988**

Main clubs: **Ajax, PSV Eindhoven, Feyenoord**

How they qualified: Netherlands finished first in European qualifying Group G

COACH

Louis van Gaal, 71, was appointed in August 2021 after coming out of retirement to take the national team reins for the third time. Made his name as coach of a brilliant young Ajax side in the 1990s before moving on to Barcelona, winning back-to-back La Liga titles. Van Gaal failed to qualify the Dutch for the 2002 World Cup but took them to the semi-finals in 2014 in his second stint, losing on penalties to Argentina. Also coached Bayern Munich, Manchester United and AZ Alkmaar.

KEY PLAYER



Frenkie de Jong burst onto the scene in the 2018-19 season as part of another talented young Ajax team that was seconds from reaching that year's Champions League final. His eye-catching performances earned him a move to Barcelona as the Spanish giants fought off a host of Europe's top clubs for his signature. De Jong's creativity and versatility have turned him into an indispensable part of a resurgent Dutch side.



SENEGAL

Best World Cup performance: **Quarter-finalists in 2002**

Other honours: **African champions in 2022**

Main clubs: **ASC Jaraaf, ASC Jeanne d'Arc, AS Douanes**

How they qualified: Senegal defeated Egypt in a play-off

COACH

Aliou Cisse, 46, wants to atone for an agonising exit from the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where Senegal lost out on a second-round place only because they accumulated more yellow cards than Japan. After losing as a player in the 2002 Africa Cup of Nations final, he made amends by guiding his country to victory in Cameroon this year with a penalty shootout victory over Egypt at the end of a goalless final. He was part of the Senegal team that reached the 2002 World Cup quarter-finals in South Korea.

KEY PLAYER



Kalidou Koulibaly was born in France, but opted to represent the country where his parents were born. The 31-year-old centre-back played for French and Belgian outfits before beginning an eight-year stay with Napoli in 2014. He moved to Chelsea this year and teamed up with Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy. Koulibaly has been critical of African teams at the World Cup, saying they set their goals too low.



ECUADOR

Best World Cup performance: **Last 16 in 2006**

Other notable performances: **Fourth at Copa in 1959 and 1993**

Main clubs: **LDU Quito, Barcelona, Emelec**

How they qualified: Ecuador finished fourth in the single South American qualifying group

COACH

Gustavo Alfaro, 60, hails from Argentina but has been in charge of Ecuador since August 2020 when he replaced Jordi Cruyff. Alfaro had spent the best part of the previous three decades working at clubs in his native Argentina, lastly at Boca Juniors in 2019. His side held both Argentina and Brazil at home as they edged out Peru to take the last automatic spot for Qatar in the single South American qualifying group. However, Alfaro's Ecuador also went out of the 2021 Copa America in the quarter-finals.

KEY PLAYER



Enner Valencia, who this month turns 33, is Ecuador's captain and all-time top scorer with 35 goals. He is also a veteran of previous major tournaments, notably scoring all three of his country's goals at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and appearing at four different editions of the Copa America. 'Superman' initially made his name at Emelec but later spent three years in the Premier League, with West Ham and at Everton.

Oman to host T20I series from Nov 14

Muscat – Cricket fever would continue in Oman after the ongoing ICC Men’s T20 World Cup as Oman Cricket is set to host a quadrangular T20I series from November 14. A day after the T20 World Cup winners will be crowned at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Oman will host Canada, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain for a T20I series at the picturesque Oman Cricket Academy grounds in Al Amerat.

Oman Cricket’s chief development officer Duleep Mendis said: “It would be a good platform to have upcoming cricket nations like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain play quality cricket against teams like Oman and Canada.

“Though our national team do not have an immediate international assignment as we have completed the ICC World Cricket League (WCL) 2 engagements, we would like to have our boys in good form and in match-playing mode.”

The T20I series will be played from November 14-21 with the top two teams in the round-robin format playing the final.

The four-nation tournament will be followed by a bilateral 50-over-a-side three-match series against Canada.

‘Sometimes loving is letting go’

Gerard Pique takes Camp Nou bow as Barcelona beat Almeria to go top

Barcelona, Spain - Gerard Pique bowed out at Camp Nou on an emotional night as Barcelona beat Almeria 2-0 to move top of La Liga, despite missing several clear chances on Saturday.

This was the 35-year-old defender’s last home game for the club, whom he has played for 616 times, and the World Cup winner will retire from football after Tuesday’s visit to Osasuna.

Goals from Ousmane Dembele and Frenkie de Jong allowed Pique to go out in style in front of the home fans as Barcelona eased two points clear of Real Madrid, who visit Rayo Vallecano on Monday.

A giant banner was draped over the centre-circle bearing the message “Semp3” - a play on “always” in Catalan and Pique’s shirt number - as he led the team out wearing the captain’s armband, instead of Sergio Busquets.

Whistles from recent weeks because of Pique’s struggles turned to cheers every time he touched the ball, as fans paid their respect to a club legend and arguably their best ever central defender.

“Sometimes loving is letting go,” Pique told supporters in a tearful speech after the game.

“I am sure in the future I will be back here again. It’s not a goodbye.

“I left after 17 years to get some air. My grandfather made

me a club member. I was born here and I will die here. Visca Barca.”

Pique, who won 30 trophies with the club over 14 years since re-joining from Manchester United, lined up in a makeshift defence featuring three left-backs.

Jordi Alba played in his natural position, while Alejandro Balde started at right back and Marcos Alonso at centre-back, as Barcelona wait for their injured

I am sure in the future I will be back here again. It’s not a goodbye. I left after 17 years to get some air. My grandfather made me a club member. I was born here and I will die here. Visca Barca.

GERARD PIQUE

defenders to return.

“It was a historic night and complete for everyone, especially for Gerard,” Xavi told DAZN.

“We had a great game, we wanted to say goodbye to him in the best way possible.

“The bigger the game is for him, the bigger he plays. I have already said he is a Barca legend and we are very grateful to him.”

Earlier an impressive Chimy Avila brace helped Osasuna win 2-1 at Celta Vigo and climb provisionally fifth, continuing their strong start to the season.

Giroud saves Milan’s blushes

Olivier Giroud spared AC Milan the embarrassment of having their Serie A title defence damaged by Paolo Maldini’s son on Saturday with a stunning late volley which earned his team a 2-1 win over Spezia.

Milan moved up to second, six points behind league leaders Napoli, after substitute Giroud crashed in a superb finish from Sandro Tonali’s cross in the 89th

minute just as it looked like Daniel Maldini had left them trailing even further behind.

In the bedlam that followed his winner veteran striker Giroud, 36, was sent off as he ripped his shirt off in celebration and was given a second booking.

A draw with 17th-placed Spezia would have been a big blow for Milan as Napoli went eight points clear earlier on Saturday by beating Atalanta 2-1 in Bergamo as they hunt a first Scudetto since 1990.

AFP



Barcelona’s Gerard Pique waves to the crowd after their match against Almeria at Camp Nou on Saturday (AFP)



Arsenal players celebrate after beating Chelsea in the English Premier League on Sunday (AFP)

Gabriel sends Arsenal top as Chelsea crash again

Manchester, United Kingdom - Arsenal beat Chelsea 1-0 to dispel doubts over their Premier League title credentials and go top of the table on Sunday as Manchester United were blown away 3-1 by an inspired Aston Villa on Unai Emery’s bow as boss.

United are now three points off the top four after Newcastle continued their fine form with a 4-1 win at Southampton to go third.

Gabriel Magalhaes bundled in Bukayo Saka’s corner for the only goal at Stamford Bridge, but the slender margin of victory was the very least Arsenal deserved.

Chelsea offered barely anything going forward as they slipped to back-to-back Premier League defeats for the first time in two years.

“For such a young team, the maturity, the composure they showed, the resilience and courage to play how we wanted to play was phenomenal to do it against these kind of players,”

said a proud Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta.

“Winning in this stadium is an extra thing, another step for this team to keep believing they can do it under pressure and against big opponents.”

Victory takes Arsenal back

Winning in this stadium is an extra thing, another step for this team to keep believing

MIKEL ARTETA

two points clear of Manchester City at the top of the table.

Crucially for Arteta’s men after six seasons outside the Champions League, their lead over fifth-place now stands at 11 points.

Chelsea remain in seventh, behind Brighton, who Graham Potter left in September to take

charge of the Blues.

Emery’s dream start

United were unbeaten in nine games as the Red Devils appeared to be taking shape under Erik ten Hag. But despite the lavish amounts spent to assemble the United squad, a lack of strength in depth was exposed with Antony, Jadon Sancho and Raphael Varane missing due to injury and Bruno Fernandes suspended.

Emery could not have asked for a better start to his time in charge of Villa as Leon Bailey smashed across David de Gea and Lucas Digne’s free-kick found the top corner inside 11 minutes.

Luke Shaw’s strike that deflected off Jacob Ramsey into his own net gave the visitors hope just before half-time.

Villa, though, quickly restored their two-goal lead when Ramsey side-footed into the top corner on 49 minutes.

AFP

Bagnaia claims MotoGP world title

Valencia, Spain - Francesco Bagnaia claimed the MotoGP world crown in the season-ending Valencia Grand Prix on Sunday to pull off the greatest title turnaround in the championship’s history.

The Ducati rider, who trailed outgoing champion Fabio Quartararo by 91 points mid-season, completed his astonishing comeback with ninth place behind race winner Alex Rins.

“World champion - it sounds good” said Bagnaia, universally known as ‘Pecco’.

“That was the hardest race of my life,” the 25-year-old added.

Among those rushing to congratulate him was his mentor, Italian motorcycling legend Valentino Rossi, the last Italian to win the MotoGP title in 2009.

Also on hand was Giacomo Agostini, who was the last Italian to take the championship on an



Ducati’s Francesco Bagnaia celebrates after winning the World Championship’s title in Valencia on Sunday (AFP)

Italian bike 50 years ago.

Quartararo looked set to defend his crown after success in Germany in June.

His subsequent collapse was

painful for his fans as Bagnaia reeled in the Frenchman to take a 23-point lead going into the season-finale.

That left the French rider

needing to win, and Bagnaia finish out of the top 14, to retain his crown, a mission that was to prove impossible.

AFP

Garcia edges Kasatkina to advance at WTA Finals

Fort Worth, United States - Caroline Garcia rallied from a set down to beat Daria Kasatkina 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/5) on Saturday in a winner-take-all clash that sent the French player into the WTA Finals knockout phase.

The clash for the last semi-final berth was tense and action-packed, Garcia shaking off the frustration of the first set then holding on in the tightly contested third to line up a meeting with fifth-ranked Greek Maria Sakkari.

Round robin play concluded later Saturday with world number one Iga Swiatek, already assured of her semi-final berth, beating American teenager Coco Gauff 6-3, 6-0. Gauff had already been eliminated from semi-final contention.

Garcia, ranked sixth, became the first player in 30 attempts this season to beat Kasatkina after dropping the first set.



Caroline Garcia celebrates after defeating Daria Kasatkina in their group match at the 2022 WTA Finals in Fort Worth, Texas, on Saturday (AFP)

After rolling through the second set, she had a chance to break in the 13-minute ninth game of the third, but Kasatkina saved six break points to hold as

they went to a tiebreaker.

Garcia gave herself two match points with a gutsy rally, sending Kasatkina wide with a swinging forehand volley then firing a

backhand volley cross-court.

Kasatkina saved one match point, but dropped a volley into the net on the next.

“It’s definitely a great achievement,” Garcia said of reaching the semis in the season finale open to the top eight players in the world. “I was already really proud to be in the top eight. I don’t really know if I realize that this is the semi-final tomorrow.”

Garcia said the victory vindicated her aggressive style in a high-stakes contest.

“Every match we say you have to give it all and no regrets, go for it and it’s always true, but in this tournament even more - it’s the last one (of the season).”

Garcia said her success this week “proves that this was definitely a good year.

“I started very far from the top 10, the top eight, and I made my way to it,” added Garcia.

AFP

FAN LEADERS



People watch an air show at the Corniche in Doha



People attend a drone show in Lusail

Praising the peninsula

WORLD CUP ORGANISERS RECRUIT FANS IN HUGE NUMBERS TO REPRESENT PARTICIPATING NATIONS, LIVEN UP THE OPENING CEREMONY, AND SING QATAR'S PRAISE

A scheme by World Cup organisers to recruit fans to act as cheerleaders for Qatar as well as their nations, has brought jeers from some supporters. Fans who accept will receive free hotel rooms, match tickets and a daily allowance. In return, they are expected to liven up the opening ceremony and to post positive social media comments about the host country, according to supporters' accounts and documents seen by AFP. Organisers confirmed in a statement that Qatar is paying for fans from the 32 competing nations to attend the World Cup but said that reports that it was paying for coordinated promotion were absolutely false. Other sporting events have used the same system. Qatar approached hundreds of football bloggers, influencers, and leaders of fan associations,

offering to make them 'Fan Leaders'. "We gagged on reading the document," said Fabien Bonnel, spokesman for the French Irresistibles, a group of fans contacted in 2021. "They wanted us to promote them by becoming the influencers of French fans and sell this World Cup in Qatar." "One thing is sure, many have refused," said Ronan Evain of the Football Supporters Europe network. These proposals are 'far from true fan culture'. Yet more than 450 fans from 59 nations signed up, the organising committee said. They insisted that joining the Fan Leader Network was a 'voluntary and unpaid role'. Each fan leaders picked between 30 and 50 people from each competing nation who have been invited to the opening game on November 20. They will be flown to Qatar



A view shows the Lusail Stadium in Lusail



People have their picture taken with a large art installation at a parking lot of a shopping mall in Doha

and housed two to a room, said organisers. They will also receive US\$68 a day on a preloaded Visa card. In return they will be expected to liven up the opening ceremony and sign a code of conduct. A document prepared by the organisers, the Supreme Committee for the Delivery and Legacy, said that midway through the ceremony fan chants from each nation will be played and you will be expected to stand up, sing the song/chant, wave your flags and represent your

country. The camera will focus on each national fangroup in turn. The fans may add some football atmosphere to the first World Cup in an Arab nation. "Given the prices, the remoteness, and the unease around this World Cup, the fans will not be the same as in a classic World Cup. So we have to try to bring them into the stadiums," said a source close to the French Football Federation. "They need colour at the opening ceremony, supporters

with team shirts. Well filmed. It can make an impact."

Buying supporters While the fans are only obliged to attend the opening ceremony, they will stay a lot longer. "They are going for ten days, with free tickets for the three group matches of their national team," said Herve Mougin, president of the French Irresistibles. During that time the guest fans we will be expected to make social media waves, following Qatar's guidelines. "Your opinions are your own - We are not asking you to be a mouth piece for Qatar, but it would obviously not be appropriate for you to disparage Qatar, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy...or the FIFA World Cup Qatar," said the organisers' document.

"You agree to report any offensive, degrading or abusive comments to the SC and, if possible, to take a screenshot of those comments and then promptly delete them." The organising committee said in a statement, "Recent media speculation has portrayed this initiative to be an illicit scheme - paying guest fans in return for coordinated promotion of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. This insinuation is absolutely false."

It added that likening the expenses given as a 'payment' to the fans not only overshadows the essence of the programme, it also questions the credibility and motives of the fans involved. Last year, the English Football Association invited members of the England Supporters Travel Club to become 'fan leaders'. Following recent reports about the scheme, an FA statement said, 'We were told this was an opportunity to engage with fans from all competing nations to ensure that the voice of supporters was clearly heard. We have had no more involvement with the scheme, and no sight of the 'code of conduct' or any of the terms and conditions of involvement.' One European fan involved in supporter groups said, "They are buying supporters. It's their plan. We have passed a threshold. It's ridiculous. This is not the image of fans we want to represent." AFP

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I CHINNU GIRAPPA BAGANUR (holder of Indian Passport v 4001375) Son of/ daughter of GIRAPPA SHARNAPPA BAGANUR having permanent address MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA INDIA, ROOM-NO 102, BLD IN NO 8/B RIBT COLONY MANK HORP,SUTIVJI NAIYAR P (complete postal address in India) presently residing at the following address in BARKA-SUADI-OMAN. MAKHA HYPERMARKET, intend to change name from CHINNU GIRAPPA BAGANUR (old name) to CHINNU GIRAPPA BHAGA (new name) for all practical purpose. Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, PO Box No : 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

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A principal and a gentleman



TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL

To me, education is... **fuelled by relationships**

I am inspired by... **working towards a common purpose**

My favourite book... **Fall of Giants, Ken Follett (Book I, in his 20th century trilogy)**

My favourite author... **Ken Follett**

My most memorable moment... **The high school graduations of my three children from TAISM**

I hope...**to make a difference**

Peter Lee, Middle School principal of The American International School of Muscat (TAISM), was selected as one of two international school educators for the 2022 National Distinguished Principals Award. Instrumental in setting high standards for instruction, student welfare, and all-round facilitation of the learning process, Lee hopes to continue steadfastly in his task with a forward-looking vision

Hubert Vaz

The American International School of Muscat (TAISM) received a great honour recently when Peter Lee, its Middle School principal, was selected by the US-based National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) for the 2022 National Distinguished Principals Award. The award is not just a prestigious credential in Lee's career as an educator, it also catapults TAISM to new heights among the best Overseas Schools of the United States Department of State.

The award programme had been established in 1984 to recognise and celebrate elementary and middle-level (K-8) principals in the United States, who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, character, and climate for the students, families, and staff in their learning communities.

Outstanding principals have been selected for this award from the international schools that are assisted by the Office of Overseas Schools of the United States Department of State. And Lee's nomination was supported by the director of the school, Kevin Schafer, and selected from among several nominees.

"The TAISM community is ecstatic about this well-deserved award for Peter," says Schafer. "Only two educators outside of the USA, and one from each US state, win this prestigious award annually. We're proud that Peter's consistent leadership and his care for TAISM students is being recognised

publicly and globally."

In a tete-e-tete with Muscat Daily, the erudite educator, known for his comely disposition and the great rapport he enjoys with staff as well as students, shares some insights about his career and his vision for TAISM. Excerpts:

What provides you the fuel to keep going on in full steam as an educator?

My educational career started in 1993, as a sixth grade teacher in public school in the Minneapolis, Minnesota area (USA). My family and I moved to TAISM in 2006, where I continued my teaching career. I taught for 19 years before transitioning to being the Middle School Principal, at TAISM, in 2012. Throughout all of these experiences, and now in my 30th year in education, what keeps me going is the satisfaction of serving students and families and working to put them, along with our staff, in the best possible position to be successful.

What does this award mean to you, and what paved the way for your selection?

Receiving the NDP award is quite an honour. In the US, only one principal from each state is selected and I was one of two international school principals to receive it. It is an honour for me individually, but I am more excited to receive the award on behalf of the school. I also feel like I am receiving this award for our staff, students, and school community. It is a testament to the great work we are doing with students at TAISM.

Working with very talented educators is very inspiring and makes being a good leader that much easier.

During one of the most difficult times in education (in view of the pandemic), how did you equip yourself to stay afloat?

I am naturally a pretty optimistic and solutions-oriented person. That was certainly put to the test during the pandemic. I have been a part of the TAISM community for 17 years and I think what kept me going during that time was a strong commitment and sense of duty to serve our community and our students, specifically, to the best of my ability. It wasn't easy for any of us during those years, and having a dedicated and talented group of professionals working along side of me, and having the partnership of the parents in our school community was really important to our success in serving students. It is really all about providing the highest quality of learning opportunities to our students, no matter what the circumstances.

In view of the pandemic, how prepared is TAISM to take on similar challenges in future.

The sense of community that permeates our school - from staff to students to parents - equips us well to meet any challenges. We genuinely care about one another and are united in a common purpose. When you have positive and productive relationships established with all stakeholders in your community, challenges don't seem quite as

daunting. You realise that you can collaborate with others to find solutions.

We are an adaptive organisation, meaning we will learn, change, and modify our approach when necessary to meet the needs of students and families. I think all of us at TAISM reflect on the ability to adapt our instructional approach, the increased focus on student, parent and staff wellness, and the commitment to providing the best educational experiences during the pandemic as a point of pride. It was hard work that stretched everyone pretty thin, but at the end of the day, our school kept moving forward. I am proud of that.

As an educator, do you foresee anything that might revolutionise the approach, curricula as well as goals and outcomes of education globally?

Education should be an ever-changing industry. The needs of the future are dynamic and jobs and careers that we are preparing students for may not even exist yet. With that in mind, it is important that we are preparing students to be critical and creative thinkers, collaborators, and problem-solvers.

Students need to learn to approach problems with a spirit of inquiry and innovation. It is our job, as educators, to provide opportunities for students to develop these skills. I see a greater importance in the coming years of providing students opportunities to set their own learning pathways, be creative problem solvers, and have opportunities for design thinking.



'You belong here, I value you'

Peter Lee, who earned his bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Gustavus Adolphus College in St Peter, Minnesota, later did his Master's in Education from St Mary's University in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and his Ed S in Education Leadership from Capella University in Minneapolis.

He served in a variety of schools in the United States before joining TAISM in 2006 wherein he created a school climate that promotes a feeling of community and wellness.

As noted by one of the school's Middle School teachers, "The culture that Peter has cultivated in the Middle School at TAISM is one that is welcoming and inclusive. Every morning Peter can be seen strolling the hallways to greet each and every staff member and as many students as he can. This routine sends a clear message of 'you belong here and I value you' which contributes greatly to the culture of our school."



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