

Oman calls for global cooperation to confront food security, climate change

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has appreciated efforts of Volker Turk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for his stand on the fundamental challenges facing the world, from climate change and conflicts to governance and development.

This came in a statement by H E Idris bin Abdul Rahman al Khanjari, Permanent Represen-

tative of Oman to the United Nations and international organisations in Geneva, delivered on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries within the framework of an interactive dialogue following a statement of the High Commissioner at the 54th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

H E Khanjari stated the GCC countries agree with the High Commissioner that human rights and development are



H E Idris al Khanjari

closely interconnected, through the joint pursuit of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the need of recognising the

fact that achieving prosperity and justice depends on protecting human rights for all.

H E Khanjari informed that the GCC countries are particularly concerned about the effects of climate change and water scarcity, and stress the importance of adopting necessary policies and procedures at institutional and governance levels to ensure sustainable management of resources.

He added that the GCC coun-

tries are well aware of the problem of global food security, which is exacerbated by geopolitical turmoil, and renew their call for the need of coordinated international cooperation in this field. "We also express our concern about the humanitarian situation of refugees and migrants in some European countries."

The GCC countries agree with the High Commissioner that "leaving no one behind" is not an empty slogan, he added,

but rather a collective commitment to human rights. "The GCC countries affirm their commitment to joint and multilateral work to develop policies that promote development while preserving human dignity," said H E Khanjari.

He noted that the GCC countries look forward to constructive interaction in upcoming summits and events "to achieve our common goals in human rights and development".

Speaking at the opening of the session, Turk highlighted the human rights violations caused by climate change, saying that it pushes millions of people into famine and causes destruction of homes and lives.

He also informed about a proposal for inclusion of international crime of ecocide in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court by a number of states and civil society groups.

OVER RO488MN APPROVED FOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In its fifth meeting of the year, the Tender Board, chaired by H E Dr Said Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, approved important projects, on Wednesday, the total value of which exceeds RO488.7mn.

Some of the approved projects are:

Oman Cultural Complex: The board cleared RO147.8mn for the design and construction of the complex.

Muscat Winter Wonderland: An allocation of RO6.9mn was granted for implementation and marketing of winter festival activities.

Expo 2025 Osaka: RO6.6mn was sanctioned for the sultanate's pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai in Japan.

Healthcare support: RO130.6mn was sanctioned for import of medicines, vaccines and serums by the Ministry of Health.

Infrastructure enhancements: Several infrastructure projects got the green light, including the first phase of the Batinah coastal road in North Batinah and South Batinah for RO78.95mn, dualisation of Al Ansab-Al Jifnain road for RO53mn, and a new Ministry of Health building for RO7.85mn.

Salalah developments: In Salalah, approved projects include construction of the Atin Road intersection on November 18 Street (RO7.5mn), Sultan Taimur Street dualisation (RO6.2mn) and Al Farouq Street dualisation (RO4.9mn).



H E Dr Said Mohammed al Saqri

Infrastructure expansion: Projects include the design and implementation of Wadi Bani Jaber Road (Phase II) for RO4.4mn, allocation of a channel on Arabsat Badr-6 (RO4.1mn), drainage network construction in Salalah (RO3.9mn) and air traffic management system maintenance (RO3.5mn).

Local roads: RO3.4mn has approved for paving internal roads in Bidiyah, North Sharqiyah.

Sports infrastructure: Preparations for the Hockey5s World Cup in Amerat received funding of RO3.1mn.

Healthcare personnel: The board allocated RO995,000 for healthcare staff, nutritionists and technicians for Dar al Aman al Khoud, affiliated with the Ministry of Social Development.

Additional consultation services: RO1.6mn was approved for engineering consultation services for Oman Botanic Garden and RO160,000 for the Al Nama Hospital project in North Sharqiyah.



RO147.8mn sanctioned for cultural complex

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Tender Board approved the construction of Oman Cultural Complex (OCC), a project envisaged as a national cultural centre, on Wednesday. Spread over an area of 400,000sqm opposite Muscat International Airport, a total of RO147.8mn was allocated for the complex.

The project consists of three main buildings - National Theatre, National Library and National Archives - in addition to eight other buildings.

The National Theatre will have a 1,000-seat capacity main auditorium and an additional hall for

The OCC project, which was first tendered in 2014 but put on hold, has been revived under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth

250 people. The National Library will be a 20,000sqm five-storey building, while the National Archives, partially open to the public, will include nearly 20km of shelf space.

The OCC project, which was first tendered in 2014 but put on hold, has been revived under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. It invited chosen contractors last year to carry out the specialist design, material procure-

ment and construction of OCC.

According to the tender document brief on the project, this new development by the ministry 'aims to establish a national cultural centre in Muscat as part of its strategy to preserve history and tradition, provide knowledge and competency, and promote cultural and artistic innovations'.

The ministry added that OCC is a long-cherished project of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

to create a landmark for art and culture of international scale, dedicated to collect, preserve and exhibit Oman's past and present. It is envisaged as a vibrant space to present live contemporary art and culture and as a link connecting local and international knowledge and cultural industries.

Additionally, OCC will provide an inspiring environment for the capital city Muscat, the nation and the region.

'This classic archetype ensemble, with buildings of exceptional contemporary architecture, will have a build-up area of 73,000sqm and be embedded in an oasis-like walled garden with parking and recreational areas.'

COVID-19 a persistent public health threat: WHO

Cairo, Egypt - World Health Organization (WHO) has reminded that COVID-19 poses an enduring threat to public health. It recently designated the Omicron EG.5 lineage as a "variant of interest" and listed other closely monitored variants.

Within the Eastern Mediterranean Region, four countries that share COVID-19-specific reports have detected the EG.5 variant. Other countries have begun to integrate COVID-19 reporting as part of respiratory disease surveillance systems. Vigilance in monitoring the situation remains paramount while this process takes place to transition COVID-19 surveillance from an emergency response to long-term disease prevention, control and management.

The public health risk posed by EG.5 is currently deemed low. The variant has, however, shown increased prevalence, a growth advantage and the ability to evade the immune response. It therefore has the potential to become the dominant variant in the near future.

WHO continues to emphasise the need for enhanced surveillance, sequencing and the comprehensive reporting of SARS-CoV-2 variants, along with clinical management, as the virus continues to evolve.

WHO's general recommendations for respiratory hygiene remain consistent. 'Get vaccinated in line with WHO guidance on vaccination. Stay at least 1m apart from others and avoid crowds. When physical distancing is not possible and in poorly ventilated settings, wear a properly fitted mask.'

Sayyid Fahd receives GCC human rights officials

Muscat - H H Sayyid Fahd Hamoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received on Wednesday heads of delegations who took part in the GCC Human Rights Institutions Forum hosted by the sultanate.

The forum saw participation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Arab League's Permanent Committee on Human Rights.

During the meeting, H H Sayyid Fahd affirmed that GCC countries continue to protect and enhance human rights which are guaranteed by Islamic law.

He also appreciated the efforts exerted to boost cooperation between human rights institutions in the region and to develop mechanisms for these in line with international treaties.

H H Sayyid Fahd also high-



lighted the march of comprehensive development in Oman, which is in accordance with a system that is based on justice and equality among all citizens in terms of rights and obligations.

He reiterated that human rights in Oman are protected through the Basic Law of the State, as well as national laws and

regulations issued in this regard.

The meeting discussed several topics included in the agenda of the forum, such as the GCC Human Rights Strategy and means of developing coordination to boost joint action regionally and internationally while also enhancing cooperation with the office of the United Nations High



Commissioner for Human Rights.

On their turn, the heads of the GCC delegations appreciated Oman for hosting the forum which contributed to reaching positive outcomes. They also affirmed that human rights are protected in Oman.

The meeting was attended

by H E Dr Abdullah Mohammed al Saidi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Sheikh al Fadhil Mohammed al Harthi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, and Sheikh Abdullah Shuwain al Hosni, Chairman of Oman Human Rights Commission.

ONA

Oman sends humanitarian aid for Libya flood relief

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal orders on Wednesday to send humanitarian aid to Libya, which has been ravaged by devastating floods.

The Royal orders are within the framework of the brotherly relations between the two countries and in line with the sultanate's humanitarian role to provide relief to those affected by natural calamities.

On Wednesday, Libya was reeling from a massive flood that killed more than 2,000 people, wreaking havoc in the eastern city of Derna where bodies wrapped in blankets lined the ravaged streets.

Relief missions gathered pace with Turkey, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates among the first nations to rush aid to the war-scarred country after the



disaster that has left about 10,000 missing according to international humanitarian workers. On Sunday afternoon, Storm Daniel made landfall on Libya's east coast after earlier lashing Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey.

It touched Benghazi before veering towards the Jabal al Akhdar district towns of Shahat, Al Marj, Al Bayda, Soussa and Derna, devastating that city of 100,000 people.

Agencies

Our Correspondent

Style, Luxury, Safety Lynk & Co makes entry into Oman

RIYADH ALI SULTAN

General Manager, Towell Auto Group

How has the journey so far been with Lynk & Co?

A few years ago, during my time in Europe, I had the opportunity to witness the immense popularity of Lynk & Co cars in the region. I was truly impressed by their innovative and distinctive design, advanced technology, and impressive features. However, what truly captured my attention was the brand's unwavering commitment to safety. It amazed me to learn that these cars boasted a remarkable 21 advanced driver assist safety features.

Intrigued by these remarkable vehicles, I delved deeper into their origins. Lynk & Co, the epitome of automotive craftsmanship, emerges from the heart of Europe, with its design and engineering prowess emanating from the vibrant city of Gothenburg, Sweden. Nestled within this cultural hub, Lynk & Co's headquarters serve as the creative epicentre for the brand's innovative vision.

A testament to the brand's commitment to excellence, Lynk & Co vehicles are meticulously designed and engineered in collaboration with Volvo, an esteemed Swedish automotive manufacturer renowned for its remarkable engineering heritage. The partnership between Lynk & Co and Volvo brings together a wealth of collective knowledge, expertise, and cutting-edge technologies, resulting in vehicles that embody the pinnacle of automotive ingenuity.

Inspired by the exceptional qualities of Lynk & Co cars, I felt a strong desire to introduce them to the people of Oman. I believed that the stylish, feature-loaded, and safer vehicles offered by Lynk & Co would be a fantastic addition to the sultanate. Upon returning to Oman, I immediately set my team to work on making this vision a reality.

Although the process faced some delays due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am delighted to announce that we are finally launching Lynk & Co here in Oman. I extend a warm invitation to the people in Oman to personally experience the marvel of Lynk & Co cars at our new and unique showroom located in Azaiba. Come and witness for yourself the combination of style, advanced features, and safety that sets Lynk & Co apart. We are excited to share this new chapter of mobility with the people of Oman and look forward to serving them with unparalleled excellence.

What do you feel about Lynk & Co's expected performance in Oman?

In the highly competitive automobile market, the key to success lies in captivating a diverse audience with a harmonious blend of captivating aesthetics, advanced features, impressive performance, and, above all, uncompromising safety. Lynk & Co, the epitome of automotive excellence, understands this principle profoundly.

With an impressive line-up of models, including the 01, 03, 03+, 05, and 09, the flagship model, Lynk & Co ensures that every customer's unique preferences and requirements are met. Whether one seeks the nimbleness and versatility of a compact vehicle or the sophistication and spaciousness of a larger model, Lynk & Co

A fusion of cutting-edge technology, European design elegance and a commitment to seamless mobility experiences, Lynk & Co arrives in Oman to redefine the way people think about cars and transportation.

As a brand known for pushing boundaries, the launch in Oman represents a step forward in transforming the automotive landscape, introducing a harmonious blend of style, luxury and safety.

In a lavish launch event, new models were introduced at Lynk & Co's new showroom at Ghala Heights in Muscat. *Muscat Daily* caught up for an interview with Riyadh Ali Sultan, general manager of Towell Auto Group, and Derek Peng, marketing head of Lynk & Co Asia Pacific. Excerpts from the interview -



Lynk & Co brand's dedication to delivering excellence and its ability to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the automobile market make it a compelling choice for discerning customers

offers a spectrum of choices to cater to diverse needs. This comprehensive range of models is a testament to the brand's dedication to providing an unparalleled driving experience for all.

But the excitement doesn't end there. The promise of more models to come adds an element of anticipation and intrigue. As the brand continues to innovate and push boundaries, customers can eagerly await the introduction of new and captivating vehicles that will redefine the driving landscape. Lynk & Co's commitment to continuous improvement and expansion ensures that customers will always have a reason to be enthralled.

Moreover, Lynk & Co understands that a

truly exceptional automotive experience extends beyond the vehicles themselves. With the backing of the Towell Group, renowned for its customer-centric approach, Lynk & Co ensures that every aspect of the ownership journey is characterised by utmost satisfaction. From personalised assistance to comprehensive after-sales support, customers can rest assured that their needs are at the forefront of the brand's operations.

In this remarkable combination of an exhilarating range of vehicles and the unwavering commitment to customer centricity, Lynk & Co surpasses consumer expectations. The brand's dedication to delivering excellence and its abil-

ity to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the automobile market make it a compelling choice for discerning customers. With Lynk & Co, the pursuit of automotive perfection becomes a reality, and customers can revel in a driving experience that exceeds their wildest expectations.

How does Lynk & Co stand different from the other auto brands that are available in Oman?

Lynk & CO is an innovative automotive brand that differentiates itself from other brands available in Oman in several ways. Today's consumers have evolved significantly compared to those of the past. While traditional expectations from vehicles focused on safe transportation and convenience, modern customers seek much more. They demand a digitally native car that aligns with their connected lifestyle and provides a seamless integration of technology into their driving experience.

Lynk & CO recognises this shift and stands out by catering to the needs of today's connected customer. The brand places connectivity as its core value, acknowledging that a vehicle should offer more than just transportation. Lynk & CO vehicles are equipped with an array of connected technologies that aim to simplify and enhance daily life.

One of the key features is the large central touchscreen that serves as a hub for various functionalities. It allows customers to access their favourite apps and services while on the move, keeping them connected to the digital world. Additionally, Lynk & CO vehicles incorporate telematics systems that are constantly connected to the internet, enabling real-time updates and communication.

By embracing connectivity, Lynk & CO challenges the established norms of the automotive industry. It acknowledges the needs and requirements of a new generation of globally connected consumers who seek a seamless integration of technology into their vehicles. This forward-thinking approach sets Lynk & CO apart from traditional brands and positions it as a brand that understands and caters to the evolving demands of today's consumers.

DEREK PENG

Marketing Head, Lynk & Co Asia Pacific



Coupled with its trendy design and exceptional automotive quality, Lynk & Co has established a youthful and innovative image, making it especially appealing to the younger demographic

What are the key highlights of the opening of Lynk & Co Center in Oman?

Lynk & Co, identified by a "Personal, Open, and Connected" values, is set to introduce high-value products to the local market, aimed at capturing the attention of potential Omani consumers seeking to improve their lifestyle. This opening signifies a new stride in Oman, marking a renewed advancement in the Omani market.

This Lynk & Co Center aims to provide customers with a comprehensive car-buying experience which goes beyond sales. From inquiries to test drives, new vehicle handover, and ongoing maintenance, the Lynk & Co Center is the starting point of your Lynk & Co experience.

Strategically situated in the Ghala Heights area of Muscat, along the Sultan Qaboos Highway close to the M/S Towell Group head office, the Lynk & Co Center boasts a harmonious palette of gray and white tones. With an open-layout design, it creates a tranquil and comfortable shopping environment. The distinctive features and spacious layout of the centre contribute to an enjoyable and comfortable car-buying experience for customers.

What are the advantages of Lynk & Co compared to traditional luxury brands?

Founded in 2016, Lynk & Co is a youthful and international automotive brand. Born with the idea of "Born Global, Open, and Connected," coupled with its trendy design and exceptional automotive quality, Lynk & Co has established a youthful and innovative image, making it especially appealing to the younger demographic.

Product Excellence: Lynk & Co serves as a model of profound integration of global resources and technological collaboration within Geely Holding Group. The brand's automobiles possess distinctive advantages in terms of R&D and design. Lynk & Co has crafted a series of high-value global products, creating a comprehensive product lineup that caters to a diverse range of user needs.

What are the key highlights of Lynk & Co's journey from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region?

Since its inception, Lynk & Co has successfully itself in the European market and successfully ventured into the Asia-Pacific region. Throughout this journey, Lynk & Co has consistently embraced a user-centric approach, fostered digital development, and pioneered innovative business models. The guiding principle of 'users first' has remained steadfast, shaping both our operational ethos and our global expansion strategy.



Saudi and Russian oil output cuts to cause big supply shortfall: IEA

Paris, France – Oil production cuts by Saudi Arabia and Russia will cause a "significant" global supply shortfall through the end of the year, raising the risk of further market volatility, the International Energy Agency said Wednesday.

The warning in the IEA's monthly market report comes a day after oil prices jumped following OPEC's own update showed that the gap between global supply and demand would be the widest since 2007.

"The Saudi-Russian alliance is proving a formidable challenge for oil markets," the IEA said.

Oil prices had been slumping in recent months after surging following Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

In an effort to prop up prices, Saudi Arabia and Russia, its ally in the wider OPEC+ group, announced earlier this month that they would extend voluntary cuts until the end of the year.

"From September onwards, the loss of OPEC+ production, led by Saudi Arabia, will drive a significant supply shortfall through the fourth quarter," the Paris-based IEA said.

"Oil stocks will be at uncomfortably low levels, increasing the risk of another surge in volatility that would be in the interest of neither producers nor consumers, given the fragile economic environment," it added.

Saudi Arabia has extended an oil production cut of one million barrels per day, which began in July, to the end of the year.

Russia has decided to prolong



International Energy Agency's warning comes a day after oil prices jumped following OPEC's own update showed that the gap between global supply and demand would be the widest since 2007

a reduction in exports of 300,000 bpd over the same period.

Oil prices have been rising in recent days, raising fears that they will push inflation higher and prompt central banks to keep interest rates higher for longer, which could in turn push economies into recession.

Last week, the price of Brent North Sea crude, the international benchmark, rose above

\$90 per barrel for the first time since November 2022.

The IEA said world oil demand remains on track to grow by 2.2mn bpd to 101.8mn bpd this year, partly due to resurgent Chinese consumption and jet fuel.

But the extension of Saudi and Russian output cuts "will lock in a substantial market deficit" through the last three months of the year, it added.

OPEC+ production has fallen

by two million bpd so far while supply by countries outside the cartel has risen by 1.9mn bpd.

Global supply will rise by 1.5mn bpd.

Stock markets mostly fell Wednesday before crunch US inflation data, with investors concerned that a spike in oil will drive consumer prices higher and force the US Federal Reserve to lift interest rates again.

"Oil prices have risen by more than 25% over the past few months, which suggests a new inflationary pressure and something that will muddy the outlook for the Fed at its next rate meeting," noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

AFP

Oman to host ME Health Insurance Conference

Muscat – Oman, represented by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), will host the Middle East Health Insurance Conference 2023 for the third time in a row.

The three days conference will be held during the period from September 24 to September 26, 2023. The event is organised by the Middle East Insurance Review. It will see a wide regional and international participation.

This year's conference will discuss issues related to risk management in health insurance and mitigating fraud and abuse of health benefits, as they pose negative impact on the quality and cost of insurance and health services.

CMA's interest in hosting this important international event comes in conjunction with the growth and increased turnout for health insurance products in recent years.

Health insurance acquired the largest share of Oman's gross insurance premiums at 35.4%, thus topping all insurance products. The gross direct premiums of health insurance activity also increased by 16.9%



The Capital Market Authority (CMA) will host the event

to cross RO191mn in 2022, compared to RO163mn in 2021.

The Middle East Health Insurance Conference 2023 will review the status of the health insurance market in Oman and its level of regulatory and supervisory development, in addition to the technological developments and the qualitative shift that 'Dhamani' electronic platform will bring about.

The conference is considered a great opportunity to meet expertise, exchange of ideas and future visions for the

health insurance sector, in addition to exchanging international experiences and best practices pertaining to mitigating fraud and abuse of health insurance benefits.

A number of working papers will be presented during the conference, dealing with best practices based on the use of technology, AI, scientific innovations related to risk management in health insurance and the legal measures applied in this regard.

ONA

US inflation ticks up in August to 3.7%

Washington, US – Consumer inflation in the United States picked up in August for a second straight month, according to government data released Wednesday, putting the heat on policymakers as they work to lower prices.

The consumer price index (CPI), a key inflation gauge, jumped 3.7% from a year ago, picking up pace from July's 3.2% figure, said the Labor Department. But a measurement strip-

ping out volatile segments cooled.

All eyes are on the report, which is expected to have a bearing on the US central bank's interest rate decision released next week.

The Federal Reserve has lifted the benchmark lending rate rapidly since March last year to tamp down demand and sustainably lower inflation – but the current figure remains stubbornly above officials' two per-

cent goal.

In August, higher gasoline costs bumped up headline inflation but the "core" reading – removing the volatile food and energy components – cooled to 4.3% on an annual basis.

"The index for gasoline was the largest contributor to the monthly all items increase, accounting for over half of the increase," said the Labor Department.

AFP

EU to probe China electric car subsidies

Strasbourg, France – Brussels will investigate Chinese state subsidies for electric cars, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday, vowing to defend Europe's industry against "artificially low prices".

"Global markets are now flooded with cheaper Chinese electric cars. And their price is kept artificially low by huge state subsidies," von der Leyen said, during a speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

This could lead the European Union to impose duties on those cars that it believes are unfairly sold at a lower price, thereby undercutting European competitors.

"Europe is open for competition but not for a race to the bot-



EU chief Ursula von der Leyen

tom," the European Commission president said.

France reportedly pushed von der Leyen to launch the investigation, but there are growing concerns in Europe about how much the continent relies on Chinese products.

The European Commission's internal market chief Thierry Breton last week warned about a trend emerging where Europe was "being relegated to net imports of electric vehicles or solar panels".

China could overtake Japan to become the world's largest car manufacturer this year, according to some experts.

France is particularly concerned that Europe will fall behind if it is not more assertive when confronted with China's actions that are more protectionist. Paris has announced measures that would provide subsidies for new electric cars based on the manufacturers' emissions output.

AFP

BP chief executive Bernard Looney resigns over transparency issues

London, US – British energy giant BP said Tuesday that its chief executive Bernard Looney has resigned "with immediate effect", after admitting he had not been "fully transparent" about historical relationships with colleagues.

"Bernard Looney has notified the company that he has resigned as chief executive officer with immediate effect," the company said in a statement, adding that finance chief Murray Auchincloss would act as interim CEO.

Looney, 53, is leaving after less than four years in the role, having seen the firm through a tumultuous period that included the Covid pandemic and the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

He had vowed to reposition BP as a leader in clean energy technologies, and gradually cut oil and



Bernard Looney

gas production to reduce carbon emissions, but environmentalists have criticised the company for inaction in that regard during his tenure. His surprise departure follows an internal probe into his behaviour that has been sup-

ported by external legal counsel.

BP said that in May last year its board received and reviewed allegations from an anonymous source relating to Looney's conduct "in respect of personal relationships with company

Bernard Looney is leaving after less than four years in the role, having seen the firm through the Covid pandemic and the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine

colleagues".

However, the board was given his assurances over his disclosures of past personal relationships, as well as his future behaviour, according to BP.

AFP

Apple bows to European Union, unveils iPhone with USB-C charger

Cupertino, US – Apple unveiled its new iPhone lineup on Tuesday, with its Lightning charger ports replaced on the newest models by a universal charger after a tussle with the European Union.

The European bloc is insisting that all phones and other small devices must be compatible with the USB-C charging cables from the end of next year, a move it says will reduce waste and save money for consumers.

The firm had long argued that its cable was more secure than USB-C chargers, which are already deployed by Apple on other devices and widely used by

rivals including the world's biggest smartphone maker Samsung.

"USB-C has become a universally accepted standard. So we're bringing USB-C to iPhone 15," said Kaiann Drance, Apple's vice president of iPhone marketing at a launch event.

European Union commissioner Thierry Breton responded to iPhone switching to the new connections by saying universal chargers are "common sense." The European market "is open, but on our conditions," Breton said in a released statement.

The update to Apple's line



People gather to look at the Apple iPhone 15 Pro during a launch event at Apple Park in Cupertino, California, (AFP)

comes as the Silicon Valley tech giant faces declining sales of iPhones, with premium prices pushing customers to delay switching to newer models. The firm is also caught up in diplomatic turbulence between the United States and China, with reports saying the communist government is banning civil servants from using its phones.

"Apple needed to deliver more than just minor updates to get people excited about buying new products," Techspontential analyst Avi Greengart said in a demo area at the event. "I think they delivered on that with lots of up-

dates, some of them not so minor."

Along with improvements to iPhone cameras and chips, Apple said that the iPhone 15, which includes four varieties, would have internal components that simplify repair and a new frame that allows the back glass to be easily replaced. The openness to repair is an unexpected turnaround.

Apple last month said it was endorsing passage of a California law requiring major gadget makers to enable people to fix their devices without taking them back to companies.

AFP



H E Sabti receives DG of Gulf Health Council

The Sultanate of Oman has begun preparing for hosting the 9th Meeting of the Committee of the Ministers of Health of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the 86th General Conference of GCC Ministers of Health Council next month.

As part of the preparation for the meeting and the conference, H E Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, on Wednesday received in his office H E Sulaiman Saleh al Dakheel, Director General of Gulf Health Council and his accompanying delegation,

currently visiting the country. The meeting exchanged cordial conversation, and embarked on the preparation for the two upcoming events in addition to the draft resolutions to be adopted at the 86th General Conference of GCC Ministers of

Health Council. They also explored the council's achievements accomplished over the years and future aspirations. The ministry's Undersecretary for Health Affairs and a number of senior officials also attended the meeting.

Alizz Islamic Bank's new website wins award

With a strong belief in enhancing the online customer experience, Alizz Islamic Bank recently launched its new corporate website.

The site, which can be navigated with ease via desktop, tablet or mobile device, offers customers and visitors a unique user experience. The new website is a testament of Alizz Islamic Bank's commitment towards enhancing customer experience and focusing on digital transformation.

In recognition of the profound transformation of new website the bank was felicitated with the award for 'Corporate Website of the Year' at the OERLive DX Excellence Awards.

The award was received by Adam al Jabry, unit head of Marketing & Corporate Communications, Velimir Stanojevic, head of Alternative Channels and Yarab al Zadjali, manager of Alternative Channels on behalf of the bank.

The new Alizz Islamic Bank website is dynamic and fully responsive making it easy to navigate on a wide range of web browsers and portable devices. The website also introduces a web version of the Alizz Islamic Bank chatbot which was previously launched on WhatsApp and the bank's official Instagram



account.

"The new Alizz Islamic Bank website reflects the exceptional customer experience and high standards that we strive to deliver as part of our business objective. We are continuously enhancing all customer touch points and working on benchmarking with the best practice focusing on excellence in customer service at a whole new level," said Ali al Mani, Chief Executive Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank.

"Communication methods are changing, with people engaging companies more through non-traditional, more immediate dig-

ital channels. For us, the best way to promote products and services and quickly interact with customers is through the most popular channels used via smartphones."

Mani added that at Alizz Islamic Bank, "we recognise the importance of online channels in the daily life of the customers whether existing or potential".

"As part of our overall strategy it is critical for us to understand how customers behave and what do they need. We are proud to launch the new website and we will continue to enhance the user experience as we go along."

Trend Vision One recognised as most preferred platform

Trend Micro Incorporated, a global cybersecurity leader, announced a major customer endorsement for its leading Trend Vision One platform.

G2 Grid, the world's largest software review platform and a trusted, impartial source of information, ranked Trend Vision One XDR Platform second out of 59 XDR vendors on the latest Summer 2023 G2 Grid.

Trend Vision One has been recognized as a leader across multiple segments, including the Mid-Market and Enterprise categories. It has earned prominent badges such as 'Best Results: Enterprise', 'Best Usability: Enterprise', and 'Best Relationship: Summer 2023'.

Trend Micro's commitment to innovation and addressing industry needs has been acknowledged through its Trend Vision One platform's recognition as a Momentum Leader and Leader in the Summer 2023 G2 Grid.

Moreover, the platform's effectiveness in supporting small businesses has also been acknowledged with the High Performer badge.



Dr Moataz bin Ali, Trend Micro

Middle East and Africa is evolving rapidly, and Trend Micro is leading the charge in ensuring the safety of organisations in the region.

As per the 2022 Annual Cybersecurity Report by the company, 'Rethinking Tactics', the company's security solutions successfully blocked and detected over 870mn cyber threats in the region last year. The recognition by G2 Grid underscores the company's dedication to this mission.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this recognition from the respected G2 Grid, as it echoes the voices of our customers and validates our unwavering commitment to innovation," said Dr

Moataz bin Ali, regional vice president and managing director, Mediterranean, Middle East, Central Asia and Africa, Trend Micro. "Our Trend Vision One platform represents our dedication to providing state-of-the-art, holistic, and user-centric solutions in the rapidly evolving world of cybersecurity."

"This accolade reiterates our belief that integrating artificial intelligence and offering a unified view of security events significantly enhances our customers' ability to respond to threats swiftly and effectively. We see these recognitions not as a finish line, but as a milestone on our continuous journey to redefine security and empower our customers in the face of ever-changing cyber threats," Dr Ali added.

Trend Vision One is a cloud-native security operations platform that uses AI to help organisations identify and respond to threats more quickly and effectively. The platform provides a unified view of all security events across an organisation's environment, giving them a better understanding of the threats, they face.

BankDhofar opens new branches

BankDhofar, a leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the grand opening of three new branches in key locations: Al Hail North and Mabela Industrial area in Muscat and Humbar branch in Sohar.

This strategic expansion marks a significant step in the bank's mission to provide accessible and convenient banking services to more communities across the sultanate.

The opening ceremonies were held in the presence of a number of prominent members of the society and BankDhofar's executive management team.

Al Hail North branch was officially opened under the patronage of Shaikh al Moutasem Abdullah al Siyabi - deputy wali of Seeb, while the Mabela Industrial branch was opened under the patronage of H E Hilal Hamad al Sarmi - a member of the Shura Council representing the wilayat of Seeb.

Humbar branch in Sohar was opened under the patronage of H E Yaqoob Yousuf al Kameshki - a member of the State Council.

The branches will serve as a financial hub for residents and businesses in each area. They offer a wide range of banking services, including personal and



business accounts, loans, and investment solutions.

They are designed to meet the banking needs of the growing community in the region. Customers can expect a welcoming environment and expert assistance with their financial goals.

The bank is committed to expanding its footprint to better serve its customers in all regions in opening those three branches in key locations; we bring our trusted and innovative banking services closer to more Omanis

and residents as well.

The expansion underscores BankDhofar's dedication to supporting local communities and businesses. These new branches feature modern and customer-friendly design elements, ensuring that customers enjoy a comfortable and efficient banking experience.

Additionally, BankDhofar continues to prioritize digital banking solutions, complementing the physical branch network to provide a seamless banking journey

for customers.

BankDhofar nation-wide network currently consists of more than 100 branches including Maisarah and three corporate branches. The network also includes more than 300 ATMs - CDMs - FFM's - MFKs for BankDhofar and Maisarah.

'BankDhofar looks forward to becoming a trusted partner in the financial journeys of the residents and businesses in Al Hail North, Mabela Industrial area, and Humbar in Sohar,' it stated.

MoE concludes teachers forum with NXplorers Shell award ceremony

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiads, in cooperation with Oman Shell, announced the winners for the fourth edition of the NXplorers Shell programme, under the patronage of Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shakiliyah, CEO of the Omani Authority for Academic Accreditation and Educational Quality Assurance.

H E Prof Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary for Education in the Ministry of Education, was also present on the occasion.

The closing ceremony included an exhibition of the projects that qualified for the final evaluation stage in the senior and junior programme categories.

The Ministry of Education's



speech and Oman Shell's speech were delivered and the NXplorers Shell program operetta was presented.

The attendees and students participated in a dialogue session with H E Dr Ambusaidi.

At the end of the ceremony, the winners of the NXplorers Shell Programme Awards were honoured, a release stated.

"Every year, the Ministry of Education celebrates the achievements of its students participating in various programs, including the Shell NXplorers programme, which comes with the support of partners who believe in the value of investing in the minds of young people and the energy of tomorrow for Oman," said Yaqoub al Balushi, Head of the Innovation

Department, while delivering the Ministry of Education's speech.

"May this support continue and contribute to providing our students with a lot of skills and knowledge. Many thanks to Oman Shell for its continued and ongoing support for the implementation and expansion of the program, to accommodate every year a new batch of our students, and to present to us in each round, amazing work that always achieves wonderful results at the local and international levels."

He stressed in his speech that the Shell NXplorers program has witnessed continuous development in the way it is implemented. After starting with ten government schools distributed in some governorates, during the 2018-19 academic year, it has ex-

panded to include other schools where the number reached thirty-four public and private schools in the 2022-23 academic year distributed across all governorates, and implemented at two levels, for grades V through VIII, and IX through XII, in order to ensure fair competition among students.

The awards for the fourth edition came in the senior category, with Al Amal School from South Batinah, and its Hope in Drop Project, taking the first place and Al Asmaa Bint Al Harith School for Basic Education from North Batinah and its Sawan Project, taking the second place.

Umm Al Fadl School for Basic Education from Dakhiliyah with its Green Gold Project, took the third place.

Last-ditch effort on to find survivors of Morocco quake

Ineghede, Morocco - Rescue teams stepped up a massive effort to bring relief to devastated Moroccan mountain villages on Wednesday as the chances faded fast for finding survivors from the powerful earthquake which killed 2,900 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless.

Vehicles packed with supplies were inching up winding mountain roads to deliver desperately needed food and tents to survivors of the nation's deadliest quake in more than six decades.

Search teams were in places still scouring the rubble for the living. Morocco is now well past the 72-hour window when rescues are considered most likely, yet survivors are in some cases found well beyond that period.

"We're working in a lot of places," said Fahas Abdullah Al Dosanri of the Qatari fire department, part of the international aid effort, adding some villages still cannot be reached by road.

Moroccan authorities reported that crews were working clear unpaved tracks that have been cut off by landslides.

In the hardest-hit areas south of Marrakesh many villages in the High Atlas mountains were completely destroyed and villagers were taking shelter in yellow government-issued tents.

"The only thing that remains of those villages is their name," Fatima Benhamoud, 39, said near a distribution centre for the temporary shelters.

Her family was living in one of



A displaced resident carries his belongings in the village of Imi N'Tala, near Amizmiz, on Tuesday, four days after the deadly earthquake (AFP)

the tents in a park in Amizmiz, which has become an aid hub for the mountain villages, because their home was no longer safe.

The shelters' arrival are an indication that aid is starting to flow but they are intended to be only temporary and will be totally insufficient against the approaching cold and rainy season.

Hard-hit mountain villages

Morocco is deep in mourning for its dead, with the most recent toll

on Tuesday recording at least 2,901 killed and 5,530 injured in the 6.8 magnitude quake that struck late on Friday when many were at home.

In the tourist hub of Marrakesh, whose UNESCO-listed historic centre suffered cracks and other damage, many families still slept out in the open, huddled in blankets on public squares for fear of aftershocks.

But the need was most desperate in remote and poor mountain villages, where tradi-

tional adobe homes crumbled to rubble and dust. King Mohammed VI paid a visit to victims of the earthquake on Tuesday at Marrakesh University Hospital where the official MAP news agency said he 'inquired about the state of health of the injured' before giving blood.

Many Moroccan citizens have rushed to help quake victims with food, water, blankets and other aid or by donating blood to help treat the injured, an effort joined by the national football

team. Morocco has allowed rescue teams to come to its aid from Spain, Britain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates but so far declined offers from several other nations, including the United States and Israel.

The quake was Morocco's strongest on record and the deadliest to hit the country since a 1960 earthquake destroyed Agadir on the Atlantic coast, killing between 12,000 and 15,000 people.

AFP

Bahrain prison hunger strike ended: Officials

Manama, Bahrain - Prisoners in Bahrain have 'ended' a mass hunger strike over jail conditions, a government source told AFP, after activists warned the action could resume.

The hunger strike, which lasted 36 days and involved at least 800 inmates according to activists, was halted on Monday, days before a team from the UN Human Rights Office was due to visit.

The strike was 'temporarily suspended' after an offer to improve conditions and as the health of some prisoners deteriorated, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) said on Tuesday.

But a government source familiar with the situation said 'inmates have ended their hunger strike', adding that the National Institute for Human Rights inspected the Jau prison.

The institute confirmed 'that the inmates on hunger strike have decided to end it as of (Monday) after visiting hours were reorganised, the hours of open air access were increased, and the number of contacts that could be contacted was increased too', the source said late on Tuesday.

The statement varies from the account by BIRD, which said some inmates were to be released from solitary confinement and healthcare pro-

visions would be revised, as well as the other measures.

Dozens of people have held scattered protests almost daily in support of the prisoners, in echoes of the large-scale demonstrations that rocked the tiny but strategic island state in 2011.

Prisoners at the Jau prison, which holds dissidents detained when authorities

The hunger strike over conditions in jail, which lasted 36 days and involved at least 800 inmates as per activists, was halted on Monday

crushed the 2011 protests, have been subjected to 23-hour cell confinement and restrictions on prayer, according to BIRD and the banned opposition. The UN Human Rights Office has said it was 'deeply concerned' about the hunger strike and will assess prison conditions at Bahrain's invitation.

Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa will also make an official visit this week to close ally the United States, whose navy's Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain.

AFP



Protesters shout slogans during a demonstration in support of We Will Stop Femicide Platform outside the courthouse in Istanbul on Wednesday, during the last hearing of a trial seeking to ban the platform (AFP)

Turkey drops bid to close leading anti-femicide group

Istanbul, Turkey - A Turkish court on Wednesday rejected a prosecutor's attempts to shut down a leading anti-femicide campaign group on charges of violating administrative laws and 'morality'.

The rare court victory for a Turkish rights group came as Ankara vows to mend ties with Western allies after May elections in which President Recep Tayyip Erdogan extended his dominant rule into a third decade.

Cheers from the We Will Stop Femicide Platform members and supporters went up in Istanbul's main courthouse after the presiding judge dropped the case after more than a year of hearings.

"You won't be able to stop us, but we will stop femicide," the group declared on social media after the verdict.

"We are very happy, but (the trial) should not have happened in the first place," We Will Stop Femicide Platform representative

Nursen Inal told AFP.

Riot police cordoned off the courthouse and detained two supporters of the campaign group ahead of the closely watched hearing.

Prosecutors had asked the court to close the group for 'acting against the law and morality' in hearings that had stretched out for more than a year.

The group called the charges political and said it was never presented with an explanation as to which laws it was supposed to have violated.

Change in tone

The We Will Stop Femicide Platform has been campaigning against the murder and abuse of women in the mostly Muslim but officially secular nation since 2010.

It became a lightning rod for criticism from Islamic conservatives after speaking out against Erdogan's 2021 decision to pull Turkey out of a European con-

vention aimed at combating violence against women.

More conservative members of Erdogan's ruling party also accused the group of damaging traditional family values by speaking out in defence of LGBTQ rights.

Erdogan himself branded the LGBTQ community 'perverse' and repeatedly denounced its supporters during his May reelection campaign.

The We Will Stop Femicide Platform says 403 women were murdered in Turkey last year and 423 in 2021.

The group's prosecution alarmed human rights groups and followed a string of other hugely controversial jailings of Erdogan opponents and reporters. But some analysts are sensing a change in tone in Turkey after the May vote.

Turkey this year reaffirmed its commitment to resume long-stalled negotiations to join the European Union.

AFP

Main Palestinian factions back truce

Beirut, Lebanon - Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah movement and its Islamist rival Hamas have backed a fledgling ceasefire in a south Lebanon camp hit by deadly fighting, a statement said on Wednesday.

Clashes have rocked the Ain al-Helweh refugee camp, on the outskirts of the southern city of Sidon, since last Thursday, pitting members of the Fatah movement, which controls the camp, against hardline Islamist fighters. Hamas has stayed out of the fighting.

At least nine people have been killed and more than 85 wounded, including fighters and civilians, the Palestinian Red Crescent said on Wednesday.

Senior Palestinian officials, including Fatah's Azzam al-Ahmad and Hamas's Mussa Abu Marzuk, met late on Tuesday at the Palestinian embassy in



Lebanon's caretaker PM Najib Mikati (centre) meeting with Palestinian Fatah movement delegation in Beirut on Wednesday (AFP)

Beirut, a joint statement said.

They expressed their 'full commitment to consolidating the ceasefire' and agreed to 'work to facilitate the return of those forced from their homes, and vacate schools as soon as possible'.

They also agreed to 'continue coordination with the Lebanese state', the statement added.

By longstanding convention, the Lebanese army stays out of the Palestinian camps and leaves the factions to handle security.

Fatah's Ahmad also discussed the situation with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and other officials on Wednesday.

Ain al-Helweh is home to more than 54,000 registered refugees and thousands of Pales-

tinians who joined them in recent years from neighbouring Syria, fleeing the civil war there.

The camp, Lebanon's largest, was created for Palestinians who were driven out or fled during the war that accompanied the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has said the fighting has displaced hundreds of families.

On Monday evening, a ceasefire was announced by Lebanon's General Security agency after a meeting between its director and Palestinian security officials, but Tuesday saw brief clashes.

An AFP correspondent in Sidon said the situation was tense but largely calm on Wednesday morning, despite sporadic bursts of gunfire.

AFP

Iranians hit by internet curbs in year since protests

Tehran, Iran - Iran has imposed curbs on the internet in the year since protests erupted over Mahsa Amini's death, forcing people to find other ways to run their businesses or keep in touch with loved ones.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died on September 16, 2022 after her arrest in Tehran for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

Her death triggered months of nationwide protests in which hundreds of people were killed, including dozens of security personnel, before authorities moved to quell what they branded 'riots', including restrictions on the use of social media.

Alma Samimi, who makes a living by selling leather bags online, said her business had suffered since the blackout came



A woman speaks on a cell phone while a man next to her browses a phone along a street in Tehran on September 4 (AFP)

into force.

"The damage has been irreversible," she said, with profits linked to her Instagram account - which had amassed thousands of followers - nosediving 80 per

cent. "Online interactions have dramatically dropped since last year," she said.

The restrictions, which affected online activity including on Instagram and WhatsApp, come

as millions of Iranians struggle to make ends meet, grappling with an economic crisis marked by soaring inflation and the Iranian rial's sharp decline.

Iran's economic woes were significantly compounded by Washington's 2018 decision to reimpose sanctions on Tehran after then-president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from a landmark nuclear deal.

"We cannot plan for the future anymore," Samimi lamented.

Some 1,200 business owners have since called on Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi to lift the restrictions, according to local media.

To keep her business afloat, Samimi resorted to using virtual private networks and anti-filter tools to bypass the censorship.

AFP

Japan PM replaces foreign, defence ministers in cabinet reshuffle

Tokyo, Japan - Japan's struggling Prime Minister Fumio Kishida named new foreign and defence ministers on Wednesday in a major reshuffle that raised the number of women in the cabinet to five.

Kishida's popularity and his standing within the ruling party have dived since he took office in October 2021, and many voters are not happy with his government's handling of the world's third-largest economy.

The 66-year-old will stand for re-election next year as president of the fractious Liberal Democratic Party, which has dominated politics for decades, and experts said the cabinet reshuffle was an attempt to shore up his approval ratings.

Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi was replaced by Yoko Kamikawa, one of five women in the new cabinet, chief cabinet secretary and government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters.

Kamikawa, 70, is Japan's first woman foreign minister in 19 years.

She was justice minister five years ago when Japan executed the leader and members of the Aum Shinrikyo cult for their role in the deadly 1995 sarin attack on the Tokyo subway.

Minoru Kihara, 54, succeeded Yasukazu Hamada as defence minister, just as Japan faces a rising threat from North Korea and deteriorating relations with China.

Public support for the Kishida government stood at just 36 per cent against 43 per cent for disapproval, according to a poll released on Monday by national broadcaster NHK.

A majority of voters are not satisfied with the government's policy to address inflation, according to a Yomiuri poll published last month.

Kishida said on Sunday that he plans to 'implement a bold economic package' to address the impact of rising prices on voters.

And he stuck with his economic team in the reshuffle.

Shunichi Suzuki stays as finance minister and Yasutoshi Nishimura retains the ministry of economy, trade and industry ministry.

Kishida's flamboyant former rival Taro Kono remains in charge of digital affairs.

Farm minister Tetsuro Nomura, who recently made a gaffe about the release of waste water from the disaster-hit Fukushima nuclear plant, was replaced.

"The cabinet shuffle is, as usual, an attempt to shore up faltering approval ratings," said Brad Glosserman at Pacific Forum research institute.

It aims to make Kishida's internal re-election 'more likely by boosting public support (and) to ensure that factions within the LDP continue to support him', he told AFP.

Public support has been hit in recent months due to issues including the troubled new 'My Number Card' identification system.

Scandals have also taken their toll, including 'inappropriate behaviour' by Kishida's son, who was removed from the position of his secretary earlier this year.

Magazine photos showed invitees to a party thrown by Shotaro Kishida pretending to hold a press conference and one lying down on red-carpeted stairs.

In the reshuffled cabinet, five of the 19 ministers are women, up from two previously.



Japan's PM Fumio Kishida (centre) attends the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) executive meeting at the party's headquarters in Tokyo on Wednesday (AFP)

Russia will win 'great victory' over enemies: Kim Jong Un

Moscow, Russia - Kim Jong Un told President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday he was sure Russia would win a 'great victory' over its enemies, as Ukraine's Western allies warned of a possible Russian arms agreement with North Korea.

Russia became a pariah in the West after launching full-scale hostilities in Ukraine last year and has looked to strengthen alliances with other headline leaders ostracised by democratic countries.

"We are confident that the Russian army and people will win a great victory in the just fight to punish evil groups who pursue hegemony, expansion, and ambition," Kim told Putin, raising a toast during an official dinner following one-on-one talks.

Kim also praised the 'heroic' Russian army in comments that news agencies sponsored by Moscow interpreted as relating specifically to Moscow's large-scale military operation in Ukraine.

Putin meanwhile praised 'the future strengthening of cooperation and friendship between our countries', while hosting Kim at a Far East spaceport, and later told reporters he saw 'possibilities' for military cooperation with North Korea.

He had earlier said Moscow could help Pyongyang build satellites and suggested the countries

sia's Far East, with footage released by the Kremlin showing the pair shaking hands enthusiastically as Kim arrived.

The two then toured assembly and launch facilities for the Angara and Soyuz-2 space rocket launchers before sitting down for talks with their delegations.

While Kim was in Russia, Pyongyang fired two ballistic missiles on Wednesday, the South Korean military said, the latest in a string of sanctions-busting tests.

Experts say Russia will likely use the talks to seek artillery shells and antitank missiles from North Korea, which wants advanced satellite and nuclear-powered submarine technology in return.

Kim, who travelled overland to Russia in his bullet-proof train, was accompanied by an entourage that suggested the summit would have a strong military focus.

Among the top military officials accompanying Kim were Korean People's Army Marshal Pak Jong Chon and Munitions Industry Department Director Jo Chun Ryong, according to the North's state media.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu took part in the talks with Kim, as did Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, images on Russian state television showed.

AFP



Russia's President Vladimir Putin (right) shakes hands with North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un during their meeting at the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Amur region on Wednesday (AFP)

We are confident that the Russian army and people will win a great victory in the just fight to punish evil groups who pursue hegemony, expansion, and ambition

KIM JONG UN

might also discuss military cooperation.

US officials and experts have said Russia is interested in buying North Korean ammunition to use in Ukraine.

Both leaders affirmed historical ties between Moscow and Pyongyang.

"We will always be with Russia," Kim said, according to footage broadcast on Russian TV.

"An old friend is better than two new ones," Putin said, quoting a Russian proverb and referencing the Soviet Union's role in the Korean War.

Their talks as well as discussions with delegations lasted around two hours before the leaders proceeded to the officials dinner in Kim's honour.

Kim will later oversee a display of the potential of Russia's Pacific fleet in Vladivostok, Putin announced.

The two leaders met at the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Rus-

Thailand to offer Chinese tourists visa-free entry

Bangkok, Thailand - Chinese tourists will enjoy visa-free entry to Thailand from the end of September under a temporary scheme announced by the kingdom's newly formed cabinet on Wednesday.

Thailand's vital tourism sector accounts for almost 20 per cent of its GDP but has struggled in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and changing traveller habits. In particular, Chinese tourists - accounting for the largest percentage of Thailand's visitors, with some 11mn touring the country in 2019 - have been slow to return.

Under the current rules, they can apply for a visa on arrival but must demonstrate travel insurance, hotel bookings, and proof of funds exceeding US\$280 at immigration for a maximum stay of 15 days.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said the new scheme would run from September 25 until February 29 next year and would 'test if there is any impact (on the Thai economy)'.

There were no details about how long Chinese tourists might be able to stay under the arrangement.

"We have discussed with all relevant parties to make sure that we are fully ready," Srettha told reporters after his first cabinet meeting.

Officials said they estimate the scheme, which also includes Kazakhstan, could bring a total of 30mn visitors this year, up from 11mn in 2022.

AFP

China's Xi Jinping says 'upgrading' Venezuela ties

Beijing, China - President Xi Jinping announced on Wednesday an 'upgrading of China-Venezuela relations' in a meeting with his counterpart Nicolas Maduro, state media reported.

Maduro arrived in Beijing on Tuesday after a tour of Shanghai and other Chinese cities.

The Venezuelan leader, who touched down in the southern tech hub Shenzhen on Friday, is expected to stay in China until Thursday for his first state visit to the country since 2018.

Xi announced on Wednesday the 'upgrading of China-Venezuela relations to an all-weather strategic partnership', according to footage of the meeting published by state broadcaster CCTV.

The 60-year-old Maduro is seeking to secure membership for Venezuela in BRICS, a bloc of

to safeguard national sovereignty, national dignity and social stability, and firmly support Venezuela's just cause of opposing foreign interference', Xi told Maduro, while also saying he would work to deepen cooperation between the two countries.

The pair will also hold a ceremony at the Great Hall of the People, CCTV added.

Last week Maduro posted on social media that his 'historic' visit was aimed at 'strengthening cooperation and the construction of a new world order'.

China loaned about US\$50bn to OPEC member Venezuela in the 2010s, with Caracas repaying the debt with shipments of oil, of which it has some of the largest reserves in the world.

It owed US\$20bn to Beijing in 2018.

AFP



President of China Xi Jinping (AFP)



People watch a fire at an apartment building in Hanoi on Wednesday (AFP)

Dozens dead in fire at Hanoi apartment

Hanoi, Vietnam - Dozens of people died in a fire at an apartment block in Vietnam's capital Hanoi, state media said on Wednesday, with witnesses reporting screams from inside and a small boy thrown from the building.

The fire started just before midnight on Tuesday (1700 GMT) in the parking floor of the 10-storey building, an area packed with motorbikes, witnesses said. More than 100 people managed to escape or were pulled from the building by rescuers, with authorities rushing 54 to hospital, including 'dozens of dead', the official Vietnam News Agency said.

At least three children were among the dead, Viettimes, an online state newspaper, reported. "I heard a lot of shouts for help. We could not help them much," said Hoa, a woman who lives near the block and gave only one name.

"The apartment is so closed with no escape route, impossible for the victims to get out," she told AFP at the site.

Photos by AFP photographers on the scene overnight showed flames and smoke billowing from barred balconies.

The blaze was out by Wednesday morning, but rescuers still struggled for hours thereafter to access the building, which is down a narrow alley in a residential area of southwest Hanoi. The complex's small balconies were surrounded by iron bars, with the apartment block having only a single exit - and no emergency ladder on the outside.

Around 150 people lived in the complex, authorities said.

Another witness, Huong, said a small boy was thrown from a high floor to help him escape the flames.

"I was about to sleep when I smelled something. I went outside and saw the fire," she said. "The smoke was everywhere. There was a little boy thrown from a high floor, I don't know whether he survived or not although people used a mattress to catch him," she said.

Neighbours reported several others jumping from the block. "There was a middle-aged woman jumping down onto my terrace here. She hit her arm and broke it. Another person also jumped down here and broke their legs," said Dao To Nga.

"A child was put into a plastic basket and lowered down."

Some were able to flee the building using her roof. "This rooftop of my family helped 14-15 people escape," she said.

One survivor, Nguyen Thi Minh Hong, told AFP that her family waited in their seventh-floor apartment at the back of the building for five hours before help arrived.

"We were sleeping when suddenly we felt very hot because the power had been cut. My husband opened the door and we heard people shouting for help and we saw smoke."

AFP

The smoke was everywhere. There was a little boy thrown from a high floor, I don't know whether he survived or not although people used a mattress to catch him

HUONG

India: AAI gets nod to install body scanners at 4 airports

New Delhi, India - To make security checks quicker and error-free at India's hyper-sensitive airports, the Airport Authority of India (AAI) received clearance from the Public Investment Board (PIB) to install full-body scanners that will cut down the passenger frisking time by half.

These full-body scanners will be installed at four airports in the country including Kolkata, Chennai, Pune and Goa.

In July, the government had floated a tender to procure 131 full-body scanners - that cut down the average passenger frisking time to 15 seconds from the current 30 and 600 new hand baggage scanners at over Rs 1,000 crore at airports run by the AAI, but it was later withdrawn as it needed clearance from PIB.

The initial proposal was to install full-body scanners and new hand-baggage scanner machines at 43 airports that include Amritsar, Goa, Srinagar, Jammu, Leh, Varanasi, Chennai, Pune, Kolkata, Raipur, Tirupati, Bhopal, among others at over Rs 1,000 crore at airports run by the AAI.

However, in a recent meeting between stakeholders involved in the safety and security of airports, it was decided to install full-body scanners in the four airports that witness maximum foot-fall among all airports owned by the AAI.

ANI

Fears mount of surging death toll in Libya's flood disaster

Rescue teams from Turkey have arrived. Algeria, France, Italy, Qatar and Tunisia also pledged to help

Derna, Libya - Libya was reeling on Wednesday from a massive flood disaster that killed at least 2,300 people when a surge of water devastated the eastern city of Derna, leaving another 10,000 missing according to the Red Cross.

Relief missions gathered pace with Turkey, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates among the first nations to rush aid to the war-scarred country, and the UN pledging US\$10mn in support for survivors, including more than 30,000 people left homeless.

The Mediterranean coastal city of Derna was hit by a huge flash flood late on Sunday that witnesses likened to a tsunami after two upstream dams burst when torrential rains brought by Storm Daniel battered the region.

The wall of water ripped away entire buildings, vehicles and the people inside them. Many were swept out into the Mediterranean Sea, with bodies later washing up on beaches littered with debris and car wrecks.

Traumatised survivors have dug through the mud-caked ruins of shattered buildings to recover victims' bodies, scores of which were lying wrapped in blankets out in the open before being buried in mass graves.



This combination of handout satellite images released by Maxar Technology and created on Wednesday shows an overview of Libya's eastern city of Derna before the flash floods on September 7 and during the flash floods on Tuesday (AFP)

The confirmed death toll in the politically fractured North African country reached 2,300 by Tuesday afternoon, but some regional officials were quoted as giving figures more than twice as high. Another 10,000 people were still missing, said Tamer Ramadan of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

"The death toll is huge and might reach thousands," Ramadan said on Tuesday, adding that the organisation had independent sources saying that 'the number of missing people is hitting 10,000 persons so far'.

Oil-rich Libya is still recovering from the years of war and chaos

Relief missions gathered pace with Turkey, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates among the first nations to rush aid to the war-scarred country, and the UN pledging US\$ 10mn

that followed the NATO-backed uprising which toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

'Epic calamity'

The country has been left divided between two rival governments - the UN-brokered, internationally recognised administration based

in Tripoli, and a separate administration in the disaster-hit east.

Media reports quoted an interior ministry spokesman of the eastern-based government as saying 'more than 5,200' people had died in Derna.

The city, a 300km (190 mile) drive east of Benghazi, is ringed by hills and bisected by a riverbed

that is usually dry in summer, but which became a raging torrent that also destroyed several bridges.

Mudslides and flooding also hit nearby areas of eastern Libya where, aid group the Norwegian Refugee Council said, 'entire villages have been overwhelmed by the floods and the death toll continues to rise'. "Communities across Libya have endured years of conflict, poverty and displacement. The latest disaster will exacerbate the situation for these people. Hospitals and shelters will be overstretched."

With global concern spreading, several nations offered urgent aid and rescue teams to help

address what one UN official called 'a calamity of epic proportions'. The United Nations allocated US\$10mn for disaster relief, said Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

"Storm Daniel has claimed thousands of lives, causing widespread damage and wiping out livelihoods in eastern Libya," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter, adding: "We stand with the people of Libya at this difficult time."

Rescue effort

Rescue teams from Turkey have arrived in eastern Libya, authorities said, and Algeria, France, Italy, Qatar and Tunisia also pledged to help. The United Arab Emirates sent two aid planes carrying 150 tonnes of food, relief and medical supplies.

The EU said assistance from Germany, Romania and Finland had been dispatched to Libya, including food, water tanks, tents and blankets as well as hospital tents and power generators.

A Kuwaiti flight took off on Wednesday with 40 tonnes of supplies, and Jordan sent a plane loaded with food parcels, tents, blankets and mattresses.

Climate experts have linked Libya's deadly disaster to a combination of the impacts of a heating planet and of the country's years of political chaos and underinvestment in infrastructure.

Hurricane-strength Mediterranean storms such as Daniel - which earlier hit Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece - are known as 'medicanes' which can gain strength as warmer air absorbs more moisture.

AFP

More than 330mn children still in extreme poverty, says UNICEF

Washington, US - The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp slowdown in the fight to end child poverty, with 333mn children still living in extreme poverty, according to a report published on Wednesday.

The report from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank found that the pandemic led to the abolition of extreme poverty for 30mn fewer children than was previously predicted.

As a result, around one in six children still live on less than US\$2.15 per day, according to the report.

"Compounding crises, from



UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell

the impacts of COVID-19, conflict, climate change and economic shocks, have stalled progress, and left millions of children in extreme poverty," UNICEF Executive Director

Catherine Russell said in a statement. The report's findings throw a spanner in the works of the UN's ambitious goal to eradicate extreme child poverty by 2030.

AFP

Ukraine has made 'great strides' in EU bid, says Von der Leyen

Strasbourg, France - EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday that Ukraine has made 'great strides' in its quest for EU membership, as Kyiv presses to open accession talks this year.

"The future of Ukraine is in our Union," the European Commission president said during her annual state of the EU address to lawmakers.

Ukraine was made an official candidate to join the 27-nation bloc last June in the wake of Russia's all-out invasion.

Kyiv is now urging the EU's member states to agree to move



EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (AFP)

onto the next step of opening formal membership talks this year.

Von der Leyen's commission, the EU's executive arm, is ex-

pected to give its opinion next month on whether Ukraine is ready to begin negotiations.

"Accession is merit-based - and the commission will always defend this principle. It takes hard work and leadership," Von der Leyen said.

"But there is already a lot of progress. We have seen the great strides Ukraine has already made since we granted them candidate status."

The commission said in an interim report in June that Kyiv had completed two of seven reform benchmarks it had been set to open talks.

Ukraine, along with neighbouring Moldova, has joined a group of nations from the western Balkans who have been waiting for years to make progress on their bids to join the EU.

Von der Leyen said that the bloc must get ready to accept new members, without waiting to first change its own founding treaties.

The commission head told MEPs the EU should streamline its decision-making but 'we cannot - and we should not - wait for treaty change to move ahead with enlargement', she said.

AFP

Breathless Indonesians irate over pollution crisis in capital city

Jakarta, Indonesia - Soaring pollution in Indonesia's capital has left 35-year-old Asep Muizudin Muhamad Darmini hooked up to breathing tubes at a Jakarta hospital, gazing at the dense grey haze outside.

Air pollution is hardly a new phenomenon in the megalopolis, but monitors and activists say the effects have been even worse than usual this year. Under growing pressure, the government is beginning to recognise the contribution of industry to the soupy smog over the capital.

It sanctioned 13 firms in recent weeks for failing to meet operational standards and has since ordered remote work for some civil servants, cloud seeding, and vehicle emissions tests.

Before a regional summit last

week, it even trimmed power generation at the Suralaya coal plant near Jakarta in a bid to tackle high levels of PM2.5, a class of pollutants which can penetrate deep into the lungs.

Still, the city of around 30mn people had the worst air pollution in the world for multiple days last month, according to Swiss-based monitor IQAir.

Darmini tried to shield himself by wearing a mask and exercising regularly, but in vain. "I feel powerless because no matter how hard I try to maintain a positive mindset and live normally, my body cannot fight against the pollution," Darmini, 35, told AFP.

Legal action

The director of Indonesia's top hospital for respiratory diseases



A boat with a customer crosses the polluted Cileungsi River in Bogor city of West Java on Tuesday (AFP)

said infections and pneumonia cases spiked '20 to 30 per cent' between March and July compared to last year, though he could not say definitively whether pollution was entirely to blame.

Air pollution is driven by multiple causes, with factors like warmer air, wind patterns, and topography playing a role in where pollutants concentrate.

Experts are also clear that polluting sources of energy like the coal power plants that dot Indonesia play a key role.

Data modelling by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) suggests emissions from the country's coal-fired power plants in 2022 were responsible for 10,500 deaths and US\$7.4bn in health costs.

Indonesia has pledged to stop commissioning new plants from 2023 and to be carbon neutral by 2050. But it is already facing legal action over its slow progress and the resulting impacts on the health of Indonesians.

In 2021, activists and citizens won a lawsuit that found President Joko Widodo and top officials negligent in protecting Jakartans from pollution.

The government lost its appeal but has filed another one to the Supreme Court. Cempaka Asriani blames poor air quality for the persistent cough her six-year-old son cannot shake.

"The government doesn't appear to fully comprehend our rights and their obligations," the 35-year-old told AFP.

AFP



Oman's Ahmed al Kaabi battles for the ball with Sergino Dest of the US during their friendly match in St Paul, Minnesota, on Tuesday (AFP)

Balogun on target as USA beat Oman in friendly

Miami, United States - The United States beat Oman 4-0 in an international friendly in St. Paul, Minnesota on Tuesday with striker Folarin Balogun grabbing his second goal since switching national allegiances.

Monaco forward Balogun, who switched from England in May and scored in the Nations League final against Canada a month later, opened the scoring in the 13th minute.

A fierce strike by teammate Sergino Dest was parried out by Oman keeper Ibrahim Al Mukhaini, and Balogun reacted swiftly to bury the loose ball.

The USA had been far from impressive in their 3-0 win over Uzbekistan on Saturday but looked sharper and they doubled their lead on the hour through Brenden Aaronson.

The midfielder, who plays in Germany for Union Berlin, drilled a free-kick through a badly organized Oman wall and past the unsighted Al Mukhaini to make it 2-0. Aaronson went close to add another with a fine solo run and

low shot which the Oman keeper did well to get down to but the third goal arrived soon enough with Ricardo Pepi who found the target for the second straight game.

DeJuan Jones broke down the right and found Pepi with a low ball into the box which the striker collected before spinning sharply and firing into the bottom corner.

The fourth goal came via two players USA coach Gregg Berhalter had brought on to make their debuts - Benjamin Cremaschi found Kevin Parades down the right and his low cross was turned into his own net by the sliding Oman defender Khalid Al-Braiki.

"I saw a young side, a lot of young players coming through so, overall, I'm really happy with what I have seen, a really good opportunity to take things forward into October," said US Soccer technical director Matt Crocker.

Berhalter's side will face Germany on October 14 in East Hartford and then take on Ghana three days later in Nashville.

MESSILESS BUT MERCILESS



Argentina's Enzo Fernandez celebrates after scoring against Bolivia in their World Cup qualifier in La Paz on Tuesday (AFP)

Despite the absence of their talisman Lionel Scaloni's side had too much firepower for Bolivia with goals from Enzo Fernandez, Nicolas Tagliafico and Nicolas Gonzalez securing an impressive victory

Eight minutes later Bolivia's task got even tougher when Roberto Fernandez was sent off for an over-the-top challenge on Cristian Romero.

Argentina went in at the break with a 2-0 lead after Tagliafico

met a floated Di Maria free-kick with a header that looped over Viscarra.

The three-time World Cup winners were in total control after the break with Alvarez hitting the post in the 70th minute

and Viscarra kept busy by efforts from Rodrigo De Paul and Di Maria.

Gonzalez wrapped up the victory seven minutes from the end with a left-footed drive after more hesitant defending from the home side, who have lost both their opening games.

Scaloni was pleased with the performance by his team, saying they were "not afraid to play with the ball" and also offered an explanation for Messi's absence.

"Leo was not ready to play, he tried to recover, but he did not

feel comfortable," he said.

Masterful Marquinhos

Brazil came up against a determined Peru side and looked set to be heading for a frustrated ending when Raphinha's rocket in the 72nd minute was brilliantly saved by Pedro Gallese.

But in the final minute Neymar whipped in a corner and Marquinhos met it with a masterful glancing header that flashed into the far corner.

AFP

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THREE LIONS STROLL AT HAMPDEN PARK

Bellingham shines brightest as England inflict more pain on Scotland

Glasgow, United Kingdom - Jude Bellingham stole the show with a goal and assist as England extended their 24-year unbeaten run against Scotland in a 3-1 friendly win to mark the 150th anniversary of the first meeting between the nations.

Phil Foden and Harry Kane were also on target as the Three Lions tamed the roar of Hampden Park and Scotland's five-game winning streak on Tuesday.

The hosts had high hopes of a famous victory in football's oldest international fixture after impressive wins over Spain and Erling Haaland's Norway in recent months to close in on qualifying for Euro 2024.

But Scotland suffered a sobering evening as England proved a class apart.

Bellingham was the pick of Gareth Southgate's stars as the Real Madrid midfielder revelled in the number 10 role he has shown in for the Spanish giants in the early weeks of the season.

"It's just a freedom role really," said Bellingham. "I know it depends on the system we play and we've got so many amazing players to accommodate."

"The team comes first always. I really enjoyed playing in that position today."

Southgate hailed the 116th clash between the sides as the renewal of a "great sporting rivalry" on the eve of the game.

However, the ugly side of the



Jude Bellingham (L) scored a goal and made one as England defeated Scotland 3-1 at Hampden Park in Glasgow on Tuesday (AFP)

It's just a freedom role really. I know it depends on the system we play and we've got so many amazing players to accommodate. I really enjoyed playing in that position today

JUDE BELLINGHAM

animosity between the two sets of supporters was on show even

before a ball was kicked. After the English national an-

them was drowned out by a chorus of booing, a minute's silence for former Scotland manager Craig Brown was disrupted by the away fans.

'Take your medicine'

Once the action got underway Scotland were second best, even if it took England over half an hour to make their dominance

show in the scoreline.

"We knew playing against England was going to be difficult but if you want to learn as a team, you have to play against the best teams," said Scotland boss Steve Clarke. "We didn't want to lose to our old enemy, but sometimes in football you have to take your medicine."

AFP



Gareth Southgate

Southgate blasts treatment of Maguire as a 'joke'

Glasgow, United Kingdom - Gareth Southgate has condemned the "ridiculous treatment" of England defender Harry Maguire, labelling the unrelenting criticism a "joke".

The Manchester United centre-back won his 59th cap as a substitute in England's 3-1 friendly win in Glasgow on Tuesday but his performance was marred by an own goal.

Maguire, named in the European Championship team of the tournament two years ago, has become a target for abuse after struggling for form and game-time at Old Trafford.

But he remains an integral part of Southgate's England squad.

The 30-year-old made his first start of the season in Saturday's 1-1 draw against Ukraine in a Euro 2024 qualifier.

However, he was mocked mercilessly when brought on at half-time against Scotland three days later.

England boss Southgate said he had no complaints about the Scottish fans' behaviour, but added that it was a "consequence of ridiculous treatment of him for a long period of time".

"It's a joke," he said. "I've never known a player treated the way he is - not by the Scottish fans, by our own commentators, pundits, whatever it is."

"They've created something that's beyond anything I've ever seen."

"He's been an absolute stalwart for us in the second-most successful England team for decades. He's been an absolutely key part of that."

England fans chanted the defender's name throughout the second half at Hampden Park, bellowing out "Harry Maguire, he's winning 3-1" after Harry Kane added to Phil Foden and Jude Bellingham's first-half goals.

AFP



Germany's Thomas Mueller scores against France in their friendly match in Dortmund on Tuesday (AFP)

Germany beat France in friendly but pressing questions remain

Dortmund, Germany - Despite responding to coach Hansi Flick's sacking with a 2-1 victory over neighbours France in Dortmund on Tuesday, pressing questions remain for Euro 2024 hosts Germany.

Usually a bitter rivalry between two of Europe's proudest footballing nations with six World Cups and five European Championships between them, France did not bring their usual intensity to Tuesday's friendly.

Manager Didier Deschamps made six changes from their last outing, a 2-0 win over Ireland, including benching star striker Kylian Mbappe. With France trailing 1-0 for most of the second half, Deschamps left Mbappe on the bench as his side chased the game, the manager later revealing "we didn't want to risk him in this game".

The France manager admitted his changes were made with the future in mind, including leading the line with Randal Kolo Muani who "hasn't played for a while,

hasn't trained (and) isn't in top form right now".

Calling Flick's caretaker successor Rudi Voeller a "unique and rare coach", Deschamps congratulated his "old friend", telling reporters "I'm not happy we lost, but nevertheless I'm happy for him." Immediately after the game, interim coach Voeller described the win, Germany's first since March and only the second since the disappointing group stage exit at the Qatar World Cup, as an "emotional release".

"What I liked most was that we brought good energy onto the field", telling the post-match press conference "it's not just about the result, but the style and manner of the performance".

Veteran Germany striker Thomas Mueller, who was named in the starting XI for the first time since Qatar, scored after just four minutes.

The 2014 World Cup winner said the win was an "emotional liberation" for his side.

AFP

Spain smash Cyprus to continue recovery

Barcelona, Spain - Spain thumped Cyprus 6-0 on Tuesday to keep their Euro 2024 qualification bid firmly on track after an early setback against Scotland.

La Roja followed up their hammering of Georgia with another hefty victory to stay second, two points ahead of Norway in Group A, having played a game less.

However Spain still trail leaders Scotland, who inflicted an early defeat on Luis de la Fuente's side and have won all five of their matches so far.

Substitute Ferran Torres struck twice for Spain, while Gavi, Mikel Merino, Joselu and debutant Alex Baena were also on target.

"Our objective is clear - win the rest of the games," De la Fuente told Spanish broadcasters TVE.

"We want to finish top of the group."

Lamine Yamal, who became Spain's youngest player and goalscorer in the 7-1 win in Tbilisi last week, became their youngest ever starter at 16 years and 61 days old.

With Marco Asensio and Dani



Spain's Ferran Torres celebrates after scoring against Cyprus in their EURO qualifying match on Tuesday (AFP)

Olmo injured against Georgia, Yamal and Athletic Bilbao forward Nico Williams started on the flanks, as De la Fuente also brought Merino in for Fabian Ruiz.

Both sides stood for a moment of silence to honour victims of the earthquake in Morocco and flooding in Libya.

Spain presented the Nations League trophy they won in June

to fans in Granada, although that success was soon forgotten after the women's team won the World Cup and then the Luis Rubiales kiss scandal overshadowed everything.

The former federation president resigned from his post on Sunday and interim president Pedro Rocha watched on as Spain gradually dismantled an

initially stubborn Cyprus side.

La Roja took the lead after 18 minutes when Williams burst down the left and crossed for Gavi, wearing a skull cap after an ear injury with Barcelona, to stroke home at the near post.

The Athletic winger set up the second too, with a delectable cross to the back post for Real Sociedad midfielder Merino, a

Basque derby rival at club level, to head home.

Morata turned home the third after Yamal hit the post but the Atletico Madrid forward, who netted a hat-trick against Georgia, was offside.

'In the clouds'

Williams hobbled off with an apparent thigh injury and was replaced by winger Yeremy Pino just before half-time.

Another substitute, Joselu, headed home the third from Real Madrid team-mate Dani Carvajal's cross.

The Los Blancos defender also set up the fourth, for Barcelona's Torres, who continued his recent good form at club level with a cool low finish.

De la Fuente sent on Villarreal midfielder Baena on for his debut and a minute later he netted the fifth from close range after a clever Joselu backheel.

"I'm in the clouds, for any Spanish player to debut for the national team is a dream since we were young, it's the highest level," said Baena.

"With a goal on top ... when I scored I couldn't believe it."

Mbeumo, Onana help Cameroon book Cup of Nations place

Johannesburg, South Africa - Brentford forward Bryan Mbeumo scored and Manchester United goalkeeper Andre Onana made several superb saves as Cameroon beat Burundi 3-0 on Tuesday to reach the Africa Cup of Nations finals.

Mbeumo punished a careless pass to put the Indomitable Lions ahead 25 seconds into the second half in extreme humidity in Garoua. Christopher Wooh added a second goal just before the hour in front of a capacity 30,000 crowd.

Victory took Cameroon from last to first in the three-team Group C with seven points and Namibia, who had a bye, also qualified with five points

Garoua-born Cameroon captain Vincent Aboubakar completed the scoring with an added-time goal in the final qualifier for the 2023 tournament.

Victory took Cameroon from last to first in the three-team Group C with seven points and Namibia, who had a bye, also

qualified with five points. Burundi had four and were eliminated.

Cameroon are the second most successful country in the Cup of Nations, winning the African showpiece five times.

Their qualification means the top 16-ranked teams in Africa are among the 24 qualifiers for the

January 13-February finals, which the Ivory Coast will host.

Burundi, 98 places below Cameroon in the world rankings and qualifiers only once for the Cup of Nations, were the superior side in the opening half only to be repeatedly foiled by Onana. The recent Manchester United signing from Inter Milan made three excellent saves in his first appearance since being sent home by Cameroon during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Lucky to be level at half-time, Cameroon snatched the lead 25

seconds after the restart thanks to a gift-wrapped goal that changed the course of the game.

Burundi goalkeeper Onesime Rukundo pushed the ball inside the area to Christophe Nduwarugira, whose weak return pass was intercepted by Mbeumo, and the Premier League star made no mistake.

The killer second goal on 59 minutes came when Burundi failed to clear a corner and the loose ball was hammered into the net by Wooh for his first Cameroon goal.

Oman hope to achieve good results in Qatar, says Mendis

Aqib Ilyas-led team will take on UAE in their first match at the inaugural Gulf T20I on Saturday

Muscat - Oman are all set to compete in the inaugural edition of the 2023 Men's Gulf T20I Cricket Championship, which will be held in Doha, Qatar, from September 15-23.

The team will be led by Aqib Ilyas in the absence of regular skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, while Ayaan Khan has been named the vice-captain, according to a press statement from Oman Cricket (OC) on Wednesday.

Oman will begin their campaign in the six-nation championship, organised by the Qatar Cricket Association (QCA) with a match against the UAE on September 16.

The single round-robin format will see Oman take on hosts on September 17 followed by a clash against Bahrain on September 19.

Coached by Duleep Mendis, Oman will play their penultimate match against Saudi Arabia on September 20 before rounding off their engagements with a match against Kuwait on September 22. The top two teams from the group will clash in the final a day later.

All the matches will be played at the West End International



Oman squad for the inaugural edition of the 2023 Gulf T20I Cricket Championship in Doha

It is a great initiative to host a T20I championship in the region. I hope that it becomes an annual affair and each country gets a chance to host the event

DULEEP MENDIS

Cricket Stadium and the championship will be broadcast live to more than nine countries. The championship will be held under the auspices of the International Cricket Council (ICC) and in accordance with international laws of the game.

Speaking ahead of the team's departure, Mendis said: "It is a great initiative to host a T20I championship in the region. I hope that it becomes an annual affair and each country gets a chance to host the event. We are looking forward to this first event.

"Despite the scorching summer, the boys have been really training hard for this tournament. We have played a few practice games to acclimatise with the match conditions and, more importantly, the weather.

"The boys are ready and I hope we can achieve good results. We have done good home work ahead of our departure to Qatar on Wednesday."

The national team cricketers were last seen in action during the ICC ODI World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe in June-July where Oman exceeded expectations to make it to the Super Six stage in

the ten-nation event. Despite a switch in the format, the core team that travelled to Zimbabwe remains the same with only one new face in the squad.

Shakeel Ahmed, a left-arm spinner, has been drafted into the national time for the first time.

The batting mainstays would be opening batters - Jatinder Singh and Kashyap Prajapati - while the sole wicketkeeper is Mohammed Naseem Khushi.

The other specialist spinner is Jay Odedra and the pace attack will be spearheaded by Bilal Khan, Kaleemullah, and Fayyaz Butt.

Squad: Aqib Ilyas (captain,

Renaissance CT), Ayaan Khan (vice-captain), Jatinder Singh, Kashyap Prajapati, Shoaib Khan (all from Muscat CT), Mohammed Nadeem, Mohammed Naseem Khushi, Kaleemullah, (all from Yalla Shabab), Jay Odedra, Bilal Khan, Rafiullah, Shakeel Ahmed, (all from Oman Stallions), Fayyaz Butt (Renaissance CT), and Mehran Khan (VLCC).

Officials: Duleep Mendis (head coach), Evert Laubscher (assistant coach), Mazher Saleem Khan (team coordinator), Zeeshan Siddiqui (analyst), and Sean Nowak (physiotherapist)

Naveen back, Naib dropped from Afghanistan World Cup squad

Kabul, Afghanistan - Afghanistan recalled fast bowler Naveen-ul-Haq in the 15-man World Cup squad announced Wednesday, but allrounder Gulbadin Naib was dropped despite recent good performance.

Naib, 32, led Afghanistan in the last World Cup held in England four years ago where the team lost all nine matches and he was sacked.

But the medium pacer took seven wickets in the last three ODIs, including 4-60 against Bangladesh in the Asia Cup encounter in Lahore last week.

Naveen played the last of his seven ODIs against Ireland in January 2021.

Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) said the squad is strong and is expected to do well.

"Naveen-ul-Haq returned to the Afghanistan ODI squad after a two-year gap for the World Cup in India and it is a strong squad," said ACB release.

Hashmatullah Shahidi leads the squad that has four changes following a two-match loss in the Asia Cup and a 3-0 series wipe out against Pakistan in Sri Lanka. Besides Naib, also out are Karim Janat, Sharafuddin Ashraf and Suliman Safi.



Mushfiqur Rahim

Bangladesh's Mushfiqur to miss India match in Asia Cup

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladeshi batsman Mushfiqur Rahim will skip Friday's Asia Cup Super Four match against India to spend time with his wife and newborn daughter, the cricket board said Wednesday.

Bangladesh is already out of the race for the September 17 final after India defeated Sri Lanka by 41 runs in Colombo on Tuesday, in the tournament that is a prelude to the upcoming ODI World Cup in India.

Mushfiqur had returned to Bangladesh for the birth of his second child, born on Monday.

He was initially expected to rejoin the team for the India match in the Sri Lankan capital

Colombo. He will now remain in Dhaka, the Bangladesh Cricket Board said.

"Mushfiqur has informed us that his wife is still recovering, and he needs to be by her side and with their children," BCB operations chief Mohammed Jalal Yunus. "We fully understand his situation, and have decided to permit him to skip the game."

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who also returned home with Mushfiqur after their defeat against Sri Lanka on September 9, rejoined the team in Colombo on Wednesday.

They will wrap up the campaign with the India game. AFP

Pakistan look to 'match-winner' Zaman after Naseem injury

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Pakistan bowling coach Morne Morkel on Wednesday said injuries to their premier quicks is a big blow ahead of a must-win Asia Cup match but a "fantastic opportunity" for up-and-coming talent.

Naseem Shah has been ruled out of the team's final Super Four match - effective semi-final - against Sri Lanka in Colombo on Thursday, with Pakistan Super League star Zaman Khan coming in as replacement.

Naseem and fellow quick Haris Rauf were injured in the team's previous Super Four clash



Zaman Khan

of the 50-over tournament, a prelude to the upcoming ODI World Cup.

"A big blow, picking up those little niggles, but in this same sort

Zaman flew in from Pakistan and is already a popular name in national cricket after his heroics in this year's PSL

of thing what a fantastic opportunity for the guys coming in," Morkel told reporters.

"After going down against India, it's a must-win game for us

come tomorrow and I'm quite excited to see the new guys stepping in, to see their character, to see how they respond."

Zaman flew in from Pakistan and is already a popular name in national cricket after his heroics in this year's PSL for champions Lahore Qalandars. The 22-year-old is expected to make his ODI debut in a high-pressure match.

"I'm excited just to work with him, connect with them and build that relationship and help him develop, because he's a match winner," Morkel said of the quick who won defended 13 runs of his

last over to star in Lahore's title defense this season.

Shaheen Shah Afridi leads the Pakistan pace attack that rattled India in the Asia Cup group match, which was washed out after just innings.

But Shaheen and company took a hammering in their last meeting with India, who posted 356-2 in a match played across two days due to rain.

Morkel said the 228-run loss to India has been good learning ahead of the 50-over showpiece event where they will meet the arch-rivals on October 14.



South Africa's Aiden Markram celebrates after scoring a century in their third ODI against Australia in Potchefstroom on Tuesday

Markram, spinners keep South Africa's series hopes alive

Potchefstroom, South Africa - South Africa's spin bowlers backed up a century by Aiden Markram as the hosts ended Australia's winning streak with a 111-run victory in the third one-day international at the JB Marks Oval in Potchefstroom on Tuesday.

Markram hit 102 not out in a South African total of 338 for six. South Africa survived a furi-

ous assault by David Warner and Travis Head before bowling out Australia for 227.

Australia won the first two games in the five-match series after sweeping a Twenty20 series 3-0.

The tourists looked on track for another win when Warner and Head thrashed 79 for the first wicket off only 48 balls.

Australia were 104 for one at

the end of the 10-over power play, the second time in a row they reached three figures while fielding restrictions were in place.

But left-arm spinners Tabraiz Shamsi (two for 29) and Keshav Maharaj (two for 37) changed the course of the match on a spin-friendly pitch before fast bowler Gerald Coetzee (four for 50) finished off the Australian innings.



France's Adrian Mannarino returns the ball to Switzerland's Dominic Stricker during their Davis Cup match in Manchester on Tuesday (AFP)

France off to a flyer as Davis Cup group stage finals begin

Paris, France - France swept aside Switzerland and Chile crushed Sweden as the Davis Cup group stage finals got underway on Tuesday.

Serbia, with Sunday's US Open champion Novak Djokovic taking a well-earned breather, were equally emphatic winners over South Korea while the Netherlands felled Finland 2-1.

The top two from each of the

16-team four group round robin will move into the knockout phase in Spain in November.

And 10-time previous title-holders France made the best possible start to their Group B campaign in Manchester.

In front of massed ranks of empty seats - as the home crowd awaited the arrival on court of Andy Murray and his Great Britain team's clash with

Australia on Wednesday - France gave Switzerland short shrift. Adrian Mannarino got the ball rolling for Sebastian Grosjean's team, despatching 21-year-old Dominick Stricker who made the last 16 at the US Open at Flushing Meadows, in three sets, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Making reference to the near-deserted arena Mannarino said: "I wasn't expecting such a small

crowd, it was almost cold out on court".

Ugo Humbert made it 2-0 for the French when beating Stan Wawrinka, 38, who delivered the Davis Cup for Switzerland alongside Roger Federer in 2014, 6-4, 6-4, saving a match point before succumbing. Earlier Wawrinka had also drawn attention to the sparse turnout, poking fun at the former organisers of the

Davis Cup, ex-footballer Gerard Pique's Kosmos company.

The three-time Grand Slam champion played in Switzerland's 2014 triumph, when they beat France in the final, under the old format of knock-out ties played home and away.

Kosmos changed the tournament format in 2019 to include a group stage which is now played in several cities across Europe.



14

HIGH PROTEIN

If you've taken up a high-protein diet, make it interesting to forget carbs.



15

IN TOWN

IntercityHotel's first anniversary and ISC chess-carrom tourney



16

ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town in Hollywood and Bollywood

SPARTAN SALALAH



TRIFECTA WEEKEND

Hubert Vaz

Jump into a pair of tough safety boots, dab on sunscreen generously, and wear not just cool sports attire but also a never-say-die attitude... If you enjoy adventure and an adrenaline rush, Salalah is where you have to be this weekend!

The Spartan Salalah Race will be held on September 15 and 16 for the second consecutive year, given the encouraging response for the inaugural edition last year. 'It's bigger and better than ever', say the organisers, adding that, this year, the event introduces the Spartan Beast Race - a challenging 21km course, alongside the Sprint (5km) and Super (10km) races. Families can also join in on the fun with the Kids Race for participants in the age group of 4 to 14 years.

Dhofar Municipality and OQ are the main sponsors of the event while Badr al Samaa Group of Hospitals is the medical partner. And Spartan values

this steadfast backing for its mission to transform lives and foster a culture of fitness, determination, and camaraderie in the Middle East.

This energy-packed race is an annual highlight, drawing athletes and adventure enthusiasts from around the world to tackle obstacles, conquer rugged terrains, and push their limits. It is considered to be more than a race, an

embodiment of Spartan values - perseverance and resilience.

Christopher Hutchison, festival manager of Spartan Arabia, said "The Spartan Salalah Race promises a weekend of athletic achievement, shared victories, and a celebration of the human spirit. Don't miss your chance to be part of history at the Spartan Salalah Race." Registrations are yet open and an am-

bitious turnout of around 1000 participants is expected this year, he hoped.

He further said, "Spartan is the largest Obstacle Course Race in the World. We've hosted six races in Oman, so far, this being our 7th - the second race in Salalah. This race weekend is called the Salalah Trifecta Weekend and is host to a 5km Sprint, 10km Super Run and a 21km Beast Race,

besides the 1-3km Kids Race."

The Beast Race will commence at 6.30am on Friday while the other races will begin 6.30am onwards on Saturday. Registration of participants and spectators is currently on in large numbers. The routes have been designed to include varied terrain - hills, trails, and wadis, with tonnes of fun, mud, and obstacles, Hutchison said, calling on participants to carry sunscreen and be well hydrated to enjoy the race.

Taking advantage of Salalah's monsoon beauty, the race has been planned during the popular Khareef season when people from around the world visit Oman to enjoy the Salalah Tourist Festival amid the region's lush greenery and serene waterfalls.

This race is considered a test of strength and endurance and all finishers receive a T-shirt and medal while every registration comes with access to the Spartan Account to track one's tickets, race results, teams, and challenges.

SPARTAN MISSION

Spartan's mission is to help people live without limits - developing physical and mental strength to take on all of life's challenges with an unbreakable spirit.

Upcoming runs

- Nov 2, 2023
Hatta Spartan Trifecta Weekend & Trail Half Marathon 10K
- Dec 5: 2023
Abu Dhabi Spartan World Championship
- Jan 20, 2024
Khorfakkan Spartan Super 10K, Sprint 5K & Kids



WHAT TO EXPECT

With obstacle course racing, you never quite know what you're going to get, come race day. Such race brands develop new obstacles every year, so the courses constantly evolve. What you can expect is anywhere from 12 to 20 obstacles in any course or 30-plus obstacles in the main race.

While some obstacles require pure strength, others (like walking a balance beam or spear-throwing) are more skill based.



WHY TRY AN OBSTACLE COURSE RACE?

Obstacle course racing (OCR) provides an exciting, challenging experience unlike any other competitive events. Every mile and every obstacle is daunting and exhilarating, pushing you to your limits and testing your mental fortitude.

Training for and completing an OCR with a team of family, friends, or co-workers is guaranteed to be a memorable bonding and team-building experience.

Even if you sign up on your own, though, you are never alone on the obstacle course. Fellow racers cheer you on and often offer a helping hand.

cook-up

Mutton
Chaap Fry
(Spicy goat ribs)

Ingredients

- 500g mutton chops (ribs) – 8-10 pieces, ½ cup yogurt
- ½tbsp black pepper powder
- ½tbsp garam masala
- 1tsp red chilli powder
- 1tsp salt or to taste
- 2tbsp white vinegar
- 1tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 3-4tbsp oil
- 2 sprigs of coriander - chopped

Method

Make the marinade by combining all spices, yogurt, vinegar, ginger-garlic paste, and oil. Beat with a fork till you get a smooth consistency. Apply the marinade to the mutton chops, coating them evenly. Set aside on the counter for 30 minutes, until chops and yogurt come down to room temperature.

Transfer the marinated chops into a sauce pan/pot with 1 cup water and put the lid on. Let it cook on low heat for 40-45 minutes. Check if the meat is tender, then cook without the lid to let remaining liquid evaporate.

Lightly grease a grill pan with oil. Grill or panfry the mutton chops on both sides on high flame until you get a nice charred golden brown colour on each side. Garnish with chopped coriander. Serve with lemon wedges.



Glazed Spatchcocked
Chicken (Grilled whole
chicken)

Ingredients

- 1 cup chicken broth, 1 cup apricot preserves
- 1tbsp stone-ground mustard, 1 broiler/fryer chicken
- ¾tsp salt, ½tsp pepper, 1tsp spicy mix

Method

In a small saucepan, bring the chicken broth to boil and simmer to reduce to half. Stir in preserves and mustard. Reserve half the glaze for basting.

Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Prepare grill for indirect medium heat. Place chicken on greased grill grate or in an oven - skin side down - covered, until nicely browned, around 12-15 minutes. Turn chicken over and cook other side too for 20-30 minutes, brushing occasionally with reserved glaze mixture. Turn over again and continue grilling for 10-15 minutes until skin gets crispy or desired golden brown. Remove and let it stand on a wire mesh for 15 minutes before carving. Sprinkle spicy mix all over, before serving.

Spicy mix - To make the spicy mix, on a hot pan, slightly roast one red chilly, 1tsp cumin, 1tsp coriander seeds. Pound these in a mortar and pestle or pulse grind to a coarse powder. Mix with ½tsp of salt before garnishing.

High Protein Dinner

If you are into shunning carbs, to get rid of extra flab, focus on high protein dinners that keep you feeling full between meals. Avoid the hot-food counters in supermarkets, make it interesting at home

Herbed Rack of
Lamb

Ingredients

- 2 (8-rib) frenched racks of lamb – trimmed but with a thin layer of fat
- 1½tsp kosher salt, ¾tsp black pepper powder
- 2tsp vegetable oil

For herb coating

- 3 large garlic cloves - minced
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1tbsp finely chopped fresh thyme
- 2tsp finely chopped fresh rosemary
- ½tsp salt, ½tsp black pepper powder
- 1½tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

Method

Heat a heavy large skillet over high heat until hot, at least 2 minutes. Meanwhile, pat lamb dry and rub meat all over with salt and pepper. Add oil to hot skillet, then brown the racks, in two batches, on all sides - 10 minutes per batch.

Transfer racks to a small roasting pan or baking sheet. Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 200°C.

Stir together garlic, herbs, salt, pepper, and oil. Coat meaty parts of lamb with herb mixture, pressing to help adhere. Roast 15 minutes, then cover lamb loosely with foil and roast until thermometer inserted diagonally into center of meat registers 50°C - 5 to 10 minutes more. Let it stand, covered - 10 minutes. Slice each rack into single chops or 4 double chops.



Spicy King Fish Fry

Ingredients

- 4-6 slices of kingfish
- ½tsp turmeric powder, 2tsp red chilli powder
- 1tsp garam masala, 1tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 2tsp yoghurt, a pinch of carom seeds (optional)
- 2tbsp oil, ½tsp salt

Method

Pat dry the fish steaks with a paper towel. Sprinkle

salt and turmeric and rub evenly on both sides of the fish pieces. Mix together the yoghurt, ginger-garlic paste, red chilli powder and garam masala. Apply this marinade on both sides of the fish slices and sprinkle carom seeds, if using. Set aside for 15-20 minutes. Heat oil in a fry pan and place the fish slices side by side over it. Cook on each side till golden brown - around 6-8 minutes each side. Serve with onion rings/lemon wedges.

take a break

IN TOWN

INTERCITYHOTEL 1ST ANNIVERSARY



IntercityHotel Muscat, operated by Deutsche Hospitality, celebrated its first anniversary last week



Photos: V K Shafeer



ISC Chess and Carrom Tournament



Photos: V K Shafeer



The Indian Social Club organised a Chess and Carrom Tournament last week

BOGGLER

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

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

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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS



1. In the movie 'Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban', what kind of creature was Buckbeak?

- A Centaur
B Basilisk
C Thestral
D Hippogriff

2. Who is known for the painting titled 'The Starry Night'?

- A Vincent Van Gogh
B Pablo Picasso
C M F Hussain
D Leonardo da Vinci

3. What was the name of the rover in India's recent moon mission Chandrayaan-3?

- A Vikram
B Pragyan
C Pradyuman
D Aditya

Answer :
1. D
2. A
3. B

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Make sure you have important conversations in person, especially if they involve finances or major purchases. It would be easy to just click your way to a new gadget online, but it wouldn't be wise. You need to be able to ask questions, read body language, and understand the tone of someone's voice. You also have to consider that sometimes people use email or texting to back out.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You'll be feeling a huge amount of compassion for other people today, which could distract you from what you need to get done. If a deadline is looming, try to avoid small talk as much as is politely possible, because if you hear about someone's missing puppy you'll be worrying about it all day. You could relate to another person in pain to such an extent that it causes you pain too.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You try to be open minded about getting to know people, but today it's going to be hard for you to avoid judging a book by its cover because the cover is so incredibly attractive! If you have your eye on someone, try not to let it blind you to the truth about them or distract you from your responsibilities. A simple question will tell you all you need to know about whether they're someone you'd like to get to know better.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're smart enough to not bend to the will of others. You know that succumbing to peer pressure simply isn't a healthy way to live your life. But today, the urge to hop on the bandwagon could be hard to resist. Is it wrong to go along with the crowd every once in a while? No, so stop with the guilt trip and just do what you want to do. You still have control over your life.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You want to live your life on your own, but are you willing to pay the price? Being independent means that sometimes you have to be ready for your reputation to be bruised a little bit. But wouldn't you rather be known as someone who occasionally breaks the rule than as someone who always does everything they're told to do?



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You can't force yourself to get along better with someone if they won't cooperate. Either you two are compatible or you're not. Instead of continuing to beat your head against a wall trying to charm them, accept the situation as it is and make the best of it. You don't have to make everyone your friend.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

This isn't a very good day for group activities, nor it is a perfect day for getting stuff done on your own. Instead, a lot of positive energy will be generated by partnerships of two. These duets that you form throughout your day are small enough to enable you to retain your own identity and ideas.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Bring one of your back-burner ideas to the front of your mind today. It's time you made a move that has the boldness of someone who knows they can't fail, because you can't fail, not today! Make your big romantic move, take that risky business leap, or tell that person what you've been trying to tell them for a long time. The time for hesitation is long past.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

A work deadline might get pushed up today. If it does, your first thought will probably be to rearrange your day and possibly even cancel an important social engagement. But before you do anything drastic, see what you can do to negotiate a little wiggle room. It won't hurt to ask. Find out who can jump in on this project.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Try to get out there and be more social with people today. Not only are your social skills better than ever, but there are also tons of people who miss you and would love to spend some time with you. You might prefer to hang out at home with a good movie right about now, but that isn't a wise thing to do.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

The good news is that today you'll finally be able to close the door on past work issues. It's all water under the bridge right now, and you can feel free to start focusing on more productive and positive goals. You've learned some valuable lessons, and you've got things under control. You've proven yourself, and those in power are ready to give you more responsibilities!



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Try not to censor your words or actions today. When you open up and say what you really think without worrying how it sounds to other people, you free yourself to think bigger ideas. You're already known for your innovative thinking, so you have a lot of credibility with the crowd you're hanging with.

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

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

KARAN JOHAR BACKS PRIYANKA CHOPRA'S MOVE

Bollywood director Karan Johar calls Priyanka Chopra's move to Hollywood 'fantastic'. The filmmaker also praised her for the success she has achieved since making the shift. Asked to comment on Priyanka's shift to Hollywood, by ET Canada on the sidelines of Toronto International Film Festival 2023, where he attended the premiere of *Kill*, which he has co-produced, Johar said, "It was fantastic. To see her grow from strength to strength, and truly achieve the kind of success that she has on her own terms... and the way she has gone about it, she is always wonderful on every platform that she has ever been on, everything that she ever stands for, and represents."

Kevin Sorbo says Hollywood disliked his beliefs

Kevin Sorbo recalled being dropped by his agent and manager because of his Christian beliefs and conservative views. He explained that he believes Hollywood is a 'one-way' street when it comes to tolerance. Sorbo and his wife Sam Sorbo recently spoke to *Fox News Digital* about their upcoming movie, *Miracle in East Texas*, which was inspired by a true story and follows two con men who attempt to persuade a group of widows to invest in their worthless oil wells.

Alexander Payne brings 'The Holdovers' to Toronto

Director Alexander Payne has entered the Oscars hunt with his new film *The Holdovers*, a poignant 1970s-set dramedy about a cantankerous prep school teacher and a troubled student that screened Monday at the Toronto film festival. The film reunites Payne with his *Sideways* star Paul Giamatti, who plays the surly Paul Hunham, who grumbles through his lessons on ancient civilisations and has no qualms about failing students who think their wealth should be able to buy good grades.



'POOR THINGS' WINS VENICE TOP PRIZE

The Golden Lion in Venice was awarded Saturday to a hilarious and shockingly explicit reworking of *Frankenstein* - *Poor Things*, starring Emma Stone as a sex-mad reanimated corpse, which had festival-goers in stitches. An ongoing Hollywood strike may have robbed Venice of its usual bevy of stars, but its strong selection showed the world's oldest film festival was still a launchpad for Oscar contenders. *Poor Things* by Greek director Yorgos Lanthimos was labelled an 'instant classic' by critics. It looks set to repeat the success of his 2018 film *The Favourite*, which won two awards in Venice on its way to a string of international prizes.

VENICE FILM FEST CONCLUDES

Italian actress Caterina Murino and Edouard Rigaud pose with photographers during the red carpet of the closing ceremony of the 80th Venice Film Festival on September 9, at Venice Lido

LIL NAS X THRILLS TORONTO FANS



Lil Nas X brought his megawatt smile and star power to Toronto for the world premiere of a documentary tracking his meteoric rise - one of several movies spotlighting the music industry at North America's biggest film festival. The 24-year-old Lil Nas X - who rocketed to fame with viral country rap hit *Old Town Road* and has since become a global icon, captured attention when he stepped onto the red carpet late Saturday.



SHERYL LEE RALPH TO GET NAMESAKE TROPHY

Project Angel Food is finalising its Angel Awards lineup, securing a programme that will feature Emmy Award winner Sheryl Lee Ralph (seen in centre), singer-songwriter, Jewel and activist-author Mary Fisher. Ralph will receive an inaugural prize named after her - the Sheryl Lee Ralph Legacy Award - designed to honour her longtime support of Project Angel Food and decades of leadership and activism against HIV and AIDS.

WHAT'S ON



Genre: Animation
Starring: Callum Maloney, Lucy Carolan, Jonas Elkhawad
Language: English
Releasing date: 14th September

RABBIT ACADEMY - MISSION: EGGPOSSIBLE

RMax and his friends must find a super power to save Easter and the Golden Egg from the insidious Foxes.

TAILING TRAITORS, ONE BY ONE



BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: **JAWAN**
Genre: Action, thriller
Starring: Shah Rukh Khan, Nayanthara, Vijay Sethupathi, Priyamani

King Khan is raking in the moolah like never before with the stupendous success of *Jawan*. The much anticipated release of this movie, which could easily have been named *'Pathan 2.0'*, has also compelled many small-time cinema houses in parts of north India to reopen in a bid to share the spoils. And how! Co-written and directed by Atlee - the 36-year-old Tamil film director whose directorial debut in Hindi cinema has now catapulted him to an all new level - *Jawan* is produced by Gauri Khan and Gaurav Verma under Red

Chillies Entertainment. It stars Shah Rukh Khan in a dual role as father and son doppelgangers who team up to rectify corruption in Indian society - an act that Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan has done 'n' number of times in *Akhree Rasta* (1986), *Desh Premee* (1982), *Adalat* (1976), *Mahaan* (1983) - old and bold double roles. The story revolves around Azad (SRK) the jailer of a woman's prison in Mumbai, who along with a group of inmates (consisting of Lakshmi, Eeram, Ishkra, Kalki, Helena and Janhvi) hijack a Mumbai Metro. He negotiates with NSG officer Narmada Rai (Nayanthara)



to ask the agriculture minister to send Rs40,000 crores in exchange for the passengers' lives. Kaliee Gaikwad (Vijay Sethupathi), a global arms dealer, learns that his daughter Alia is

also one of the captives and agrees to fund the deal. When Alia questions their motive, Azad reveals his plan of donating the money towards the loan waiver of 700,000 impoverished farm-

ers. Azad and his gang directly transfer the funds into the farmers' bank accounts and escape from the metro. Azad reveals his name as Vikram Rathore to Kaalie through Alia. Meanwhile, Azad meets Narmada and her daughter Suchi, and they eventually get married (like we were not expecting that). Azad and his gang next kidnap the health minister and demand to initiate better infrastructure at every government hospital, in exchange for the health minister's life. The infrastructure is immediately initiated in the hospitals, allowing Azad and his gang to escape again after a shootout between Narmada and her team. By and by, Narmada finds out about Azad's true identity and confronts him, but Kaliee's brother and his henchmen capture and torture them. However, Azad is saved by his doppelganger named Vikram and Narmada finds out the identities of Azad's accomplices and confronts them, where she learns

about Azad and Vikram's connection. Well, that's how Bollywood masala is usually ground - with the same spice! The action in *Jawan* might be persuasive and akin to what Atlee does best. You see drones, choppers, guns and the whole inventory of Hollywood-style action blockbusters. However, what really sells this action packed drama is not the templated sequences of international action but the fact that it has been given an Indian flavour. This 'clean India' campaign by Khan, tailing traitors, one after the other, is much appreciated by the audience, given the fact that the meal is served out by Bollywood's much-loved dimpled star. (Btw, where have the dimples gone?) The same applies when south superstar Rajinikanth does it, over and over again. As for the songs, you won't remember them once you run out of popcorn. But, a good weekend watch!

Rating ★★★★★



UNMATCHED STYLE, PERFORMANCE & COMFORT

NOW MORE AFFORDABLE

MAZDA 6



EMI _____
*STARTING FROM RO **93**

MAZDA CX-5



EMI _____
*STARTING FROM RO **100**

MAZDA CX-9



EMI _____
*STARTING FROM RO **131**

MAZDA CX-60



EMI _____
*STARTING FROM RO **143**



****FREE**
AAA ROADSIDE
ASSISTANCE