



H M issues Royal Decree appointing governors

Promulgates Public Utility Expropriation Law, amends provisions of Police College's bylaw

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik today issued four Royal decrees, reading as follows:

Royal Decree No. 71/2023 promulgating the Public Utility Expropriation Law.

Article 1 states that the Public Utility Expropriation Law attached to this decree shall be enforced.

Article 2 says that the Minister of Housing and Urban Planning shall issue the bylaw (executive regulation) for the attached law after the approval of the Council of Ministers. The minister shall also issue the decisions necessary for the implementation of the law's provisions. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall be enforced without prejudice to the provisions of the law.

Article 3 annuls Royal Decree No. 64/78 on promulgation of the Public Utility Expropriation Law. It also cancels all that contradicts the attached law or con-

travenes its provisions.

Article 4 says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No. 72/2023 amending some provisions of the Police College's bylaw.

Article 1 states that the amendments on the bylaw of the Police College attached to this decree shall be enforced.

Article 2 cancels all that contradicts the attached amendments or contravenes their provisions.

Article 3 says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No. 73/2023 transfers "powers related to the revision of contracts" from the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs to the Secretariat General of the Tender Board.

Article 1 transfers "powers related to the revision of contracts" from the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs to the Secretariat General of the Tender Board, as follows:

1. Reviewing the blueprints of unified model contracts drafted by Units of the State's Administrative Apparatus and other public legal persons in the instances/circumstances stipulated by law.
2. Reviewing the blueprints of contracts whose value exceeds RO 5 million, as well as related 'change orders', irrespective of their values prior to contract signing or whether any unit of the State's Administrative Apparatus or other public legal persons might have started implementing the projects. The review of instances other than 'unified model contracts' covers the procedures that preceded the contract signing process.

Article 2 transfers to the Secretariat General of the Tender Board the Justice and Legal Affairs Ministry's technicians and legal advisers tasked with reviewing contracts, as well as other staff of the Ministry whose tasks are associated with such revision/review. It also stipulates transferring the abovementioned employees' status of seniority and financial grades. Existing job

nature allowances of the abovementioned employees will be preserved for them in a personal manner.

The transfer shall take place in accordance with the mechanism that will be agreed by the Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs and the Secretary General of the Tender Board.

Article 3 cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article 4 says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. 74/2023 appointing governors.

Article 1 appoints the following as governors to the governorates indicated along their names:

- **Masoud Said Hashim Hashmi** as Governor of South Batinah, with the Special Grade.
- **Mahmoud Yahya Sulaiman al Thuhli** as Governor of North Sharqiyah, with Special Grade.
- **Sheikh Ahmed Musallam Suhail Jidad al Kithiri** as Governor of Al Wusta, with the Special Grade.

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

ONA

Sayyid Badr calls for investigation into Israeli aggression

Muscat- H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, has called on the international community to conduct an independent investigation into the Israeli aggression and hold it accountable for its deliberate targeting of civilians and their facilities, depriving them of their humanitarian needs, starving them and subjecting them to collective punishment in the Gaza Strip.

In an interview with ONA, H E Sayyid Badr affirmed that Oman, as always, is committed to political solutions based on dialogue and the principles of international law. He said Oman believes that the international community should intervene to stop the war in Gaza and deter Israel from violating international law and continuing its military operations that result in the killing of civilians in the Gaza Strip, as well as demolition of infrastructure, buildings and residential areas

H E Sayyid Badr said, "My firm belief is that violence is not a solution, and we strongly condemn it because victims are often children and civilians. If we look at previous historical experiences, it is clear that a military solution to the Palestinian issue or the Arab-Israeli conflict is impossible to achieve. Yes, there are existing movements or organisations resisting occupation, which is their legitimate right. However, if we seek a final and just solution, it cannot be achieved militarily but through peaceful means. The possible and sustainable way out is political solutions, dialogue and a strong commitment to achieving peace."

He further added, "We must continue to confront these practices and Israel's inhumane actions by upholding our values and adhering to our humanitarian ethics, which reject killing, destruction and attacks on children and civilians. We must continue to exert political, diplomatic and legal pressure and employ the voice of truth, the language of reason and the power of logic in the face of Israel's oppressive aggression. Its actions include killing innocent civilians, destroying their infrastructure and depriving them of water, food, fuel and medicine. I would like to emphasise that the media also has a responsibility here to deal with the situation objectively and credibly and to convey a fair message to the world, appealing to the human conscience everywhere. In the end, truth must prevail and injustice must end."

He explained that the value of constructive international engagement lies in protecting the rights of civilians in peace and war. Global frameworks are capable of creating the necessary conditions to halt the conflict and adopt peaceful solutions.

The Foreign Minister pointed out that all countries condemn and denounce the targeting of civilians, regardless of their nationalities, because this contradicts all human values. All countries have the right to self-defence. However, Israel's response is excessively disproportionate, particularly in targeting civilians. It should not be forgotten that the Palestinian people also have the right to self-defence, he affirmed.



History has taught us that 'self-defence' cannot justify genocide, collective punishment and the targeting of innocent civilians. Moreover, blocking humanitarian aid to the population is a crime under international law

H E SAYYID BADR AL BUSAIDI

firmed.

He explained that the forced displacement of civilians in northern Gaza Strip, pushing them southwards, is widely considered a precursor to genocide, based on Article II of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The blockade of Gaza, which prevents civilians from accessing water, electricity, food and fuel, is an unlawful act and can be considered a war crime. These collective actions are prohibited under Article 33 of the Geneva Convention, he asserted.

He said, "History has taught us that 'self-defence' cannot justify genocide, collective punishment and the targeting of innocent civilians. Moreover, blocking humanitarian aid to the population is a crime under international law."

H E Sayyid Badr called for an immediate ceasefire and the establishment of a truce monitored by independent United Nations observers. "The world must also formulate urgent plans to provide direct and immediate humanitarian aid and necessities to the Gaza Strip."

He affirmed that Oman and the GCC countries have committed to supporting humanitarian relief efforts in the Gaza Strip.

He said the world needs to address the root cause that led to this crisis and deal with it properly.

According to H E Sayyid Badr, there four key reasons of the crisis.

Continued on Page 02

87% employment target achieved

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour informed on Tuesday that 87% of the employment target for the third quarter of 2023 has been achieved in both government and private sectors. This reflects robust strides towards fulfilling the national employment objectives aimed at assimilating Omani jobseekers into the workforce.

The data released by the ministry indicates notable success in the government sector, where 10,000 out of 13,050 targeted jobseekers secured employment. These individuals have either stepped into new roles or filled positions previously occupied by expatriates. In the private sector, 11,165 individuals were employed against a target of 16,000.

Additionally, training inte-



10,000 out of 13,050 targeted jobseekers secured employment in the government sector, while 11,165 individuals were employed against a target of 16,000 in the private sector

grated with replacement or employment in the government sector had a target of 2,000, of which 1,461 was achieved. In the private sector, where the goal

was to reach 7,000, a total of 1,614 individuals ventured into self-employment and 4,788 completed training, showcasing a positive trend towards self-suf-

ficiency and entrepreneurship.

The third quarter saw a total of 30,464 job opportunities being created. Additionally, 26,689 individuals who had prior work experience were absorbed into various roles, raising the total count to 57,153.

Emphasising employment as a fundamental pillar of the national economy, the Ministry of Labour has reiterated its commitment to creating jobs.

This commitment, it reiterated, is part of a robust partnership with the private sector aimed at creating job opportunities. 'The national employment plans, anchored to methodical and well-thought-out workflows, are crafted in line with Royal Directives. These directives underline employment as a fundamental pillar, in fact, a cornerstone of the national economy,' the ministry stated.

Oman suspends issuing visas to Bangladeshis

Muscat - Oman will no longer allow conversion of tourist and visit visas into work visas for all nationalities, while also suspending issuing all types of new visas to citizens of Bangladesh.

In a statement, Royal Oman Police said, 'ROP, within its review of the policies for obtaining some types of visas, announces the suspension of the conversion of all types of tourist and visit visas to work visas for all nationalities coming to the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the issuance of all types of new visas for Bangladeshi citizens, effective Tuesday, October 31, 2023 until further notice.'

Oman, Saudi eye opportunities in free zones

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Buoyed by exponential growth in bilateral trade, which soared more than threefold from 2021 to 2022, Oman and Saudi Arabia are keen on fortifying their robust economic ties.

The focus is now on attracting investments into Oman's economic and free zones, and industrial cities. This objective was evident at a meeting held at the Federation of Saudi Chambers in Riyadh on Tuesday. The meeting saw members of the Saudi-Omani Business Council alongside representatives of major companies from both nations convening to explore joint investment avenues.

The agenda of the meeting was to deliberate on ways to bolster economic and investment cooperation, and to spot-



(Supplied photo)

light the investment opportunities waiting in Oman. Discussions extended to the facilities available for investors and the key economic sectors earmarked by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). These sectors include food and fisheries, pharmaceuticals, technology, logistics, renewable energy and petrochemical industries.

The Omani delegation, inclusive of several CEOs of economic, free and industrial zones, brought to light the SAR160bn investment these zones have attracted. H E Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidi, Chairman of OPAZ, highlighted the development of five such new zones across different governorates in Oman, notably mentioning the free zone at Muscat

International Airport and the integrated economic zone in Dhahirah.

H E Sunaidi drew attention to the ample scope for economic integration between the zones and industrial cities of the two nations, and lauded the significant uptick in direct trade exchange, which currently stands at RO2bn.

Walid bin Hamad al Aryanani, Acting Secretary-General of the Federation of Saudi Chambers, drew attention to the aligned aspirations of the kingdom's Vision 2030 and the sultanate's Vision 2040. Cooperation and partnerships increased trade exchange from US\$3bn to over US\$10bn between 2021 and 2022.

Saudi exports to Oman grew from US\$1.2bn to US\$6bn, while the sultanate's exports to the kingdom increased from US\$1.8bn to US\$4.2bn.



SAYYID FAHD RECEIVES GCC HOUSING MINISTERS

H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received GCC ministers of housing, who were in Muscat to attend a meeting hosted by Oman as the chair of the current GCC session, on Tuesday. He expressed Oman's appreciation for the efforts exerted in the field of housing and urban planning targeting progress based on modern methods of construction while preserving architectural heritage (ONA)

Oman bikers embark on 8,000km adventure ride to Saudi for a cause

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fueled by resolve and camaraderie, a group of eight Omani bikers are preparing for a remarkable expedition from Oman to Saudi Arabia to serve a dual mission of celebrating Omani National Day and extending solidarity to the war-torn people of Palestine.

The group of eight, currently comprising seven Omanis and a Qatari representing Oman Bikers, is anticipated to grow as the departure date approaches.

In a conversation with *Muscat Daily*, Khalid al Azri, head of Oman Bikers, expressed this optimism about the likely increase in riders' participation.

Over a period of ten days starting on November 13, the Oman Bikers will cover nearly 8,000km odyssey (round trip) - marking their lengthiest venture in 2023.

The journey is set to commence from the Oman Automobile Association, a few days before the National Day, and will traverse through to the northern



This ride is monumental for us. The sheer magnitude of this one stands out. We anticipate a safe return

KHALID AL AZRI

reaches of Saudi Arabia. "This ride is monumental for us. We anticipate a safe return post this ten-day adventure. Despite having embarked on longer journeys,

the sheer magnitude of this one stands out," Azri stressed.

"Our previous Saudi sojourns were part of broader expeditions encompassing Qatar, Kuwait,

and Bahrain. This time, the spotlight is solely on Saudi, with an extensive exploration of its northern sector," he further added.

The final itinerary, encapsulating stopovers, meal plans, deadlines, and equipment requisites, is due for confirmation by the weekend.

Adding a layer of camaraderie to the adventure, the troupe is likely to rendezvous with Saudi

bikers en route.

The expedition entails grappling with the elements and navigating uncharted terrains, and seasoned bikers are no strangers to such challenges. This ride, Azri said, epitomises the zest for adventure and the bond shared amongst these fervent bikers.

"It's a tribute to the sultanate's heritage and a gesture of solidarity towards the beleaguered Palestinians. Through this endeavour, we aspire to disseminate a potent message of unity and empathy."

The invitation to partake is open to all, with the stipulation of owning a bike with a capacity exceeding 800cc.

The registration for the expedition ends on November 5.

Established in 2009 as the first motorcycle club in the sultanate, Oman Bikers boasts a diverse membership with biking aficionados from across the globe. Their trailblazing escapades have spanned far-flung destinations including China and Europe, marking indelible imprints of adventure and humanitarian outreach.



MoH, OMIFCO to support needy patients

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a significant step towards bolstering healthcare assistance to financially constrained patients, the Ministry of Health has inked a financing agreement with the Omani Indian Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO).

OMIFCO will facilitate the acquisition of respirators for individuals with limited income to lessen their medical burden under their social security programme.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajamiya, Undersecretary for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs in the Ministry of Health, and Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Fana al Araiimi, Director of Sustainability and Corporate Communications, OMIFCO.

H E Dr Fatima underscored the essence of such collaborations between the governmental and private sectors in Oman, working in unison towards the common goal of public welfare.

She praised the initiatives of OMIFCO, and other supportive enterprises, in financing critical healthcare services.

The signatories are of the view that this agreement would also effectively curtail the duration of patients' hospital admission, and thus would reduce the healthcare costs, besides lessening the risk of hospital-acquired infec-

tions due to prolonged stays.

This would, in turn, create room for other patients in need, and ease social pressure on the families involved, the officials explained.

Sheikh Araiimi expressed OMIFCO's enthusiasm about this collaborative venture with the ministry. He emphasised that such endeavours are instrumental in fortifying the health services extended to patients experiencing respiratory challenges across the country.

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SHEIKH KHALID
AL ARAIMI

The signing of this agreement is part of OMIFCO's social responsibility programmes aimed at enhancing the quality of life through its support to the health sector.

This initiative, now in its fifth consecutive year, aims to activate the principle of partnership and cooperation between the public and private sectors to serve development in the country.

84 students felicitated with Academic Excellence Award

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) on Monday honoured 84 outstanding students with the Academic Excellence Award at a ceremony held under the patronage of H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah.

The event - organised by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States in conjunction with the ministry - was supported by the Almarai Company.

Among the attendees were H E Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information; Dr Abdul Rahman bin Mohammed al Asmi, Director-General of the Arab Education Bureau for the Gulf States; and Abdullah bin Nasser al Badr, CEO of the Almarai Company.

The event commenced with



an address by Dr Asmi, who emphasised that honouring the innovators and the outstanding people represents an inspiring human value and a civilised practice reflecting society's interest in academic prowess.

He asserted the pivotal role of diligent students in fostering societal advancement, urging them to sustain their pursuit of academic excellence.

"The Arab Bureau of Educa-

tion for the Gulf States feels that students are the pillar of the present, leaders of the future, and the focus of community development and prosperity," said Dr Asmi.

Subsequently, the Almarai CEO articulated the firm's commitment to nurturing educational growth and fostering students' innovative capabilities. Badr reiterated Almarai's ongoing resolve to support initiatives propelling

youth development.

"Investing in education and honing human competencies align seamlessly with the ethos of the Academic Excellence Award, laying a robust foundation for future leadership and sustainable community development," said Badr.

Adding a personal touch to the ceremony, student Bodour bint Abdullah al Yafi from Al-Zahra Private School in Dhofar,

representing the winners expressed heartfelt gratitude and jubilation on the momentous occasion.

"Today marks a beacon of hope and joy, propelling us with renewed vigour towards a promising future," she said.

Extending a deep-seated appreciation to parents, teachers, and the leaders of GCC countries, she encapsulated the collective resolve of her peers to continue on this enlightened path of knowledge and achievement.

The Academic Excellence Award not only stands as a testament to the scholastic achievements of the honoured students but also symbolises a broader societal value placed on education and the relentless pursuit of knowledge in the Arab world.

Sayyid Badr calls for investigation into Israel's aggression

Continued from Page 01

According to H E Sayyid Badr, the four key reasons of the crisis are -

1. Israel has been unlawfully occupying Palestinian territories in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip since 1967.

This occupation involves the persecution and displacement of innocent residents from their homes and the imposition of daily suffering on Palestinians in their territories.

It deprives all Palestinians and refugees in these territories of

their fundamental right to self-determination.

2. Despite agreements reached through the Oslo Accords in 1993, the continued occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has led to the systematic expansion of illegal settlements and the forced eviction of Palestinian residents from their land and homes, not to mention the apartheid policy pursued by the Israeli government.

3. Gaza has been under siege since 2007, isolated from Palestinians in the West Bank, making

the territory entirely dependent on Israel for its infrastructure and essential vital supplies. Close to 2.3mn of its inhabitants live in poverty and isolation - conditions imposed on them by Israel without any rights.

4. The Israeli coalition government formed in 2022 has escalated this injustice and darkness.

"We witness how the leaders of this Israeli government promote policies that target Palestinian populations more aggressively and cruelly than ever before."

H E Sayyid Badr appealed to

the world to take strong, deterrent and punitive action against the heinous statements and threats made by Israeli officials, such as those made by the current Minister of Finance, who said, "There are now three options for the Palestinians: slavery, migration or death."

H E Sayyid Badr pointed out that the international community has neglected these root causes of the conflict for decades. It is time for a genuine awakening within the United Nations Security Council to enforce its resolutions and apply international law

to all countries without discrimination or double standards.

As for what needs to be done to achieve a successful peace process in the future, H E Sayyid Badr said, "It may be too early to discuss the details of a peace project, but in brief, I would like to say that, at the right time, an effective and credible peace process involving all parties without exclusion will be needed.

"There are experiences and lessons that can be learned. For example, Israel and its allies previously accepted the idea of engaging in dialogue with the

Palestine Liberation Organization in the 1990s, after initially refusing to negotiate with it due to its classification as a terrorist organisation. That dialogue with the PLO led to the start of a peace process at that time.

"Today, we say that Israel and its allies must face the reality that, without engaging in dialogue with all parties, including Hamas, there cannot be genuine Palestinian-Israeli peace.

"The peace process should involve all key parties. We believe there is an international consensus on the need for a compre-

hensive peace, based on the two-state solution and in accordance with international law and well-known United Nations Security Council resolutions related to the Palestinian issue."

At the conclusion of his statement, H E Sayyid Badr affirmed that the Arab Peace Initiative is still in place and remains applicable because it is based on international law and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

It is comprehensive and addresses all the occupied Arab territories exactly as stipulated by international legitimacy.

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عالي البروتين
و قليل السكر

Sohar to get stunning new waterfront project

Our Correspondent
Muscat

North Batinah governorate has announced winners of the Majis Waterfront Project design competition, aimed at transforming the scenic locale of Majis village in the wilayat of Sohar.

The collaborative endeavour between North Batinah governorate and OQ company saw Ghassan Bani Oraba, Mohammed al Mafraji and Al Ghalia al Zaidi, students of College of Engineering of Sultan Qaboos University, claiming the coveted prize.

Speaking with *Muscat Daily*, Oraba informed that their winning design drew inspiration from the rhythmic cadence of sea waves. The design incorporates curved lines to mirror wave movement. "It includes an array of recreational and public amenities - a floating theatre, dedicated exercise zones equipped with sports apparatus, a volleyball court, a children's play area, an open-air exhibition space, a bicycle track, parking facilities, a prayer area and rest-rooms."

The design envisages construction of a pedestrian bridge, gracefully arching towards the sea, making it an iconic feature of the waterfront, he elaborated.

According to Oraba, the competition was stiff with a total of 180 participants competing with 20 projects.



The design drew inspiration from the rhythmic cadence of sea waves. It incorporates curved lines to mirror wave movement

GHASSAN BANI ORABA

The initial phase of the competition posed a challenge to the team as its three members were based in three different countries and saw them grappling with different time zones. Balancing course commitments and project deadlines with the design competition was a tightrope walk. "But we were committed. And thanks to the backing of family and friends, we met the challenge."

Following the win, the design awaits some refinements by the competition organisers.

Oman Botanic Garden leads in preserving botanical heritage

Our Correspondent
Muscat

On the occasion of Oman Tree Day on Tuesday, Oman Botanic Garden, in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman, organised an interactive session to introduce its achievements in the field of afforestation and preserving the botanical heritage of the sultanate.

Covering 4.2sqkm, the garden will be the largest of its kind in the Arabian Peninsula and the world.

In over a decade of work on the project, the team at Oman Botanic Garden has succeeded in registering 25 new species of plants.

The garden will conserve and celebrate Oman's botanic diversity within two biomes and surrounding external habitats, containing the country's most endangered and endemic flora.

An official at Ministry of Heritage and Tourism informed that the project showcases all the native plant species of Oman in carefully created natural habitats, from bone-dry deserts to lush green monsoon forests. "The garden will also showcase traditionally cultivated crops and the many ways people use plants in Oman." Located at the foot of the Al Hajar mountains in Al Khoud, the site is one of only a handful of locations in the world where the ancient seabed is visible sitting 100m above sea level.



The official informed that 1,407 species of local plants have been cultivated in environments simulating their native conditions. "The team has conducted about a thousand field trips since the beginning of the project."

The project is the first of its kind in the region; no other botanical garden represents the entire flora of one country in habitat settings, presenting an unprecedented opportunity for visitors to experience the flora and vegetation of Oman while learning about the agricultural heritage, rich cultural traditions and legendary hospitality of the country. The project will include cable cars, nurseries, a visitor

centre, research centre, field study centre, habitat gardens, habitat pavilions, amenity areas, play areas and family zones in garden settings that are unique to Oman.

The programme on Tuesday saw PDO employees cultivating 2,000 seedlings and more than 10,000 seeds of Omani plant species, which will be planted in the garden.

The programme aimed to raise awareness on the importance of trees, community and institutional cooperation in propagating and preserving Omani plants, and enhance efforts made in the field of afforestation and agriculture.

Bids invited for dualisation of Rub al Khali road

Muscat - The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has announced a tender for Phase 1 of the Rub al Khali road dualisation project.

In a statement, MTCIT said, 'Phase 1 of the Rub al Khali road dualisation project starts from lbri roundabout and extends to the Tanam roundabout, covering a distance of



about 6km.'

Additionally, the project involves construction of several road intersections, roundabouts, a pedestrian underpass and service roads on both sides of a total length of 10km.

The project includes development of several rainwater drainage facilities to ensure the road is operational in all weather conditions.

Sultan Qaboos University TENDERS NOTICE

The Investment & Revenue Department at Sultan Qaboos University would like to invite companies to submit their quotations for:

S/N	Type of Business	Location	Date of site visit	Tender #	The last date for collecting the Document	The last date for submission of the quotations
1	Rent and operate Coffee Shop	College of medicine and Health Sciences	8/11/2023 09:30 am	SQU.IRD.5/23	19/11/2023	19/12/2023 before 11:00 a.m.
2	Provision of Photocopying Services (R Tenders Notice)	In various locations at Sultan Qaboos University Campus	9/11/2023 09:30 am	SQU.IRD. 6/23		
3	Sales & maintenance of computer equipment & mobile phones	Shop No (11)- The Student Services Center	13/11/2023 9:30 Am	SQU.IRD.7/23		
4	Rent and operate ice cream kiosk	A Kiosk near the Shop No (15) -In The Student Services Center	13/11/2023 10:00 Am	SQU.IRD.8/23		
5	Rent and operate ATM machine	Administration Building Extension &	14/11/2023 9:30 Am	SQU.IRD. 9/23		
6	Rent and operate ATM machine	Cultural Center	14/11/2023 10:00 Am	SQU.IRD. 10/23		
7	Rent and operate ATM machine	Sultan Qaboos University Hospital	14/11/2023 10:30 Am	SQU.IRD. 11/23		
8	Rent and operate commercial shop (Food Related)	Shop No(1) College of Arts and Social Sciences	15/11/2023 9:30 Am	SQU.IRD. 12/23		
9	Rent and operate commercial shop (Nonfood Related)	Shop No(2) College of Arts and Social Sciences	15/11/2023 9:30 Am	SQU.IRD. 13/23		

- * The priority will be for the Small and Medium Establishments (SME), which fulfils the quality requirements. All classes of companies can also apply for these bids.
- * Tenderers who wish to participate in this Tender may collect Tender Documents from The Section of Revenue and Expenditures at the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University, during the working hours for an amount of OR.25 for each tender document (non-refundable). The last date for collecting the Document is on Sunday, 19 /11/2023.
- * The Site Visit for the selected shop is necessary. It will be on the above-mentioned date and the assembly point will be at the Investment & Revenue Department.
- * The last date for submission of the quotations: is on Tuesday, 19 /12/2023. The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Director of The Investment & Revenue Department, located on the first floor of the commercial building at Sultan Qaboos University and deposited in the Tender Box kept in the Department, before 11:00 a.m.
- * The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Tender being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Tenderer.
- * The Tenderer should prepare the Site in accordance with the health requirements of Muscat Municipality and the requirements of civil defense in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- * Sultan Qaboos University reserves the right to reject any quotation not fulfilling the requirements and does not bid itself to accept the highest rent or any other quotations.

The Investment & Revenue Department
P.O BOX 50, P.C. 123, ALKHOD, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: 24142685- 24142684 - mobile: 93900477
E- mail: investment@squ.edu.om



TENDER NOTICE

SULTANATE OF OMAN
The Ministry of Agricultural
Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

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

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
974/2023/MAF WR/HQ-103	Supply and Installation of Pesticide Residue and Quality Control Analysis Instruments	25/-	Specialized	Thursday 16/11/2023	Wednesday 6/12/2023
975/2023/MAF WR/HQ-104	Rehabilitation and maintenance of the Biological Control Rearing Unit in Al-Rumais	25/-	Second	Thursday 16/11/2023	Wednesday 6/12/2023
976/2023/MAF WR/HQ-105	supply of Early Detection and surveillance of red palm weevil	25/-	Specialized	Thursday 16/11/2023	Wednesday 6/12/2023

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- Preference will be given to companies whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanization and possible purchase of national products.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration (regarding the exemption from submitting a bid bond in tenders).
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402200** or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Galfar Engineering & Contracting Company, the largest contracting and construction firm in Oman, has been awarded a major road construction contract worth RO53mn by Muscat Municipality, the company announced on Tuesday.

'Galfar has received the letter of acceptance from Muscat Municipality for the Dualisation of Al Ansab-Al Jifnain Road. The value of this project is approximately RO53mn,' Galfar said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The execution period for this road project is 30 months plus 120 days for mobilisation from the date when the works are to be commenced, the company said.

'We take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Muscat Municipality for the confidence vested in Galfar by awarding this project,' Galfar added.

Galfar has been highly successful this year in terms of winning major contracts and growing its project pipeline significantly.

In June, the company was awarded a massive contract worth RO280mn by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) for an execution period of seven years. The PDO contract also includes an additional three-year extension option worth RO120mn.

Galfar had also won a RO29mn engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contract from OQ Exploration & Production Company, a sub-



Muscat - Asyad Group, represented by Oman Post and Asyad Express, has established an investment partnership with two

real estate companies: Wujha Real Estate Development Company and Bayan Investment House.

This new partnership aligns with Asyad Group's strategy to actively involve the private sector in the development and investment of its assets. The agreements are in line with the group's comprehensive land investment strategy, strategically designed to enhance its assets through design, build, finance, operate, and transfer (DBFOT) arrangements with private entities.

As part of the agreements, the two real estate companies will invest in two of Asyad's strategically significant locations in Bausher and Amerat, according to a press release.

Sheikh Ibrahim bin Sultan Al-hosni, acting CEO of Oman Post and Asyad Express, said that this partnership perfectly aligns with

*Muscat Municipality
has awarded Gafar
the contract for
dualisation of Al
Ansab-Al Jifnain
Road with an
execution period
of 30 months*

subsidiary of Oman's global integrated energy group OQ.

Galfar's total consolidated revenues grew by more than 51% to RO185.43mn during the first nine months of 2023, compared to RO122.53mn in the same period of 2022, according to the company's initial unaudited financial results.

On the back of higher revenues, Galfar's net profit for the January-September period of 2023 surged to RO1.458mn from just RO110,000 recorded in the corresponding period of 2022.

Galfar's project pipeline grew to RO644mn by the end of June 2023, supported by major project awards worth RO323mn during the first half of this year, according to the company's second quarter financial report.

Galfar expects to maintain a solid project pipeline in excess of RO500mn in the future, with a significant number of tenders under evaluation across a diverse array of sectors and clients.

Condensed consolidated interim statement of financial position (Unaudited) as at 30 September 2023				
	Shareholders RO	Participants		Total RO
	General Takaful RO	Family Takaful RO		
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	565,279	1,304,505	969,562	2,274,067
Financial asset at fair value through equity	403,111	-	-	-
Receivable from participants' fund	2,869,389	-	-	-
Takaful balance receivables	-	6,901,840	4,449,084	11,350,924
Retafakul balance receivables	-	8,388,863	1,480,388	9,869,250
Other receivables and takaful assets	1,937,052	639,216	1,090,191	1,729,407
Retafakul contract assets	-	5,219,471	11,232,814	16,452,285
Deferred policy acquisition costs	973,739	-	-	-
Wakalah bank deposits	9,419,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	3,000,000
Investment in sukuk	3,867,343	-	6,273,107	6,273,107
Property and equipment	508,633	-	-	-
Intangible assets	374,058	-	-	-
Deferred tax asset	1,221,711	-	-	-
Right of use assets	1,520,892	-	-	-
Total assets	23,660,207	23,953,894	26,995,146	50,949,040

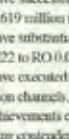
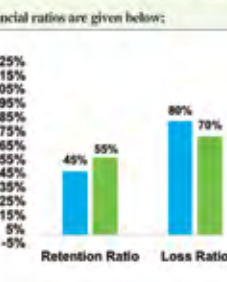
LIABILITIES, PARTICIPANTS' FUND AND EQUITY				
Liabilities				
Takaful liabilities	-	20,497,273	14,654,778	35,152,051
Payable to shareholders' fund	-	470,734	2,398,655	2,869,389
Payable to retakaful	-	6,597,329	10,393,050	16,990,379
Accounts and other payables	463,639	2,352,200	1,783,675	4,135,875
Wakala financing	4,560,763	-	-	-
Deferred income from retakaful contracts	-	152,694	-	152,694
Employees' end of service benefits	96,424	-	-	-
Ijarah Liabilities	910,690	-	-	-
Total liabilities	6,031,516	30,070,230	29,230,158	59,300,388
Participants' fund				
Deficit in participants' fund	-	(6,116,336)	(2,235,012)	(8,351,348)
Equity				
Capital and reserves				
Share capital	16,000,000	-	-	-
Legal Reserve	1,436,739	-	-	-
Investment fair value reserve	26,535	-	-	-
Retained earnings	(5,834,583)	-	-	-
Total equity attributable to shareholders	11,628,691	-	-	-
Perpetual Sukuk eligible as additional capital	6,000,000	-	-	-
Total Equity	17,628,691	-	-	-
Total equity, participants' fund and liabilities	23,660,207	23,953,894	26,995,146	50,949,040
Net assets per share attributable to shareholders	0.0465	-	-	-

	Shareholders RO	General Takaful RO	Family Takaful RO	Total RO
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	440,756	1,861,088	1,288,383	3,149,471
Financial asset at fair value through equity	450,835	-	-	-
Receivable from participants' fund	4,638,835	-	-	-
Takaful balance receivables	-	4,584,655	3,108,698	7,693,353
Retakaful balance receivables	-	5,858,014	1,202,434	7,060,448
Other receivables and takaful assets	1,656,233	514,842	140,282	655,124
Retakaful contract assets	-	9,859,987	9,834,967	19,694,954
Deferred policy acquisition costs	455,328	-	-	-
Wakalah bank deposits	10,769,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	3,000,000
Investment in sukuk	3,500,000	-	2,464,107	2,464,107
Property and equipment	582,599	-	-	-
Intangible assets	372,081	-	-	-
Deferred tax asset	1,305,172	-	-	-
Right of use assets	1,621,737	-	-	-
Total assets	25,792,576	24,178,586	19,536,871	43,715,457
LIABILITIES, PARTICIPANTS' FUND AND EQUITY				
Liabilities				
Takaful liabilities	-	21,018,773	12,415,272	33,434,045
Payable to shareholders' fund	-	1,043,154	3,595,681	4,638,835
Payable to retakaful	-	2,496,234	5,853,105	8,349,339
Accounts and other payables	743,444	4,564,894	1,656,478	6,221,372
Wakala financing	5,644,746	-	-	-
Deferred income from retakaful contracts	-	41,727	340	42,067
Employees' end of service benefits	49,749	-	-	-
Ijarah Liabilities	1,077,373	-	-	-
Total liabilities	7,515,312	29,164,782	23,520,876	52,685,658

Participants' fund				
Deficit in participants' fund	-	(4,986,196)	(3,984,005)	(8,970,201)
Equity				
Capital and reserves				
Share capital	16,000,000	-	-	-
Legal Reserve	1,436,739	-	-	-
Investment fair value reserve	19,203	-	-	-
Retained earnings	(5,178,678)	-	-	-
Total equity attributable to shareholders	12,277,264	-	-	-
Perpetual Sukuk eligible as additional capital	6,000,000	-	-	-
Total Equity	18,277,264	-	-	-
Total equity, participants' fund and liabilities	25,792,576	24,178,586	19,536,871	43,715,457
Net assets per share attributable to shareholders	0.1228			

	2023		
	General Takaful RO	Family Takaful RO	Total RO
Takaful revenue			
Gross contributions	15,281,058	12,346,194	27,627,252
Contributions ceded to retakaful	(4,794,223)	(7,683,856)	(12,478,079)
Net retained contributions	10,486,835	4,662,338	15,149,173
Movement in unearned contribution reserve - net	(1,899,196)	(440,490)	(2,339,686)
Income from retakaful contracts	204,249	76,893	281,142
Total takaful revenue	8,791,888	4,298,741	13,090,629
Takaful expenses			
Gross claims settled	(12,797,183)	(2,994,236)	(15,791,419)
Retakaful share in claim settled	7,092,494	2,368,821	9,461,315
Net claims settled	(5,704,689)	(625,415)	(6,330,104)
Movement in outstanding claims reserve - net	(2,071,291)	(488,355)	(2,559,646)
Movement in other reserves	(148,525)	87,183	(61,342)
Net claims incurred	(7,924,505)	(1,026,587)	(8,951,092)
Acquisition costs amortised during the year	-	-	-
Other takaful expense	(284,346)	(21,204)	(305,550)
Wakala fee expense	(1,986,835)	(1,604,131)	(3,590,966)
Total takaful expenses	(10,195,686)	(2,651,922)	(12,847,608)
Other income	187,997	32,966	220,963
Profit on wakala deposit	171,322	138,417	309,739
Mudarib fees expense	(85,661)	(69,209)	(154,870)
(Deficit) / Surplus from takaful operations	(1,130,140)	1,748,993	618,853
	2022		

Takaful revenue			
Gross contributions	13,307,082	11,227,315	24,534,397
Contributions ceded to retakaful	(4,782,949)	(8,740,621)	(13,523,570)
Net retained contributions	8,524,133	2,486,694	11,010,827
Movement in unearned contribution reserve - net	(1,559,850)	92,174	(1,467,676)
Income from retakaful contracts	251,880	117,425	369,305
Total takaful revenue	7,216,163	2,696,293	9,912,456
Takaful expenses			
Gross claims settled	(14,854,868)	(4,751,147)	(19,606,015)
Retakaful share in claim settled	7,594,853	4,208,724	11,803,577
Net claims settled	(7,260,015)	(542,423)	(7,802,438)
Movement in outstanding claims reserve - net	329,392	(523,090)	(193,698)
Movement in other reserves	490,031	(168,075)	321,956
Net claims incurred	(6,440,592)	(1,233,588)	(7,674,180)
Other takaful expense	(25,291)	(6,812)	(32,103)
Wakala fee expense	(1,836,857)	(1,367,480)	(3,204,337)
Total takaful expenses	(8,302,740)	(2,607,880)	(10,910,620)
Other income	116,385	44,301	160,686
Profit on wakala deposit	68,154	57,501	125,655
Deficit from takaful operations	(902,038)	190,215	(711,823)

 تكاful عمان للتأمين ش.ع.م.و TAKAFUL OMAN INSURANCE SAOG																																						
The Directors' Report to the Shareholders on Condensed Consolidated Interim Financial Information																																						
Dear Shareholders, It is my privilege to present to you the remarkable performance of Takaful Oman Insurance Company SAOG for the nine months ended on September 30, 2023, on behalf of the Board of Directors. Despite the challenging market conditions, our company has demonstrated resilience and achieved notable results. Let me elucidate some of the key accomplishments: - We have successfully transformed the participants' fund from a deficit of RO 0.711 million in 9M22 to a surplus of RO 0.619 million in 9M23, an impressive improvement of RO 1.33 million. - We have substantially reduced our loss before tax and OCI in the shareholders' fund by 75% from RO 0.249 million in 9M22 to RO 0.062 million in 9M23, indicating our operational excellence. - We have executed a robust business strategy that encompasses enhancing our product portfolio, diversifying our distribution channels, improving our customer service, and leveraging our digital capabilities. These achievements exemplify our commitment to generating value for our stakeholders and establishing our company as a leading outsider in the takaful industry. We are confident that we will sustain our growth and achieve our strategic objectives in the forthcoming quarters. Macro Economics Outlook The S&P Global ratings elevated the Sultanate of Oman's sovereign credit ratings twice to BB in 2022. Likewise, the Fitch ratings upgraded the Sultanate's ratings to BB+ in September 2023. The upward trends from the government's prudent use of high oil revenues to reduce debt and spend its resources spending discipline mitigating external risks, and an upward revision of Fitch's oil price forecast. The government outline its budget within debt free limits to pre-emptively settle some of its debt. The government debt management has evolved out of its profit, diminishing the risk of liquidity pressures. According to Fitch Ratings estimates, Oman's general government debt will decline to 39% of GDP in 2023 and remain steady at around 35% in 2024 and 2025, below the 'BB' pre-recession of 54%. Oman's credit rating could be enhanced further by factors such as a fortified government balance sheet due to new fiscal consolidation measures or high oil revenue. Oman's net external debt/GDP could also decline, reflecting lower SOE external debt or higher foreign reserves. Moreover, low oil economic growth could augment non-oil fiscal revenues and alleviate social spending pressures on the government. Performance in Brief Participants Funds The participant funds have recorded a surplus of RO 0.619 million for the nine months ended September 30, 2023, in contrast to a deficit of RO 0.711 million in the corresponding period last year. The significant gains from the government's prudent use of high oil revenues to reduce debt and spend its resources spending discipline mitigating external risks, and an upward revision of Fitch's oil price forecast. The government outline its budget within debt free limits to pre-emptively settle some of its debt. The government debt management has evolved out of its profit, diminishing the risk of liquidity pressures. According to Fitch Ratings estimates, Oman's general government debt will decline to 39% of GDP in 2023 and remain steady at around 35% in 2024 and 2025, below the 'BB' pre-recession of 54%. Oman's credit rating could be enhanced further by factors such as a fortified government balance sheet due to new fiscal consolidation measures or high oil revenue. Oman's net external debt/GDP could also decline, reflecting lower SOE external debt or higher foreign reserves. Moreover, low oil economic growth could augment non-oil fiscal revenues and alleviate social spending pressures on the government. Shareholders' Fund The Shareholders' fund revenue is derived from the Wakala fees. For the nine months period ended September 30, 2023, the shareholders' fund has increased Wakala fees of RO 3.26 million, up from RO 3.20 million in 9M22, reflecting an 129% YoY growth on the back of increased business underwritten. Despite the General & Admin expenses rising by 3% YoY on an absolute basis, the Expense Ratio improved to 22% from 28% as compared to the same period last year, owing to higher Net Earned Contribution which grew by 44% YoY. The Shareholders' fund has reported a profit before finance cost, tax & OCI of RO 0.229 million, compared to RO 0.038 million in 9M22, registering an impressive growth of 495% due to higher Wakala fees. Key financial ratios are given below:																																						
 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ratio</th> <th>9M22 (Actual)</th> <th>9M23 (Actual)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Retention Ratio</td> <td>49%</td> <td>59%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss Ratio</td> <td>80%</td> <td>79%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Commission Exp Ratio (Net)</td> <td>8%</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Expense Ratio</td> <td>28%</td> <td>22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Combined Ratio</td> <td>117%</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Ratio	9M22 (Actual)	9M23 (Actual)	Retention Ratio	49%	59%	Loss Ratio	80%	79%	Commission Exp Ratio (Net)	8%	6%	Expense Ratio	28%	22%	Combined Ratio	117%	100%																		
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 Investment Position & Performance: The Company has a resilient and stable investment portfolio of RO 24.3 million, comprising predominantly of Bank deposits with reputable, dedicated Islamic banks and Islamic windows of commercial banks, accounting for 51% of the total combined investment portfolio. The Company has earned an investment income of RO 0.628 million from the Shareholders' fund and RO 0.399 million from the Participants' fund in 2023, culminating in a total investment income of RO 0.938 million in 2023, which signifies a 219% YoY augmentation compared to RO 0.773 million in the corresponding period last year. The Company has also augmented its strategy to incorporate high-quality Sukuk into the investment portfolio, which will facilitate the enhancement of the investment income.																																						
IFRS 17 Update: As an Islamic financial institute, Takaful Oman is bound by the reporting framework applicable to follow AAOIFI standards. AAOIFI has recently issued its financial accounting standards, FAS 47, which deals with the Accounting for Recognition and Measurement. These standards will be effective for the annual financial statements of the Takaful institutions starting from January 01, 2025. The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has granted the company an exemption to postpone the implementation of the IFRS 17 standard issued by the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and has allowed the company to comply with the above two standards issued by the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) according to their timelines. Shariah Compliance is the foremost priority Takaful Oman Insurance has demonstrated a commitment to being transparent and accountable in optimizing its portfolio while abiding by the Shariah law. The Shariah Supervisory Committee (SSC) exercises the supervisory role to ensure that the company's operation is in compliance with Islamic Shariah rules and principles. The Financial statements for the period ended September 30, 2023, are reviewed and approved by Shariah Supervisory Committee. High Performing Leadership Team with Excellent Omnipotential Ratio Employees are the backbone of any organization. To achieve sustainable & profitable growth, an experienced and motivated team is essential. Transparency, high ethical and moral standards, diversity, and equal opportunity are the fundamental pillars of HR policy. The company provides a healthy working environment, to harness the best potential of the employees. In line with government policy, the company provides young training and learning opportunities in the insurance sector. Takaful Oman is proud to achieve an overall Organization ratio of 82% as against the required ratio of 75%. The company staff is the primary source of achievement. To keep the company ahead in the industry, it continues to invest in the training and development of its human resources. Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG is dedicated to pursuing the business in a socially responsible and sustainable manner. Our ESG charter demonstrates our commitment to ethical and responsible business practices, community development, environmental protection, employee engagement, stakeholder engagement, and ESG integration. The Company recognizes that our CSR activities and ESG considerations will enhance society and the environment and foster long-term success as a responsible business. Acknowledgement: The Board gratefully acknowledges His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Saud for his outstanding leadership and vision. The Board would like to convey their profound gratitude to the shareholders who have shown unwavering confidence in the Company and its management team. They would also like to thank the Capital Market Authority (CMA), Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), the Re/Takaful Companies, and all the Participants for their continuous guidance and support. In addition, The Board would like to express their heartfelt appreciation and recognition for the commitment, dedication, and innovative thinking displayed by every member of our Takaful Oman family, with complete confidence that they will continue to do so. On behalf of the Board of Directors Mr. Salim bin Hamed Al Harthi Chairman																																						
Condensed consolidated interim statement of shareholders' comprehensive income (Unaudited) for the period ended 30 September 2023 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th><th>2023 RO</th><th>2022 RO</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Wakala fees</td><td>3,590,966</td><td>3,204,337</td></tr> <tr> <td>Investment and other income</td><td>628,373</td><td>648,064</td></tr> <tr> <td>Mudarbah Fees Income</td><td>154,869</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>4,374,208</td><td>3,852,401</td></tr> <tr> <td>General and administrative expenses</td><td>(2,787,040)</td><td>(2,702,829)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ijarah financing expense</td><td>(49,476)</td><td>(42,510)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Wakala financing expense</td><td>(242,563)</td><td>(245,637)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Acquisition cost</td><td>(1,357,573)</td><td>(1,110,949)</td></tr> <tr> <td>(Loss) / Profit before taxation</td><td>(62,444)</td><td>(249,524)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Taxation</td><td>(83,461)</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>(Loss) / Profit for the period</td><td>(145,905)</td><td>(249,524)</td></tr> </tbody> </table> Note: The complete accounts will be delivered or sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English as requested, within seven days of receipt of the request. Requests to be sent to the following address: Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG P.O. BOX 207, Postal Code 134, Bareaq Al Shatti, Sulthanate of Oman Tel.: 00968 22303000, Fax: 00968 24699511				2023 RO	2022 RO	Wakala fees	3,590,966	3,204,337	Investment and other income	628,373	648,064	Mudarbah Fees Income	154,869	-		4,374,208	3,852,401	General and administrative expenses	(2,787,040)	(2,702,829)	Ijarah financing expense	(49,476)	(42,510)	Wakala financing expense	(242,563)	(245,637)	Acquisition cost	(1,357,573)	(1,110,949)	(Loss) / Profit before taxation	(62,444)	(249,524)	Taxation	(83,461)	-	(Loss) / Profit for the period	(145,905)	(249,524)
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Eurozone economy shrinks in Q3, inflation falls further

شركة زجاج مجان ش.م.ع.ع

MAJAN GLASS

MAJAN GLASS COMPANY S.A.O.G.

P.O Box 17, Postal Code 327, C.R.No: 3/19456/6, Sohar Industrial Estate, Sultanate of Oman.

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REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON THE
UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE PERIOD
ENDED ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Board of Directors of Majan Glass Company SAOG is pleased to present the Company's unaudited financial results for the period that ended on 30 September 2023.

Performance overview:

Gross Sales revenue for the period ended September 2023 amounted to RO 9,943 Million, almost in line with the comparable period of the Previous Year's Sales of RO 10,093. However, for the same reporting periods, the ex-works sales showed a 1.47% increase (current period ended Sep 2023 Ex works sales is RO 9,358 million as compared to the previous year same period Ex works sales of RO 9,222), given the change in logistics mix to more ex-works/FOB sales compared to the previous year. This change is also driven by the company's effort to optimize the customer/country mix to improve profitability.

The company also managed to pass on the additional cost of operations by way of a Price increase to its customers for the current year, resulting in better performance in the bottom line.

Exports amounted to 88% of the total sales for the quarter that ended 30 September 2023

During the period that ended on 30 September 2023 (especially in Quarter 1), the company faced some production constraints due to unforeseen breakdowns in the plant, adversely affecting the production capacity, sales, and the bottom line. However, the company has immediately addressed the issue and expects improvements in the coming months, which is seen in the results of the last two quarters.

The Gross profit amounted to 1,362 thousand Omani riyals for the period ended on September 30, 2023, compared to a Gross profit of 1,433 thousand Omani riyals for the same period of the previous year, 2022.

Net Loss after Tax for the current period amounts to RO 227K as against Net Loss after Tax of RO 573K for the same period in the previous year, 2022. (Loss reduced by 60.38%)

Driven by the improvement in Customer Mix and better operational performance, the company managed to stop incurring losses consecutively for the two quarters that ended on 30 June 2023 and 30 September 2023. The company continues to focus its efforts further to improve margins and achieve better positive performance.

Quarter-wise Performance Highlights:

Particulars	Q1 03-23	Q2 06-23	Q3 09-23	Total YTD Sep 2023	Total YTD Sep 2022
Sales Million Bottles	79.22	82.25	81.41	242.88	273.46
Production Million Bottles	74.89	82.87	80.83	238.59	268.70
OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS - (ALL AMOUNTS ARE IN RO MILLION)					
Sales	2,999	3,356	3,588	9,943	10,093
Cost of Goods Sold	-2,762	-2,861	-2,958	-8,581	-8,660
Gross Profit	0,237	0,495	0,630	1,362	1,433
Net Profit/(Loss) Before Tax	-0,275	0,067	0,126	-0,082	-0,388
Income Tax	-0,010	-0,010	-0,125	-0,145	-0,185
Net Profit/(Loss) After Tax	-0,285	0,057	0,001	-0,227	-0,573
EBITDA	0,002	0,354	0,425	0,781	0,692

Future Outlook:

The company order book is full for the year's balance per current customer orders and projections. Raw Material rates are stabilising. Caution needs to be exercised given the current geopolitical tensions and rate-tightening cycle happening in economies worldwide, which could lead to consumers cutting back on spending. However, given the diversity in its Product/Category/Country/Customer portfolio, the company is well placed to manage the situation, given that most of its SKUs are used for packaging daily-use staple products.

Acknowledgement:

On Behalf of the Board of Directors, I take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour and his Government for their continuous assistance and generous support extended to the industry. We pray to the Almighty Allah to bestow His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour with the best health and long life to lead the country to prosperity.

On Behalf of the Board of Directors,

Mohammed Abdullah Mohammed Al-Farsi

Chairman

Dated:- 30 October 2023

Statement of Comprehensive Income for Nine months
period ended on 30th SEPTEMBER 2023 (UNAUDITED):

	30th September 2023	30th September 2022
	RO '000s	RO '000s
Sales	9,943	10,093
Cash Cost of Sales	(7,990)	(7,846)
	1,953	2,247
Cost of Sales - depreciation	(591)	(814)
Gross Profit / (Loss)	1,362	1,433
Other income	231	86
Expenses		
Administration and general expenses	(1,365)	(1,615)
Finance charges	(288)	(270)
Depreciation	(22)	(22)
Profit / (Loss) Before Tax	(82)	(388)
Deferred / Income tax for current year	(145)	(185)
Net Profit / (Loss)	(227)	(573)

Statement of Financial Position as
at 30th September 2023 (UNAUDITED):

	30th September 2023	30th September 2022
	RO '000s	RO '000s
ASSETS:		
Non-current Assets		
Property, Plant & Equipment	3,834	3,435
Capital work in progress	-	-
Fixed Assets	3,834	3,435
Deferred tax asset	233	523
Total Non-current assets	4,067	3,958
Current Assets		
Inventories	3,777	4,253
Trade & other receivables	3,961	3,711
Bank balances & cash	34	61
	7,772	8,025
Assets held for sale	-	-
Total Current assets	7,772	8,025
Total Assets	11,839	11,983
Current Liabilities		
Term loan / Bank overdraft - current portion	3,404	4,245
Trade & other payables	4,755	4,184
Employees and Directors' Payables	676	623
	8,835	9,052
Non-current Liabilities		
Term loan	2,087	1,376
	2,087	1,376
Total Liabilities	10,922	10,428
Net Assets	917	1,555
Shareholders' equity		
Share capital	4,202	4,202
Statutory reserve	1,273	1,273
Retained earnings	(4,558)	(3,920)
Total shareholders' equity	917	1,555

Notes:

1.All amounts are in RO '000s.

2.Previous year figures are regrouped/rearranged wherever required.

3.The complete Financial statements of the Company would be made available to any shareholder or interested party on request in Arabic or in English within 7 days from the date of request. The request applications can be sent on the above mentioned address.

Chery demonstrates super hybrid platform

Recently during Chery Tech Day, Chery initiated the forward-looking technology strategy, exploring the technological development direction and future research layout under the tide of industry transformation.

In 2022, Chery Tech Day dedicated an exhibition area to 'new energy', displaying innovative technologies such as intelligent hybrid architecture and multi-functional skateboard platforms. This demonstrated Chery's determination and confidence in leading the new energy race.

In 2023, Chery's Super Hybrid Platform and high-performance electric platform have been implemented in various vehicle models. Among the six major technical show areas of the '2023 Chery Tech Day', the hybrid technology zone, electric technology zone, and battery zone have collectively showcased Chery's technological breakthroughs in the field of new energy.

Chery's Super Hybrid Platform, known as C-DM, has advanced further. It is equipped with Chery's dedicated 1.5T hybrid engine, paired with Chery's pioneering hybrid-specific 3-speed DHT gearbox, hybrid-specific three-element lithium battery pack, and battery management system.

This achieves three core advantages: comprehensive high performance, sustained high energy efficiency, and high battery safety. It boasts impressive performance metrics such as thermal efficiency exceeding 44.5%, accelerating from 0 to 100 kilometers per hour in 4.26 seconds, and achieving a super-fast charge from 30% to 80% in only 18 minutes. These enhancements contribute to an overall elevated user experience.



Through technological innovation, global attributes, and a focus on user experience, Chery showcased a wide array of achievements at the 2023 Chery Tech Day.

This demonstration highlights Chery's ongoing pursuit of self-improvement and innovation, with a commitment to leading the future development of the industry, and ultimately, providing a better driving experience for users worldwide.

Recently, Kantar and Google jointly released the 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders Top 50. Chery is ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th in the overall list and its brand power has achieved strong growth.

Chery Automobile took the first spot among all Chinese automotive brands in J.D. Power 2023 China Initial Quality StudySM(IQS).

In Oman, Chery will soon be launched by Saud Bahwan Group.

BankDhofar introduces innovative vertical credit card with more security

BankDhofar is pleased to announce the launch of its new Vertical Credit Cards, designed to meet the customers need. The vertical design offers a unique and modern look that is both stylish and functional. This reflects the bank's commitment to deliver customer centric solutions made possible by listening to the needs of its customers.

The card is set to revolutionise the way our customers manage their finances. It offers a contemporary design, reflecting the convenience of 'Tap and Go' payments, thus enhancing their everyday banking experience.

The vertical design is more ergonomic and easier to hold, making it ideal for one-handed use. It is also more secure, as the card number and other sensitive information are hidden from view when the card is used for payment.

In response to changing customer preferences and spending patterns, especially in the post-COVID era, BankDhofar recognised the growing demand for a more convenient and secure payment experience. To cater to these evolving expectations, the bank collaborated with a local Omani SME for the new card designs, where colour scheme was chosen carefully to reflect the specific segment colours along



with a wave pattern of silver to reflect the movement and endless possibilities.

This not only reflects the dedication to understand customer needs but also mirrors the spirit of Oman Vision 2040, emphasizing the power of government and private partnerships.

In addition to enhanced design, BankDhofar's vertical credit cards reward customers for their everyday spending. Each transaction offers an opportunity to earn valuable rewards, ensuring that every purchase contributes to a brighter financial future.

BankDhofar's cardholders will have a chance to be part of the credit card 'Bonus Points' promotion campaign. During this campaign for spend of RO200, Platinum cardholders can earn 3,000 bonus reward points (worth of RO30 which is equivalent to the card's annual fee) and for spend of RO100 Gold cardholders will have the opportunity to earn 2,000 bonus points (worth of RO20 which is equivalent to the card's annual fee). This campaign is valid till November 30.

BankDhofar is a leading financial provider of credit card solutions. The bank offers a variety of credit cards to meet the needs of its customers, including Infinite, Platinum, World and Gold. BankDhofar is committed to providing its customers with the best possible products and services.

Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital inaugurates breast cancer clinic

In a significant milestone for healthcare in Oman, Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital has launched a breast cancer clinic - a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to the early detection and comprehensive treatment of breast cancer and other breast-related ailments.

The launch of the Aster Al Raffah Breast Cancer Clinic comes at a crucial time when incidence of breast cancer accounts for 12.5% of new annual cancer cases worldwide.

In Oman, where breast cancer is the most prevalent cancer overall and particularly among women, the clinic's specialised services are of utmost importance. Notably, 31% of breast cancer cases in Oman are diagnosed at advanced stages, emphasising the need for early



intervention and specialised care.

The Aster Al Raffah Breast Cancer Clinic boasts of cutting-edge technologies and a team of expert medical professionals dedicated to providing the highest standard of care.

The clinic features advanced diagnostic technologies that include world-class breast mammography, ultrasound, and breast MRI machines.

These critical tools play a pivotal role in ensuring early detection and precise diagnosis of breast-related issues. This launch of the breast cancer clinic heralds a new era in healthcare by offering a range of diagnostic and therapeutic services.

Commenting on the launch of the breast cancer clinic, Dr Salim al Rahbi, consultant breast surgeon at Aster Al Royal Raffah Hospital, emphasised the clinic's dedication to providing comprehensive care for breast cancer patients.

Future of School Buildings symposium ends

The Ministry of Education (MoE) on Monday concluded the symposium on 'The Future of School Building' organised in conjunction with the Urban October Conference, implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning under the slogan 'Urban Planning and Sustainability of Cities', at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Through this symposium, the ministry seeks to develop school buildings architecturally and structurally in a manner consistent with educational developments in modern education paths, and to keep pace with national developments in the field of city development and planning in accordance with Oman Vision 2040, and the requirements of educational development in the field of education.

It also seeks to develop modern visions of engineering and architectural designs for future school buildings as an attractive educational environment and raise the level of partnership and integration between the role of MoE and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in the field of school buildings.

In addition, MoE aims to meet the educational needs and requirements in the field of the school building that incubates education, in line with education



development plans and strategies, update the construction specifications for school buildings in accordance with advanced standards, and create a national partnership between the various segments of the educational community and civil society with regard to developing the school building for the future.

The symposium discussed the planning policies for the school building, and the aspects of planning policies for establishing schools in the future.

They also discussed the contemporary engineering design of the school building in accordance with the Omani environment.

There was an Artificial Intelligence Corner which witnessed effective interaction from the students that reflected the students' ideas and perceptions about school buildings in the future.

Oman Book Lovers Club participates in EduTrac Oman expo in Muscat

Oman Book Lovers Club (OBLC) made a significant mark at the EduTrac Oman - Education, Training & Career Expo held from October 22 to 24.

The club's dedicated team enriched the expo experience for attendees by hosting an engaging booth and thought-provoking panel discussions.

Organised yearly at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, in the month of October by the event organiser - Al Nimr Expo, the EduTrac Oman in Muscat is an international trade fair focusing on higher education, training and career development.

The fair acts as a platform for students, graduates, and HR professionals to network, explore career opportunities, and seek advice from experts.

Simultaneously, it provides universities and educational institutions - both locally and internationally - a chance to engage directly with potential students, raise awareness about academic education, and strengthen their



presence in the thriving Omani education market.

Oman Book Lovers Club, in short OBLC, is a community founded on March 30, 2021, with a vision to connect all Book Lovers in Oman and to create a one-stop-shop for all things related to books. OBLC engages its members and the book loving crowd with book discussions, live chats with authors, book talks, club activities for kids, toddlers and teens, books sharing/ Borrowing Library, bookstore discounts, educational institution collaborations and so on.

Their 10,000+ members and 8,000+ books available for free borrowing are proof of their vision - 'At OBLC, there is something for everyone!'

'OBLC is open for everyone to join and be a part, as a member and a volunteer,' the group stated, adding that the registration forms for both are available on their social media pages.



At the EduTrac Expo 2023, OBLC hosted a reading corner and a couple of enlightening panel discussions with a view to connect and engage book readers in attendance and also to spread awareness about the club's library and other reading activities to keen readers, who otherwise have limited sources to find their favourite books.

The club's booth at the EduTrac Oman Expo was a hub of literary enthusiasm, drawing visitors from all walks of life. Notably, the presence of the distinguished calligrapher Mohammed al Rawahy added a touch of artistic brilliance to the event.

The highlight of the Expo, however, was the series of panel discussions on October 22-23.

The first discussion, titled 'Writing as a Career', explored the evolving landscape of writing professions and the growing opportunities in the field. This conversation was graced by Vaishali

This conversation featured Divya Narang, the spouse of the Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. She shared her perspectives on the vital role of reading in a teenager's life.

Mohammed al Rawahy, a renowned calligrapher and retired English Literature Professor at SQU, and Haylie Saunders, Deputy Head at Cheltenham Muscat International School, added their expertise to the discussion, emphasising the importance of nurturing a love for books among teenagers.

These engaging panel discussions provided valuable insights and perspectives on the evolving world of literature and reading, making the Expo an intellectual feast for attendees.

OBLC continues to be a prominent player in promoting literature and the love of books in the community. Their participation in the EduTrac Oman Expo exemplifies their commitment to education and the cultural enrichment of Oman.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Israel, Hamas locked in ‘fierce battles’ in Gaza, 8,525 killed

Huthis fired drones and missiles towards Israel and vowed to keep up attacks

Jerusalem - Israeli troops and Hamas fighters engaged on Tuesday in ‘fierce battles’ in Gaza, where the dire humanitarian crisis spiralled and tearful Palestinian families scoured rubble in a desperate search for loved ones.

Footage from the Israeli military showed tanks and armoured bulldozers churning up bomb-scarred dirt tracks and troops searching shattered buildings for Hamas fighters and the 240 hostages still missing. Israel struck 300 targets during its fourth night of land operations in northern Gaza, launched after the bloodiest attack in its history when Hamas gunmen killed some 1,400 in a brutal cross-border raid, according to Israeli officials.

The army said its forces were ‘engaged in fierce battles with Hamas fighters deep inside the Gaza Strip’, killing dozens of fighters.

Warplanes kept up a relent-



This photo taken from Israel’s southern city of Sderot shows smoke rising during Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip on Tuesday (AFP)

We want to live like other people in this world... We don’t know what to do. The least they can do is give us a truce, give us three hours, a temporary truce or a ceasefire

AHMED AL-KAHLOUT

less barrage of strikes on Gaza, where the bombing campaign has now killed 8,525, according

to the latest count given by the Hamas-run health ministry, many of them children.

The ministry later said another 50 people had died in an Israeli strike on the Jabalia refugee camp.

“We want to live like any other people in this world, to live quietly,” said Ahmed al-Kahlout, a Gaza resident living near an Orthodox Cultural Centre destroyed in a strike.

“We don’t know what to do. The least they can do is give us

a truce, give us three hours, a temporary truce or a ceasefire,” Kahlout told AFP.

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dismissed growing international calls for a ceasefire, saying it would be ‘surrender’ to the Hamas group he has vowed to destroy.

Hamas also released footage of battles within Gaza, including what it said was a military vehi-

cle on fire.

None of this footage could be independently verified but AFP images showed plumes of smoke rising above Gaza and Israeli helicopters raining down rockets on the northern Gaza Strip.

‘Stop these massacres’

The humanitarian toll has sparked a global backlash, with aid groups and the United Nations warning time is running out for many of the territory’s 2.4mn people denied access to food, water, fuel and medicine.

“Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children. It’s a living hell for everyone else,” said children’s aid agency UNICEF, urging an ‘immediate humanitarian ceasefire’.

Surgeons are conducting amputations on hospital floors without anaesthetic, and children are forced to drink salty water, said Jean-Francois Corty, vice-president of Medecins Sans Frontieres, which has 20 staff on the ground. Israel has accused Hamas of using hospitals as military headquarters and civilians as ‘human shields’, charges the group dismisses as ‘baseless’ propaganda.

At a funeral in southern Gaza, tearful mourners cradled the bodies of relatives wrapped in white shrouds before burying them with their bare hands.

“We ask the world to show sympathy for the children to stop these massacres,” Youssef Hijazi, the grandfather of one victim, told AFP.

As even Israel’s staunchest allies voiced concern about the humanitarian crisis in southern Gaza, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA said there was not nearly enough aid to meet the ‘unprecedented’ needs. “When an eight-year-old tells you that she doesn’t want to die, it’s hard not to feel helpless,” said UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths.

Hisham Adwan, Gaza director of the Rafah crossing with Egypt where some aid has been allowed in, said 36 trucks had been waiting there since the previous day.

“I feel that it’s extremely slow and there’s disruption to UNRWA’s work, and we don’t know why,” he said.

Israel said it is inspecting cargo to make sure weapons are not being smuggled in, and monitoring to guarantee Hamas does not seize the supplies.

Meanwhile, in a sign that the conflict risked spiralling throughout the region, Yemen’s Iran-backed Huthis fired drones and missiles towards Israel and vowed to keep up attacks.

Israel’s army also said it had intercepted a missile fired from the Red Sea region.

AFP

A CRACKED LOAF IS BETTER THAN NO BREAD



A boy stands holding a fresh and cracked loaf of bread along an alley in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement (AFP)

Israel demolishes home of Hamas deputy leader

Arura, Palestinian Territories - The Israeli army demolished the West Bank home of exiled Hamas number two Saleh al-Aruri with explosives on Tuesday as war raged with the Islamist group in Gaza.

The Israeli military said forces entered the village of Arura, near Ramallah, and shot at people who were ‘hurling’ rocks towards them during the demolition. Aruri is accused by Israel of masterminding numerous attacks. He was elected deputy to Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in 2017, before being officially named the group’s number two.

An AFP journalist saw the ruins of the house in Arura, where Aruri’s nephew said the move was meant to ‘intimidate’ people. “And to distance people as much as possible from the resistance (to Israel), but these



Palestinians look on as an excavator clears the rubble of the house of Hamas deputy chief Saleh al-Aruri, in West Bank on Tuesday (AFP)

people are steadfast,” said Qutaiba Khasib.

The Israeli military arrested around 20 people including a brother of Aruri and nine of his nephews, on October 21, village mayor Ali al-Khasib and witnesses told AFP.

At the same time, they interrogated dozens of residents and took possession of Aruri’s

house. After spending nearly two decades in Israeli prisons, Aruri was freed in 2010 on the condition he went into exile.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and its forces regularly carry out incursions into Palestinian communities.

AFP

Iran says resistance groups won’t ‘remain silent’ on Israel-Hamas war

Doha, Qatar - Iran said on Tuesday it was ‘natural’ for Tehran-backed groups to attack Israel in light of its war on Hamas, warning of a wider spillover if no ceasefire is reached.

The remarks were made by Iran’s top diplomat Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Qatar’s capital Doha where he met with Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and his Qatari counterpart to discuss a push for a diplomatic breakthrough.

‘It is natural that the resistance groups and movements do not remain silent against all these crimes’ committed by Is-

rael, Amir-Abdollahian said in remarks relayed by Iran’s foreign ministry.

“They will not wait for anyone’s advice, therefore we need to use the last political opportunities to stop the war,” he said after talks with Sheikh Tamim, warning the situation could ‘get out of control’.

In the face of the growing crisis, Iran-backed groups in Lebanon and Syria as well as Yemen have launched cross-border attacks that many fear could inflame the region.

Amir-Abdollahian’s statement came hours after Tehran-



Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani meets with Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Doha on Tuesday (AFP)

backed Huthis in Yemen claimed responsibility for a drone attack on southern Israel,

with the group vowing to continue its attacks.

Shortly afterwards, the Israeli

military said its forces intercepted a ‘surface-to-surface missile’ fired towards Israeli ter-

ritory from the area of the Red Sea, saying it was ‘successfully intercepted’ by the ‘Arrow’ aerial defence system.

Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman said the pair had discussed ‘the dangerous escalation of confrontations in the Gaza Strip and West Bank and the importance of advancing immediate ceasefire efforts’, in a post on X, formerly Twitter. “We also stressed the need to intensify regional efforts to prevent the expansion of violence and conflict in the region,” he said.

Both Iran and Qatar have

been fierce supporters of the Palestinian cause and have open channels of communication with Hamas, the Islamist rulers of Gaza.

The wealthy Gulf emirate, which hosts the largest US military base in the Middle East, also hosts the political office of Hamas and is the main residence of its self-exiled leader Ismail Haniyeh. It has used its channels with Hamas, established with US blessing, to play a lead role in the release of four of the hostages held by Hamas in Gaza.

AFP

Millions across northern China choke under severe pollution

Beijing, China - Tens of millions of people across northern China were under severe pollution warnings on Tuesday, with authorities urging them to reduce outdoor activities as a greyish smog enveloped the region.

Several areas of north China's Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, home to over 100mn people, are suffering from some of the worst pollution they have seen in months.

In the capital Beijing, authorities on Monday issued an orange alert - the country's second-highest pollution warning. "There has been more smog in the past two days... it really

has an effect," said office worker Fu Dalin, 27.

"Because the smog is so serious, I won't go out for a run like usual, and will just have to stay at home," he told AFP in a business district in downtown Beijing. Another resident of the capital, Xu Gengying, said the pollution wouldn't stop her from going about her everyday life.

"We still go out when we need to, if there's something to do. Just avoid doing some exercise outdoors - no jogging," she said.

In several areas in densely populated Hebei province, which surrounds the capital, au-



A couple wearing masks walks along a street in Beijing on Tuesday (AFP)

thorities issued their highest red alert.

Air quality monitoring firm IQAir on Tuesday listed Beijing as the fifth most-polluted major city on Earth, just ahead of Indian megalopolis Mumbai.

Authorities urged residents to 'to reduce going out and strenuous outdoor exercise in the near future', according to state news agency Xinhua.

They were also limiting the number of construction and transport vehicles allowed on the roads.

In parts of Hebei, one official forecast showed that hazy conditions brought visibility down

to lower than 50 metres.

In the nearby city of Tianjin, south of Beijing and home to 15 million people, the meteorological bureau advised anyone suffering from respiratory issues to refrain from going outside and to wear a mask if they do.

'Unfavourable' conditions

Official forecasters say the smog, which they blamed on 'unfavourable weather conditions', will linger in the region until temperatures drop from unseasonably mild highs later this week.

Should a red alert be issued in

Beijing, that would trigger measures such as reducing traffic by prohibiting emitting vehicles with licence plates ending in even and odd numbers from driving on alternate days.

The Chinese capital declared 'war on pollution' after winning the Winter Olympics bid in 2015, shutting down dozens of coal plants and relocating heavy industries to shed its status as one of the world's most polluted cities.

But while there has been improvement in recent years, air quality remains far below World Health Organization standards.

AFP

Border clashes: Chinese minister in Myanmar

Talks were held with Myanmar junta on establishing peace along their shared border

Yangon, Myanmar - China's public security minister has held talks with Myanmar's junta on establishing peace along their shared border, state media said Tuesday, following clashes between ethnic armed groups and the military in Myanmar.

Thousands of people have been reportedly displaced, with some crossing into China, after three armed groups fighting for autonomy launched coordinated attacks on the junta, which said it had lost control of several outposts.

Wang Xiaohong, who is also a member of China's cabinet, the State Council, met the junta's home minister Lieutenant-General Yar Pyae in the capital Naypyidaw, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported.

The two 'discussed peace and tranquillity in border areas of the two countries' and cooperation on law enforcement and security, it said, without giving details.

Since Friday fighting has raged across a swathe of Myanmar's northern Shan state - where a

billion-dollar rail link is planned as part of Beijing's Belt and Road global infrastructure project.

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Arakan Army (AA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) say they have seized several military posts and key roads linking Myanmar with China, its biggest trade partner.

The three groups - which analysts say can call on at least 15,000 fighters between them - have fought regularly with the military over autonomy and control of resources.

The TNLA said on Tuesday its troops were battling the military around 40km (25 miles) east of Lashio town, home to the military's northeastern command.

Shops were open in the town, a resident told AFP, but banks were closed and the streets were quieter than usual.

"Security forces have closed the roads around military bases and the airport," they said, requesting anonymity for security



Myanmar's Home Minister Yar Pyae (left) shakes hands with China's Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong during a meeting in Naypyidaw on Monday (AFP)

reasons.

Flights to and from Lashio's airport have been cancelled until at least Wednesday, an air ticketing agent told AFP.

Phone and internet connections in Hopang township, around 10km from Chinshwehaw on the China border, appeared to be cut on Tuesday.

On Monday the MNDAA released footage it said showed its fighters occupying Chinshwe-

The AA, TNLA and MNDAA say the military has suffered with dozens wounded, killed and captured since Friday.

Analysts say both sides likely inflate or deflate casualty figures.

Displacement

The United Nations has said it fears more than 6,200 people have been displaced by the fighting, including 600 who have fled across the Chinese border.

Thousands have been displaced, with some crossing into China, after three armed groups fighting for autonomy launched coordinated attacks on the junta, which lost control of several outposts

haw. More than a quarter of Myanmar's US\$1.8bn worth of border trade with China from April to September this year passed through Chinshwehaw, junta-controlled media reported last month, citing the commerce ministry.

In commercial hub Yangon the price of Chinese potatoes had gone up as new shipments 'cannot travel through the border route', state media reported on Monday.

China is a top ally and major arms supplier of the junta, and has refused to label its 2021 power grab a coup.

Beijing maintains ties with some ethnic armed groups along its border with Myanmar, home to ethnic Chinese communities who use Chinese SIM cards and currency.

It has previously denied reports it has supplied the armed groups with weapons.

AFP



RAIN FURY IN VIETNAM KILLS 3

This aerial photo shows flooded houses in Huong Khe district in central Vietnam's Ha Tinh province on Tuesday. Three people died after days of heavy rain in central and north Vietnam that flooded homes and submerged roads, disaster management authorities said (AFP)

Bangladesh: Myanmar team meets Rohingyas

Teknaf, Bangladesh - Myanmar officials arrived in Bangladesh on Tuesday to meet with Rohingya refugees as part of a long-stalled repatriation scheme now backed by China, authorities said.

Bangladesh is home to around one million Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled a violent 2017 crackdown by the Myanmar military that is now subject to a UN genocide probe.

The stateless and persecuted minority live in overcrowded, dangerous and under-resourced relief camps, and several previous attempts to broker their return home have failed due to reluctance from Myanmar and the refugees themselves.

The team of Myanmar officials arrived at Teknaf, a river port just across from their shared border with Bangladesh, to meet with several dozen Rohingya families.

"They will discuss repatriation with the Rohingyas today and verify their identity," Shamsud Douza, the country's deputy refugee commissioner, told AFP.

"The delegates will leave for Myanmar today but will return tomorrow."

Bangladesh officials said Myanmar plans to take back around 3,000 refugees by December as part of a pilot repatriation scheme brokered in a three-way meeting between the



Rohingyas from various camps wait to meet delegates from Myanmar to discuss the possibility of repatriation in Teknaf on Tuesday (AFP)

two countries and China in April.

"They are ready to accept them. But the Rohingyas are not ready to go. That's the challenge," one Bangladeshi government official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Rohingya community leaders have long said they would only return if they were granted citizenship and resettled in their own land.

'We have questions'

"We are interested to go back to our country if Myanmar takes us back to our place of origin, gives us dignity, and fulfils all our rights," Khin Maung, a prominent Rohingya leader, told AFP.

"But if our rights are not given, we have questions," he said.

The Rohingya are widely viewed in Myanmar as interlopers from Bangladesh, despite roots in the Southeast Asian country stretching back centuries, and are stateless after Myanmar stopped recognising their citizenship in 2015.

Violence is a fact of life in the camps, with rival armed groups battling for control of territory.

Malnutrition is also widespread, with the UN food agency saying a funding shortfall this year had forced it to cut rations by a third.

The desperate situation has prompted thousands of Rohingyas to embark upon dangerous and often deadly sea trips to Southeast Asian countries to escape the camps.

AFP

Charles III visits Kenya as colonial abuses loom

Nairobi, Kenya - King Charles III paid a solemn visit on Tuesday to the birthplace of independent Kenya, at the start of a trip clouded by calls for an apology over Britain's bloody colonial past.

Although the four-day state visit by Charles and Queen Camilla has been billed as an opportunity to look to the future and build on the cordial modern-day ties between London and Nairobi, Buckingham Palace has said the king will address historic 'wrongs' during decades of colonial rule. It is the 74-year-old British head of state's first tour of an African and Commonwealth nation since becoming king last year and comes



King Charles III shakes hands with Kenyan President William Ruto as Kenyan First Lady Rachel Ruto and Queen Camilla look on in Nairobi on Tuesday (AFP)

just weeks before Kenya celebrates the 60th anniversary of independence in December.

Under rainy skies, Charles and

Camilla were given a ceremonial red-carpet welcome by Kenyan President William Ruto, who said on X he was 'honoured' to host

the royal couple. Later, Charles and Ruto laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in the Uhuru Gardens memorial park.

Uhuru means 'freedom' in Swahili and the site is steeped in Kenya's turbulent history. Independence was declared there at midnight on December 12, 1963. The Union flag was lowered and replaced with Kenya's black, red, green and white flag.

The gardens were built on the site of a camp where British colonial authorities detained suspected Mau Mau guerrillas during the suppression of their 1952-1960 uprising.

AFP



Thailand's Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin (AFP)

Thailand: Visa-free entry for Indians, Taiwanese

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand will offer visa-free entry to tourists from India and Taiwan, the prime minister announced on Tuesday, as the government seeks to rebuild the key tourism sector after it was battered by the pandemic.

Indian and Taiwanese visitors will be entitled to stay for up to 30 days under the six-month trial, which will start next month.

Thailand's tourism sector accounts for almost 20 per cent of overall GDP, but it has struggled to get back on its feet since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We will provide visa-free entry to India and Taiwan because a lot of their people like to travel to Thailand," Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin told reporters after a weekly cabinet meeting.

Until now, tourists from India and Taiwan have had to apply for a 15-day visa-on-arrival at immigration checkpoints, presenting a bank statement and proof of accommodation. The move comes after the government opened a similar visa-free scheme for Chinese tourists in September.

AFP

Tens of thousands of Afghans flee Pakistan as deadline looms

Peshawar, Pakistan - More than 10,000 Afghans living in Pakistan rushed to the borders on Tuesday, just hours before a deadline for 1.7mn people to leave Pakistan voluntarily or face arrest and deportation.

The Pakistan government has said it would begin arresting undocumented Afghans and taking them to new holding centres from Wednesday, from where they will be processed and forcibly returned to Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban government has imposed a harsh interpretation of Islamic law since seizing power in August 2021, banning girls from secondary and university education and forcing women to stay out of work.

While hundreds of thousands of Afghans are estimated to have fled to Pakistan since the Taliban's return to power, millions more had already settled there over decades of conflict, making Pakistan the host of one of the world's largest refugee populations. Despite a gruelling economic crisis in Afghanistan, coupled with the Taliban government's edicts on women and girls' rights, Afghans in Pakistan are being forced to return to their home country.

"Thousands of Afghan refugees are waiting for their turn in vehicles, lorries, and trucks, and the number continues to grow," Irshad Mohmand, a senior government official at the Torkham border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province told AFP.

"More than 10,000 refugees have gathered since morning."

In Afghanistan, the Taliban government has qualified Pakistan's policy as 'harassment'.

'Procedure of deportation'

Thousands more Afghans are



Afghan refugees arrive in trucks and cars to cross the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Chaman on Tuesday (AFP)

Thousands of Afghan refugees are waiting for their turn in vehicles, lorries, and trucks, and the number continues to grow

IRSHAD MOHMAND

waiting at the southern Chaman crossing in Balochistan province, officials said - with numbers at both borders expected to double on Wednesday.

Despite huge pressure at the border, a government official based in Peshawar near the border said the holding centres

condition of anonymity.

But some Afghans are determined to try to find the way to remain in Pakistan, even if it means going under the radar.

A fourteen-year-old Afghan girl, who AFP has not named for security reasons, said she will stay in Pakistan as long as possible, despite not have legal papers. "We are not going back home, because my education in Afghanistan would come to a grinding halt," she told AFP in Peshawar.

"Our father has told us that if he is arrested by Pakistani au-

thorities, we should not leave even then. Because we will have no life in Afghanistan." Several schools for Afghan students in the capital Islamabad closed from Tuesday as families went into hiding, teachers told AFP.

'Avoid humiliation'

More than 100,000 Afghan migrants have already left Pakistan since the start of October, when the government announced a one-month deadline for Afghans it says are living illegally in the country.

More than 80 per cent have

left via the northern Torkham border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where the majority of Afghan migrants live.

Police in the province said they have not yet begun arrests as families leave voluntarily, but Afghan refugees in Karachi and Islamabad have reported arrests, harassment and extortion.

"To avoid any humiliation by the Pakistani authorities I have decided to leave," Zulfiqar Khan, who was born to refugee parents in a sprawling Peshawar aid camp, told AFP last week.

AFP

India police charge man over attack on prayer meeting



Leader of Opposition in Kerala Assembly V D Satheesan visits the injured people in the hospital in Kochi on Sunday (ANI)

New Delhi, India - Police in India say they have charged a man in connection with a bomb blast at a Jehovah's Witnesses prayer meeting that killed three people.

Dozens were also injured in Sunday's explosion at a convention centre where more than 2,000 people had gathered for a three-day meeting.

A Akbar, the police commissioner in the port city of Kochi, told reporters late on Monday that suspect Dominic Martin had been charged with several offences, including under India's anti-terror laws.

Martin had turned himself in to police after releasing a video message on social media in which he claimed to be a disgruntled former member of the church.

Local media reports said Martin, 48, had learned how to make

explosives on the internet.

Broadcaster NDTV said he had spent around 3,000 rupees (US\$36) to make the bombs.

He returned to India about two months ago from Dubai, the website The News Minute reported.

There are nearly 60,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in India, according to the church's website.

Jehovah's Witnesses are members of a US-based Christian evangelical movement and are perhaps best known for knocking on doors around the world, Bible in hand, trying to convert people to their beliefs.

The movement, which preaches non-violence and is politically neutral, has a history of persecution, with its activities banned or restricted in several countries.

AFP

BACK TO EARTH AFTER MONTHS

Space flight engineer Zhu Yangzhu waves as he leaves the capsule of the Shenzhou-16 spaceship after landing in China's Inner Mongolia on Tuesday. Three Chinese astronauts safely returned to Earth on Tuesday after five months in orbit at the country's space station, state media reported (AFP)



Fresh clashes as Bangladesh garment workers protest low wage

Ashulia, Bangladesh - Bangladeshi police clashed on Tuesday with thousands of garment workers demanding fair wages for the clothing they make for major Western brands, a day after similar protests left at least two people dead.

Police said tens of thousands of workers at dozens of factories had launched strikes in Ashulia and Gazipur, the country's largest industrial city, with authorities firing tear gas and rubber bullets as crowds smashed up factories and blocked roads.

Gazipur alone is home to more than a thousand plants that make clothing for brands such as H&M and Gap.

"Workers hit the streets as their salaries can no longer cover



A cargo truck burns on the street after it was torched by garment workers during a protest in Shafipur on Tuesday (AFP)

rising food expenses," said Al Kamran, a senior garment union leader in Ashulia.

Bangladesh is one of the world's largest garment ex-

porters, with the industry accounting for 85 per cent of the South Asian country's US\$55bn in annual exports. But conditions are dire for many of its four mil-

lion apparel workers.

"Some 15,000 of the workers joined protests for a wage hike at separate places in Ashulia," Mahmud Naser, deputy police chief of the Ashulia industrial area, told AFP.

Union leader Kamran disputed those figures, reporting some 50,000 workers had downed tools in Ashulia alone, with soaring prices a key driver.

The cost of some basic food-stuffs, like potatoes and onions, had more than doubled since last year, Kamran said.

"House rents have also spiked. The only thing that has not increased is salaries." Taslima Akter, the head of the Garment Sramik Samhati union, has said the compensation manufactur-

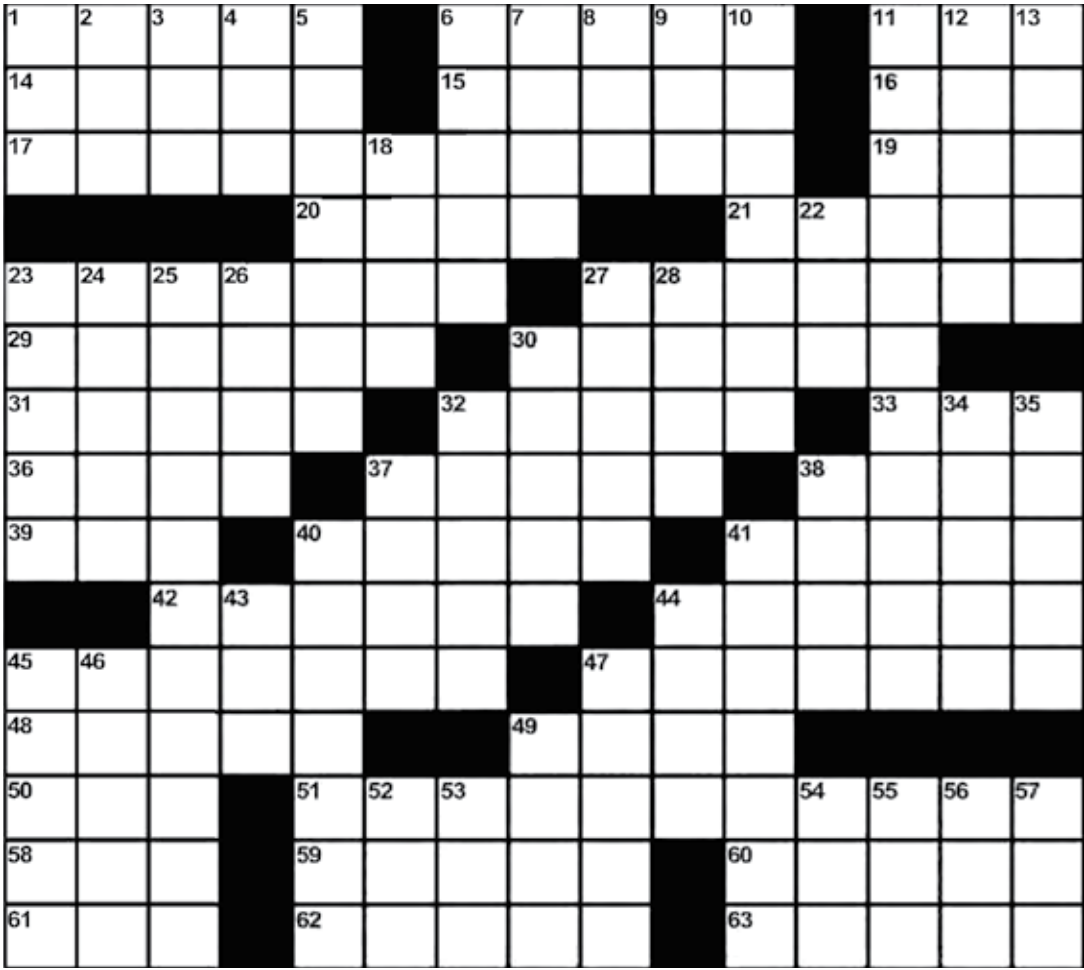
ers are offering is 'less than what a worker got in 2017' once inflation and currency depreciation were taken into account.

Police said protesters had set fire to tyres, broken windows at factories and blocked a key highway connecting the industrial area with the capital Dhaka.

Officers responded by firing 'rubber bullets and tear gas', said Naser, the deputy chief in Ashulia, adding there were no reports of injuries. The protests erupted early last week, but violence escalated on Monday when tens of thousands left their shifts and staged protests in Gazipur, where a six-storey factory was torched by workers, leading to the death of one labourer.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) News windup
6) Acute anxiety
11) Some undergraduate degs.
14) Give a formal address
15) Bit of an uproar
16) It's this or nothing
17) Passionate with a constant temperature?
19) "Christ the Redeemer" city
20) Defraud
21) American felines
23) Morally blemished
27) Devoted to reading
29) Used the backspace key
30) Tutu wearer's dance
31) Sign on a grade-school bathroom
32) Protrude outward
33) Zig's companion
36) Topmost spot
37) Destiny or fate, to Hindus
38) Eye part that holds the iris
39) American uncle
40) Weasley of the "Harry Potter" books
41) What the ruling Romanovs were
42) A charmer?
44) 1982 Oscar-winning

role for Meryl
45) Mountaineering attempts
47) Gliding steps in 31-Across
48) Thai monetary units
49) Dry, as a desert
50) Geisha's waist-cincher
51) Activity of choir members
58) Cub Scout faction
59) Brainstorm aftermaths
60) Frightfully strange
61) Before, to poets of old
62) Bike and bridle, for two
63) Has a breakdown

DOWN

1) Line of seats
2) Significant time, historically
3) It can get you there
4) Sign at many convenience stores
5) Flintstone child
6) "You've Really Got_ On Me"
7) Cranny cohort
8) Word on U.S. coins
9) This boat
10) Creature that loses its tail
11) Rites of passage for some 13-yearolds
12) Fake identity

13) Play in a mud puddle
18) Stretched the truth
22) Hawaiian instrument, briefly
23) French Impressionist
Edgar
24) "All My Children" character
25) Harvester or tractor, e.g.
26) Ferry destination, often
27) Like Caribbean weather
28) Korbut of gymnastics fame
30) More than charred (Var.)
32) Downfalls
34) Eagle's nest
35) Radon and krypton
37) "Braveheart" garment
38) Org. with carriers
40) Armada component
41) Yes men
43) NYC opera house (with "The")
44) Knee neighbor
45) Dwelling place
46) Cavalry sidearm
47) Christian symbol
49) Beijing housemaid
52) Abbr. on a toothpaste box
53) No longer playing (Abbr.)
54) Type of garden with

rocks
55) Keogh plan kin

56) Tuck partner
57) Some refrigerators

NOTE PAD

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

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

It's easy to teach an old dog new tricks when the dog wants to learn them, so if you're looking to pick up a new skill or get rid of a bad habit, make sure you have the honest desire to do so. If you don't feel that strongly about change, you're just wasting your time trying to make it. Are you letting other people's expectations drive your goals? Make sure that your ambitions are your own or they're never going to inspire you.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Today, putting physical energy into changing your intimate surroundings energizes you and fills you with a sense of pride that you haven't felt in quite a while. It's the perfect day for minor or major household renovations: adding a new coat of paint on the kitchen walls, a few new throw pillows for the couch, or even a fire pit in the yard. You have a vision for how you want to change your home, and it's about time you realized it.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your creativity has always been a big part of your intelligence, but never more so than right now. The tasks you're working through require the kinds of smarts that you have in abundance. This is a very exciting time for you, full of unique people who are helping you see things in a new light. There might be a frustrating person in the mix, but even though they might rub you the wrong way from time to time, the sensation they leave you with is always positive.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

It's the right day for a power struggle. You're clear-headed and there's no way you can lose a fight! Just make sure that while you're busy fighting for what you want you aren't losing focus on the more important things around you (like personal relationships). Other people, not power, should be your top priority now. Only get into it if you have to. As skilled as you are besting the competition, at heart you're a lover, not a fighter!

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

When you're dealing with new people in any kind of group situation today, try to take your ego out of it. There's no reason to try to impress upon them how wonderful you are. They'll be able to figure that out on their own soon enough. Although your routine has changed recently, you shouldn't feel threatened by new people taking over some of your responsibilities. They're here to help you, so let them help. Be careful not to get too defensive.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Sometimes your dreams are just silly and weird plays that your subconscious performs at night, not visions of what your future holds. If disturbing images have kept you tossing and turning lately, don't worry too much about it. This is just a phase and will be over soon. Turn your attention away from your dreams, because you can't control them. Instead, start exerting more power over your waking hours. Then you'll start to see things change.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Today, you're much more open to using your mind in new ways and thinking through foreign (or even uncomfortable!) ideas. It might be frustrating to figure out some of the heavier concepts now, but it will also be very rewarding. Your brain needs some exercise, and you're going to be in a position to give it a fantastic workout. Don't shy away from that certain person who always intimidates you. Today is the day to engage them in conversation.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You can't spend your life waiting for other people. You need to move on with your own agenda at your own pace and not try to align yourself with anyone else. If everyone around you is so busy that they can't make time for you, don't let it ruffle your feathers or take it personally. Go on and do what you wanted to do before they hit the brakes. It isn't to spite them. It's to remind yourself and you're perfectly capable of doing whatever you need to do by yourself.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You might feel like all of your emotions are going to spill out of your mouth at any moment today, and so what if they do? You'll be surrounded by people who respect and even admire you. There's nothing you can say or confess that will make them change how they feel about you. You have much too much good credit built up with them already. Don't be afraid to speak the truth today. People will listen to it and be affected by it. Compassion is all around you.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

A small complication or drama could pop up today, but don't worry. It's nothing that will concern you, so there's no need for you to try to figure it out. Just sit back and watch as people who have different ideas about what to do try their best to solve the issue. They might not get as far as you would with it, but it's good for them to try. You can't go around solving everyone's problems all the time. Focus your troubleshooting skills on your own issues for a while.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You could spend at least part of your day stimulating your mind with innovative ideas or new philosophical concepts. You might get confused and even a little bit frustrated, but you'll also learn a lot, and that's what's important. That's what creates new paths for you to pursue. Stop by a modern art gallery, watch a foreign film, or listen to music from another country or culture. Be open to new ideas. It's the best way to improve yourself.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Not everyone operates on your same timetable, and you shouldn't try to rush them to get to where you are. It isn't too hard to see what's holding them back, but just because you understand the problem doesn't mean you can solve it. This is their issue, so let them deal with it. The only way you can help speed things up is to show them what you know. Give them a hint or two about where they need to apply their energy. Then let them know that you're there to help them if needed.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What was the name of the British Royal Yacht that entered service in 1953 and decommissioned on 11 December 1997?

A. Britannia
B. Alexandra
C. Victoria and Albert
D. Queen Elizabeth

02.What is the name of the Spanish island group in the Mediterranean Sea that includes Majorca, Minorca, Ibiza, Formentera and Cabrera?

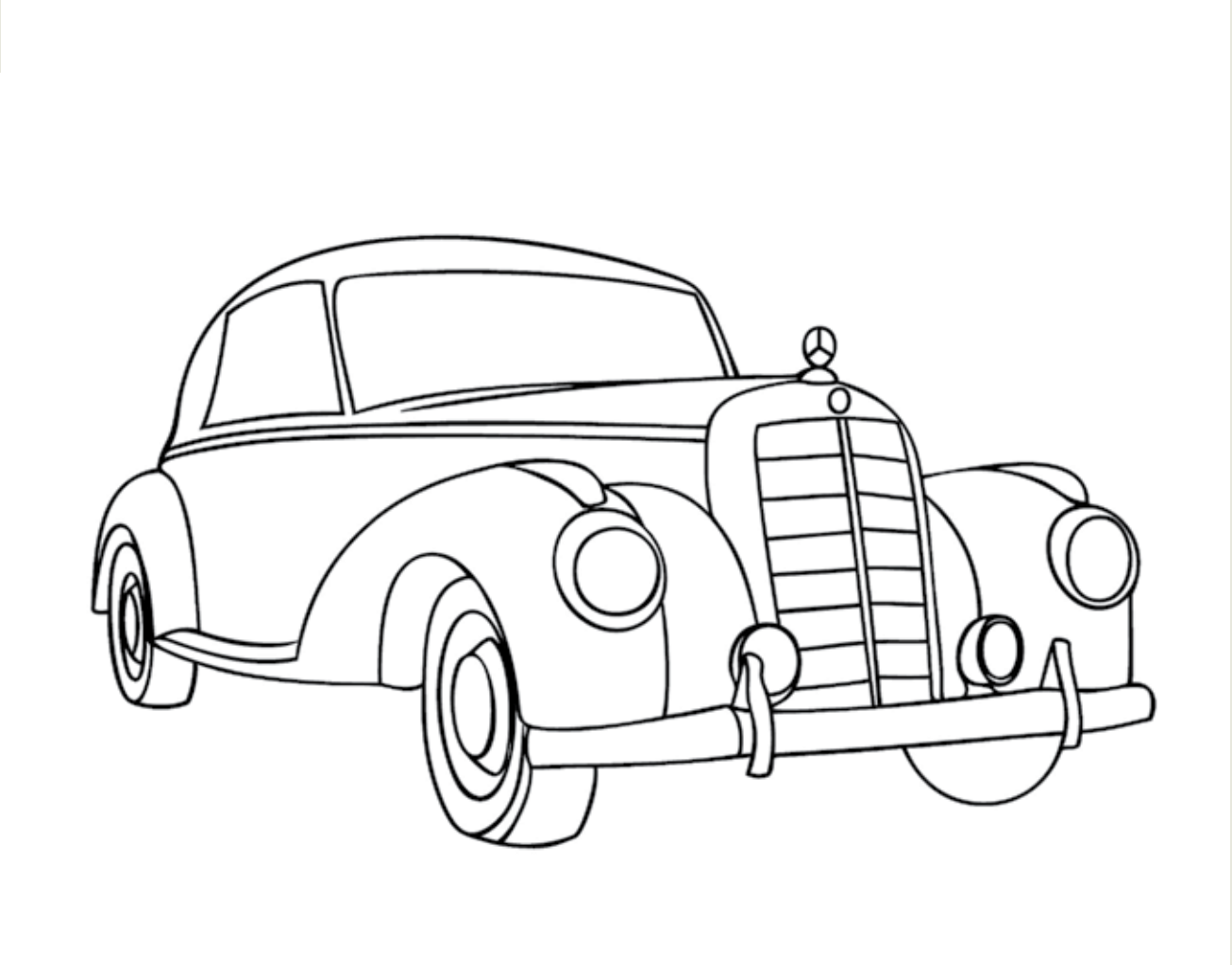
A. Bermuda
B. Balearic Islands
C. The Channel Islands
D. Samoa

03. Whose adopted children are David Banha and Chifundo "Mercy" James?

A. Courtney Cox-Arquette
B. Jennifer Aniston
C. Madonna
D. Beyonce

Answers: 1.A 2.B 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

Y	E	E	E
E	I	R	D
F	I	S	J
B	D	A	M

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Lionel Messi receives his eighth Ballon d'Or award in Paris on Monday (AFP)

EIGHTH WONDER

Messi wins Ballon d'Or as Bonmati claims women's award

Paris, France - Lionel Messi won the eighth Ballon d'Or of his remarkable career at a glittering ceremony in Paris on Monday, while Spain's World Cup-winning star Aitana Bonmati took the women's prize.

For Messi, the trophy rewards, above all else, his inspirational performances at last year's World Cup in Qatar, when he dragged Argentina to victory, scoring seven goals and being named the tournament's best player.

It was the crowning moment of his astonishing career, and it allowed him to see off stiff competition, in particular from Erling Haaland and Kylian Mbappe, to take the award on the stage of the Chatelet Theatre in Paris.

It was a return to the French capital after his departure from Paris Saint-Germain in June and his subsequent move to Inter Miami in Major League Soccer.

"This is a gift to the whole Argentina team for what we achieved," said Messi on stage after receiving his award from David Beckham, the co-owner of Inter Miami.

Messi dedicated the trophy to late Argentina legend Diego Maradona, who would have celebrated his 63rd birthday on Monday.

"Happy birthday Diego. This is for you too," he said.

Messi benefits from a recent change which means the award is based on a player's record over the last season, rather than over the calendar year.

He won despite an underwhelming final season at PSG, even if he was a Ligue 1 title winner.

Mbappe, Haaland just miss out

Mbappe was the star player in that team, scoring 41 goals, and

Messi not thinking about long-term future

Paris, France - Lionel Messi said Monday he was not thinking about his long-term future as he sought to enjoy winning the eighth Ballon d'Or of his storied career.

Messi, 36, succeeded Karim Benzema as winner of the prize, awarded on the back of his performances last season, when he inspired Argentina to glory at the World Cup in Qatar.

"The last one I won was also thanks to what we achieved with the Argentine national team in the Copa America (in 2021), but this one is much more special because it comes after we won the World Cup," Messi told various media including AFP after collecting his award at a ceremony in Paris.

"That is the trophy everyone wants to win the most, and it was a dream come true for me, my teammates and my country."

He dragged Argentina to a victory in Qatar that crowned his remarkable career and allowed him to see off stiff competition for the Ballon d'Or from Kylian Mbappe and Er-

ling Haaland in particular.

Haaland came second in the final voting, with Mbappe third and Kevin De Bruyne in fourth place. Former Barcelona superstar Messi scored seven times at the World Cup and was named the tournament's best player

joying the day to day at the moment," he said.

"We have a Copa America coming up in the United States, where I am now, in which we are the holders, so I am looking forward to coming into that in good shape and then just see how I am getting

We have a Copa America coming up in the United States, where I am now, in which we are the holders, so I'm looking forward to coming into that in good shape

LIONEL MESSI

after Argentina beat France on penalties in the final in Doha.

Yet Messi, who won his first Ballon d'Or in 2009, also had an underwhelming final season at Paris Saint-Germain, before leaving to play for Inter Miami in Major League Soccer. He played down suggestions he could come back for another Ballon d'Or, possibly after the next World Cup in 2026, when he will be 39.

"I am not thinking about the long-term future. I am just en-

joying the day to day at the moment," he said.

"Things didn't turn out as I hoped but I enjoyed the city a lot, and my kids liked it a lot and found it hard to leave," he said. "It is a spectacular city and I was lucky to live here. Football-wise it did not go the way I hoped but I prefer to remember the many good things."

will again feature in the running for the prize, which is voted for by one journalist in each of the top 100 nations in the FIFA ranking.

Messi will struggle to hold off the next wave of superstars, led by Mbappe, Haaland and Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham, but his World Cup performances

City team that won the treble of English Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League.

Messi is 36 and won his first Ballon d'Or in 2009. With eight, he is now three ahead of his old rival Cristiano Ronaldo, the next most decorated player in the history of the award.

It remains to be seen if Messi

made his victory this time feel inevitable.

The women's prize seemed even more clear cut, as Bonmati was rewarded for starring as Spain won the World Cup in Australia in August.

The 25-year-old midfielder was named the best player at the World Cup as the Spanish team overcame off-field turbulence, including protests against their national federation and coach Jorge Vilda, to lift the trophy.

Bonmati also starred as Barcelona won the Champions League last season and was recently named as the UEFA Women's Player of the Year.

She was one of four members of the triumphant Spain team to feature among the 30 nominees, with Alba Redondo, Salma Paralluelo and full-back Olga Carmona, who netted the winner in the final, all shortlisted.

Australia's Sam Kerr came second with Paralluelo in third place.

Putellas had won the Ballon d'Or in each of the previous two campaigns. Norway's Ada Hegerberg won the inaugural award in 2018 and USA star Megan Rapinoe succeeded her a year later.

Bellingham won the Kopa Trophy for the best player of last season aged under 21. The 20-year-old has started his Madrid career with 13 goals in 13 games, although the prize rewards his performances in his final campaign with Borussia Dortmund.

Bellingham's Madrid teammate, the Brazil forward Vinicius Junior, won the Socrates prize in recognition of his off-pitch work.

Messi's Argentina colleague Emiliano Martinez won the Yashin Trophy for the best goalkeeper of the season.

AFP



Aitana Bonmati receives the Women's Ballon d'Or award on Monday

SPAIN STAR BONMATI TOASTS 'UNIQUE YEAR'

Paris, France - Spain's World Cup-winning star Aitana Bonmati said she would struggle to do better than a "unique" last 12 months, after collecting the Women's Ballon d'Or at a ceremony in Paris on Monday.

Bonmati succeeded her international teammate Alexia Putellas as winner of the prize after inspiring Spain to glory at the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand earlier this year.

She also starred as Barcelona won the Champions League last season and was recently named as the UEFA Women's Player of the Year.

"It is difficult to improve on this. It has honestly been a unique year," she told various media including AFP after collecting her award.

"If anyone had said to me when I was little that I would play at the Camp Nou, win a World Cup, two Champions Leagues, a Ballon d'Or, a UEFA prize, extraordinary things have happened for me lately."

"I am lucky to be part of a club like Barca, where I am surrounded by the best players," she added of the Spanish and Euro-

pean champions.

The 25-year-old midfielder was named the best player at the World Cup as the Spanish team overcame off-field turbulence, including protests against their national federation and coach Jorge Vilda, to lift the trophy.

Their victory celebrations after beating England in the final in Sydney were overshadowed by Spanish Football Federation chief Luis Rubiales's forced kiss on the lips of Bonmati's teammate Jenni Hermoso as she went to collect her medal.

On Monday, Rubiales was handed a three-year ban from all football activities for three years.

However, Bonmati did not want to take the focus away from her own achievement on Monday.

"I hope we can just talk about sport. There are enough extraordinary things in our country for us to always be talking about things that are less about sport," she said.

Bonmati was one of four members of the triumphant Spain team to feature among the 30 nominees for the Ballon d'Or. AFP



Jude Bellingham speaks after receiving the Kopa Trophy for best under-21 player (AFP)

Bellingham calls on England to 'quit talking' and deliver

Paris, France - Real Madrid and England star Jude Bellingham said he was targeting Euro 2024 glory with England after winning the Kopa Trophy for the best player of last season aged under 21 at the Ballon d'Or ceremony in Paris on Monday.

The 20-year-old has enjoyed a sensational start to his Real career, a brace in Saturday's 2-1 Clasico win over Barcelona taking him to 13 goals in his first 13 games for the Spanish giants.

But the Kopa Trophy rewards his performances last season. In his final campaign with Borussia Dortmund, Bellingham scored 14 times in 42 games as they came second in the Bundesliga. He also helped England reach the quarter-finals of the World Cup in Qatar.

"I am really grateful to Dortmund for the opportunities they

gave me over the years and especially last year, to be a leading player and someone who helped the team to win games," Bellingham told AFP and other media after collecting his prize.

"I think I took that responsibility on quite well and all said I think I had a good year so I am very happy."

He succeeds Barcelona and Spain midfielder Gavi as the winner of the trophy named after former Real Madrid and France star Raymond Kopa.

Kylian Mbappe and Matthijs de Ligt are also former winners of the award, which is voted for by previous winners of the men's Ballon d'Or.

Bellingham also ranked 18th in the voting for this year's Ballon d'Or, recognised as the most prestigious individual prize in football.



2009

2010

2011

2012

2015

2019

2021

FAN VIOLENCE IN FRENCH FOOTBALL

Lyon team bus attack sparks call for tougher measures to control supporters

Paris, France - French football clubs on Monday came under intense pressure to bring their supporters under control after Lyon coach Fabio Grosso suffered cuts to his face when his team's bus was pelted with stones near Marseille's stadium.

Sunday's Ligue 1 match between Marseille and Lyon was postponed after the attack on the bus on its way to the Velodrome. Grosso's face was left bloodied and his assistant Raffaele Longo was also injured. A club source said Grosso had also been experiencing dizzy spells.

TV pictures showed Grosso with a bandage on his head as he emerged from the stadium's medical room. A photo circulating on X, formerly known as Twitter, appeared to show Grosso lying on a stretcher with a cut above his left eye.

The match was postponed at Lyon's request despite even though the stadium was already half full.

It was the latest incident in an already trouble-scarred season in France.

Sports Minister Amelie



Firefighters stand next to Lyon's team bus after it was stoned as it entered the Stade Velodrome in Marseille on Sunday. Lyon coach Fabio Grosso (left) was injured in the incident (AFP)



Oudea-Castera said the incidents were "unacceptable" and called on the clubs to take firm and swift action.

"If it is proved that supporters were involved... then clubs cannot remain on the sidelines of that,"

she told France 2 television. "All the authorities in sport must be made responsible," she added.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said nine people had been arrested as a result of the incidents.

He said 500 officers had been on duty for the match between two of French football's best-supported clubs and so "there was no fault" on the part of the police.

"It is up to the club to manage its supporters," he said.

As the incidents took place outside the stadium, the clubs are not, in theory, liable.

The French league's director general Arnaud Rouger said: "This is not our responsibility, but as with any incident we stand side by side with the government and I fully support the words of Gerald Darmanin who has called for a stronger penalties for the perpetrators of these particularly serious incidents."

In a related incident, Lyon fans were said to have aimed racist chants at their Marseille counterparts on the approach to the stadium, which could be punishable under the French league's rules.



Australia abandons 2034 World Cup bid in boost for Saudi

Sydney, Australia - Australia decided on Tuesday against bidding for the 2034 men's football World Cup, paving the way for Saudi Arabia to host the event.

Football Australia pulled its bid on the October 31 deadline, after the Asian Football Confederation threw its weight behind Saudi Arabia, which is the hot favourite to land the event.

"We have explored the opportunity to bid to host the FIFA World Cup and -- having taken all factors into consideration -- we reached the conclusion not to do so for the 2034 competition," Football Australia said in a statement.

FIFA has invited bids from the Asia and Oceania regions for the rotating World Cup hosting rights after naming Morocco, Spain and Portugal as joint hosts for 2030.

There had been talk of a joint bid from Indonesia and Australia for 2034, but the former recently said it supported the Saudi bid.

Saudi Arabia's ambition to host the 2034 World Cup is the latest step in a campaign to turn the kingdom into a global sports powerhouse.

Neighbouring Qatar last year hosted the first World Cup in the Middle East. Australia is now eyeing the Women's Asian Cup in 2026 and the 2029 FIFA Club World Cup.

"Achieving this -- following the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023 and with the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games -- would represent a truly golden decade for Australian football," Football Australia said.

Australia and New Zealand jointly hosted the Women's World Cup this year, a competition that was generally regarded as a success.

Australia is now eyeing the Women's Asian Cup in 2026 and the 2029 FIFA Club World Cup

FIFA bans Rubiales for 3 years for forced kiss on Spain player

Geneva, Switzerland - FIFA on Monday imposed a three-year ban on former Spanish football chief Luis Rubiales after his forced kiss on the lips of World Cup winner Jenni Hermoso shocked the world of football.

The sport's governing body provisionally suspended Rubiales for 90 days following his unsolicited kiss during the medal ceremony after Spain won the Women's World Cup in Sydney on August 20.

FIFA said Rubiales had broken its code of conduct and would now be banned from all football activities for three years.

Rubiales responded by announcing he will appeal against the ban.

"I am announcing as of now that I will be appealing," Rubiales wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"I will go as far as taking the case to the highest court to ensure that justice is done and that the truth comes out," he added in a post which also included a 'flexed biceps' emoji.

Hermoso said the incident left



her feeling "vulnerable and like the victim of an assault" and described it as "an impulsive, macho act, out of place and with no type of consent on my part".

Rubiales, who repeatedly insisted the kiss was consensual, resigned as head of the Spanish football federation in September.

"The FIFA disciplinary committee has banned Luis Rubiales, the former president of the Spanish Football Association (RFEF), from all football-related activities at national and international levels for three years," the Zurich-based organisation said in a statement.

AFP

Kidnapping of Liverpool footballer Diaz's father in Colombia: What we know

Bogotá, Colombia - A massive search is under way for Liverpool winger Luis Diaz's father, kidnapped in Colombia Saturday along with his wife, who has since been released.

Police have been tightlipped about details of the investigation, but here is what we know:

The kidnapping

Colombian media has reported that Luis Manuel Diaz and Cilenis Marulanda were kidnapped Saturday by armed men with motorcycles at a gas station in the Indigenous family's home town of Barrancas, near the border with Venezuela.

Footage from a security camera, the location of which AFP has verified, showed a high-end pickup truck in the vicinity, followed by a motorbike.

Hours after the kidnapping, President Gustavo Petro said the footballer's mother had been rescued, but her husband was still unaccounted for.

The search involves at least 200 police, soldiers, commando members, cartographers, judicial police and pilots of special search



Luis Diaz with his father Luis Manuel Diaz

and rescue aircraft.

At a press conference Sunday, Attorney General Francisco Barbosa said the missing man "could be" in Venezuela, without providing further details.

The investigation

Police chief General William

Salamanca said on Monday his officers were doing a sweep "house by house," collecting information.

Police have offered a reward equivalent to \$48,000 leading to information on Diaz's whereabouts.

"We have information on people who may have been linked to the event. There was planning," deputy police director General Nicolas Zapata told reporters.

Colonel Giovanni Montanez, director of the elite military unit against kidnapping and extortion, told Blu Radio that "so far no demands have been made... no calls

have been received" for ransom.

Armed groups

Barrancas with its 38,000 inhabitants is in a northern part of Colombia where criminal groups as well as rightwing paramilitary fighters, dissidents of the now-defunct FARC armed group and ELN guerrillas, are known to operate. After being rescued, Diaz's mother could not reveal "anything in particular" about her captors, said Montanez.

In six decades of civil conflict, Colombia has registered some 38,000 kidnappings, mainly by armed groups funding their operations through ransom money.

Who is Luis Manuel Diaz?

The senior Diaz used to be an amateur coach at the only football school in Barrancas, where his son showed promise from a very young age.

He is credited with aiding the meteoric rise of the Liverpool and Colombia striker known as "Lucho" - the first Indigenous Colombian to make it to world football's top echelons.

AFP

Jokic triple as Nuggets stay perfect, Curry shines in Warriors win

Los Angeles, United States - Nikola Jokic bagged the 107th triple double of his career as the Denver Nuggets extended their unbeaten start to the season with a 110-102 victory over the Utah Jazz on Monday.

Serbian star Jokic finished with 27 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds in another dominant performance by the reigning NBA champions, who made it four wins out of four after leading virtually from start to finish.

Denver led by 10 points after the first quarter and were always in control thereafter, stretching their advantage to 17 points at one stage in the third quarter.

Jokic's latest triple double leaves him tied with LeBron James and Jason Kidd for the fourth most triples in NBA history.

Jokic received scoring support from Aaron Gordon, who posted 21 points with seven re-

bounds while Jamal Murray added 18 points - including a trio of three-pointers - in a comfortable win for Denver.

Lauri Markkanen led the Utah scoring with 27 points.

In other games on Monday, Stephen Curry delivered his second 40-point game of the season as the Golden State Warriors routed the New Orleans Pelicans 130-102 on the road.

Curry, who scored 41 points

in Friday's victory over Sacramento, was once again back to his mesmeric best with a 42-point haul that included seven three-pointers.

New Warriors recruit Chris Paul added 13 points off the bench while Moses Moody and Trayce Jackson-Davis also finished with 13 apiece.

'White hot' Curry

Zion Williamson and C.J. McCollum led the New Orleans

scorers with 19 points each.

Warriors coach Steve Kerr was left in awe of Curry's latest masterpiece.

"He's white hot," Kerr said of Curry.

"It's amazing watching him. He looks better than ever at 35. But he puts the work in every summer, keeps looking for ways to get better - he's constantly searching for edges in his training ... just stunning to watch."

AFP



Nikola Jokic of Denver Nuggets drives to the basket during their game against Utah Jazz on Monday (AFP)



A GLIMMER OF HOPE

Shaheen shines as Pakistan down Bangladesh to stay alive

PAKISTAN VS BANGLADESH

Kolkata, India - Shaheen Shah Afridi grabbed three wickets while openers Fakhar Zaman and Abdullah Shafique cracked half-centuries as Pakistan stormed to a seven-wicket victory over Bangladesh on Tuesday to stay afloat in the race for a World Cup semi-final place.

Shaheen's 3-23 helped Pakistan dismiss Bangladesh for just 204 in 45.1 overs before Zaman's 74-ball 81 and Shafique's 69-ball 68 guided Pakistan over the line for the loss of three wickets with 105 balls to spare.

The victory revived Pakistan's outside hopes of reaching the semi-finals with six points from seven matches.

They still need to win against New Zealand (November 4 in Bengaluru) and England (Kolkata on November 11) and also hope other results go their way if they are to stay in the tournament.

In contrast, Bangladesh became the first side to crash out of the 10-team event with just one win from seven games.

"We are trying to win our next

two matches and let's see where we stand. We will take a lot of confidence into those matches," said Pakistan skipper Babar Azam who singled out Zaman for special praise.

"We know when Fakhar plays the way he can for 20-30 overs it is a different ball game. So we let him play his natural game and it is good to see."

Needing to improve their net run-rate, Zaman and Shafique cruised to 128 by the 22nd over.

Shafique hit nine boundaries and two sixes as he made his third half century in addition to a hundred in the tournament.

He fell before to spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz while Azam holed out to the same bowler for nine.

Zaman, who recovered from a knee injury to replace Imam-ul-Haq in one of three changes for Pakistan, smashed seven sixes and three boundaries, his 16th ODI fifty, but first after 11 innings.

He holed out to Miraz in the 28th over but Mohammad Rizwan (26) and Iftikhar Ahmed (17) remained undefeated to



Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi (R) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Najmul Hossain Shanto on Tuesday

complete the modest chase.

Miraz finished with 3-60, the only bright spot in Bangladesh's bowling.

"Two more matches hopefully we can bounce back. The fans supported us and are behind us whether we are doing well or not," said Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan.

We are trying to win our next two matches and let us see where we stand

ABAR AZAM

"We have to give something back to them so they can smile."

Earlier, Shaheen and fellow fast bowlers Mohammad Wasim (3-31) and Haris Rauf (2-36) ripped through Bangladesh. The pace trio were too hot to handle as Bangladesh struggled on a dry and slow Eden Gardens pitch.

Bangladesh, who won the toss and batted, only passed the 200-mark thanks to a solid 70-ball 56 from Mahmudullah, 45 by Liton Das and Shakib's 64-ball 43.

AFP

Australia's tattooed leg-spinner is making his mark

New Delhi, India - With a John Travolta tattoo, trademark playing glasses and bonding with Virat Kohli over being meat-free, Australia leg-spinner Adam Zampa has become one of the standout stars of the Cricket World Cup.

The 31-year-old has also overcome absent-mindedly swimming into a hotel swimming pool wall and recovered from a fever so severe that he was dubbed "Lazarus" by teammates.

With a joint tournament best of 16 wickets, Zampa is a crucial part of Australia's push towards a sixth World Cup title.



Adam Zampa

However, his time in India did not get off to the most promising of starts.

He went wicketless in his team's opening loss to the hosts and then managed just one in their thrashing by South Africa.

Since then, however, Zampa's success has mirrored that of his team as four successive wins have put Australia on the brink of the semi-finals.

He claimed four wickets each in the team's next three wins and 3-74 in a last-ball thriller against New Zealand in Dharamsala. Zampa, a self-confessed Shane Warne fan, has an action

similar to the late Australian spin great but has long rejected being a Warne clone.

"I'm very good at self-reflection," said Zampa after the win over Sri Lanka.

In his career, he has needed that quality, none more so than in September when he returned the joint worst ODI figures of 0-113 against South Africa at Centurion.

Zampa had an injury scare at the start of Australia's campaign in India when he hit a wall while swimming with his eyes closed.

That left him with a nasty-looking scar on his face.

Trott proud as Afghanistan no longer 'rock up and it's left to luck'

Pune, India - Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott was proud of his side's landmark World Cup victory over Sri Lanka, hailing a team who no longer "rock up and it's left to luck".

Monday's seven-wicket defeat of the 1996 champions in Pune followed Afghanistan's eight-wicket win over Pakistan.

Victory also meant Afghanistan, who'd already beaten defending champions



Jonathan Trott

England, had won back-to-back matches at the World Cup for the first time.

Afghanistan have six points and sit in fifth place in the table, two behind New Zealand and Australia with the top four guaranteed to make the semi-finals.

It's an impressive feat for a team that had won just one game - against non-Test nation Scotland - at their two World Cups prior to this edition.

AFP



Tom Latham

All Blacks' grit inspires New Zealand against South Africa at World Cup

Pune, India - New Zealand captain Tom Latham hopes to summon the fighting spirit of the All Blacks when his side face fellow Cricket World Cup semi-final contenders South Africa in Pune.

Wednesday's match comes just days after South Africa edged New Zealand by a point in a dramatic Rugby World Cup final in Paris, where the beaten All Blacks had to play most of the game a man down after skipper Sam Cane was sent off.

Latham's men also suffered a narrow defeat last time out,

going down by five runs against Australia after just failing to chase down a huge target of 389.

"That was obviously a fantastic game of rugby," Latham told a pre-match press conference on Tuesday. "But I guess you look at the All Blacks as a whole, they played some great rugby throughout the World Cup."

He added: "I think you look at the final and I guess the Kiwi way is we look to scrap the whole way, obviously faced with a little bit of adversity in terms of being down to 14 men."

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ILYAS BLITZ POWERS OMAN INTO SEMIS

Muscat - Aqib Ilyas (63) smashed a 24-ball half-century as Oman overpowered Singapore by 22 runs for their second successive victory in a Group A match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia Qualifier Final in Kirtipur, Nepal, on Tuesday.

Batting first, Oman set up a formidable score of 174/6 and then restricted their rivals to 152/8.

The win also secured the side a place in the semi-finals following hosts Nepal's six-wicket win over Malaysia in the same group later on Tuesday. Both Singapore and Malaysia have yet to open their account and with a game left, Oman and Nepal advanced to the last-four stage with four points each.

The concluding Group A league match between Oman and Nepal on Thursday will decide the group toppers.

The winners of the semi-finals on Friday will secure a direct spot in the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup, co-hosted by the USA and the West Indies.

Oman currently lead Group A on better net run-rate (NRR) with 1.350 while Nepal have 1.322.

The Group A toppers will play the Group B second-placed team while the Group B leaders will meet Group A runners-up.

After two rounds, UAE lead the Pool B with four points after their five-wicket win over Kuwait



Aqib Ilyas with the player of the match trophy

on Tuesday while Bahrain and Hong Kong have two points each. Kuwait have yet to open their account.

On Tuesday, at the Tribhuvan University ground against Singapore, Oman were put to bat first and after Kashyap Prajapati and

Pratik Athavale gave the team a good start, Prajapati departed in the fifth over with the score at 28. Ilyas along with Athavale then send the Singapore bowlers on a leather chase as they shared 50-run stand before Athavale was dismissed for a 32-ball 42.

Opening match hero and Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood and his deputy, Ilyas, then took on themselves to set a formidable target.

Ilyas was in explosive form, blasting 50 in just 24 balls, and along with Maqsood shared a

69-run partnership before the latter departed for 17-ball 26, a knock that was studded with three boundaries and a maximum.

Ilyas continued to exhibit his vast range of strokes but in a bid to accelerate perished for a 35-ball 63. His innings had equal number of hits to the ropes and over it. Oman managed to score 174/6. Janak Prakash, Ramesh Kalimuthu and Anish Paraam took two wickets each.

Spinners Shakeel Ahmed and Maqsood stalled the Singapore chase as they dismissed the openers to leave them 42/2 in seven overs.

Anish Paraam (26) and Surendran Chandramohan (41) provided a semblance of fight but Mohammed Nadeem broke the growing partnership when Paraam was caught by Ayaan Khan to leave Singapore 77/3 in the 12th over.

Ilyas then got the crucial wicket of the dangerous-looking Chandramohan as the Singapore batter was hit wicket.

Manpreet Singh's valiant 31 off 20 wasn't enough as seamers Fayyaz Butt and Bilal Khan ran through the lower order to restrict them to 152/8.

All the six Oman bowlers were among the wickets and the two impressive wins will give them much needed confidence against Nepal in the concluding Pool A game on Thursday.



Ahmad al Harthy in action

Oman's Al Harthy aiming for Middle East dominance at WEC in Bahrain

Muscat - Ahmad al Harthy is aiming to proudly fly the flag for Oman once again on Saturday, when the Middle East region provides the grand stage for the final race of the FIA World Endurance Championship - round seven of the season at Bahrain International Circuit.

Oman Racing with TF Sport's Al Harthy has produced an excellent debut season in FIA WEC, the globe's premier endurance racing category, with two podium finishes thus far in the GTE Am class, including a sensational runner-up finish on his maiden appearance in the Le Mans 24 Hours.

In qualifying too Al Harthy has been very impressive, and the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omanel and MHD-ITICS partnered racer is focused on ending the season on a real high in this coming weekend's eight-hour race.

Currently fifth in the GTE Am points standings ahead of the championship finale in Sakhir, al Harthy is just eight points shy of the coveted top three and 14 points away from second position.

While the competitiveness of Oman Racing's No.25 Aston Martin Vantage GTE

has been hindered to a large extent by the category's Balance of Performance gradings, which has had a major impact on the squad's podium challenging potential at recent events, Al Harthy remains hopeful for Bahrain.

For Bahrain, Al Harthy would dearly like to challenge for a third podium finish of the year and he will be giving his all. The weekend will actually mark his first race in the Middle East since a season-best top four finish in the final event of the 2022 Asian Le Mans Series in Abu Dhabi.

"It really has been a wonderful first season for Oman Racing in FIA WEC, we've achieved some amazing results and I have been so proud to represent Oman in the world's biggest endurance racing championship. While it has been a long season, it actually doesn't seem all that far in the past we were at Sebring starting out on our maiden season in World Endurance, said Al Harthy .

"I think everyone at the team can feel incredibly proud of everything we've achieved so far this year, there have been downs as well the ups but we've always continued to fight and we never, ever give up."

Swiatek wins opener at WTA Finals, Gauff beats Jabeur

Cancún, Mexico - World number two Iga Swiatek overcame a shaky start to defeat Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova in straight sets in her opening WTA Finals match in Cancun.

In Monday's other clash, US Open champion Coco Gauff opened her tournament with a 6-0, 6-1 drubbing of Tunisia's Ons

Jabeur.

Polish star Swiatek looked out of sorts in an error-strewn first set in which she trailed 2-5 before roaring back to clinch a 7-6 (7/3), 6-0 victory.

The 22-year-old four-time Grand Slam champion is bidding to reclaim her world number one ranking from Aryna Sabalenka at

this week's season-ending finals in Mexico.

'In the first part of the match I wasn't feeling like I was playing bad,' Swiatek said.

'I just felt like I was making mistakes on the last shots within the rally. I felt there was room for improvement but I didn't need to change a lot.

'So I just tried to be more precise, not play risky.'

The 19-year-old Gauff raced through the first set against Jabeur to win 6-0 in just 23 minutes and then shrugged off a lengthy rain delay to take the second set 6-1 for a convincing win.

AFP



Iga Swiatek

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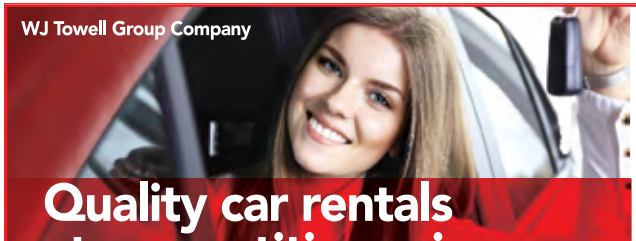
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The women's walking group in Riyadh

‘Mall-ified’ movers

SAUDIS WHO FIND IT 'TOO HOT OUTSIDE' FOR FITNESS ACTIVITIES, TAKE UP MORNING WALKS/JOGS IN AIRCONDITIONED MALLS



The shops have not yet opened, but the air-conditioned concourse of a Riyadh shopping mall is crowded anyway - a haven for walkers and joggers grateful for somewhere cool to exercise.

The early-morning crowd includes 55-year-old engineer Mohammed Sultan, in a white T-shirt and black trainers, doing laps around the mall trailed by his niqab-wearing wife.

"It's too hot outside to exercise. The weather indoors is cold and does not cause thirst," Sultan says, noting that even in October, the end of the hot period in Saudi Arabia, daytime temperatures can still approach 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). "Walking in gyms (on a treadmill) is very boring," he adds with a laugh.

It is a scene replicated daily in malls across the Saudi capital, highlighting how a growing interest in physical fit-

ness in the Gulf kingdom has collided with a dearth of suitable spaces for working out.

Long popular in the United States, another car-centric country with an obesity problem, mall-walking is increasingly becoming a Saudi sport.

Roughly one in five Saudi adults is obese, according to an in-depth study published by the World Bank last year that described the issue as 'alarming'.

To help bring that percentage down, the Saudi Sports for All Federation now organises races such as the Riyadh Marathon, which this year drew thousands of runners onto the capital's streets.

Such events, however, are fairly irregular, and new gyms sprouting up in Riyadh often charge steep fees - a turn-off for Saudis who spurn fancy machines and simply need space to stretch their legs.

Officials have begun work on a 135km Sports Boulevard in the capital



The mall is safe for women, air-conditioned and controlled. No pollution, no dust, no traffic

ZUZANA KALOUS

featuring foot, cycle and horse-riding paths.

The only option

However that project - billed by organisers as 'a green spine through the city' with 'cooling water features' and shaded football pitches - is still years from completion.

That makes malls the only option for many people - at least for now, says Australian expat Zuzana Kalous, who formed a women's walking group in Riyadh in 2020 that meets four times per week in different shopping centres.

"The mall is safe for women, air-conditioned and controlled. No pollution, no dust, no traffic," she tells AFP as more than 20 members of her group jogged past storefronts one recent morning.

The contained environment also guarantees people can exercise even in less-than-ideal weather, like spring sandstorms or winter rains, says Saudi

nutritionist Laila al Rifai, a member of Kalous's group.

"Commercial centres are the ideal solution to continue walking at any time of the day, at any time of year," she says.

Hassan Merhi, a Lebanese fitness trainer based in Riyadh, encourages his clients to walk outdoors as much as possible, noting that most studies show it offers a better workout than staying inside. "It helps burn fat faster and reduces stress," he said.

Batoul Zind al Hadid, a 41-year-old from Syria, says a mall walk is excellent for those who are still feeling out their first steps. Not only does it tend to be more social, with groups gathered together in the same space, it also allows her to stay on top of the latest fashion trends by studying the display windows.

It is, she says, 'a more comprehensive and entertaining experience'.

AFP

UNCOMFORTABLE TOURS

TALE OF TWO UNIVERSITIES

In UK, tourists discover the darker side of Oxford and Cambridge through tours that provide insights into their murky past

British universities Oxford and Cambridge are constantly ranked among the best in the world and celebrated for their academic excellence. But their murkier history is being brought to life for tourists, as the country increasingly grapples with its colonial past.

"This is not the standard walking tour," warned guide and student Claire McCann, before leading her group onto the cobbled streets of Oxford, which attract some seven million visitors every year.

Majestic buildings, many dating back to the Middle Ages, bear witness to the rich history of the university city, some 50 miles (80km) northwest of London.

Most British prime ministers, including current UK leader Rishi Sunak, and the Labour main opposition leader Keir Starmer, have studied behind the high walls of Oxford's various colleges. But their university years are not the subject of the tour, which instead focuses on 'difficult legacies' - a burning issue brought to the fore in the UK since Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests.

First stop on the tour is Oriel College, outside of which sits a statue of alumnus Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902), a coloniser who dreamed of a British Africa from Cape Town to Cairo.

McCann, originally from South Africa, read a quote of Rhodes in which he described Africans as the 'most despicable specimens of human beings'. She highlighted his

role in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) and that he founded De Beers, which is still the world's number one diamond company.

As part of the tour, she talked about the 'exploitation' in the mines, which made Rhodes a fortune and also allowed him to set up one of the most prestigious academic awards in the world. Notable Rhodes scholars include former US president Bill Clinton.

"What should happen with the statue?" asked McCann.

Rhodes Must Fall

The 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign launched by students called for the statue's removal. But Oxford decided in 2021 that the statue would remain in place.

A short walk away across the High Street is All Souls College, which McCann described as 'the most exclusive college in Oxford'. Dating back to the 1430s, it is one of the richest and only accepts two or three new research students per year.

"All Souls demonstrates for us how networks of prestige have historically been supported by economic exploitation and slavery," said McCann.

Following the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, All Souls announced that it would no longer call its library after Christopher Codrington, a former student.

When Codrington died in 1710, he



Tour guide Oliver talks with a group of people attending an 'Uncomfortable Oxford' tour outside the Sheldonian Theatre on Broad Street, in Oxford



A statue of Cecil Rhodes on the exterior of the Rhodes Building, in Oxford

All Souls demonstrates for us how networks of prestige have historically been supported by economic exploitation and slavery

CLAIRE MCCANN

left part of his fortune to the university, which according to All Souls' website came largely from his family's plantations in the West Indies that were worked by enslaved people of African descent.

More than 20,000 people have participated in the walks, called Uncomfortable tours, since they started in 2018. They also exist in Cambridge and the founders hope to extend them to London and even Paris.

"Did you know that Oxford and Cambridge combined own more land than the Church of England?" asked guide Ashley Lance as she walked along the tranquil River Cam, opposite Cambridge University's sumptuous King's College Chapel.

"According to a study published in 2018, Cambridge is the most unequal city in Britain," she added.

Shocking discrimination

Lance, 27, explained that two worlds exist in the city - one comprised of the university, with its students, professors and laboratories, and the other made up of the rest of the population.

Despite their rivalries - Oxford is referred to as 'the other place' in Cambridge - the two universities have had much in common.

Women were able to study at Oxford from 1870, but had to wait until 1920 to qualify for a degree. They were banned from libraries for a long time, for fear they would be 'far too distracting' to men, explained McCann.

Oriel, founded in 1326, was the last Oxford college to open its doors to women, in 1985.

In Cambridge, St John's College, founded in 1511, accepted women from 1980. But on the day the first female students arrived, a faculty official lowered a flag to half-mast and wore a black armband.

"It's so shocking," said one exasperated Londoner on the tour, visiting with her daughter.

Michelle Miller, an American who has just moved to Oxford with her husband, said she was interested in the lesser-known aspects of popular tourist destinations.

"We didn't know there were so many controversies," the 52-year-old said. AFP



College of All Souls, in Oxford