



Leaders welcome the signing of several agreements on various aspects of bilateral cooperation, including a 303km rail link

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have affirmed their determination to motivate the government and private sectors to spearhead joint efforts to develop and diversify commercial exchange and investments. This is with the objective of establishing partnerships between the respective sectors and integrating efforts.

This was stated in a joint communique between Oman and the UAE, reading as follows:

'The leaders of the two countries held in-depth discussions in the spirit of brotherhood and harmony. During the discussions, the two leaders reiterated their keen interest in strengthening cooperation in various spheres of common interest. They commended the existing coordination and cooperation in political, security, economic and cultural fields benefiting the two neighbours.

'The two leaders underscored the role played by the Supreme Joint Committee and welcomed the effective communication between officials in the two countries to discuss common issues and joint action to enhance bilateral relations in economic, commercial, investment, cultural, diplomatic, consular and educational fields. Additionally, efforts are being exerted to enhance cooperation in the areas of environment, food security, advanced technologies and innovation, energy projects, renewable energy, industry, health and pharmaceuticals.

'Bilateral cooperation also covers real estate development, tourism, petrochemicals, converting industries, supply chain, transportation, logistical partnership, information technology, financial technology, and any other sector that would enhance common benefits and interests and bring prosperity to the peoples of the two countries.

'The two sides also welcomed the signing of several memoranda of understanding on various aspects of bilateral cooperation.

'His Majesty the Sultan and the President of the UAE have affirmed their determination to

COMMITTED TO JOINT EFFORTS



(ONA)



stimulate the government and private sectors to work towards the elevation of joint efforts to develop and diversify commercial and investment exchanges, and to establish partnerships in various sectors and between busi-

ness owners, with a view to realising integration between the two brotherly countries.

'The two sides also exchanged views on several matters, including developments in the regional and international arenas. They re-

solved to coordinate in a manner that serves their interests and consolidates the pillars of security and stability in the region and the world at large.

'His Majesty congratulated Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed on

the occasion of the UAE being announced host of the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - COP-28 - which will be held in 2023.

'At the conclusion of the visit, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed expressed his thanks and appreciation to His Majesty as well as the Omani government and people for the warm welcome and sincere hospitality accorded to him, and his accompanying delegation. He wished Oman further progress and prosperity.

'His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sentiments to the UAE people, wishing them further progress and prosperity.'

RO5bn worth of investment opportunities identified

Muscat - On the sidelines of the UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan's visit to Oman, ADQ, an Abu Dhabi-based investment and holding company, discussed a range of investment opportunities, estimated worth nearly RO5bn, with Oman Investment Authority (OIA) across a variety of sectors aimed at contributing to increased economic cooperation and trade between the two nations.

OIA and ADQ recently entered a partnership agreement worth RO1.05bn to facilitate investments between the UAE and Oman in sectors of mutual priority and interest.

Additionally, ADQ and Oman Information, Communication and Technology Group (ITHCA), a wholly owned subsidiary of OIA, signed an MoU to establish a RO60mn venture capital fund to invest in high growth technology companies in Oman.

OIA, ADQ recently entered a partnership worth RO1.05bn to facilitate investments in Oman

ADQ, ITHCA sign MoU to establish RO60mn venture capital fund to invest in Oman

16 MoUs signed across several sectors with focus on energy, transport and logistics

OIA and ADQ have also identified preliminary investments worth over RO3.15bn, to be assessed further, in new projects in Oman across target sectors, including green hydrogen, solar and wind power generation, green aluminium, steel, and water and electricity transmission lines.

OIA and ADQ are also exploring investments in other sectors that include but are not limited to food and agriculture, logistics, technology and healthcare. 'This is in line with ADQ's ambitions to expand its power, water

and industrial platforms throughout Oman to capture synergies that achieve long-term and sustainable value creation for both nations,' a press release stated.

H E Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of OIA, said, "Our partnership with a like-minded institution such as ADQ, showcases our shared commitment to building long-term sustainable relationships. Our discussions today will create a platform to enable us to explore mutually beneficial co-investment opportunities, and also facilitate knowledge sharing to strengthen our respective organisations' investment platforms."

Mohamed Hassan al Suwaidi, MD and CEO of ADQ, said, "As part of the UAE's longstanding bilateral relationship with Oman, we discussed several potential strategic opportunities that can unlock significant synergies and value through joint collaboration across key industries in the sultanate. Today's engagement builds on our recent efforts and commitment to develop tangible investment partnerships in key markets, such

as Oman, that complement our investment strategy and growth aspirations. We are confident that this visit reinforces the significant economic potential of ADQ's partnership with OIA."

As a strategic partner of the government, ADQ undertakes value accretive co-investment programmes with key regional partners through its Sovereign Investment Partnerships platform.



\$3bn rail network to link Sohar Port with Abu Dhabi

Much-anticipated railway will feature the best international safety, security and environmental standards

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Rail, the sultanate's national developer and operator of railway networks, signed an agreement with Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of UAE National Rail Network, to jointly establish an equally-owned company, Oman-Etihad Rail Company, on Wednesday.

The newly created entity will hold an overall investment power of US\$3bn to design, develop and operate a 303km railway network connecting Sohar Port to the UAE National Rail Network.

Oman Rail, part of Asyad

Group, was represented in the signing ceremony by Abdulrahman Salim al Hatmi, Group CEO of Asyad; Etihad Rail was represented by its CEO Shadi Malak.

Under the agreement, Oman-Etihad Rail will lay the groundwork and workplan for the project, including its financial operations and schedule. The company will also handle the design, development and operation of the rail network, which will connect Sohar and Abu Dhabi.

Historic and strategic relations

Built on the historic and strategic relations between the two coun-



tries, the joint venture is an extension of the longstanding collaboration of Oman Rail and Etihad Rail, both of which seek to create new prospects in the infrastructure, transport and logistics industries by connecting the two countries via rail.

The two parties aim to unlock

new opportunities by strengthening commercial exchange and social cohesion, connecting key urban centres, facilitating travel between communities and providing seamless transport solutions between economic and industrial zones in Oman and the UAE.

The much-anticipated railway

will primarily link Sohar to Abu Dhabi and will feature the best international safety, security and environmental standards to provide faster and safer passenger and freight services. The passenger trains will be designed to reduce travel time from Sohar to Abu Dhabi to one hour and 40

minutes, and from Sohar to Al Ain to 47 minutes, travelling at a maximum speed of 200km/h. Freight trains will run up to 120km/h.

Economic benefits and opportunities

Employing cutting-edge transport and rail technology, the railway link between Oman and the UAE will boost growth of the national economies in both countries. It will also improve the efficiency of supply chain, facilitate cross-border trade by linking commercial ports to the railway network, boost market competitiveness and reduce cost of supply chains.

With multiple stakeholders set to reap the benefits of the mega project, the railway will provide a host of investment opportunities

and support contracts to the private sector. The new transport system will create job opportunities across sectors, develop national human capital of both countries and kick off a new age of innovation.

The project will stimulate tourism activities between Oman and the UAE, strengthen the competitiveness of the two countries in global trade and consolidate their positions as logistics hubs for import and export to regional markets.

Underlining the impact of the landmark agreement, Hatmi said, "Adding a new railway capability to our logistics sector will offer trade and logistics companies outstanding investment opportunities and empower manufacturing and industrial activities to quickly expand beyond borders."

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday held a bilateral meeting with the visiting UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan at Al Alam Palace in Muscat.



During the meeting, the two leaders reviewed the march of deep-rooted relations binding the two countries and means of promoting them. They expressed their keenness to push these relations forward in various spheres to serve the interests of the Omani and Emirati peoples.

The meeting was attended from the Omani side by Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International

Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy

Prime Minister for Defence Affairs and Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq along with the members of the royal family and the Head of Private Office waits for UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan during the latter's visit to Al Alam Palace for a bilateral meeting on Wednesday morning (ONA)

Muscat - Oman and the UAE signed as many as 16 agreements and memoranda of understanding in various fields during the visit of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, at Al Alam Palace in Muscat on Wednesday.

The first seven memoranda of understanding were signed by H E Salim Nassir al Afi, Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals and Suhail Mohammed al Mazrouei, the UAE's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

The first was in the field of energy between Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the UAE's Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure.

The MoUs in the field of coop-



eration on transport and logistics and another in the field of maritime transport were inked between the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) of Oman and the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure of the UAE.

An MoU on cooperation and investment in the field of industry was signed between the sultanate's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the neighbouring country's Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology.

The host country's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the UAE's Ministry of Culture and Youth signed an MoU in the fields of culture and youth; while Oman's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the UAE's Ministry of Cli-

mate Change and Environment signed an MoU on cooperation in sectors of agriculture, livestock, fisheries and food safety.

The seventh MoU - in the field of higher education, research, innovation and vocational training - was signed between the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation of Oman and the Ministry of Education of the UAE.

Also, the Ministry of Information, represented by Oman News Agency (ONA), signed an MoU with Emirates News Agency (WAM) in the field of news and information exchange. The MoU was signed by Ibrahim Saif al Azri, ONA Director General and Editor-in-Chief and Mohammed

Jalal al Raisi, WAM Director General.

The two sides also signed an MoU for cooperation in exchanging information related to money laundering and its predicate offence and the financing of terrorism. The MoU was signed between the National Centre for Financial Information of Oman and the UAE Financial Intelligence Unit.

Col Abdulrahman Amir al Kiyomi, CEO of Oman's centre and Ali Faisal Ba'Alawi, Head of the UAE unit signed the MoU.

Oman Rail and Etihad Rail signed a cooperation agreement through Abdulrahman Salim al Hatmi, CEO of Asyad Group and Shadi Malak, CEO of Etihad Rail.

An MoU was signed between the Omani Group for Communications and Information Technology (ITHCA Group) and the Abu Dhabi Development Holding Company. It was signed by Atef Said al Siyabi, Deputy Chairman of ITHCA Group and Mohammed Hassan al Suwaidi, CEO and Managing Director of Abu Dhabi Holding.

Five separate agreements were signed between the Muscat Stock Exchange and Muscat Clearing Company with Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange. They were signed by Haitham Salim al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange and Said Hamad al Dhaheiri, CEO of Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange.

Muscat - Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, visited the National Museum of Oman and the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) on Wednesday.

Sheikh Mohamed was briefed, in detail, on Oman's history and civilisation during his visit to the National Museum.

At the conclusion of his visit to the museum, the UAE President signed the visitor's book in which he expressed his admiration for the display that reflected Oman's historical relations with

the world.

During his visit to ROHM, Sheikh Mohamed was briefed on its facilities and shows, as well as its programmes and the latest equipment that are used for the holding of programmes every season. He also viewed ROHM's unique architectural design, creatively combining Omani architectural and cultural legacy with the modern architectural pattern.

ROHM staged a concert for the UAE President performed by the Steel Band and the Operetta Troupe of the Royal Guard of Oman.



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'Landmark railway deal to be a game changer'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a historic agreement on Wednesday to establish the first rail link between the two countries from Sohar to Abu Dhabi.

The 303km rail link between Sohar Port and Abu Dhabi will adopt the highest international safety and environmental standards while providing safe and fast services for passenger and freight transport.

The announcement of the path-breaking deal sparked great interest among experts and citizens alike in the country.

"The railway will pave way for a new horizon of social and economic integration among the Gulf countries. The agreement lays out a strategic roadmap that will contribute to strengthening the solid relations between Oman and UAE," said Khalfan al Touqi, an economic analyst.

He added that the project will facilitate fast movement of goods from Oman to UAE and provide a chance to promote Omani goods there. "It offers scope for great commercial exchange between the two countries in several sectors. The railway link will encourage the establishment of integrated service areas, hotels and rest houses

which will be a boon for the local economy."

Nasser al Hosni, director of Happy Line Transportation, said the project will contribute to achieving sustainable development at economic and social levels as well as provide a fast and efficient transport system that will enhance trade exchange and economic growth. "Railways can transport large quantities of goods and move a large number of passengers; this is going to be a game changer."

The rail route will enhance commercial traffic between the sultanate's ports and Jebel Ali Port in the UAE. "I believe that the new railway line will bring a boom in North Batinah and Buraimi and result in unprecedented growth in the region," Hosni added.

The idea of the railway project started in 2011 and was re-



The railway link will encourage the establishment of integrated service areas, hotels and rest houses which will be a boon for the local economy

KHALFAN AL TOUQI



The project will contribute to achieving sustainable development at economic and social levels as well as provide fast and efficient transport

NASSER AL HOSNI

Rail link will implement strategic goals: H E Ma'awali

Muscat - H E Said Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, has stated that the railway project linking Oman to the UAE will implement the strategic goals of the two countries.

The project will open vistas of social and economic integration due to the fact that it ce-



H E Said Hamoud al Ma'awali

ments ties between Sohar Port and the UAE's free zones and economic zones. H E Ma'awali added.

"In particular, the project is envisaged to play a major role in boosting the logistics sector and activating commercial exchange in the near future," the minister said, noting that the rail link will achieve sustainable

development at the economic and social levels and present a new model for cross-border transport.

According to H E Ma'awali, the project will serve to localise industry, as it links industrial estates, accelerates traffic of raw materials and provides an attractive milieu for investors and industrialists.



RO100,000 fine slapped on firm for tax evasion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A company in Muscat has been fined RO100,000 for failing to submit tax returns.

Abdul Hakim bin Salim al Harthy, Director of Legal Department in Tax Authority, said, "The Court of First Instance in the wilayat of Seeb recently issued a court ruling against a company operating in Oman that failed to submit tax returns and violated the provisions of the Income Tax Law issued by Royal Decree No 28/2009."

The Anti-Tax Evasion Department received a notification of financial transactions managed by one of the partners of the company, and after referring to the electronic systems and records of the Tax Authority, it was found that the accused did not file tax returns amounting to around RO1mn.

Judicial control officers conducted investigations, collected

evidence and verified the records, following which the case file was referred to the Public Funds and Money Laundering Cases Department of the Public Prosecution to complete legal procedures. Later, the accused was referred to the competent court.

According to Harthy, the court sentenced the accused for the misdemeanor of not submitting tax returns which is mandatory for a tax year, and ordered him to pay a fine of RO100,000 after the authority approved the tax reconciliation with the accused.

"The authority urges people to use the electronic services provided through its e-services portal for easy tax payments. The authority also urges taxpayers to monitor the awareness bulletins issued through its social media platforms and the media to know the latest developments in tax laws and regulations," said Harthy.

OFA launches new season of programmes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omani French Friendship Association (OFA) introduced a new season of programmes for 2022/2023 on Monday to its members at Crowne Plaza Muscat under the patronage of H E Veronique Aulagnon, French Ambassador to Oman.

Marie Elicagaray, coordinator of OFA, opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking the new members of the association, following which she introduced the programmes of the new season - the sixth - to the 60 members present on the occasion.

"The calendar for 2022/2023 promises to be exciting with an Inspirational Women of Oman panel discussion on October 19, a round table on solar and hydro-

The calendar for 2022/2023 includes an Inspirational Women of Oman panel discussion on October 19 and a round table on solar and hydrogen projects on November 15

MARIE ELICAGARAY

gen projects on November 15, a World Cup match watching session at the French Residence in December, and more conferences in 2023 on different topics, including perfumes, digital programmes and fisheries, besides cultural and gastronomic gatherings in between," Marie said.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	36	26
Doha	37	25
Kuwait City	37	25
Manama	35	25
Riyadh	37	21

PRAYER TIMINGS

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Asr	3.27pm
Maghrib	6.02pm
Isha	7.12pm

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MSX signs deals with ADX for cooperation, dual listings

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and agreements to enhance cooperation and expand bilateral relations between two stock exchanges.

The agreements – which were signed during the visit of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the UAE, to Oman – aim to build on the strong foundations for a closer partnership and exchange visions and experiences between the two parties in various fields of common interest.

MSX and ADX signed an agreement to promote cooperation on dual listing of securities across the two markets. The agreement sets out the legal foundations for such transactions and unifies and defines the

required operational, administrative and technical procedures to achieve effective cooperation and coordination.

ADX also signed a memorandum of cooperation with Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (MCD) for dual listing of securities on both markets and to further develop clearing and central depository functions in the two markets.

This cooperation will allow both parties to obtain the required permits and approvals to collaborate and establish joint working committees on issues of common interest.

In a statement issued by Abu Dhabi Government Media Office, Saeed Hamad al Dhaheri, managing director and CEO of ADX, said, “The signing of this MoU reaffirms both Abu Dhabi’s and ADX’s commitment to establishing a regional network for knowledge and information sharing which is intended to bolster

liquidity and mutual long-term economic growth with our regional partners.”

He said the agreements between ADX and MSX aim to further develop the investment and capital markets landscape between the two countries by adopting the highest standards of regulatory best practices in both markets.

“To this end, ADX will continue in its successful efforts to date in establishing close working relationships, cooperation and collaboration with regional and international financial markets,” Dhaheri added.

Haitham al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange, said, “These agreements and MoU will enhance the levels of cooperation between the two markets, and it is hoped that they will have positive repercussions on strengthening the bonds of relations between all components of the capital market sector in two

countries.”

He emphasised that this cooperation will open the way to create many investment opportunities for all investors, support economic development, and strengthen brotherly relations between the two countries.

As part of the growing relationship, MSX will also join the ‘Tabadul’ platform, which was created by ADX in collaboration with Bahrain Bourse (BHB) to connect regional exchanges.

Established on the mutual market access model, Tabadul enables investors to trade directly on the onboarded exchange through local authorised brokers. Securities listed on MSX will therefore be available for trading on the platform along with securities listed on ADX and BHB, in a step that will promote economic growth, build regional partnerships, increase liquidity and drive sustainable growth in stock markets in the region.

MSX appoints financial advisers to launch new initiatives



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) is teaming up with the UAE-based Al Ramz Corporation Investment and Development and Oman-based Ubhar Capital to formulate capital market initiatives.

MSX, Al Ramz and Ubhar Capital will devise plans aimed at improving the participation of Oman’s capital markets in propelling economic development in keeping with Oman Vision 2040, according to a statement issued by the exchange.

MSX aims to promote initial public offerings (IPOs), diversify capital market solutions and encourage investment and facilitate it to investors in order to accomplish market upgrade.

Haitham al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange, said,

“MSX is keen on strengthening Oman’s national economy and reach a consolidated target which is consistent with Oman Vision 2040.

This mandate will help achieve economic objectives, enhance the stock exchange’s strategic plan to expand market depth, promote its role in raising capital and create a benign investing environment that will promote public offerings and induce domestic as well as foreign investment flows.”

He added, “Al Ramz and Ubhar Capital have a good reputation and position in the regional capital markets, and we count on this agreement that it will produce results that give the stock exchange its position and provide various financial solutions that serve all categories of investors.”

Sheikh Abdulaziz Khalifa al

Saadi, CEO of Ubhar Capital, said, “We are honored to be a part of this mandate which aims to develop our capital market in line with Oman’s vision 2040. The MSX initiative is set to mobilize public and private actors in the pursuit of Oman’s economic development. Ubhar Capital is fully committed to this opportunity to make tangible contributions to our capital markets by utilizing its existing talent pool and experience through market cycles.”

MSX plans to promote confidence in capital markets by raising the level of governance and transparency in financial markets and enhancing data availability. It also plans to develop the regulatory environment to ensure investors protection and enhance overall attractiveness and competitiveness.

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MUSCAT DAILY

UAE one of the quickest economies to reach pre-pandemic levels: WB

Abu Dhabi, UAE – The UAE has consolidated its position as one of the quickest economies to reach its pre-pandemic levels among GCC peers, said Issam Abousleiman, country director of the GCC countries, Middle East and North Africa at the World Bank. In an interview with the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Abousleiman said the UAE led the world with a successful vaccination programme in 2021, as well as its monetary and fiscal stimulus packages, which resulted in UAE’s economy to reach its pre-pandemic levels fast.

“Our projections suggest the UAE’s economy will grow 4.7 per cent in 2022 which is then expected to average 3.5 per cent in the medium term. We project both fiscal and external balances to register surpluses of 4.4 per



Issam Abousleiman

cent and 13.7 per cent of GDP, respectively, during 2022, according to the June 2022 projections. We are currently revising these forecasts, which will be published during our annual meetings in mid October,” he explained.

He highlighted that Expo 2020 Dubai had a significant impact in bolstering the recovery momentum. “The UAE established itself as a major partici-

pant on the world stage and drew not just visitors but also economic investments. There was a wide range of economic impacts from the Expo; from real estate to tourism and hospitality to investments and logistics,” he added.

The country director of the GCC Countries, Middle East and North Africa at the World Bank also said that the GCC region is projected to expand by 5.9 per cent in 2022 before moderating to 3.7 per cent and 3.3 per cent in 2023 and 2024, respectively. “These projections are expected to be revised upwards in our October forecast based on OPEC+ developments of raising production quotas,” he clarified.

On the other hand, and as most of the GCC population has been fully vaccinated, coupled with pandemic pressures fading

away, the non-oil sectors are set to continue expanding by more than 3 per cent in the medium term, Abousleiman went on to explain.

Abousleiman also pointed out that in light of the continuation of the US dollar peg, the central banks in the Gulf are and will be on a tighter monetary policy path following the US Federal Reserve policy outlook. The recent Fed decisions to hike the policy rate were matched by GCC central banks at varying amounts.

In another context, Abousleiman highlighted that the UAE was able to enact significant reforms in only six months during the COVID-19 crisis, which sends a powerful signal about the government’s commitment to the gender equality agenda.

WAM

Indian rupee plunges to new all-time low

Mumbai, India – The Indian rupee further weakened to hit a new all-time closing low of 81.90 against the US dollar on Wednesday as the greenback strengthened against major global currencies.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the Indian rupee slipped below the 82-level for the first time against the US dollar. The Indian rupee has weakened sharply in recent days largely due to a strengthening of the US dollar.

For the record, the US Federal Reserve had raised the repo rate by 75 basis points – which is the third consecutive hike of the same magnitude, in line with expectations, which essentially means that investors will move



towards the US markets for better and stable returns amid the monetary policy tightening. The Fed also hinted that more rate hikes were coming and that these rates would stay elevated until 2024.

There has also been weakness in the Indian equities markets. The Indian stock market’s key indices, Sensex and Nifty, slumped for the sixth consecutive session on Wednesday dragged by heavy selling pressure in the index heavyweights Reliance Industries, ITC and HDFC Bank.

The 30 stock S&P BSE Sensex slumped 0.89 per cent to 56,598.28 points against its previous day’s close at 57,107.52 points.

ANI

EU sees sabotage in Nord Stream gas pipelines leaks

Copenhagen, Denmark - The EU said Wednesday that leaks from two Russia-Germany undersea gas pipelines appeared to be "a deliberate act", as fossil fuel-rich Norway boosted security at its installations.

The three outflows from the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines have sent natural gas prices soaring, exacerbating an energy crunch in Europe as it stands on the threshold to winter.

Methane gas from the leaks are bubbling to the surface of the Baltic Sea close to Denmark and Sweden in discharges expected to last for a week, until depletion of the gas in the pipelines.

Europe suspects the leaks to be from sabotage.

They "are not a coincidence," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said in a statement. "All available information indicates those leaks are the result of a deliberate act."

He warned: "Any deliberate disruption of European energy infrastructure is utterly unacceptable and will be met with a robust and united response."

Suspicion has focused on Russia, which has cut gas supplies to Europe in retaliation for severe Western sanctions over the war in Ukraine.

But the Kremlin hit back, saying it was "stupid and absurd" to accuse Russia of causing the leaks.

EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel have both blamed the Nord Stream leaks on sabotage.



This photo released on Tuesday by the Danish Defence Command shows the gas leak at Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline off the Danish Baltic island of Bornholm (AFP)

Michel on Wednesday tweeted that they "appear to be an attempt to further destabilise energy supply to EU".

He added: "Those responsible will be held fully accountable and made to pay."

The EU is currently mulling further sanctions on Russia for annexation votes imposed on four regions in Ukraine its forces occupy.

Neither of the Nord Stream pipelines are currently operational, but they were full with gas when they were hit with what Swedish seismologists said were "massive releases of energy".

One of the seismologists told AFP "there isn't much else than a blast that could cause it".

Danish Defence Minister Morten Bodskov told reporters in Brussels that "it can

easily take one or two weeks for the area to calm down enough" for an inspection to verify the cause.

Two Danish military vessels have been sent to the area.

Non-EU member Norway, which has now overtaken Russia as the biggest supplier of gas to Europe, said it will beef up security around its oil and gas facilities.

"The government has decided to put measures in place to increase security at infrastructure sites, land terminals and platforms on the Norwegian continental shelf," Norwegian Energy Minister Terje Aasland said.

The Norwegian Petroleum Safety Authority earlier this week called for "increased vigilance from all operators and shipping companies on the continental shelf".

Built in parallel to the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, Nord Stream 2 was intended to double the capacity for Russian gas imports to Germany.

But Berlin blocked newly completed Nord Stream 2 in the days before the war.

Germany, which has been highly dependent on imports of fossil fuels from Russia to meet its energy needs, has since come under acute stress as Moscow's supplies dwindle.

Sweden and Poland agree sabotage is the most likely cause of the Nord Stream leaks, with Warsaw suggesting Russia was probably the culprit, to escalate the war in Ukraine.

The United States said it was looking into the leaks, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken telling reporters that, if sabotage were confirmed, "that's clearly in no one's interest".

The US has pledged to help European allies on energy security, and is already shipping what liquefied natural gas it has to spare to the EU.

AFP



A pedestrian walks past an electronic board showing numbers for the Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong on Wednesday (AFP)

Markets slump, dollar surges on recession fears

London, UK - Global stock markets mostly sank Wednesday and the dollar soared as investors fretted over recession fears and heightened Ukraine tensions.

"With the prospect of a sharp economic slowdown, further pain for households and businesses, and investor sentiment on its knees, alas equities markets continue their descent," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. The major Asian markets all closed down, and European stocks were down through afternoon trading.

The US was the exception, with markets edging up slightly at the open.

The British pound slumped 1.7 per cent against the haven dollar - despite the Bank of England snapping up UK government bonds to try to bring calm to markets.

However, the UK government's 30-year bond yield managed to retreat to 4.44 per cent, having hit a 1998 peak at 5.14 per cent.

The BoE intervention fol-

lowed rare criticism Tuesday from the International Monetary Fund, which argued that Britain's recent budget could increase inequality and worsen inflation.

The dollar remains the go-to unit as the US Federal Reserve leads the way in raising interest rates.

Observers are betting that US borrowing costs will peak at around 4.75 per cent next year, and are expected to remain elevated for some time.

The prospect of such tight monetary policy has battered equities, as US 10-year Treasury yields - a gauge of future rates - hit four percent for the first time since 2010.

"Fear of tightening-induced recessions has wiped out the recovery we saw in stock markets over the bulk of the summer as investors were once again burned by an over-eagerness to catch the bottom in the market, despite there being little evidence of it being justified," said OANDA's Craig Erlam.

AFP

BoE intervenes as IMF criticises UK budget

London, UK - The Bank of England (BoE) stepped in Wednesday to shore up market confidence after the International Monetary Fund criticised Britain's inflation-fighting budget.

Reacting to markets turmoil, the BoE announced it was temporarily buying up long-dated UK government bonds "to restore orderly market conditions".

However, the pound promptly slumped 1.7 per cent to US\$1.0552.

The BoE intervention followed criticism Tuesday from the IMF, which argued that Britain's budget could increase inequality and worsen inflation.

Credit ratings agency Moody's also waded in overnight with a warning about soaring debt.

Finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng's big tax cuts and energy price freeze, aimed at boosting the UK's recession-threatened economy, appeared to have had the opposite effect as traders warn of ballooning debt to pay for the incentives.

Following last Friday's budget, UK government bond yields have soared and the pound hit a record low at US\$1.0350.

Critics added that Kwarteng's measures would benefit the rich more than the poorest, as millions of Britons suffer from a cost-of-living crisis.

"We have acted at speed to protect households and businesses through this winter and the next, following the unprecedented energy price rise," the Treasury said as it sought to defend itself.

"We are focused on growing the economy to raise living standards for everyone," it added, blaming sky-high oil, gas and electricity prices on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng (AFP)

IMF advice

In a highly unusual intervention, the IMF late Tuesday said it was "closely monitoring" developments and urged the government in London led by new Prime Minister Liz Truss to change tack.

The Fund added: "We understand that the sizable fiscal package announced aims at helping families and businesses deal with the energy shock and at boosting growth via tax cuts and supply measures.

"However, given elevated inflation pressures in many countries... we do not recommend large and untargeted fiscal packages at this juncture."

The IMF said the "UK measures will likely increase inequality" and stressed the importance of fiscal policy not working "at cross purposes to monetary policy".

Analysts warned that Britain's controversial measures could force the Bank of England to hike interest rates far higher than forecast.

"Expectations that there will be a super-size interest rate hike coming from the Bank of England to try and counter the government splurge on tax cuts and spending have increased," Harg-

reaves Lansdown analyst Susanah Streeter noted Wednesday.

Many central banks, including the BoE, are aggressively hiking interest rates in a bid to cool decades-high inflation.

Tax cuts

In his budget, Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng cut the highest rate of income tax and scrapped a cap of banker bonuses.

He also, however, announced a plan to lower income tax for all workers. Conservative party head Truss appointed Kwarteng to replace Rishi Sunak, who reached the final two in the race to be prime minister.

Sunak had hit out strongly at Truss's promise of tax cuts, arguing that the UK priority was to first bring down the nation's inflation rate that stands at a near 40-year high of 9.9 per cent.

Moody's called Britain's new fiscal policy regime "credit negative", adding that a sustained confidence shock could "permanently" weaken its debt affordability.

Kwarteng has said he would wait until November 23 to outline plans on controlling government debt.

AFP

Crisis-hit Lebanon to devalue currency

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanon will weaken its official exchange rate for the first time in more than two decades, a central bank official said, as part of efforts to tackle a crippling financial crisis.

The exchange rate has been officially pegged at 1,507 Lebanese pounds to the dollar since 1997, but will drop to 15,000 to the greenback at the end of October, the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The pound, however, traded at more than double that value on the black market on Wednesday, selling for more than 38,400 to the dollar - nearing its all-time record low - money exchangers said.

Lebanon's local currency has lost more than 95 per cent of its value on the black market since the 2019 onset of Lebanon's financial crisis, branded by the World Bank as one of the



planet's worst in modern times.

The decision to shift the peg follows a visit last week by a delegation from the International Monetary Fund, which is pressing Lebanon to implement reforms to unlock billions of dollars in loans.

The unification of several central bank exchange rates and the establishment of a credible and transparent monetary and exchange rate system are among

the IMF's demands.

However, analysts expressed scepticism that the shift would lead to a unified exchange rate.

"The new rate is still substantially below the black market rate, so in effect by declaring a new rate, we add to the multiplicity of rates that already exists," said economist Nasser Saidi.

"It does not resolve the issue of multiple exchange rates, it just

adds one other rate."

Parliament this week approved an overdue 2022 draft budget, a move also requested by the IMF.

One of the exchange rates listed in the budget relies on the value of 15,000 Lebanese pounds to the dollar.

Lebanon is under IMF pressure to implement a raft of reforms before the term of President Michel Aoun expires at the end of October, economy minister Amin Salam has told AFP.

Lebanon's worst-ever economic crisis has seen poverty rates climb to reach more than 80 per cent of the population, according to the United Nations.

Food prices, meanwhile, have increased by 2,000 per cent since 2019, the World Food Programme says.

AFP

Turkey bows to pressure, cuts Russian bank ties

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's booming wartime trade with Moscow took a giant step back on Wednesday with confirmation that the last three banks still processing Russian card payments were pulling out under pressure from Washington.

The decision follows weeks of increasingly blunt warnings from the United States for NATO member Turkey to either limit its economic relations with Russia or face the threat of sanctions itself.

The US Treasury said last week that Turkish banks working with Russian Mir bank cards "risk supporting Russia's efforts to evade US sanctions".

Two private Turkish lenders that began processing Mir after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in August



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

suspended the transactions earlier this month.

But three state lenders - Halkbank, Vakifbank and Ziraatbank - still worked with the cards.

A senior Turkish official did not say when Russians would no longer be able to access their

cards in Turkey at all.

The three banks "are still processing (the outstanding) payments, but they have set a future date" for pulling out, the official said on condition of anonymity because no formal decision by the three bank has been announced.

The Kremlin on Wednesday condemned Washington for forcing Turkish banks to cut their Russian ties.

"They are threatened with secondary sanctions on the banking system. And this decision, of course, was made under this unprecedented pressure," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The explosion of Turkish trade with Russia during the seven-month war in Ukraine has been a source of growing irritation for Washington.

The value of trade between the two rose by more than 50 per cent. Turkey has also agreed to pay for a quarter of its Russian natural gas imports in rubles.

US Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo paid a rare visit to Ankara and Istanbul in June to express Washington's worries that Russian oligarchs and big businesses were using Turkish entities to evade Western sanctions.

The Treasury sent a follow up letter to Turkish banks and businesses in August warning that they cannot expect to have "access to the US dollar and other major currencies" if they trade with sanctioned Russians.

Turkey has tried to stay neutral in the Ukrainian conflict and refused to sign up to Western sanctions against Russia.

AFP

150 trees planted as part of ‘Green Madayn’ campaign



The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates ‘Madayn’, in cooperation with Muscat Municipality’s Directorate General of Afforestation and Gardens, organised ‘Green Madayn’ Campaign to plant 150 trees in Nizwa and Samail Industrial Cities.

The workforce based in the companies and factories in the two industrial cities took

part in the campaign alongside school students. The campaign aims at enhancing awareness among the investing companies in the two industrial cities on the significance of afforestation efforts in achieving a safe and ideal environment, and thus reducing negative impacts. The efforts made by Madayn in this area play a key role in reinforcing sustainable development partnerships with the private sector in social responsibility aspects.

Khedmah app provides OpenSooq vouchers

Oman Investment and Finance Company (Khedmah) has recently collaborated with OpenSooq, a classified ad and e-commerce website and mobile app catering to the MENA region, to make OpenSooq’s advertisement vouchers more easily accessible to individuals. Customers can sign in to their Khedmah app and purchase OpenSooq vouchers from the e-store. The vouchers will be sent to them via e-mail, WhatsApp or SMS.

“This collaboration will lead to enhancing customer service within the domain of online purchasing by making it easy for them to obtain vouchers from anywhere and at any time they prefer. Whilst Khedmah has remained steadfast in its commitment to its digital goals, it has also focused on continuously enhancing its value-added services by partnering with popular digital platforms, including OpenSooq. Such mutually beneficial collaborations have helped us to contribute meaningfully to the country’s digitalisation strategy and catalyse economic progress,” OIFC Chief Executive Officer Said bin Ahmed Safrar said. As per OpenSooq’s guidelines, customers get only a limited number of free ad posts, following which they need to purchase a voucher to continue posting ads.

Ooredoo’s community work honoured at GCC forum



Ooredoo’s pioneering work to support communities across Oman has been honoured at a meeting of the GCC Social Development Forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Nominated by the Ministry of Social Development in Oman, Aysha al Shoily, Head of CSR for Ooredoo received the award on behalf of the telecoms company. Ooredoo joined private sector companies, voluntary organisations and representatives from the commercial sector across the region in celebrating ground-breaking social projects.

The meeting brought together ministerial committees for civil services, social development and labour from across the GCC to enhance cooperation and recognise the efforts of leaders in the fields of work, development and social affairs. This was the first time that meetings of the three sectors had been held simultaneously. It aims to build strong collaboration in social, economic and digital services across the region. Ooredoo expressed appreciation to the Ministry of Social Development for supporting and recognising the efforts of the private sector in contributing to the community through their CSR programmes. Ooredoo’s community projects were held up as a positive example of community engagement and working together to benefit of individuals, families and different charity associations across Oman.



Aster encourages 10k steps a day on World Heart Day

Aster Volunteers, the global CSR arm of Aster DM Healthcare, one of the largest integrated healthcare provider network in the GCC and India, has launched the second edition of ‘Heart2Heart Walks’ on the occasion of World Heart Day. The global initiative aims to encourage people to walk for their heart health, while also providing them with a greater cause of saving the lives of underprivileged children in need of heart surgery.

The second edition of #Heart2Heart by Aster Volunteers commenced on Wednesday at Aster Royal Hospital and will run until October 16.

During this period, individuals wishing to participate can register online via heart2heart.astervolunteers.com and walk a minimum of 10,000 steps per day for two weeks of the campaign period.

With the combined efforts of the participating individuals, Aster DM Foundation will be donating ₹100 for minimum 10,000 steps a day, towards Pediatric Cardiac Surgery for underprivileged children through Aster Volunteers Treatment Aid programme in India.

Flagging off the initiative, Dr Ashendu Pandey - CEO, Aster Hospitals & Clinics Oman, said, “Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of deaths globally, however, half of these can be prevented. In India, 2mn children have undetected congenital heart issues. Through the Heart2Heart Walk initiative by Aster Volunteers, we at Aster want to encourage people to take proactive measures to safeguard their heart health and support underprivileged children with cardiac ailments in gaining a healthy future. Our efforts are in line with WHO’s

theme of World Heart Day 2022 - ‘Use Heart for Every Heart’. Let us give hope to people, let’s walk for our own health and for the smiles of underprivileged kids.”

Last year, the ‘Heart2Heart Walks’ organised by Aster Volunteers had contributed ₹2.26mn for pediatric-cardiac surgeries of underprivileged children, towards the right direction of touching little lives and promising them a healthier tomorrow.

To contribute this year, participants will need to record their steps on their gadgets/smartphones and share their step count through screenshots on heart2heart.astervolunteers.com or whatsapp it on Oman number - +968 92167864. Alternatively, one can upload it in on their social media channel with #Heart2Heart and #Astervolunteers.

For every 10k steps walked by an individual in a day, ₹100 would be donated by Aster DM Foundation towards cardiac surgeries for underprivileged children

Bank Muscat’s Asalah scheme gets excellent response

In line with the bank’s vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’, Bank Muscat launched its special Asalah referral scheme for 2022 earlier in the year. The scheme, which offers guaranteed cash prizes worth up to RO2,000 for successful Asalah referrals, has been getting an excellent response from customers. It has been hailed as an excellent example of the bank’s continuous innovation in serving customers better every day.

All that existing Asalah Priority Banking Customers have to do is to successfully refer new customers to Asalah Pri-



ority Banking during the promotional period which ends on December 31 this year. A reward of RO100 per successful referral will be paid out once the referred customer meets all eligibility criteria for a mini-

mum of three months after opening an Asalah account with the bank. Existing customers can win up to RO2,000 by making up to 20 successful referrals during this year. All that customers need to

do is to download the referral form from the bank’s website at https://bm.click/3cZp9HL, fill up the details of the referrer and the referee and then email it to AsalahReferral@bankmuscat.com.

The referee should ensure that account is opened and their salary or deposit should be credited within 30 days of the date of referral, to be eligible for participation in the scheme. Cash rewards of RO100 each will be credited directly to both the referrer’s and referee’s account for maintaining the eligibility criteria during the

three-month review period.

Customers having a monthly salary of RO5,000 or those who maintain a savings deposit of RO30,000 are eligible for Asalah Priority Banking and enjoy a range of unrivalled benefits including access to a team of dedicated Relationship Managers, 39 Asalah Centres across Oman and a dedicated 24/7 Asalah Call Centre.

Asalah customers also enjoy access to an integrated wealth management platform that allows them to invest in global asset classes through a single touchpoint.

Nissan presents family-friendly features that set Pathfinder apart

Nissan has introduced the all-new Pathfinder that now comes with a host of aesthetic, mechanical and technological upgrades that bolster the SUV to better cater to the changing needs of families. Redesigned from the ground up, the all-new Nissan Pathfinder has been created with a sharp focus on all that modern families desire.

From safety and entertainment to comfort and practicality, the new Pathfinder is equipped with a host of segment-leading features, serving as the ideal family companion in the city and off the beaten path. A testament to its family friendliness, the all-new Pathfinder was awarded the ‘Best Family Car 2022’ by Parents - the leading source for busy, millennial moms, dads, and families - for the third consecutive year, amongst a selection of over 50 vehicles that surpassed industry safety standards.

Coinciding with the ‘Back To School’ season, and as parents

across the region place greater prominence on the safety, comfort, and entertainment of their family, the all-new Nissan Pathfinder brings six pioneering features to the fore:

Smooth ride

Providing a smooth driving experience with eight passengers onboard, the all-new Pathfinder boasts a strong 3.5-litre DOHC V6 engine with Direct Injection Gasoline that produces 271 horsepower and 340NM of torque. Paired to an all-new 9-speed automatic transmission, that offers a 30 per cent improvement in acceleration, the new SUV packs a punch whether cruising city streets or exploring lesser travelled paths.

When on the highway, the new Pathfinder’s suite of Nissan Intelligent Mobility technologies elevates driving experiences, supported by ProPILOT, that takes the stress out of long commutes.



Innovative technologies

In the all-new Pathfinder, the safety of those inside and outside the vehicle remain uncompromised. In addition to ten airbags as standard, Nissan Safety Shield 360 offers en-

hanced protection through automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection, blind spot intervention, rear cross traffic alert, lane departure intervention, high beam assist, and intelligent forward collision warning.

Connected during the journey

Connectivity is key in the all-new Pathfinder, that comes fitted with NissanConnect, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto as standard. Higher grade options provide wireless Apple CarPlay

integration and a wireless smartphone charging pad. For longer trips, five USB charging ports ensure all devices are fully charged.

Unparalleled comfort

Be it the daily school run or a weekend getaway, the Pathfinder offers comfort for all onboard. Seating flexibility has been enhanced with standard 8-person capacity or, for the first time on the Pathfinder, premium second-row captain’s chairs for a 7-person capacity.

With the second-row bench seats, flexibility is taken a step further with the introduction of EZ FLEX one-touch release that allows the second row to tilt and slide forward for third row accessibility, with the single click of a button even with a car seat attached.

Smartly designed space for storage

Numerous cubby holes, including 16 beverage holders and a

new storage shelf above the glove compartment, ensure plenty of space to store personal belongings.

A new easy-to-clean luggage box offering an additional 54.4 litres of under-cargo storage, is ideal for outings to the beach, and is accompanied by a large centre console storage box for tablets, laptops, and smartphones.

Family adventure

Families that enjoy venturing off-road, are likely make the most of the all-new Intelligent 4WD system and seven unique drive/terrain modes. Ready for all adventures, the new Pathfinder offers families a number of optional accessories to make time spent in the great outdoors safer and more enjoyable. These include crossbars for added cargo carrying capabilities, an all-season cargo area and seatback protector, and portable cargo organiser amongst others.

India bans Islamist group, citing ‘terror links’

A nationwide crackdown on the Islamist outfit saw hundreds of the organisation’s members arrested during this week

New Delhi, India - India banned an Islamist group and its affiliates for five years on Wednesday over alleged terrorism links, after a nationwide crackdown that saw hundreds of the organisation’s members arrested.

A government notice said the Popular Front of India (PFI) had been outlawed for its ties to extremist organisations, including the Islamic State group, and for violent attacks attributed to its members.

The PFI denies involvement in extremist activity and says it is the subject of a ‘witch hunt’ by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist government.

Police have arrested more than 300 PFI cadres in raids across the country since Friday.

A home affairs ministry statement announcing the ban outlined a laundry list of charges accusing the group of violent and subversive activities.

Members had engaged in ‘cold-blooded killings of persons associated with organisations espousing other faiths, obtaining explosives to target prominent people and places and destruction of public property’, Wednesday’s notice said.



Following the banning of the Popular Front of India, the CRPF personnel are seen deployed at ‘Kesavasmriti’, the RSS office at Aluva in southern state of Kerala, to maintain law and order, on Wednesday (ANI)

The ministry said PFI members had been responsible for at least 10 murders in southern India since 2016 and accused

the group of ‘pursuing a secret agenda’ to radicalise society and undermine democracy.

Hardline Hindu groups have long campaigned for a ban on PFI, which is estimated to have

tens of thousands of members around India.

Calls to outlaw the organisation have grown in recent months after several Muslim-led protests against the govern-

ment. The group was accused of organising street rallies against a state ban on the wearing of hijabs by Muslim school students in Karnataka, which resulted in violent confronta-

A government notice said the Popular Front of India had been outlawed for its ties to extremist organisations, including the Islamic State group, and for violent attacks attributed to its members

tions between protesters and Hindu activists.

Violent attacks

Modi’s government has been accused of clamping down on dissent and promoting discriminatory policies toward the country’s 200mn-strong Muslim minority since coming to power in 2014.

Actions against the PFI were ‘a conscious attempt by the Modi government to spread Is-

lamophobia among the public and demonise Muslims as a community’, CPIML Liberation, a communist political party in India, wrote on Twitter.

But the PFI has been implicated in violent attacks before, with 13 members jailed in the year 2015 for hacking off the hand of a university lecturer accused of insulting the Prophet Mohammed.

Wednesday’s ministry notice said some PFI activists had joined Islamic State and participated in terror activities in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

It also linked the PFI to Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), an extremist group that carried out several bombing attacks in India’s eastern neighbour in 2005 that left at least 28 dead.

Investigators had recovered incriminating materials including bomb-making manuals and videos related to Islamic State from raids on the group’s top leadership, broadcaster NDTV reported on Wednesday, quoting officials.

AFP

Body of US ski mountaineer found

Kathmandu, Nepal - The body of top US ski mountaineer Hilaree Nelson was retrieved from the Himalayas by a search team on Wednesday, two days after she disappeared on the slopes of Nepal’s Manaslu peak.

Nelson slipped and went missing while skiing down the world’s eighth-highest mountain after a successful summit with her partner Jim Morrison on Monday.

Morrison led the search operations and had left on Wednesday morning on a helicopter to resume efforts to locate her at an elevation of around 6,200 metres (20,000 feet).

“They returned to the same area and found her body. They have now flown to Kathmandu,” Jiban Ghimire of Shangri-La Nepal Trek, which organised the expedition, told AFP.

Nelson, 49, is described by her sponsor, The North Face, as ‘the most prolific ski mountaineer of her generation’.

A decade ago, she became the first woman to summit both the highest mountain in the world, Everest, and the adjacent



People remove the body of US ski mountaineer Hilaree Nelson from a helicopter after it was airlifted, in Kathmandu on Wednesday (AFP)

Lhotse peak within the span of 24 hours.

She returned to Lhotse and made the first ski descent of the mountain in 2018, which earned her the National Geographic Adventurer of the Year award.

In an Instagram post last week, Nelson said her latest climb had been deeply challenging because of ‘incessant rain’ and dangerous conditions.

“I haven’t felt as sure-footed on Manaslu as I have on past adventure into the thin atmosphere

of the high Himalaya,” Nelson wrote in a post on Thursday. “These past weeks have tested my resilience in new ways.”

‘Her legacy’

Mountaineers and well-wishers have shared heartfelt messages for Nelson since she went missing. “Let’s pray for Hilaree,” fellow The North Face athlete Fernanda Maciel, currently at the Manaslu base camp, wrote on Instagram on Tuesday.

Mountain guide Caroline

George thanked Nelson for inspiring her own adventures.

“She is a beacon... I have infinite gratitude for her journey on this planet and for the legacy she leaves,” she wrote.

Constant rain and snow have been a challenge for the 404 paying climbers attempting to reach the summit of Manaslu this year.

On the same day as Nelson’s accident, an avalanche hit between Camps 3 and 4 on the 8,163-metre (26,781-foot) mountain, killing Nepali climber Anup Rai and injuring a dozen others who were later rescued.

The deaths of Nelson and Rai are the first confirmed casualties of the autumn climbing season in Nepal.

Nepal is home to eight of the world’s 14 highest peaks and foreign climbers who flock to its mountains are a major source of revenue for the country.

The industry was almost completely shut down due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, but the country reopened its peaks to mountaineers last year.

AFP

Rockets fired at Iraq’s Green Zone as parliament sits

Baghdad, Iraq - Three rockets were fired on Wednesday at Baghdad’s Green Zone, wounding seven security force personnel as parliament was holding its first session in two months, Iraq’s security forces said.

The parliament, at the centre of a months-long political paralysis, met for the first since deadly unrest in August to vote on the resignation of its speaker.

“One rocket fell in front of the Iraqi parliament,” the government said in a statement, adding the number of casualties had risen to seven, after providing an initial toll of four wounded including one officer.

The rockets fell in different parts of Baghdad’s fortified Green Zone, which houses Western embassies and government offices.

Iraq’s deeply divided political factions have failed to form a new government since inconclusive elections in October 2021, and the last session of parliament dates back to July 23.



Iraqi supporters of Shiite Muslim cleric Moqtada clash with security forces in Tahrir Square in Baghdad on Wednesday (AFP)

Later in July, supporters of Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr stormed the assembly and staged a month-long sit-in on its grounds.

Tensions boiled over into clashes on August 29 between the Sadrist, rival Iran-backed factions and the army in which more than 30 demonstrators were killed.

Iraqi media said 222 out of

235 members of parliament present at the session on Wednesday voted against the resignation of speaker Mohammed al-Halbussi, in what analysts had described a vote of confidence.

Hundreds of Sadr’s followers demonstrated at a square in central Baghdad in protest at the parliament’s session.

AFP

Sri Lanka imposes social media ban for employees

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka ordered civil servants on Wednesday not to express opinions on social media after some officials claimed schoolchildren were fainting from a lack of food due to the country’s dire economic crisis.

In a fresh order to 1.5mn state employees, the Ministry of Public Administration and Management said a long-established ban on speaking to reporters now extends to social media posts.

“Expressing opinions on social media by a public officer... shall constitute an offence that leads to taking disciplinary action,” the order said.

It followed claims from provincial health officials and teachers that dozens of students were fainting in schools because of a lack of food.

Since late 2021, Sri Lanka’s 22mn people have been suffering the country’s worst-ever economic crisis after the

government ran out of dollars to import many essentials.

This triggered huge shortages and unofficial inflation rates second only to Zimbabwe, as well as protests that led to the ouster of president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July.

Health Minister Keheliya Rambukwella dismissed claims of malnutrition among young children. He accused ‘politically motivated’ public health workers of exaggerating the situation.

However, the World Food Programme said in its latest report that six million Sri Lankans - nearly a third of the island country’s population - are ‘food insecure and require humanitarian assistance’.

Rajapaksa’s successor Ranil Wickremesinghe has cracked down on anti-government protesters and banned demonstrations in much of the capital.

AFP

Typhoon Noru tears across Vietnam, Laos

Danang, Vietnam - Typhoon Noru tore roofs from homes and caused power outages across central Vietnam on Wednesday, with hundreds of thousands of people taking refuge, after the storm claimed at least 10 lives in the Philippines.

In Danang, Vietnam’s third-largest city, high-rise buildings shook as the typhoon made landfall in the early hours of Wednesday, bringing winds of up to around 120km per hour, according to the national forecaster. More than 300,000 people in Vietnam hunkered down in shelters overnight after experts predicted the storm would be one of the biggest to ever hit the country.

By Wednesday evening, it weakened to a tropical storm as it crossed into southern Laos, but forecasters in Vietnam warned of landslides and serious flooding in the typhoon’s wake.

The defence ministry has mobilised around 40,000 soldiers and 200,000 militia members, equipped with armoured vehicles and boats in preparation for



A tree has fallen on a car following the passage of typhoon Noru in Danang on Wednesday (AFP)

rescue and relief operations, state media said.

In the tourist city of Hoi An, the Hoai River was close to bursting its banks, while the ground was littered with metal roof sheeting and fallen trees that had damaged cars and blocked roads.

Several streets in the old town

were under water.

“The typhoon was terrible last night. I could not sleep as the wind was so strong and loud,” resident Nguyen Thi Hien told AFP.

Around 300 houses in the coastal province of Quang Tri had their roofs blown off on Tuesday as the wind began pick-

ing up speed. “I heard the sound of fallen trees and signboards outside. I was scared. But we were prepared so luckily the losses were not that bad.”

Residents rushed to clean up the debris early on Wednesday, with some shops already open and tourists walking the streets, taking pictures of the floodwater.

Reshma D’Souza, from India, spent a frightening night in her hotel room. At around 1am, she said, she saw that the ‘wall was vibrating’.

“(It was) shaking, so I was just praying and I was so scared.”

Airports and offices across central provinces began to reopen on Wednesday afternoon.

But key sections of the highway linking Hanoi in the north with commercial hub Ho Chi Minh City in the south remained closed due to landslides and floods, according to state media.

Noru hit Vietnam after slamming into the Philippines earlier this week as a super typhoon with winds of up to 195kph, leaving 10 dead and eight missing, the civil defence office said.

In Laos, authorities ordered a close watch on dams and urged people to seek shelter for themselves and for livestock.

Noru is then expected to move over Thailand’s northeastern Ubon Ratchathani province on Thursday, gradually weakening into a tropical depression.

AFP

Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman named Saudi premier

The move effectively formalises power already wielded by Prince Mohammed

Riyadh, KSA - Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, has been named prime minister, a post traditionally held by the king, in a government shuffle announced on Tuesday.

The move effectively formalises power already wielded by Prince Mohammed, who has been the kingdom's de facto ruler for several years, analysts said.

The heads of other critical ministries, including interior, foreign and energy, remained in place, according to a royal decree from King Salman published by the official Saudi Press Agency.

Prince Mohammed, who turned 37 last month, has been first in line to succeed his father as king since 2017.

Saudi Arabia has for years sought to quell speculation over the health of the 86-year-old king, who has ruled the world's top oil exporter since 2015.

In 2017, it dismissed reports and mounting speculation that the king was planning to abdicate in favour of Prince Mohammed.

King Salman has been hospi-



This file photo shows Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman attending the Future Investment Initiative (FII) conference in the Saudi capital Riyadh on October 23, 2018 (AFP)

talised twice this year, most recently a one-week stay in May that involved tests including a colonoscopy, according to state media.

Sweeping changes

Prince Mohammed became defence minister in 2015, a key step in a swift consolidation of power.

In that role he has overseen Saudi Arabia's military activities in Yemen, where the kingdom leads a coalition backing the internationally recognised government in its fight against Iran-aligned Houthi rebels.

He has also become the public face of a sweeping reform agenda known as Vision 2030.

Changes have included granting women the right to drive,

opening cinemas, welcoming foreign tourists, defanging the religious police and hosting pop stars and high-profile heavyweight fights and other sporting events.

Yet he has also jailed critics and, in a sweeping purge of the nation's elite, detained and threatened some 200 princes and businessmen in Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel in a 2017 anti-corruption crackdown that tightened his grip on power.

He gained global notoriety for the 2018 killing of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate.

Last year, US President Joe Biden declassified an intelligence report that found Prince Mohammed had approved the oper-

who swallowed an earlier vow to make the Saudi leadership a 'pariah'. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz became the latest major leader to visit the kingdom this past weekend.

'Overdue' step

Making the crown prince prime minister is an unusual move, but it has happened before.

In the 1950s, Crown Prince Faisal al Saud became prime minister and assumed control of government operations, ultimately leading to a power struggle resulting in then-King Saud's abdication.

This scenario is different, 'formalising a de facto situation', said Ali Shihabi, a Saudi analyst close to the government.

"It was overdue actually, since he has been CEO to the King's chairman role for many years," Shihabi said.

The crown prince 'has already gone through the power struggle phase and won it over, so what's happening now is more regularisation of his authority', said Umar Karim, an expert on Saudi politics at the University of Birmingham.

The move could also resolve thorny questions related to protocol, given Prince Mohammed has for years been meeting heads of state even though his administrative rank has been defence minister, Karim said. Prince Mohammed is being replaced as defence minister by his younger brother, Khalid bin Salman, who was deputy defence minister.

AFP

It was overdue actually since he has been the CEO to the King's chairman role for many years

ALI SHIHABI

ation against Khashoggi, an assertion Saudi authorities deny.

But the spike in energy prices triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine spurred a number of Western leaders to travel to Saudi Arabia to appeal for ramped-up oil production, notably then-UK prime minister Boris Johnson and Biden himself,

US hosts Pacific island nations in 'unprecedented' summit

Washington, US - President Joe Biden and his government roll out the red carpet for the leaders of tiny Pacific island countries on Wednesday in what a US official called an 'unprecedented' diplomatic effort, conducted under shadow of rising Chinese influence in the region.

Officials say leaders from across the ocean's remote but strategic archipelagos will attend, as well as representatives from two French territories and the US territory of Guam.

Events begin on Wednesday and culminate with an address by Biden on Thursday and dinner at the White House. The in-

videes will meet everyone from cabinet secretaries to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the head of the US Coast Guard, which maintains an important security presence in the Pacific.

"We've done meetings like this with the Pacific leaders before - they've normally been about an hour long in Hawaii or elsewhere," a senior US official said. "We've never done anything like this. This is unprecedented." White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden would discuss 'our broadening and deepened cooperation on key issues such as climate change, pandemic and

economic recovery, maritime security, environmental protection, and advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific' - a phrase referring to pushback against Chinese expansion.

Jean-Pierre emphasised that Biden feels 'leader-to-leader' contact is 'very important' and 'that's what you're going to see with the summit'.

US officials said they hope that personal touch will make a difference in helping Washington to reestablish its presence after long ignoring a region that the US had dominated since the end of World War II.

AFP

'US will operate undaunted in Taiwan Strait'

Tokyo, Japan - Washington will operate 'undaunted and unafraid' throughout Asia, including the Taiwan Strait, US Vice President Kamala Harris said on Wednesday as she addressed American troops in Japan.

Speaking after attending Tuesday's funeral for assassinated former Japanese leader Shinzo Abe, Harris accused China of 'disturbing behaviour' in the East China Sea and South China Sea and 'provocations across the Taiwan Strait'.

"The United States believes that peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is an essential feature of a free and open Indo-Pacific," she said, using Washington's term for the Asia-Pacific region.

"We will continue to fly, sail



US Vice President Kamala Harris speaks during her visit onboard USS Howard at the naval base in Yokosuka on Wednesday (AFP)

and operate, undaunted and unafraid, wherever and whenever international law allows," she added.

Beijing claims both democratic Taiwan and the narrow body of water separating the is-



Russians arrive in Georgia after crossing the Kazbegi/Verkhniy Lars border crossing point on Wednesday (AFP)

Kremlin proxies claim victory in annexation votes

Kyiv, Ukraine - Kremlin-installed authorities in four Ukrainian regions under Russian control claimed victory on Tuesday in annexation votes, drawing global outrage, as Moscow warned it could use nuclear weapons to defend the territories.

Ukraine and its allies have denounced the so-called referendums as a sham, saying the West would never recognise the results of the ballots, which have dramatically ratcheted up the stakes of Russia's seven-month invasion. Pro-Russian authorities in Zaporizhzhia said 93.11 per cent of voters backed joining Russia, according to preliminary results on Tuesday evening.

In Kherson, another Moscow-occupied region in southern Ukraine, officials said more than 87.05 per cent of electors supported the move after all the ballots were counted.

In the eastern Lugansk region controlled by pro-Russia separatists, local authorities said more than 98.42 per cent voted in favour of annexation, according to local authorities.

Officials in the Moscow-held Donetsk region claimed victory as well, with the local poll body

saying 99.23 per cent of the vote was for annexation.

"Saving people in the territories where this referendum is taking place... is the focus of the attention of our entire society and of the entire country," Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier during a meeting with officials. His spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the votes would have 'radical' legal implications and that the so-called referendums 'will also have consequences for security', referring to Moscow's threats to use nuclear weapons to defend its territory.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed on Tuesday that Kyiv would defend its citizens in Moscow-held regions and rejected the referendums as a 'farce'.

He said the votes mean Kyiv will not negotiate with Moscow.

"There is nothing to talk about with (the) current Russian president," Zelensky said.

Russian forces this month have suffered serious setbacks in Ukraine's east and south, which observers say pushed Putin to rush ahead with the vote to cement Moscow's authority there.

AFP

Menacing Florida, Hurricane Ian nears catastrophic Category 5

Port Charlotte, US - Hurricane Ian intensified to just shy of catastrophic Category 5 strength on Wednesday as its heavy winds began pummeling the US state of Florida, with forecasters warning of life-threatening storm surges after leaving millions without power in Cuba.

Mandatory evacuation orders had been issued in a dozen coastal Florida counties, with voluntary evacuation recommended in several others, according to the state's emergency officials as they girded for a potentially historic storm. In a pre-dawn advisory the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said 'Ian has strengthened into an extremely dangerous Category 4 hurricane', warning later of 'catastrophic storm surge, winds, and flooding'.

At 7am (1100 GMT) it said 'data from a Hurricane Hunter aircraft indicate that maximum

sustained winds have increased to near 155 miles (250km) per hour' - just shy of Category 5, the strongest category on the Saffir-Simpson scale.

"This is going to be a nasty, nasty day, two days," Governor Ron DeSantis said early on Wednesday as he warned residents of a 'rough stretch' ahead for Florida.

"It could make landfall as a Category 5, but clearly this is a very powerful major hurricane that's going to have major impacts, both on... southwest Florida but as it continues to work through the state."

The NHC for its part said Ian was 'rapidly intensifying', while conditions along the Florida coast were 'rapidly deteriorating'. Tropical storm-strength winds were already battering the Florida Keys, as the storm was expected to make landfall later on Wednesday near Fort Myers



A woman walks through a flooded street in Batabano, Cuba, on Tuesday, during the passage of hurricane Ian (AFP)

and Port Charlotte, along the state's west coast, before moving across central Florida and emerging in the Atlantic Ocean by late Thursday.

With up to two feet (61cm) of rain expected to fall on parts of the so-called Sunshine State, and a storm surge that could reach devastating levels of 12 to 16 feet

(3.6 to 4.9 metres) above ground, authorities were warning of catastrophic conditions.

"This is a life-threatening situation," the NHC warned.

DeSantis said on Tuesday night that there had already been at least two 'radar-indicated tornadoes' in the state, and warned those in areas projected to be hit

hardest that their 'time to evacuate is coming to an end'.

Calls to heed evacuation warnings were echoed by US President Joe Biden, who earlier said Ian 'could be a very serious hurricane, life-threatening and devastating in its impact'.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden had

spoken with DeSantis - a potential 2024 election challenger - on Tuesday evening to discuss storm preparations.

Widespread blackout Ian plunged all of Cuba into darkness on Tuesday after battering the country's west as a Category 3 for more than five hours before moving back out over the Gulf of Mexico, the Insmet meteorological institute said.

The storm damaged Cuba's power network and left the island 'without electrical service', state electricity company Union Electrica said.

Only the few people with gasoline-powered generators had access to electricity on the island of more than 11mn people. Others had to make do with flashlights or candles at home, and lit their way with cell phones as they walked the streets.

In the western city of Pinar del

Rio, AFP footage showed downed power lines, flooded streets and damaged rooftops.

"Desolation and destruction. These are terrifying hours. Nothing is left here," a 70-year-old resident of the city was quoted as saying in a social media post by his journalist son, Lazaro Manuel Alonso.

About 40,000 people were evacuated across Pinar del Rio province, which bore the brunt of the storm, local authorities said.

Cuban residents described 'destruction' and posted images on social media of flooded streets and felled trees.

At least two people died in Pinar del Rio province, Cuban state media reported. In Consolacion del Sur, southwest of Havana, 65-year-old Caridad Fernandez said her roof was seriously damaged and water came through her front door.

AFP

Iran police vow to confront women-led Mahsa Amini protests with ‘all might’

Paris, France - Iran’s police warned on Wednesday they will confront ‘with all their might’ women-led protests that erupted nearly two weeks ago over the death of Mahsa Amini in custody, despite growing calls for restraint.

Dozens of people have been killed since demonstrations erupted when the 22-year-old Kurdish woman died after being arrested in Tehran for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic’s strict rules on hijab headscarves and modest clothing.

Widespread protests took place for a 12th straight night on Tuesday, according to opposition media based outside Iran, despite internet restrictions designed to impede gatherings and prevent images of the crackdown getting out. Women have burned their scarves and symbolically cut their hair in protest at Amini’s death and the strict dress code, in solidarity rallies from New York to Istanbul.

Riot police in black body armour are seen shooting up at apartment windows in Tehran’s Ekbatan Town, in footage shared overnight by Radio Farda - a US-funded Persian station based in Prague.

“Today, the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran and some rioters seek to disrupt the order, security and comfort of the nation using any pretext,” the police command said, quoted by Fars news agency.

“Police officers will oppose with all their might the conspiracies of counter-revolutionaries and hostile elements, and deal firmly with those who disrupt public order and security anywhere in the country.” The statement came only hours after the UN said its secretary general, Antonio Guterres, had called on Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi not to use ‘disproportionate force’ against protesters.

In a meeting during last week’s UN General Assembly, Guterres ‘stressed to President Raisi the need to respect human rights, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association’, the UN chief’s spokesman said.

“We are increasingly concerned about reports of rising fatalities, including women and children, related to the protests,” the spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

He said Guterres ‘calls on the security forces to refrain from



A woman reacts as she takes part in a protest over the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, outside the Iranian embassy in the Cypriot capital Nicosia on Tuesday (AFP)

using unnecessary or disproportionate force and appeals to all to exercise utmost restraint to avoid further escalation’.

‘Blow to the head’

Fars news agency said on Tuesday that ‘around 60’ people had been killed since Amini’s death on September 16, up from the official toll of 41 authorities re-

ported on Saturday. But the Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights said the crackdown has killed at least 76 people.

Officials said on Monday they had made more than 1,200 arrests, including of activists, lawyers and journalists.

A cousin of Amini said she had been visiting Tehran with her family when she encountered the

notorious morality police and died after a ‘violent blow to the head’.

Amini, whose Kurdish first name is Jhina, was arrested along with her brother and female relatives after leaving an underground station despite being ‘dressed normally’, Erfan Salih Mortezaee said.

“The police officer told (her

brother), ‘We are going to take her in, instil the rules in her and teach her how to wear the hijab and how to dress’,” he told AFP in Iraq’s autonomous Kurdistan region. “Jhina’s death has opened the doors of popular anger,” said Mortezaee, who joined the Iranian Kurdish nationalist group Komala after leaving the Islamic republic a

We are increasingly concerned about reports of rising fatalities, including women and children, related to the protests

STEPHANE DUJARRIC

year ago.

Shah’s son hails ‘women’s revolution’

In an interview with AFP, the son of Iran’s late shah hailed the protests as a landmark revolution by women and urged the world to add to the pressure on the clerical leadership.

Reza Pahlavi, whose father

was toppled in the Islamic Revolution of 1979, called for greater preparation for a future Iranian system that is secular and democratic. “It is truly in modern times, in my opinion, the first revolution for the women, by the women - with the support of the Iranian men, sons, brothers and fathers,” said Pahlavi, who lives in exile in the Washington area.

“It has come to the point, as the Spaniards would say, basta - we’ve had enough.”

On Tuesday, authorities in Iran arrested the daughter of ex-president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani for ‘inciting rioters’, the Tasnim news agency reported.

The crackdown has drawn condemnation from around the world. US think-tank Freedom House called on ‘other governments to stand with these courageous protesters and hold Iranian officials to account for their abuses’.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Iran to ‘end its use of violence against women for exercising what should be a fundamental freedom’.

“We stand with all those who are exercising the universal right to peaceful protest,” he said.

AFP



Candidate in Kuwait’s parliamentary elections Modhi al-Mutairi delivers statements during a press event in Kuwait City, on September 18 (AFP)

Kuwait goes to polls, yet again, as opposition groups return

Kuwait City, Kuwait - Kuwait will hold its most inclusive elections in a decade on Thursday with some opposition groups ending a boycott after the oil-rich country’s royal rulers pledged not to interfere with parliament.

The polls are the sixth in 10 years, reflecting the repeated political crises that have gripped the only Gulf Arab state with a fully elected parliament.

The elections come after Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Jaber Al-Sabah announced the dissolution of parliament in June following disputes between lawmakers and the government, the fourth to be named in two years.

Several opposition MPs had been on strike in protest at delays to parliamentary sessions and the failure to form a new government. A core source of friction is MPs’ demand for ministers from the royal family to be held accountable for corruption.

Kuwait, which borders Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran and is one of the world’s biggest oil exporters, has held 18 elections since the parliamentary system was adopted in 1962.

But when he dissolved parliament, Sheikh Meshal promised there would be no interference by authorities in the election or the new parliament.

“We will not interfere in the people’s choices for their representatives, nor will we interfere with the choices of the next Na-

tional Assembly in choosing its speaker or its committees,” the crown prince said.

“Parliament will be the master of its decisions, and we will not be supporting one faction at the expense of another. We will stand at the same distance from everyone.”

Opposition figures have stayed out of elections over the past 10 years, accusing executive authorities of meddling in the workings of parliament.

One of them, People’s Action Movement candidate Mohammad Musaed Al-Dossari, said he had been persuaded to stand again by the crown prince’s promises.

Sheikh Meshal’s speech ‘reassured’ Kuwaitis and ‘encouraged’ the political groups and MPs who had been boycotting to return to run in the elections’, Al-Dossari said.

Thursday’s vote also comes after the country’s emir issued an amnesty last year for political opponents who had been tried on various charges.

Some 305 candidates, including 22 women, are competing for 50 seats in five constituencies. Parliament has been all-male since the only woman MP lost her seat in December 2020.

Women represent 51.2 per cent of the 795,920 voters. About 70 per cent of the population of around 4.2mn is made up of expatriates.

AFP

Four Palestinians killed in Israeli raid

Jenin, Palestinian Territories - An Israeli raid targeting alleged militants in a West Bank flash-point killed four Palestinians on Wednesday, including the brother of a man blamed for a deadly attack in Tel Aviv.

The violence was the latest to hit Jenin, in the north of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, an area that has seen near daily clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen since an escalation that began in March.

Jenin deputy governor Kamal Abu al-Rub told AFP that Wednesday’s raid was ‘the most violent that the occupation army has carried out since the start of the year’.

The Palestinian health ministry recorded four dead and 44 wounded by live fire in the latest Israeli operation.

Among them was Abed Hazem, whose brother Raad was named as the killer of three Israelis in a shooting spree in Tel Aviv’s busy nightlife district in



Palestinians run during clashes with Israeli forces in the city of Jenin in West Bank on Wednesday (AFP)

April.

Raad Hazem was shot dead after a massive Israeli manhunt. Israeli forces have been pursuing Abed and Raad’s father Fathi for months.

The army only immediately confirmed two deaths during an operation it said targeted ‘two suspects involved in a number of recent shooting attacks’.

“While surrounding the residence in which both suspects

were located, an explosive device detonated and the suspects opened fire toward the security forces. The security forces fired back according to standard operating procedures and the two suspects were both killed’, the army statement said, confirming Hazem as one of the men killed.

Since March, Israel has launched hundreds of operations in the northern West Bank, in-

cluding in Jenin and nearby Nablus, in pursuit of alleged militants. The raids have sparked clashes that have killed dozens of Palestinians, including fighters.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967 but parts of the territory are nominally controlled by the Palestinian Authority, in accordance with terms set out in the 1994 Oslo peace accords.

AFP

‘N Korea fires two ballistic missiles’

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles on Wednesday, Seoul’s military said, just days after Pyongyang’s last test and ahead of a visit to South Korea by US Vice President Kamala Harris.

The launches, part of a record-breaking blitz of weapons tests this year by North Korea, came after Seoul’s spy agency warned that Pyongyang was close to conducting another nuclear test. “Our military has reinforced monitoring and surveillance and is maintaining utmost readiness in close coordination with the US,” Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

AFP

US announces multi-billion dollar plan to end twin challenges of obesity, hunger

Washington, US - The White House announced on Wednesday billions of dollars in pledges from major corporations - including the likes of fast food behemoth Burger King - to craft a national strategy on ending the twin US challenges of hunger and obesity.

The private sector pledges were unveiled as President Joe Biden was hosting what the administration touted as the first big White House summit on food and diet since Richard Nixon was in office more than half a century ago.

Nearly 42 per cent of American adults are technically obese and about 10 per cent of US households suffer food insecurity, according to latest government statistics.

Biden will tell the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health that gov-



US President Joe Biden delivers remarks about lowering health care costs in the Rose Garden at the White House, Washington, DC on Tuesday (AFP)

ernment, Congress, private companies and society must work together ‘to achieve the goal of ending hunger and reducing diet-related diseases in the United States by 2030’, a senior administration official told reporters. Because Congress is unlikely to fund major federal di-

etary programmes, Biden finds his hands largely tied. However, officials said he was using the power of the presidency to get major companies involved and that the response has been strong.

“We know that we can only achieve the goals... if we rally a

whole of society response,” an official said.

Officials briefing reporters said that US\$8bn in public and private sector commitments already made include pledges from more than 100 organisations, ranging from hospitals to tech companies and food industry players.

“All have committed to bold and in some cases, paradigm shifting commitments that will meaningfully improve nutrition, promote physical activity, and reduce hunger and diet related disease over the next seven years,” an official said.

GE, the multinational energy, aerospace and healthcare company, and food industry innovation specialists Food Systems for the Future are set to launch a US\$2.5bn private investor coalition over the next three years.

The National Restaurant As-

sociation will expand a project aimed at getting children to eat healthier food at 45,000 more outlets, including at chains like Burger King.

IT and communications giant Cisco will contribute US\$500mn over five years for healthier meals and food production in areas where it does business.

Officials acknowledged that there is no enforcement mechanism for the spending programmes but ‘we will continue to certainly work closely with these partners to ensure they execute on the actions committed to’.

The White House says that poor diets are behind ever-rising cases of diseases like type 2 diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and certain cancers, warning that ‘there is no silver bullet to address these complex issues, and there is no overnight fix’.

AFP

BOWLERS' PARADISE

Arshdeep, Chahar help India down South Africa in T20 opener in Thiruvananthapuram

Thiruvananthapuram, India - Fast bowlers Arshdeep Singh and Deepak Chahar wreaked havoc with the new ball to set up a convincing eight-wicket win for India in the first Twenty20 international against South Africa on Wednesday.

South Africa recovered from 9-5 in 2.3 overs to post 106-8 after India elected to field first on a seaming pitch at the start of the three-match series in Thiruvananthapuram.

India lost skipper Rohit Sharma for a duck and the star batsman Virat Kohli for three before the hosts achieved their target with 20 balls to spare and take a 1-0 lead.

KL Rahul (51) and Suryakumar Yadav (50) put on an unbeaten 93-run partnership to complete the chase as India move into their final two matches ahead of the T20 World Cup starting next month in Australia.

It was the bowlers who set up victory with Chahar taking two and Arshdeep returning figures of 3-32 to kickstart India's dominance despite losing pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah to "back pain" before the start of the match.

Number eight Keshav Maharaj hit 41 off 35 balls to help South Africa bat the full 20 overs and add some respectability to their meagre total.

Chahar bowled skipper Temba Bavuma for a fourth-ball duck and fellow opener Quinton de



India's Deepak Chahar celebrates after taking the wicket of South Africa captain Temba Bavuma in their first T20I in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday

Kock dragged a delivery on to his stumps from left-arm quick Arshdeep.

The Proteas slipped further into trouble when Arshdeep had Rilee Rossouw caught behind for nought and then bowled David Miller the next ball.

It was South Africa's worst-ever start to a T20 international when Tristan Stubbs fell to Cha-

har in the third over.

Aiden Markram (25) Wayne Parnell (24) put together 33 runs for the sixth wicket to slow India's momentum.

Markram smashed three fours and one six before being trapped lbw by Harshal Patel as India successfully reviewed the on-field umpire's initial decision.

Parnell fell in the 16th over but

Maharaj stood firm before his knock ended in the final over as Patel picked up his second wicket.

In reply, India struggled to 17-1 in the first six overs with Kagiso Rabada sending back Rohit and then the hosts lost Kohli, caught behind off fast bowler Anrich Nortje. Suryakumar eased the nerves with two sixes including a

lucky one with an edge that sailed over deep third man to bring the crowd alive.

The in-form Suryakumar, who hit five fours and three sixes in his 33-ball knock took on the bowlers with Rahul, who stood anchor to hit the winning six, for company as the two went about the chase with clinical precision.

AFP



England's Mark Wood celebrate after the dismissal of Pakistan's Asif Ali during their fifth T20I in Lahore on Wednesday (AFP)

Wood sparkles as Pakistan out for 145 in 5th T20I

Lahore, Pakistan - England fast bowler Mark Wood's express pace helped the tourists bowl out Pakistan for a below-par 145 in the fifth T20 international in Lahore on Wednesday.

Wood - playing only his second international since undergoing elbow surgery - took 3-20 after the home team were sent in to bat at Gaddafi Stadium.

Wood's fellow pacers Sam Curran (2-23) and David Willey (2-23) also bowled with hostility as Pakistan were dismissed in 19 overs.

Amid a middle-order collapse from 42-1 which saw Pakistan lose six wickets off 48 balls for just 58 runs - opener Mohammad Rizwan held on with a defiant 46-ball 63.

Wood dismissed Pakistan skipper Babar Azam in the third over for nine before David Willey removed Shan Masood and Iftikhar Ahmed to derail Pakistan.

Mohammad Nawaz, for a duck, and Shadab Khan fell to in-judicious run outs to leave Pakistan tottering at 100-7.

Rizwan completed his 20th T20I half-century before hitting Curran straight into the hands of Adil Rashid at deep square-leg in the 18th over.

Rizwan struck three sixes and two fours.

The seven-match series is tied at 2-2 after the first four matches were played in Karachi.

The remaining matches are also in Lahore (September 30 and October 2).

Verstappen on verge of second world title as F1 returns to Singapore

Singapore, Singapore - Red Bull's dominant Max Verstappen can clinch a second world championship when the Singapore Grand Prix returns this weekend after a three-year absence because of Covid.

The flying Dutchman has a mathematical chance to seal back-to-back world titles under lights around the spectacular and demanding Marina Bay street circuit. o do so, the 24-year-old must win the race - something he has never done in Singapore - and needs his closest rivals to falter badly.

If that does not happen, the championship fight will move on to the Japanese Grand Prix a week later. It looks a case of



Max Verstappen

when, not if.

"You need a bit of luck for that as well," Verstappen told Sky Sports of retaining his crown in Singapore. "I don't think about it."

Verstappen opened up a 116-

point lead in the drivers' standings over Ferrari's Charles Leclerc following his victory at the Italian Grand Prix. He is 125 clear of third-placed Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez.

He needs to extend his lead to 138 points by Sunday's chequered flag to be crowned with five races to spare - the earliest championship win since Michael Schumacher's in 2002 with six GPs remaining.

Monza was Verstappen's 11th victory in 16 races of a potentially record-breaking season. He needs two more wins to equal the single-season mark of 13 jointly held by Schumacher (2004) and Sebastian Vettel (2013).

AFP

Storm adds pressure on Quartararo in Thailand

Bangkok, Thailand - A tropical storm forecast to batter Thailand this weekend could shake up the three-way fight for the MotoGP world championship after leader Fabio Quartararo failed to capitalise in Japan.

The French reigning world champion could only finish eighth at Motegi on Sunday in a race to forget for the title-chasing trio.

That was at least better than chief rivals Francesco Bagnaia, who crashed out on the last lap trying to overtake Quartararo, and Aleix Espargaro, who came 16th after a malfunction with his Aprilia.

Quartararo extended his championship lead over Italy's Bagnaia from 10 points to 18 in Japan, despite being well off the



Fabio Quartararo

pace of race winner Jack Miller.

The Yamaha rider has not won a race since June in Germany and

seen his lead at the top whittled away. Heavy rain and lightning badly impacted practice at

Motegi and the elements look set to play another significant role in Thailand for all three days including Sunday's race.

Super typhoon Noru is expected to bring rain and storms as MotoGP returns to the International Circuit at Buriram, about 400 kilometres (250 miles) northeast of Bangkok, for the first Thai GP since 2019 after Covid.

"We will have to push to the maximum," said Quartararo, who has been suffering in the second half of 2022, recording only one podium finish in the last six races.

The title race is in the home straight and too close to call. After Thailand there are only grands prix in Australia, Malaysia and Valencia.

AFP

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England's Harry Maguire (L) and Germany's Ilkay Gundogan during their Nations League match on Monday. Both teams have struggled with their form in the tournament (AFP)

FROWN OF EUROPE

As World Cup looms, European giants struggle for form

London, United Kingdom - Just weeks away from the start of a World Cup like no other, the poor form of Europe's powerhouses suggests there could be a changing of the guard in Qatar. European nations have won every World Cup since Brazil lifted the last of their five titles in Japan and South Korea in 2002. Europe has supplied 13 of the 16 semi-finalists at the past four World Cups, with Italy, Spain, Germany and France coming out on top. But reigning European champions Italy have failed even to qualify for Qatar, while there are doubts over the chances of Eng-

land, France, Germany and Spain. England's six-game winless run is their worst ever heading to a major tournament, with the Three Lions relegated from the top tier of UEFA's Nations League. World champions France only avoided the same fate thanks to other results going their way as Les Bleus and Germany won just one of their six Nations League group games. Spain have progressed to the semi-finals of that competition, but were beaten 2-1 at home by Switzerland last week. Adding to the uncertainty is a

first-ever mid-season World Cup for European teams, with no time for pre-tournament training camps and friendlies. Between now and the break for the World Cup on November 13 - a week before the tournament starts - players at Europe's top teams could play up to 13 times for their clubs. "Everybody has got the same challenge. It's a strange period because so many teams are a little bit up in the air," said England manager Gareth Southgate. "There's very few teams that have been able to find form. "We've all had the players for three or four days, two games in quick succession, and now this gap where you are sitting hoping you don't pick up big injuries, but we're going to pick up some."

Injuries, fatigue and the competitive nature of the Nations League have been pinpointed as the reasons for the struggles of some of the traditional giants. England, Germany and Italy were all in the same Nations League group, as were Spain and Portugal. "We're playing and have been playing some top-level sides and we will be better for that," said Southgate. "In the past we've had runs of friendlies or whatever the matches are and then we've gone into tournaments. This is the first time we've hit high-level opposition." France were without a host of stars that Didier Deschamps hopes will be fit for the World Cup for their 2-0 defeat to Denmark on Sunday.

"The important thing is to be able to recover all our strength in the next two months," said Deschamps. As the European contenders struggle for continuity with little time to prepare, Argentina and Brazil head to Qatar as the form teams. In what could be his final World Cup at 35, Lionel Messi is enjoying playing in the best Argentina side of his international career. Lionel Scaloni's men are on a national record 35-game unbeaten run stretching back to 2019, which includes Messi's first major international trophy at the Copa America last year. Defeat in that Copa America final on home soil is Brazil's only defeat in 29 matches. AFP



Argentina's Lionel Messi dribbles past Jamaica's Damion Lowe during their international friendly match in Harrison, New Jersey, on Tuesday (AFP)

Messi in the 100 club as Argentina streak continues with Jamaica defeat

Harrison, United States - Lionel Messi marked his 100th international victory with two goals as Argentina edged closer to Italy's world record unbeaten streak with a 3-0 defeat of Jamaica in a World Cup warm-up friendly in New Jersey on Tuesday. Paris Saint-Germain superstar Messi took his international goals tally to 90 in 164 appearances after coming on as a second-half substitute at the Red Bull Arena. Messi's goals capped an emphatic win for the South Americans, who have now gone 35 games unbeaten in a streak stretching back to 2019 - just two shy of Italy's world record unbeaten run of 37 set between 2018 and 2012. Messi, who also scored twice during a friendly win over Honduras in Miami on Friday, delighted the crowd with an electrifying cameo after coming on in the 56th minute for Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez. He bagged his first of the night in the 86th minute, darting forward before caressing a shot into the bottom corner past Jamaica goalkeeper Andre Blake. The 35-year-old seven-time Ballon D'Or winner then produced an impish second goal, craftily curling a low shot underneath the Jamaican wall into the bottom corner from a free-kick. Messi's late double crowned another assured performance from Lionel Scaloni's Argentina, who are rapidly emerging as one of the favourites for the World Cup in Qatar in November. AFP



Portugal's Danilo Pereira (L) vies with Spain's Alvaro Morata (AFP)

Spain snare Nations League semis spot from Portugal

Braga, Portugal - Alvaro Morata's late strike snatched Spain a 1-0 Nations League victory over Portugal in Braga on Tuesday and sent them into the semi-finals. La Roja needed to win to finish top of League A Group 2, but struggled on another difficult night for the Euro 2020 semi-finalists, until Morata's 88th-minute breakthrough. Spain have not been able to hit top form in the matches leading up to the World Cup, but this victory provides a morale boost. Portugal had the better of the game but Spain brightened in the final stages, with the introduction of several substitutes, including Nico Williams, who headed across goal for Morata to gleefully turn in at the back post.

Banana thrown at Richarlison as Brazil thrash Tunisia

Paris, France - Richarlison responded angrily on Wednesday to racist abuse after he scored as Brazil thrashed Tunisia in a friendly in Paris. "As long as you continue to "blah blah blah" and don't punish, it will continue like this, happening every day and in every corner. No time left, man!" he tweeted in Portuguese. Richarlison was pelted with objects from the stands after putting Brazil ahead for the second time as they thrashed Tunisia 5-1 at Parc des Princes on Tuesday. The Tottenham forward celebrated in front of the Tunisian supporters, who responded by throwing a banana and plastic cups in his direction. Brazil midfielder Fred kicked the banana off the pitch, before



Brazil's forward Richarlison (R) celebrates after scoring against Tunisia in their friendly match at the Parc des Princes in Paris on Tuesday (AFP)

extra security guards took up residence on the side of the field. "Unfortunately... a banana was thrown on the pitch towards Richarlison, scorer of the second Brazilian goal," the Brazilian football confederation (CBF) said on Twitter, including a photograph of the banana lying by the touchline. "The CBF reinforces its position to combat racism and repudiates any prejudiced act." AFP

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COOK-UP

When food is not your focus, try out a few five-minute foods



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IN TOWN

Trbutes and toasts to UK's late Queen and King Charles III



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ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town in Hollywood and Bollywood

MUTTRAH CORNICHE

DOWN BY THE BAY

Muttrah corniche provides many avenues for relaxing and unwinding amid a peaceful atmosphere - that is, if you step away from the chaos and crowds which invariably throng the Old Muttrah Souq

AT MUTTRAH CORNICHE

Hubert Vaz
Photos: Syed Fasiuddin

Flip a coin and hear the tinkling sound of it falling on the stone pavement... chase a batch of cute kittens frisking around the bushes of blue star junipers...stretch out on a bed of green grass and gaze at the skies above the Arabian Sea...

You are at Muttrah corniche, and surprisingly no aromas of freshly toasted shawarma overpower you, neither are you greeted with heady fragrances of frankincense and Arabian perfumes sold by enthusiastic vendors who are out to make you their first

catch of the day. Where are the crowds? Where are the cabbies? Where has your appetite for a walk through history vanished?

You don't have to be always caught up in the invisible whirlpool at Old Muttrah Souq, which invariably gets you into its sway, whenever you visit this tourist haven. The fact is, most people visit Muttrah corniche only to enter the souq for traditional purchases or a stroll through time which comes forth from the wares on sale in the ancient market. In the bargain, most people simply drive past the entire stretch without taking time to view or enjoy the interesting avenues en route.

While Kalbou Park and Riyam



Park are marked out destinations frequented mostly by families with small children who love to enjoy the rides playing in the lawns by the seaside, Muttrah corniche also offers more quiet spaces to settle on the lawns and enjoy chitchats or story telling. Some youth also come in for exercising or relaxing with some impromptu yoga or massage on the lush lawns.

If you drive past the souq and turn in right at the small roundabout before Riyam Park, you can get into a narrow lane that leads you to green lawn with ample space for relaxing and for children to play. There are also a set of exercise machines for those interested in shaping up in the evenings or mornings. However, currently,

children use the machines like fancy rides.

While this area is much in demand during public holidays, when crowds descend to enjoy the quieter side of the capital, weekdays and weekends only find the creatively-inclined (artists, painters, writers, students) visiting this area for inspiration and uninterrupted mental jogging. It's not uncommon to see people sketching the seascape or romancing their laptops, cut away from the chaos and crowds that is soul of Muttrah corniche.

So, the next time you visit Muttrah, strike off Old Muttrah Souq from your agenda and discover the hidden aspects of this locale at ease.

THINGS TO DO

- Climb up to Muttrah Fort and enjoy the stunning view
- Get to the top of the iconic incense burner at Riyam Park
- Use the exercise machines on the lawns in the wee hours
- Enjoy a morning/evening constitutional to stay fit
- Settle on the lawns/under the canopies for sit-down parties
- Get an infilling of fresh air blowing in from the sea
- Visit the Gate Museum on the way to Sidab
- Take up creative photography - there's much around to shoot

DRAWBACKS

- Inadequate parking spaces, especially on holidays
- No public transport/shuttle bus services for visitors
- Absence of public utilities - toilets, drinking water
- No petrol pump along the entire stretch
- Lack of ATMs and money exchanges for tourists
- Absence of an information kiosk, or authorised guides
- Modern goods/garments sold by some vendors at the souq
- Repairs are pending at damaged sections along the seafront



cook-up

QUICK COOKING

5-MINUTE foods

When you have to focus on other important tasks or cannot be in the kitchen when your prime time serial is being aired on television, try out these quick recipes that do not let you compromise on a good meal:



Creamy Chicken Penne Pasta

- Ingredients**
- 400g chicken breasts – cut to pieces
 - ½tsp salt
 - ¼tsp ground black pepper
 - 1tbsp vegetable oil
 - 400g penne pasta
 - 2tbsp butter
 - 2tbsp minced garlic
 - 1 packet cream of chicken soup
 - 1tbsp chopped parsley

Method

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over medium-high heat. Add penne pasta and cook until al dente. Reserve 2 cups of the hot pasta water in a bowl, drain the rest and set aside the pasta to cool. Season the chicken with salt and pepper, heat oil in a skillet and add the chicken. Saute on medium flame and cook for 6-8 minutes until chicken is tender.

In a pot, add two cups of the pasta water and the cream of chicken soup mix. Mix well and let the soup boil to desired consistency. (Boil longer if you want it thicker). Add the sauted chicken pieces and butter. Stir slightly and switch off the heat. Serve in plates garnished with chopped parsley.

If you prefer not to use soup mix, in the same skillet, add butter and garlic and saute until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add 1tbsp flour and cook until thickened into a paste, about 1 minute.

Add 1 cup heavy cream, 1 cup chicken broth (or pasta water), and 2tbsp grated Parmesan cheese, and mix well. Bring the sauce to a simmer over medium heat and simmer for 2-3 minutes until thickened to a desired consistency. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Add the chicken and pasta to the skillet and toss well to coat. Garnish with parsley and serve.



Prepare your own meatballs with ground beef, seasoned with pepper, salt, and chopped coriander

Beef Meatball Curry

- Ingredients**
- 4tbsp vegetable oil
 - 3 yellow onions - sliced
 - 1tsp ginger garlic paste
 - 1 can chopped tomatoes
 - 1 cup yogurt
 - 1tsp cumin powder
 - 1tsp coriander powder
 - ½tsp turmeric powder
 - ½tsp red chilli powder
 - ½tsp salt
 - ½tsp garam masala
 - 1 box (400g) readymade meatballs
 - 1tbsp chopped coriander

Method

Saute the meatballs with 1tbsp oil, till browned all over, and set aside. (Readymade meatballs are precooked.)

Heat oil in a pot and add the onions. Fry them till they are golden brown. Add the ginger garlic paste, all the spice powders and chopped tomatoes. Mix well and cook covered on medium flame for 3-4 minutes. Add 2-3 tbsp water, mix well and cook for 3-4 minutes till the tomatoes are cooked well and blended with the spices. Now whip up the yoghurt and add. Mix and cook on low flame for 2-3 minutes. Then add the sauted meatballs and cook covered for 3-4 minutes on low flame. Serve hot, garnished with coriander, along with steamed rice or bread.



Kheema Pav

- Ingredients**
- 500g beef mince
 - 1 cup chopped tomatoes
 - 1 onion – minced
 - 1tsp minced ginger
 - 1tsp minced garlic
 - 2 green chillies – slit
 - 1tsp red chilli powder
 - ½tsp turmeric powder
 - 1tsp garam masala
 - 3tbsp oil
 - Juice of one lime
 - Salt, to taste
 - 1tbsp chopped coriander
 - Lemon wedges and sliced onion – to serve
 - Freshly baked Indian Pavs (dinner rolls)

Method

Boil the mince in a pressure cooker and set aside. Heat oil in a pan and saute the onion. Add the ginger and garlic and fry for a minute. Then add the spice powders, green chillies, chopped tomatoes and mix well. Cook on medium flame for 4-5 minutes till tomatoes soften. Add the boiled mince, with salt, to taste, and lime juice. Add a cup of the mince broth, mix well and cook on high flame till all the gravy dries up. Serve piping hot, garnished with coriander, with lemon/onion wedges and fresh pavs.

take a break

IN TOWN

TRIBUTES AND TOASTS



British Business Forum hosted a function, to pay tributes to the Late Queen Elizabeth II and to mark the accession of King Charles III, at the Diplomatic Club
Photos: V K Shafeer



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
There's nothing quite so satisfying as a job well done. Remind yourself of that if your enthusiasm starts to wane in the face of what seems like a mountain of details all clamoring for your attention. Why not hand some of those tasks over to a trustworthy associate? Tell them the results you need and the timeline you're on.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Love might just reveal itself when you least expect it, but you have to stop searching for it so frantically first. Instead, think about what it is that you enjoy doing, the people you like having around, and what kind of goals you want. You may end up becoming so absorbed in having a life that you forget all about love.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
The key to long-term achievement is keeping everything on the down low when a certain boss type is going mad with power. While it may be tempting to point out areas in which they could improve things in the workplace (or their own attitude), they won't take kindly to any suggestions right now no matter how well meant.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Someone you care about may be acting a little distant, but it's not you. It's them, so don't take their mood to heart. It's doubly important that you not let their funk put a damper on your high spirits. Motivate yourself to take charge and stir up some action, whether it's renovating your love life or your home.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Sitting there in limbo? That's absolutely normal, so stop pressuring yourself and take a break instead. It's an excellent time to take off on a vacation, even if that means sitting in the park and listening to music while you watch the sun set. (Every little bit counts!) Go ahead and let your mind roam far afield.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Life is far from ordinary for you right now. The stars stir up your world and bring lots of unusual and unpredictable influences into your daily routine. This affects everything you do, think, or say, so don't be taken aback if you hear the most surprising things coming out of your mouth. The best thing to do in a situation like this is go with the flow and enjoy the motion while you're at it.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Isn't it time you grew up? You can pay your bills, buy a house, and hold down a job, and still that's not really the mark of a truly mature person. Those are just the accessories that we think signify adulthood. The stars are telling you that it's time to take responsibility for your actions and be accountable for the consequences.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Your colleagues adore you, and it's no wonder. You work extremely hard and don't think twice about pitching in when someone else needs a hand. Your office practically feels like a second home and your coworkers like a second family. However, it's still a good idea to remain wary if someone new keeps offering help when you least need it.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Pinning your hopes on one prospect? Be careful or the glitter might wear off, especially the more you burden it with your aspirations. Take a look at its real worth before you consider abandoning it. Dig deep within yourself and feel confident that you're someone of considerable determination and ingenuity and you can finesse this opportunity into something invaluable.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Get off the fence and be clear when communicating with a group. You've been trying too hard for too long to be everything to everybody, and it's making you crazy and not winning you the fans you hoped it would. (Not only that, but you're not feeling too hot about yourself lately either.) You have only your self-respect to gain by speaking up for what you believe in.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
An extraordinary alliance with a work mentor or office buddy will help you break free of a limiting role on the job, and you've never been more grateful to be given the opportunity to spread your wings and fly. While you're overcome with gratitude, remember that it was your willingness to speak up and take a chance that got the ball rolling.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Wincing at the thought of some less-than-stellar behavior on your part and feeling just a touch defensive? Brush off criticisms, including your own, and focus resolutely on the present and future. Beating yourself up will only lead to a treacherous bog of low self-esteem. Instead, take a look at what you can change for the better, and resolve to correct any inappropriate behaviour.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. If an artist discusses canon, collage, call and response, and retrograde, what are they most likely to be talking about?
A. Embroidery
B. Mediaeval poetry
C. Techniques of cubist painting
D. Compositional forms of choreography
02. Which of these is the nearest east of New York City?
A. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
B. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
C. Mexico City, Mexico
D. Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
03. What sign of the zodiac is represented by a goat?
A. Taurus
B. Libra
C. Aries
D. Capricorn

Answers: 1. D 2. A 3. D

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

BOGGLER

S	Z	C	N
T	T	I	L
A	S	T	R
A	P	I	E

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

entertainment



ANGELINA JOLIE VISITS PAKISTAN FLOOD VICTIMS

Hollywood star and humanitarian Angelina Jolie has said the flood disaster in Pakistan should be a 'wake-up call' for the world regarding climate change, calling for more international aid after meeting with victims.

Pakistan has been lashed by unprecedented monsoon downpours that flooded a third of the country - an area the size of the United Kingdom - and killed nearly 1,600 people, according to the latest government figures.

"I've never seen anything like this," said Jolie, who previously visited Pakistan to meet the victims of the devastating 2010 floods and a deadly 2005 earthquake, in footage released on Thursday.

Stars raise cash for Ukraine healthcare



British music stars Harry Styles and Ed Sheeran, US basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal and other celebrities will donate personal objects for a campaign launched Saturday to support healthcare in Ukraine.

The WHO Foundation launched the 'Human Kind' e-store, where fans can try to win items donated by their favourite celebrities. Harry Styles has donated a signed vinyl, while Shaquille O'Neal, Ukrainian footballer Vitaliy Mykolenko, and other sports legends have donated signed shirts and jerseys.

Rihanna headlining Super Bowl Halftime Show 2023

Rihanna is going to be headlining the Super Bowl Halftime Show next year in Arizona! The superstar, 34, confirmed reports that were making rounds earlier in the day with a simple - but powerful - post via her Instagram on Sunday, Sept. 25. Her tattooed hand was seen holding up an NFL-branded football against a crisp white background in the image, alongside a caption with just a period.



MONROE BIOPIC 'BLONDE' HITS NETFLIX

Cuban Spanish actress Ana de Armas arrives for the screening of the film *Blonde* during the 79th Venice International Film Festival at Lido di Venezia in Venice.

Destined to be one of the most divisive films of the year, Marilyn Monroe biopic *Blonde* finally lands on Netflix on Wednesday after more than a decade of troubled production.

While there is almost universal praise for the visceral lead performance by Ana de Armas, critics cannot agree whether the uncompromising, nearly three-hour film is an artistic tour de force or another cruel layer of exploitation perpetrated against the 20th century icon.

For *ID* magazine, *Blonde* is guttural, instinctive, anguished filmmaking that bends space, time, and every cinematic tool at its disposal in service of attaining emotional truth.

COMING SOON

VIKRAM VEDHA

Vikram Vedha is an action-thriller showcasing the face-off between a tough cop Vikram and a dreaded gangster Vedha. The film underlines 'between Good & Evil, what you choose, defines you'.

Genre: **Thriller**

Starring: **Radhika Apte, Hrithik Roshan, Rohit Saraf, Saif Ali Khan**

Language: **Hindi**



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW:
TICKET TO PARADISE
Genre: Comedy, romance
Starring: George Clooney, Julia Roberts



LOVE HEALS, LOVE REUNITES

With plenty of powder and shot all over the big screen over the past few decades, one wouldn't imagine a celluloid experience devoid of gunshots, crashing edifices, car chases, et al in the current era when complex plots and digital effects are the order of the day. However, *Ticket to Paradise* reminds viewers that heartwarming romance on the silver screen is not dead, as yet.

This movie demonstrates that romantic comedies do hinge entirely on the chemistry of the lead pairs, even if they are in the evening of their lives. And with veterans like Julia Roberts and George Clooney in the lead, one couldn't possibly ask for more.

If Bollywood lead pairs like Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol demonstrated the same sentiments on the big screen when they rekindled their yesteryear romance in *Dilwale* a few years ago, Roberts and Clooney do somewhat the same in *Ticket to Paradise*. And, guess what, the plot, too, seems very much Bollywood.

After two decades of avoiding contact with each other, former married couple David (George Clooney) and Georgia (Julia Roberts) cross paths once again when they attend the college graduation ceremony of their daughter Lily (Kaitlyn Dever). They then vow never to see each other again, but the promise is eventually broken when they learn that Lily has got engaged to a man she met on a vacation in Bali. Dashing to attend Lily's wedding, both parents are, however, adamant to break up the relationship, lest their daughter repeat the same mistakes as themselves. And yes, if the plot is Bollywood-ish, one must expect them to start recalling old times and grow fond of each other again.

The movie is, indeed, about fostering love in relationships, letting bygones be bygones, and learning to be happy and enjoy life as it unfolds with all its surprises. A must watch with someone you love!

Rating ★★★★★



BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: **PONNIYIN SELVAN - I**
Genre: Historical fiction Starring: Chiyaan Vikram, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Jayam Ravi, Karthi



DYNASTIC GRANDEUR

The much awaited Kollywood (if you may) release, Mani Ratnam's *Ponniyin Selvan - Part I* is expected to open with a bang this Friday. The Tamil film, originally intended to be a stand-alone film, was later split into two parts - the first part of which will be screened in standard and IMAX format, also dubbed in Hindi.

Ratnam's film is based on Kalki Krishnamurthy's *Ponniyin Selvan*, a five-part historic fiction series, first published in the 50s. The series went on to become a sensation with

its unique take on the historical Chozha dynasty - a Tamil kingdom that was at the height of its powers during the medieval period.

Bollywood viewers would be delighted to catch Aishwarya Rai Bachchan on the silver screen again as Nandini - the face of vengeance. Known for her exotic beauty, she has crossed paths with almost all characters from the Chozha dynasty for various reasons and is the primary antagonist, the young bride of Periya Pazhuvettaraiyar, a chancellor-treasurer and the second most powerful person in the dynasty.

A R Rahman's music for this big budget drama, produced by Madras Talkies and Lyca Productions, is something to behold, rather enjoy in surround format. The voices of Kamal Haasan, Chiranjeevi, Mammootty, Upendra and Ajay Devgn have also been used in this film in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi, respectively.

Known as the golden period for art, architecture and development for the Tamil people, the Chozha era finds a special place in Tamil culture and history - a time when trade and agriculture flourished. It was also

during this period that several temples were built, including the Thanjai Periya Koyil at the Chozha capital of Thanjavur.

The literary universe of the film is rife with rich characters and complex back stories, which make it quite daunting for the uninitiated. Through these characters in iconic roles, the film explores themes such as revenge, power and a battle of succession since these feature prominently in the written epic. Enjoy the grandeur and grace!

Rating ★★★★★