

HM issues Royal Decree ratifying Oman-Poland visa waiver agreement

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 49/2023 on Wednesday ratifying an agreement between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the government of the Republic of Poland on mutual waiver of visas for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports. The agreement was signed in Warsaw on June 13, 2023. Article 1 ratifies the above-mentioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of publication.



Music created digitally lacks emotional touch

Platform for career guidance launched

Our Correspondent Muscat

The National Employment Programme unveiled national career guidance platform Khuta that aims to bridge the gap between jobseekers and the labour market on Wednesday.

The platform, the first of its kind in Oman, was launched under the patronage of Dr Khamis Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

Aligned with the principles of Oman Vision 2040 in the education, research, innovation and employment sectors, the platform is set to revolutionise career guidance services in the country.

At the launch, Azhar bin Ahmed al Kindi, Technical Director of National Employment Programme, highlighted the platform's tailored approach, catering to students, jobseekers, employees, business owners, entrepreneurs, teachers, academicians and students' guardians.

The main objective of Khuta is to enhance the efficiency of career guidance services and ensure educational outputs align with the actual needs of the labour market.



By aligning study programmes with the labour market needs, Khuta enables individuals to identify professions that best suit their abilities and inclinations

AZHAR BIN AHMED AL KINDI

"Supported by scientific research, career counselling programmes have proven to play a crucial role in assisting individuals in making informed academic and professional decisions while fostering graduate readiness for the job market," said Kindi.

Khuta encompasses a wide range of programmes that will

contribute to development of a highly skilled workforce, thereby driving economic growth and fostering professional success and satisfaction. By promoting integration between the educational system and labour market needs, it will serve as a vital tool in cultivating a harmonious relationship between the two sectors.

Khuta offers an intuitive user experience, featuring innovative tools and resources that aid individuals in making well-informed career choices, exploring various career paths and developing future-oriented skills aligned with the evolving demands of the labour market.

It provides specialised guidance services and comprehensive data on study programmes in higher education, employment opportunities and the nature of professions, facilitating a seamless transition for students entering the job market.

Continued on Page 02

Oman athletes win gold, silver at Arab Games

Our Correspondent Muscat

Omani athletes won two medals at the 15th Arab Games being held in Algeria till July 15.

Fatik bin Abdel Ghafour Beit Jaboub struck gold in high jump, while Qusai al Rawahi claimed a silver medal in the 100m race for athletes with disabilities, setting a personal milestone in the Arab championship.

Elated with his performance, Jaboub said, "I am extremely happy to have won the gold medal for Oman. This victory required tremendous effort, given the fierce competition from highly skilled participants in the event. By the grace of God, I was able to beat athletes with established reputations."

He attributed the win to "rigorous training, participating in local and international tournaments, and invaluable foreign training camps that played a crucial role in enhancing my performance and achieving this feat".

He added that the win has motivated him to intensify his training to deliver good results and stand atop more podiums, especially in the upcoming international championships.

Reflecting on his achievement,



Fatik bin Abdel Jaboub

Rawahi expressed his joy at securing the silver medal in his debut at the Arab Games. "Praise be to God, this triumph is the culmination of intensive camps and training led by national coach Abdullah al Anbari, who provided continuous guidance. I am grateful to him."

He informed that these Arab Games serve as a training ground and preparations for the Asian Games in China for athletes with disabilities in October. "I am currently following the training programme devised by the coaching staff, and I hope to undergo rigorous outdoor camps to ensure complete readiness for China."

Oman's Steel Industry Booming Under the Jindal Group

An industrial powerhouse with a dominant presence in steel, Jindal Group is a prominent player in the global steel manufacturing sector. It is bolstering its commitment to the Sultanate of Oman by undertaking several strategic investments aimed at fostering socio-economic growth and supporting the nation's transition to a green, circular economy. Working in tandem with His Majesty Sultan Haitham's Vision 2040 plan to reduce the country's dependency on the oil and gas sector while diversifying into non-oil-based manufacturing, the group is flying the flag high. These investments under the Vulcan International Holding Company include Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel, Sohar Steel, and Vulcan Pelletizing Plant in Sohar, and in Duqm Vulcan Green Steel.

Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel (JSIS), a revered steel manufacturer in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, continues to strengthen its position as a catalyst for the Sultanate's development. The company's facility in Sohar has expanded its value chain to reach a production capacity of 2.4 million metric tons per annum (MTPA). With new projects announced at the Sohar facility, Vulcan's total investments in the area will exceed USD 1.5 billion, emphasising its commitment to in-country value creation and job opportunities.

Commenting on the company's ICV strategies, Harsha Shetty, Chief Executive Officer of JSIS, said, "Since the commencement of operations in Oman in 2010, the company has kept pace with the dynamically evolving goals of the country and established itself as a reliable partner that is invested in building a resilient, self-reliant nation. As such, with the operations of the proposed new projects in full swing, the benefits to the nation will be unparalleled. We are working towards aligning a comprehensive ICV agenda with national priorities, apart from the ongoing investments in assets and technology. This



encompasses a gamut of initiatives across a wide spectrum, including generating employment and business opportunities, nurturing a skilled workforce, and supporting local industries. JSIS is driven by innovation and progressive thinking at its core, which extends to how we do our part to create a more sustainable local ecosystem."

Jindal Shadeed's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs are complementary to these initiatives. Through

the 'Steel of Oman' campaign, the company has demonstrated its support for Oman's passion for football and its potential in the global football arena. Partnerships with the Oman Football Association (OFA) and Ali Al-Habsi's Academy for Football have led to the establishment of nine under-14 football training centres, fostering the development of young talent. JSIS CSR policy actively engages in community initiatives related to the youth development, SME partnerships, and safe home construction practices.

With its exceptional track record in steel manufacturing and strong community-centric values, JSIS continues to drive the Sultanate's progress and competitiveness on the global stage.

The group has also committed USD 3 billion to develop a mega Green steel project in the Sultanate of Oman. The project, known as Vulcan Green Steel, will be established in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and will encompass a 5 million metric tons per annum (MTPA) green hydrogen-ready steel plant. It is a marquee initiative to combat climate change and produce green steel on a large scale. The plant will be powered entirely by renewables and green hydrogen, making it one of the largest green steel facilities globally.

In addition to Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel and Vulcan Green Steel, the group is actively involved in other ventures in the Sultanate's steel industry. Notably, the company is developing the Sohar Pelletizing Plant, equipped with Metso Outotec technology, with a 6 million metric tons production capacity per annum. Civil piling work is underway, and the plant is scheduled to commence production by end of 2024.

Furthermore, the group is investing in a pilot Carbon Capture Plant at the Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel facility in Sohar. The plant, expected to be completed by the end of 2023, will have a maximum capacity to capture 7 tons of CO2 per day at a pilot scale. This initiative showcases the group's dedication to environmental stewardship and reducing carbon emissions.

With these strategic investments, Vulcan Investments and the Jindal Steel Group is poised to strengthen Oman's steel industry, drive economic growth, and contribute to the nation's sustainability goals. The company remains committed to its partnership with the Sultanate and its vision for a prosperous and environmentally conscious future.

ASMED launches electronic system to empower SMEs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has collaborated with Royal Oman Police (ROP) to introduce an electronic system called 'Information Plus'.

The user-friendly system, accessible through the ASMED website, serves as a comprehensive digital resource for company and establishment information, including location, activities, employees and economic data.

The primary objective of the system is to foster an entrepreneurial environment and establish a centralised electronic database to support SMEs in their business endeavours, aligning with Oman Vision 2040's national objectives. By promoting entrepreneurship as a crucial driver of the economy, the system facilitates data-driven decision-making in economic and



The user-friendly system, accessible through the ASMED website, serves as a comprehensive digital resource for company and establishment information, including economic data

strategic sectors.

By encouraging the use of open data and providing access to SME owners, the system empowers entrepreneurs to launch their projects and tackle various challenges through innovative solutions. It lays the foundation

for a digital economy rooted in a knowledge society and innovation. The shared and reusable information can be transformed into tools and applications that drive research, innovation and smart solutions.

At the core of ASMED's

proactive operations, the system plays a pivotal role by offering easy access to open data in digital format, ensuring swift responses and convenience. To support aspiring entrepreneurs and SME owners, ASMED will organise workshops where they can gain valuable insights and guidance for establishing their projects.

The system will prove invaluable in conducting market research before initiating a project. It will also promote integration between SMEs and larger companies, serving as an effective tool to identify promising opportunities within different governorates and urban communities.

With an interactive map interface, the system provides a wealth of information on government and private sector establishments within an entrepreneur's specific governorate, wilayat and urban community.

Oman, Morocco sign four pacts to enhance joint cooperation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A partnership agreement and three memoranda of understanding (MoU) covering several fields were signed on Tuesday in Rabat during the sixth meeting of the Joint Commission between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Morocco.

The meeting was co-chaired by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates.

The agreements concern maritime transport and ports, rail transport, diplomatic action and consumer protection.

The partnership agreement in the field of maritime transport and ports aims to encourage both parties to develop their economic and commercial relations and maritime activities, promote joint investments and facilitate the exchange of experience and expertise.

In the diplomatic field, the two countries signed an MoU to strengthen bilateral cooperation by developing a framework for diplomatic training, exchange of experience, expertise and information in the field of international relations, diplomacy, foreign policy and international law on the basis of mutual respect.

In the field of consumer protection, an MoU was signed to strengthen cooperation at the artistic, technical, legal and public policy levels to raise consumer awareness, defend consumer rights and ensure the quality of consumer products and services.



An MoU was also signed between Morocco's National Railways Office and Oman Rail to strengthen cooperation between the two countries and develop partnerships between the two rail networks through the exchange of experience, expertise, information and trainees.

Sayyid Badr observed that relations between Oman and Morocco are long-standing and stable. He added that these relations are currently developing in various economic and cultural spheres through constructive cooperation in promising fields with tangible returns for both sides, especially in the economic and investment sectors.

Sayyid Badr praised the care and attention given to relations between the two countries by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Mohammed VI.

According to Bourita, under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, Oman is playing a distinguished role in es-

tablishing the foundations of security and peace both in the region and internationally.

He also spoke of the need to work to strengthen bilateral cooperation in all political, economic, commercial, industrial and development fields that can open new horizons for cooperation between the two countries in order to achieve their aspirations and hopes.

Sayyid Badr stressed Oman's continued commitment to consult, coordinate and cooperate in addressing the challenges facing the region in order to further security and stability. The minister said that the political visions of the two countries are aligned on many regional and international issues, and stressed the importance of resolving such issues through dialogue and realistic peaceful means based on the rules of international law and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and legitimate rights of states.

SAYYID BADR RECEIVES ENVOYS' CREDENTIALS



H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received copies of credentials of H E Hager Amru Khalifa al Namy, Ambassador-designate of Libya to Oman, and Dr Liane Saunders (in photo above), Ambassador-designate of the United Kingdom to Oman. H E Sayyid Badr wished the ambassadors success in carrying out their duties. He also wished the relations between Oman and their respective countries further development and growth (ONA)

Vocational platform for jobseekers launched

Continued from Page 01

Furthermore, the platform offers specialised training courses in basic and future skills, in line with the Omani national framework for future jobs.

It provides detailed information on study programmes and specialties offered by higher education institutions, creating valuable connections between schools, higher education institutions and the economic sec-

tors of the sultanate.

"By aligning study programmes with the labour market needs, Khuta enables individuals to identify professions that best suit their abilities and inclinations, empowering them to enter the job market fully prepared," informed Kindi.

Additionally, Khuta facilitates direct communication between users and career

guidance specialists, offering personalised support and guidance related to career and academic path planning. Users can seek assistance with career plans, academic or professional development, and receive expert advice from counsellors.

The platform also has a vast repository of resources, including books, manuals, articles, official documents, videos and films.



إعلان مناقصة

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers to the following tenders

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصات أدناه

No رقم	Tender Ref الرقم المرجعي	Tender Title عنوان المناقصة	Tender Fee OMR الرسوم
1	SIPC 2023-109	SOHAR New Website Development & Brand Visuals Enhancement	52.500
2	SIPC 2022-096	Design and Installation of Safety Barricades on Roof Top of SOHAR Administration Building	26.250
3	SIPC 2023-011	Catering Management Services	262.500
4	SIPC 2023-079	Re-Painting of Faded Road Marking in SIP Area	52.500

- The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%.
- Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Wednesday 05/07/2023 until 4:00 pm on Wednesday 19/07/2023.
- Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

- تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصات أدناه
- تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصات أدناه
- تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصات أدناه

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

Account Name اسم الحساب	Sohar Industrial Port Co شركة ميناء صحر الصناعي
Account Number رقم الحساب	3101-007970-500
Bank Name اسم البنك	Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br بنك عمان العربي ش.م.م - الفرع الرئيسي
SWIT رمز السوفيت كود	OMABOMRUXXX

Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted
ملاحظة: التحويل البنكي في الطريقة الوحيدة المقبولة للدفع

الخطوة الأولى: يجب على مقدمي العطاءات سداد رسوم المناقصة وفقاً للتفاصيل البنكية أدناه:

الخطوة الثانية: يتعين على مقدمي العطاءات تقديم المستندات التالية:

- طلب الحصول على النسخة الإلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة
- نسخة من إيصالات التحويل البنكي
- أوراق السجل التجاري للشركة
- على أن يتم إرسالها إلى: sipcprocurement@soharportandfreezone.com

الخطوة الثالثة: سوف يستلم مقدمي العطاءات نسخة إلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

- يحق للشركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة قبول أو رفض أي مورد
- يحق للمصالح عن الأسباب
- يطلب من المورد تقديم المستندات المطلوبة
- يطلب من المورد تقديم المستندات المطلوبة
- يطلب من المورد تقديم المستندات المطلوبة

الخطوة الرابعة: سوف يستلم مقدمي العطاءات نسخة إلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

الخطوة الخامسة: سوف يستلم مقدمي العطاءات نسخة إلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents
- All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address: sipcprocurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic Tender Document by e-mail.

- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons
- All SMEs are requested to provide their RIYADAH Card along with the required documents
- For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to: sipcprocurement@soharportandfreezone.com

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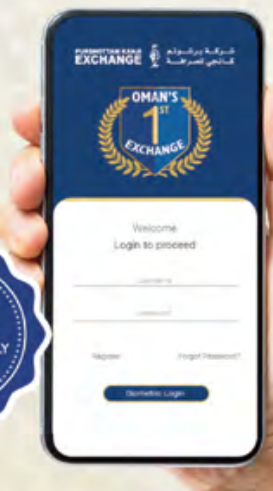
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400-year-old Rustaq heritage house collapses

Our Correspondent
Rustaq

The 400-year-old Beit al Gharbi in Qasra village, Rustaq, collapsed on Tuesday. Once a renowned tourist and cultural destination housing a vast collection of antiques, the historic structure had long awaited restoration.

Zakiya Nasser al Lamkiya, founder of Beit al Gharbi, said, "Unfortunately, the front part of the heritage house collapsed on Tuesday afternoon."

The three-storey museum with 14 rooms attracted thousands of tourists each month, including visitors from Germany, Britain and the Gulf Cooperation Council states. Additionally, students visited throughout the year, particularly during Eid al Adha and Eid al Fitr holidays, Zakiya informed.

She transformed her ancestral family home into a museum in 2016, exhibiting an impressive collection of historical artefacts once used by Omanis.

Her passion for the past and dedication to preserving the archaeological heritage left behind by ancestors inspired her to establish the museum. Reflecting on the idea, she said, "When I saw my abandoned ancestral home, the thought of creating an antiques house filled with historical artefacts struck me. With the help of my parents, neighbours and fellow citizens in the wilayat, we restored the house, making it ready to welcome local and foreign visitors."

Beit al Gharbi boasted an



The restoration process will require significant finances, but it is crucial to continue attracting tourists and supporting the tourism sector

ZAKIYA AL LAMKIYA

array of antiques, ranging from old books, coins, cooking utensils, handicrafts, cosmetic items, incense burners, silverware, pottery, mandooos boxes and dairy processing tools.

Regretting the decision to close the museum, Zakiya appealed to the private sector and concerned citizens for assistance to restore it. "The restoration process will require significant finances, but it is crucial to continue attracting tourists and supporting the tourism sector."

be'ah collects over 39,000 tonnes of waste during Eid

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The average daily waste received during the Eid al Adha holiday exceeded 8,000 tonnes, a 31% increase compared to regular days. This led Environmental Services Holding Company - be'ah - to make elaborate plans to collect and dispose large quantities of waste during the holiday, from June 27 to July 1, totaling more than 39,000 tonnes.

Khamis Marhoon al Siyabi, Executive Vice-President of Municipal Waste Operations at be'ah, emphasised the company's strategic plan implemented in collaboration with waste management service providers across various governorates.

"This plan aimed to effectively manage the expected surge in municipal solid waste and slaughter waste during the Eid holiday. Specific locations, known as skip locations, were allocated for the collection of slaughter waste, taking into ac-



count population density and accessibility for citizens."

To prioritise public health and safety, be'ah increased waste collection frequency throughout all governorates and ensured the daily and continuous transportation of slaughter waste to engineered landfills during the Eid holiday.

Siyabi informed that be'ah extended the working hours of transfer stations and landfills to support waste collection operations across Oman.

According to Mohammed Ahmed al Mamari, Senior Regional Operations Manager for Batinah, Musandam, Dhahirah

and Buraimi governorates at be'ah, the company distributed over 305 additional containers dedicated solely to the collection of sacrificial waste during Eid al Adha.

Notably, the waste collected during the holiday reached significant amounts, including 6,837 tonnes in North Batinah, 6,175 tonnes in South Batinah, 279 tonnes in Musandam, 2,390 tonnes in Dhahirah and 984 tonnes in Buraimi. "These figures highlight the necessity of concerted efforts needed to handle the substantial increase in waste production during this festive period."

Restored Taqah Castle to open on July 12

Our Correspondent
Dhofar

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has completed restoration and maintenance work of Taqah Castle.

The castle will reopen its doors to visitors on July 12 at an event held under the patronage of the Wali of the Wilayat of Taqah.

In an effort to preserve the castle's unique characteristics

and identity, MHT used traditional construction materials and ensured the conservation of all architectural elements without alterations. "The restoration process was carried out meticulously using manual equipment to avoid any damage to the building's structure," the ministry stated.

Taqah Castle is a prominent tourist attraction not only in the wilayat of Taqah but the Governorate of Dhofar.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the number of visitors to Oman's 51 castles and forts experienced a 71.2% increase between 2015 and 2019 to 426,525. Additionally, the sites now employ 110 workers.

To further enhance tourism and achieve the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040, the ministry is actively engaging the private sector in managing historical sites across the sultanate.

App for sickle cell anaemia patients launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health has launched 'For You', the first Omani app exclusively designed for patients with sickle cell anaemia. Its primary goal is to enhance the quality of life for individuals affected by the disease.

Dr Yusra bint Sulaiman al Nasiriya, faculty member of Oman College of Health Sci-

ences, informed that the app is an inclusive educational tool catering to parents and patients with sickle cell anaemia. Its benefits extend to all segments of society.

The app aims to enhance knowledge, empower parents and identify vital pain indicators.

It has seven interactive features - a pain scale, educational videos, games, a doctor consultation service, weekly reminders, Q&A, and a chat service.

The user-friendliness of the app was studied among a group of sickle cell anaemia patients at The Royal Hospital and Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

"Harnessing smart technologies is crucial in reducing complications associated with chronic diseases," Dr Yusra said.

She also informed about ongoing efforts to enhance the app, such as activating the 'Doctor for You' feature and exploring its integration with the AI

Shifa app for remote monitoring of sickle cell anaemia patients.

Additionally, work is underway to develop a sensor that detects vital and chemical indicators linked to pain attacks in children with sickle cell anaemia. "These advancements will undoubtedly make the app completely dependable, reducing recurring complications, enabling early intervention, and minimising the financial burden of treating associated complications."

OETC opens RO14mn Saih al Khairat grid station

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The RO14mn Saih al Khairat grid station in Dhofar was inaugurated by Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) on Wednesday.

The event, held under the patronage of Ahmed Hamed al Subhi, Chairman of Nama Holding, was attended by Saleh al Rumhi, CEO of the company.

The grid station is a strategic investment for OETC, guaranteeing a stable and dependable energy supply to vital sectors, including manufacturing, agriculture and livestock facilities. Its purpose is to meet the increasing demand for electrical energy in Dhofar in the coming years.

Equipped with robust communication infrastructure and security systems, the grid station also features a 91km overhead transmission line connecting it to the Thumrait grid station. The transmission line operates at 33/132kV. It has six gas insulated cells of 132kV, four cells of 33kV, and two 125MVA transformers.

Speaking on the occasion, Rumhi emphasised the significance of the project in connecting rural areas to the electricity network in Dhofar, thereby reducing operational costs.

"Implementation of this project aligns with Oman's vision of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. It is expected to reduce reliance on diesel fuel for station operations, resulting in a significant decrease in carbon emissions of approximately 114,000 tonnes annually," he said.

OETC, a member of the Nama Group, holds the sole responsibility for the transmission and control of electricity throughout the sultanate's network. The company transmits electricity from production stations to distributed load centres in various governorates. Operating at a voltage of 132kV and above, the transmission network covers most of the governorates, from north to south. Additionally, OETC manages the interconnection lines between Oman and the GCC interconnection network, operating at 220kV.

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Announcement

► The University invites the qualified and experienced companies for the following Re-Tender No. 5/2022:

General Cleaning and Insect and Rodent Control Services in the New Building of the University in Maabila 8

Tender documents can be obtained from the Revenue Department on the ground floor of the University new building in Maabila 8

Start of Tender Document Collection	09/07/2023
Closing Date of the Tender Document Collection	20/07/2023
Cost of Tender Documents	OMR 10\ Only (non-refundable)
Guarantee	1% of the total annual value of the Tender valid for (90) days from the Closing date
Site Visit and pre-bid meeting (For all bidders)	Tuesday, 25/7/2023 12:00 PM at the University building in Maabilaa 8:12:00 PM at the University building in Maabilaa 8
Tender Closing (Submission Date)	2023/07/30 01:00 PM at the University building in Maabilaa 8

1. Bids are valid for 90 days from the closing date.

2. Attending the Site Visit and Pre-bid Meeting is a prerequisite for accepting bids.

3. The guarantee mentioned above is to be paid by certified check or original bank guarantee.

4. Any reservations or inquiries about the aforementioned tender should be submitted within one week from the date of the tender announcement, and no request or inquiry will be considered if received by the committee after the specified deadline.

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OPAZ Board lauds Royal Decree on Khazaen

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) on Wednesday lauded the establishment of Khazaen Economic City through a Royal Decree (No 44/2023).

The board said it 'valued' the Royal Decree that saw the coming up of the new economic city near Barka under the supervision of OAZ. It was the board's second meeting of the year held at the authority's headquarters under the chairmanship of Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, the Chairman of the Board.

The board stressed that the city will serve enhancing the business environment and creating new investment opportunities in South Batinah, along with other economic zones, free zones, and the existing and under construction industrial cities in the various governorates.

During the meeting, the board touched on the current progress of the masterplans of the Economic Zone in Al Rawdah in the



wilayat of Mahdah in Buraimi governorate.

In this regard, the board discussed the protection alternatives from potential flood risks, in addition to highlighting the opportunities for direct connection between the sone and the roads leading to the ports of Sohar and Shinas. The board was briefed on the existing coordination, through the Omani-Saudi joint

executive committee, on the project for the Integrated Economic Zone in Dhahirah governorate. In addition, the meeting included discussing the linking locations with the road leading to the Empty Quarter borders.

The board also approved the incentives for the usufruct agreement and stressed continuing the cooperation with the governors' offices in the two zones.

Free zone project in Muscat airport

With regards to the free zone project at Muscat International Airport, OPAZ Board of Directors approved extending the concession agreement for the operating company (ASYAD) for a period of 50 years renewable, in addition to the other advantages of the agreement.

On the other hand, the board

commended the progressive results achieved by the various departments of OPAZ in the field of automating procedures and digital transformation in line with the government evaluation system for digital transformation, and highly-prised the steps taken to combat the use of paper transactions within and outside OPAZ by none sending and receiving paper documents except

of correspondences of a special nature, starting from July 1.

OPAZ Board of Directors was familiarised with the initial results of using artificial intelligence technologies and introducing employees' qualification programmes. Hence, the board directed to increase adopting new technologies and providing more spatial information to investors, artificial intelligence techniques

and business intelligence in line with converting electronic basic environment systems to locally approved cloud platforms, and continue enhancing and updating information security software and systems.

Moreover, the board was also briefed on the future programmes aimed at improving and speeding up the transactions between the economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, including the central services portal and the system for managing shipments and goods between the zones affiliated with OPAZ, in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Royal Oman Police.

It is worth mentioning that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones was established by a Royal Decree (No 105/2020) on August 18, 2020. It oversees 14 economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities. It also supervises the establishment of a group of new economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities.

Turkey's inflation rate slows to 38.2% in June

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's annual inflation rate slowed to 38.2% in June, official data showed on Wednesday, although economists warned that this may be a low point for the year.

The rate slowed from 39.6% in May, according to the TUIK state statics agency.

A separate study released by independent economists from the ENAG group who question the official data put the June figure at 108.6%, up from 105.2% in May.

The official rate has been steadily dropping since reaching a more than two-decade high of 85% in October of last year.

But economists think inflation will soon start growing faster because of the vast spending pledges President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meted out ahead of May's general election. Turkey has also allowed its tightly controlled currency to start losing value against the dollar at a faster-than-expected rate.

"Inflation is likely to rise in July and we think it will end this year at 40-45% year-on-year," said Liam Peach, a senior emerging



markets economist at Capital Economics.

"With the lira's depreciation having been more front-loaded than we had expected and the currency likely to depreciate further in the coming months, inflation looks set to end this year at a higher level than we had thought. The lira has lost more than 23% of its value against the dollar since Erdogan extended his rule into a third decade in a hard-fought runoff election on May 28," he added.

The drop underscores a radical shift in policies since the election that includes an end to a two-year era of ultra-low interest

rates.

The central bank hiked its policy rate to 15 percent from 8.5% last month in its first meeting since the election.

Economists welcomed Erdogan's turn to more traditional economics, urging his team to move even faster.

But the Turkish leader still believes that high interests rates contribute to - rather than cure - growing consumer prices.

He began pushing the central bank to slash borrowing rates at all costs in 2021, setting off the worst inflationary spiral of his rule.

AFP

Moody's assigns first time Ba3 rating to PNC Investments LLC

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Moody's on Wednesday assigned a Ba3 corporate family rating (CFR) and Ba3-PD probability of default rating (PDR) to PNC Investments LLC (PNCI), which operates under the Sobha Realty brand and is a leading private developer of residential property in Dubai (Aa2, stable).

Concurrently, Moody's has also assigned a Ba3 backed instrument rating to the proposed benchmark-sized senior unsecured sukuk (the certificates) to be issued by Sobha Sukuk Limited, a Cayman Islands special purpose vehicle. The outlook on both entities is stable.

The Ba3 CFR assigned to PNCI is supported by the company's improving market position for residential property development in Dubai, having established itself as a leading privately owned developer; and its strong off-plan sales activity and material pre-completion payment collection that reduces development risk, and which combined with its available ready to build land bank covering



the next 2-3 years of planned development, provides some revenue visibility.

The company's good profitability with gross margin in the mid-30% and its strong financial metrics with debt to EBITDA of 1.4x and debt to book capitalisation of 21% as of the end of 2022 as well as prudent financial policies targeting net debt to EBITDA of less than 2.75x through the cycle have also contributed to this rating.

The rating also factors in PNCI's relatively small scale and limited track record, especially of operating through economic cycles in a highly competitive market; the cyclicality of the property development industry, especially in

Sukuk issuance

The proposed senior unsecured sukuk has been assigned a Ba3 rating. The alignment of the sukuk's rating with that of PNCI's Ba3 CFR is because certificate holders are effectively exposed to the creditworthiness of PNCI for the periodic distributions (akin to coupon payments) and principal repayment of the sukuk.

Holders of the sukuk will not be exposed to the performance risk of the sukuk portfolio assets and do not have any preferential claim or recourse over the relevant commodity (Murabaha) and real estate assets (the 'sukuk assets'), or rights to cause any sale or disposition of the sukuk assets, except as expressly provided under the English Law transaction documents. Following the planned issuance of the sukuk, Moody's expects PNCI's capital structure to become predominantly unsecured.

Moody's notes that the company could maintain a small portion of construction financing, which is secured on receivables from the sale of units in the respective construction project that is being financed.

Stock markets drop as Chinese data disappoints

London, UK - Stock markets re-treated on Wednesday on poorly-received Chinese data, as investors looked ahead to the re-opening of Wall Street after the Independence Day holiday.

"There are fresh concerns about the global economy powering down as data from China's service sector underlines how tepid the post-pandemic recovery has become, just as trade tensions between Beijing and Washington ramp up," noted Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"This has put indices in Europe on the back foot, following falls in Asia."

European oil prices declined with China being a key consumer of crude, while US futures were higher compared with Monday's close.

All eyes later will be on the release of minutes from the US Federal Reserve's June policy



meeting.

They should provide an insight into officials' thinking when they decided to pause interest rates for the first time after ten straight hikes to combat elevated inflation.

The minutes will be followed on Friday by closely-watched US jobs data, a key guide to the state of the world's top econ-

omy.

While the Fed and other central banks' battle against sticky inflation has been the overriding issue for investors this year, China's struggle to get growth back on track has also been a major cause of angst.

A string of indicators in recent months has shown that policymakers have a lot of work to do

to get the world's number two economy, a key driver of global GDP, back up to speed.

The initial burst of activity seen after the lifting of the country's zero-COVID policy at the end of 2022 has subsided.

Apart from the odd pledge of action and some small interest rate cuts, authorities have done little to address the problem.

In the latest sign of trouble, the Caixin private survey of the services sector showed that activity slowed sharply in June and at a much faster pace than feared.

That came after an official reading also pointed to weakness in the sector and added to a run of soft data on trade and consumer activity, among other things.

However, analysts said that while Beijing has said it plans to provide much-needed support, the scope will be limited owing to huge debt levels in the coun-

try, meaning the bazookas deployed in the past cannot be used this time.

"Measures already introduced have mainly focused on providing a floor to economic growth," said Bruce Pang, of Jones Lang LaSalle.

"But we need more comprehensive, larger-scale and stronger-than-expected policy support at a time when market demand and confidence have not yet had a clear recovery."

China-US relations remain an issue, and President Xi Jinping's government this week added to their tech standoff by imposing export controls on key metals used in making microchips. Officials said Monday's measure placed on shipments of gallium and germanium was to protect national security.

A day after that move, Xi urged countries to avoid decoupling and severing supply chains. AFP

MSX drops 9 points as global markets fall

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index 30 on Wednesday lost 9.2 points, comprising a drop by 0.19% to close at 4786.02 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4795.19 points. The trading value on Wednesday stood at RO1,244,962, comprising a decline by 77.4%, compared to the last session, which stood at RO5,514,616.

The report released by MSX pointed out that the market value went up by 0.002% to reach about RO23.86bn.

The report added that the



value of shares bought by non-Omani investors reached RO315,000, comprising 25.31%. The value of shares sold by non-Omani investors reached RO7,000, comprising 0.57%. The net non-Omani investment increased by 24.74% to RO308,000.

Saudi, Kuwait claim gas field eyed by Iran

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia has said it enjoys 'full rights' along with Kuwait to a disputed gas field in the resource-rich Gulf, pushing back against claims by Iran, state media reported late on Tuesday.

The field, known as Arash in Iran and Dorra in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, falls under "joint ownership between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait, and they alone have full rights", the official Saudi Press Agency reported, citing a foreign ministry source.

The Saudi statement appeared one day after Kuwait reinvited Iran to participate in talks on their sea borders.

The dispute over the field - whose recoverable reserves are estimated at some 220bn cubic metres - dates back to the 1960s, when Iran and Kuwait awarded overlapping offshore concessions.

Last year, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement to develop the field, despite objections from Iran which branded the deal as 'illegal'.

Mohsen Khojsteh Mehr, managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company, said



last week that "there is full preparation to start drilling in the joint Arash oil field".

"Considerable resources have been allocated to the board of directors of the National Iranian Oil Company for the implementation of the development plan for this field," he was quoted as saying by Iranian state media.

Iran and Kuwait have held

unsuccessful talks for many years over their disputed maritime border area, which is rich in natural gas.

Saudi Arabia is also a part of the dispute since it shares with Kuwait maritime gas and oil resources in the area.

Iranian drilling of the field in 2001 spurred Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to agree on a maritime

border deal which stipulated that they jointly develop the offshore zone. In March, Saudi Arabia and Iran announced a surprise Chinese-brokered rapprochement deal, agreeing to restore ties after a seven-year rift, raising hopes for reduced tensions between the Middle East heavyweights.

AFP



UN worried as clock ticks on Ukraine grain export deal

Geneva, Switzerland - The United Nations said on Wednesday that it was 'worried' about the survival of a grain exports deal for Ukraine, which could collapse within a fortnight, threatening food security for the world's most vulnerable.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative aimed at easing a global food crisis is set to expire on July 17 unless Russia, which is pressing an invasion of Ukraine launched in February 2022, agrees to its renewal.

But Moscow remains unhappy about the operation of the deal's parallel agreement on Russian food and fertiliser exports, and said on Tuesday that it saw no reason to extend the BSGI.

"No doubt we are worried because the two agreements signed in Istanbul are very important for food security and for the developing countries in the global south," Rebeca Grynsman, head of the UN's trade and development agency UNCTAD, told reporters in Geneva.

UNCTAD has been a major player in brokering the deals.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine saw Ukraine's Black Sea ports blocked by warships until the agreement, signed in July 2022, allowed for the passage of critical grain exports.

The initial 120-day agreement struck with the UN and Turkey last July has been extended three times: in November, March and in May.

The parallel agreement, between Moscow and the UN, is aimed at facilitating the export of Russian food and fertilisers, which are exempt from Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over the Ukraine war.

But Russia claims this parallel agreement is not being upheld.

UN considers Moscow trip

"We need both, to continue bringing prices down and have stable markets of food and fertilisers in the world," Grynsman said.

"The United Nations remains committed to making every effort for the continuation of the agreements. They remain our main concern and we hope that

we can ensure their extension for the benefit of the most vulnerable countries and the most vulnerable people in the world.

"We will continue during the days and hours still left with our efforts to make that happen."

Ukraine was one of the world's top grain producers, and the deal has helped soothe the global food crunch triggered by the conflict.

Some 32.8mn tonnes have been exported so far under the agreement, according to the UN. Just over half of the exports have been corn, while more than a quarter have been wheat.

Grynsman said consultations with a Russian delegation had taken place in Geneva.

"We will consider, yes, going to Moscow in the days that are left, but that has not been confirmed yet," she added.

Russia said on Tuesday that the Moscow-UN deal had 'continued to degrade', blaming the problem on secondary effects of Western penalties on shipping and insurance companies as well as banks.

AFP

Moderna signs agreement towards making mRNA medicine in China

Shanghai, China - US-based biotech giant Moderna on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding towards producing mRNA medicine in China for the domestic market, the company said, an investment reportedly worth \$1 billion.

The announcement is among the latest signs China is open for foreign business after years of pandemic-induced isolation, although memories of Beijing's disruptive zero-COVID measures and its increasing prioritisation of national security have hammered international firms' confidence in the country.

Local media outlet Yicai reported on Wednesday that Moderna's Chief Executive Stephane Bancel was in Shang-



hai for a signing ceremony, and that the company "is set to announce investment in China of as much as US\$1bn".

In an email, Moderna declined to comment on the specific value of the investment, but confirmed that agreements had been signed.

"We signed a memorandum

of understanding and a related land collaboration agreement to work toward opportunities for Moderna to research, develop and manufacture mRNA medicines in China," a company representative wrote in an email to AFP.

"Any medicines produced under this agreement will be ex-

clusively for the Chinese people - who face many of the same health challenges that affect other communities around the world - and will not be exported," they added.

Beijing had previously refused to greenlight Moderna's mRNA vaccine for COVID-19, along with those from other foreign firms, for public use.

The representative did not respond to a question about whether Wednesday's announcement involved its COVID-19 vaccine.

The news comes ahead of a trip to China by US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who is looking to stabilise fraught ties between the world's two biggest economies.

AFP

UN urges 'massive' clean energy investment in developing world

Geneva, Switzerland - The United Nations called on Wednesday for massive investment in clean energy in developing countries, saying there was otherwise little hope of achieving any climate goals by 2030.

Developing countries need renewable energy investments of about US\$1.7tn annually but attracted foreign direct investment in clean energy worth only US\$544bn in 2022, the UN's trade and development agency UNCTAD said.

"We cannot fulfil the world's energy needs and safeguard our planet and our future without massive private sector investment in renewables in developing countries," said UN chief Antonio Guterres.

"We are at least a decade late in our efforts to combat global warming. Investment in renewable energy in developing countries is therefore essential and often the most economical way to bridge the energy gap.

"But while the transition to renewable energy is a global prior-



ity, investments in energy infrastructure and efficiency still fall far short of what is needed."

International investment in renewable energy has nearly tripled since the Paris climate accord was struck in 2015, UNCTAD noted in its annual World Investment Report.

However, it said much of the growth was in developed nations. Since 2015, '31 developing countries, including 11 least developed countries, have not yet registered a single utility-sized international investment project in renewables or other energy transition sectors,' the report said.

Fossil fuel subsidies US\$1tn: UN report

"The scale of the challenge is enormous," said UNCTAD chief Rebeca Grynsman.

"A significant increase in investment in sustainable energy systems in developing countries is crucial for the world to reach climate goals by 2030."

The agency called for debt relief to give developing countries fiscal space to invest in clean energy transition. The report also said that fossil fuel subsidies around the world amounted to a record US\$1tn in 2022 - eight times the value of subsidies pro-

vided to renewable energy.

'Fossil fuel subsidies represent a disincentive to investment in the energy transition because they make it more challenging for renewable energy to compete, especially when it does not receive the same level of support,' it said.

'Although phasing them out is complex, particularly for developing countries, doing so would help encourage investment in renewable energy.'

UNCTAD's report said that after a steep drop in 2020 and a strong rebound in 2021, overall global foreign direct investment (FDI) declined by 12% in 2022, to US\$1.3tn. 'The slowdown was driven by the global polycrisis: The war in Ukraine, high food and energy prices, and debt pressures,' it said.

International project finance and cross-border mergers and acquisitions were especially affected by tighter financing conditions, rising interest rates and uncertainty in capital markets.

AFP

CONDOLENCES

The Board of Directors, Management and Staff of
Oman Hotels & Tourism Company SAOC
express their heartfelt condolences on
the sad demise of



MAQBOOL HAMEED AL SALEH

Founder & Chairman of OHI Group

May God bless the deceased with His mercy, and provide his family and loved ones with patience and solace.



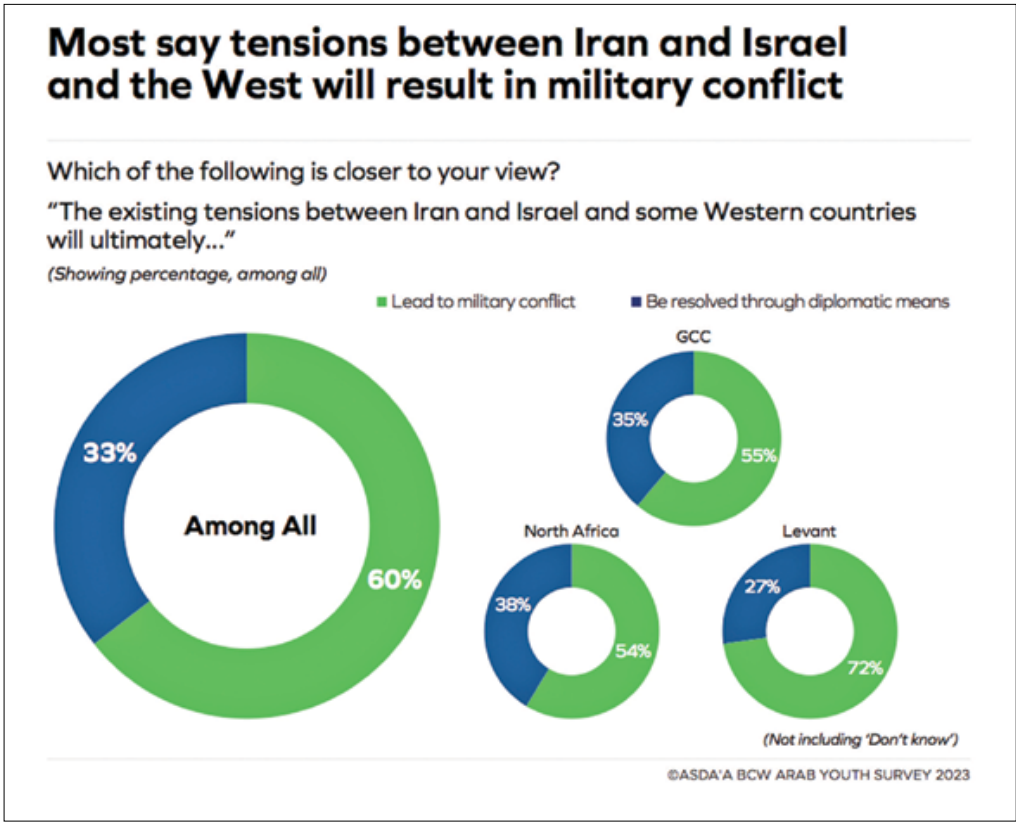
60% Arab youth say tensions between Iran, Israel and West will lead to military conflict

Around two-thirds (60%) of Arab youth say that relations between Iran and Israel and the West will deteriorate into military conflict. Many also say that they expect the Iranian regime to become even more authoritarian in the future, with a third saying the country will experience more civil unrest and possibly a coup.

These are some of the key insights from the landmark 15th annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey, unveiled by ASDA'A BCW, the Middle East & North Africa's leading communications consultancy. The survey is the largest study of its kind of MENA's largest demographic, its 200mn plus youth. This year's findings show young Arab men and women 'Living a New Reality', the overarching theme of the 2023 survey.

ASDA'A BCW commissioned SixthFactor Consulting, a leading research company, to conduct face-to-face interviews with 3,600 Arab citizens aged 18 to 24 in their home nations from March 27 to April 12 this year. The largest sample in the survey's history was equally divided between men and women in 53 cities across a total of 18 Arab states, including for the first time South Sudan.

The interviews were deliberately conducted face to face rather than online to maximise the accuracy of the research and to reflect the nuances of Arab youth opinion across the region as much as possible.



The 75-year Palestinian-Israeli conflict won't be resolved soon

Arab youth are also pessimistic about the prospects for peace in the Palestinian Territories, with most (55%) saying the 75-year conflict between Palestinians and Israelis won't be resolved within the next five years.

Although a majority (60%) of GCC citizens said a positive resolution is 'likely', over two-thirds (69%) in Levant, and more than half (57%) in North Africa, say it is 'very unlikely' or 'somewhat unlikely' that the conflict will be

resolved soon.

Moreover, nearly four in ten (39%) young Arabs overall believe that with rising national priorities, the conflict does not receive adequate attention from the Arab world, rising to more than half (51%) in the Levant region, which includes the Palestinian Territories.

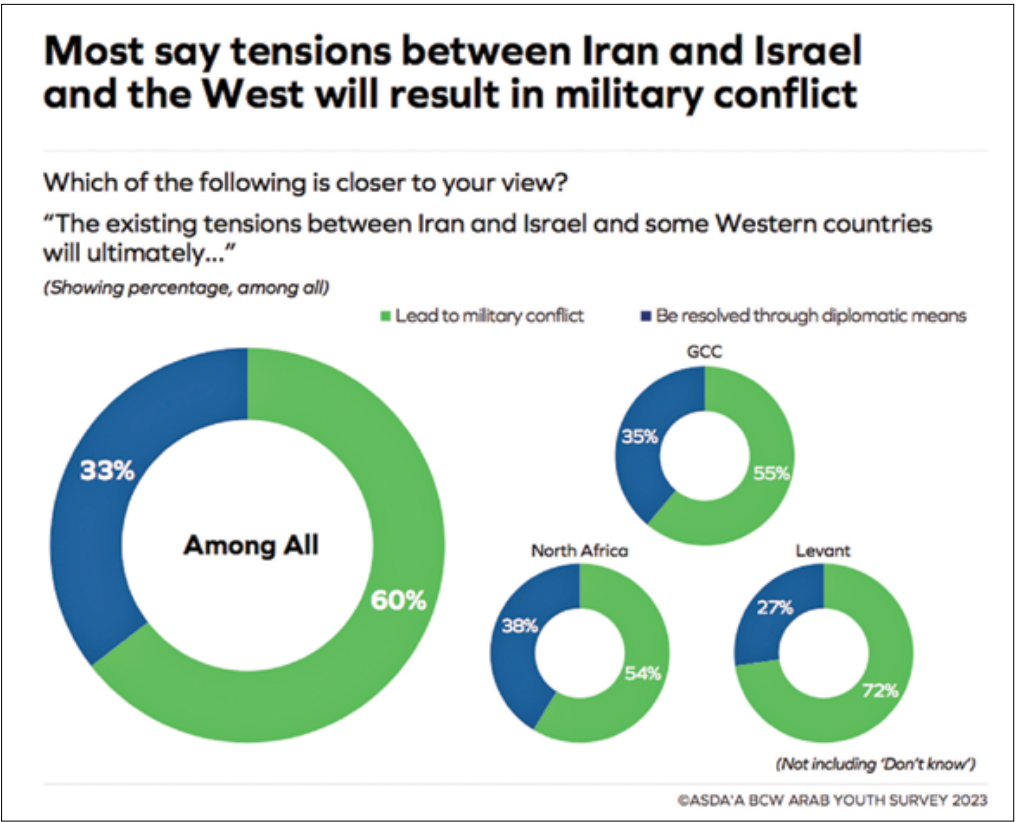
Divergent views on closer ties with Israel

Most Arab youth oppose the normalisation of ties between Arab countries and Israel but a majority in the United Arab Emi-

rates, Egypt and Morocco favour closer diplomatic relations with the country.

When young Arabs were asked whether they supported or would endorse their government's decision to normalise diplomatic ties with Israel, three-quarters (75%) in the UAE, a signatory of the Abraham Accords, said they supported normalisation. A third in Bahrain, the first country to sign the agreement, said the same.

In Egypt, nearly three-fourths (73%) support diplomatic ties with Israel, as do nearly half of



youth in Morocco, another participant in the Abraham Accords. In Sudan, however, the fourth Arab nation to establish full diplomatic ties with Israel, 94% oppose it.

In South Sudan, 47% of youth favour closer relations with Israel, compared with 31% in Algeria, 19% in Syria and Yemen, 13% in Tunisia, 14% in Kuwait, and just 6% in Jordan. In the rest of the region surveyed, an overwhelming majority oppose diplomatic ties.

Sunil John, President, MENA, BCW and Founder of ASDA'A

BCW, said that while the agency's 15th annual attitudinal survey of Arab youth showed an intriguing divergence of opinion on relations with Israel in some of the countries that have joined the Abraham Accords, the underlying sentiment across the region was that rapprochement with Israel should remain off the table.

“Overall, the Arab world has witnessed a reduction in armed conflict in recent years, with the situation in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen calmer than it was before,” said John.

“The exceptions of course are Sudan, where civil unrest has flared recently, and the Palestinian Territories, where relations between Palestinians and Israelis remain deadlocked, a state of affairs exacerbated by the involvement of Iran.”

“These conflicts notwithstanding, the overall de-escalation of tensions suggests that countries in the Middle East are willing to overcome their differences,” John added. “This trend must continue if the region, an economic bloc of over 400mn people, is to realise its full potential.”

Bank Muscat offers 100% cashback on international use of credit cards

In line with its commitment to offer various services and benefits to meet customers' aspirations especially during summer, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the sultanate, launched a special offer on its credit cards when used internationally.

During the offer period, customers will get the chance to enter a monthly draw to get 100% cashback on their spends (capped at RO100) for every RO100 spent using Bank Muscat credit cards internationally on POS machines or online.

For every RO100 spent, customer get another 1 chance to win. The higher the spend, the higher the chances to win. There will be 100 winners every month with a total of 700 winners by the end of the campaign. The offer continues until December 31, a press release stated.

The campaign comes as part of Bank Muscat's strategy to provide special offers to customers and users of Bank Muscat cards in general and credit cards in particular; providing them with the best value proposition for its products to enhance their experiences, the release added.

Bank Muscat credit card customers enjoy curated discount offers across a wide range of categories including, lifestyle, health and beauty, entertainment, travel and hotel stays. This is in addition to card usage benefits such as free travel insurance and rewards on spends. Bank Muscat is also currently offering customers who apply for all eligible Bank Muscat credit

cards a waiver of annual fees for the first year.

“We are pleased to see the positive feedback Bank Muscat's credit cards get. The bank is keen to provide various offers to meet customers' needs and aspiration,” said Abdullah Tamman al Maashani, General Manager - Products, Bank Muscat.

“We hope that these added benefits will give our valued customers the chance to enjoy the added value the cards provide during their travel plans this summer. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our valued customers for their continuous confidence in the bank's products and services. We will continue to develop our services and facilities to offer the best banking experience for all customers.”

In line with its customer-centric vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’, Bank Muscat has launched a new service within its Internet and mobile banking channels, which enables customers to submit applications for credit cards digitally.

The new service further expands the list of options available to customers through the bank's various digital channels and enhances banking convenience leading to reduce waiting times when visiting branches.

The new features enable customers to apply digitally for a variety of credit cards including Visa Gold credit card, Visa Classic credit card, Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum credit card, Bank Muscat Lulu Titanium Mastercard credit card, among others.

Sharia’a Supervisory Board of Alizz Islamic Bank presents compliance report

The Sharia’a Supervisory Board of Alizz Islamic Bank held its third meeting of the current year with a full quorum under the chairmanship of Dr Essam al Enezi, Chairman of the board.

Board members - Dr Ahmed Subhi Ayadi and Dr Ibrahim bin Nasser al Sawafi, and eminent members from the Tamkeen Program for empowering the second level of the Sharia’a Supervisory Board also attended the meeting, said a press release.

Tamkeen Program members participated alongside the members of the Sharia’a Supervisory Board as part of their practical training.

The meeting was attended by Alizz Islamic Bank's general manager Ali bin Saif al Mani and senior executive management.

Mani gave a visual presentation on the bank's Q2 performance this year and the expectations for the bank moving forward.

The Sharia’a Compliance and Audit Department also presented a report on sharia’a compliance and the risks of sharia’a non-compliance, in which the indicators of periodic review and assessment of potential risks



were mentioned.

The sharia’a audit report for the second quarter of the current year was presented, which reflected the sharia’a review of executed transactions.

The sharia’a board provided appropriate solutions for procedural processes.

It also discussed a number of issues raised and new products, and the sharia’a board issued its decisions regarding them, in addition to considering a number of

restructuring requests for corporate financing and issuing the appropriate decisions for them.

Issa bin Salim al Riyami, head of the Sharia’a Audit and Compliance Department, said, “The Sharia’a Supervisory Board plays an indispensable role in terms of providing sharia’a-compliant solutions to the bank's customers, especially in terms of meeting the needs of corporate customers, where there is a requirement for more advanced products.

The department actively participated in the development of various products that were launched during the past year, as well as the products that are scheduled to be launched in 2023. All of this was done under the supervision and guidance of the Sharia’a Supervisory Board.”

Riyami pointed out that the Sharia’a Supervisory Board of the bank performs various roles that to achieve the ultimate goal of

ensuring compliance with the sharia’a in all areas of dealing with customers, products and services.

“The bank's transactions have been carried out in accordance with the principles and rules of the sharia’a, and it provides the necessary reports on its findings and takes the necessary steps to support the bank's products and services so that they are compatible with the principles and rules of the sharia’a,” he added.

Ooredoo announces summer internships for Omani students

Ooredoo has opened its door for Omani students to do summer internships - an excellent way for them to gain 'real-world work experience and industry insights, build valuable connections, and learn new skills while making their CV look great'.

‘Ooredoo's summer internship programme, is the perfect plan if you are a student or know any higher education students looking to gain relevant skills and turn the summer months into a



Sulaiman al Mughairi

real advantage,’ the company stated in a release.

The Ooredoo summer internship enables Omani higher education students to get a taste of what it's like to work in telecoms, as interns will shadow real experts while rotating between various departments matching their education and needs. The placement typically lasts for two or three months, allowing students to test the water before committing to a particular career.

“Ooredoo aims to support young Omani people in their future employment, and internships can make a big difference in making the transition from study to the world of work,” said Sulaiman al Mughairi, Acting Chief People Officer at Ooredoo Oman.

“The transferable skills these prospective job seekers will gain are essential in a competitive job market, where hands-on experience matters.”

He added, “Our structured

summer internships enable students to demonstrate their value in the workplace while gaining confidence in their abilities to perform successfully in future careers. They also show students roles they may have yet to consider and help them gain insight into how a company like Ooredoo operates while working alongside real specialists.” Ooredoo's summer internships do not require applicants to have any previous work experience.

WEST BANK RAID

Israel ends two-day army operation that killed 13

Jenin, Palestinian Territories - Israel's army on Wednesday declared the end of a large-scale military operation in the occupied West Bank that killed 12 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier over the previous two days.

The raid, involving hundreds of forces, drone strikes and armoured bulldozers, targeted the northern West Bank city of Jenin, a centre for multiple armed Palestinian groups.

Amid the days of violence, a Palestinian attacker in Tel Aviv on Tuesday wounded seven Israelis, two seriously, in a car ramming and stabbing attack before an armed civilian shot him dead.

And overnight, Israel carried out airstrikes on targets inside the blockaded Gaza Strip in response to rocket fire from the Palestinian coastal enclave, with no deaths reported.

As the army pulled out of Jenin from late on Tuesday, much of the crowded city was left charred and in rubble from the incursion which displaced at least 3,000 residents.

Its adjacent refugee camp, a tiny area home to 18,000 people, has long been a stronghold of militant groups including Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

"The operation is officially over and the soldiers have left the Jenin area," said an army spokesman on Wednesday after columns of armoured vehicles were seen withdrawing.

In Jenin on Wednesday, thousands of mourners joined a funeral procession for the slain Palestinians.

Militants fired in the air as the bodies were carried through the streets, which were covered in debris from the violence.

"In our souls and blood, we



Israeli military vehicles move during a military operation in Jenin in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday (AFP)

will sacrifice for you, martyr," the crowd chanted.

Jenin residents inspected the widespread destruction in the

logistic sites.

The Palestinians labelled the escalation an act of 'open war against the people of Jenin'.

international law, in the area Palestinians regard as the core on the independent state they are seeking.

Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, the territory is home to about 490,000 Israelis living in settlements - a number that hard-right nationalist groups within Netanyahu's coalition government are working to increase.

The Palestinians want Israel to withdraw from all land seized in 1967 and to dismantle all Jewish settlements. Netanyahu, however, has pledged to 'strengthen settlements' and expressed no interest in reviving peace talks, which have been moribund since 2014.

The army, after a number of deadly attacks last year inside Israel, started to launch almost daily raids into the West Bank.

The violence has further escalated since Netanyahu's government took over late last year, with clashes concentrated in the northern West Bank, long a hotbed of militancy.

During this week's raid, the army said it had uncovered militant hideouts, arms depots and bomb-making facilities.

"Our troops operated at dozens of sites where they produced ammunition, explosives and various types of weapons," Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said. "Anyone who attempt to harm the children and the citizens of Israel will experience the full force [of the military]," he warned.

The army said troops had 'confiscated' a large amount of funds from militants during its operation.

AFP



An elderly woman stands amidst the rubble of a broken pavement in an alley in Jenin on Wednesday (AFP)

Broken walls, crushed cars: Jenin assesses damage

Jenin, Palestinian Territories - As Israeli forces pulled out of Jenin, its Palestinian residents came back to assess the devastation: trashed homes, charred cars and roads strewn with rubble, glass and bullet casings.

The West Bank city has endured violence before, but the latest offensive was the heaviest in years, with air strikes hitting buildings and armoured bulldozers ripping up streets.

Siham al Naaja (53) returned to her apartment in the Jenin refugee camp Wednesday to find the windows smashed, furniture upturned, pictures ripped off walls and belongings scattered across the floor.

"There's no electricity, there's no water, there's nothing," she said about the city where many buildings were pockmarked from the gunshots.

Naaja was among at least 3,000 people who fled after Israel launched its raid Monday in the crowded neigh-

bourhood amid gunfights with Palestinian fighters.

She sadly pointed to her upturned household and a broken plastic toy on the floor, and charged that the Israeli forces had stolen the family's money and gold.

Jenin's refugee camp - a small and densely populated urban area - houses Palestinians, and their descendants, who fled during the conflict that erupted when Israel was created in 1948.

In the refugee camp, 18-year-old Mahdi Jalysa pointed to a food bag with Hebrew writing on it, left behind by the soldiers.

"The army entered the camp, and the first thing they did was (launch) airstrikes," he said. Local people were caught by surprise, he recounted, adding that at the time "we had no food".

Nearby rubble from damaged buildings was piled up on roads alongside torn-down power cables and streaks of fuel.

AFP

MONSOON BLUES



People ride on a horsecart through a flooded street after heavy rainfall in Lahore, Pakistan, on Wednesday (AFP)

Iran maintains crackdowns, executions over protests: UN fact-finding mission

Geneva, Switzerland - Iran is still meting out harsh punishments on people suspected of involvement in mass protests, including 'chilling' executions, a United Nations fact-finding mission said Wednesday.

Iran was rocked by demonstrations sparked by the September 16 death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd who had been arrested for allegedly violating the strict dress rule for women based on sharia'a.

At a special session in November, the UN Human Rights Council voted to create a high-level investigation into the deadly crackdown.

Reporting to the council, Sara Hossain, chair of the independent international fact-finding mission, said that ten months on, the Amini family's "right to truth and justice remains unfulfilled".

"The lack of transparency around the investigations into her death is further evidenced by the arrest and continued detention of the two women journalists, Nilufar Hamedi and Elahe Mohammadi, who first reported on the event," she added.

Iran has said that 22,000 people have been pardoned in connection with the protests - which "suggests that many

more were detained or charged", Hossain said.

No official data exists on the nature of the allegations against them, or on those convicted, detained or charged in connection with the protests, she said.

Hossain said pardoned protesters were reportedly made to express remorse - "to effectively admit guilt" in signing written undertakings not to commit 'similar crimes' in future. "Harsh punishments continue to be meted out to those involved in the protests, including for exercising rights protected under international human rights law," she said.

AFP

Tunisians target African migrants, dozens expelled, say witnesses

Sfax, Tunisia - Racial tensions in the Tunisian coastal city of Sfax flared into violence targeting migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, dozens of whom were forcibly evicted from the city, witnesses said on Wednesday.

Amid the disturbances late on Tuesday, police detained some and deported them as far away as the Libyan border more than 300km, according to a local rights group.

The latest unrest started after the funeral of a 41-year-old Tunisian man who was stabbed to death Monday in an altercation with migrants, which led to the arrests of three suspects from Cameroon.

"We are going to avenge his death!" young people chanted at the victim's funeral, according to video footage published online.

Sfax, the North African country's second-largest city, is a departure point for many migrants hoping to reach EU member Italy by sea, usually the island of Lampedusa about 130km away.

Hundreds of residents massed in the streets late on Tuesday demanding the eviction of all illegal migrants. Some blockaded streets and set tyres ablaze.

Videos shared on social media showed police chasing dozens of migrants from their homes to the cheers of city residents, before loading them into police cars.



Tunisians block the road to migrants by setting tyres on fire as tensions rise in Sfax after the burial of a Tunisian stabbed to death during a scuffle between residents and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, on Tuesday (AFP)

On the Facebook page of non-government group Sayeb Trottoir, the medic Lazhar Neji, working in the emergency room of a hospital, deplored "an inhumane... bloody night that makes you tremble".

He said the hospital had received between 30 and 40 injured migrants, including women and children, and said "some were thrown from terraces, others attacked with swords".

Other footage showed migrants lying on the ground, their

hands on their heads, surrounded by residents armed with sticks who waited for police to arrive to hand them over.

Police took some migrants to the site of the Sfax International Fair, from where they were to be transferred elsewhere, said Romdane Ben Amor, head of the non-government group Forum for Economic and Social Rights.

He said that some migrants were taken to an area near the Libyan border, without being able to give precise numbers.

Tunisia has seen a rise in racially motivated attacks following President Kais Saied's comments in February accusing 'hordes' of illegal migrants of bringing violence and alleging a 'criminal plot' to change the country's demographic makeup.

With a population of 12 million, Tunisia hosts an estimated 21,000 migrants from other parts of Africa, representing 0.2% of the population.

AFP

President Biden denounces wave of shootings

President calls for stricter gun control measures as US witnesses multiple shootings on Independence Day

Washington, US - President Joe Biden called again on Tuesday for stricter gun control measures while denouncing a wave of shootings that overshadowed Independence Day.

Five people were killed and four wounded in a shooting in Philadelphia on Monday night, police said. Another shooting overnight in Fort Worth, Texas, claimed the lives of three and injured eight, CNN reported.

And as of Tuesday afternoon, the country had already seen multiple shootings on Independence Day. Five were injured in Lansing, Michigan, and four hurt in Charlotte, North Carolina, according to the Gun Violence Archive (GVA).

Another shooting in Akron, Ohio, which police responded to in the early morning hours of Tuesday, left four injured, according to local media.

"Over the last few days, our nation has once again endured a wave of tragic and senseless

shootings in communities across America," Biden said in a statement, mentioning the shootings in Philadelphia, Fort Worth, and Lansing, as well as recent instances of gun violence in Baltimore, Wichita, Kansas and Chicago.

"As our nation celebrates Independence Day, we pray for the day when our communities will be free from gun violence," the President said.

At a Fourth of July parade last year in Highland Park, Illinois, just outside Chicago, a gunman killed seven and wounded dozens. This year, the suburb planned a remembrance ceremony in lieu of a parade and traditional festivities, officials said.

"In mere moments, this day of patriotic pride became a scene of pain and tragedy," Biden said in reference to the shooting's anniversary.

In Philadelphia, police said they had apprehended the shooter, though his motive re-



US President Joe Biden (left), First Lady Jill Biden (second from left) and family members watch the Independence Day fireworks from the Truman Balcony of the White House in Washington, DC, on Tuesday (AFP)

mained unknown.

"We have absolutely no idea why this happened," Philadelphia Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw said.

The suspect, a 40-year-old man, was wearing body armour and a ski mask, and sprayed bullets from a military-style assault

rifle at random in the city's Kingsessing neighbourhood, said Ernest Ransom, a staff inspector with the Philadelphia police. He was "shooting aimlessly at occupied vehicles and individuals on the street as they walked," Ransom said.

In Fort Worth, meanwhile, no arrests had been reported as of Tuesday afternoon.

"I am devastated by the news

Much more must be done... to address the epidemic of gun violence that is tearing our communities apart

JOE BIDEN

of a mass shooting in Fort Worth last night," Mayor Mattie Parker said on Twitter. "My heart breaks for the victims."

There have been at least 346 mass shootings in the United States this year, according to the GVA's archive. The GVA defines a mass shooting as a gun-related incident in which at least four or more people are wounded or killed, aside from the shooter.

More than 44,000 people were killed by guns last year, with about 24,000 of them by suicide.

"Much more must be done... to address the epidemic of gun violence that is tearing our communities apart," Biden said, praising gun control measures passed in Illinois after the Highland Park attack.

"I urge other states to follow Illinois' lead, and continue to call upon Republican lawmakers in Congress to come to the table on meaningful, commonsense reforms that the American people support."

AFP

Fifteen dead as heavy rains lash southwest China



Paramilitary policemen search an area after it was flooded by heavy rains in China's southwestern Chongqing, on Tuesday (AFP)

Beijing, China - Fifteen people died and four were missing after torrential rain lashed the metropolis of Chongqing and swathes of southwestern China, local officials and state media said on Wednesday.

China has for weeks been hit by extreme weather - from heavy rains to intense heatwaves - the frequency of which is increasing as global temperatures soar.

Residents in the capital Beijing and dozens of other areas have been warned to stay indoors as temperatures soar past 35°C.

And in one of the deadliest natural disasters to occur in China so far this year, torrential rains in Chongqing this week "killed 15 people and left four others missing", local authorities told AFP.

"The heavy rains, mainly seen in the areas along the Yangtze River, have triggered floods and geological disasters, disrupting the lives of more than 130,000 people in 19 districts and counties," state-run news agency Xinhua said.

Images from state broadcaster CCTV posted on social media on Tuesday showed torrents of muddy water in Chongqing's heavily affected Wanzhou District overflowing embankments and pieces of debris being swept away.

And the Communist Party-backed *People's Daily* posted photos of ongoing rescue efforts Wednesday, showing emergency responders helping residents evacuate flooded residential buildings.

On the outskirts of Chongqing, workers on Tuesday discovered that a closed-off railway bridge had collapsed after it was "damaged by the impact of mountain torrents", CCTV said.

The government dispatched a

Senator with Indigenous roots challenges Mexico ruling party

Mexico City, Mexico - A woman senator of Indigenous origin on Tuesday joined the opposition challengers seeking to shake up the race to replace Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador next year.

Initially seen as an outsider, Xochitl Galvez has emerged as the opposition favourite to take on Lopez Obrador's ruling party, whose leading presidential contender is also a woman.

Lopez Obrador, a leftwing populist, enjoys solid approval ratings but is required by the constitution to step down after a single six-year term.

Two weeks after his Morena party launched its own process to select a candidate, Galvez registered along with lawmakers Santiago Creel and Gabriel Quadri to represent the opposition.

The Broad Front for Mexico groups the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which ruled the country for more than 70 years until 2000, as well as Galvez's conservative National Action Party, and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution.

"We have to stop the hatred... the confrontation and solve the



Senator Xochitl Galvez (AFP)

big problems," said Galvez, a loquacious 60-year-old engineer and former head of the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples.

A businesswoman in the technology sector, Galvez has grabbed the media's attention since she unsuccessfully tried to enter Lopez Obrador's daily news conference last month to respond to the President's remarks.

Lopez Obrador on Tuesday branded Galvez the "candidate of the power mafia", referring to opposition parties that he accuses of having plundered the country.

A day earlier, Galvez had accused the president of chauvin-

ism.

"He cannot conceive that a brave, qualified woman can gain a political position by herself," she said.

Analysts said that Galvez posed a credible challenge to the ruling party, which has been seen as likely to remain in power.

"Morena was very comfortable and sure thinking that the 2024 contest had almost been won," political analyst Paula Sofia Vazquez said.

"Contrary to what they thought... it will not be so simple," she told AFP.

According to opinion polls, former Mexico City mayor Claudia Sheinbaum has taken a lead over ex-foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard for the ruling party candidacy.

It means that Mexico could be heading for an unprecedented all-woman battle between the two main political camps in the June 2024 election.

Galvez and other opposition hopefuls must gather at least 150,000 signatures of support by early August, after which surveys and a public consultation will determine the candidate.

AFP

'Crashed spy satellite of North Korea had no military utility'

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea's first spy satellite had 'no military utility' at all, South Korea said on Wednesday after analysing its wreckage.

In May, North Korea attempted to put what it described as its first military reconnaissance satellite in orbit but the rocket carrying it plunged into the sea minutes after launch.

The crash sparked a complex, 36-day South Korean salvage operation involving a fleet of naval rescue ships, minesweepers and deep-sea divers. The retrieved parts of the rocket and the satellite were analysed by experts in South Korea and the United States, the Defence Ministry in Seoul said on Wednesday after the end of the operation.

They "evaluated it had no military utility as a reconnaissance satellite at all", the ministry said.

North Korea said it had developed the spy satellite as a necessary counterbalance to the growing US military presence in the region.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has made the devel-

opment of a military spy satellite a top priority.

Pyeongyang has vowed to launch another one soon.

North Korea's ruling party 'bitterly' criticised the officials responsible for the crash last month, state media reported.

The United States, South Korea, and Japan condemned North Korea's satellite launch on May 31 as a violation of United Nations resolutions prohibiting the nuclear-armed state from using ballistic missile technology.

Analysts have said there is significant technological overlap between the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles and space launch capabilities.

Relations between the two Koreas are at their lowest points in years, and diplomacy is stalled after failed attempts in recent years to discuss Pyongyang's denuclearisation.

Kim has declared North Korea an 'irreversible' nuclear power and has called for ramped-up arms production, including tactical nuclear weapons.

AFP

Treated water from Fukushima safe: IAEA chief



Rafael Grossi (centre), Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, at the Fukushima nuclear power plant on Wednesday (AFP)

The planned, decades-long discharge of accumulated water from the nuclear facility has been approved by IAEA as meeting global standards

Iwaki, Japan - The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog tried to reassure local residents and representatives on Wednesday that the planned release of treated wastewater from the Fukushima nuclear plant is safe.

The planned, decades-long discharge of accumulated water from the devastated nuclear facility has been approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as meeting global standards.

Its chief Rafael Grossi acknowledged at a meeting in Iwaki, Fukushima prefecture, that concerns remain.

"All these complex graphs and statistics are one thing but the reality, the reality of people, the reality of the economy, the reality of the social mood and perceptions may be different," he told a meeting of residents and officials.

Some 1.33mn cubic metres of groundwater, rainwater and water used for cooling have accumulated at the Fukushima site, which is being decommissioned after several reactors

begin this summer but is opposed by some regional neighbours, with Beijing vocally condemning the plan, as well as some in Fukushima, particularly fishing communities who fear customers will shun their catches.

Grossi said the IAEA was not involved in the process to "give cover... to decorate something that is bad".

"When it comes to this activity here, what is happening is not some exception, some strange plan that has been devised only to be applied here and sold to you," he said.

"This is, as certified by the IAEA, the general practice that is agreed by and observed by many, many places, all over the world."

'No choice'

Still, there is palpable anger among some residents who fear the reputational damage of the release.

Tetsu Nozaki, chairman of the Fukushima Prefectural Federation of Fisheries Co-operations,

Associations, argued Japan's government was misrepresenting local sentiment, which he said remained strongly opposed to the plan.

"We fishery operators are left with no choice but to react emotionally and harden our attitude," he told Grossi. "I beg you to realise... that this project of the release of ALPS-processed water is moving ahead in the face of opposition."

Grossi said he had no 'magic wand' that could assuage concerns but pointed out the IAEA will set up a permanent office to review the release over decades.

"We are going to stay here with you for decades to come, until the last drop of the water which is accumulated around the reactor has been safely discharged," he said.

The IAEA said on Tuesday in a final report that the release would have 'negligible' impact on the environment, a finding that South Korea said it respects.

AFP

FRANCE ON THE BOIL

Backlash over call to control social media

President Macron calls for powers to ‘cut off’ social media in case of widespread violence like riots

Paris, France - President Emmanuel Macron’s government faced a backlash on Wednesday after the centrist leader called for powers to ‘cut off’ social media in case of widespread violence like riots over the past week.

“We have to think about the social networks, about the bans we’ll have to put in place. When things get out of control, we might need to be able to regulate or cut them off,” Macron told a meeting of mayors on Tuesday according to media reports.

Macron and his ministers have singled out platforms like Snapchat, TikTok and encrypted messenger Telegram for their role in spreading images of the nights of violence following the June 27 police shooting of a 17-year-old teenager, Nahel M.

“When (social media) becomes a tool for organising or for attempting to kill, it’s a real problem,” Macron said.

“This is worrying, when we reach the point of saying the only solution is cutting off social networks, you ask yourself what point we’ve reached” in France, Greens leader Marine Tondelier told broadcaster France Inter Wednesday.



An ambulance passes by as the messages and flowers brought by people for the slain boy Nahel M are seen at the site where he was shot by police, near Paris on Wednesday (AFP)

Other opposition politicians from left and right had attacked the proposal, with hard-left France Unbowed chief Mathilde Panot responding to Macron in a tweet with ‘Ok Kim Jong-Un’, referring to the leader of sealed-off North Korea. ‘Cut off social networks? Like China, Iran or North Korea? Even if it’s a provocation to distract attention, it’s in very bad taste,’ conservative parliamentary chief Olivier Marleix also wrote on Twitter.

Some voices were even raised within Macron’s parliamentary camp, with MP Eric Bothorel writing that to cut off social networks would mean “giving up on the idea that democracy is stronger than the tools turned against it. It would be a mistake”.

Digital Transition Minister Jean-Noel Barrot’s office on Wednesday told France Inter that cutting off social networks was ‘not on the table’.

Instead, the government wants to bring together lawmakers to discuss how best to alter an existing social-network bill currently under debate, cabinet spokesman Olivier Veran said after ministers met on Wednesday morning.

A working group would examine possible ‘legal tools’ and ‘precisions’ that could be added, he told reporters.

“That could mean suspending features... for example some platforms have geolocation features allowing young people to meet at a certain spot, showing (violent) scenes and how to start fires,” Veran said.

“That’s an appeal to organise hateful acts in public and we’d have the authority to suspend it.”

AFP

Republican senator sparks outcry with ‘ethnic’ violence comments

Paris, France - One of the most senior figures in France’s mainstream rightwing party was accused of ‘crass racism’ on Wednesday after claiming that immigrant-origin people who took part in riots over the past week had undergone ‘a regression to their ethnic roots’.

Bruno Retailleau, who heads the Republicans party in the Senate, was responding to a question about the identities of the people, who have burned cars and clashed with police during the country’s worst riots since 2005.

Although many of them were black or of north African origin, sparking calls for tighter curbs on immigration, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told parliament on Tuesday that



Bruno Retailleau

90% of the people arrested since last Tuesday were French citizens.

“OK, they’re French, but these are French people in their official identity, and unfortunately for the second and third generations (of immigrants), there is a sort of regression to-

wards their ethnic roots,” Retailleau told Franceinfo radio.

He also criticised plans by President Emmanuel Macron to accelerate the payment of money to local authorities to help rebuild public buildings that he said were burned down by ‘savage people’ - a racially loaded term. “It’s a double blow for French people: They have paid already and now we’re going to need to rebuild because these savage people have set fire to them,” he said.

The parliamentary head of the hard-left France Unbowed party, Mathilde Panot, denounced a ‘crass racism’, while fellow MP Clementine Autain said that “these people, oozing racism, dare give lessons about good republican behaviour”.

The comments from Retailleau, a conservative who has sought his party’s presidential nomination in the past, underscore the increasingly shrill debate about immigration and identity in France.

The Republicans party, which traces its roots to post-war hero Charles de Gaulle and has provided presidents from Jacques Chirac to Nicolas Sarkozy, has veered sharply rightwards under its new tough-talking leader Eric Ciotti.

It has been eclipsed by France’s far right for much of the last decade, with veteran anti-immigration leader Marine Le Pen attaining her highest score ever in presidential elections last year.

AFP

Police probing death following rubber bullet use in Marseille

Marseille, France - French authorities are investigating the death of a man who may have been hit by a police rubber bullet during riots in Marseille, they said on Wednesday.

The 27-year-old man was riding a scooter in the southern French port city overnight Saturday to Sunday during the height of rioting when he lost consciousness, fell, and was found dead shortly after.

France was hit by riots and looting after an officer killed 17-year-old Nahel M during a June 27 traffic stop in a Paris suburb, rekindling long-standing accusations of systemic racism among security forces. Marseille prosecutor Do-

It is probable that the man’s death has been caused by the impact of a rubber bullet on the chest

minique Laurens said the scooter rider was believed to have suffered a heart attack after a ‘violent shock’ consistent with the impact of a rubber bullet - known as a ‘flashball’ - in the chest.

One police source said that there was had been no police near the site of the crash at the time, and that the investi-

gation was trying to establish the man’s itinerary ahead of his death. Emergency responders said on the weekend they believed the man had suddenly fallen ill when they were called out to the scene, and that there had been no scenes of tension between rioters and police nearby.

But Laurens, while on Tuesday announcing an investigation into ‘death involving the use of a weapon’, said that there had been rioting and looting in the area.

He said it was ‘probable’ that the man’s death had been caused by the impact of a rubber bullet on the chest.

AFP

India’s headhunting warriors sever past, fret over future

Mon, India - Once, the way to get ahead among India’s Konyak warriors was by chopping off an enemy’s skull. Today, the last survivors of a past age mourn the changing times - and a new generation they see as soft.

At 90, Nokkho Konyak can barely see beyond a few feet, his facial tattoos marking him as a warrior are fading and his frail body needs support.

But his eyes light up and his hands become animated when he talks about “those simpler times”.

“We witnessed our brave elders cutting off enemies’ heads and participated in many battles,” he told AFP.

Nokkho is a Konyak, a small but fierce and respected warrior community in northeastern India’s Nagaland state.

The Konyaks were the last to give up the age-old practice of severing enemies’ heads in this remote, hilly and densely forested region close to the



The Konyaks perform their tribal dance in Longwa village in the Mon district of India's Nagaland state (AFP)

Myanmar border.

“I am lucky to still be alive, to be around my extended family, and I feel that today’s generation is too privileged,” he said at Chi village, about 360km from the regional capital Dimapur.

Nokkho is an old man from a dying breed that practised or witnessed headhunting before it

stopped half a century ago.

“Human heads were trophies that earned you respect,” he said, sitting in front of a wall decorated with the skulls of animals sacrificed by his family.

Warriors were inked with different tattoos signifying anything from participation in a battle to killing someone and actually tak-

ing a head.

As a young boy, he practised lopping off heads on large puppets, though he never severed a human one in battle himself.

The last two headhunters in the village, his two elderly friends, died about 20 years ago.

Most tribal fights happened over land and limited resources,

with warriors carrying spears, axes and machetes ambushing their enemies.

Wherever possible, enemies’ headless bodies were tied to a bamboo pole and taken back to the victor’s village.

The head itself was taken and paraded about for the village to see, hailed as a sign of bravery to

be celebrated.

“My youth was a time of great transition,” Nokkho said, referring to the arrival of missionaries, who denounced headhunting and gradually converted most people from their traditional animist beliefs to Christianity.

Nokkho remembers World War II, the end of British colonial rule, the formation of the Indian state in 1947, the first roads and power lines, and now, finally, the arrival of mobile phones.

‘Hard for women’

Like Nokkho, 90-year-old Bo Wang, king of nearby Hongphoi village, took up hunting wild boars and other animals after “headhunting became taboo”.

Wang’s family, like other royals in nearby Konyak villages, has been the final local authority for generations.

“Everyone lived in fear of an ambush, and we were taught to be wary of everyone,” Wang said, describing the stress of

growing up with the threat of headhunters.

The area is peaceful now, he said, but he laments what he sees as a lost era. “Everything changed with modernity, our culture is dying,” he said.

“People respected hierarchy, elders and their king - which isn’t the case anymore,” he added.

Dressed in a traditional red conical cap adorned with fluttering feathers and boar tusks, he sat around a fire with his peers reminiscing, saying they hoped their stories, lives and culture would not be forgotten.

But Wang’s second wife, Kamya (80) said she was glad her granddaughters were growing up today and not in the conditions she experienced.

“There was just stress, not enough food or resources,” she told AFP. “It was particularly hard for women, who thanklessly worked at home, in the fields - all the time.”

AFP

West Indies ease to win over Oman

Harare, Zimbabwe - The West Indies rebounded from their failure to qualify for this year's Cricket World Cup by cruising to a seven-wicket win over Oman in Harare on Wednesday.

Opener Brandon King made 100 and captain Shai Hope finished on 63 not out as the West Indies easily chased down Oman's total of 221-9 with 10.2 overs to spare.

The two-time champions will miss the 50-over World Cup for the first time after being eliminated from contention last week following a heavy defeat by Scotland in their opening Super Six match.

Jason Holder and Alzarri



Brandon King of the West Indies celebrates after scoring a century

Joseph as a result both returned to the Caribbean ahead of a two-Test series against India later this month.

Shoaib Khan scored 50 and wicketkeeper Suraj Kumar added an unbeaten 53 as Oman recovered from 116-6 to give their bowlers a modest target to defend.

Romario Shepherd took 3-44 and Kyle Mayers claimed 2-31 in a chaotic innings featuring three run outs.

The West Indies lost Johnson Charles early in reply but King and Keacy Carty steadied the chase before the latter was run out for 29.

AFP

Agarkar named India's chief cricket selector

New Delhi, India - Former pace bowler Ajit Agarkar has been appointed chief selector of Indian men's cricket after being "unanimously" elected to head a five-member committee.

Agarkar's appointment comes after his predecessor Chetan Sharma resigned following a sting operation by a TV channel, which caught him gossiping about national stars.

A three-member committee appointed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India on Tuesday recommended Agarkar for the role of chairperson of the Men's Selection Committee "based on seniority", from the



Ajit Agarkar

total number of Test matches.

Agarkar, 45, has represented India in 26 Tests, 191 one-day and four Twenty20 matches in an international career between 1998 and 2007.

AFP

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Oman Sail's Optimist and ILCA teams all set for Pan Arab Games

Muscat - Seven sailors from Oman Sail's youth sailing squad will join over 3,800 athletes from 18 countries at the 15th edition of the Pan Arab Games, being held in Algeria for the first time since 2004.

Racing begins on Friday with Omani sailors competing in Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 7 classes under the guidance of coaches Sultan al Balushi and Munther al Kindi. Competitions will be held over 12 races in all classes at the Promenade Les Sablettes in Algiers following a practice day to acclimatise to the conditions.

Oman will also be providing two senior officials to the sailing event after the Union of Arab National Olympic Committees selected Abdulaziz al Shidi to be a member of the Technical Committee team and Nawaf Al Ghadani to be part of the Jury Committee Team, which will also demonstrate Oman's capabilities off the water.

On the sailing side, Oman will be represented by a talented group of sailors in various categories. In the Optimist class, Hassan Nasser al Wahaibi, Tamim Suleiman al Balushi, Feras Haitham al Nabhani, and Soud



Sailors of Oman youth squad train at a camp in Ras al Hadd

Talib al Shaqsi. For the ILCA 4 category, Abdullatif Zaid al Qasmi and Hatem Mohsen al Oreimy will be competing. Finally, Ahmed Hassan al Balushi will represent Oman in the ILCA 7 class.

Ahmed al Qasmi, National Team Manager, said, "The team has been taking part in a training camp at Ras al Hadd since mid-June to prepare and will now travel to Algeria to represent Oman. We are confident in our abilities and look forward to competing alongside talented sailors from across the region. Our sailors have performed very well in recent championships and in training in all three of our classes at the Pan Arab Games and we are all very proud to represent the nation at such a high-profile event."

ILCA 4 and ILCA 7 national team coach, Munther al Kindi, added, "We have selected seven of the top prospects in our youth squad for this championship and have supported them to take another step forward in their careers."

"This is a great opportunity to test their knowledge and technique against their peers from different nations and engage in high-level competition."

'I'M 100 PER CENT THERE'

Tunisia's Jabeur backs WTA in Saudi link

London, United Kingdom - Tunisian star Ons Jabeur has backed the Women's Tennis Association over their decision to evaluate the potential for playing a tournament in Saudi Arabia.

After finishing as Wimbledon runner-up last year, Jabeur is the sport's most prominent Arab player and her support for the WTA's interest in the Gulf state is a significant boost to the governing body.

"If it benefits for the player, I'm 100 percent there. I hope in Saudi they will not just invest with ATP, I hope with WTA (as well)," Jabeur said after her straight sets win against Magdalena Frech in the Wimbledon first round on Tuesday.

WTA chief executive Steve Simon said last week that his organisation is considering the "challenging topic" of taking the sport to Saudi Arabia.

The country has been linked with hosting the flagship end-of-season WTA Championships.



Tunisia's Ons Jabeur celebrates after winning a point against Poland's Magdalena in their first-round match at Wimbledon on Tuesday (AFP)

The Saudis have been increasing their global reach in recent years despite accusations of attempting to "sportswash" their human rights record.

As well as the Saudi interest in women's tennis, ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi has said the men's tour has had "positive" dis-

cussions with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund about a potential deal.

That announcement drew criticism from tennis legends John McEnroe and Chris Evert.

Jabeur doesn't agree and pointed out that significant progress is being made in Saudi

Arabia with regard to women's rights. "I believe in Saudi they're doing great giving women more rights. It's time to change things," she said.

"Believe it or not, we have the best two women in the Arabic world right now playing in tennis (herself and Egypt's Mayar

Sherif). It's now or never. I hope they really invest in WTA."

The Saudis have been signing up veteran football stars such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema to play in their domestic league and are bankrolling English Premier League club Newcastle.



Andy Murray with Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe

Iranian jail to Wimbledon royal box, thanks to Murray

London, United Kingdom - Andy Murray revealed he had an "emotional" meeting with Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who spent six years in an Iranian jail cell, after inviting her to watch him from the royal box at Wimbledon on Tuesday.

British-Iranian Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Murray became friends after she revealed that watching the Scot win Wimbledon on television in 2016 helped sustain her during solitary confinement.

She had been accused of spying while in the country visiting her parents and held in Tehran's notorious Evin prison until her release last year.

"She hadn't been to Wimbledon before," said Murray.

"After the story she told me about watching my Wimbledon final while she was in a cell, I felt like I wanted to invite her to come along and watch the tennis in totally different circumstances."

"Hopefully, a much more enjoyable experience. It was very emotional talking to her and hearing her story. It was brilliant that she was able to come along and watch."

Zaghari-Ratcliffe revealed in an interview last year that prison officials allowed her access to a TV which only had two channels.

One broadcast an Iranian soap opera while the other was a sports channel showing Wimbledon when Murray was winning his second title at the tournament.

"They had no idea what they had given me," she said.

On Tuesday, she was able to at last see Murray in the flesh on Centre Court and the two-time champion didn't disappoint his guest as he eased

It was very emotional talking to her and hearing her story

ANDY MURRAY

Falls mar Tour de France stage finale as Philipsen wins again

Nogaro, France - Jasper Philipsen won a second consecutive stage of the Tour de France on Tuesday as a series of high-speed falls at the Nogaro motorbike race-track stole the headlines.

The Alpecin rider Philipsen finished at a speed over 67kph and took the overall lead in the sprint points battle after pipping Caleb Ewan and Phil Bauhaus.

Belgian Philipsen expressed shock at the falls.

"I've never experienced a finish like that before, those curves are tight and I'm so happy not to have fallen," said the 25-year-old.

His teammate and lead-out man Mathieu van der Poel also spoke out about the choice of placing the finale on a racetrack.

"A circuit is not safer than a



Jasper Philipsen celebrates on the podium

road. I'm just happy I managed to stay upright and managed to find a gap for Jasper," he said.

Philipsen agreed.

"Maybe because it was so boring and slow today the riders were more nervous. The corners were also much more technical than I had expected."

Alcaraz, Rybakina start with win as rain reigns

London, United Kingdom - World number one Carlos Alcaraz and defending women's champion Elena Rybakina got their Wimbledon bids off to winning starts on Tuesday as torrential rain brought havoc to the All England Club schedule.

Only an hour's play was possible on the outside courts, which meant 69 of the planned 77 matches were unable to be completed.

Just eight matches took place on the covered Court One and Centre Court.

Alcaraz raced through the first set against French veteran Jeremy Chardy in just 22 minutes before breaking twice in the second set.



Carlos Alcaraz celebrates after beating Jeremy Chardy

Chardy, who had previously announced that Wimbledon would be the final tournament of his career, drew first blood in the third set to lead 4-2, but Alcaraz hit back strongly, sealing a 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 win with an ace.

Rybakina was caught cold in the opening set, double-faulting on her first point on the way to losing her first service game to unseeded American Shelby Rogers but she rallied strongly to win 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

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SAMBA BEATS IN ITALIAN RHYTHM

Coaching great Ancelotti takes on Brazil challenge

Sao Paulo, Brazil - Real Madrid's Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti is set to become the first foreigner in almost 60 years to coach Brazil's national team the president of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said on Tuesday.

Ancelotti, 64, has a season remaining on his contract with Real, which he has said he would like to honour, and will take over Brazil in time for the Copa America, in the United States from June 2024.

The Brazilian federation had announced earlier Fluminense's Fernando Diniz would take charge of the team for the coming year. "This guy (Diniz) is a coach who has a nice style of play," Ednaldo Rodriguez president of the CBF told CNN Brazil.

"His style is similar to the coach who will assume the role at the Copa America, Ancelotti."

The prize football-mad Brazil will want one of the most successful coaches in European football to deliver is a sixth World Cup trophy in 2026. It would be the first since 2002.

The 2022 edition was especially galling for the Brazilians as they exited in the quarter-finals,



Carlo Ancelotti

beaten by Croatia, and their bitter continental rivals Argentina lifted the trophy.

Tite brought down the curtain on his six years in charge follow-

ing their elimination. Ancelotti's agreement to take over Brazil comes after months of negotiations with Rodrigues, who had the Italian at the top of the list.

Ancelotti had said the Real job would be his last after almost 30 years as a coach, but one of the most glamorous and challenging jobs in football brought a change

of mind. Brazilian hierarchy said they were attracted not only by Ancelotti's record of winning trophies but also by his laid-back character and ability to develop close relations with the players.

"We went after him not only due to his record, but also because he is a decent person," Rodrigues told beIN Sports recently.

"Those who have worked with him say that he is open, cultured, and he appreciates Brazilian football."

One moment his love of Brazilian football was put on hold

We went after him not only due to his record, but also because he is a decent person. Those who have worked with him say that he is open, cultured, and he appreciates Brazilian football.

EDNALDO RODRIGUEZ



Roberto Firmino

Firmino joins Saudi club Al-Ahli after Anfield exit

Paris, France - Brazilian forward Roberto Firmino became the latest high-profile player to complete a move to Saudi Arabia, signing for Al-Ahli on Tuesday after his contract with Premier League giants Liverpool expired.

The 31-year-old left Liverpool after eight seasons at Anfield, during which time he scored 111 goals in 362 appearances and won the Premier League, Champions League and Club World Cup.

His arrival at Al-Ahli was revealed by the club in a video posted to social media and comes less than a week after the

team concluded a deal to sign Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy from Chelsea.

Backed by the nation's sovereign wealth fund, the Saudi Pro League is luring big names from the major European leagues with the promise of huge salaries.

Former Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard took over as coach at Al-Ettifaq earlier in the week, while Karim Benzema and N'Golo Kante have also made the move to the Gulf state since Cristiano Ronaldo's switch to Al-Nassr in January started the trend.

AFP

Galtier leaves PSG, clearing way for Luis Enrique arrival

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday confirmed the departure of coach Christophe Galtier, clearing the way for the expected appointment of former Barcelona and Spain boss Luis Enrique.

Galtier had a year remaining on his contract but his departure from the Qatar-owned club had been expected ever since the end of the last Ligue 1 season at the start of June.

"Paris Saint-Germain and Christophe Galtier have decided to terminate his contract as coach of the first team," the club announced in a statement published after sources close to the negotiations had revealed the news to AFP.

"Everyone at Paris Saint-Germain thanks Christophe Galtier, as well as his assistants Thierry Oleksiak and Joao Sacramento, for their professionalism and commitment over the course of the season, and wishes them the



Luis Enrique

best in their future careers."

PSG have called a press conference at their training ground for later on Wednesday when Luis Enrique is set to be unveiled

as the new coach to replace Galtier.

The 56-year-old former Saint-Etienne, Lille and Nice coach was appointed a year ago and led

PSG to a French record 11th title. However, they finished just a point ahead of runners-up Lens after losing seven games after the turn of the year. Their league

success was also overshadowed by a disappointing exit from the Champions League in the last 16 to Bayern Munich.

PSG also went out of the French Cup at the same stage to Marseille, and Galtier is the seventh coach to leave the club since the Qatari takeover of 2011.

The final weeks of Galtier's reign were marred by accusations that he made racist remarks about players during his previous job at Nice.

He has vehemently denied the accusations but will stand trial in December on charges of "moral harassment and discrimination on the grounds of actual or supposed membership or non-membership of a particular ethnic group, nation, alleged race or religion", according to prosecutors in Nice.

The offences are punishable by three years' imprisonment and a 45,000-euro (\$49,000) fine.

Anderson omitted as England ring changes for third Test

Leeds, United Kingdom - England have left out all-time leading wicket-taker James Anderson in one of three changes to their side for a must-win third Ashes Test against Australia at Headingley starting Thursday, with express quick Mark Wood, seam-bowling all-rounder Chris Woakes and spinner Moeen Ali recalled.

Both Anderson and fellow paceman Josh Tongue have been rested as England bid to keep the Ashes alive at 2-0 down in the five-Test series following a 43-run defeat at Lord's last week.

England captain Ben Stokes's stunning 155 gave his side hope of an improbable win at Lord's following the disputed stumping of Jonny Bairstow, given out when he thought the ball was



James Anderson

dead. But all-rounder Stokes, who has been struggling with a long-standing knee problem, bowled

just 15 overs across two innings at Lord's and he said his fitness had been a factor in England's

team selection for Headingley.

"I'm not going to lie, last week sort of took it out of me a little bit," Stokes told reporters on Wednesday. "So a big part of something that I had to think of was what would be the best team if I wasn't to bowl a ball this game, in the worst-case scenario."

"It doesn't mean I'm not going to bowl but that was a huge part of the thinking about the team that we picked."

Anderson's 688 wickets are the most by any fast bowler in Test history, but the 40-year-old swing specialist has struggled in this series, with just three wickets at more than 75 apiece.

Given a congested schedule - there is just a three-day turn-

around between the second and third Tests -- rotating England's pace attack was always a possibility and Tongue has also made way alongside Anderson after a promising display at Lord's.

"It's a good chance for Jimmy to have a rest up and then get ready to charge in from the Jimmy Anderson end at Old Trafford next week," said Stokes.

"It's great to have Woody fit, he's firing and ready to go this week."

Moeen replaces Ollie Pope after the vice-captain was ruled out of the rest of the season due to dislocating his shoulder at Lord's. Harry Brook has been promoted up the order to take Pope's place at No 3.

AFP



England captain Ben Stokes (L) and Australia's Pat Cummins (R) chat on the field after the second Ashes Test at Lord's (AFP)

Bairstow row casts shadow over Ashes Test at Headingley

London, United Kingdom - Australia can expect to face a fired-up England and a furious crowd in the third Ashes Test at Headingley starting Thursday as the row over Jonny Bairstow's divisive dismissal at Lord's rumbles on.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese have even traded verbal bouncers over the issue, which started when Bairstow was given out stumped by opposing wicket-keeper Alex Carey during what the England batsman thought was a break in play.

Bairstow's exit, in a match Australia won by 43 runs to go 2-0 up in the five-match Ashes despite England captain Ben Stokes's stunning 155, sparked a chorus of boos at a normally sedate Lord's and led to three MCC members being suspended for allegedly abusing visiting players in the pavilion.

To add fuel to the fire, the third Test is taking place at Bairstow's Yorkshire home ground, with increased security measures expected at Headingley -- traditionally one of English

cricket's most raucous venues.

Many within the Australian game have been stunned by the vehemence of English reaction to a legitimate dismissal and the attempts to link it to their side's Sandpapergate ball-tampering controversy in South Africa five years ago.

But former England captain Mike Atherton said rather than

Many within the Australian game have been stunned by the vehemence of English reaction

world Test champions Australia abusing the 'Spirit of Cricket', Bairstow had been guilty of "dozy cricket".

Stokes insisted he would have withdrawn the appeal and Joe Root, his predecessor as England skipper, endorsed that view by saying Tuesday: "As a team we want to play our cricket in a certain way and leave a certain legacy."



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International Day of Yoga session hosted by Embassy of India



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ENTERTAINMENT

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MAESTRO'S MIND

Strings ATTACHED

ITALIAN VIOLINIST AND CONDUCTOR IN OMAN DECRIES THE ONSLAUGHT OF DIGITAL INTERVENTIONS IN THE FIELD OF MUSIC

Hubert Vaz

Prof Luca Blasio, an Italian concert violinist and tutor of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra (ROSO), is a happy and content man - happy because he has found a fulfilling musical career in Oman spanning one and a half decades, and content because he has successfully imparted training to a number of budding Omani musicians over the years. But there's one aspect about the future of music that worries him.

Prof Blasio, who is also professor at the Muscat Royal College of Music and musical director of Muscat Strings, is wary about the digital bombardment in the field of music worldwide that has taken away the personal touch from many of the compositions and rendered much of the music as one that lacks feeling and emotion.

It is true that digital interventions in the field of music, in the form of synthesisers, keyboards that produce sound of a range of musical instruments, and other equipment, have made the end tasks more convenient, cost effective as well as less time-consuming. However, music produced in this manner does not have the creative flair or emotional touch which only talented musicians can accord to any composition, he points out.

Prof Blasio has been in Oman since January 2009 and has been teaching young students of ROSO as well as performing as a soloist with

the orchestra at concerts in Oman, the region as well as different parts of the world, including Europe and the Americas. Every visit around the world has been a fulfilling experience not only because of the joy of performing but also because of the privilege of taking Arabic music around the world.

"It has been a great pleasure for me to be part of this orchestra for so many years - it was the dream of our late beloved Sultan Qaboos bin Said who had encouraged and promoted music arts in Oman. Though the process had started quite late, the Royal Orchestra has blossomed and flourished over the years with great momentum and has now reached incredible heights of success," Prof Blasio said adding that it is now regarded in high esteem among some of the top orchestras around the world.

About imparting education in music to the younger generation in Oman, Prof Blasio said there is need to set up an institution dedicated to musical arts so that young Omanis as well as expatriates can learn to play a variety of musical instruments, including many traditional instruments, like the Oud and mandolin, and percussion instruments - from as early as six years of age. However, the demand for such education in music has been meagre, he said.

Stressing the fact that young Omanis need to carry forward the cultural traditions started by their forefathers, Prof Blasio expressed the hope that more youngsters would take up learning Arabian musical instruments to keep alive the music of the region which has been appreciated in other parts of the world. While

western influences as well as digital skills have lured the younger generation to other forms of music, unless they are given greater exposure to traditional music and opportunities to learn it, they would continue to stay aloof, he felt.

As regards preserving traditional music and instruments, he did take note that there are societies for traditional music, like the Oud Society, Band for Folklore, etc, which work in this area.

"They are doing a lot. In fact, last year, traditional musicians had been to Rome where they performed a concert along with Italian musicians - it was very interesting," he said, however, adding that a very small number of people are interested in learning traditional instruments. "There should be more demonstrations in schools, for traditional and classical music, to make children more connected with music," he said, adding that once children get exposure to varied forms of music, they will be able to choose what suits them best.

About ROSO, Prof Blasio said, "It was the dream of Late Sultan Qaboos to have an orchestra with 100% Omani musicians and so it is today. I believe, that the work that has been done since 1985 has, indeed, produced incredible achievements. Western countries have orchestras with 400-500 years of heritage and continuous work towards highest standards. However in Oman, in a very short time, the foundation of the symphony orchestra has been laid and the level that has been achieved, considering that it was started in 1985, is really amazing.



The biggest difference between Arabic traditional music and western classical is in the system of the scales. Western music is based on scales and on the division of scales in 12 semitones that are equal to each other. Arabic music has semitones that are not equal – they might be smaller in some places or bigger in other places. There is also traditional folk music that is not written down but passed down from musician to musician. But that exists in all parts of the world.

PROF LUCA BLASIO

cook-up

Pesto Sauce

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup walnuts
- 2 large garlic cloves - roughly chopped
- 2 cups packed fresh basil leaves
- 1/2tsp salt
- 1/4tsp ground black pepper
- 2/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

Method

Place the walnuts and garlic in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Process until coarsely chopped, about 10 seconds. Add the basil leaves, salt, and pepper and process until mixture resembles a paste, about 1 minute. With the processor running, slowly pour the olive oil through the feed tube and process until the pesto is thoroughly blended. Add the Parmigiano and process for a minute more. Use pesto immediately or store in an air-tight container, covered with a thin layer of olive oil to prevent discolouration.



Pasta's a quick-fix solution for summer meals, and if you make your sauces in advance, you can do it in a jiffy. Here's a selection of recipes of homemade sauces to add some zing to your pasta

zingy thing

Pomodoro Sauce

Ingredients

- 1 can (450g) whole tomatoes
- 1/2tbsp olive oil
- 1 clove garlic - minced
- 1/4tsp dried basil
- 1/4tsp kosher salt
- 1/6tsp coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 1/2tbsp honey

Method

Pour the can of tomatoes with juices in a blender and pulse to form a coarse puree. Heat the oil in a medium-sized saucepan on medium-high heat. Cook minced garlic until it begins to brown, 1-2 minutes. Add in the tomato puree and season with the dried basil, salt, and pepper. Stir in the honey and simmer for about 10-15 minutes, until slightly thickened. Taste and adjust the seasonings and honey, as desired.



Carbonara Sauce

Ingredients

- 2tsp olive oil
- 200g sliced beef pancetta - roughly chopped
- 3 garlic cloves - crushed
- 2 egg yolks (at room temperature)
- 2 eggs (at room temperature)
- 1/2 cup thick cream
- 75g grated parmesan cheese

Method

Heat oil in a large, non-stick frying pan over medium heat. Add pancetta and garlic. Cook, stirring, for 5 minutes or until pancetta is crisp. Drain on paper towel. Whisk egg yolks, eggs, cream and three-quarters of the parmesan together in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Add egg mixture and pancetta mixture to pasta. Season with salt and pepper. Toss over low heat until well combined. Serve garnished with remaining parmesan.



Marinara Sauce

Ingredients

- 750g whole peeled tomatoes
- 1 medium yellow onion - peeled and halved
- 2 large cloves garlic - peeled
- 2tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1tsp dried oregano,
- 1/2tsp red pepper flakes (optional), salt - to taste

Method

In a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the tomatoes (with their juices), halved onion, garlic cloves, olive oil, oregano and red pepper flakes. Bring the sauce to a simmer over medium-high heat, then lower the heat to keep the sauce at a slow, steady simmer for about 45 minutes, or until droplets of oil float free of the tomatoes. Stir occasionally, and use a wooden spoon to crush the tomatoes against the side of the pot after about 15 minutes has passed. Remove the pot from the heat and discard the onion. Smash the garlic cloves against the side of the pot with a fork, then stir the smashed garlic into the sauce. Do the same with any tiny onion pieces you might find. You may blend the sauce smooth with an immersion blender, if desired. Add salt, to taste, and serve warm.

Alfredo Sauce

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 100g cream cheese
- 1/2tsp minced garlic
- 1tsp garlic powder
- 1tsp Italian seasoning
- 1/4tsp salt
- 1/4tsp black pepper powder
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Method

In a medium saucepan add butter, heavy whipping cream, and cream cheese. Cook over medium heat and whisk until melted. Add the minced garlic, garlic powder, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Continue to whisk until smooth. Add the grated parmesan cheese. Bring to a simmer and continue to cook for about 3-5 minutes or until it starts to thicken. Toss it with your favourite pasta.



take a break

IN TOWN

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA



The Embassy of India organised a special session at Indian School Muscat to mark International Day of Yoga on June 21



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

It should be quite easy for you to make decisions today, even the ones that are usually real head-scratchers for you. Your emotions are running black and white, which helps to simplify things quite a bit. You'll see the right way and wrong way without much trouble. The only problem could be with struggling friends.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You might need to look past your deep emotions today when there's a major time crunch and you have to get a lot of stuff done in a little bit of time. There simply won't be time to explore your feelings the way you might want to. But don't worry. Once everything is over, you will have plenty of time to vent your frustration.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Some controversy could pop up today. Stand up for what you believe even if your peers totally disagree. You will find that you and a big-time power broker have a common goal, which means that might will be on your side. Are you prepared for your plans to come to fruition? Let's hope so, because you could strike a friendship today.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your emotional intensity could be getting in the way of things today, but it's important for you not to get too self-conscious about it. If you feel like you're getting too sensitive, keep in mind that it's just the way you're processing things. People's words might feel like a personal attack, but if you dissect what they're saying objectively, you'll see that they don't mean anything negative by it.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

If you've been dreaming about making a change, today is the day to make that dream come true. All you have to do is take the initial step. Don't make the mistake of expecting major transformations to happen overnight. If you need to end a relationship, you don't have to do it today. Just set up a time to meet and talk. If you're working on a physical change, take each day as it comes.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You enjoy having your curiosity piqued as much as the next person, but today someone will be so mysterious that you might be driven over the edge! They get a kick out of giving you just enough information to keep you interested and intrigued, while you're ready to delve deep into who they are and what makes them tick. It looks like they're not going to open up any time soon.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Even though you'll be feeling some serious peer pressure today, don't compromise your beliefs. Show people that you have principles and you're not afraid to stand up for them. You will be admired for it, not maligned. And if someone you respect turns out to have been saying things they don't really mean, try to give them the benefit of the doubt.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

In every social interaction you have today, it's important to stay true to yourself. It's the best way to stay comfortable in a crowd. You have an intense energy that appeals to most people, but if it intimidates other people, so what? You can't sculpt your personality to accommodate the comfort level of the people around you.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Now is an excellent time to take stock of where you are and where you want to go in one of your personal relationships. Things have been complicated lately, and they need to be addressed. So seek the quieter path right now and give yourself time to replay the events of the past few days in your head. If you're feeling introspective and moody, just go with it.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Today, making a fresh start seems like the right way to solve a relationship issue, but it might not be. Unless you truly talk out what has been causing strife between you and this other person, nothing will really change. Even if the two of you agree to disagree, this issue will linger and rear its ugly head again. It might take years, but it will come up again.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Right now, whatever you've got up your sleeve should stay there, party plans, juicy gossip, insider information, whatever. Avoid oversharing at all costs when it comes to your ideas, plans, and hopes, especially in front of people you don't know very well. Mum's the word for you today, so keep your mouth shut.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You need to speak with conviction today. Now is not the time to be wishy-washy about things! People are looking to you for guidance, and if you show any hesitation about what you're thinking, you'll lose their allegiance. But if you fully commit yourself to a project or position, people will follow you anywhere.

BOGGLER

A	C	D	B
R	S	I	O
D	R	A	N
A	N	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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

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

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

Weird but True...or False?

Can you spot the difference between a fun fact and a made-up tidbit? Take this 'Weird But True...or False' quiz to find out, based on facts from National Geographic Kids magazine.

A coconut is a nut - True or False?

A coconut is actually a one-seeded drupe, a fruit with a hard, stony covering enclosing a seed. Peaches and olives are also drupes. False

Royalty



Discover how much you know about some of history's most legendary leaders with this fun quiz based on facts from Nat Geo Kids magazine.

When was the United Kingdom's Queen Elizabeth II crowned?

a. 1985 b. 1990 c. 1942 d. 1952

Answer - Crowned in 1952, Queen Elizabeth II was the world's longest reigning female monarch, with 70 years on the throne as of 2022.

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

entertainment



OSCAR
WINNING
ACTOR
ALAN
ARKIN
DIES AT 89

Alan Arkin, the Oscar-winning *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Argo* actor known for his wry wit and improvisation skills, has died at the age of 89, according to his sons. Adam, Matthew and Anthony - who all followed their father into the entertainment industry - said he was 'a uniquely talented force of nature, both, as an artist and a man.' "A loving husband, father, grand and great grandfather, he was adored and will be deeply missed," they said in a statement last Friday, without citing a cause of death.

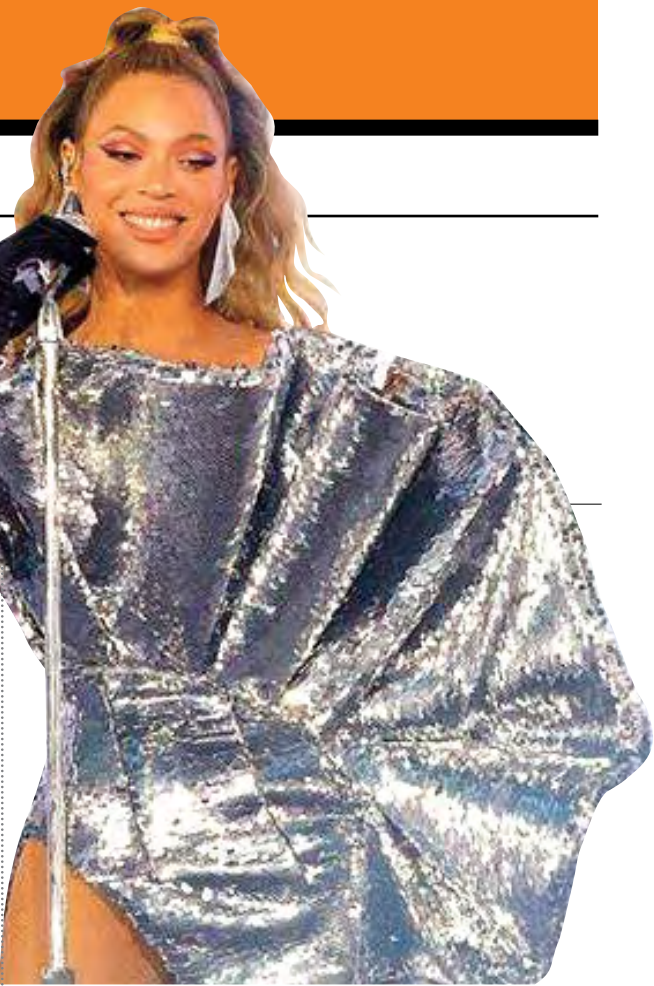
'GOAT STORY'
HEROINE A VIRAL STAR

Who is the breakout CGI starlet of the summer? It certainly isn't Ruby Gillman, the 'teenage kraken' that gurgled at the box office this weekend. *The Little Mermaid*? Try again. No, the animated ingenue that has captured internet users' hearts is Katie (voiced by Mahulena Bocanova) — the buxom, blonde love interest from *Goat Story: The Old Prague Legends*. And what is Goat Story, you may ask? It's an independent animated film from the Czech Republic released in 2008 that — for some inconclusive reason — has become a social media sensation in 2023.



HOLLYWOOD ACTORS
EXTEND CONTRACT TALKS
JUST BEFORE DEADLINE

The union representing 160,000 actors and performers on Friday agreed to extend contract negotiations with Hollywood studios, staving off a potentially crippling strike until at least July 12. The Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) has been locked in lengthy negotiations with the likes of Netflix and Disney, but as a midnight deadline loomed, both sides announced they would continue to negotiate. The current contract has been extended until July 12 at midnight Los Angeles time, SAG-AFTRA said in a statement, adding that a media blackout on the negotiations would remain in effect.



BEYONCE TO LAUNCH
'RENAISSANCE FLAGSHIP'
IN TORONTO

Beyonce is kicking off the North American leg of her *Renaissance World Tour* in fashion: She's partnering with Canadian retailer Holt Renfrew to launch merchandise for her recent album and tour. The Renaissance Flagship, an installation that celebrates the fashion of the singer's Renaissance era, album and tour, will transform the third floor of Holt Renfrew's 50 Bloor Street West store in Toronto from July 5-11. The merchandise launch coincides with Beyonce's two-night stint at Toronto's Rogers Centre on July 8-9. This is the first time the 21-piece collection, priced from about US\$20 to US\$250, will be available in North America.

US ACTOR DAVID
CORENSWET CAST AS NEXT
SUPERMAN

Rising US star David Corenswet will become the latest actor to don Superman's famous red cape, director James Gunn confirmed last Tuesday. The 29-year-old, best known as the lead of recent Netflix series *Hollywood*, will take on the iconic role for *Superman: Legacy*, due in 2025 from Warner Bros. The news was first reported by various Hollywood trade publications, which also revealed that Rachel Brosnahan, star of multiple Emmy-winning comedy *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel*, is set to play Lois Lane. Superman has previously been played on the big screen by Christopher Reeve, Brandon Routh and, most recently, Henry Cavill.



COMING SOON

HIDDEN
STRIKE

Two ex-special forces soldiers must escort a group of civilians along Baghdad's "Highway of Death" to the safety of the Green Zone.

Genre: Action
Starring: Jackie Chan, John Cena
Language: English
Release Date: 06 July



BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW
SATYAPREM KI KATHA

Genre: Comedy, drama
Starring: Kartik Aaryan, Kiara Advani

Loveable loser

Kartik Aaryan and Kiara Advani are back as each other's love interests with *SatyaPrem Ki Katha*. They were earlier paired together in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*. Directed by Sameer Vidwans, the romantic musical drama

also has a social message. (It seems.) The star cast includes Supriya Pathak Kapur, Gajraj Rao, Siddharth Randheria, Anooradha Patel, Rajpal Yadav, Nirrmite Saawaant, and Shikha Talsania. The film also marks a collaboration between NGE and



Namah Pictures. The tory revolves around Satyaprem (Sattu), a Gujarati happy go lucky, yet good for nothing, boy who is eager to marry Katha, daughter of a well-known businessman Harikishen. Sattu's dreams somehow come true when Katha's parents arrive at his house to seek his hand in marriage. He attempts to get Katha to fall in love with him in order to keep his marriage and tries to prove to be a worthy husband. However, Katha is not quite convinced and the reason behind Katha's dismay is what keeps the story going. While Kiara's performance is noteworthy Kartik seems to be playing his goofy self too often that his actions

and mannerisms are predictable in every film, and in this, you almost know his character the moment you settle in with popcorn. While the film attempts to deliver a message, the haphazard treatment leaves the audience confused. There's nothing new in this film which one has not seen in Bollywood masalas. The song and dance sequences are too loud and the attempt to strike a balance between entertainment and education falls flat as the movie oscillates between comedy and melodrama. But, if you love Kartik (you simply can't hate him) this is your treat for summer. Worth a watch!

Rating ★★★★★