

N Sharqiyah ready for tourists

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The winter season makes North Sharqiyah the perfect destination for outdoor activities and the governorate is ready to receive a large number of visitors.

Popular for its golden sand dunes, the governorate hosts a variety of desert camps, which have completed preparations to receive tourists from around the world.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ali bin Salim al Hajri, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the governorate, said, "In the winter season - October to April - North Sharqiyah receives a large number of visitors from inside and outside the sultanate to enjoy its tourist attractions. The desert in the governorate is one of the most beautiful areas in Oman, especially in the winter season. It is also one of the most popular destinations for dune bashing, camel riding, desert crossings and camping."

Ali bin Salim al Hajri informed that in a sign of a promising season ahead, bookings started early this year. "The governorate has lined up several events, tourism activities and festivals that will support the tourism movement. One of the highlights of this season will be the North Sharqiyah Festival, which will be held in January 2023."

According to Ali bin Salim al Hajri, there are 13 camps in North Sharqiyah offering around 380 rooms.



The tourists are mainly from European countries who like to wear the traditional Omani dress and take photographs as souvenirs. They also enjoy watching the sunset, sandboarding and quad biking

BADR AMER AL HAJRI

Badr Amer al Hajri, owner of Bidiyah Camp, described the beginning of this season as being on a "healthy note".

"We are witnessing a large turnout of foreign tourists, residents and citizens. We have 35 air-conditioned rooms that are full, especially on the weekends."

Sharing details of the activities that tourists like to indulge in, Badr Amer al Hajri informed that the tourists are mainly from European countries who like to wear the traditional Omani dress

and take photographs as souvenirs.

Tourists also enjoy watching the sunset, sandboarding, riding quad bikes, and visiting heritage villages that display traditional crafts, including pottery making. "We are expecting a huge increase in tourists in the coming days for camping in North Sharqiyah. This will undoubtedly revive tourism and increase the national income."

About the tourist facilities available, Badr Amer al Hajri said

he hopes to get a road that leads to his camp repaired and to improve the WiFi service to support the large turnout of guests.

Another tourist facility, Oman Desert Private Camp in Bidiyah has prepared well to receive visitors. "We have a good number of reservations already," said owner Ali al Hajri. "We have 12 rooms and we have reservations on all days of the week. On weekends, rooms are fully booked. Most foreign tourists come from Germany, France,

Britain and the US."

According to Ali al Hajri, all camps are keen to present artistic programmes such as folk art and Omani handicrafts, in addition to Omani food, drinks, distinctive Omani clothes and handcrafted ornaments. "We offer trips and outdoor activities to enjoy the sands of Sharqiyah. We also have a unique feature - a 300m zip line to enthrall guests."

But with the sudden influx of tourists, the region also bears the brunt of environmental desecration and pollution. Mohammed Hamdan al Hajri, a concerned citizen from Bidiyah, has drawn the attention of authorities to prevent random camping that results in dumping of waste, especially plastic, harming the environment and consequently affecting tourism itself.

"Sharqiyah Sands is considered one of the most beautiful places for camping in Oman and it should be conserved for sustainable tourism. The region has also started hosting adventure activities, including paragliding, sand biking and sandboarding," he said.

Mohammed Hamdan al Hajri informed that Wadi Bani Khalid, one of the most picturesque wadis in Oman, as well as the wadis of the wilayat of Dima Wa al Taien, which flow all year around, are also located in the governorate. "The governorate has popular markets, including the Sinaw Market and a market for women in the wilayat of Ibra."

OMAN, HUNGARY REVIEW BILATERAL RELATIONS



H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received Dr Laszlo Kover, Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, on Sunday. Their meeting reviewed the relations between Oman and Hungary and touched on regional and international developments (ONA)

Revenue of star hotels increases over 100%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Revenues of 3- to 5-star hotels increased 100.1 per cent to RO120,167,000 until the end of September this year, compared to the same period in 2021.

According to the latest figures of National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the number of hotel guests in star hotels recorded an increase of 31.6 per cent in the first nine months of 2022, compared to the same period in 2021, while occupancy rate was 42.7 per cent, compared to 35 per cent during same period in 2021.

According to NCSI, GCC citi-

zens were among the top nationalities that visited the sultanate until the end of September 2022, followed by European guests.

The data shows that the number of visitors from the Gulf countries during this period witnessed a significant growth of 780.8 per cent - from 13,512 at the end of September 2021 - to 119,010 until the end of September 2022, followed by European guests whose number grew by 578.2 per cent to 203,103.

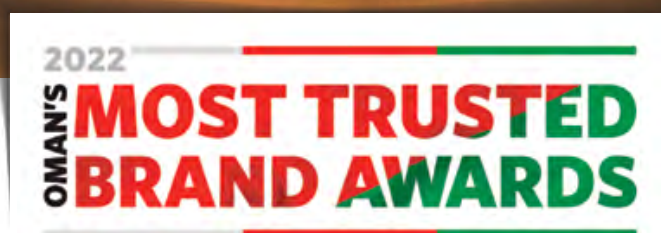
The data also revealed that the number of Omani guests decreased by 16.2 per cent from 631,183 at the end of September 2021, to 528,745 till September 2022.

Count on consumer experience

Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards (OMTB) - the sultanate's ultimate stamp of approval by consumers who salute the supremacy of brands that score high on quality and service - is now into its 6th year.

Keeping alive a 'tradition of trust', OMTB helps acknowledge the efforts put in by the top brands in winning the confidence of their customers. At the same time, customers get a chance to prove their loyalty towards their favourite brands.

The ultimate wave of approval is about to surge, as consumers decide which brands rule supreme!





Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman has committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050, in line with the Paris Climate Agreement's objectives of limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels.

It also reaffirmed its commitment to an ambitious green hydrogen strategy, which targets investments worth RO54bn and creating 70,000 permanent jobs.

According to the government's strategy, development of a green hydrogen economy is at the heart of the sultanate's decarbonisation efforts and energy security objectives.

Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers had to say on Oman's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050:

Mohamed Mansoor Ahmed
Private sector employee

Net zero can be achieved by balancing the usage of green house gases produced and its removal from atmosphere. Oman too can join a few countries who have set a target and are consciously working towards the set objectives. What we can do is plant more trees and by retaining and creating more forests which would help in maintaining surface temperatures and also keep a check on rising sea levels and uncertain climatic conditions. Countries like Japan, Canada and in the EU have legally



GREEN IS THE WAY AHEAD

binding net zero commitments. One cannot think of stopping global warming overnight, but every right step taken can certainly slow down the rate. So the thumb rule is to have a check on the waste we produce, using available resources efficiently and effectively, creating awareness and most importantly being responsible and accountable in sustaining production and consumption.

Afzal Yusuf Khan
Mechanical engineer

The primary focus should be on removing car-

bon dioxide from air, avoid future carbon emissions by evaluating data and making decisions for the future generations. Reducing current greenhouse gases through greater efficiency in energy and material use, and investing and making intelligent designs to neutralise residual emissions is the way forward. And yes, there is a great deal of excitement around green hydrogen in Oman.

Samuel PV
Businessman

The easiest and best way is to use renewable

energy sources such as solar and wind. These can indeed significantly reduce carbon emissions both during construction and once the home is built and lived in.

Salim al Busaidi
Engineer

It is high time we look seriously at the environment. We must reduce emissions from factories, reduce carbon emissions and take strong action against deforestation. It has indeed been a major factor in driving up emissions of carbon, so researchers feel that

planting new trees and restoring lost forest areas are simple and cheap ways that could help us now.

Abdullah al Balushi
Government employee

This is one of the biggest issues that we are facing collectively around the world, including Oman. We must now shift to energy sources that are sustainable. I think installing solar panels and mini wind turbines on new buildings will make properties more energy efficient.



What does the National Day mean to you? What do you plan to do in the National Day holidays?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

SEND US ON OUR
NEW
WHATSAPP NO
91953774



Dhofar International Development And Investment Holding Company (SAOG) AND ITS SUBSIDIARIES

P.O.Box 2163, Salalah, Postal Code 211, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: 23295400, Fax: 23291500, Email: didico@omantel.net.om, Website: www.didic.com

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE NINE MONTHS ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Unaudited Financial Results of Dhofar International Development & Investment Holding Company SAOG ("DIDIC") for the period ending 30 September 2022.

During the third quarter of 2022, the performance of the securities markets in the region varied from marginal losses to minor gains, with the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recording the highest gain of 9.8% for the quarter as against other indices. MSX jumped by 406 points during the quarter and closed at 4528 points as on September 30, 2022 which is an increase of 9.8% over the three months period. Most other indices in the GCC region witnessed a minor loss or marginal gain during the period ranging from -6% to 4%. On a YTD (Year to Date) basis, Muscat Stock Exchange recorded an increase of 9.7%.

During this nine-month period, the Company's investments in equities recorded an increase of RO 2.27 million, on account of increase in prices of its key equity investments.

Group Consolidated Performance

During the nine months period ending 30 September 2022, net profits were RO 7.329 million and the total comprehensive profit attributable to our shareholders amounted to RO 5.950 million as compared to net profit of RO 5.006 million and total comprehensive profit of RO 1.805 million for the same period last year. The Group ended the period 30 September, 2022 with total assets of RO 220.94 million, a marginal decrease of 2.4% while shareholders' equity of RO 124.70 million registering an increase of 1.8% from

the third quarter of 2021 where total assets amounted to RO 226.34 million and shareholders' equity attributable to our shareholders was RO 122.48 million.

Performance of Key Associates

Bank Dhofar, our banking associate, reported net profit of RO 26.10 million for the nine months period ended 30 September 2022 as compared to RO 28.29 million for the same period in 2021, representing a drop of 7.8%. This decrease is mainly owing to higher provisioning taken during the period. The net interest income increased to RO 74.80 million compared to RO 64.22 million during same period of 2021 registering a substantial increase of 16.5%. The Total operating income also increased by 9.4% to RO 97.47 million for the nine months ending 30 September 2022. Net loans and advances including Islamic financing witnessed a marginal drop of 1.4% and reached RO 3.32 billion as at 30 September 2022 as compared to RO 3.36 billion as at 30 September 2021. Similarly, customer deposits including Islamic deposits, decreased by 1.6% compared to comparative period of last year. Total shareholders' equity in the bank increased marginally 0.5%, increasing to RO 553.233 million from RO 550.623 million a year prior.

Dhofar Insurance, our insurance associate reported an impressive growth of 21% of gross premium written to RO 55.392 million from RO 45.785 million for the period ending 30 September, 2022. Its net underwriting results however showed a drop of 7.5% from RO 6.327 million in the nine months period of 2021 to RO 5.739 million a year later. It reported net profit of RO 2.42 million for the period ended 30 September 2022 as

compared to RO 2.32 million a year earlier. The shareholders' equity has increased by 2%, from RO 27.36 million as at 30 September 2021 to RO 27.88 million as at 30 September 2022.

Oman Investment & Finance Company, our billing and collection associate that has also ventured into money exchange and contracting operations through two specialized subsidiaries, has continued noteworthy improvements in its group operations for the period ended 30 September, 2022 with net profits increasing to RO 4.38 million from RO 2.72 million a year earlier. This is mainly on account of the release of provision taken earlier, higher investment income and an increase in OIFC's share of profits in its associates, mainly for Bank Sohar. The Shareholder's equity have decreased by 2%, from RO 28.28 million as at 30 September 2021 to RO 27.71 million as at 30 September 2022.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the board of directors, I would like to extend our gratitude to the leadership of the CMA, CBO and MOCI for their continued support. I would also like to thank the management teams of DIDIC, our subsidiaries and associate companies for all their hard work and dedication.

Finally, we wish our country continued safety and stability under the wise leadership and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, may God protect him and prolong his life.

Khalid Bin Mustahail Ahmed Al Mashani
Chairman

UNAUDITED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

	Group 2022 RO	Parent Company 2022 RO	Group 2021 RO	Parent Company 2021 RO
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	3,003,367	2,313,526	4,240,542	3,560,637
Receivables and prepayments	770,896	5,477,292	719,228	2,085,912
Inventories	24,080	-	21,013	-
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss				
-Investment in equities	45,681,455	30,622,882	40,420,684	28,018,173
-Investment in term deposits	1,830,000	1,830,000	3,930,000	3,930,000
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	1,055,116	-	9,279,688	-
Investment in subsidiaries	-	696,842	-	9,589,837
Loan to subsidiary	163,095,884	163,095,884	162,116,923	162,116,923
Investment property	247,212	247,212	247,212	247,212
Property and equipment	5,227,004	546,991	5,361,942	591,172
Total assets	220,935,014	209,780,628	226,337,232	215,089,866
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	54,472,000	54,472,000	54,472,000	54,472,000
Legal reserve	9,745,374	9,745,374	9,124,654	9,124,654
General reserve	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404
Investment revaluation reserve	(5,187,226)	(5,187,226)	(7,931,934)	(7,931,934)
Retained earnings	58,603,382	58,603,382	59,747,782	59,747,782
Total equity due to shareholders of the Parent	124,703,935	124,703,934	122,482,906	122,482,906
LIABILITIES				
Other liabilities	408,412	208,410	2,316,060	1,923,077
Income tax payable	109,383	-	9,383	-
Loans and borrowings	95,713,284	84,868,284	101,528,883	90,683,883
Subordinated bonds	-	-	-	-
Total equity and liabilities	96,231,079	85,076,694	103,854,326	92,606,960
Net assets per share	0.305	0.305	0.225	0.225

UNAUDITED INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

	Group 2022 RO	Parent Company 2022 RO	Group 2021 RO	Parent Company 2021 RO
INCOME				
Dividend income	1,299,505	1,227,123	1,498,661	1,209,207
Net revenue of a subsidiary	185,085	-	237,288	-
Realised (loss)/gain on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	571	8,505	(251)	299
Unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	2,486,955	2,274,904	2,564,886	2,387,148
Interest income	330,380	466,160	545,839	693,306
Other income	63,663	67,653	113,004	115,911
Total income	4,366,159	4,044,345	4,959,427	4,405,871
EXPENSES				
Administrative and general expenses	(1,321,534)	(939,955)	(1,362,562)	(1,004,115)
Depreciation	(131,325)	(40,315)	(137,946)	(58,781)
Total expenses	(1,452,859)	(980,270)	(1,500,508)	(1,062,896)
Operating profit/(loss)	2,913,300	3,064,075	3,458,919	3,342,975
Finance costs	(5,124,529)	(4,553,430)	(6,968,671)	(6,422,797)
Amortization of deferred finance cost	(97,930)	(97,930)	(444,939)	(444,939)
Share of loss from subsidiaries	-	(821,874)	-	(429,930)
Share of profit from associates	9,738,272	9,738,272	8,961,223	8,961,223
Profit for the period before tax	7,429,113	7,329,113	5,006,532	5,006,532
Income tax	(100,000)	-	-	-
Profit for the period	7,329,113	7,329,113	5,006,532	5,006,532
Other comprehensive income / (loss)				
<i>Items that will not be subsequently reclassified to profit or loss</i>				
Realised profit on financial assets through other comprehensive income by a subsidiary	654,342	654,342	-	-
Changes in fair value of financial assets through other comprehensive income	(226,685)	-	(920,092)	-
Share of other comprehensive loss of subsidiaries	-	(226,685)	-	(920,092)
Share of other comprehensive loss of associates	(1,806,315)	(1,806,315)	(2,281,046)	(2,281,046)
Other comprehensive loss for the period	(1,378,658)	(1,378,658)	(3,201,138)	(3,201,138)
Total comprehensive profit for the period	5,950,455	5,950,455	1,805,394	1,805,394
Basic earnings per share	0.018	0.018	0.012	0.012

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Kite, laser and drone shows to mark National Day

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Kite, laser and drone shows will be held in three governorates to celebrate the 52nd National Day, according to an official in the Secretariat General of National Celebrations.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, the official said, “The celebrations will include kite shows for the first time, along with laser and drone shows in three governorates.”

On November 18, laser and drone shows will be held in Amerat Park in Muscat and Sahel Ittin in Salalah in Dhofar at 8pm, while a kite show will be held in Sahel Ittin in Salalah from



Amerat Park closed from Nov 15 to 17 for National Day preparations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality, in coordination with the Secretariat General of National Celebrations, has announced the temporary closure of Amerat Public Park from November

15 to November 17.

A statement issued by Muscat Municipality said, ‘Amerat Public Park will be temporarily closed for three days, starting November 15, in order to prepare the park to organise an event to celebrate the glorious 52nd National Day.’

2pm to 5pm.

On November 19, laser and drone shows will be held in the Khoudh Dam area in Muscat and the wilayat of Khasab in Musan-

dam at 8pm.

On November 20 and 21, kite shows will be held at Seeb Beach and Azaiba Beach. “Kites of different shapes and col-

ours will provide a great opportunity to more than 20 participants to display pictures of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and flags of the sultanate to express the joy of the National Day celebrations. The shows will be held from 2pm to 5pm,” the official said.

Explaining the concept of the drone shows, the official informed that illuminated drones will perform synchronised and choreographed aerial formations.

Muscat and all other major cities across the sultanate have been decked up for the National Day with flags and lights on main roads.

Football Fan Festival gears up for FIFA spectacle

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) showcased various facilities of the Football Fan Festival, including five big screens to livestream the 64 matches of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, to media personnel on Sunday.

Taking place at OCEC Gardens from November 20 to December 18, the event will include contests and food stalls alongside screening of matches live.

H E Azzan Qassim al Busaidi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and head of the Steering Committee overseeing the Oman World Cup Programme, described the preparations for the Football Fan Festival as being on schedule.



For our international guests, Football Fan Festival will also play a crucial role in showcasing what makes our country unique and special

H E AZZAN QASSIM
AL BUSAIDI

perfect opportunity to engage with our guests, both locally and from abroad. We hope they leave knowing a little more about our beloved country, its storied history, breathtaking beauty, and renowned hospitality.”

An area of more than

9,000sqm in OCEC Gardens will be dedicated to the festival, which will feature a specially constructed fan village catering to all ages. The festival grounds will be divided into several zones, each catering to one core aspect of the celebrations, including dining facilities, activities and matches.

Visitors can sample cuisine from all parts of the world in the Food Zone’s 12 F&B outlets.

The Activity Zones will offer fans over 20 interactive football-themed mini-games, activities for families and people of all ages to enjoy. There will also be a Football Fan Festival E-World Cup, an online e-sports contest, which will kick off on November 20.

Tickets priced at RO2 can be purchased at www.footballfan-festival.om



Two cruise ships bring over 5,000 tourists to Salalah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Port of Salalah received over 5,000 visitors that arrived on two cruise ships in two days, according to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The port received the visitors on November 8 and 12. In a

statement, the ministry said, ‘On November 12, the Port of Salalah received the Italian cruise ship *Aida Cosma* with 4,507 tourists onboard.’

On November 8, Port of Salalah received *Viking Mars* with 1,332 onboard, including 881 tourists of various nationalities.

Over 369,000 banned cosmetic items seized in Barka

Muscat - The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) seized prohibited cosmetic items from shops in South Batinah governorate, the authority said.

The Consumer Protection

Department in Barka, in cooperation with the Pharmaceutical Control Department of the Directorate General of Health Services in South Batinah, managed to seize a large quantity of

banned cosmetic products that were up for sale without approval,’ CPA said.

As many as 369,213 banned cosmetic products were seized during the inspection, it added.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. 44 /2022

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Description	Document Fee	Last date for inquires submission	Last date for obtaining Tender Docs.	Last date for Submission
129/2022/MM/PA-28	Tailoring & Supplying uniforms for Muscat Municipality	25/- OMR	04/12/2022	12/12/2022	11/01/2023

- Specialized Companies with a valid registration certificate from Tender Board can obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Starting from the date of this announcement until the end of deadline mentioned above.
- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically through link mentioned above.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond which is equivalent to (1%) of the total value of the tender to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality and valid for (90) days starting from the deadline for submission.
- Tender not accompanied by a tender bond will be rejected.
- Clarifications and support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please contact us through e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
 - For technical support of e-tendering system, please send an email to (etenderhd@mtc.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).
 - For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (csnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+96824402200/24402330).

Website: www.mm.gov.om



سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصات Tenders Notice

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology In AL Khuwair invites for the Following Project:

TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCTIT/HQ 158/2022	MANAGE, ORGANIZE AND EXECUTE THE HACKATHON Sas48	13/11/2022	27/11/2022	25/12/2022	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (ALL GRADES)	(25/-) TWENTY-FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCTIT/HQ 159/2022	DEVELOP ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEMS GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK	13/11/2022	27/11/2022	27/12/2022	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST GRADE)	(300/-) THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCTIT/HQ 123/2022 (RECALL)	DEVELOPMENT OF IT SUPPORT SERVICES & IT INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES STANDARDS UNDER MTCTIT ACCREDITATION PROGRAM	13/11/2022	27/11/2022	25/12/2022	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST GRADE)	(300/-) THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. The Tenderer should enclose Bank Guarantee issued by local bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to (Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee).

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: **+968 24402200** e-mail : **etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om**

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE



@mtcitoman

www.mtcit.gov.om





Foundation stone laid for Sohar Titanium Project

Sohar – A ceremony was held at Sohar Freezone on Sunday to lay the foundation stone of Sohar Titanium Project to produce titanium dioxide at a cost of RO43mn.

The project will be set up on an area of 120,000 square meters. Once completed, it will have a

production capacity of 150,000 tonnes per year.

The project is expected to start commercial operation by 2025.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Eng Salim Nassir al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Sohar Titanium Project is a

strategic partnership between Minerals Development Oman (MDO) and its partners. While MDO owns 35 per cent stake in the project, remaining 65 per cent is distributed to Dubai Holding and Stork International through Gulf Titanium.

ONA

Sanvira Carbon's RO60mn plant inaugurated in Sohar



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sanvira Carbon (FZC) Company's calcined petroleum coke plant, which has been developed with an investment of over RO60mn, was inaugurated at Sohar Freezone on Sunday.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of H E Eng Salim Nasser al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, according to an Oman News

Agency report.

The plant has a production capacity of 600,000 tonnes per annum of calcined petroleum coke and 24 megawatts of electricity annually through produced steam.

The calcined petroleum coke plant has been developed by Sanvira Carbon (FZC), which is a joint venture between India's Sanvira Industries, Oman National Investment Development Company (Tannia) and Omani

chemicals manufacturing firm United Business Trading.

Sanvira Industries is one of the leading manufacturers of calcined petroleum coke.

Sanvira Carbon's plant is the first of its kind in the sultanate that transforms petroleum coke into a product of high industrial value, which is used in aluminum industries and several other mining industries.

The project will provide 200 employment opportunities for

Omani youth. Omanisation at the plant is planned to be increased to 50 per cent in the next five years.

Sanvira Carbon plant is an addition to the petrochemicals and aluminum sectors in Oman by attracting advance technologies and creating employment opportunities. The project will target both local and exports markets. GCC demand for calcined petroleum coke stands at 1.5mn tonnes annually.

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE

شركة برشوتم كانجي للصرافة

Bring Home your Exchange

Download our App Today!

Available on the Google Play | Download on the App Store

99101314, 99849289 | customersupport@pkexchange.net

www.pkexchange.com | pkexch | @pkexchange1

Fish oil refinery unit opens in Duqm

Duqm – The first fish oil refinery unit has been opened and Inaugurated by Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, acting CEO of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

Gold Fin International Company, which is specialized in the production of fish meal and fish oil extract, has built this first unit for fish oil refining suitable for human consumption in Duqm.

The unit has the processing capacity of 10 tonnes per day.



Through the new refining unit, the plant can extract the fatty acids (Omega-3) found in fish which is suitable for human consumption.

In a press statement, Akaak said, "We are pleased to inaugurate the fish oil refining unit, which represents an added value to the fish and food industries in the region.

"This unit will use the latest technologies for refining fish oil for human consumption."

Global food import bill to jump by 10% to record \$1.9tn in 2022: UN

Paris, France - Global spending on food imports is expected to reach a record US\$1.94tn in 2022, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization warned Friday, a 10 per cent jump compared to the previous year due to rising prices.

The new forecast would mark "an all-time high", and is due to the depreciating values of currencies against the US dollar - the main currency of exchange on international markets - as well as Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine.

Ukraine and Russia are agricultural superpowers, with more than 30 nations reliant on them for wheat and sunflower oil exports.

"The bulk of the increase in the (global food import) bill is accounted for by high-income countries, due mostly to higher world prices, while volumes are also expected to rise," the report said.

Consequences will be more dramatic for economically vulnerable countries, it added.

"For instance, the aggregate food import bill for the group of



low-income countries is expected to remain almost unchanged even though it is predicted to shrink by 10 per cent in volume terms, pointing to a growing accessibility issue for these countries," the FAO said.

Sub-Saharan Africa, already hard-hit by malnutrition, is expected to spend US\$4.8bn more on food imports, despite a decrease in volumes.

"These are alarming signs from a food security perspective," FAO said.

Between Russia and Ukraine, the two countries account for 30 per cent of the world wheat trade and 78 per cent of sunflower oil exports prior to the Kremlin's invasion of its neighbour. The ongoing eight-month conflict pushed grain prices to unprecedented levels.

The opening of a secure maritime corridor has allowed more than 10mn tonnes of agricultural products to leave Ukraine in recent months, leading to a cautious decline in market prices.

Another easing factor is that world wheat production "should reach a record level of 784mn tonnes in 2022/23", the FAO said, driven in particular by the Russian and Canadian crops.

But other factors are weighing heavily on the balance of poor importing countries, warns the FAO, like the global import bill for agricultural inputs.

In particular, fertiliser imports are expected to reach US\$424bn in 2022, a nearly 50 per cent increase compared to the year before.

Russia is one of the world's leading exporters of gas and nitrogen fertilisers, and prices have tripled in one year.

"As a result, some countries may be forced to reduce input applications, almost inevitably resulting in lower agricultural productivity and lower domestic food availability," the FAO said.

The "negative repercussions" for global food security is likely to extend to 2023.

The FAO has been advocating for months to establish a financing facility for countries heavily dependent on imports.

AFP

UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30th SEPTEMBER 2022			
Particulars	As on 30-09-2022 Riials	As on 30-09-2021 Riials	
ASSETS			
Property Plant & Equipment	1,104,211	1,037,601	
Right of Use Assets	103,483	116,086	
Deferred Tax Asset	74,283	74,283	
Investments	-	-	
Total Non Current Assets	1,281,977	1,227,970	
Current Assets	2,150,069	1,323,383	
Less : Current Liabilities			
Short term maturity of Long term Loan	----	----	
Other current Liabilities	1,868,313	712,418	
Net Current Assets	281,756	610,965	
TOTAL ASSETS	1,563,733	1,838,935	
LIABILITIES			
Share Holders' Funds:			
Share Capital	1,000,000	1,000,000	
Reserves & Retained Earnings	563,733	838,935	
Long Term Loan	----	----	
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,563,733	1,838,935	
UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE 9 MONTHS ENDED 30th SEPTEMBER 2022			
Particulars	9 months ended 30-09-2022 Riials	9 months ended 30-09-2021 Riials	
Sales	1,301,955	785,721	
Gross Profit	154,628	81,518	
Depreciation	(104,018)	(98,979)	
Admin & General Expenses	(266,734)	(228,139)	
Operating Profit / (Loss)	(216,124)	(245,600)	
Finance Charges	(14,626)	(3,749)	
Other Income	12,404	11,809	
Balance	(218,346)	(237,540)	
Prior year tax payment	----	(5,574)	
Profit / (Loss) before taxation and minority interest	(218,346)	(243,114)	
Provision for Taxation	----	----	
NET PROFIT / (LOSS) AFTER TAX	(218,346)	(243,114)	

Britain warns tax hikes coming after Truss fiasco

London, UK -The UK government on Sunday warned of impending tax hikes, especially for the wealthy, as it bids to repair economic havoc wrought by Liz Truss's short-lived tenure as prime minister.

Truss's successor Rishi Sunak, who was heading to a G20 economic summit in Indonesia, has vowed to get soaring inflation under control even if it means more pain for hard-pressed consumers and businesses.

His finance minister, Jeremy Hunt, told Sky News that the pain would fall disproportionately on the better off when he unveils an emergency budget statement on Thursday.

"We're all going to be paying a bit more tax, I'm afraid," he said, while refusing to be drawn



Jeremy Hunt

into detail on the plan, after a tax-cutting budget by Truss caused panic on financial markets.

Hunt conceded that the UK economy was already likely in recession after a contraction in the July-September quarter, "but we are a resilient country and we've faced much bigger challenges, frankly, in our history".

"We will be asking everyone for sacrifices," the chancellor of the exchequer stressed.

"But I think in a fair society, as we are in the UK, we need to recognise that there's only so much you can ask from people on the very lowest incomes, so that will be reflected in the decisions that I take."

Hunt is reportedly looking at changing income tax brackets, to raise more revenue from high earners, and impose strict curbs on government spending for years to come even as inflation hits double digits.

He is seeking up to £60bn (US\$71bn) in savings and extra revenue - half of which was left by a budget black hole bequeathed by Truss, according to the Resolution Foundation, a

think tank.

"We do have to do some tax rises, do some spending cuts, if we're going to show that we're a country that pays our way," Hunt said, insisting his policies would make any recession "shallower and quicker".

Hunt said the surge in energy prices linked to the war in Ukraine amounted to an economic hit of £140bn.

"It's like the economy supporting an entire second NHS (National Health Service)," the chancellor said.

Asked if the NHS was on the brink of collapse after the Covid pandemic, Hunt acknowledged "massive pressures" in the service and "unbearable pressure" for doctors and nurses.

AFP

US inflation eases in October but still near decades-high

Washington, US - US consumer prices cooled in October but remained at decades-high levels, according to government data, keeping the pressure on President Joe Biden as his Democratic party struggles to retain control of Congress.

The closely-watched report showed more evidence of rising costs, including a rebound in gasoline prices. But there were positive signs in the consumer price index (CPI), which showed annual inflation slowed to 7.7 per cent in October, even while underscoring a heightened cost of living, the Labor Department reported.

That was the lowest annual increase since January, fueling hopes that soaring costs will start to pull back and causing Wall Street stocks to rally.

Biden welcomed the data, say-

ing it showed "a much-needed break in inflation at the grocery store as we head into the holidays."

But he cautioned in a statement that it will "take time to get inflation back to normal levels," with potential setbacks along the way, and vowed to keep helping households with living costs.

While the annual inflation rate was down from a harsh 9.1 per cent in June - the highest in 40 years - latest numbers are unlikely to bring quick reprieve from the Federal Reserve's aggressive moves to cool the economy.

Russia's war in Ukraine has sent food and fuel prices soaring, and the energy index surged 17.6 per cent over the past 12 months, according to the data.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, "core" CPI rose 6.3 per cent in October from a year

ago, slightly below the rate in September.

As residents reel from soaring costs, the US central bank has moved forcefully to lower demand and bring prices down.

The Fed has raised the benchmark lending rate six times this year, including four consecutive giant rate hikes, despite fears it could trigger a recession.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell last week said it was premature to consider pausing the hikes, but there is a growing chorus of voices, including some Fed officials, advocating for smaller steps in coming months.

Dallas Fed President Lorie Logan said Thursday that she believes "it may soon be appropriate to slow the pace of rate increases" so policymakers can assess how conditions are changing.

AFP



شركة عمان والإمارات للاستثمار (ش.م.ع.)
OMAN & EMIRATES INVESTMENT HOLDING CO. SAOG

P.O. Box 2205, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24489458, Fax: +968 24489465,
E-mail: oeioman@omantel.net.om
Website: www.omanemirates.com

Board of Directors' Report – 30 September 2022

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board, I take this opportunity to present the financial performance of Oman & Emirates Investment Holding Co SAOG for the nine months period ended 30th September 2022.

Financial Results:

The Company (Group & Parent) recorded Net Profits of RO 2,166,940 and RO 2,295,922 respectively during January to September 2022, compared to (Group & Parent) Net Profits of RO 538,784 and RO 567,123 respectively during January to September 2021. The Break-up details are as under:

Particulars	Equity Holding %	Jan-Sep 2022 RO	Jan-Sep 2021 RO
Profit/(Loss) before share of results of Subsidiaries and Associates		2,439,939	(9,905)
FINCORP Al Amal Fund	-	-	250,531
FINCORP SAOG	51.2	(151,038)	462,989
Oman Hotels and Tourism Co. SAOC	31.72	(163,658)	(249,509)
Oman Fiber Optic Co. SAOC	20.97	170,679	113,017
Net Profit/ (Loss) - Parent		2,295,922	567,123
Oman Euro Food Industries Co. SAOG	80.84	(128,982)	(28,339)
Net Profit/ (Loss) - Group		2,166,940	538,784

Stock Market Indices:

During the period January to September 2022, MSM, ADX and DFM increased by 9.66%, 14.87% and 4.48% respectively (January–September 2021: MSM, ADX and DFM increased by 7.75%, 52.59% and 14.19% respectively.

Net Equity, Investments and Borrowing:

The Net Equity of the Group and the Parent Company increased by 10.3% and 10.5% respectively during the year ended September 2022. The Net Equity of the Group reached RO 23.240 Million at 30.9.2022 (30.09.2021: RO 20.090 Million) up from RO 21.073 Million at 31.12.2021. The Net Equity of the Parent reached RO 24.239 Million at 30.9.2022 (30.9.2021: RO 20.846 Million) up from RO 21.943 at 31.12.2021.

The Total Investment Values of the Group and the Parent Company were RO 32.407 Million and RO 31.105 Million respectively as at 30.9.2022 (30.9.2021: Group RO 40.632 Million and Parent Company RO 38.289 Million).

The total borrowing of the Group and the Parent Company have reduced to RO 16.176 Million and RO 12.455 Million respectively as at 30.09.2022 (30.09.2021: Group RO 24.428 Million and Parent Company RO 20.706 Million).

Future Outlook:

The removal of pandemic restrictions, higher oil prices, increased hydrocarbon production and controlled inflation drove strong recoveries across the GCC but will remain subjected to the impacts of imported inflation from the abroad in medium term. Valuations across the markets are likely to be corrected in the coming months until stabilization in global markets. The GCC region is expected to register strong surpluses in 2022 and continue over the medium term. The World Bank projected a 6.9% expansion for the GCC economies in 2022 before moderating to 3.7 per cent in 2023.

Oman's GDP growth is forecast to reach 4.5% in 2022 before moderating to an average of 3.2 per cent in 2023. Despite increased revenues and economic improvements, Oman faces economic challenges ahead in finding the balance between growth, economic diversification and job creation on one hand and fiscal reform and deleveraging of state-owned enterprises on the other. Oman is also working to reduce its external debt to balance its books. Improvements in financials have led rating agencies to raise Oman's credit rating.

Acknowledgement:

I take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Governments of the Sultanate of Oman and United Arab Emirates for their support to our Company. I also thank the stock market authorities, banks, shareholders and employees of the Company for their guidance, cooperation and efforts.

Mohamed Darwish Al Khoori
Chairman
9th November 2022

CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

	30 September 2022 Group RO	(Restated) 30 September 2021 Group RO	31 December 2021 Group RO	30 September 2022 Group RO	(Restated) 30 September 2022 Group RO	31 December 2021 Parent RO
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	4,933,154	1,007,754	1,919,812	3,111,082	121,940	113,040
Trade and other receivables	1,910,767	1,297,444	1,075,767	34,844	436,687	40,850
Inventories	502,584	367,107	434,392	-	-	-
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	14,719,029	20,935,548	20,481,259	11,314,649	16,554,682	16,651,253
Investment in associates	15,585,746	17,583,221	16,100,249	13,966,118	15,062,044	14,110,383
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	-	3,722,204	3,960,924	3,873,243
Financial assets at amortised cost	2,101,966	2,112,656	2,109,961	2,101,966	2,112,656	2,109,961
Property, plant and equipment	2,328,496	2,607,966	2,531,702	439,967	540,162	515,016
Investment properties	2,981,700	3,135,900	3,074,850	2,711,700	2,835,900	2,804,850
Right-of-use asset	43,577	116,190	43,577	-	-	-
Deferred tax asset	78,494	420,755	78,496	-	-	-
Total assets	45,185,513	49,584,541	47,850,065	37,402,530	42,222,995	40,218,596
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES						
EQUITY						
Share capital	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500
Legal reserve	4,991,892	4,921,214	4,991,892	4,062,500	4,062,500	4,062,500
Retained earnings	6,060,159	2,980,899	3,893,219	7,988,739	4,596,225	5,692,817
Equity attributable to the owners of the parent	23,239,551	20,089,613	21,072,611	24,238,739	20,846,225	21,942,817
Non-controlling interest	3,311,099	3,596,140	3,485,638	-	-	-
Total equity	26,550,650	23,685,753	24,558,249	24,238,739	20,846,225	21,942,817
LIABILITIES						
Bank overdrafts	211,952	1,280,624	630,360	143,644	1,212,281	562,017
Trade and other payables	2,405,281	1,332,012	2,054,192	708,971	670,729	812,952
Lease liability	53,454	139,392	53,454	-	-	-
Term loans	2,311,176	5,693,760	3,100,810	2,311,176	5,693,760	3,100,810
Loans from Governments	12,961,120	15,776,692	16,136,924	9,308,120	12,123,692	12,483,924
Deferred Government grant	691,880	1,676,308	1,316,076	691,880	1,676,308	1,316,076
Total liabilities	18,634,863	25,898,788	23,291,816	13,163,791	21,376,770	18,275,779
Total equity and liabilities	45,185,513	49,584,541	47,850,065	37,402,530	42,222,995	40,218,596
Net assets per share	0.191	0.165	0.173	0.199	0.171	0.180

CONDENSED INTERIM UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE NINE-MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2022 Group RO	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2021 Group RO	(Unaudited) Jul - Sept 2022 Group RO	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2021 Group RO	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2022 Parent RO	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2021 Parent RO	(Unaudited) Jul - Sept 2021 Parent RO
Interest income	308	-	308	-	308	-	-
Rental income	89,057	33,860	32,852	14,321	89,057	33,860	14,321
Brokerage commission income	115,690	72,001	53,184	17,988	-	-	-
Dividends income	645,804	819,067	76,988	91,024	541,743	718,028	74,136
Realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets	1,961,516	390,252	14,125	112,432	1,872,507	335,350	60,822
Unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss – net	708,575	520,220	406,909	(103,940)	791,989	(77,018)	(212,836)
Gross profit on sale of food products	146,749	223,209	31,127	64,960	-	-	-
Share of (loss)/profit from associates & Subsidiaries - net	(278,315)	387,290	(23,072)	25,803	(144,017)	577,026	82,068
Management fees	76,005	99,780	23,479	32,790	-	-	-
Other income	45,840	35,801	30,530	16,302	318	18,029	318
Total income	3,511,229	2,581,480	646,430	271,680	3,151,905	1,605,275	535,340
Expenses							
Staff costs	(568,589)	(618,803)	(180,466)	(172,859)	(223,694)	(271,048)	(77,237)
Administrative expenses	(516,206)	(472,113)	(166,104)	(147,078)	(282,333)	(284,542)	(83,473)
Amortisation of placement charges	(7,995)	(7,995)	(2,694)	(2,694)	(7,995)	(7,995)	(2,694)
Total expenses	(1,092,790)	(1,098,911)	(349,264)	(322,631)	(514,022)	(563,585)	(163,404)
Net operating profit/(loss)	2,418,439	1,482,569	297,166	(50,951)	2,637,883	1,041,690	379,888
Finance costs	(426,038)	(528,840)	(69,570)	(160,401)	(341,961)	(474,567)	(137,860)
Profit/(loss) for the period before tax	1,992,401	953,729	227,596	(211,352)	2,295,922	567,123	338,097
Income tax	-	19,652	15,869	(8,669)	-	-	-
Profit/(loss) for the period after tax	1,992,401	973,381	243,465	(220,021)	2,295,922	567,123	338,097
Attributable to:							
Equity holders of the Parent Company	2,166,940	538,784	282,288	(305,954)	2,295,922	567,123	338,097
Non-controlling interest	(174,539)	434,597	(38,823)	85,933	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the period	1,992,401	973,381	243,465	(220,021)	2,295,922	567,123	(282,753)
Earnings per share	0.018	0.004	0.002	(0.003)	0.019	0.005	0.003

CONDENSED INTERIM UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE-MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2022 Group RO	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2021 Group RO	(Unaudited) Jul - Sept 2022 Group RO	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2021 Group RO	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2022 Parent RO	(Unaudited) Jan - Sept 2021 Parent RO	(Unaudited) Jul - Sept 2021 Parent RO
Profit/(loss) for the period after tax	1,992,401	973,381	243,465	(220,021)	2,295,922	567,123	(282,753)
Other comprehensive income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the period	1,992,401	973,381	243,465	(220,021)	2,295,922	567,123	(282,753)
Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to:							
Owners of the Parent Company	2,166,940	538,784	282,288	(305,954)	2,295,922	567,123	338,097
Non-controlling interest	(174,539)	434,597	(38,823)	85,933	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the period	1,992,401	973,381	243,465	(220,021)	2,295,922	567,123	(282,753)

Note: The complete Financial Statements of the Company in Arabic or English will be made available to any shareholder on request.

Bank Muscat wins Best Retail Bank in Oman award at MENA event

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, was awarded the Best Retail Bank in Oman Award at the MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2022 held in Dubai earlier this year.

Organised by MEED in partnership with Retail Banker International and Private Banker International, the inaugural MENA Banking Excellence Awards sought to recognise institutions in the Middle East and North Africa region which is considered to be one of the fastest growing banking and financial services markets in the world.

Bank Muscat was recognised for its customer-centric vision, innovative offerings backed by state-of-the-art technology and commitment to constantly enhance customer experience.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnasser al Raisi, Bank Muscat general manager - Personal Banking, said, "We would like to take this opportunity to thank MEED as well as its partners Retail Banker International and the Private Banker for recognising the bank as the Best Retail Bank in Oman. Over the last four decades, Bank Muscat has carved a name for itself for the largest branch and ATM-CDM-FFM network, its cutting-edge omnichannel Mobile and Internet banking, its constant stream of innovative products and serv-



ices and total commitment to customer-centricity, all of which are unmatched in Oman. Going ahead, the bank will aim to continue its market-leading position in the sultanate's financial services sector by further enhancing customer experience, digital transformation and public-private partnership in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040."

Bank Muscat, which is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year has made a name for itself with a large number of firsts in the banking sector over the past four decades. Today, the bank leads the financial services sector in the sultanate with 174 branches and more than 800

touchpoints including automated teller machines (ATMs), cash deposit machines (CDMs) and fully functional machines (FFM) installed across the country. It is the first choice for over 2mn customers in Oman and has been playing an important role in enhancing financial inclusion in Oman with different innovative products for its customers.

Bank Muscat's continuously upgraded omnichannel Internet and mobile banking offer customers a fast and secure banking experience, and today, over 1.3mn retail banking customers use various features like real-time bill payments for utilities in Oman, fund transfers within the

bank and in Oman, fund transfers across the world via the SWIFT network amongst a number of other services and benefits. There has also been a rapid uptake in contactless payment through its various debit, credit and prepaid cards as well as contactless wearables.

The bank is working towards upgrading its phygital network (physical/digital) by replacing more than 150 CDMs and FFM during the 1st quarter of 2023. During the year as well, the bank is planning to add more than 50 new ATMs/CDMs/FFMs in various locations across Oman. The bank has also started rolling out Multi-Function Kiosk, which en-

ables customers to instantly issue and activate new or replaced debit cards around the clock.

Meanwhile, premier banking clientele have the advantage of being able to benefit from some of the most exclusive and differentiated services available in the sultanate through Bank Muscat Private banking, Asalah Priority banking and Al Jawhar Privilege banking. On the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the bank has also recently launched a number of attractive offers for its customers including highly discounted offers on Baituna, Sayyarati and Personal Finance loans.



Takaful's sharia'a committee meets Board of Directors

The first meeting between the new Sharia'a Supervisory Committee (SSC) of Takaful Oman Insurance and the company's Board of Directors was held on October 27. The meeting witnessed attendance from Mohammed Abdullah al Khonji, chairman of the Board of Directors of the company, and distinguished members of the Board of Directors. Attendees from the Sharia'a Supervisory Committee included committee chairman Dr Majid bin Mohammed al Kindi and members of the Sharia'a Supervisory Committee.

Apart from reaffirming its commitment to sharia'a principles, the meeting discussed the sharia'a framework under the regulatory regime, key challenges of the Islamic insurance industry, and various new developments and opportunities in the sector.

Takaful Oman Insurance has

remained steadfast in its efforts to continuously enhance its portfolio while adhering to the norms and regulations of sharia'a.

The company has demonstrated utmost transparency in all its procedures, worked with integrity, and upheld the highest values of ethicality in all its dealings.

The board has also shown its commitment to providing its full support and assistance to the Sharia'a Supervisory Committee.

Neelmani Bhardwaj, acting CEO at Takaful said, "Takaful Oman Insurance, being the first Islamic insurance company in the sultanate, is leading transformation in the sector and setting new benchmarks along the way. Our strong dedication to providing world-class sharia'a-compliant products has helped us increase our database of loyal customers."

Over 570 trail runners to take part in Himam race

More than 570 trail runners from 41 countries will take part in the forthcoming Himam Trail Run Race to be held from December 1 to 3, said a press release.

"Over 570 trail runners from 41 countries of all ages and experience levels have registered to take on the breathtaking challenge that has been curated around diverse landscapes, heritage sites and lush plantation in Jabal Akhdar, Al Hamra and Birkat Al Mouz," the release added.

Supported by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) as main sponsor, the race has been made bigger since its last edition and will feature a 25km and 55km races that will begin at Birkat al Mouz, whereas the Al Hajar Range Challenge 100km will start in Al Hamra.



Each course will then circle the foothills of Jabal Akhdar through traditional plantations and picturesque villages before heading to the gates of the old Fort in Birkat al Mouz where the finishing line awaits.

Dr Zahir al Riyami, Himam

Adventure President, said, "The response so far has been incredible, and we are now gearing up for the biggest ever Himam Trail Run Race. This is a great opportunity to broaden the appeal of Oman's unique landscape and shine a light on the beautiful

scenery and culture of Jabal Akhdar, Al Hamra and Birkat al Mouz.

"Registrations have been pouring in from around the country and across the world and we look forward to welcoming runners of all ages to experience a

brand-new course developed especially for this race and take part in one of Oman's fastest growing sporting events," he added.

Each race carries points from the International Trail Running Association (ITRA) which will help more experienced runners enter trail running races around the world. The 25km 'Start-Up Challenge' will award all finishers one ITRA points, the 55km race, known as 'The Adventure', carries three ITRA points, while the 100km 'Al Hajar Range Challenge' course will give four ITRA points to all finishers.

Last year's Himam Trail Run proved to be an event for all, attracting 421 runners from 36 countries, including 50 female athletes and 29 runners aged over 50 years of age.

Ooredoo celebrates 52nd National Day by giving 52GB data

Celebrating Oman's 52nd National Day with its customers, Ooredoo is offering 52 GB Social Data to Hala (prepaid), Shahry Endless and Omanuna users from November 10 to 18.

The limited-time offer is available to existing Ooredoo customers and includes free data use on WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and Facebook.

On this special occasion, customers will be able to share greetings and great-looking posts with their family, friends and their social

media circles. Ooredoo wants its digital users to be able to stay connected, which will further foster a sense of community during the national celebrations.

Customers can subscribe to the 52 GB of Social Data offer through the Ooredoo App or by dialing *555*521#. For more information on this and other products and services by Ooredoo, one may wither download the award-winning app, or dial *555#, or head to www.ooredoo.om/ND52.

Misfaco celebrates Steviana on World Diabetes Day

As the global community is marking the World Diabetes Day on Monday, Saudi-based Misfaco is celebrating its sweetener product Steviana largely used by those who are diabetic.

"Misfaco has been distinguished for more than fifteen years in the manufacture and export of the first healthy sweetener in the world, Steviana 'the pride of the Saudi industry'," said a press statement.

The first production of Steviana was in 2007, since then the company is paying a continues effort by using the best of art technology and modern science in manufacturing sweeteners to achieves its mission which is high quality products at affordable prices, it added.

Steviana is sweetener that contain of Stevia Rebaudiana which is an outstanding sweet tasting herb that has remarkable health promoting qualities, contains zero calories and nutrient



rich, since it contains substantial amounts of calcium, phosphorous as well as sodium, magnesium, zinc, rutin, Vitamin A, Vitamin C and over 100 phytonutrients.

Steviana is also being used as an aid to weight loss and weight management, since it contains zero calories and reduces the craving for sweet and fatty foods, therefore weight watchers love it.

Unlike sugar, Steviana does not trigger a rise in blood sugar levels, so it is the best gift for diabetic people. Also unlike other sweeteners, Steviana has no bitterness after taste.

MoHERI hosts a two-day workshop on robotics

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) organised a robotics workshop as part of the student training programme of the Skills Development Programme for Researchers and Innovators on Friday and Saturday at the Social Centre at Innovation Park Muscat in cooperation with the Innovation Cell Centre.

Thirty Omani students aged 13 to 16 years old participated in the robotics workshop this past weekend. Based on achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040 in the innovation field, the workshop aimed to develop the participants' abilities to challenge and compete in the research, creativity and innovation fields.

The workshop included a number of challenges as well as participation certificates and some prizes for those who did well during the two-day workshop.

The workshop covered three topics: Brainstorming strategies, design and printing, and programming. For the brainstorming strategies section, it was pre-



sented by Habiba al Kindi, and included an introduction to brainstorming, stages of brainstorming, basic rules for brainstorming, brainstorming methods, and limitation of brainstorming.

For the design and printing

section, the participants were taught the basics of 3D design of robots using Fusion360 programme, which was presented by Ghada al Nasiri, and the correct way to use the 3D printer for the designed shapes and their readiness to install them in the

robot, which was presented by Othman bin Saif.

As for the programming section, it was presented by Hajar al Nasiri, and consisted of teaching the students the basics of programming robots using the C++ language as well as the installa-

tion of the programming parts in the composite robot and drawing a path to examine its programming.

The student training programme aims to keep pace with the rapid development witnessed by the world around us in how to deal with the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Internet of Things, and build the national capabilities of members of the society, especially the national capabilities of students.

It is worth noting that the Skills Development Programme for Researchers and Innovators is one of the programmes of the Department of Research and Innovation Capacity Building in the Research and Innovation Sector of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, which aims to promote a culture of research and innovation among members of the society, maximise the skills and capabilities of researchers, innovators and those interested, and enhance youth capabilities in future skills.

AGAE opens state-of-art showroom for Changan

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE) announced the inauguration of a flagship showroom for the premium automotive brand Changan at Mawalleh in Muscat. The state-of-art showroom will cater to the rising demand for premium Changan models and the luxurious UNI series.

Spread over an area of 1300sqm, the facility has the capacity to display more than 20 cars. Designed in accordance with global standards, the showroom's façade holds a glass fascia with an inside height 6.3m and front elevation of nine metres which provides excellent visibility to customer. The showroom location has easy access to customers residing in Muscat and is only 2.4km from Burjal Sahwa roundabout.

The showroom has ample sitting place for customers to discuss and look at the display cars. The large showroom area also provides customers with sufficient place to look at the entire model range of Changan and UNI models, seven different model variants in Changan and three models in UNI Range needs such a large state of the art showroom to meet customer choices.

The state-of-the-art showroom also has exclusive new car



delivery area, customer lounge, wheelchair access, ample car parking and comes with prayer room facilities etc.

A spokesperson for AGAE said, "We have always believed in strengthening our relationship with our customers and are elated to expand our network and come closer to all of them."

"We have a great partnership with Changan brand and are very happy to extend this further with the inauguration of our new facility. We look forward to welcoming new buyers to the Changan family and establishing a fruitful, long-term relationship."

He also added that Bahwan group showroom standards are very well maintained for buying

convenience like test-drive to satisfy customer on quality of drive, easy financing and also offers low instalments through banks and finance companies, insurance and registration to support the customers to buy their favourite Changan and UNI models.

The premium automotive brand Changan has received overwhelming response among Oman customers. Changan Automobile boasts of a comprehensive portfolio of range of products including Sedan, Crossovers, SUVs and Pickups like Changan Alsvin- Entry level sedan, EADO Plus - Family Sedan, CS35 PLUS Crossover, CS75 Plus Crossover, CS85

Coupe, CS95 7-seater 4WD and Hunter Pickup's. All the models of Changan Hunter the pickup has a 'European Standard' body and has plastic bed liners which is unique to the model.

Changan auto luxury brand is called UNI and it's positioned as futuristic and fashionable, the UNI range features progressive design and smart technologies offered only in luxury brands.

Changan UNI range of automobiles is devoted to creating a new experience with highly technological and sporty exterior design coupled with avant-garde interiors. For a luxury model to be 'sporty at a glance', the UNI range adopts a short overhang and long axle design, adding the



sporty feeling to a luxury range. This improves the overall handling of the UNI range having high agility and high-speed stability when driving.

The UNI range has adopted pure, precise and agile exterior design elements. The hidden door handle design blends in with the body, making it simple and sophisticated. The UNI family's classic borderless grille design is combined with the narrow, sharp headlamps on both sides for an intense look. The aerodynamic airship-shape spoiler improves driving stability and fashionable in aesthetics. The space battleship gear shift knob has a sporty design, giving the user a sense of exploration in

every trip.

Equipped with IACC system, the UNI range can achieve L2 autonomous driving having features of FCW+AEB+LDW+LAS+TJA+AEB+LCDA. UNI range is equipped with four high-definition wide-angle cameras giving 360-degree view around the vehicle in real time to park your vehicle safely.

The UNI range adopts a simplistic yet avante grade interior design. It uses an asymmetrical design in the instrumentation and centre console as well as bright colours that create technically dynamic interiors. It adopts the Intelligent Cockpit Interaction System which appears to be two screens staggered on the

surface, but internally they are connected as one have a high-resolution display and adaptive backlight control to protect the eyes from fatigue to the max while reading and driving.

The UNI range features newly designed seats with fuller side wings which also provide more reliable support and confidence when cornering. The wireless charging provides ultra-fast charging with wide-range compatibility.

One of the 'big four' Chinese automakers of the world and a top selling brand, Changan Automobile boasts of with a comprehensive portfolio of products which includes sedans, crossovers and SUVs. With an inspiring history of 160 years Changan Automobile Group traces its corporate origins way back to the 1862 with 62 years of automobile making and 36 years' experience of manufacturing Changan vehicles.

With world class R&D facilities, Changan develops products which are advanced, high-tech, innovative, fashionable, safe and deliver a strong performance. Each year Changan invests five per cent of the annual sales revenue for product R&D and with continuous efforts has built a global collaborative R&D network with various priorities.

Oman Air wins three prestigious titles at World Travel Awards 2022

Continuing to set benchmarks for quality, comfort and hospitality, Oman Air, the national airline of Oman, has been named World's Leading Airline - Business Class; World's Leading Airline - Customer Experience; and World's Leading Airline Lounge - Business Class by the World Travel Awards 2022.

The airline's Chief Executive Officer, Abdulaziz al Raisi, along with the management team, received the awards during a ceremony hosted by Oman Airports at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, under the patronage of H E Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. The awards, which are decided by public vote, were presented to winners from 50 participating countries, of which Oman won a total of nine.

"Oman's travel and tourism industry is growing in leaps and bounds, playing an ever-greater



role as a key enabler of Oman's economic diversification. We are delighted to be part of these efforts, alongside a leading network of airports and hotels," the Oman Air CEO said.

"These awards are a welcome testament to our dedication to creating an extraordinary travel experience that brings the world to Oman and showcases the

best of Oman to the world. We would like to thank our valued guests who voted for us and continue to choose us as their preferred airline."

The year 2022 has been a momentous year for Oman Air as the airline adapts to the pick-up of travel post-pandemic, while continuing to evolve to meet the demands of a rapidly

shifting market. Recently awarded the 2023 Five-Star Major Airline rating by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX), it has made increasing investments in its products and services, offering guests innovative cabin design, exceptional hospitality, and a growing range of destinations from its hub in Muscat.

Oxy Oman to sponsor equestrian endurance race

Oxy Oman representatives recently attended the sponsorship signing ceremony for the Oxy Equestrian Endurance Race, which is exclusively sponsored by the company, in cooperation with the Oman Equestrian Federation, and the Al Dhahirah Equestrian Committee.

Under the sponsorship agreement, three vehicles will be awarded to the top three winners of the 100km race, said a press statement.

The signing event was held at Oman Equestrian Federation. Steven Lauver, president and general manager of Oxy Oman, and Sayyed Munther bin Saif bin Hamad al Busaidi, chairman of Oman Equestrian Federation signed the sponsorship agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

The Oxy Equestrian Endurance Race will be held in Ibra,



Dhahirah governorate in December this year. Oxy Oman's exclusive sponsorship marks the company's second year in supporting equestrian racing, in addition to its long-term engagement with camel racing in the sultanate as a local support historically tied to the culture of local communities. "Oxy is committed to sup-

porting projects which directly impact communities located within our concession areas, and to enhance social development through long-term projects in the region that aid in diversifying the economy. This sponsorship reflects the company's long-standing strides in support of historic cultural sports in the sultanate," said Steven Lauver.

Zubair launches payment solution provider SalisPay

The Zubair Corporation has announced the launch of SalisPay - an innovative new age payment solution provider specialising in multi-channel payment processing and acquiring. Salis Payment Solutions LLC, a joint venture between CredoPay, an India-based fintech technology platform, and OCS Infotech, a group company of the Zubair Corporation.

The launch took place at a glittering ceremony at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, Muscat, on November 8. In attendance at the event were Al Zubair bin Mohammad al Zubair, vice chairman of the Board of Directors of the Zubair Corporation, Zubair Corporation group CEO Niels Bormans, CredoPay CEO Dore Swamy and SalisPay COO Anu Chieran Philip, together with several VIP clients from banks and financial institutions and several members of the executive management of the Zubair Corporation group companies.

SalisPay is a one-stop solution for unified acquiring, multi-chan-



nel payment processing and connected banking solutions. It offers clients a secure, robust, certified, and scalable solution in various business engagement models to suit their business and commercial needs.

"Launching SalisPay is part of our endeavour to pave the way for Oman's digital payment future. From smart POS soft POS payment gateways and connected banking systems to a comprehensive range of end-to-end merchant services and PAAS solutions, this innovative

fintech platform is set to revolutionise how we make and receive payments in Oman in the near future," Bormans said.

"With contactless and mobile payments on the rise, and in-person retail sales picking up momentum again, many businesses in Oman are looking to take advantage. It is our goal at SalisPay to be their trusted partner in this growth journey, supporting their needs for a seamless, digital payment processing and collection experience," SalisPay COO Anu Chieran Philip said.

Oman Data Park signs agreement with Crossword to reduce cybersecurity risk

Oman Data Park (ODP) signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Omani-British company 'Crossword Cybersecurity', to provide services that contribute to reduce cyber security risk for public and private entities and enhance the protection of the cyber security structure of sensitive information in the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreement aims at adding more security measures to secure the data hosting process for the institutions and companies, enhance its protection from the danger of third parties such as suppliers and other parties, and ascertain funding sources, verifying suspicions of money laundering.

The agreement was signed by Oman Data Park CEO Maqbool al Wahaibi and Crossword Cybersecurity group managing director Stuart Jubb.

"We are pleased to sign a partnership agreement with an international company such as Crossword, to transfer technol-



ogy related to cyber security to ensure the protection of the sensitive data of government entities and private companies in the Sultanate of Oman, in particular, combating against external attacks that targeting some public and private companies where they are penetrating their devices and affecting their data and incurring heavy losses for them," Oman Data Park CEO said.

"We delight to call on government agencies and companies to take advantage of high-tech

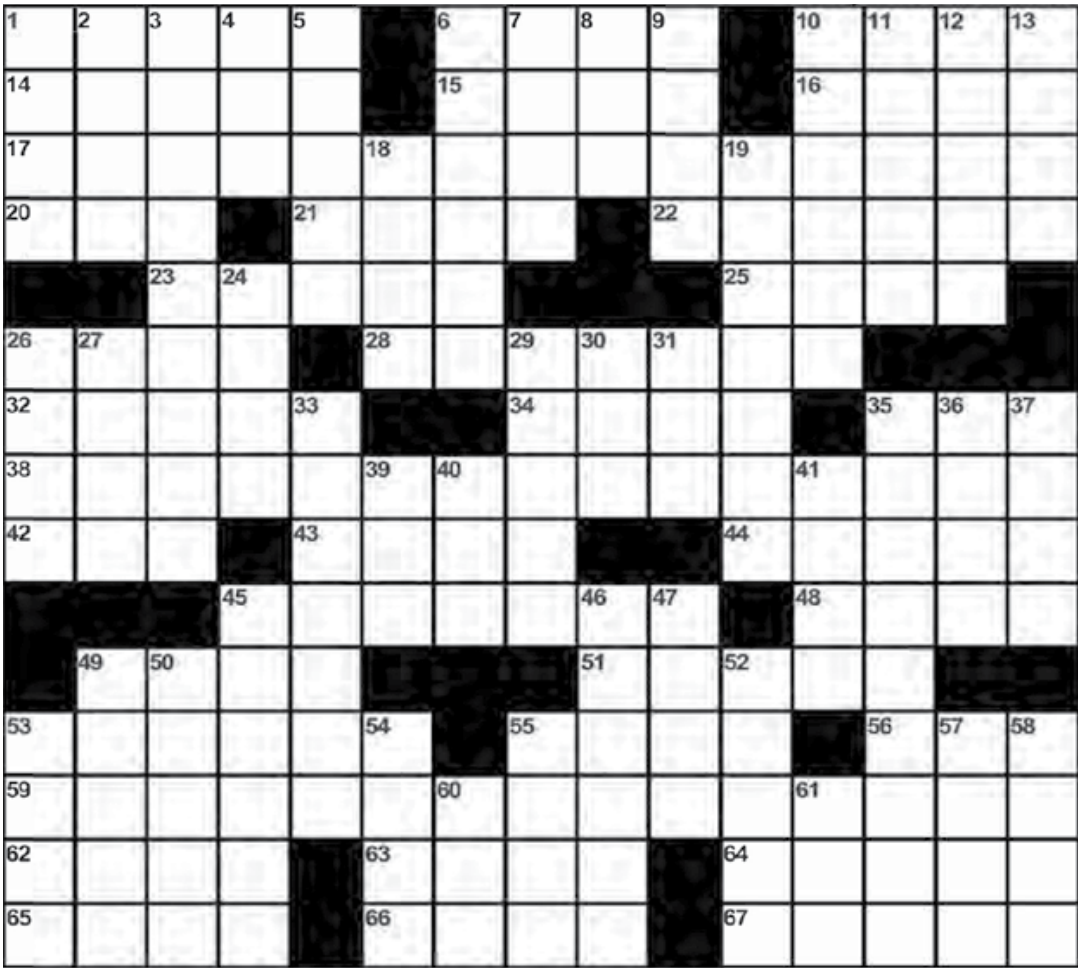
services to bridge the gap in the areas of cyber security information sharing," Maqbool added.

Khalid bin Ali al Maskari, Director of Development at Crossword Cybersecurity said, "Signing an agreement with Oman Data is considered a strategic step to set a cyber-security plan at the regional level, while this agreement allows expanding cyber security services and enhances the skills of national cadres with professional experiences."

"This agreement provides a quantum leap in providing various services in the Sultanate of Oman through Oman Data Park, to government agencies and companies, aiming to secure their sensitive data and information, as well as exchanging experiences with reputable international companies in the field of cyber security, such as Crossword Cybersecurity in the UK."

Crossword, a British global company in the field of cyber security solutions, its vision is to partner with organisations to keep them secure in the digital world. Crossword offers a range of cyber security solutions to help companies understand and reduce cyber security risk, through a combination of experts, process and technology, in the form of an experienced consulting team, managed services and products. Crossword's areas of emphasis are cyber security strategy and risk, supply chain cyber, threat detection and response, and digital identity.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Increased
6) Person of action
10) Fairy-tale beast
14) Anklebones
15) "Cogito, _ sum"
16) Face-to-face exam
17) How some lay it on?
20) Tailor-made line
21) Sporty headgear
22) Pats down
23) Type of alcohol
25) Sugar bowl marchers
26) von Bismarck
28) Matching audio to video
32) Zoo heavyweight, briefly
34) Goals
35) It's on the streets
38) Tremendously, slangily
42) Bonanza find
43) Feature of 32-Across
44) Coach
45) Insomniac's symptom
48) _-European
49) London hoosegow, once

51) Class reminders
53) Resolve, as a dispute
55) "... little spice to your life"
56) Word with "jam" or "roll"
59) It's overwhelming
62) Very thin, as a line
63) Computer info
64) Dine at home
65) Perfect place
66) Use a coffee spoon
67) Brings about, biblical style

DOWN

1) Ogden's state
2) Blanched
3) Watchful hours?
4) Low or high end?
5) Abandon
6) With all one's heart
7) Dog bowl bits
8) It might need a boost
9) Good vantage point
10) Showing awe, perhaps
11) Matter for the mill
12) Sets up, as pool balls
13) Moose cousins
18) _ down a bunt (sacri-

fices)
19) Word with "mass" or "rapid"
24) Vocal sound
26) About
27) God with a hammer
29) Mary Poppins was one
30) Oft-mooched item, briefly
31) "This tape will self-destruct ..." org.
33) Desdemona's man
35) Exchange words?
36) Battery contents
37) Nevada city
39) Coal carrier
40) Anger
41) A Great Lake
45) Definitely not ripe
46) Ingratiate oneself
47) Creates an instant lawn
49) Ice-cold
50) Pay reparations, e.g.
52) Sealed, as a package
53) Strongbox
54) Discontinues
55) Not backing
57) Name on elevators

58) Dapper fellow
60) Cereal morsel
61) Doctor in a 1964 movie

NOTE PAD

MOTE PARA INCUS
ITEM AFAR LEONE
STRIPPING LANCE
CONTRARIES TSAR
OWE NOSHER
RECAPS STOP CPA
ATONE OPINE REV
TONAL CONELATE
INSLOTTE DETER
OCTETAS STEEDS
OILRIG AIR
ALTO CONTRACTED
BLUSH NOSEPIECE
EATER AMEN TARE
DRESS LEAS EMUS

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You need to put some more effort into planning if you want your latest project to go as well as possible. It's true that this isn't the fun, glamorous, or exciting part of things, but it will be well worth the effort. Unless you line up the right people and book the necessary places soon, you could be left out in the cold. There are some bigger challenges coming up for you, and if you want them to be stress-free then preparation is crucial. Load up on supplies just in case.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

All the power is completely in your hands today, so if you see something you don't like too much, you should do something about it! This rule applies to emotional issues as well as aesthetic situations, so don't be too surprised if you need to pull someone aside for a quiet heart-to-heart talk in order to smooth over a sensitive topic. To counteract potential problems or conflicts, try to avoid whatever makes you uncomfortable or puts you in a negative state of mind.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Where's the fire? There is no reason to rush through this day. Whether you're egged on by your own expectations or by annoying peer pressure, there's no good reason not to take things slowly. If you have some exciting plans for this evening, that's fine, but that doesn't mean you should forget about what's going on today. Everything and everyone you encounter right now is worth your full attention.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Have faith that success is something you can achieve, and soon. It's true that not everything can be on your timetable, but that doesn't mean that things aren't going to happen. Right now, you're suffering from a bout of impatience, and you need to cure yourself of it. Get active with the lighter side of your life as soon as possible. If you can spend your time laughing, you won't worry so much about progress on the heavier stuff.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Most of your opinions have been formed over the years by life experience and true passion, but that doesn't mean that they can't be revised. Changing your mind (for the right reasons) is never a sign of weakness. In fact, it's a sign of maturity and intelligence. So keep your mind open today and be willing to reevaluate some long-held beliefs. Things have been shifting in your life, and your perspectives need to adapt to those changes.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Be careful with what you say today and keep in mind that eavesdropping is a popular pastime for the folks around you right now. They are all hungry for information and gossip. Not only do you need to be conservative in what you say, but you have to be thorough as well, which is a tricky proposition. Organize your thoughts and say what needs to be said and nothing more. If you make sure you cover all your bases, you'll be well protected and sure to shine.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

This is a day full of hopeful events, and you should be able to sense a new beginning, because something new is coming right around the corner. Your senses are sharp and on target, so today is a good day to take a big risk. You know what to stand behind and what to avoid, so trust yourself. Some fresh, new ideas are going to pop into your head at surprising times. Put them on the back burner if you don't have time to deal with them today, because there will be some real gems there.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

From dawn to dusk today you will have all the energy you need to stay focused and in control. This is a day when any collaborations you make will have the greatest chance of being successful. Working with others will involve a real, respectful exchange of ideas. You won't have to worry about any big power grabs. You're gaining a growing understanding of your situation, and that is giving you more confidence and a better strategy for figuring out what to do next.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It's like there's a giant magnifying glass on your life right now, and every little thing you do is definitely magic! Your slightest movement could cause some major earthquakes that shift around the status quo and make people notice you in a whole new light. Everything is starting to fall into place in terms of your health or physical routine. It's about time you realized that if you put real effort into something, real results will come out of it.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Ideas about duration could be dominating your mind today. You're thinking more and more about making things last. In terms of your romantic life, you might be finally be ready to make the type of commitment that's always intimidated you before. On the job, you might want to put more of yourself into what you do every day and identify whose job you want to be promoted into in the future. Your ambition is starting to wake up, and you're starting to think more about enduring.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Someone close to you needs you to give them something, and it could be a gesture or commitment you are not ready to give. So instead of simply giving them what they want, you need to teach them how to find it for themselves. Over the years you've learned a lot about getting what you want, so why not share that with them? You might be telling them something they don't want to hear, but in the end it will be better for both of you if you put yourself first, at least for now.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your continued effort in a new relationship, either professional or personal, could pay off in a big way. Expect a phone call or email that connects all the dots and finalizes a new direction for both of you. This alliance signifies more than an opportunity for progress. This is a new opportunity for you to express a side of yourself that doesn't get a lot of exposure. You are growing, and right now it's the people in your life who are nurturing that growth.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is notable about the date Friday 15 October 1582 in Western history?

A. It was the first day observed under the Gregorian calendar
B. John Dee revealed the occult Enochian language
C. The first play by William Shakespeare was staged
D. The Douay-Rheims Bible, translated from the Latin Vulgate into English, was published

02. The character created by O. Henry in his 1907 short story "The Caballero's Way" formed the basis, although considerably softened, for the main character in what 1950s US TV series?

A. Fury
B. Buffalo Bill, Jr
C. Casey Jones
D. The Cisco Kid

03. Which of these is the oldest known complex scientific calculator, sometimes called the first analogue computer?

A. Scheutz's engine
B. Babbage's difference engine
C. Antikythera mechanism
D. Harvard Mark I

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.C

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

E	L	T	I
T	B	I	S
H	E	S	R
E	E	D	B

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

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

WORD BUILDER

U
R
G
O
C
A
E

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Israel's Netanyahu tapped to form next government

Jerusalem - Israel's veteran ex-premier Benjamin Netanyahu secured a mandate on Sunday to form a new government, paving the way for his comeback at the helm of what is expected to be the most right-wing administration in the country's history.

After a period of unprecedented political gridlock that forced five elections in less than four years, November 1 polls gave Netanyahu and his far-right allies a clear majority in the 120-seat parliament.

"I have decided to assign to you, Benjamin Netanyahu, the task of forming a government," President Isaac Herzog told him at a ceremony in Jerusalem.

Accepting the mandate, the 73-year-old Netanyahu vowed to serve all Israelis, 'those who voted for us and those who did not - it is my responsibility'.

The veteran right-winger, who is fighting corruption allegations in court, will have at least 28 days to build a coalition with his allies - two ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties a rising extreme-right alliance called Religious Zionism.

Herzog noted Netanyahu's ongoing trial, saying: "I am not oblivious, of course, to the fact that there are ongoing legal proceedings against Mr Netanyahu at the Jerusalem District Court, and I do not trivialise this at all."

But he noted that recent precedent made clear Netanyahu could serve as prime minister while contesting the allegations.

Netanyahu's next moves will



Israel's President Isaac Herzog (right) and Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu shake hands after the former tasked the latter with forming a new government, in Jerusalem, on Sunday (AFP)

be closely scrutinised as unease mounts in some quarters over his policy plans and the goals of his controversial governing partners. The new government is widely expected to pass sweeping judicial reforms, a long-held priority of Israel's right. That could include a so-called 'override clause' giving parliament the right to overrule the supreme court any time it declares legislation to be illegal.

Netanyahu's government may also take full control over appointing supreme court judges, a role currently held by a panel of lawmakers, sitting judges and lawyers.

'It is difficult for me to exaggerate the damage and danger' of the proposed reforms, said Suzie Navot, a constitutional law professor at the Israel Democracy Institute think tank.

'Very sensitive questions'

Netanyahu can seek a two-week extension to his initial mandate, but is expected to announce a coalition deal reasonably quickly, given broad ideological unity within the incoming government.

Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, co-leaders of the Religious Zionism bloc, have publicly demanded control of two key

ministries - public security and defence.

Ben-Gvir, a firebrand known for anti-Arab rhetoric and incendiary calls for Israel to annex the entire West Bank, has repeatedly called for the security services to use more force in countering Palestinian unrest.

Violence has soared between Israel and the Palestinians this year. Recent months have been the deadliest period in years in the Israeli-occupied West Bank according to the United Nations, with near daily army raids and an increase in clashes and attacks on Israeli forces.

Netanyahu's previous terms

in office saw what little remained of the Middle East peace process collapse in a surge of Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank.

Herzog, whose role is largely symbolic, was reported to have tried to convince outgoing premier Yair Lapid and his defence minister Benny Gantz to form a

I have decided to assign to you Benjamin Netanyahu, the task of forming a government. I am not oblivious, of course, to the fact that there are ongoing legal proceedings against Mr Netanyahu

ISAAC HERZOG

unity cabinet with Netanyahu, in order to keep Ben-Gvir from entering government.

The presidency publicly denied the claims.

But Herzog this week told Ben-Gvir that he had received 'questions from Israeli citizens and world leaders... very sensitive questions on human rights'.

"There is a certain image of you and your party which seems, and I'll say it in all honesty, worrying in many regards," he added.

AFP



Two Iranian men holding hands and showing the victory sign during protests in Zahedan city on Friday (AFP)

Iran charges more than 750 people after 'recent riots'

Tehran, Iran - Iran's judiciary has charged more than 750 people in three provinces for participating in 'recent riots', local media reported, amid nationwide protests since the death of Mahsa Amini.

More than 2,000 people had already been charged, nearly half of them in the capital Tehran, since the demonstrations began in mid-September, according to judiciary figures.

Dozens of people, mainly demonstrators but also security personnel, have been killed during the protests, which the authorities have branded as 'riots'.

Judicial chief for the southern province of Hormozgan, Mojtaba Ghahremani, said 164 people had been charged 'after the recent riots', the judiciary's Mizan Online news website reported on Sunday.

They face accusations including 'incitement to killing', 'harming security forces', 'propaganda against the regime' and 'damaging public property', the website said, adding that their trials

would begin 'from Thursday in the presence of their lawyers'.

Another 276 people were charged in the central province of Markazi, its judiciary chief Abdol-Mehdi Mousavi was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA. However, 100 young people were released after signing pledges not to participate in any future 'riots', IRNA said.

In central Isfahan province, judicial chief Asadollah Jafari said 316 cases had been filed in connection with the recent strife.

Twelve have already gone to trial, the Tasnim news agency reported him as saying late on Saturday. Amini's death on September 16 came days after her arrest by the morality police for an alleged breach of the country's strict dress rules for women.

Authorities have denied claims by rights groups abroad that some 15,000 people have been detained in the ensuing unrest.

AFP

Musar tipped to be Slovenia's first woman president

Ljubljana, Slovenia - Slovenians were voting on Sunday in a run-off poll expected to elect the country's first woman president - a lawyer linked to former US first lady Melania Trump.

Natasa Pirc Musar, backed by the centre-left government, is running against ex-foreign minister Anze Logar, a veteran of conservative politics, in the EU country of two million.

A lawyer, Pirc Musar was hired to protect the interests of Slovenian-born Trump during her husband's presidency, stopping companies attempting to commercialise products with her name.

She is forecast to win just slightly above 50 per cent of the vote, ahead of Logar who is due



This file photo shows Natasa Pirc Musar attending a TV debate in Ljubljana, ahead of Slovenia's presidential elections, on October 17 (AFP)

to get between 44 and 49 per cent, according to the latest polls.

Pirc Musar, who headed the country's data protection author-

ity for a decade, says her victory would make her 'the voice of women' in Slovenia and abroad.

Though the president's role is largely ceremonial, the human

rights advocate has vowed to be a 'moral authority'.

"The president cannot be neutral... and have no opinion... I have never been afraid to speak out," the former television presenter, 54, told AFP.

Pirc Musar, who is a keen motorcyclist, has come under attack because of her husband's lucrative investments - especially in tax havens.

Her opponent Logar, 46, also ran as an independent but is a long-time member of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) of Janez Jansa, who failed in his bid to be re-elected as premier in April.

"I entered this campaign to win," Logar said, casting his ballot in the capital Ljubljana.

Critics accused Jansa of attacking media freedom and the judiciary and undermining the rule of law in his latest term in office. Logar plays the cello and is a keen mountaineer who cycled to the presidential debates.

"It is good if the president represents a different view than the ruling coalition - (it) provides more balance... which is better for a democratic system," Logar told AFP ahead of Sunday's vote.

Newspaper columnist Uros Esh said Pirc Musar has surrounded herself with 'strong advisers', allowing her to compete with the relatively more experienced Logar. But Logar would 'more likely be a mere instrument' of Jansa's party, Esh said.

AFP

Lebanon extradites to Iraq Saddam's grandnephew

Baghdad, Iraq - Lebanon extradited a man said to be a grandnephew of Saddam Hussein to Iraq, where he is accused of involvement in a massacre by the Islamic State group, a security source said on Saturday.

Abdullah Sabawi was extradited on Friday, the Iraqi security source told AFP on condition of anonymity, describing him as the 'son of a nephew' of the executed dictator. He is accused of having been a member of IS and having participated in the Speicher massacre' of 2014, in which up to 1,700 air force cadets were executed by the militant group, the source added.

A Lebanese judicial source said Sabawi 'was detained on

June 11' following an Interpol notice calling for his arrest over his alleged involvement in the massacre. "Iraq requested his extradition," the source added. Sabawi's family has denied the accusations, telling AFP he had been in Yemen at the time of the killings.

The Camp Speicher massacre was considered one of IS's worst crimes after it took over large parts of Iraq in 2014.

Video footage released by IS showed an assembly-line style massacre in which gunmen herded their victims towards the banks of the Tigris, shot them in the back of the head and pushed them into the river one after the other.

AFP

'Tears of happiness': Ukrainians rejoice after liberation from Russians

Pravdyne, Ukraine - After enduring more than eight months of Russian soldiers occupying her village near Kherson, Svetlana Galak said she cried 'tears of happiness' when Ukrainian soldiers arrived to liberate them.

"I don't know when the Russians arrived, but I only know one thing - that yesterday, or the day before yesterday, I saw a Ukrainian soldier and I was relieved," the 43-year-old told AFP.

"I had tears of happiness, that finally Ukraine is liberated," she said. Her village Pravdyne is located about 20km (12 miles) northwest of Kherson - a region and its capital city that were captured by Russian forces shortly after their invasion in late February. On Friday, Russia said it had withdrawn more than 30,000 troops from the region, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declaring Kherson 'ours' as residents reacted with



Residents of Kherson temporarily living in Odessa celebrate the liberation of their native town in front of The Odessa National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre in Odessa, on Saturday (AFP)

joy and jubilation.

Galak is among the 180 remaining in Pravdyne, a small village located in the middle of an agricultural plain that had 1,000

residents before the war.

Some of the roofs of buildings appear blasted off, and several homes have been destroyed. Debris of anti-mine parts and explo-

sives litter the village's fields - a remnant of bombing campaigns.

Kyiv's recapture of the southern region, which serves as a gateway to the Black Sea, was

also a bittersweet moment for her - Galak's 15-year-old daughter had been killed in a bombing raid on the village.

"I will tell you honestly, I was not happy that Russians were here, and my child died. It is hard for me," she said.

Mistreatment, hunger

Her husband Viktor told AFP of mistreatment under some of the soldiers, like when he was once stopped when he went to a different part of Pravdyne to visit his mother.

"The Russians stopped us and forced us to kneel," the 44-year-old told AFP.

While questioning him on whether he really was a resident of the village, another soldier tied his arms and legs.

"Then one of them came and said he was going to put a grenade under me so I wouldn't

run away," he said.

He then told them that his daughter had already been killed and asked them: "Why do you want to put a grenade under me? Do you want to kill us all or what? What is your aim? Are you fascists?" he recounted.

Luckily, before he could be interrogated, another soldier recognised Viktor and informed his captors, who then released him.

"We were happy when we saw Ukrainian soldiers, because we are Ukrainians," he said, adding that the occupation was also difficult due to the lack of food.

"The Russian soldiers brought sweets, cans, food and everyone took it because no one wanted to die of hunger."

Despite his run-in with some soldiers, many others 'did not want to fight', Viktor said. "They were sitting around, not very

happy to be here and not be with their families."

On Saturday, volunteers were seen coming in with a van to distribute food aid. Two women hugged each other while crying.

Svetlana Striletska, 50, told AFP that 23 people were killed in the village since the occupation.

The 50-year-old school principal and deputy councillor of Pravdyne had helped with ferrying in humanitarian aid, making butter and sunflower oil in a little factory before the Russians destroyed it.

She and her husband had to flee Pravdyne, she said.

"I will never forget it, a man from the village ran up to us and told me: 'You have to run away, because they are looking for you,'" she told AFP.

"I knew I had to choose between being killed or running away."

AFP

US Democrats maintain Senate majority

Republicans had been expecting to ride a mighty red wave and capture the Senate

Washington, US - President Joe Biden's Democrats retained control of the US Senate on Saturday, a remarkable midterm election result that defied predictions of a Republican win over both houses of Congress.

Midterms traditionally deliver a rejection of the party in power, and with inflation surging and Biden's popularity in the doldrums, Republicans had been expecting to ride a mighty 'red wave' and capture the Senate and the House of Representatives. But the wave never got much beyond a ripple, and on Saturday US networks called the key Senate race in Nevada for Democrat incumbent Catherine Cortez Masto, giving the party the 50 seats it needs for an effective majority.

The win clinches Democratic

control in the Senate as Vice President Kamala Harris can cast the tie-breaking vote if the upper chamber is evenly split 50-50.

"I feel good and I'm looking forward to the next couple years," Biden said of the result, speaking at a meeting of South-east Asian leaders in Phnom Penh on Sunday.

Biden, due to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the G20 summit on Monday, said control of the Senate would bolster his position in the talks.

"I know I'm coming in stronger," he said of the midterms' impact.

One Senate race remains up in the air - a runoff in Georgia set for December 6, in which the Democrats could add to their majority. The result in the House of Representatives still hangs in the balance, and while Republicans are slightly favoured to take control, it would be with a far smaller majority than they had envisaged going into Tuesday's election.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer was quick to ring in his party's win, tweeting the result was a 'vindication' of Democrats' achievements.

Speaking minutes after the projections were announced,



Demonstrators gather at a rally to protest midterm election results outside of Maricopa County Tabulation and Election Center in Phoenix, Arizona, on Saturday (AFP)

Schumer said the result showed Americans 'soundly rejected the anti-democratic, authoritarian, nasty and divisive direction the MAGA Republicans wanted to take our country,' referring to former president Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' movement.

Trump was omnipresent on the campaign trail, putting his thumb on key Republican pri-

maries and holding rallies nationwide, during which he repeated his baseless claims of fraud in the 2020 race.

Call to 'come together'

While more than 100 Republican candidates who challenged the 2020 presidential election results won their races, according to US media projections, some of

Trump's hand-picked candidates underperformed and the Republicans' poor showing overall was a damaging political blow.

Trump is set to declare his 2024 White House bid on Tuesday - an announcement he had planned as a triumphant follow-on to an expected crushing election victory by the party he still dominates.

Maintaining control of the

Senate means Biden and the Democrats will retain key leverage in legislative debates, particularly in domestic and foreign spending policy.

Schumer underscored that the Democrats' win would ensure a 'firewall' against moves by Republicans in Congress to further curtail abortion rights - a key issue in the midterms.

But the Senator for New York also urged the two parties to 'try

Trump's response to the Arizona result was to double down on unfounded claims of ballot rigging, posting on his Truth Social platform that the Democrat's victory was a 'scam' and the result of 'voter fraud.'

The underwhelming outcome for Republicans has prompted a bout of internal finger-pointing, with targets including Trump, party leaders and campaign messaging.

US media on Saturday cited a letter circulated by three Republican senators calling for the postponement of party leadership elections currently scheduled for the middle of next week.

"We are all disappointed that a Red Wave failed to materialise, and there are multiple reasons it did not," the letter said.

"We need to have serious discussions within our conference as to why and what we can do to improve our chances in 2024," it added.

After the Senate result was projected, Republican Senator from Missouri Josh Hawley called in a tweet for the party to 'build something new.'

"The old party is dead. Time to bury it."

AFP

I feel good and I am looking forward to the next couple of years. I know I am coming in stronger

JOE BIDEN



Italian writer Roberto Saviano (left) and Italy's new prime minister Giorgia Meloni (AFP)

Press freedom fears as Italy PM Meloni takes Saviano to trial

Rome, Italy - Italian anti-mafia journalist Roberto Saviano stands trial next week on defamation charges brought by Giorgia Meloni, now Italy's prime minister, for a 2020 outburst criticising her stance on migrants.

Meloni's far-right Brothers of Italy was at the time a small opposition party, but took office last month after a sweeping election victory driven in part by its promise to stop the flow of migrants across the Mediterranean.

Saviano, who is best known for his international mafia best-seller *Gomorrah*, faces up to three years in prison if convicted in the trial, which opens on Tuesday.

The 43-year-old told AFP it was an 'unequal confrontation, decidedly grotesque', while press freedom groups warned it sent a 'chilling message' to journalists.

Watchdogs say such trials are symbolic of a culture in Italy in which public figures - often politicians - intimidate reporters with repeated lawsuits, threatening the erosion of a free and independent press. Italy ranked 58th in the 2022 world press freedom index published by Reporters Without Borders, the lowest level in western Europe.

baby from Guinea in a shipwreck.

He pointed a finger at Meloni and Matteo Salvini, the leader of the anti-immigrant League party, which is now part of her coalition government.

Meloni said in 2019 that charity vessels which rescue migrants 'should be sunk', while Salvini, as interior minister that same year, blocked the vessels from docking. "I just want to say to Meloni, and Salvini, you bastards! How could you?" Saviano said on the show.

Meloni sued, as did Salvini, whose separate case is expected to go to trial in February.

PEN International, an organisation that defends free speech, sent an open letter to Meloni this week urging her to drop the case.

"Pursuing your case against him would send a chilling message to all journalists and writers in the country, who may no longer dare to speak out for fear of reprisals," it said.

Meloni will be represented by lawyer Andrea Delmastro, who she recently nominated deputy justice minister.

Saviano said he has been sued for defamation 'dozens of times', but only Meloni and Salvini's suits have gone to trial.

The author, who has been under police protection since publishing *Gomorrah* due to threats from the mafia, said the tactic was to 'intimidate one in order to intimidate 100'.

AFP

One body found after buildings collapse in French town Lille

Lille, France - Rescue workers retrieved one body early on Sunday in the northern French town of Lille, following an hours-long search through the rubble of two collapsed buildings.

Two small adjoining houses collapsed in a shopping street in the city centre at around 9:15am local time (0815 GMT) on Saturday.

At first the collapses did not appear to have caused any casualties. The homes were evacuated during the night as a precaution following a warning by a resident that one of the walls was 'warped', police said.

Authorities soon realised a doctor was missing after calls to his phone went unanswered. He had been lent an apartment in the building for the weekend.

A body was located shortly before 1:30am on Sunday and fire service Lieutenant Colonel Stephane Beauventre, who is leading the rescue operations, said they believed the victim was the doctor.



Firefighters inspect a collapsed building as they search for victims in the city of Lille, northern France, on Saturday (AFP)

"The body went to the forensic institute. It will be clearly identified later," Beauventre said.

Officials visited neighbouring houses on Saturday to check for cracks or gas leaks after the collapse.

A resident of one of the buildings first noticed something was amiss in the early hours of Saturday, when he returned home and saw that 'the building had

moved'.

"We could not open the door, we heard rubble falling," Thibault Lemay told French radio, adding that he immediately warned emergency services.

Municipal police and firefighters decided to evacuate the buildings, as 'there was a real risk', said Lille's mayor Martine Aubry.

AFP

Australian PM hails talk with Chinese premier Li

Phnom Penh, Cambodia - Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Sunday hailed a 'positive' meeting with Chinese premier Li Keqiang - the first in-person encounter between leaders of the two countries since 2019.

Albanese, whose Labour government is keen to scrape the ice off of Canberra's frosty relationship with Beijing, spoke to Li at a gala dinner on Saturday night at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in Phnom Penh.

"I had a great conversation with Premier Li. It was very positive and constructive," Albanese told reporters on Sunday.

Ties with Beijing had hit an all-time low in recent years under the previous conservative government in Australia.

China whacked Australia with trade sanctions costing billions of dollars in merchandise and service exports after

Canberra called for an independent inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic.

Former prime minister Scott Morrison was the last Australian leader to speak with Li and Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2019.

Saturday was the first time Li and Albanese met in person, and they discussed the 50-year anniversary of the two countries' diplomatic ties.

"I think it's a good thing that it happened. I've said repeatedly about the relationship with China - that we should cooperate where we can and that dialogue was always a good thing," Albanese said.

Asked if he thought China was looking to recalibrate its relationship with other countries, he answered: "We should cooperate with China where we can and that's what we're doing."

AFP

Biden to seek red lines in talks with Xi Jinping

Phnom Penh, Cambodia - US President Joe Biden said on Sunday he will seek to establish 'red lines' in America's fraught relations with Beijing when he holds high-stakes talks with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

Biden said he goes into Monday's encounter on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Indonesia stronger after his Democratic Party's unexpected success in midterm elections they were forecast to lose heavily.

Washington and Beijing are at loggerheads over issues ranging from trade to human rights in China's Xinjiang region and the status of the self-ruled island of Taiwan. Biden said he expected candid talks with Xi.

"I know Xi Jinping, he knows me," he added, saying they have always had 'straightforward discussions'.

The two men have known each other for more than a decade, since Biden's time as vice-president, but Monday will see them meet face-to-face for the first time in their current roles.



US President Joe Biden speaks as he attends the East Asia Summit during the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits in Phnom Penh on Sunday (AFP)

"We have very little misunderstanding. We just got to figure out what the red lines are," Biden said.

White House officials say Biden will push China to use its influence to rein in North Korea after a record-breaking spate of missile tests sent fears soaring that the reclusive regime will soon carry out its seventh nuclear test.

Biden had a fillip overnight

with the news that the Democrats retained their effective majority in the US Senate thanks to Catherine Cortez Masto winning in Nevada.

Japan, S. Korea talks

Biden will meet his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk-yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Sunday to discuss ways to address the threat posed by the North's missile

programme.

China is Pyongyang's main ally and US officials say that, while Biden will not make demands, he will warn Xi that further missile and nuclear build-up would mean the United States boosting its military presence in the region - something Beijing bitterly opposes.

"North Korea represents a threat not just to the United States, not just to (South Korea) and Japan but to peace and stability across the entire region," US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told reporters.

Kim Jong Un's regime ramped up missile launches in response to large-scale US-South Korean air exercises, which the North described as 'aggressive and provocative'.

Biden on Sunday held talks with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia, a key regional ally and member of the Quad security group.

Beijing has denounced the Quad, which also includes the United States, Japan and India, as

an attempt to isolate it.

Diplomatic blitz

Biden flew to Phnom Penh for the COP27 climate conference as part of US efforts to boost its influence in Southeast Asia as a counter to China.

China has been flexing its muscles - through trade, diplomacy and military clout - in recent years in a region it sees as its strategic backyard.

Biden told leaders at an East Asia Summit - including Chinese Premier Li Keqiang - on Sunday that the United States would speak out against Beijing's rights abuses, according to a White House press release.

A day earlier Biden took a veiled swipe at Beijing in talks with leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional bloc.

He said the United States would work with ASEAN to 'defend against the significant threats to rules-based order and threats to the rule of law'.

AFP

Charles III leads first Remembrance Sunday

He laid his first wreath at the war memorial as reigning monarch, dressed in a field marshal's uniform

London, UK - Charles III led his first Remembrance Sunday event as king, laying a wreath in tribute to UK and Commonwealth war dead, as Britain's new prime minister also lauded Ukraine's defenders.

The 73-year-old monarch had previously deputised for his mother Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September aged 96 after a year of failing health.

Since 2017, she had watched the annual service from a balcony of the foreign ministry overlooking the Cenotaph in central London.

Last year a back complaint forced Elizabeth to miss the ceremony, just weeks after an unscheduled overnight stay in hospital.

Charles, who served in the Royal Navy in the 1970s, laid a wreath on her behalf.

Now king and commander-in-chief of British forces, he laid his first wreath at the war memorial as reigning monarch, dressed in



Britain's King Charles III attends the Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Cenotaph on Whitehall in central London, on Sunday (AFP)

a field marshal's ceremonial uniform. Charles stood in silence after depositing the ring of red artificial poppies - Britain's symbol of remembrance.

The wreath was mounted on black leaves, with a ribbon in the king's scarlet, purple and gold horseracing colours.

Two minutes' silence was observed after Big Ben tolled 11 times, marking the resumption of full operations for the newly restored Great Clock in the nearby Houses of Parliament.

Cannon fire marked the beginning and end of the silence, culminating in buglers playing

the Last Post in front of the Cenotaph, before UK politicians and Commonwealth ambassadors laid their own wreaths.

New Conservative leader Rishi Sunak was attending his first Remembrance Sunday as prime minister.

"This year more than ever, we

are reminded of the huge debt of gratitude we owe those who lay down their lives to protect their country," Sunak said in a statement. "As we fall silent together on Remembrance Sunday, we will honour the memories of the men and women we have lost, and pay tribute to the brave sol-

diers of Ukraine as they continue their fight for freedom."

'Special poignancy'
Speaking to Sky News, Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Tony Radakin said there was particular emotion attached to this Remembrance Sunday.

"I think there's a special poignancy this year with both the loss of Her Majesty, another loss of a Second World War veteran," he said.

"I also think it's poignant when we have once again the spectre of war in Europe and all that that entails, and a country that's been invaded and is fighting for its freedom," he said, referring to war in Ukraine.

Remembrance Sunday in Britain is the culmination of days of events to pay tribute to all those who lost their lives in conflict.

On Thursday Queen Consort Camilla laid a cross at the Field of Remembrance outside London's Westminster Abbey, alongside 70,000 other symbols left by military associations, and a space dedicated to Elizabeth.

On Friday - Armistice Day, marking the end of hostilities in World War I - a service was held at the National Memorial Arboretum in central England.

The king, queen and senior family members on Saturday attended an annual concert organised by the Royal British Legion veterans' charity.

On Sunday, around 10,000 veterans marched past the Cenotaph including 400 who fought in the Falklands War, 40 years ago.

Other royals attending on Sunday included Charles's eldest son and heir, Prince William, and William's wife Kate.

AFP

G20 ministers launch \$1.4bn pandemic fund



US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (left) meet with G20 leaders before launching a pandemic fund, in Nusa Dua on Sunday (AFP)

Nusa Dua, Indonesia - G20 health and finance ministers launched a US\$1.4bn fund on Sunday to tackle the next global pandemic ahead of the bloc's leaders gathering for a summit on the Indonesian resort island of Bali but the host's president said it was not enough.

The 24-nation fund is viewed as one of the early global outcomes of the summit next week where little progress is expected on the Ukraine crisis with Russian President Vladimir Putin not in attendance. It was launched at a news conference on Sunday opened by Indonesian President Joko Widodo and addressed by World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and World Bank President David Malpass.

"The G20 agrees to build a pandemic fund to prevent and prepare for a pandemic. Donors from G20 and non-G20 members, as well as philanthropic organisations, have contributed to the funds. But it is not enough," Widodo said in a video address.

He said US\$31bn was required to tackle the next global pandemic. "We must ensure community resilience in the face of a pandemic. A pandemic can no longer take lives and destroy the joints of the global economy."

The United States has contributed US\$450mn to the fund,

Donors from G20 and non-G20 members, as well as philanthropic organisations have contributed to the funds. But it is not enough

JOKO WIDODO

nearly a third of the total.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the joint fund was an example of what the G20 can do to tackle global problems.

"I am proud of what we have accomplished. I think the steps we have taken this year will help deliver on a vision of a healthier and more responsive global health architecture," she said.

Indonesia was at one point an epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic when a wave of Delta strain cases hit the country in mid-2021.

Its health system was overwhelmed by the number of infections and Jakarta produced its own homegrown vaccine as lower income countries became frustrated at more developed nations hoarding inoculations for their citizens.

AFP

WWII-era planes collide during Dallas air show

Houston, US - At least two crew members were killed when two World-War-II-era planes collided in mid-air at a show in Dallas, a pilots association said, with witness footage showing Saturday's crash ending in a fiery explosion on the ground.

By early on Sunday it was still unclear exactly how many people were in the two aircraft, a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and a smaller Bell P-63 Kingcobra, the Federal Aviation Administration said.

But the Allied Pilots Association, the collective bargaining agent for American Airlines, confirmed two of its retired members died in the Texas accident.

"Our hearts go out to their families, friends, and colleagues past and present," the group said late on Saturday in a statement on Twitter.

It was not yet known whether



Smoke rises from the crash after two planes collided mid-air during the Wings Over Dallas Airshow at Dallas Executive Airport, in Dallas, Texas, on Saturday (AFP)

anyone survived the afternoon crash, which occurred during the Wings Over Dallas Airshow at Dallas Executive Airport.

Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson called the incident 'a terrible

tragedy,' and said on Twitter that 'no spectators or others on the ground were reported injured.'

Hank Coates, the chief executive of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) whose planes were

involved in the accident, said the B-17 'normally has a crew of four or five', while the P-63 is operated by a single-pilot.

He said the Sunday part of the air show was cancelled.

Multiple videos posted on social media showed dramatic scenes of the smaller plane descending towards the lower-flying B-17 and crashing into it.

After the collision, the planes appeared to break apart into several large pieces before crashing to the ground and exploding in a ball of fire, creating a huge plume of black smoke.

The crash scattered debris across the airport grounds as well as on a nearby highway and strip mall, Johnson said.

The FAA said its agents and the National Transportation Safety Board would investigate the incident.

The CAF's Coates said the pilots who operate the planes during such shows are experienced volunteers with 'very thorough training' and are often retired military pilots.

AFP

Taliban ban women from gyms and public baths

Kabul, Afghanistan - Gyms and public baths are now also off limits to Afghan women, the Taliban confirmed on Sunday, days after banning them from parks and funfairs.

Women are increasingly being squeezed out of public life since the Taliban's return last year despite the hardline Islamists promising a softer version of the harsh rule that characterised their first stint in power that ended in 2001.

Most female government workers have lost their jobs while women are also barred from travelling without a male relative, and must cover up with a burqa or hijab when out of the home.

AFP

MH17 downing: Families hope for justice

Vleuten, Netherlands - Each night before bedtime in the small Dutch town of Vleuten, Evert van Zijtveld lights two candles at a concrete shrine next to his front door to remember his murdered children.

Eight years and four months ago his daughter Frederique, 19, and son Robert-Jan, 18, died with 296 others when Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot from the sky over war-torn Ukraine.

Now the 67-year-old is hoping for justice and closure in a high-security Dutch courtroom on Thursday, where judges will deliver their verdicts on four suspects who remain at large.

"Those who are responsible for downing MH17 should be sent to prison. If they are guilty, the international community should hunt them down," Van Zijtveld told AFP in an interview.

For Van Zijtveld and others who lost loved ones when the Boeing 777 travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was hit by what prosecutors say was a Russian-supplied missile, the loss



Evert van Zijtveld, 67, poses during an interview in Vleuten on November 9, (AFP)

is still raw years later.

Large photographs of Frederique and Robert-Jan adorn the home of Van Zijtveld and his wife Grace, who also lost her own mother Neeltje Voorham, 77, in the disaster.

One picture shows a smiling Van Zijtveld cuddling his daughter, which in a tragic irony was taken in the departures lounge at

Schiphol airport when Frederique was departing on another trip.

'Search for justice'
"Angry is not the right word," sighed Van Zijtveld, a tall and dapper Dutchman who has earned widespread respect through his work in helping other relatives of victims deal with their grief, and setting up a fund for under-privileged children.

"I am just very sad. My children and my parents-in-law were taking a holiday in the eastern part of the world. They were hit by a BUK. They were murdered. They were wonderful people."

Prosecutors say the four suspects - three Russians and a Ukrainian - played a key role in supplying the missile and have demanded life sentences if the men are convicted.

About an hour's drive to the east, in the village of Renkum, Sander Essers says he often listens to music to help him deal with his grief.

The 72-year-old lost his brother Peter, sister-in-law Jo-

lette Nuesink and their two children Emma, 20 and Valentijn, 17.

"Some evenings I take some time to listen to my brother's favourite Brazilian music, to think about him and his family and to cry," Essers told AFP.

"For me, the verdict will be the partial end for the search for justice for my dear family... I hope the legal proof will be sufficient to come to a verdict."

Both Van Zijtveld and Essers say the verdict, whatever the judges decide, will be a milestone after more than eight years of heartache, often under the intense glare of the media.

Many bereaved relatives testified during the trial which started in March 2020, offering heartbreaking accounts of the impact from the loss of their loved ones.

"This is a kind of a closure, this phase. It's too heavy to start it all over again," Van Zijtveld said.

He had tough words for the four accused. "They are real cowards for not coming to court."

AFP

After a five-year restoration project, the world-famous ringer, which was renamed 'Elizabeth Tower' in 2012 to mark Queen Elizabeth II's diamond jubilee, is back with a bong!

BIG BEN'S BACK

Getting up close to Big Ben requires earplugs, and ear defenders over them to be safe. When the 13.7-tonne bell sounds, the vibration hits you in the chest.

After a five-year restoration project, the world-famous ringer is now back with a bong. The Great Clock towering above Britain's Houses of Parliament is resuming daily operations following the painstaking renovation of more than 1,000 moving parts.

When the clock's five cast-iron bells including Big Ben fell silent in 2017, a mournful crowd of parliamentarians and staff gathered below. Some shed tears.

Now, after a week of testing, normal service resumed every 15 minutes from 11:00 am (1100 GMT) on Sunday (November 13).

The time marks the moment on November 11, 1918 when the guns fell silent in World War I. In Britain, Remembrance Sunday immediately follows Armistice Day every November 11.

They are two of the few occasions that Big Ben and his partners have rung since 2017, along with New Year's Eve, when Britain left the European Union in 2021, and the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II in September.

Atop the 96m Elizabeth Tower is the belfry housing the bells - protected by exterior netting to keep out bats and pigeons.

Beyond lie some of London's most spectacular vistas. But parliament's three in-house timekeepers don't have time to enjoy the view.

Ian Westworth, 60, and his colleagues have been busy overseeing the tests to ensure everything is in order after the £80mn (US\$90mn) restoration.

London calling

"It's the sound of London back again," Westworth told AFP on a dawn tour of the tower. "The bell's sounded through wars, and you try and imagine what this bell's actually seen - 160 years of development."

The Elizabeth Tower, previously called the Clock Tower, was renamed in 2012 to honour the late queen's diamond Jubilee. When first built in the 1840s, it dominated the Westminster skyline. Today, newer and taller buildings lie nearby.

"You used to be able to hear this on a quiet night up to 15 miles (24 kilometres) away," Westworth said, as a chill wind whistled through the belfry. "Now you're lucky on a day like today if you can hear it the other side of Parliament Square."

The five-year restoration involved cleaning and repainting each of the five bells' hammers and arms. The bells themselves

ELIZABETH TOWER

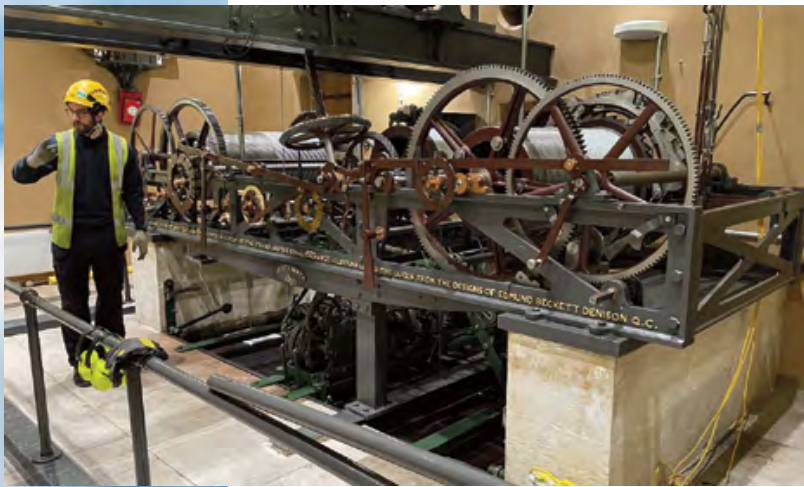


File photos of the Elizabeth Tower, commonly referred to as Big Ben, at the Houses of Parliament in central London



It's the sound of London back again. The bell's sounded through wars, and you try and imagine what this bell's actually seen - 160 years of development

IAN WESTWORTH



Alex Jeffrey, one of the three full-time timekeepers in Britain's Houses of Parliament, explains the renovation of the building's clock mechanism

stayed in place.

Big Ben sounds the hour, and is so large that flooring in the tower beneath would have to be dismantled if it ever had to be removed. The four smaller bells around it sound the quarter-hour.

The biggest job was taking apart the 11.5-tonne clock mechanism dating from 1859 so that every cog and pinion could be cleaned, repaired and re-oiled by a specialist company in Cumbria, northwest England. Other changes were cosmetic.

Twenty-eight round LED lights now illuminate the four clock faces, a balance of green and white, offering the closest match to how they would have looked in gas-lit Victorian times.

Above the bells sits a taller LED light, which glows white when parliament is in session. State-of-the-art sprinklers have been installed throughout the tower, although the belfry is beyond reach of the system.

Timeless technology

In past years before the renovation, parliament's timekeepers would benchmark the Great Clock's time against the telephone speaking clock.

Now, it is calibrated by GPS via Britain's National Physical Laboratory.

The method to adjust the clock's timing mechanism, however, remains old-fashioned - pre-decimal pennies are added or removed from weights attached to two giant coiled springs, to make or lose a second.

As the top of the hour approaches, it is time to don the ear defenders again for the continuing series of tests. Big Ben bongs seven times, setting off a bass vibrato in the gantry around it.

While deafening, the unmistakable peal of the cracked bell is also a reassuring note of constancy after a year of political upheaval in Britain, and as the rest of the parliamentary estate frays.

Political bickering over the costs is holding up a bigger renovation of the ageing complex. But Westworth and his 35-year-old colleague Alex Jeffrey remain focused on the job in hand - tending to parliament's 2,000 clocks, many of them irreplaceable antiques.

"Every day you're keeping time in a very hands-on way, using technology, arts and crafts," Jeffrey said. "It's very tactile, as is maintaining the Great Clock," he added. "It's the best job in the world."

AFP

LUNAR LAND

MOONWALKING

Astronauts flock to Spanish isle to train for Moon missions

Kneeling on the edge of a deep crater, astronaut Alexander Gerst uses a chisel to collect a sample of volcanic rock which he carefully puts inside a white plastic bag.

Gerst is not on the Moon, even if it looks like it. He is in the middle of Los Volcanes Natural Park on the island of Lanzarote in Spain's Canary Islands, off the northwest coast of Africa.

With its blackened lava fields, craters and volcanic tubes, Lanzarote's geology can be uncannily similar to that of the Moon and Mars - so much so that the European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA have for years been sending astronauts to the island to train.

"This place has lavas that are very, very similar to the ones that we find on the Moon," Gerst, a 46-year-old German astronaut with the ESA, told AFP.

He said the island was 'a unique training ground'.

Gerst, who has completed two missions on the International Space Station, is one of about a dozen astronauts who have taken part in the ESA's Pangaea training course in Lanzarote over the past decade.

Named after the ancient supercontinent, Pangaea seeks to give astronauts as well as space engineers and geologists the skills needed for expeditions to other planets.

Trainees learn how to identify rock samples and collect them, do on-the-spot DNA analysis of microorganisms, and communicate their findings back to mission control.

"Here, they are put into the field to experience the exploration of a terrain, which is something they will have to do on the Moon," said Francesco Sauro, the technical director of the course.

Six-year eruption

Gerst said the Pangaea training course, which he has just completed, helps prepare astronauts to work in a remote setting on their own. "If we run into a problem, we have to solve it ourselves," he said.

He completed the Pangaea training along with Stephanie Wilson, one of NASA's most senior astronauts. Both are possible candi-



Journalists take images as astronauts and geologists of the European Space Agency work on the summit of an ancient volcano during a training program to learn how to explore the Moon and Mars in the Timanfaya National Park in the Canary island of Lanzarote on November 10



Astronauts and geologists of the European Space Agency walk on an ancient volcano



German astronaut Alexander Gerst (L) collects samples on the summit of an ancient volcano

“Here, they are put into the field to experience the exploration of a terrain which is something they will have to do on the Moon

FRANCESCO SAURO

dates for NASA's crewed Moon missions.

Named for the goddess who was Apollo's twin sister in ancient Greek mythology, NASA's Artemis programme aims to return astronauts to the Moon's surface as early as 2025, though many experts believe that time frame might slip.

Twelve astronauts walked on the Moon during six Apollo missions from 1969 to 1972, the only spaceflights yet to place humans on the lunar surface.

NASA and the ESA also regularly use Lanzarote's landscape of twisted mounds of solidified lava to test Mars Rovers - remote-controlled vehicles designed to travel

on the surface of the Red Planet.

Lanzarote's unique geography stems from a volcanic eruption that began in 1730 and lasted six years, spewing ash and lava over large swathes of land.

Considered one of the greatest volcanic cataclysms in recorded history, the eruption devastated over 200sqkm of terrain - about a quarter of the island which is currently home to around 156,000 people.

See far away

While there are other volcanic areas such as Hawaii that could also be used for astronaut training, Lanzarote has the advantage that it

has little vegetation and desert-like climate.

"You have a lot of different types of volcanic rocks in Lanzarote. And they are exposed. You don't have trees," said Pangaea project leader Loredana Bessone. "You can see far away, as if you were on the Moon," she told AFP.

The Canary Islands is making a big contribution to space exploration in another way too. The island of La Palma is home to one of the world's largest optical telescopes.

Located on a peak, the Great Canary Telescope is able to spot some of the faintest, most distant objects in the Universe.

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Column a well experienced indian male in building material products of reputed brands both in project sales and showroom seeks job. Contact 79443928

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: 97239696/95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur
Kumar@gccaoman.com

BIRTHDAY WISHES



YUVAN SHANKAR
NOVEMBER 14

Happy birthday
best wishes
from varshitha,
koushikdutta, shanvika

JOB VACANCY

Travel Consultants / **Sales Executives**

Reputed Travel Company in
Oman is looking for Travel
Consultants, & Sales Executive
having 3-4 years' experience
working on GDS.

Email ID: resumeoman2021@gmail.com

SITUATION VACANT

A reputed Shipping and Logistics company representing an
International Freight forwarding company requires sales staff
with a minimum of four years of Air Cargo sales
experience in Oman with a valid Omani driving license.

Interested candidates may forward their **detailed resume to**

email ID : **vacancy251022@gmail.com**

WJ Towell Group Company



**Quality car rentals
at competitive prices.**

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684

Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

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



**أوربت
ORBIT**

Car Rental & Lease



FOR RENT

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

Contact: Girish Sewani - 93893596

Fans, trophy, teams arrive in Qatar for World Cup

World Cup hosts expect more than one million fans for the tournament

Doha, Qatar - One week from kickoff, the World Cup trophy returned to Qatar on Sunday, teams and fans started arriving and safety barriers went up across Doha ahead of the global showpiece.

The trophy which will be presented to the winning team on December 18 returned from a world tour in time for next Sunday's opening game when hosts Qatar take on Ecuador.

Meanwhile, Qatar has angrily re-buffed attacks by the western media, and local media on Sunday blasted the "arrogance" of some Western countries.

"It seems to have been all we have read about in recent weeks," said Ringo Gonzalez, an Ecuadoran based in Germany, who was among fans gathering at the World Cup countdown clock on the Doha seafront early Sunday.

"It will be good to see the teams finally doing something. I want Ecuador to do well and to see Lionel Messi and the other big names in action."

The United States team has already arrived in Doha and Australia were to join them on Sunday. Qatar is predicting more than one million fans will be in the smallest country to host a World Cup, and many have arrived in the capital.

Many star players were still involved for their European clubs on Sunday in the final matches before the season is paused for the World Cup.

In Doha port, the giant newly built cruise ship, MSC Europa,



People walk past a FIFA World Cup trophy replica outside the Ahmed bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan on Saturday, ahead of the Qatar World Cup (AFP)

was to be officially named on Sunday before it welcomes thousands of World Cup fans.

In a concession to Qatar's Islamic culture that restricts alcohol and bans gambling, a bottle of rose water was to be smashed on the hull instead of traditional champagne for the inauguration and the ship's casino was to be closed while it was in port.

Three cruise ships will house up to 10,000 fans and MSC said the Europa was fully booked for the first two weeks of the 29-day tournament.

On land, barriers have gone up on main streets and around metro stations and stadiums as security forces brace for the football invasion.

Organisers say that 2.9 million of the 3.1 million tickets have been sold and scores of hopeful fans waited outside the FIFA ticketing centre hoping that scarce tickets become available for top games.

Matthew Coleman, an Australian living in Doha, and his Dutch friend Gijs Beenker, left empty-handed because there were no "interesting" matches available.

At a nearby World Cup souvenir store, the staff said Europeans who buy the official ball or the La'eeb mascot were the main clients.

Migrant workers from South Asia have bought thousands of replica Brazil and Argentina shirts and can be seen wearing them in the streets.

AFP



Arsenal's Martin Odegaard celebrates after scoring against Wolves in their English Premier League match on Saturday (AFP)

Mikel Arteta hopes maturing Arsenal not thrown off course by Qatar World Cup

Wolverhampton, United Kingdom - Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta is hoping a six-week hiatus to the Premier League season does not come at the wrong time for his side after the Gunners moved five points clear at the top on Saturday.

Martin Odegaard scored twice as Arsenal were 2-0 victors at Wolves just hours after Manchester City suffered a shock 2-1 home defeat to Brentford.

Arsenal have not won the league since 2003/04 and have failed to even finish in the top four for the past six seasons.

A return to the Champions League next season appears a formality with Arteta's men 14 points clear of fifth-placed Manchester United. And City's unexpected first home defeat since February to Brentford sets up an intriguing title battle when the Premier League re-turns after the World Cup on Boxing Day.

"We showed another kind of maturity today," said Arteta.

"In the first 20-30 minutes we struggled to break them down. We were much better in the second half and we had a bit more courage and took risks but also not allowing them to run."

Eight of Arsenal's starting lineup are now headed to Qatar as Arteta confirmed Granit Xhaka's early substitution was just down to illness for the Swiss midfielder.

"I'll touch wood and hope for the best," he added on whether the break could count against Arsenal. When everyone is back we'll assess where we are and go from there.

"I would train tomorrow but unfortunately they're not here.

"I wish those going to the World Cup the best and they will look after themselves. I hope they enjoy it because it doesn't get better than playing for your country."

AFP

Nagelsmann lauds 'snake legs' Musiala ahead of World Cup tilt

Berlin, Germany - Bayern Munich manager Julian Nagelsmann has lauded forward Jamal Musiala's development, saying the teenager can be "even better" for Germany at the World Cup in Qatar.

Musiala, who grew up in England and represented the Three Lions at junior level but switched allegiance to Germany, set up both of Bayern's goals in their 2-0 win away at Schalke.

Nagelsmann said Musiala, who now has nine goals and six assists in 15 games this season, was committed to developing and improving his game.

"Jamal Musiala has again set up two goals. He played an outstanding first half and will hopefully play even better in the World Cup and the second half of the (Bundesliga) season," Nagelsmann told German television. "He listens well, also wants to develop in defence and has developed extremely well.

"He has extremely lively feet, like snake legs - the rebounds always seem to land in front of



Bayern Munich's Jamal Musiala escapes the attention of Schalke's Tom Krauss and Henning Matriciani (R) during their Bundesliga match (AFP)

his feet."

Musiala became the youngest Bayern player to notch up 100 Bundesliga games at 19 years and 259 days on Saturday night, Bayern Munich captain Manuel Neuer said he is "happy" Musiala elected to play for Germany rather than England.

"He is a very important - a key player. We are happy that he's with Bayern and also with the national team," Neuer told Sky.

Musiala said the three points would give his side a "good feeling" ahead of the World Cup break.

AFP

Mbappe on target for five-goal PSG before World Cup

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe scored and came through unscathed along with fellow Paris Saint-Germain stars Lionel Messi and Neymar in their final match before the World Cup, a 5-0 Ligue 1 rout of Auxerre on Sunday.

PSG coach Christophe Galtier opted not to rest the attacking trio against the Burgundy side as the champions sought to extend their lead at the top of the table before the break for the tournament in Qatar.

And Mbappe scored the opener after 11 minutes in Paris for his 12th league goal this season after good work by Messi, Moroccan Achraf Hakimi and Nuno Mendes.

Carlos Soler nodded in the second after 51 minutes and then set up Hakimi for the third six minutes later. Renato Sanches and Hu-go Ekitike added two more in the final ten minutes.

The Parisians move five points ahead of Lens, who won 2-1 at home against Clermont on Saturday, with Rennes a further five points adrift in third.

For their final match before



PSG's Kylian Mbappe celebrates with Nuno Mendes after scoring against Auxerre on Saturday (AFP)

the World Cup, the MNM trio - Messi, Neymar, Mbappe - took to the pitch but did not really sparkle in a game played without great intensity.

The apathy of the magic trio did not, however, prevent the champions giving a demonstration of their goal-scoring prowess before a big break until their next

Ligue 1 match on December 28 against Stras-bourg. Mbappe's early goal following a beautiful cross from Messi relayed by Mendes, seem to anaesthetize the Parisian forwards.

No question of taking the slightest risk for the World Cup players in a tournament which could be the final one for veter-

ans Messi and Neymar.

If Messi made an effort and even found the post with a curled shot from the left after 66 minutes, Neymar measured his pace, collapsing at the slightest contact and playing in slow motion, without any intensity, far from his usual flamboyance.

AFP

Sweet is allowed
NOW ..

Distributed by
CATERING SOLUTIONS TRADING LLC
Please contact +968 22060236/237

LAST CHANCE SALOON

Belgium, Croatia star players hoping to defy advancing years in Qatar

Paris, France - Belgium and Croatia's ageing star players are looking forward to one last tilt at World Cup glory in Qatar, but will have to get past a dangerous Morocco side and tournament debutants Canada just to reach the knockout phase.

Roberto Martinez's Belgians are the Group F favourites, boasting a host of household names including Kevin De Bruyne, Romelu Lukaku and Eden Hazard.

Croatia, runners-up at the last World Cup to France, will again be led in midfield by the ever-green Luka Modric as they hope to sur-pass expectations again.

But Belgium, who finished third in 2018, have questions hovering over their defence, with a combined age of 68 for centre-backs Toby Alderweireld and Jan Vertonghen, both now playing club foot-ball back home.

There are also worries over key players in forward positions.

Captain Hazard has mustered just 11 starts for Real Madrid since the start of last season, while Lukaku has only made two substitute appearances since August due to a muscle problem.

"Is Eden Hazard still an important player for the national team? Yes, 100 percent," Martinez told RTBF last month.



Croatia's evergreen star Luka Modric (L) will have another go at the World Cup in Qatar while Kevin De Bruyne and Belgium's golden generation will be hoping to make it count this time



"I think his experience, the way he affects the opposition, the way he's still beating players, he's creating a real threat.

"For me it's a profile that is one of the best in the world in terms of being able to play."

The Red Devils remain in the

lofty position of second in the FIFA rankings, though, behind only Brazil, and will be hopeful of finally ditching their tag of 'nearly-men' in recent championships.

Belgium have not failed to reach the quarter-finals of a

major tournament since missing out on qualification for Euro 2012.

Canada will be Belgium's first opponents on November 23 as the North Americans make only their second appearance in the tournament and first since 1986.

But any thoughts the Canadians will be pushovers are likely to be misplaced, after John Herdman led his young side to the finals as the winners of CONCACAF qualifying.

Englishman Herdman took Canada to the 2015 Women's

World Cup quarter-finals.

Their top scorer in qualifying was Cyle Larin, who plays for Belgian champions Club Brugge, while Bayern Munich wing-back Alphonso Davies has returned in good form after a Covid-related heart problem.

Can Croatia?

Croatia enjoyed a wonderful four weeks in Russia four years ago, with a run to the final of which the highlights included a 3-0 thumping of Argentina and a dramatic extra-time victory over England in the semi-finals.

Zlatko Dalic had only taken the reins as coach during qualifying for that competition but remains at the helm.

His team arrive in Qatar fresh from reaching the Nations League finals, emerging as winners of a group which featured world champions France and

Belgium have not failed to reach the quarter-finals of a major tournament since missing out on qualification for Euro 2012

Euro 2020 semi-finalists Denmark. Mario Mandzukic and Ivan Rakitic have retired since the last World Cup, but 37-year-old captain Luka Modric, winger Ivan Perisic and midfielder Mateo Kovacic remain.

Morocco, Croatia's first opponents, sacked coach Vahid Halilhodzic just three months before the tournament and appointed Walid Regragui. Halilhodzic had controversially sidelined star players Noussair Mazraoui of Bayern and Chelsea's Hakim Ziyech before being dismissed.

Morocco impressed for large periods of their matches in 2018 but struggled in front of goal and finished bottom of their group.

AFP



BELGIUM
Best World Cup performance: **THIRD PLACE (2018)**
Other honours: **None (Euro 1980 runners-up)**
Main clubs: **Anderlecht, Club Brugge**
How they qualified: Winners of European qualifying Group E

2
FIFA RANKING

COACH
Roberto Martinez has enjoyed six strong years in charge but is yet to deliver an elusive first major tournament title. Belgium's 'Golden Generation' reached the World Cup semi-finals for only the second time in Russia but came up short against France. This year could be the final chance for Martinez's current squad to emerge on top, with several important players already in their 30s. Martinez has an excellent 72.4 win percentage as Belgium boss.

KEY PLAYER


Manchester City midfielder **Kevin De Bruyne** finished third in the recent Ballon d'Or voting and will be Belgium's go-to man when in need of inspiration. Injury-prone captain Eden Hazard has only made 11 starts for Real Madrid since the start of last season and striker Romelu Lukaku has struggled for full fitness since returning to Inter Milan on loan from Chelsea. De Bruyne scored a career-best 19 goals for English champions City last term.



CANADA
Best World Cup performance: **FIRST ROUND IN ONLY PREVIOUS APPEARANCE IN 1986**
Other honours: **CONCACAF Championship/ Gold Cup winners in 1985, 2000**
Main clubs:
How they qualified: Canada finished first in the CONCACAF zone final qualifying standings

41
FIFA RANKING

COACH
John Herdman has taken an unconventional route to the World Cup. After working with Sunderland's youth academy, the 47-year-old Englishman moved to New Zealand in 2003, and took over as head coach of the New Zealand women's team in 2006. That led to a move to Canada where he guided Canada's women to bronze medals at the 2021 and 2016 Olympics. He was subsequently installed as the coach of Canada's men's teams in 2018.

KEY PLAYER


Canada have forged a close-knit men's squad based on hard work, discipline and a clear tactical framework. Yet Bayern Munich's **Alphonso Davies** is one of the few players capable of providing an X-factor for the Canadians. Comfortable playing as a full-back or winger, Davies offers blinding speed on the counter-attack as well as a proven ability on the biggest stages. He was a key member of Bayern who won the 2020 Champions League.



CROATIA
Best World Cup performance: **RUNNERS-UP (2018)**
Other honours: **None (Euro 1996, 2008 quarter-finalists)**
Main clubs: **Dinamo Zagreb, Hajduk Split**
How they qualified: Winners of European qualifying Group H

12
FIFA RANKING

COACH
Well-travelled **Zlatko Dalic** was a surprise appointment when he took over during 2018 World Cup qualifying, but helped Croatia through the playoffs before a surprise run to the final, where they lost 4-2 to France. He has since helped the team overcome the retirements of several stalwarts, including striker Mario Mandzukic, to see the team qualify for Euro 2020. There were some calls on Dalic to resign after a disappointing 2020-21 UEFA Nations League.

KEY PLAYER


Veteran midfielder **Luka Modric** won the player of the tournament award as he led Croatia to their first ever World Cup final in Russia. He ended Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi's stranglehold on the Ballon d'Or in the same year. Modric has showed few signs of slowing down since, winning his fifth Champions League crown with Real Madrid last season. Now aged 37, Qatar will likely be Modric's last World Cup.



MOROCCO
Best World Cup performance: **SECOND ROUND IN 1986**
Other honours: **African champions in 1976**
Main clubs: **Raja Casablanca, Wydad Casablanca**
How they qualified: Morocco defeated the Democratic Republic of Congo in a play-off

22
FIFA RANKING

COACH
Walid Regragui, 47, has had little time to prepare the Atlas Lions having replaced Bosnian Vahid Halilhodzic on the last day of August this year. Born in Paris, he played right-back for a number of French clubs and one in Spain and was capped 45 times by Morocco, the home of his parents. His coaching career began in 2012 as a Moroccan national team assistant and he then guided clubs in the north African kingdom and in Qatar.

KEY PLAYER


A stand-off between Chelsea winger **Hakim Ziyech** and Halilhodzic led to the change of coaches. The Bosnian accused him of feigning injury to avoid playing in warm-up matches last year. Ziyech, 29, responded by retiring from international football until Moroccan officials intervened and dumped Halilhodzic. Regragui has hailed the Netherlands-born attacker as a "fighter who gives everything for his adopted country".



SHOP & WIN

Spend **20** & win
amazing prizes!!!

Offer from 3rd Nov until 20th Nov' 2022

