

► NEWS BRIEF

HM GREETES KING OF MALAYSIA

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, King of Malaysia, on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Majesty the Sultan wished the Malaysian monarch good health and happiness and the people of Malaysia further progress and growth.

HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF KYRGYZSTAN

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Sadyr Japarov of the Kyrgyz Republic on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. His Majesty the Sultan wished President Japarov good health and happiness and the people of Kyrgyzstan further progress and prosperity.

04



Profits of Oman's listed firms rise 11% to RO180mn in Q2

RO4mn to support poor students

Each student will be entitled to RO25 worth of school supplies at the beginning of the year and RO11 monthly for daily meals

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Implementing a Royal Directive of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to support government school students of social security and low-income families, the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), will provide more than RO4mn in the first semester of the 2022/2023 academic year.

MoSD stated, 'An amount of RO4,073,070 has been approved for the first semester of 2022/2023 to provide school supplies and daily nutrition, in implementation of the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to help students of social security and low-income families.'

MoSD informed that each student will be entitled to RO25 worth of school supplies, to be spent at the beginning of the school year starting on September 4. Each student will also re-



Parents irked by hike in school supplies this year

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A large number of parents said they noticed a substantial hike in prices of school supplies this year.

"The price of school bags, pens and other items have gone up," said Sultan al Rawahi, a parent.

He added, "Unfortunately, the prices vary from one store to another. Last year, we bought school supplies for four children for RO30, but now we had to



spent RO50 on one."

Another father of school going children said that he too has noticed the increase in

prices of some school supplies this year. "I will check out wholesale stores for a good bargain. I think rationalisation in purchase and searching for offers is the best solution to avoid spending more."

According to Ahmed al Balushi, a shop owner, demand for school supplies at the beginning of the school year increases. "The increase in price of paper globally reflects on the rise in prices of notebooks this year compared to the past."

In an interview with a local

radio channel, H E Salim bin Ali bin Salim al Hakmani, chairman of Consumer Protection Authority, said, "We received complaints from some parents about the high prices of school supplies, which are mostly imported to Oman. The prices of these items have risen due to the rise in international prices. But the authority is communicating with traders to mitigate the price hike. Many merchants have already responded and are selling school supplies at reasonable prices."

ceive RO11, which will be spent as daily meal vouchers at the rate of 500bz for 22 school days per month.

MoSD will transfer the funds to the bank accounts of social security families, while the Ministry of Education will transfer the funds to accounts of low-income families. The daily meal vouchers will be distributed by the Ministry of Education.

Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniya, Minister of Education, issued a ministerial decision on Monday to form a joint committee comprising personnel of MoSD and her ministry to implement the initiative of providing school supplies and daily meals.

Continued on Page 02

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New hotline to report child abuse, begging

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To keep communication channels open with the community and to curb child abuse and begging, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) launched a new communication centre and hotline - 1555 - on Monday.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development,



The centre will respond to beneficiaries' queries, follow up their requests and deal with their communications within 48 working hours

H E SHEIKH RASHID AL SHAMSI



in the presence of Talal Said al Mamari, CEO of Omantel, several ministry officials and beneficiaries of the service.

According to H E Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, MoSD Undersecretary, inauguration of the centre is an important step in achieving one of the pillars of Oman Vision 2040.

"It aims to provide an integrated service and reduce waiting time. The centre will respond to beneficiaries' queries, follow

up their requests and deal with their communications within 48 working hours."

The centre will receive reports of begging and child abuse 24x7 in direct coordination with specialists in various departments in governorates through trained and qualified staff to serve all beneficiary groups, H E Shamsi informed.

In March 2022, MoSD launched the first phase of its digital transformation pro-

gramme, which includes social security services and social aid, along with 20 other e-services.

The ministry confirmed that the services are within the strategic plan for digital transformation and to keep pace with efforts to improve the quality of government services and provide these in accordance with specific controls, standards and stages of time to ensure integration with various government institutions.

TRA to manage data through Wusool Electronic System

Muscat - The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for operating and managing the electronic documents and records of the Wusool Electronic System with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA).

TRA will be the first government department to run the Wusool Electronic System after NRAA, as part of the first phase of the system when it will be installed in 20 government departments in partnerships and cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology



(MTCIT).

The MoU was signed by H E Dr Hamad Mohammed al Dhoyani, chairman of NRAA, and

Omar Hamdan al Ismaili, CEO of TRA.

The Wusool Electronic System constitutes a cornerstone

initiative of digital transformation in the government sector. Besides enabling government departments to electronically manage their records applying the latest global practices in the field, the new system will furnish a streamlined and secure environment for the data.

H E Dhoyani said that the next few months will see the propagation of the system in all target departments, once all operational requirements are finalised.

The MoU was signed electronically via Wusool, using electronic authentication certificates issued by MTCIT.

ONA

Over 4mn wild seeds planted to date: EA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) has planted 4.75mn seeds of wild trees in different parts of the sultanate, in cooperation with relevant authorities, in its ongoing efforts to plant 10mn wild trees.

According to official data, 4.75mn seeds of indigenous tree species have been planted by volunteers and using drones in various regions. EA has also planted 480,000 wild trees so far, including 70,600 mangrove trees.



The project aims to increase vegetation coverage, protect and preserve the ecosystem, and rehabilitate degraded land while spreading environmental awareness among community members.

Towards this end, the authority has established nine nurseries that can produce more than 200,000 seedlings, while there are plans to establish eight more.

In January 2020, EA, in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman, launched the initiative to plant 10mn wild trees in the next ten years. The wild tree species include ghaf, sumr, sidr, shue, tiq, talh, mitan, sarh and alalan.

Under the initiative, the departments of EA in all governorates distribute seedlings of Omani wild trees among organ-

isations and individuals in order to increase the area of vegetation cover and combat desertification.

In August, EA started the second phase of a project to inventory and document perennial wild trees in the wilayats of Nizwa, Jabal Akhdar and Manah in Dakhliyah.

The project aims to identify the perennial tree species in the governorate and their geographical distribution. Data related to the circumference of trunk, height and general condition of

the trees are fed into a geographic information system for future reference.

The project also aims to educate all segments of society and visitors on the importance of preserving perennial wild trees.

The third phase will include installation of number plates on some trees in order to enhance knowledge and awareness of the importance of these trees, EA stated.

The project began in April this year and will gradually cover all the governorates.

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167 navigation licences issued to foreign ships



Our Correspondent
Muscat

A total of 167 navigation licences were issued to foreign ships in the first six months of 2022 to ply in Omani territorial waters, according to the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT).

A statement issued by MTCIT said, 'The number of navigation licences issued by the ministry to foreign ships in the first six months of 2022 increased 36 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.'

Licences were issued to tugs, oil tankers, yachts, cruise ships, landing ships, service ships and excavators.

Additionally, the ministry provided 1,685 services, including issuing 209 new marine unit registration certificates and 859 marine unit renewal certificates.

The ministry also issued 395 certificates and documents, and 224 certificates related to marine activities, during the first half of 2022 - an increase of 96 per cent compared to the same period last year.

It inspected 135 ships and their data entered into the database as per the Riyadh Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Indian Ocean MoU for the control and inspection of ships during H1 2022.

The ministry also registered 24 violations against shipping vessels.

RO4mn to support poor students

Continued from Page 01

A statement issued by Ministry of Education said, 'The committee will supervise a joint team, which will be headed by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary for Education in the Ministry of Education, and Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Undersecretary of MoSD. The team will include officials from the two ministries.'

The committee will initiate co-ordination between the relevant authorities to identify the students targeted for the initiative. It will complete the work within two weeks and submit a comprehensive report to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Social Development.

Around 59,000 students will benefit from the Royal Directive.

The journey of pampered camels

Annual migration from the mountains to the plains isn't always uneventful

Our Correspondent
Salalah

In a curious connection, as the plains of Salalah turn a vibrant green, demand for camel milk and meat goes up. Coinciding with the increase in tourism during khareef, shops - roadside stalls to high-end restaurants - can be seen doing brisk business selling camel meat delicacies.

Restaurant owner Khalid al Amri sells camel meat all year round. However, demand is highest during khareef. "Tourists come to my restaurant, and even some street vendors, for an authentic taste. We specialise in camel biryani, shuwa, sawarma, burgers and wraps. Prices vary from RO1 to RO15."

The camels normally graze on the mountains and come down to the plains in the monsoons, when fog and heavy rains disrupt their habitat.

Feeding on the grass in the plains - by now lush green due to the rains - increases milk produc-

tion significantly. Camel herder Musalman Yaqoob said, "This milk is of very high nutritional value. Owing to the abundance of fresh grass, the camel eat to their heart's content, and ultimately produce more milk."

The demand for camel meat delicacies is met by the availability of more animals in this season.

However, the annual migration from the mountains to the plains isn't always uneventful.

"Many camels fall down the mountains while descending to the plains. It is very difficult to carry or even help the injured animals with broken legs," Musalman informed.

"Some camels lose balance and fall. Many struggle and manage to get up, but others unfortunately succumb to injuries from their fall."

Musalman described the loss of even a single animal as a "very sad and dreadful time" for the herdsman. "We have to take care of the entire herd of over



Tourists come to my restaurant, and even some street vendors, for an authentic taste. We specialise in camel biryani, shuwa

KHALID AL AMRI



100 camels and cannot carry one animal all along. We have no option but to slaughter them."

Though the plains are full of camels at this time of the year, the shepherd easily recognise their animals. "We can identify our camels out from a herd of a thousand others," said Musalman's brother Mohammad.

Herdsman use moles, odour, vocalisation and even the temperature of the animals' neck for identification.

"We have specific sounds that are actually names for the camels and when we make these noises, they recognise their owner."

Bulls sell for RO500 to RO1,200, depending on age and body structure.

For meat,

male animals are mostly slaughtered, while females are left to graze and milked. Pregnant cows are always given special care with one herdsman dedicated to its care.

"We sell camel milk to shops and supermarkets. Not everyone can milk a camel. These animals are very sensitive and only allow their owners to milk them," Musalman said.

He described camels as "very arrogant like small children, needing pampering".

In recent times, news of camels injected with hormones to increase meat and milk production have become common. "Bulls are given injections to beef up for more meat, and cows to produce extra milk. But this is not good - for the animals nor people who consume such meat and milk," said another herdsman Abdullah al Affifi.

"We as shepherds can judge the difference, but others can't tell the difference between an injected and a naturally raised camel. It is a tempting prospect but unethical. We love our animals and don't engage in such practices," Affifi said.

Date production up marginally

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Date production increased 2.2 per cent from 366,383 tonnes in 2020 to 374,341 tonnes by the end of 2021.

Data released in the National Centre for Statistics and Information's 2021 Statistical Yearbook showed that the governorate of Dakhliyah produced the highest quantity of dates (89,379 tonnes), followed by North Batinah (57,399 tonnes), South Batinah (56,351 tonnes) and North Sharqiyah (52,721 tonnes).

Date production in Dhahirah



reached 45,685 tonnes, 29,635 tonnes in South Sharqiyah, 18,472 tonnes in Buraimi, 13,215

tonnes in Muscat, 6,212 tonnes in Musandam, 5,140 tonnes in Dhofar and 132 tonnes in Al Wusta.

The Million Date Palm Plantation Project was initiated in 2017 to increase production of dates and enhance self-sufficiency in food.

The project came in response to Royal Directives of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, based on the importance of date palms in achieving food security in the sultanate, besides its historical significance.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has urged Omani

farmers to grow dates to support the project.

"The ministry has set some conditions for Omani farmers to benefit from the project financed by the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund to grow date palms," an official of MAFWR said.

"The farmer must be an Omani and the area of land cultivated should not be less than one acre," he said, adding that, "the farmer must provide a permanent source of irrigation, and the soil of the farm should be suitable for cultivation. He must also use the seedlings provided by the ministry."

Sick child airlifted from Musandam to N Batinah



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Royal Air Force of Oman airlifted an Omani child from Musandam to North Batinah on Tuesday.

In a statement, the Ministry of Defence said, 'A helicopter of

Royal Air Force of Oman carried out medical evacuation of a critically ill child.

'He was transferred from Khasab Hospital in Musandam governorate to Sohar Hospital in North Batinah to receive urgent specialised treatment.'



ANNOUNCEMENT

As per our continuous efforts to enhance and improve our client services and experience through digitalization, it is brought to the investors' and interest parties' notice that Ubhar Capital will be closing its Salalah Branch, effective from 1 September 2022. All of our Salalah customers and investors' accounts will continue to be serviced by our Head Office in Muscat or through other digital platforms. For more information, please contact Mr. Talal Al Balushi at +968 2494 151 and Mr. Ahmed Al Marhoon +968 24949117 or send an email to tobrokerage@u-capital.net or visit our offices at Madinat El Erfaan, Phase 1, Bausher Airport Heights, Way no, 501, Plot no. 216, Block no. 9993, Building no. 95, OMINVEST.



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Bangladesh	246.56
Philippines	146.03
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*Rates as on August 30 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Egypt's Zohr gas field daily output jumps to 2.7bn cubic meters

Egypt's Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources announced that Zohr gas field achieved a record during fiscal year 2021-2022 since the start of production in 2017-2018. Current production from Zohr gas field jumped to 2.7bn cubic meters per day, the ministry said on Monday, Emirates News Agency reported. The ministry clarified in a statement that the volume of investments in the gas field hit US\$741mn during the relevant year. Investments in Zohr gas field have exceeded US\$12bn since the beginning of work in the field, it added. Tarek el Molla, Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, said that there are good opportunities in search and explorations in land and sea sites in order to up petroleum and oil reserves and production.

Profits of Oman's listed firms rise 11% to RO180mn in Q2

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Listed firms on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded an 11 per cent year-on-year growth in total net profits for the second quarter of 2022 backed by healthy growth in banking and telecom sectors.

Total net profits for listed companies in Oman grew to US\$468.4mn (approximately RO180.1mn) in the second quarter of 2022 as compared with US\$422mn (approximately RO162.3mn) in the second quarter of 2021, according to the GCC Corporate Earnings report released by Kuwait-based Kamco Investment.

Key sectors like banks and telecom mainly contributed to the overall year-on-year growth in net profits at the MSX-listed firms, the report said.

The second quarter earnings of banking sector, the biggest sector in the MSX by market capitalisation, improved by 11.5 per cent to US\$276.4mn this year compared to US\$248mn in the second quarter of 2021.

Utilities sector followed with the second largest total net profits of US\$57.7mn during the second quarter of 2022, down from US\$62.2mn in the corresponding period of 2021.

Bank Muscat - Oman's largest bank by assets - posted the biggest profit within the banking sector during the second



quarter of 2022 with net profit of US\$132.4mn as compared to US\$123.4mn during the second quarter of 2021. Falling net impairment credit losses mainly contributed to Bank Muscat's rise in profits, Kamco Investment noted.

However, profits for HSBC Bank Oman witnessed the biggest percentage increase among banks recording 63 per cent rise in the second quarter earnings which reached US\$24.4mn in 2022 as compared to US\$15mn during the same period of 2021. On the other hand, Oman Arab Bank was the only bank among eight banks on the Omani exchange to post a decline in its second quarter net profit, according to Kamco Investment report.

The profit growth for Oman's telecom sector came on the back higher profits reported by Oman-tel that reached US\$41.8mn in the second quarter of 2022, up from US\$39.8mn in the same period of 2021. Comparatively, Ooredoo Oman reported a 51.5 per cent increase in net profits that reached US\$13.5mn in the second quarter of this year.

Materials sector witnessed the largest percentage growth in the second quarter of 2022 net profits among the sectors in the MSX market. Raysut Cement and Oman Chlorine both returned to profits during the second quarter of this year after dipping into red in 2021.

Total net profits of the listed energy sector firms reached US\$16.7mn in the second quar-

ter of 2022 as compared to US\$5mn in the same period a year ago, witnessing a 235 per cent year-on-year jump.

Shell Oman Marketing registered the largest absolute profit rise among the four companies in the energy sector with second quarter net profits of US\$6mn, up from US\$1.1mn in the same period of 2021. 'Higher revenue due to higher sales, especially on the growth of non-fuel retailing were attributed to the energy company's jump in quarterly profits,' Kamco Investment said.

Oman Oil Marketing recorded the biggest second quarter profit among energy sector companies with US\$6.9mn net profit against US\$3.1mn in the second quarter of 2021. Of the four listed companies in the energy sector Na-

tional Gas was the only loss-making company registering a loss of US\$0.6mn in the second quarter of 2022 as compared with a loss of US\$0.7mn in the second quarter of 2021.

Oil boosts GCC earnings

Earnings reported by the GCC-listed companies reached a new record level during the second quarter of 2022 backed by a broad-based quarter-on-quarter growth in profits across all sectors barring the financials and pharma sectors.

According to Kamco Investment's analysis, aggregate net profit for GCC-listed companies reached US\$77.3bn during the second quarter of 2022 as compared to US\$65.7bn during the first quarter of 2022 resulting in a quarter-on-quarter growth of 17.6 per cent. The year-on-year growth was even stronger at 62.6 per cent when compared to second quarter of 2021 profits of US\$47.6bn.

'The increase in profits of energy companies due to elevated oil prices accounted for the bulk of the absolute increase in profits in the region. The region showed strong consumer and business sentiments during the second quarter despite a slow-down at the global level mainly due to higher inflation and the efforts by central banks to tame rising inflation,' Kamco Investment said.

Fitch upgrades OETC rating

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fitch Ratings has upgraded Oman Electricity Transmission Company's (OETC) long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) to 'BB+' from 'BB'.

The rating agency kept its outlook stable on OETC rating. The rating action on OETC follows the upgrade of Oman's long-term foreign-currency IDR to 'BB' from 'BB-' on August 15, Fitch said in a statement.

Fitch said it assesses the links between OETC and Oman, its majority indirect shareholder, using parent and subsidiary linkage criteria.

Fitch views OETC as the 'stronger subsidiary', based on its standalone credit profile of bb+, which is higher than Oman's sovereign rating (BB/stable). It assesses the legal ring-fencing around OETC as 'open'; and access and control as 'porous', leading to a consolidated plus one approach (ie sovereign rating plus one).

OETC's 'bb+' standalone credit profile reflects the company's stable profitability, with a significant share of EBITDA from regulated electricity transmission, Fitch said.

India's Gautam Adani becomes world's third-richest person

Mumbai, India - Indian industrialist Gautam Adani became the world's third-richest person on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index on Tuesday, the first time an Asian has ranked in the top three.

The self-made billionaire has seen his net worth more than double to US\$137.4bn in the last year, rising 20 spots on the index to now rank just behind Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, Bloomberg News reported.

Adani, 60, made his fortune in ports and commodities trading and now operates India's third-largest conglomerate with interests ranging from coal mining and edible oils to airports and news media.

His ballooning net worth reflects a stratospheric rise in the market capitalisation of his publicly listed companies, as investors back the Adani Group's aggressive expansion of old and new businesses.

Shares in the flagship Adani



Gautam Adani

Enterprises - of which the billionaire owns 75 per cent - have soared more than 2,400 per cent since March 2020, and doubled in value in the past six months.

Stock price surges in other group companies including Adani Transmission, Adani Power, Adani Ports and Adani Green Energy have catapulted Adani past fellow Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani.

Born in the city of Ahmedabad in the western state of Gujarat to

a middle-class family, Adani dropped out of college to work briefly in the diamond industry before starting his export business in 1988.

In 1995, he won a contract to build and operate a commercial shipping port at Mundra in Gujarat, which has since grown to become India's largest port.

At the same time, Adani expanded into thermal power generation and coal mining in India and overseas.

In recent years, the conglomerate has forayed into petrochemicals, cement, data centres and copper refining, in addition to establishing a renewable energy business with ambitious targets.

Recent investments in Indian news media and a bid for 5G airwaves this year have raised speculation that the billionaire's empire could soon impinge on sectors dominated by Ambani's Reliance Industries.

But Adani's rapid expansion into capital-intensive businesses has raised alarm, with Fitch Group's CreditSights warning last week that the group is "deeply overleveraged".

"In the worst-case scenario, overly ambitious debt-funded growth plans could eventually spiral into a massive debt trap, and possibly culminate into a distressed situation or default," the credit market research firm said in a note.

AFP

Russia further cuts gas deliveries to France

Paris, France - French energy firm Engie said Tuesday that Russian energy giant Gazprom was slashing its natural gas deliveries "due to a disagreement between both sides over the execution of contracts".

Engie added in a statement that Russian gas supplies had already been reduced drastically after Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

"Engie had already secured the necessary volumes to guarantee supplies for its clients and for its own needs," it said.

Russia gas accounted for 4.0

per cent of its overall energy supplies at the end of July, the group said.

Warnings from the French government have mounted in recent days about possible difficulties this winter due to energy shortages and galloping inflation.

Many European countries are facing severe supply problems as Moscow turns off the gas taps in response to EU military and diplomatic backing for Ukraine.

French President Emmanuel Macron is to gather ministers for

a special cabinet meeting on Friday in order to "prepare for all eventualities this autumn and winter," his office said.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne urged company bosses on Monday to reduce their consumption and warned about the risk of rationing.

"If we end up with rationing, companies will be the most affected and unfortunately we need to be prepared for it," she told the Medef business association.

Claire Waysand, deputy chief executive of Engie, told the same

meeting on Monday that the weather would play a crucial role this winter.

"To be sure that we get through winter with enough electricity and gas, we have an interest in it not being too cold," she said.

"If so, then there might be days when there are real tensions."

France has been rapidly filling its gas storage facilities, which are now 90 percent full, and has negotiated extra supplies from Norway.

AFP

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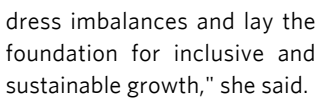
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MUSCAT DAILY

Washington, US - The IMF board has approved an agreement to revive a massive loan programme for Pakistan, as the country grapples with devastating monsoon flooding that has worsened an economic crisis.

The original US\$6bn bailout package was signed by former prime minister Imran Khan in 2019, but repeatedly stalled when his government reneged on agreed reforms on subsidies and failed to significantly improve tax collection.

"Steadfast implementation of corrective policies and reforms remain essential to regain macroeconomic stability, ad-



The new agreement follows months of deeply unpopular belt-tightening by the government of Shehbaz Sharif, who took power in April and has effectively eliminated fuel subsidies and introduced new measures to broaden the tax base.

Finance Minister Miftah Ismail, announcing the approval on Twitter, applauded Sharif

"for taking so many tough decisions and saving Pakistan from default."

The latest disbursement brings the total received under



the IMF Extended Fund Facility to about US\$4bn.

Pakistan is desperate for in-

ternational support for its economy, which suffers from poor revenue collection and dwindling foreign reserves to pay its crippling debt.

The new government has slashed a raft of subsidies to meet the demands of global financial institutions, but risks the wrath of an electorate already struggling under double-digit inflation.

Sharif's new coalition government has said it will make the tough decisions needed to turn the economy around.



Ankara, Turkey - European Union's (EU) seaborne crude oil imports from the Middle East and Africa have increased prominently as the bloc is trying to end Russian seaborne crude imports by the end of year as agreed in the sixth package of sanctions on Russia.

The EU's sanctions package adopted in June enforces a complete import ban on all Russian seaborne crude oil and petroleum products, covering 90 per cent of the current oil imports from Russia.

The ban has been subject to a certain transition period to allow the sector and global markets to adapt and a temporary exemption for pipeline crude oil, which applies to flow via the Druzhba pipeline carrying about 800,000 barrels per day.

The sanctions have come into force with immediate effect as

the transition period lasts till the end of the year for seaborne crude while it is two months longer for petroleum products.

According to real-time energy cargo tracker Vortexa, Russia's share in the EU's seaborne crude imports fell to 10 per cent by August 21 while Europe's total oil import dependency on Russia dropped to 25 per cent from above 40 per cent before the Ukraine war.

Last year, the EU imported 48bn worth of crude oil and 23bn of refined oil products from Russia, according to the European Commission.

The sanctions package also allows exemption for some member states, however those states will not be able to resell such crude oil and petroleum products to other member states or third countries.

Anadolu Agency

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tenders:

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	66/2022 (Extend)	Supply of IT Equipment with Associated Software for 5 Years	05/09/2022	20/09/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration.	26.250
2	73/2022	Design, supply, Install, migrate and Commission of a unified data center	14/09/2022	11/10/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration.	105.000
3	74/2022	Protection Test Laboratory Infrastructure set up	14/09/2022	11/10/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration.	26.250
4	75/2022	Protection System Model Update and Relay Setting Study with Performance Audit	14/09/2022	11/10/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration.	52.500
5	79/2022	Improvement of Protection System	14/09/2022	11/10/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration.	105.000
6	80/2022	Supply and Installation of DFR/PMU	14/09/2022	11/10/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Commercial registration.	26.250

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering
Buying the Tender:	By E-Tendering System.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering
Terms and conditions:	• No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. • The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. • The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). • Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. • OEIC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 92217856-91777378-93515198-93201558-99105413
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx



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تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية :

م	رقم النافذة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات النافذة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	لمن الوثيقة (شامل شهادة القيمة المضافة) (رغ)
١	٢٠٢٢/٦٦ (جديد)	توريد معدات وأجهزة تكنولوجيا المعلومات مع البرامج المرتبطة بها لمدة 5 سنوات	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/٠٥	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/٢٠	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل تجاري سارية المفعول	٢٦٢٥٠
٢	٢٠٢٢/٧٣	تصميم ، توريد ، تركيب ، وتشغيل مركز بيانات الموحد	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/١٤	٢٠٢٢/١٠/١١	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل تجاري سارية المفعول	١٠٥٠٠٠
٣	٢٠٢٢/٧٤	توريد و تركيب معدات مختبر نظام الحماية	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/١٤	٢٠٢٢/١٠/١١	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل تجاري سارية المفعول	٢٦٢٥٠
٤	٢٠٢٢/٧٥	تحديث نموذج نظام الحماية ودراسة ضبط أجهزته مع تدقيق الأداء	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/١٤	٢٠٢٢/١٠/١١	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل تجاري سارية المفعول	٥٢٥٠٠
٥	٢٠٢٢/٧٩	تحسين نظام الحماية	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/١٤	٢٠٢٢/١٠/١١	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل تجاري سارية المفعول	١٠٥٠٠٠
٦	٢٠٢٢/٨٠	توريد وتركيب مسجل الاعطال الرقمي (DFR/PMU)	٢٠٢٢/٠٩/١٤	٢٠٢٢/١٠/١١	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها شهادة سجل تجاري سارية المفعول	٢٦٢٥٠

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة بعد تقديم الطلب عن طريق نظام التناقص الإلكتروني
طريقة الشراء	من خلال استخدام نظام التناقص الإلكتروني
الرسوم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد - (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العروض	يتم تسليم النسخة الأصلية فقط من الضمان البنكي للعطاء في الصندوق . أما العرض فيتم تسليمه من خلال نظام التناقص الإلكتروني
الشروط و الضمانات	٠ عدم تجديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على الخطوف. ٠ أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ٠ إرفاق تأمينا في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (٢٪) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعنونا بإسم الشركة المغانية لنقل الكهرباء . ٠ كل عطاء لا يستوفي التامين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه . ٠ الشركة المغانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع الضمان البنكي العطاء فقط في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحا من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - رقم المسكة ١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣ - تفاصيل التواصل: ٩٢١١٧٨٦١-٩٢١١٧٧٧٧٧٧-٩٢١١٧٨٦١-٩٢١١٧٧٧٧٧٧-٩٢١١٧٨٦١-٩٢١١٧٧٧٧٧٧
البريد الالكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الالكتروني	www.omangrid.com https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx

شركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء ش. م. ع. م.
ن. ب : ١٣٨٩، الخوض، الرمز البريدي : ١٣٤، سلطنة عمان
هاتف : +٩٦٨٢٤٢٨٣٠٠ / الفاكس : +٩٦٨٢٢٣٠٩٠٤٦
موقع الإلكتروني : www.omangrid.com



ahlibank's iGeneration seeks to enhance youth technical skills

Continuing its long-term commitment to empower Omani youth with professional skills, and enhance their career development opportunities in the banking sector, ahlibank has launched iGeneration programme that aims to create a favourable environment for the sultanate's workforce and equip them with emerging critical skills required for today's job market.

The programme targets graduates and entry-level employees with two-to-three years of experience to provide them a hands-on technical experience in the banking sector. It will also allow them to demonstrate their knowledge, providing a platform to enhance their technical skills and develop viable solutions to tackle day-to-day business challenges.

In addition, those selected for the programme will also develop capabilities such as effective communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and presentation skills that will enable them to grow and lead in the chosen areas.

Mohammed al Mufargi, Assistant General Manager - Head of Human Resources, ahlibank said, "At ahlibank, our investment in people continues to be paramount. We believe in the importance of developing young minds and nurturing their skills. Through programmes such as these, we not only hope to attract talent but also provide them with the necessary skills, knowledge, tools and training required for them to achieve their full potential. We opt to enhance the professional competencies of our entry-level employees and open new avenues for young Omani graduates stepping into the workforce through our organisation."

OIFC's Khedmah offers quality debt recovery service



Reflecting on more than 40 years of experience in bill collection in the sultanate, Oman Investment and Finance Company's (OIFC) Khedmah continues to develop its scope of work, thereby including the purchase of debts from telecommunications companies and other businesses.

With a dedicated team and collection channels, the company is striving to enhance and develop the new service without compromising the quality of customer experience.

Commenting on the same, Mohammed bin Saif al Toqi, Senior Director of Communications Operations at Khedmah, said, "We have been working on the debt recovery activity plan for some time now since OIFC has a number of contracts with several telecom companies in Oman."

"We have started this service as a result of these contracts, whereby, we purchase the debts from the companies. In order to provide the payment mechanism, several procedures are followed, including directly contacting the subscriber and determining the most appropriate payment method."

Keeping up with the latest advances at work, achieving growth as well as expanding its customer base, Khedmah continuously provides training to its employees and hosts workshops on and off the job. The company believes that boosting the abilities of human resources and instilling the right skill set are key factors in preparing them for job requirements.

The company also continues to develop systems to keep pace with the steady development in the sector, considering the standards of safety, speed and ease of use.

ISWK student Shashwat wins NAC award, visits ISRO site

Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir management expressed happiness while announcing the felicitation of one of its talented students for globally excelling in an astronomy challenge.

"We are pleased to announce that Shashwat Singh, of Class VIII (B) of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir was felicitated by Stem and Space at Thiruvananthapuram in the southern Indian state of Kerala on August 16.



While in grades 6 and 7, he had enrolled for the National Astronomy Challenge, conducted by Stem and Space, and he secured Global Rank 1 for two consecutive years. For this achievement, the student was felicitated by the entire Stem and Space team, the school said.

Apart from the felicitation programme, Stem and Space also gave all the winners the chance to visit the Vikram Sarabhai Space Center (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram.

"At the VSSC they got the opportunity to interact with ISRO scientists, and gain more knowledge regarding various ISRO missions, space crafts and rockets", the school said. "We feel honoured to get this rare opportunity to visit ISRO and gain a lot of experience," Shashwat said.

Ooredoo's Nojoom members offered 15% off at Babyshop

Giving Nojoom members something else to smile about, Ooredoo is offering 15 per cent off on back-to-school supplies in Babyshop at Centerpoint, in partnership with Shukran.

Valid until September 15, Nojoom members can pick up all of their kids' must-have items for less, making their shopping even more rewarding. Babyshop has 15 Stores across Oman, located in Muscat, Barka, Suhar, Nizwa, Ibri, Sur and Salalah. And with a wide range of essentials, from trendy backpacks to smart lunchboxes and fun water bottles, its sure to put the cool in school.

With over 100 discount partners and counting, Nojoom is just one way that Ooredoo is pioneering an outstanding customer experience. Offering unmatched value, premium recognition and exclusive rewards for prepaid, postpaid or fixed customers, members can earn points simply by making calls, sending SMSs, or using any of the company's services.

Access the offer or sign up for Nojoom today through the Ooredoo App.



OETC takes part in CIGRE Paris 2022

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) is participating in the ongoing CIGRE Session 2022 in Paris along with 400 others coming from all over the globe.

The conference, which began on Sunday and to run till Friday, is witnessing the presence of a large number of senior officials from companies operating in the energy sector around the world in addition to a group of experts, engineers and those interested in the electrical energy field.

A delegation from the OETC is taking part in CIGRE, which is held to discuss the latest trends in the energy sector, where the company is presenting two technical papers, the company said in a press release.

Planning Engineer Ayman al Nnamani presented the first research paper entitled 'Long-Term Demand Forecast for Oman Electricity Transmission System Master Plan (2020-2040)', which explains the forecasts of demand for electricity in the Sultanate of Oman, taking into account the factors affecting the demand.

CIGRE conference, which is held every two years in Paris, is considered a unique conference and the most important in the field of electricity networks. GCC CIGRE is a regional committee and a member of the International Council for Large Electric Systems (CIGRE)

It also explains the company's methodology in analysing the challenges facing the electric power sector in terms of tariff reform, demand price flexibility, energy efficiency programmes, renewable energy sources and electric vehicles.

The second research paper is about 'Transmission Regulation: The Economic Regulation Applied for Oman Electricity Transmission Network' presented by Zahra al Rawahi, the Regulatory Affairs Section Head, with the participation of Alaa al Kiyumi, the Head of Revenue Assurance Department at Muscat Electricity Distribution Company.

The paper highlights the electricity

sector regulations and the role of the Authority of Public Services Regulation to observe, monitor and evaluate the electricity market to ensure fair competition and provide services at reasonable prices and high quality, which contributes to attracting new investors in the energy sector.

On the sidelines, Omar al Wahaibi, Nama Group CEO, Saleh al Rumhi, CEO of Oman Electricity Transmission Company, and Dr Rashid al Badwawi, Senior Manager Corporate Affairs in Oman Electricity Transmission Company participated in the CEOs Forum held under the theme 'Business Development in the Electric Power Industry'. The forum took

place on Monday to discuss various topics related to the electric power industry and provide an opportunity for industry representatives to raise the challenges they face while introducing a range of solutions and innovations to address issues affecting the industry.

It is worth noting that the International Council on Large Electric Systems (CIGRE), which was established in 1921 in Paris, is a global non-profit organisation concerned with the generation and transmission of electrical energy and aims to enhance cooperation and exchange of knowledge and expertise to develop electrical systems around the world. It includes more than 3,500 experts from all over the world working together in organised coordinated work programs, supervised by a technical council.

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Bank Muscat opens Green Sports field in Nizwa

In line with the bank's commitment to community development and promoting Oman as a sporting nation, Bank Muscat recently handed over a newly-developed Green Sports field to the Al Etihad Al Gharbi team from the wilayat of Nizwa.

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, continues to complete new Green Sports Fields for youth sports teams across Oman, the bank said.

The event was held in the presence of H E Sheikh Rashid Said al Kalbani, the Wali of Nizwa, a number of sheikhs and team members. The event underscored the importance of strengthening sports infrastructure across Oman, and also saw an exhibition match between two local teams on the occasion.

Juma Khamis al Yaqoubi, Regional Manager, Al Dakhliah, Bank Muscat congratulated Al Etihad Al Gharbi team in Nizwa for the successful completion of the project. This is a major achievement that will contribute to enhancing



the facilities and infrastructure for the team. He hope that the new facility would help the Al Etihad team to rise to greater heights, improve community bonding and the harness the talent of Omani youth. He also asked the team management to maintain the project and ensure that they developed it further in the future.

"We thank Bank Muscat for

having selected the Al Etihad team as a winner of this excellent programme that is helping develop Omani talent," said Sulieman Said Ambusaidi, Al Etihad Al Gharbi team, Nizwa.

Reposing his trust in the new system, Ambusaidi said, "There is absolutely no doubt in our minds that with the implementation of the new lighting system, the team is all set to significantly improve its

sporting prowess and capabilities. We look forward to a time when more of our young talent are playing at the highest level of sports thanks to the high-quality facilities which are available to them now."

The scope of support under the Green Sports programme include installation of artificial turf or natural grass on sports fields, floodlighting and water-desalination systems. Bank

Muscat's longest running CSR programme has been greatly contributing to further build Omani sporting talent by creating a pipeline of talented players who can represent the country at all levels in the future.

In 2021, the bank increased the number of annual beneficiaries on the occasion of the flagship CSR programme's 10th Anniversary.

Continuing the optimistic trend, the bank recently announced the 20 winners for this year. It is a matter of great encouragement that the Green Sports programme has benefited 163 teams and over 50,000 team members across Oman so far.

Through the 2022 edition of this flagship CSR programme, Bank Muscat has further strengthened its pioneering role in the field of social responsibility and sustainability, and its continuous drive to develop modern sports infrastructure across the Sultanate of Oman in the spirit of the Public-Private Partnership model.



Oman Air paves way for next generation of professionals

In line with Oman's Vision 2040 strategy, which aims to develop a diversified and sustainable economy, Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, continues to provide Omani nationals the opportunity to gain insights into the aviation and logistics world through specialized internship programmes at Oman Air headquarters

In 2021, Oman Air provided internship opportunities to 250 students from various universities and colleges in Oman and abroad. Furthermore, more than 160 additional students are expected to finish their internship programme by the end of August 2022. Hilal al Siyabi, Oman Air's Senior Vice President – People said that his organisation 'is pleased to lend its support to the youth of Oman and guide them through our internship programmes'.

"We remain committed to Oman's economic diversification and Omanisation objectives by training the next generation of Omanis in the aviation and logistic sectors."

Indian School Darsait host STAI event at school auditorium



Science Technology and Innovation in Education (STAI) event aimed at developing scientific temperament among student was inaugurated at the Senior School auditorium of Indian

School Darsait on Saturday.

The event, under the aegis of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, was held to showcase the talents of young minds in the areas of Science, Technology and Innovation under the tag line 'Ingenious Creative mind'.

Dr Ali Saud al Birmani, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Science & Technology inaugurated the STAI 2022 as the chief guest and expressed his views with his profound thoughts on how 'out of the box' thinking results in creativity. Mohammad al Adavi, Director of the clubs and Sports Center Department graced the occasion as the guest of honour and Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, BoD, Indian Schools in Oman presided over the function.

Other dignitaries present were, Sayed Salman, vice chairman, Board of Directors; Ashwini Sawrikar, finance director; Sebastian Chungath, Indian School Darsait management committee president; M P Vinoba, senior principal and education advisor (BoD); Dr Gokuladas V K, assistant education advisor (Operations, BoD) and STAI chairperson; Ajit Vasudevan, convener and head academic and staff welfare and grievances subcommittees, Indian School Darsait and members of the management committee.

Zubair organises workshop for executive management

Seeking to align its objectives with the Oman Vision 2040 national priorities, the Zubair Corporation in collaboration with the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, conducted a workshop aimed at highlighting the role of the private sector in realising the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.



Held at the Bait Al Zubair museum, the workshop witnessed the participation of The Zubair Corporation and its affiliated companies' executive management.

During the workshop, a number of officials and supervisors from the Unit and national programmes presented working papers that shed light on the objectives of the vision, its national priorities and the role of the private sector in achieving them.

The presented papers discussed various topics that resonate with the corporation's efforts and its affiliated companies' strategies. It also explored ways of aligning the goals of the vision with the companies' vision.

CoE gives awards to winners of first Junior Academy Programme



The Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Advanced Telecommunications Technology and IoT handed over awards to the winning teams of the first cohort of the Junior Academy Programme at a ceremony held at Innovation Park Muscat of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation on Tuesday.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) for Research and Innovation, in the presence of Dr Abdullah al Balushi, President of Ericsson Oman, and a number of officials from the strategic partners of the programme.

The Junior Academy Programme is implemented by the Center of Excellence in a strategic partnership between Ericsson, the Ministry of Finance represented by the Partnership for Development Programme (Offset) and Omantel and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and New York Academy of Sciences.

During the ceremony, 'Girls Combating Misinformation' by Esraa al Nabhani (Marfa Daris School) was awarded first prize in the international challenges as announced by the New York Academy of Sciences last month. Her paper focused on combating the spread of misinformation in the public health sector.

As for the local challenge, 'Our Life is Safer with Smart Shelter' bagged the first prize in the Ericsson Smart Homes Challenge. The team consisted of Al-Zahraa Al Nabhani (Alshatha Bint Jaber Primary School), Taher al Ruqaishi (Murtafaat Izki School), Miaad al Shaa'li (Almamoor School) and Tahra al Ruqaishi (Um Alkhair School).

The second prize for the local Smart Homes Challenge went to 'Let's Make our Life Smart' by Fatma al Abri (The Qar School), Khalid al Kalbani (Saa'd Bin Ubadah Elementary School), Laya Moosa al Mafarji (Marfa Daris Basic School), Sanaa Khalid al Balushi

This programme supports the youth in bridging the skill gap in research and project development, as well as widening their horizon

HAJAR AL BALUSHI

(Fatma Bint Asad School), Nasser al Rashdi (Abdullah Bin Rawaha School) and Razan al Rawahi (Hafsa Bint Omar Basic Education School for Girls), while the third place went to 'Xmaisons' by Farah al Ghefeili (The International School of Choueifat), Ahmed al Hadhrami (Sheikh Nasser Al Kharusi School), Maryam al Hashmi (Al Urwah School), Renad al Shukaili (Rustaq School), Haitham Idris (Al Khoudh School) and Reem Ismaili (Al Sahwa Schools).

Dr Abdullah al Balushi, the president of Ericsson Oman, said that his company alongside the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, was able to introduce 100 Omani youth to the world of new technologies and provide guidance to them to develop Internet of Things use cases based on the latest 5G and IoT technologies.

"Given that IoT technology is vital to achieving the national agendas of the Sultanate of Oman in building smart cities, which will have an important role in the future of the health, transportation and data security sectors in the sultanate, I am confident that the knowledge and skills of IoT that students developed through this program will help them to play a big role in the digital future of the sultanate."

Hajar al Balushi, the Project Manager of the CoE at the ministry, said, "This programme supports the youth

in bridging the skill gap in research and project development, as well as widening their horizon and introducing them to real life challenges and how to solve them in a practical way, with an added fun element."

The Junior Academy program indicated that the number of applications in the first edition of the programme reached 523 applications, with 101 male and female students from various governorates were enrolled, in which the students participated virtually for three months in the Internet of Things Smart Homes Challenge to find solutions and ideas on how to develop these homes smart technology in addition to some Omani students participating in global challenges, with one of them winning a challenge in the health sector.

The winners of the 1st Junior Academy Programme will receive a package of incentives, most notably remote academic programmes and credit hours provided in association with the University of Pittsburgh, a gift voucher, a smart tablet device and a certificate of participation from the programme. The second cohort of the Junior Academy programme will kick off in September.

The Junior Academy Programme aims to provide young students with the opportunity to learn how to research and develop innovation skills and compete to find solutions to global societal challenges in the field of technology and science.

The programme can contribute to deepening the participants' knowledge and enabling them to take the initiative to contribute to providing solutions to technical problems.

The programme also comes in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 to shift towards a knowledge-based economy, and to provide current generations with the necessary skills to face the future, by refining their capabilities and empowering them with knowledge that allows them to grow as individuals in the Omani society.

Madaar awarded first virtual incubator licence in Oman

Madaar, an omani online startup school that serves as a collection of tools for de-risking and developing tech-based ideas, has received the first virtual incubator and accelerator license in Oman from the SME authority.

Incubators and accelerators are vital in the successful development, launch, and growth of start-up businesses, including educational, mentorship, and practical components. Resources for startups in Oman are scarce, according to Murooj al Saadi, serial entrepreneur and founder and CEO of Madaar.

"We identified the opportunity to fill this gap, by equipping startups to validate startup ideas and get investment-ready. Madaar meets local needs, while adhering to global standards."

Madaar offers a variety of tools and services that cater to



Murooj al Saadi

the specific needs of start-ups, including virtual and hybrid incubator and accelerator programmes, access to a diverse pool of experts and potential investors, and perks and benefits from global partners. In addition, Madaar also provides an online platform that offers free resources and tools for entrepreneurs.

So far since its inception, Madaar has helped over 1500 start-ups in Oman and the



MENA region develop, grow, and scale their businesses. Some of Madaar's notable partnerships

and projects include working with Brinc on Omantel's accelerator and innovation labs; men-

toring with the Oman Technology Fund, Cylon UK's accelerator and other entities to equip Oma-

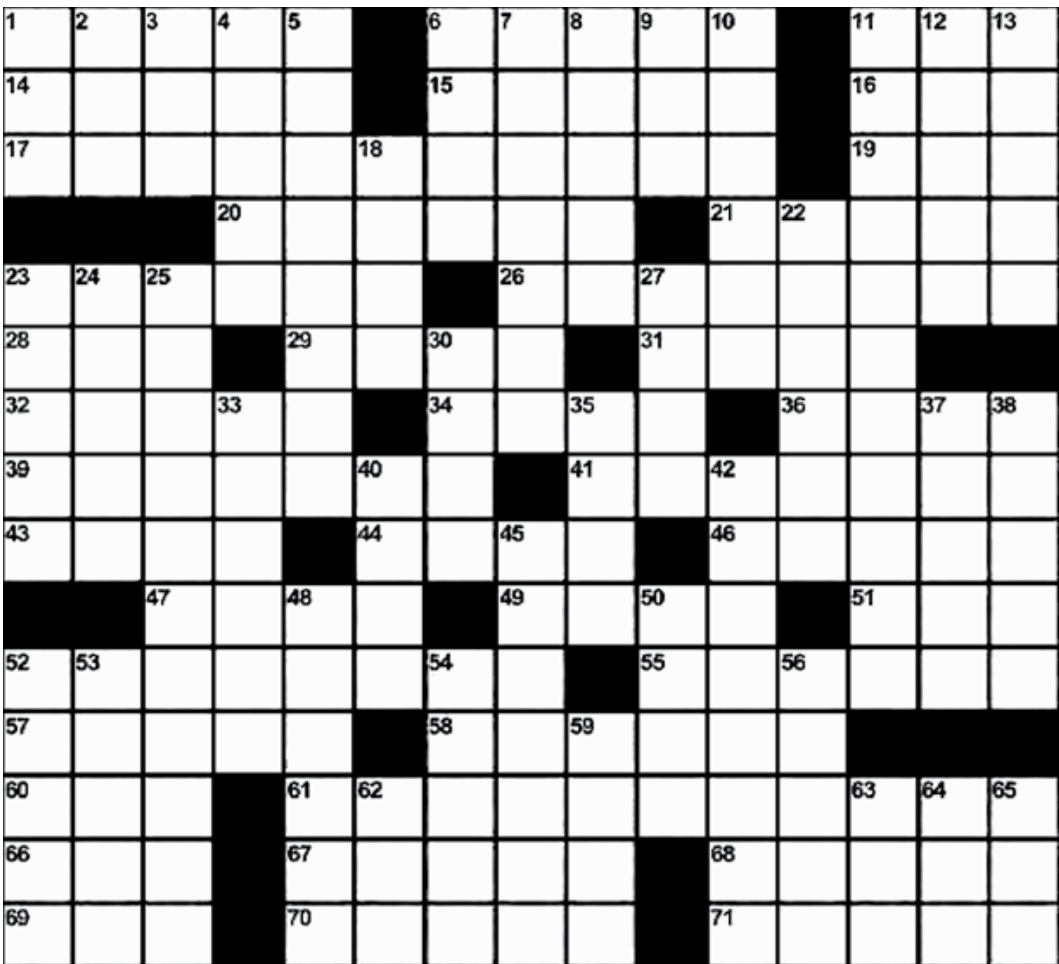
nis to solve market challenges in the region, besides in the UAE, developing the Ma'an social in-

cubation startup programme content in partnership with the fifth element consultancy.

Madaar CEO said, "No matter where you are in your startup journey, Madaar takes you step by step from the idea to the build, to reach the right solution and market, and eventually to growth and scalability in global markets." She attributes Madaar's achievement in receiving oman's first virtual incubator and accelerator licence to the experience of their team of twelve, who have gained solid and valuable expertise working with Google, venture capitalists, funds, and their own startups.

"We're entrepreneurs ourselves, taught by globally-recognised experts, and running incubators and accelerators to assist others in doing the same," Murooj added.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Certain informal parent
- 6) Wooded valleys
- 11) Female pronoun
- 14) _ of expertise
- 15) Bye-bye, in Burgundy
- 16) Pin number?
- 17) Object on Israel's flag
- 19) Interject
- 20) Burning
- 21) Suitable material?
- 23) Annoying inconvenience
- 26) Professed
- 28) FBI employee, briefly
- 29) Eve's mate
- 31) Jacob's twin
- 32) Unedited version
- 34) Petticoat junction?
- 36) Blueprint detail, in short
- 39) Most spooky
- 41) Brandy cocktail
- 43) Words with "precedent"
- 44) Senate helper
- 46) Having an irregular edge
- 47) Spot in the distance
- 49) Point to the right

- 51) Harden
- 52) Barnum and Bailey's business
- 55) Home for an old king
- 57) Guiding beliefs of a group
- 58) In a lively manner
- 60) Doctor in a 1964 movie
- 61) Campus VIP
- 66) Nightmare street of film
- 67) Down provider
- 68) Barbecue leftover
- 69) "Sayonara!"
- 70) Run-down in appearance, as a motel
- 71) Furry weasel cousin
- DOWN**
- 1) _ de deux
- 2) Dinner scrap
- 3) Ammo in a harmless shooter
- 4) Legal aides, informally
- 5) Recently
- 6) Baby's word for 1-Across
- 7) Japanese protein source
- 8) Cats have nine of them

- 9) Welcoming garland
- 10) Makes soapy bubbles
- 11) Business seed money
- 12) Steeplechase obstacle
- 13) Called off
- 18) Left the scene
- 22) Desk drawer item
- 23) Hellish place
- 24) See things the same way
- 25) First base?
- 27) Prefix for "circle"
- 30) _ spumante (Italian wine)
- 33) Total disaster
- 35) Sailing the Atlantic
- 37) Renoir's prop
- 38) Minotaur's home
- 40) Verb for Simon
- 42) Unfastens
- 45) Longed for
- 48) Boot-wearing fel-lines?
- 50) Sing "shooby-doo" and such
- 52) Paparazzi target, briefly
- 53) Venice setting
- 54) Dodge
- 56) Historical Alabama march site

- 59) Results may do this, in commercials
- 62) Make a sheepshank

- 63) Flow back
- 64) Business card no.
- 65) Prior, to poets

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your amped-up spirit of adventure can take you places now that even your heightened imagination couldn't anticipate. For best results (that is, the funniest conversations, the oddest experiences, and the fullest contact with the vast pageantry of life), set any plans or errands aside and strike out in a random direction on a field trip that lasts all day. Bring someone fun along for company, but only if they'll have the stamina to keep up.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

If you've been feeling a little more shy and retiring than usual recently, prepare for that feeling to vanish. The cosmos is definitely sending you some additional fire power, and you'll be garnering attention now, the positive kind, maybe even the romantic kind, whether you want to or not (knowing you, of course you want to). Get ready to gracefully accept a heap of compliments, return a flotilla of flirtation, and generally have a great time.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

The travel bug just bit you again, and bit you hard. Scratching that itch in a big way might feel like the only option, but before you quit your job, sublet your place, and buy that one-way ticket, you might want to try a smaller-scale solution. A really fun, really random day trip might help, one where you leave right now, with or without an adventurous friend, and go in a random direction. Why not stretch it out into tomorrow?



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Sure, you like to indulge yourself from time to time with some nifty new material possessions. Maybe stereo equipment is your weakness or digital toys or kitchen gadgets. Right now, though, a little bit goes a long way, and a big bit could leave you in something of a jam. After all, you'll want to have some funds left over to indulge some other people too. Giving really does feel better than getting.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You certainly like to think of yourself as self-sufficient, and to a certain extent you are. No one is an island, though, not even you, and right now you really shouldn't try to be. Looking to friends and family for support is only natural, and you know they look to you for the same. There's no shame in it. In fact, you'll deepen your connection with those around you, which is definitely a good thing. Reach out.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

An interpersonal issue you've been grappling with could get extra sticky right now, and you could finally get worked up enough to want to tell it like it is. Good for you. Expressing yourself is important and healthy. Before you do, however, consider whether someone in this situation isn't coming across a little differently than they are in reality. Or is that the problem itself? Factor this into what you're about to say.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Keep things nice and light when it comes to interpersonal interactions now: fluffy, inconsequential, and fun. If someone close to you tries to force a discussion about a heavy issue (or any kind of discussion at all, really), firmly deflect them by offering a specific rain check. Assure them that it's not that you don't want to talk about it, it's just that now is not a good time. After all, your good mood depends on it.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Rather than being someone's faithful companion or diplomatically negotiating between two sides, right now you're poised for a position of leadership. It might not be the most comfortable role for you to contemplate stepping into, but if you think about it, it's custom-made for you. You can show an entire group the middle path, you can provide a supportive environment, and you can help everyone find the answers. And you can look great doing it!



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Fixed ideas are never very popular with you, and right now they're very much on the "out" list. What's in? Weird coincidences, seeming contradictions, random impulses, anything different and odd and rife with opportunities for pushing boundaries. This is how you learn, after all, about others, about the world, about yourself. Push it even further, and remember that what seems to be an interruption could actually be the beginning of the main event.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You've got an impulse to do something outrageous. As long as it's not going to hurt anyone, why the heck not? Just because it's unlike you shouldn't stop you from doing it. Sure, someone might be surprised, even shocked, by your unusual behavior, but maybe that's actually a good thing. Show them one of your many other facets. They'll probably like it, and they'll probably even join you on your amazing escapade.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

If you've got the day off, you'd probably be wise to check in with work. A mini crisis is in the works, and putting off dealing with it could cause it to snowball into a major snafu. Not to mention that your boss, who actually might be part of this problem rather than part of the solution, will be highly impressed that you stepped up and stepped in, and they'll be amazed that you had the good sense to anticipate the issue.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. The London 2012 Summer Olympics was remarkable, among other things, for what?

- A. The sun shone through the entire Olympics
- B. It had three official mascots
- C. It was the first Olympics at which every sport had female competitors
- D. No competing athletes tested positive for drugs

02. The Red River forms the border of Texas with what other area?

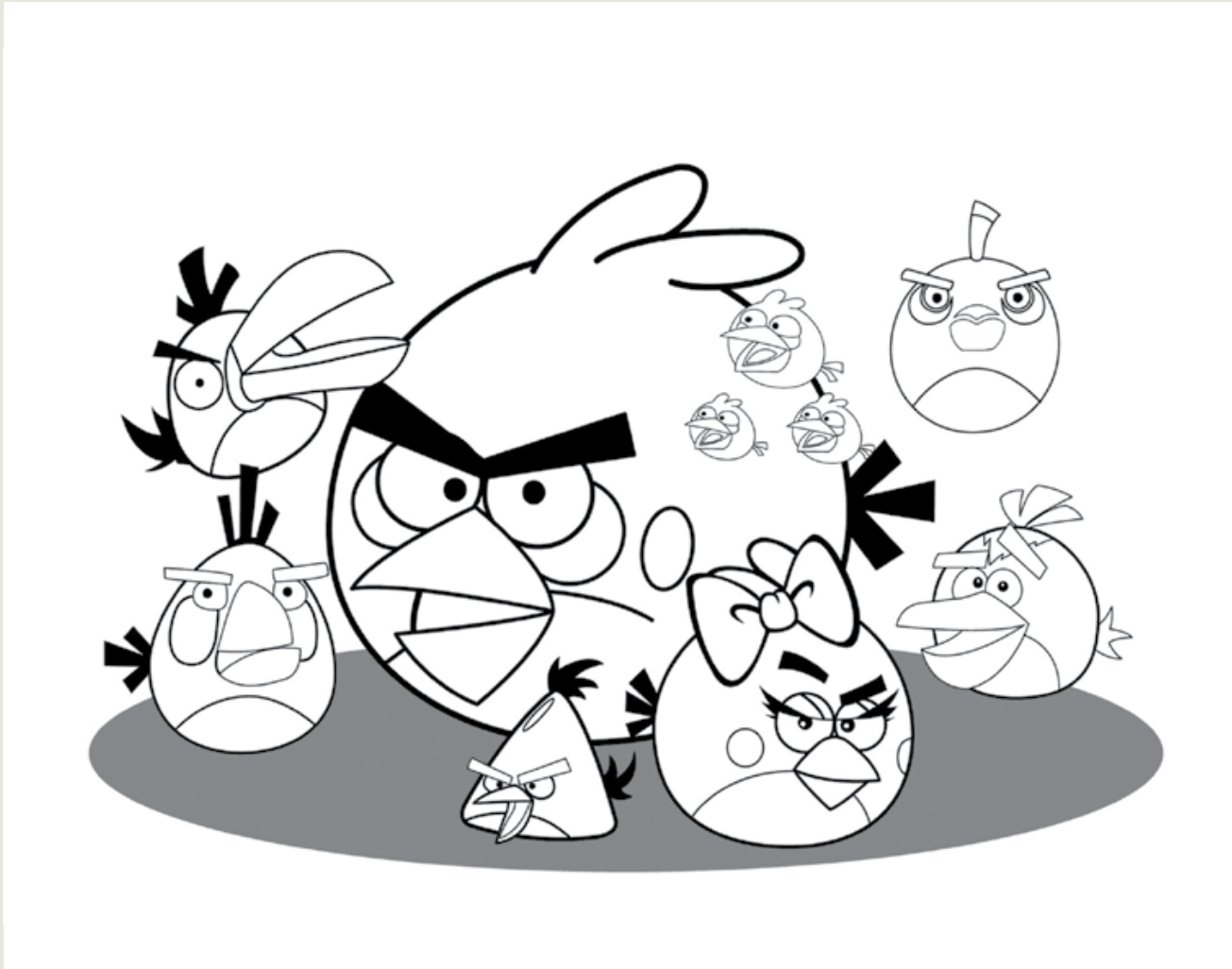
- A. Oklahoma & Arkansas
- B. Mexico
- C. Florida
- D. Louisiana

03. What are Lithium, Sodium, Potassium, Rubidium and Caesium?

- A. Metalloids
- B. Halogens
- C. Inert gases
- D. Alkali metals

Answers: 1. C 2. A 3. D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	O	S	A
A	G	I	R
C	U	S	T
N	T	I	P

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.

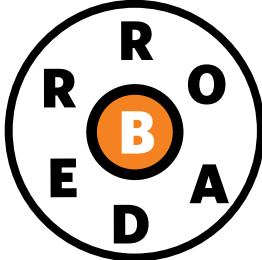
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

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

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

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

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

Iraq protesters disperse after cleric Sadr seeks end to deadly fighting

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraqi supporters of powerful cleric Moqtada Sadr began withdrawing on Tuesday from Baghdad's Green Zone after he demanded fighting end between rival Shiite forces and the army that left 23 dead and hundreds wounded.

The violence that erupted on Monday pitted Sadr loyalists against Shiite factions backed by neighbouring Iran, with the sides exchanging gunfire across barricades - violence the United Nations warned risked tipping the war-ravaged country deeper into chaos. Moments after Sadr's speech was broadcast live on television, his supporters were seen beginning to leave the Green Zone, and minutes after that, the army lifted a nation-wide curfew.

Sadr, a grey-bearded preacher with millions of devoted followers who once led a militia against American and Iraqi government forces after the 2003 US-led overthrow of dictator Saddam Hussein, gave followers '60 minutes' to withdraw after which he would threaten to 'disavow' those who remained.

"I apologise to the Iraqi people, the only ones affected by the events," Sadr said in a speech from his base in the central city of Najaf. "Shame on this revolution... Regardless of who was the initiator, this revolution, as long



Members of Saraya al-Salam, the military wing affiliated with Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, withdraw from Baghdad's Green Zone on Tuesday (AFP)

as it is marred by violence, is not a revolution," he said.

"I thank the security forces and members of Hashed al-Shaabi," he added.

Tensions have soared in Iraq amid a political crisis that has left the country without a new government, prime minister or president for months.

They escalated sharply after Sadr's supporters on Monday afternoon stormed the government palace inside the high-security Green Zone following their leader's announcement that he was quitting politics.

Overnight, shelling targeted the Green Zone that houses government buildings and diplo-

matic missions, amid angry protests after Sadr surprised many by announcing his 'definitive retirement'.

Violence continued on Tuesday morning - with the rattle of automatic gunfire and heavier explosions of rocket-propelled grenades - as Sadr's supporters clashed with the army and men

of the Hashed al-Shaabi, former Tehran-backed paramilitaries integrated into the Iraqi security forces. The UN mission in Iraq warned of 'an extremely dangerous escalation' and called on all sides to 'refrain from acts that could lead to an unstoppable chain of events'.

AFP



Palestinians hurl teargas canisters back at Israeli army vehicles during clashes in the town of Rujayb, in Nablus on Tuesday (AFP)

Israelis and Palestinians wounded in occupied West Bank shootings

Nablus, Palestinian Territories - Palestinians opened fire at Israeli Jews who snuck into an occupied West Bank city to visit a shrine, wounding two of them, the Israeli army and medical sources said on Tuesday.

The incident in Nablus was followed by an unrelated Israeli military raid nearby in which four Palestinians were shot. The army said the earlier shooting happened when 'a number of civilians entered Nablus'.

The Israelis were headed to Joseph's Tomb, believed to be the last resting place of the biblical patriarch Joseph, a flashpoint for violence in the West Bank, and revered as a holy site.

The Israeli army secures monthly pilgrimages to the tomb, but prohibits civilians entering on their own.

"While they were there, they were shot and wounded," the army said, adding that soldiers

'entered the city to rescue them'.

The vehicle of the Israelis was torched by Palestinians, an AFP reporter said, with the situation in the city remaining tense hours after the event. Two men were wounded and were being treated in hospitals in central Israel, a spokeswoman for the Rabin medical centre and a spokesman for Sheba hospital told AFP.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967, when it seized the territory from Jordan.

In an incident which the military said was unrelated to the shrine shooting, clashes erupted east of Nablus on Tuesday morning as Israeli security forces raided a house.

"Soldiers used means including shoulder-fired missiles at the building where the two wanted men were barricaded," the military said in a statement.

AFP

Israel sentences World Vision ex-Gaza chief to 12 years for aiding Hamas

Beersheba, Israel - An Israeli court on Tuesday sentenced the former Gaza head of a major US-based aid agency to 12 years in prison for funnelling millions of dollars to Islamist group Hamas.

The Beersheba district court in southern Israel issued a sentence of '12 years' prison time, less the 'detention' already served for World Vision's Mo-hammed al-Halabi, who has been jailed throughout the past six years of court proceedings.

The sentencing comes after the court issued a ruling in June that Halabi was guilty of siphoning off millions of dollars and

tonnes of steel to Hamas, which controls the Palestinian enclave.

Halabi, who was arrested in June 2016 and indicted in August that year, has consistently denied any irregularities.

His lawyer reiterated his claim to innocence following Tuesday's sentencing.

"He says that he's innocent, he did nothing and there is no evidence," Maher Hanna said. "On the contrary, he proved in the court above any reasonable doubt that he made sure that no money will be (given) directly to Hamas."

According to Hanna, if Halabi



Palestinian lawyer Maher Hanna speaks to the press at the Beersheba district court on Tuesday (AFP)

He says that he is innocent, he did nothing and there is no evidence. He insisted truth also has values

MAHER HANNA

had admitted to wrongdoings, he would have been released.

"But he insisted that truth also has value. And for his personal values and for the international humanitarian work values, he in-

sisted on the truth, and he cannot admit a thing that he did not do," the lawyer said.

Secret evidence

Hanna said they would appeal the verdict to the supreme court.

The Israeli prosecution said it was also considering an appeal.

"These are very severe deeds, the defendant funded terror with millions of shekels, helped strengthen the Hamas tunnel network," Moran Guez of the southern district attorney's office. "We asked for 16-21 years prison. We'll read the sentencing and consider our actions," she

told reporters.

Halabi had been convicted of membership in a group - Hamas - and of financing terrorist activities, of having 'transmitted information to the enemy' as well as the possession of a weapon.

Much of the evidence against him was kept secret, with Israel citing 'security concerns', prompting his legal team to question the verdict's legitimacy.

In its sentencing, the court said Halabi had joined the military wing of Hamas in 2004, and was 'planted in World Vision' the following year.

AFP

Saudi woman jailed 45 years over social media posts: Rights group

Riyadh, KSA - A Saudi woman has been jailed for 45 years for her social media posts, a rights group said citing court documents, marking the second such case in weeks.

Nourah al-Qahtani received the heavy sentence on appeal after she was convicted of 'using the internet to tear the (country's) social fabric' and 'violating public order' via social media, Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN) said.

She was convicted under the kingdom's Counter-Terrorism and Anti-Cyber Crime Law, DAWN added.

The Washington-based group, founded by slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, shared a copy of the court document but AFP was unable to verify its contents.

There was no immediate

comment from the Saudi authorities. The case was reported as debate intensifies over Western engagement with Saudi Arabia, following US President Joe Biden's visit to the oil-rich Gulf monarchy last month.

Biden had previously threatened to make Saudi Arabia a 'pariah' over the 2018 murder of Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, but the energy crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine appeared to prompt his U-turn.

Few details were available about Qahtani, who did not appear to have an active Twitter account. She was arrested in July 2021 and convicted by the Specialised Criminal Court, DAWN said, adding that her appeal was earlier this month.

AFP

Pakistan floods: UN appeals for \$160mn for worst hit

Geneva, Switzerland - The United Nations and the Pakistani government launched an emergency appeal for US\$160mn on Tuesday to help those hit hardest by the floods devastating the country.

The funds will provide 5.2mn of the worst-affected and most vulnerable people with food, clean water, sanitation, emergency education, protection and health support, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, calling the disaster a 'colossal crisis'. "Pakistan is awash in suffering. The Pakistani people are facing a monsoon on steroids - the relentless impact of epochal levels of rain and flooding," he said in a video statement.

The aid, covering the initial six months of the crisis response, will help to avoid outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, and to provide nutrition aid to young children and their mothers.

It will also provide assistance to refugees and facilitate schemes to reunite families separated. "The people of Pakistan urgently need international soli-



A volunteer distributes food to displaced families who fled from flood hit areas in Sindh province at a government school used as a temporary shelter on the outskirts of Karachi on Tuesday (AFP)

arity and support," Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told a press briefing in Geneva.

He said some 500,000 people displaced by the floods were sheltering in relief camps, with

many more temporarily staying with host families.

Around 150 bridges have been washed away, he said, and 3,500km of roads damaged in flooding and landslides, hampering access.

"The heavy rains are forecast to continue and with many dams and rivers already at flood levels, the flooding is likely to get worse before it gets better," Laerke said.

Tens of millions of people have been affected by relentless

monsoon rains that have submerged a third of Pakistan and claimed more than 1,100 lives.

The rains that began in June have unleashed the worst flooding in more than a decade, washing away swathes of vital crops and damaging or destroying more than a million homes.

World Health Organization spokesman Christian Lindmeier said Pakistan's health facilities had been severely affected by the flooding, with 180 'completely damaged'.

He said there was already a vast disparity between rural and urban healthcare provision, while treatment for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes would be 'severely' impacted.

"It's a vast problem which opens up here," he said.

The UN refugee agency said there were 1.3mn Afghan refugees registered in Pakistan and it had already delivered US\$1.5mn worth of emergency relief and shelter items - but 'much, much more' would be needed in the coming weeks.

AFP

Taiwan, China trade barbs over island drone incursions

Taipei, Taiwan - Taipei and Beijing have traded barbs over a recent string of drone sorties from the Chinese mainland to an outlying Taiwanese island, as Taiwan's president on Tuesday vowed 'strong countermeasures' against such incursions.

Photos and video taken by Chinese drones of the Kinmen islands have been circulating on both Taiwanese and Chinese social media, with one video showing Taiwanese soldiers hurling rocks at one to drive it off.

While visiting air force facilities in offshore Penghu islands, President Tsai Ing-wen said China had used 'greyzone' tactics such as drone intrusion to continue its 'military intimidation' against Taiwan.

"I want to tell everyone that the more provocative the enemy is, the more calm we need to be... we will not provoke a war and we will restrain ourselves, but that does not mean that we will not take countermeasures," she told the troops stationed in the archipelago in the Taiwan Strait.

Tsai added that she had ordered the defence ministry 'to take necessary and strong countermeasures at an appropriate time to defend the security of our airspace'.

Asked to comment on the videos on Monday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said the incursions were not 'anything worth making a fuss about' as the drones were



Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen (centre) inspecting military troops on Penghu islands on Tuesday (AFP)

'flying around Chinese territory'.

But that response triggered an angry riposte from Taipei, which compared the drone harassment to the acts of a 'thief'.

"Those who come uninvited are called thieves, whether they are breaking through the door or peeping from the air, the people of Taiwan do not welcome such thieves," Taiwan's foreign ministry said in a statement late on

Monday. "The authoritarian expansionist government of the Chinese Communist Party has always made harassing other countries a daily routine, and therefore its title of a 'regional troublemaker' is well deserved."

Taiwan lives under constant threat of invasion by China, which claims the self-ruled democratic island as part of its territory to be seized one day - by

force if necessary.

Drone incursions over Kinmen have increased at the same time Beijing embarked on a show of force in retaliation for US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan earlier this month.

For a week after Pelosi's visit, China sent warships, missiles and fighter jets into the waters and skies around Taiwan, its largest and most aggressive ex-

ercises since the mid-1990s.

It is not clear who is flying the drones from the Chinese mainland. Kinmen lies just a few kilometres off China's coast, meaning a civilian could feasibly fly a commercial drone that distance. However China has also stepped up so-called 'greyzone' tactics against Taiwan in recent years to pressure the island.

AFP

Solomon Islands suspends visits of all foreign navies

Honiara, Solomon Islands - Solomon Islands has suspended visits from all foreign navies, citing a need to review approval processes, the country's leader said on Tuesday, after a US coast guard was unable to refuel at its port.

The decision comes amid concerns over the Solomons' growing ties with China in recent years, switching diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 2019 and signing a security pact with the Asian power in April.

Western governments are wary that the islands could provide China with a military foothold in a strategically important part of the world.

In a speech on Tuesday welcoming a US hospital ship to the capital Honiara, Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said he was reviewing the process for allowing foreign military vessels to dock in the country.

"We have requested our partners to give us time to review and put in place our new processes before sending further requests for military vessels to enter the country," Sogavare said.

He also denied reports that a US coast guard ship and a British navy vessel were not allowed to dock in the country, saying delays in processing their approvals meant both were turned away.

The US embassy in Canberra confirmed in a statement that it had received formal notification of the suspension of naval visits.



Solomons PM Manasseh Sogavare

The decision comes amid concerns over the Solomons' growing ties with China in recent years, switching diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing

"The United States received formal notification from the Government of Solomon Islands regarding a moratorium on all naval visits, pending updates in protocol procedures," an embassy spokeswoman said in a statement. "The United States is disappointed that the US Coast Guard ship was not able to make this planned stop in Honiara," the statement said.

AFP

Iran jails two Swedish men for drug trafficking

Tehran, Iran - An Iranian court has sentenced two Swedish men for drug trafficking to eight and five years in prison, judiciary spokesman Massoud Setayeshi said on Tuesday.

The pair, Stephen Kevin Gilbert and Simon Kasper Brown, were arrested in July 2020 at an airport in Tehran as they were about to leave the country, Setayeshi said.

"Simon Kasper Brown, a Swedish citizen, was sentenced to five years in prison and fined for transporting more than 21,000 illegal pills of tramadol," an opioid painkiller, Setayeshi said.

"Stephen Kevin Gilbert, another citizen of this country, was sentenced to eight years in prison, 60 lashes and a fine, for being in possession of 9.8kg of opium resin," he said. Iran is a key smuggling route for opium and heroin from neighbouring Afghanistan, the world's largest producer.

The trial of the men - accused of being part of an 'international drug trafficking gang' - opened in September 2021. On Tuesday, the judicial authority said the two convicts 'had nothing to do' with another Swede arrested in July on allegations of 'espionage', whose identity has not been revealed.

This arrest came against a backdrop of diplomatic tensions between Tehran and Stockholm, after a Swedish court sentenced a former Iranian prison official to life for war crimes during mass executions in the Islamic republic in 1988.

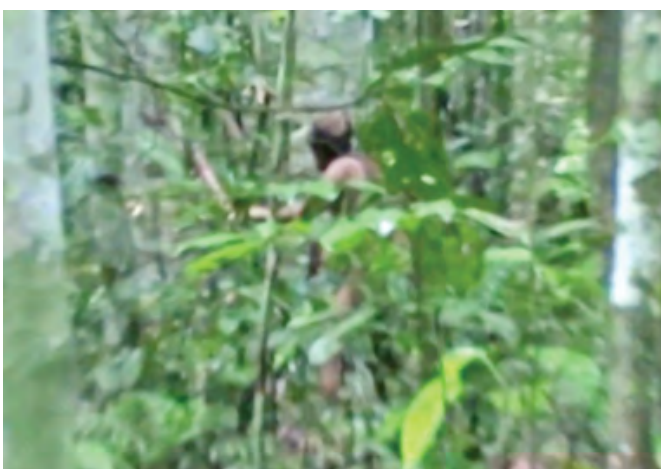
AFP

Last member of Brazilian indigenous community found dead

Brasília, Brazil - The last of his people, a Brazilian indigenous man known only as 'the man of the hole' has been found dead, decades after the rest of his uncontacted tribe were killed off by ranchers and illegal miners, officials said.

Having lived in complete isolation for 26 years, the man - whose real name was never known to the outside world - was found in a hammock in a hut in the Tanaru indigenous territory in Rondonia state on the border with Bolivia on August 23, Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) said in a statement.

Since losing everyone he knew, the man had refused all contact with the outside world and supported himself by hunt-



This video grab shows the tribesman believed to be the last known survivor of an isolated Amazonian community in Brazil on March 11, 2011 (AFP)

ing and raising crops. His nickname derived from his habit of digging deep holes inside the huts he built, possibly to trap an-

imals in but also to hide inside.

He lived in an indigenous territory surrounded by vast cattle ranches and under constant

threat from illegal miners and loggers in one of the most dangerous parts of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest, according to Survival International.

Authorities did not comment on the cause of the man's death, nor his age, which wasn't known, but said 'there were no signs of violence or struggle'.

They also found no evidence of the presence of anyone else in his home or around it.

"Everything indicates that the death was from natural causes," said FUNAI, a government agency under the justice ministry that is tasked with handling indigenous affairs.

Local media reported that the man's body had been covered in macaw feathers, prompting one

expert to speculate that he had known he was about to die.

The man was believed to have been alone since the remaining members of his small tribe were killed in the mid-1990s by illegal loggers and miners seeking to exploit the tribal area.

Rights groups said that the majority of the tribe had been killed in the 1970s when ranchers moved into the area, cutting down the forest and attacking the inhabitants.

"With his death, the genocide of this indigenous people is complete," said Fiona Watson, Survival's director of investigation, who visited the Tanaru territory in 2004.

"It really was genocide: the deliberate elimination of an en-

tire people by ranchers hungry for land and wealth," she added.

According to the most recent government data, there are some 800,000 indigenous people belonging to more than 300 distinct groups living in Brazil, a country of 212mn.

More than half live in the Amazon and many of those are under threat from illegal exploitation of natural resources that they rely on for their survival.

According to FUNAI, there are 114 records of isolated indigenous groups in Brazil, although that number varies.

Under Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, Amazon deforestation reached a record level in the first half of 2022.

AFP

Far from home, Afghan family dreams future in US

Kabul, Afghanistan - The damage inflicted by a United States drone that killed ten members of Aimal Ahmadi's family in the Afghan capital can still be seen in the courtyard of his home a year after the strike.

The 32-year-old, whose daughter was among those killed, left Afghanistan with some of his family members, moving to a refugee camp in Qatar from where they now expect to be evacuated to the US for a future far from home. "I don't wish that any human being would go through what we went through, it's terrible, unimaginable," Ahmadi told AFP from Qatar.

On August 29, 2021, Ahmadi's three-year-old daughter Malika, his brother Ezmarai, who had worked for an American charity, and several of his nephews and nieces were killed in the strike. The ten family members, including seven children, were near a family car when they were mistakenly targeted by a US drone.

The family were the last civil-



Nasratullah Malikzada, the nephew of Aimal Ahmadi, gestures towards a car that was damaged in a US drone strike, inside the house premises in Kabul (AFP)

ian deaths linked to US forces recorded in the chaotic days before American troops left Afghanistan on August 30 last

year, allowing the Taliban to fully take control of the country.

A few days after the drone strike the Pentagon acknowl-

edged that it had made a 'mistake' in wrongly identifying the family's white Toyota as an Islamic State (IS) target. The Pen-

The 10 family members, including seven children, were near a family car when they were mistakenly targeted by a US drone on August 29, 2021

tagon did not punish the service members involved in the incident.

"There was not a strong enough case to be made for personal accountability," said Pentagon spokesman at that time, John Kirby. The US administration is currently helping relocate members of the family, Ahmadi said.

The drone hit came three days after an IS suicide bomb attack at Kabul airport killed more than 150 people - including 13 US troops - significantly raising tensions in the last days of US withdrawal. An estimated 188 civilians have been killed by US

forces by mistake in Afghanistan since 2018, according to the American military.

A year after the strike, the modest two-storey house on a narrow street in the Khwaja Bughra neighbourhood in the north of Kabul is now inhabited by only a dozen distant relatives.

Several other relatives of the victims fled the scene of the tragedy, which still bears the scars of the attack.

Blown out by the explosion, the windows have now been repaired, the walls of the courtyard rebuilt and others repainted.

But on the floor, tiles are still missing where the drone strike hit. The family's second vehicle - almost completely burned by the blast - still lies in the middle of the yard under a tarp. "We didn't want to get rid of it in memory of the victims and because it saved lives by protecting the women inside the house from the shrapnel," said Ahmadi's 20-year-old nephew, Nasratullah Malikzada.

AFP

INDIA

Election is good for Congress, says lawmaker Shashi Tharoor

Thiruvananthapuram, India - Congress lawmaker Shashi Tharoor on Tuesday said that an election will be good for the Indian National Congress, which is accused of not having 'internal democracy' for being controlled by the Gandhi family unopposed.

Recently, Gulam Nabi Azad, a veteran Congress leader from Jammu and Kashmir, quit from the party blaming the new leadership under the Gandhi scion Rahul not respecting the views of the senior members in the functioning of the party.

Tharoor aired his views in a commentary that he wrote for a vernacular (Malayalam) daily that eventually triggered speculation that the former federal minister could contest for the post of party president, which is lying vacant since the current interim president Sonia Gandhi stepped down.

"I accept what I've written in my article which is that an election would be a good thing for the Congress party," Tharoor told reporters when asked whether he will contest the party's presidential poll.



Congress lawmaker Shashi Tharoor said that the grand old party should not be limited by the belief that only one family can lead it

The Thiruvananthapuram lawmaker lamented Rahul Gandhi's refusal to be appointed as the Congress president. However, in the same breath, he said that the grand

old party should not be limited by the belief that only one family can lead it.

Shashi Tharoor had penned an article in Malayalam daily *Mathrubhumi* saying that the

party elections were the first step towards rejuvenation of the organisation.

Congress Rajya Sabha (India's upper house) member Mallikarjun Kharge is of the

opinion that Rahul Gandhi should take the lead of the Congress party since he has the ability to lift the party from the crisis.

Speaking to ANI, Kharge

said, "Today the entire situation has become clear regarding the election of Congress party president. I have my personal opinion and it is the feeling of all the workers that

Rahul Gandhi should take the lead of the Congress party at this time. He should become the president of the Congress party."

Congress Working Committee (CWC) had on Sunday decided that the election for the Congress president post will be held on October 17, said sources.

The counting of votes will be done on October 19.

This comes in the backdrop of the party's senior leader Gulam Nabi Azad's resignation on Friday.

According to sources, the election for the post of president has now become a challenge for Congress with the reluctance of Rahul Gandhi to contest the polls.

The Central Election Authority has made preparations to complete the election process on time.

The process seems to remain stuck since Rahul Gandhi is not willing to contest the election for the post of Congress president, although all the efforts to convince him are still going on, added sources.

ANI

French-Indian textile designer strives to keep alive art of hand block printing

Amber, India - Textiles designer Brigitte Singh lovingly lays out a piece of cloth embossed with a red poppy plant she says was probably designed for emperor Shah Jahan, builder of the Taj Mahal, four centuries ago.

For Singh - who moved from France to India 42 years ago and married into a maharaja's family - this exquisite piece remains the ever-inspiring heart of her studio's mission.

The 67-year-old is striving to keep alive the art of block printing, which flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries under the conquering but sophisticated Mughal dynasty that then ruled India.

"I was the first to give a renaissance to this kind of Mughal design," Singh told AFP in her traditional printing workshop in Rajasthan.

Having studied decorative arts in Paris, Singh arrived aged 25 in 1980 in western India's Jaipur, the 'last bastion' of the technique of using carved blocks of wood to print patterns



Brigitte Singh (right) watches as a worker uses hand block printing technique on a cotton fabric at her workshop in Amber (AFP)

on material.

"I dreamed of practising (miniature art) in Isfahan. But the Ayatollahs had just arrived in Iran (in the Islamic revolution of 1979). Or Herat, but the Soviets had just arrived in Afghanistan," she remembers.

"So by default, I ended up in Jaipur," she said.

'Magic potion'

A few months after arriving, Singh was introduced to a mem-

ber of the local nobility who was related to the maharaja of Rajasthan. They married in 1982.

At first, Singh still hoped to try her hand at miniature painting. But after scouring the city for traditional paper to work on, she came across workshops using block printing.

"I fell into the magic potion and could never go back," she told AFP.

She started by making just a few scarves, and when she

passed through London two years later, gave them as presents to friends who were connoisseurs of Indian textiles.

Bowled over, they persuaded her to show them to Colefax and Fowler, the storied British interior decorations firm.

"The next thing I knew, I was on my way back to India with an order for printed textiles," she said.

Since then, she has never looked back.

For the next two decades, she worked with a 'family of printers' in the city before building her own studio in nearby Amber - a stone's throw from Jaipur's famous fort.

It was her father-in-law, a major collector of Rajasthan miniatures, who gave her the Mughal-era poppy cloth connected to Shah Jahan.

Her reproduction of that print was a huge success the world over, proving especially popular with Indian, British and Japanese clients.

AFP



A woman carrying a child walks past the idols of Lord Ganesha up for sale in Hyderabad on Monday (AFP)

India's biggest Hindu religious festival returns in jumbo style

Mumbai, India - Workers caked in plaster are putting the finishing touches to storeys-high statues of the elephant god Ganesha in time for one of India's biggest religious festivals, now jumbo-sized again after COVID.

The 11-day Ganesh Chaturthi festival, which draws tens of thousands of Hindu devotees onto streets across the seaside megacity of Mumbai, begins on Wednesday.

For two years authorities re-

stricted the heights of the idols to cut crowd sizes but now they can be nine metres tall or more, requiring dozens of people to carry them.

That has prompted orders to start streaming back, said four-decade idol-maker Bharat Masurkar as he sat among dozens of unfinished red, green, and gold-clothed statues made of clay or plaster.

"This year, clay and PoP (plaster of Paris) are back with full excitement," the 59-year-

old told AFP at his busy workshop. "Business was terrible for two years."

Workers toil for up to 15 hours a day, said Raju Patel, 46, who has travelled 2,000km from Bihar to Mumbai every year since 1996 to spend four months there earning money.

The giant idols are made from plaster of Paris - a durable and lightweight material that allows them to be easily transported via road.

AFP

Fighting across southern front as Ukraine wages counter-offensive

Mykolaiv, Ukraine - Intense fighting was raging on Tuesday across the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson occupied by Russia, Kyiv's presidency said, as its troops pressed counter-offensives 'in various directions'.

Most of the region of Kherson bordering the Black Sea - and its provincial capital of the same name - were seized by Moscow's military at the start of the invasion six months ago.

With the war in the eastern Donbas region largely stalled, analysts have said for weeks that combat is likely to shift south to break the stalemate before winter comes.

Also on Tuesday, fresh Russian strikes in the northeast city of Kharkiv killed at least five people, prompting officials to urge peo-



Ukrainian servicemen fire with a Polish 155mm self-propelled tracked gun-howitzer Krab at a position on the front line in the Donetsk region on Monday, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

Heavy fighting is taking place in almost the entire territory of the Kherson region. Powerful explosions continued throughout the day and throughout the night

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, KYIV

ple to stay indoors.

But much of the attention remained on the counter-offensive in the south.

In its morning update, the president's office in Kyiv said 'heavy fighting is taking place in almost the entire territory of the Kherson region'.

"Powerful explosions continued throughout the day and throughout the night' and 'the Armed Forces of Ukraine

launched offensive actions in various directions," it added.

In the town of Berezneuvate - near the frontlines 70km north of Kherson city - AFP reporters saw soldiers resting by the roadside and heard artillery fire. "We forced them well back," said infantryman Victor, in his 60s, who declined to give a surname.

But his commander Oleksandr - a veteran of the war in Afghanistan - predicted the fight

to retake Kherson will be 'long and complicated'.

In his nightly address on Monday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was coy about Ukraine's overarching strategy whilst striking a bullish tone.

"You won't hear the specifics from any person in charge because this is war."

"But the occupiers should know that we will push them to our borderline," he added.

"If they want to survive, it is time for the Russian military to flee. Go home."

Russia's defence ministry claimed Ukraine suffered 'large-scale losses' of more than 1,200 soldiers and dozens of pieces of equipment during the 'defeat' of its southern attack.

AFP

TSIT SIP PAUSE!

Fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas is stunned by Colombian qualifier Daniel Elahi Galan on ninth match point at US Open

New York, United States - Fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas was knocked out of the US Open in the first round on Monday, defeated by Colombian qualifier Daniel Elahi Galan on a dramatic ninth match point.

Galan, ranked 94 in the world, won 6-0, 6-1, 3-6, 7-5 as Tsitsipas's miserable record in New York continued with the Greek having never got past the third round.

Galan, making his main draw debut at the tournament, will face Australia's Jordan Thompson for a place in the last 32.

"I am super happy," said the 26-year-old Galan.

"When he started to play better, I became more nervous.

"But I managed to regain my composure and, even though I lost the third set, I felt that I was playing better and better."

Earlier, Russia's defending champion Daniil Medvedev routed Stefan Koslov of the United States in the top half of the draw.

The Russian comfortably dispatched world No.111 Kozlov 6-2, 6-4, 6-0 in 2hrs 1min.

Medvedev, bidding to become the first man to defend the US crown since Roger Federer retained the title in 2008, faces France's Arthur Rinderknech in the second round.

Britain's Andy Murray, another veteran well into the twilight of his career, marked the 10th anniversary of his maiden Grand Slam win with a straight sets defeat of Argentinian 24th seed Francisco Cerundolo.

The 35-year-old Scot showed no signs of recent cramping problems in a 7-5, 6-3, 6-3 win, but admitted afterwards: "It felt like five sets."

It was Murray's first straight sets win at a Grand Slam event since 2017.

Former world number one Simona Halep, seeded seventh, was the biggest casualty in the first round, crashing out 6-2, 0-6, 6-4 to Ukrainian qualifier Daria Snigur.

But there were no such problems for US teenager and 12th seed Coco Gauff, who cruised past France's Leolia Jeanjean 6-2, 6-3.

AFP



Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece is disappointed after losing to Daniel Elahi Galan of Columbia in the first round of the US Open on Monday (AFP)



Wu Yibing

Wu becomes first Chinese man to win Slam match since 1959

New York, United States - Wu Yibing on Monday became the first Chinese man in 63 years to win a singles match at a Grand Slam when he knocked 31st seed Nikoloz Basilashvili out.

Wu, 22, triumphed 6-3, 6-4, 6-0 in the opening round, firing nine aces in his 31 winners past his Georgian opponent. Mei Fu Chi, at Wimbledon in 1959, was the last Chinese man to win a match at the majors.

Wu, ranked 174 and who came through qualifying, is also the first Chinese man to win a US Open singles match since Cheng Guy in 1935.

"It's happy and exciting but still more matches to come," Wu told atptour.com.

Wu next faces Portuguese qualifier Nuno Borges who defeated US wildcard Ben Shelton 7-6(8/6), 3-6, 7-6 (5/7), 6-7 (8/10), 6-3.



Bianca Andreescu plays a forehand against Harmony Tan

Andreescu shrugs off wardrobe malfunction in first-round win

New York, United States - A hasty change of outfit worked wonders for Bianca Andreescu as she powered into the second round of the US Open on Monday.

The 22-year-old Canadian star, winner of the US Open crown in 2019, overcame Harmony Tan 6-0, 3-6, 6-1 to keep alive her dream of a second Grand Slam title.

However, the victory was not without drama as a flustered Andreescu scrambled to change her clothing.

The former world number four arrived on court in a navy blue skirt, but with gusts of wind blowing her outfit around, she pleaded with the chair umpire to make a change.

"It's not my fault, it's Nike's fault, this dress is so bad," Andreescu could be heard complaining. "I need to go. This is so bad."

She quickly returned to the court wearing shorts and a white top and set about navigating her way past Tan, who made headlines in June when she beat Serena Williams at Wimbledon.

Andreescu later explained her change of outfit after securing victory.

"It was just bothering me on some forehands. I just felt like it was kind of coming up a bit. Obviously the wind didn't help," she said.

She said she had pleaded with the umpire not to dock her a bathroom break - which he agreed to - and said she had not intended to criticise kit manufacturer Nike.

"He was very nice to say it was totally okay," she said.

AFP

Serena Williams 'staying vague' over retirement plans

New York, United States - Serena Williams said she is "staying vague" over her expected retirement from tennis after reaching the US Open second round on Monday.

"I have been pretty vague about it, right? I'm going to stay vague because you never know," said the 40-year-old after beating Danka Kovinic 6-3, 6-3.

Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam title winner, said earlier this month that she was "evolving away" from tennis and that "the countdown" was on for her retirement after 27 years as a professional.

Before Monday, the former world number one had won just one match on tour all year and seen her ranking slip to 605.

That kind of form prompted her to reveal that she was on the brink of retirement and hinting that this US Open would be her farewell.

However, the guessing game over her concrete plans for the future continued Monday with mixed messages delivered on court and then in her post-match news conference.

"It was such a hard decision,"



Serena Williams celebrates after defeating Montenegro's Danka Kovinic in US Open first round on Monday (AFP)

Williams told her on-court interviewer when asked about her original announcement revealed in an essay for Vogue magazine.

"I think when you are passionate about something it is always hard to walk away," she said.

"I have been trying to decide what to do. I love this game.

She added: "I think now's the time. I have a family and there's other chapters in life. I call it evolution."

"It's like Serena 2.0. I will still be crazy, I'll still be intense. I'll still be around. But I look forward to waking up and not having to run onto a tennis court."

I think now's the time. I have a family and there's other chapters in life. I call it evolution

SERENA WILLIAMS

On Monday, Williams, who arrived on court in a diamond-encrusted black dress and jacket that sparkled under the lights, overcame a nervy first game for a hold of serve.

The American star brought the crowd to their feet with a break for 2-0, chasing down a net cord to hit a winner.

A love service game gave the American a 5-3 lead and a final break of the night gave her victory.

She celebrated with a little jig on the baseline and a broad smile, much to the delight of a crowd which included the likes of tennis legend Martina Navratilova and former US president Bill Clinton.

AFP

Murray hails Serena and her jokes he can't repeat

New York, United States - Andy Murray marked the 10th anniversary of his maiden Grand Slam triumph with an impressive first round US Open win on Monday before hailing Serena Williams for her "incredible achievements" and risque jokes that he cannot bring himself to repeat.

The 35-year-old Murray defeated 24th seeded Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina 7-5, 6-3, 6-3, to register his first straight sets win at a Slam since Wimbledon in 2017.

Murray won the first of his three Grand Slams at the US Open in 2012, ending Britain's 76-year wait for a men's champion at the majors.



Andy Murray of serves to Francisco Cerundolo during their US Open first- round match on Monday (AFP)

Serena Williams was also celebrating 10 years ago after winning her fourth title in New York. Williams, who is widely expected to bring the curtain down on her career at this year's US Open, gets her singles campaign underway later Monday.

Murray and the American icon teamed up in mixed doubles at Wimbledon in 2019 and the British star said he saw a surprising new side to his teammate.

"I didn't really know her that well but I felt like she had a good sense of humor and cracked a few jokes, certainly early in the partnership and helped me quite a lot," said Murray.

"But I can't share them in here, because they were of that nature! I thought that was cool."

Murray described Williams as

"one of the best tennis players to have ever played, if not the best on the women's side".

However, he said the contribution of older sister Venus should not be overlooked.

Venus, 42, has seven Slam singles titles to Serena's 23 but they have won 14 doubles crowns playing together at the majors.

That would become 15 if the sisters triumph in New York over the next fortnight.

"When you combine the two, it is even more remarkable, really, and probably unlikely we will see something like that again from two sisters," added Murray.

AFP

THE PAUL POGBA AFFAIR

A family conflict, extortion claims and a witch doctor feature the mysterious controversy surrounding Pogba

Paris, France - A police investigation has been opened after claims by French football star Paul Pogba that he is the victim of a multi-million euro blackmail plot that includes his brother Mathias.

Here is a looks into an affair involving a family conflict and a witch doctor, and which comes less than three months before the Juventus star is expected to help France defend their World Cup crown.

Who is Mathias Pogba?

Mathias, 32, is the elder brother of Paul (29) and the twin brother of Florentin. All three are professional footballers. Mathias, who was born in Conakry, the capital of Guinea, has had a journeyman career which has taken him to Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Slovenia. Much of his career has been spent in the United Kingdom, including spells at Wrexham, Crewe Alexandra and Partick Thistle. Last year he played 12 matches for Belfort in the French fourth tier. Mathias Pogba has also appeared on television in France as a pundit.

Until recently, the Pogba brothers appeared close-knit. Mathias, Florentin and their mother, Yeo Moriba, have regularly been seen attending France matches in which Paul has played. Paul Pogba is also one of the main donors to 48 H POUR, a charity established by Mathias to help provide drinking water



Mathias Pogba (R) with his brother Paul Pogba during a charity match organised by the Juan Cuadrado foundation in 2017 (AFP)

and education for children in Guinea.

“Great revelations”

On Saturday, Mathias Pogba published a video on Instagram in which he promised “great revelations” about Paul and the Juventus player’s agent, Rafaela Pimenta. In the video, Mathias Pogba says the “whole world, as well as my brother’s fans, and

even more so the French team and Juventus, my brother’s team-mates and his sponsors deserve to know certain things”. “All this is likely to be explosive,” he concluded without adding any substance to his “revelations”.

Pogba’s response

A statement released on Sunday, and signed by Paul Pogba’s

lawyers, his mother Yeo Moriba and agent Pimenta, said that the videos published on Saturday night “are unfortunately no surprise”.

“They are in addition to threats and extortion attempts by an organised gang against Paul Pogba,” read the statement. They added that “competent bodies in Italy and France were informed a month ago”.

France Info radio reported that Paul Pogba told investigators he had been threatened by “childhood friends and two hooded men armed with assault rifles”.

They are demanding 13 million euros (\$13m) from him for “services provided”, he said, adding that one person close to him had withdrawn 200,000 euros using his credit card.

‘Mbappe unperturbed by Pogba curse story’

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe is showing no sign of worry or anger after his name came up in a blackmail affair engulfing his France teammate Paul Pogba,

Pogba says he is the victim of a multi-million euro blackmail plot to discredit him by claiming he asked a witch doctor to cast a spell on Mbappe. Pogba denies the accusation.

But PSG boss Christophe Galtier says Mbappe appears unperturbed. “Kylian seems to be in a good place. I heard what happened with Paul Pogba. He is showing no sign of irritation or worry with regards to that,” he said.



The investigation

Paris prosecutors confirmed that an investigation was opened on August 3 into allegations of extortion and attempted extortion by an organised gang.

Paul Pogba told investigators that he had been threatened by “childhood friends and two hooded men armed with assault rifles” who blamed him for not having helped them financially.

Paul Pogba also told investigators that he had been threatened on several occasions in Manchester, during his time playing for Manchester United, and in Turin, where he currently plays for Juventus. He said he recognised his brother Mathias from among the suspects.

Enter Mbappe

The Paris Saint-Germain striker, and France teammate of Paul Pogba, appears reluctantly in the affair. Paul Pogba told investigators that his blackmailers wanted to discredit him by claiming he asked a witch doctor to cast a spell on Mbappe, which Pogba denies.

In a series of tweets published on Sunday, Mathias Pogba appeals directly to Mbappe, saying: “Kylian, do you understand now? I have nothing against you, what I am saying is for your good, everything is true and known, the witch doctor is known! Sorry for this brother, a so-called Muslim up to his neck in witchcraft.”

AFP



Ajax forward Antony is all set to make his big-money move into the Premier League

Manchester United to sign Brazil forward Antony for 100mn euros

Manchester, United Kingdom - Manchester United have reached an agreement to sign Brazil forward Antony from Ajax, the English Premier League club announced Tuesday.

Ajax said they have agreed a transfer fee of 95 million euros (£81 million). Including add-ons, the fee could rise to 100 million euros (£86 million).

Dutch national news agency ANP said that if the deal goes through, it will be a record for an Eredivisie player, surpassing the

86 million euros maximum value of Frenkie de Jong’s move from Ajax to Barcelona three years ago. Antony has scored 31 goals in 134 club appearances for Ajax and Sao Paulo, and two goals in nine senior appearances for Brazil.

By moving to Old Trafford, the 22-year-old will be reunited with former Ajax manager Erik ten Hag, who has already brought defender Lisandro Martinez to United from the Dutch giants.

“Since February of this year,

my agents came to Amsterdam to inform Ajax of my desire to leave the club to face a new challenge and that some interested clubs would arrive and, with them, certainly a great offer,” Antony said via Italian journalist Fabrizio Romano on YouTube over the weekend, as he made clear his intention to leave the side.

“During the window months, meetings concluded including a proposal from Ajax for a contract renewal. I made it clear once

again I want to leave the club. “Today in a meeting with the board I expressed my interest in leaving the club, this time with a considerable offer on the table. Others have already arrived (but) Ajax always refuses with the argument it only has five days to replace (me).

“I’m not asking (for Ajax) to release me, I am asking Ajax to sell me for the highest bid received for a player who plays in the Eredivisie.”

AFP

Bournemouth sack head coach Parker days after 9-0 Liverpool humiliation

London, United Kingdom - English Premier League strugglers Bournemouth on Tuesday sacked head coach Scott Parker, days after they were thrashed 9-0 at Liverpool.

In a parting shot at Parker, owner Maxim Demin said in a statement that “in order for us to keep progressing as a team and a club as a whole, it is unconditional that we are aligned in our strategy to run the club sustainably.

“We must also show belief in and respect for one another. That is the approach that has brought this club so much success in recent history.”

He added: “Our search for a new head coach will begin immediately.”

Parker had taken several public swipes at Bournemouth’s management over their failure to strengthen the squad after the south coast club’s return to the top flight.

He was especially blunt following the Liverpool match, saying the Cherries were



Bournemouth head coach Scott Parker endured a nightmare afternoon at Anfield on Saturday as Liverpool ran riot (AFP)

“ill-equipped” following a rout which came after a 4-0 loss at champions Manchester City and a 3-0 defeat by Arsenal.

“I can see some more (heavy losses),” Parker said during his

post-match press conference at Anfield. “We need to make a decision. I have been clear how this season could look for us and I stick by that.

“We need to make a decision

and try and help this young group who at times are struggling for air.

“We have been trying to get more quality in and there are a million reasons why (they have not).

“I feel sorry for the fans. I feel sorry for the players because we are ill-equipped at this level.”

Gary O’Neil will take interim charge of the team, who are 17th in the Premier League and have lost three of their four opening games, conceding 16 goals.

The 41-year-old Parker, a former England international midfielder, had taken Bournemouth to promotion last season from the second-tier Championship.

“I would like to place on record my gratitude to Scott and his team for their efforts during their time with us,” said Demin.

“Our promotion back to the Premier League last season under his tenure will always be remembered as one of the most successful seasons in our history.”

AFP



Newcastle United are still awaiting the work permit of new signing Alexander Isak

Newcastle in race against time to have Isak available for Liverpool

London, United Kingdom - Newcastle manager Eddie Howe is “desperately hoping” club record signing Alexander Isak is available for Wednesday’s Premier League match away to Liverpool.

Sweden striker Isak, signed for a reported £58 million (\$68 million) from Real Sociedad, was unable to make his debut at Wolves on Sunday because his

work permit had not been processed.

Newcastle are still awaiting the documentation.

Asked on Tuesday if Isak would be available at Anfield, Howe replied: “We don’t know, we still don’t know and I still don’t know. I hope so, I desperately hope so.

“It would be great to see him involved for us, but we’re in the

hands still of other people.

“We’re desperately hoping that gets done before the game, but there’s no guarantee as I sit here now.”

Howe said he believed the cut off point was quite late: “I think it’s 75 minutes before kick-off.

“We don’t know, so it could go down to the wire. We’ll wait and see.”

AFP

All set for three hours of thrill

Hockenheim GT challenge awaits Oman's Al Zubair and team-mates Schiller and Jeffries

Hockenheim (Germany) - Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair again joins forces with Germany's Fabian Schiller and Zimbabwe's Axcil Jeffries to take part in the three-hour round of the 2022 Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS - Endurance Cup at Germany's Hockenheim circuit from September 2 to 4.

The trio will compete in their usual Mercedes-AMG GT3 running under the Al Manar Racing by HRT banner and entered in the Silver Cup category. They will be hoping to bounce back from a premature retirement at the recent TotalEnergies 24 Hours of



Spa that saw them slip to third place in the Silver Endurance Cup's Drivers' Championship.

Al Zubair said: "I am looking forward to the race, three hours at Hockenheim. Unfortunately, I

did not test there personally, as I had schooling commitments. My two team-mates did test there. It was quite positive. I'm excited to getting back in the car after the Spa incident. Hopefully, we get a

good bunch of results and keep up the momentum before the last round in Barcelona."

Benjamin Goethe, Thomas Neubauer and Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer currently top the



Hopefully, we get a good bunch of results and keep up the momentum

AL FAISAL AL ZUBAIR

placed Nicolas Scholl, Alex Aka and Marius Zug by just six points.

The 4,574km German circuit hosted a round of the FIA Formula One World Championship until 2019 and also hosts German DTM races. It will be open to GT World Challenge Europe competitors for a paid test session from 14.00hrs on Thursday (September 1), before all administration and technical checks are carried out on Friday.

A free practice session runs for 90 minutes from 09.45hrs on Saturday morning and precedes another 90-minute pre-qualifying stint from 14.05hrs.

After sharing the weekend's timetable with the GT4 European Series, Clio Cup and Mit-Jet2L Trophy Italy, the first of three 15-minute qualifying sessions gets underway from 09.45hrs on Sunday, with each driver taking part in one stint apiece.

The three-hour Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe race is scheduled to fire into life from 15.00hrs.

2022 FANATEC GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE - ENDURANCE CUP SILVER CUP - CURRENT POSITIONS (DRIVERS):

1. Benjamin Goethe/Thomas Neubauer/Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer **84pts**
2. Nicolas Scholl/Alex Aka/Marius Zug **50pts**
3. Al Faisal Al-Zubair/Axcil Jeffries/Fabian Schiller **44pts**
4. Tuomas Tujula/Stuart White/Konsta Lappalainen **33pts**
5. Jordan Love/Alain Valente/Jannes Fittje/Juuso Puhakka **31pts**
6. Thomas Drouet/Tommaso Mosca/Casper Stevenson **24pts**
6. Louis Proctor/Finlay Hutchinson/Diego Menchaca **24pts**

Former champion Mir joining Honda as MotoGP musical saddles revs up

Paris, France - Former world champion Joan Mir has agreed to ride for Honda for 2023 and 2024, while Miguel Oliveira and Raul Fernandez will join Aprilia-RNF, as the chain of MotoGP seat changes continued on Tuesday.

Mir, who won the title in 2020, did not have a ride for next season, because his current team Suzuki is quitting MotoGP. "Honda Racing Corporation

are proud to announce the signing of Joan Mir. The 24-year-old will compete aboard the Honda RC213V in the Factory Team on a two-year contract alongside Marc Marquez," the Japanese team said in a statement.

Honda needed a rider because Pol Espargaro had already announced he was headed to the rebranded KTM/GasGas team. That team is racing as KTM/Tech3 this season with



We will take advantage of all my experience in MotoGP with Suzuki to contribute as much as possible to the project and to fight together to become world champions again

JOAN MIR

Spaniard Fernandez as one of their riders.

Meanwhile Portuguese rider

signing Australian Jack Miller for next season.

At Honda, Mir, who turns 25 on September 1, will be one half of a potentially potent dream team. His teammate, fellow Spaniard Marquez, has six world titles but is still battling back from a 2020 crash which saw him undergoing a fourth operation on his right arm at the beginning of June.

Mir won the Moto3 title in

2017 on a Honda. He moved up to MotoGP with Suzuki in 2019 and won the title in the Covid-curtailed 2020 season.

"We will take advantage of all my experience accumulated over the years in MotoGP with Suzuki to contribute as much as possible to the project and to fight together to become world champions again," he said in the Honda statement.

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Afghanistan's Mujeeb Ur Rahman (L) celebrates after bowling out Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan in the Asia Cup on Tuesday (AFP)

Afghanistan in Super Four after beating Bangladesh

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates - Afghanistan registered their second consecutive victory in the Asia Cup as Ibrahim Zadran and Najibullah Zadran stitched unbeaten 69 runs off only 33 balls to help them beat Bangladesh by seven wickets in their Group B Twenty20 clash in Sharjah, UAE, on Tuesday.

Afghanistan chased down 128 runs in 18.3 overs and became the first team to advance to the Super Four.

Earlier, Afghanistan spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Rashid Khan combined to keep down Bangladesh to 127 for 7.

Mujeeb and Rashid took three wickets each to rattle the opposition after Bangladesh elected to bat first in their opening match of the six-nation tournament.

Mosaddek Hossain hit back with an unbeaten 48 off 31 balls to give some substance to the total against an upbeat Afghanistan.

British Open champion Cameron Smith of Australia joins LIV Golf

London, United Kingdom - British Open champion Cameron Smith has become the latest leading player to sign up to the breakaway LIV Golf Series which on Tuesday announced that he was in the field for its next event.

The Australian was one of six new recruits for the Saudi-backed tour for the LIV Golf Invitational Boston, from September 2-4.

As the world's number two, the 29-year-old Smith will become the highest-ranked player to compete in a LIV Golf event.

Smith was linked repeatedly to LIV Golf shortly after winning the 150th British Open, at St Andrews, last month, but avoided discussion of the subject while playing in this month's PGA FedEx Cup playoffs.

A LIV statement issued Tuesday said Smith would be among five other players making their debuts among a field of 98 at the International in Massachusetts including compatriot Marc Leishman, leading Chilean golfer



World No 2 Cameron Smith will become the highest-ranked player to compete in a LIV Golf event (AFP)

Joaquin Niemann, Harold Varner III (world no 46), Cameron Tringale (55) and India's top-ranked pro Anirban Lahiri (92).

LIV Golf's record \$25 million purses and 54-hole format have attracted several big-name players, including Phil Mickelson, Bryson DeChambeau, Brooks Koepka, Sergio Garcia, Henrik Stenson, Lee Westwood, Ian

Poulter, Patrick Reed and Dustin Johnson.

But its creation has sparked a bitter split with the established US PGA tour and a flurry of lawsuits.

Four-time major champion Rory McIlroy, has been one of LIV Golf's most outspoken critics among players.

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RUG REDESIGN

An ancient Iranian rug tradition gets a makeover to survive in the diverse market as sales begin to sink. Modern designs are fast replacing traditional weaves

Modern makeover

Striking geometric shapes that recall 20th century abstract art are not what you would expect to see adorning a handmade Iranian rug. Changing tastes and increased competition from Asia have, however, forced some in the trade to redesign and resize a tradition dating back more than 2,000 years.

"A revolution is underway," said Ahad Azimzadeh, 65, who calls himself 'the biggest exporter of Persian carpets in the world'.

Rugs traditionally woven in the Islamic republic are known for dense, curving floral designs in rich colours. Their beauty and quality have long been recognised worldwide, yet sales have collapsed over the past 30 years as the demand has swayed towards modern designs.

"In 1994 the value of Iranian carpets sold abroad reached \$1.7bn and represented 40 per cent of our non-petroleum exports," Ahmad Karimi, chief of the Handmade Carpet Manufacturers' and Exporters' Union, told AFP. By 2019-20 that figure had shrunk to US\$70mn, he said.

By another measure, in 2000, Iran represented 32 per cent of global handmade carpet exports. This fell to 7.9 per cent by 2019 as exports from China and India rose, Karimi pointed out.

New generations

There was an impact from international sanctions that targeted Iran over its nuclear programme, human rights and other issues,



but he said, other factors are more to blame.

"Especially, by the big diversity of carpets on the market and the change in the mentality and tastes of the new generations," Karimi said.

Azimzadeh, a carpet exporter,

said "the future is with modern handmade rugs." He spoke at last week's handmade carpet exhibition in Tehran. The annual event, suspended for two years because of the coronavirus pandemic, features about 400 exhibitors from across Iran.

"The patterns of Iranian carpets are ancient but today there is a strong demand for contemporary styles. They're more suitable for a modern house," said Azimzadeh, a big talker who started small - as a seven-year-old weaver. By 14, he had graduated to the commercial side of the trade.

Among the new styles on display at the exhibition, which ended on Sunday, was a rug featuring small squares of hypnotic diagonal blue and white lines. Another depicts diamond and other geometric patterns in gold silk on a black background. One wool rug looks as if an ink roller has left splashes of gold on it.

"The colours are clear and the sizes smaller," which is what modern tastes demand, Azimzadeh said.

As an extreme but less typical example of this 'revolution', Azimzadeh stands in front of a woven rug, 3mx3m in size. It depicts global personalities, including actor Charlie Chaplin, the physicist Albert Einstein and Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

From art to doormat

The new style is also cheaper. Some sell for US\$3,000 or US\$4,000, whereas Azimzadeh has a 2,000sqm traditional carpet from Tabriz priced at US\$120mn. His inventory also holds a 170-year-old piece from Kashan available for about US\$160,000.

For now, modern designs are still a minority at his stand in the exhibition,



but the traditional stock will be gradually withdrawn, he said.

"Next year, 70 per cent of the rugs on display will be modern," Azimzadeh predicts.

Karimi, of the exporters'

union, regrets that Iranian carpets are nowadays seen as "a consumer good to put in front of the door, whereas in the past it was an investment. "It's lost its status as an object of art."

Another trader, Abbas Arsin, was perhaps ahead of his time when he created what he calls the 'transitional carpet' 25 years ago. He took traditional patterns and made the bright colours fade by rubbing them and leaving them in the sun.

"My father and my older brother didn't understand why I wore myself out making the old

Turkey and China overtook Iran in the global market because we Iranians had fewer relations with the rest of the world. We didn't see the changes that were happening. Even now, not everyone is convinced."

"A year ago we began to make carpets in modern designs but they represent only five per cent of our production and I don't think we will go beyond that," said Mehdi Jamshidi, 42, director of sales for Iran Carpet company. "Modern carpets will never replace the traditional ones, which are deep-rooted in our culture and regions."

Hamid Sayahfar, 54, a dealer

India, Pakistan, Turkey, and China overtook Iran in the global market because we Iranians had fewer relations with the rest of the world. We didn't see the changes that were happening

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BEAUTY PAGEANT

As the Rose of Tralee beauty pageant concluded this week, the contestants in colourful ball gowns and silk sashes swayed as they sang the 19th-century ballad that inspired the competition.

"She was lovely and fair as the rose of the summer," they sang as this year's winner was paraded through the town in County Kerry, southwest Ireland, which gave the contest its name.

When all 33 contestants departed the stage, fireworks burst overhead and ticker tape ribbons fell from the sky.

The beauty pageant returned to Tralee and Ireland's living rooms after a two-year absence due to COVID-19 restrictions to fanfare from its legions of fans. But critics have raised questions about the pageant's relevance in modern Ireland and the diversity of its contestants, not least because of the show's all-white line up for 2022.

Created in 1959, the Rose of Tralee draws contestants, known as 'roses', from across Ireland and around the world from the Irish diaspora. All of them are winners of local selections that draw thousands of participants.

New York rose, Cathrena Collins, a 24-year-old law student, told AFP it had been really special to represent her city's Irish community, just as her grandmother had in 1965.

"It was huge for me. Growing up, I always heard stories. She always talked about what an honour it was," she explained.

Modern Ireland

The Rose of Tralee has been a major fixture on Irish television since it was first broadcast in 1967 and has had to adapt to the changing currents in Irish society to survive.

Mary McGill, an Irish lecturer and author, said it originates from a time when a 'puritanical notion of Catholicism' was a huge part of Irish identity. At the time, the church had an iron grip on Irish society and womanhood was put 'under forms of extreme surveillance and extreme expectation around morality'.

"I think, because of its origins, that baggage is still there," she said, explaining, however, that

IRISH 'ROSES'

TRADITIONAL BEAUTY PAGEANT BATTLES KEEP PACE IN MODERN IRELAND



Rose of Tralee is still able to tap into the zeitgeist in a strange way. "Something that's uniquely Irish and quite traditionalist."

"It also has managed to have a new lease of life in the 21st century because of the connection it has to Irishness, nostalgia and the

Rose of Tralee contestants pose for a selfie in the green room.

(Right) Rose of Tralee winner Rachel Duffy from Westmeath smiles on stage during the Rose of Tralee live show

global community".

This year, the contestants wanted the pageant to reflect modern Ireland as much as possible. Ireland, home to some five million people, has traditionally been a country of emigration but that began to change when its economy took off in the 1990s, notably with immigration from the EU.

Most people still class themselves as white Irish but ethnic diversity is increasing. At the same time, it has seen many once-unthinkable social changes and the liberalisation of strict abortion laws.

Wexford Rose Joy Quigley, a 26-year-old bodybuilding competitor, showed off a sleeve tattoo on her right arm as she demonstrated muscle poses for the audience in a sparkling green evening gown.

"I think a modern Irish woman isn't your typical glamorous pretty princess," she said. "We are a bit rough around the edges, and it's important to be relatable like that."

Rule changes

Broadcast over two consecutive evenings in prime time, the pageant frequently revels in its own brand of Irish kitsch.

During Tuesday's finale, one rose was admonished by a popular children's TV puppet after she revealed she had worked on a killing line in a poultry processing factory.

Men wept openly as a contestant from Queensland, in northwest Australia, read a poem about missing Ireland, including crisp sandwiches made with the nation's beloved Tayto brand.

Rose of Tralee also celebrates the bonds created by the competition in Irish communities.

Winning rose, Rachel Duffy, from Westmeath in central Ireland, spoke of her pride in representing the rural community that had rallied around her following the death of her mother 14 years earlier.

Maysen Tinkler from Toronto, Canada, was diagnosed with autism a little over a year ago, and spoke of how other contestants had supported her.

In December, a series of rule changes were announced, allowing married women and transwomen to enter, and raising the age limit from 28 to 29. Former Sydney rose, Brianna Parkins, however, criticised the all-white line-up. She said,

"There just seems to be a lack of diversity

I think a modern Irish woman isn't your typical glamorous pretty princess, "We are a bit rough around the edges" JOY QUIGLEY

across the board. It isn't just a racial issue here," the 2016 contestant said. "We have some diverse people entering but I would love to see those numbers boosted because I don't think they're true reflections of Irish society at the minute."

Executive chair of the Rose of Tralee, Anthony O'Gara dismissed the criticism, pointing out that three of the last four winners had been of mixed ethnic origin.

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