

► NEWS BRIEF

IRAN SENDS TEAM TO RESUME NUCLEAR TALKS IN VIENNA

Tehran - Iran said on Wednesday it was sending a delegation to Vienna to resume talks to revive the frayed 2015 agreement on its nuclear programme that have been halted since March.

"As part of the policy of lifting cruel sanctions against our country, Iran's negotiating team led by Ali Bagheri, the Islamic republic's chief negotiator, will leave for Vienna in a few hours," foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said in a statement.

Negotiations in Vienna began in April 2021 to restore the deal, but have stalled for the past five months amid differences between Tehran and Washington on several issues.

Heading to peace in Yemen?

Dubai - Yemen's warring parties have agreed to renew a two-month truce, the United Nations said on Tuesday, in an 11th-hour move on the day it was set to expire.

"I would like to announce that the parties to the conflict have agreed to the United Nations' proposal to renew the current truce in Yemen for two additional months," the UN special envoy on Yemen, Hans Grundberg, said in a statement.

Yemen has been gripped by conflict since the Iran-backed Huthi rebels took control of the capital Sanaa in 2014, triggering a Saudi-led military intervention in support of the beleaguered government the following year.

Grundberg added that the truce was extended under the same terms as the previous one.

On Wednesday, a Yemeni aircraft left the rebel-held capital Sanaa for Cairo on the first commercial flight between the two cities since 2016.

It was the seventh such flight under the truce, with the previous six all heading to the Jordanian capital Amman.

Beyond opening Sanaa airport to some commercial flights - a lifeline to Yemenis needing medical care abroad - the truce has allowed oil tankers to dock in the rebel-held port of Hodeida, potentially easing fuel shortages in Sanaa and elsewhere.

But a provision for the rebels



A Yemeni gunman looks at paintings at an art exhibition in Huthi-held capital Sanaa

'Oman played central role in extension of truce'

Muscat - President Joe Biden of the United States has praised Oman for 'playing a central role' in the extension of truce in Yemen.

In a statement on the extension of the UN-mediated truce, Biden said that the truce, now going on five months, has brought a period of unprecedented calm in Yemen, saving thousands of lives and bringing tangible relief for countless Yemenis.

"I want to recognise the hard



We're grateful for the role played by (His Majesty) Sultan Haitham bin Tarik as a mediator and for his team

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

work of my Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking, who - working hand-in-hand with UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg - played a major role

in this achievement."

Lavishing the sultanate with special praise, Biden said, "Oman also played a central role in securing this extension of the

truce, and we're grateful for the role played by (His Majesty) Sultan Haitham bin Tarik as a mediator and for his team as an interlocutor between all the parties to the conflict."

He said that Secretary of State Tony Blinken also helped advance the truce, "including making calls this weekend with his Omani counterpart, and with the President of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Alimi".

to ease their siege of Yemen's third-largest city Taz has yet to be implemented, to the anger of the government which is demanding roads to the city be opened.

The rebels in turn have called on the government to pay the salaries of public sector employees working in areas under their control.

"In order for the truce to fully deliver on its potential, additional steps will need to be taken, particularly on the matters of road openings and commercial flight operations," Grundberg said.

Aid agencies welcome decision

Aid agencies and Western governments had urged the Yemeni government and Huthi rebels to extend the truce, which went into effect in April and significantly reduced the intensity of fighting in a conflict the UN says has triggered the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"We hope this extension of the truce will allow for further progress on the reopening of roads linking cities and regions, allow more displaced people to return to their homes, and ensure humanitarian aid can reach people who have been out of reach because of the fighting," Norwegian Refugee Council's Yemen country director, Erin Hutchinson, said in a statement.

AFP



Permanent solutions needed to avert infrastructure losses

OMAN'S FRIENDSHIP AMBASSADOR ARRIVES IN DENMARK

The Royal Navy of Oman vessel *Shabab Oman II* arrived at the Port of Aalborg in Denmark as part of its sixth international voyage - Oman, Land of Peace - on Wednesday. It will welcome visitors for five days, introducing them to the sultanate's message of friendship and fraternity to the world.



Oman joins treaty of cooperation in Southeast Asia

Phnom Penh, Cambodia - Oman has signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in an effort to consolidate common cooperation and boost strategic partnership.

The agreement was signed by H E Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry.

The signing ceremony took place on the sidelines of the 55th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' Meeting, currently being held in Phnom Penh in the presence of ASEAN foreign ministers.

Apart from Oman, five more countries - Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates - signed the instrument of accession to TAC on Wednesday, bringing the number of state parties to the treaty of ASEAN to 49.

Speaking at the event, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, who is the chair of the 55th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, said Cambodia was hon-



Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy and Prak Sokhonn at the signing of TAC

oured to host the signing ceremony, where six more countries acceded to the TAC at the same time. "Such a remarkably high number of parties attests to the reconnection of the importance of the TAC in terms of its fundamental objectives and principles of promoting friendly multilateral cooperation and peaceful co-existence," Sokhonn said.

The TAC is a peace treaty governing inter-state relations in the region, promoting perpetual peace, everlasting amity and co-operation based on mutual respect, the principle of non-interference and peaceful settlement of disputes.

OIA sells landmark building in Düsseldorf before scheduled Oct completion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and its partner Die Entwickler Projektentwicklung have sold the Eclipse Tower in Düsseldorf, Germany, to Union Investment, an investment arm of the DZ Bank Group headquartered in Frankfurt.

OIA stated that the building has been sold to a renowned institutional investor months before completion date.

Completion of the 60m office tower is scheduled for the end of October. The building is triangular in shape, with 16 floors offering some 27,500sqm of rental space in total. It is located on one of the main arterial roads in the sought-after Kennedydamm sub-market, which links the city centre to the airport.

"Our joint venture partner and we are very happy and grateful that, despite difficult times in building materials supply chains, we are still fully on schedule and



OIA's investment directives are aligned with the government vision to strengthen areas of economic cooperation with other countries

IBRAHIM AL EISRI

will be able to complete and hand over the building before the end of this year," said Stefan Mühling, managing director of Die Entwickler.

The architecturally and structurally attractive "office building of tomorrow" features state-of-the-art office configurations and collaboration zones, plus multi-level atriums and roof terraces on the 13th and 15th floors with panoramic views. The property is already around 90 per cent let.

Ibrahim al Eisri, director gen-

eral of private equity in OIA, said the authority always looks for investment opportunities in promising areas that promote economic diversity and contribute to the maximisation of revenues to be used in forming reserves and savings for future generations.

"OIA's investment directives are aligned with the government vision to strengthen areas of economic cooperation with other countries with the aim of maintaining joint interest and finding

international partners to attract FDI to the sultanate," Eisri said.

OIA is targeting investments in the real estate sector according to a strategy that focuses on geographical diversity and building partnerships with countries and investors who demonstrate great expertise/experience in this sector.

OIA's real estate portfolio is spread across numerous developments projects aiming to achieve good returns and mitigate risk rate in the long term.

Permanent fix needed for rain destruction

Impact of recent rains shows need of permanent solutions to avert infrastructure losses in the future



Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

When Cyclone Gonu made landfall on June 6, 2007, the sultanate was caught mostly unprepared for its severity and intensity. Floods in the wake of Cyclone Shaheen in October 2021 brought much hardship on the people of Mussanah, Suwaiq, Khabourah and Saham. Then again last week, rains resulted in massive flooding in many parts of the country.

While the country is still healing from the recent weather disturbances, the need for properly designed waterways all over Oman it is now more than ever amply evident.

As it continued to pour this week, several residents of North Batinah and South Batinah struggled to commute. This has

The problem is we do not know when the wadis will start flowing. I call upon the concerned authorities to look into a permanent solution. I suggest bridges and culverts wherever roads cross wadis

SALIM AHMED SALIM

prompted commuters in the sultanate, the two Batinahs in particular, to call for permanent solutions to avert the chaos that they have encountered during heavy rains.

"Every time it rains, we get



worried about overflowing wadis. My family lives in Saham, and I go home almost every weekend from Muscat. I wish there was a permanent solution to this problem. We need a proper drainage system or small bridges over

wadis to keep traffic moving during heavy rains," said Ali al Badi. Commuter Salim Ahmed Salim, from Rustaq, said he fears whenever it rains. "Forecast of rains get me worried. It is very difficult to manoeuvre the roads

when it rains. The problem is we do not know when the wadis will start flowing. So, I call upon the concerned authorities to look into a permanent solution. I suggest bridges and culverts wherever roads cross wadis," he said.

Officials inspect damages

On Wednesday, officials visited several villages in South Batinah to inspect the damage caused by the rains. H E Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of Ministry of Finance, and a number of undersecretaries also met a group of citizens whose homes and properties were damaged.

The citizens were briefed on the efforts exerted by the relevant authorities to restore basic services affected by the rains, and the damage and affects of overflowing wadis. The officials' visit included the villages of Wadi Bani Kharus in the wilayat of Al Awabi, and Wadi Bani Awf, Al Ghushab and Al Tekha in the wilayat of Rustaq.

Initial assessments indicate that about 100 homes were affected in the wilayat of Rustaq in

the rains. "There is interruption in electricity and water supply in some areas," H E Jashmi said.

H E Dr Ali bin Amer al Shadhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology in the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said the ministry has examined the roads affected in South Batinah and priority has been accorded to finding alternative routes to get traffic back to normal at the earliest.

On his part, Shaikh Saleh bin Diab al Rubaie, Wali of Rustaq, confirmed that government institutions and agencies are working round the clock to restore basic services, electricity, water, communications and roads in the wilayats of Rustaq and Al Awabi in South Batinah.

@shadadm

SAF continues to provide technical, humanitarian support in affected areas

Muscat - The Royal Army of Oman of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) continues to provide technical as well as humanitarian support to those affected in several wilayats in South Batinah governorate impacted by the recent rains.

Work is continuing within the framework of joint national efforts to mitigate the effects of the climatic condition that the country is currently experiencing.

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) was deployed for medical evacuation of several individuals who could not be transported by land due to inclement weather from the areas of Hat and Balad Sayt, and from Al Tekha Medical Centre, to Rustaq Hospital for urgent treatment. RAFO also transported medical



staff and consumer supplies to Wadi Bani Awf in the wilayat of Rustaq.

The Ministry of Defence's Engineering Services Department provided technical and engineer-

ing support to reopen the main and secondary roads in the wilayat of Nakhl and Wadi al Ma'awil. Last week, the Engineering Services Department was deployed for relief work in

Musandam.

The Royal Navy of Oman pressed its fleet into service to transport equipment, relief material and necessary supplies to Lima in Musandam.

Rains continue in many governorates

Muscat - The wet spell continued on Wednesday with rains of varying intensity witnessed in many governorates. Al Awabi received 291mm of rainfall, the highest, over two days on August 1 and 2.

Low-level clouds and sporadic rains accompanied by hail were witnessed in Al Qabil, Mudhaibi and Ibra in North Sharqiyah, Al Hamra, Bahla and Nizwa in Dakhliyah, Dhank, Ibri and Yanqul in Dhahirah and parts of Buraimi on Wednesday.

According to the rainfall recording stations of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Al Hamra received 160mm of rainfall on August 1 and 2, followed by Bahla (50mm), Ibra (45mm), Manah (38mm), Mudhaibi (35mm) and Niwaz (33mm) among others.

The Met Office forecast clear skies over most governorates on



Thursday with chances of convective clouds developing and heavy rains and thundershowers over the Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon and evening.

'Dhofar governorate and adjoining mountains are expected

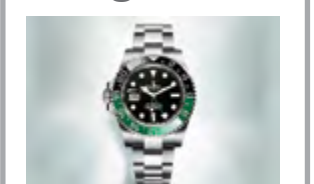
to witness intermittent drizzle and isolated rain,' it added.

Rough seas are expected along the Arabian Sea coast with maximum wave height of 4m and moderate along the other coasts with waves of a maximum height of 1.5m.

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Muscat	35	28
Abu Dhabi	42	30
Doha	40	30
Kuwait City	45	36
Manama	40	31
Riyadh	44	30

Corrigendum



In the features section (Page 13) of *Muscat Daily* on August 2, 2022, a wrong image of a Rolex Oyster Perpetual GMT-Master II watch was inadvertently carried. The correct image is shown here.

PAPER RECYCLING PROGRAMME

Attention all corporate offices!

DO YOU HAVE ANY PAPER TO RECYCLE?

Our team will collect it from your office

BIGGER, BETTER, BRANDED

RECYCLING BOXES ALSO AVAILABLE

For details contact us at recycle@apexmedia.co.om or call us on toll free no: **80076000**

MUSCAT DAILY

10mn cybersecurity threats detected and blocked in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Trend Micro solutions detected and blocked over 4.1mn email threats, 700,607 malware attacks, and over 4.6mn URL victims' attacks in Oman in 2021, according to its annual cybersecurity report.

Furthermore, it shielded remote learning and working, Smart Home Network (SHN) solutions protected devices and networks from 12,821 SHN inbound and outbound attacks and prevented 581,119 SHN events.

"Oman's enterprises continue to display digital resilience through the challenges of unforeseen global events and have bravely faced an evolving threat landscape with increasingly sophisticated attacks," said Assad Arabi, managing director of Gulf Cluster at Trend Micro.

"The modern-day, hybrid world has made it difficult for organisations to protect their digital environment, requiring security teams to bolster their security strategies to protect employees in and out of the office, as well as remote locations with unsecured public networks," he added.

Arabi said that the annual cybersecurity report provides the country's enterprises with the insights they need to readjust their security stance and prompts them to adopt industry-leading innovations securing their digital journeys.

Trend Micro Incorporated, a



global leader in cybersecurity solutions, released its 2021 annual cybersecurity report - Navigating New Frontiers - highlighting the growing rate of cyber attacks by malicious actors on digital infrastructures and individuals in

the modern-day hybrid work environment.

The report states that globally Trend Micro solutions stopped over 94.2bn threats in 2021, a 42 per cent increase in the number of detections recorded in 2020.

Attacks had surged over 53bn in the second half of 2021, blocking 41bn threats in H1 2021. Ransomware attackers are shifting their focus to critical businesses and industries more likely to pay, and double extortion tactics en-

Oman's enterprises continue to display digital resilience through the challenges of unforeseen global events and have bravely faced an evolving threat landscape with increasingly sophisticated attacks

ASSAD ARABI

sure that they are able to profit.

Ransomware-as-a-service offerings have opened the market to cybercriminals with limited technical knowledge, as well as given rise to more specialisation, such as initial access brokers who are now an essential part of the cybercrime supply chain.

Threat actors are getting better at exploiting human error to compromise cloud infrastructure and remote workers. Home-workers are often prone to take more risks than those in the office, which makes phishing a greater risk.

According to the report, better readiness for security teams against emerging threats is necessary across sectors. With these related insights, Oman seeks improvement within the movement against the threat landscape going forward.



MoU inked to plant 100,000 trees in Musandam

Khasab - Environment Authority (EA) signed a memorandum of understanding with Sohar Aluminium on Wednesday on supporting the ongoing national initiative to plant 10mn wild trees in the Governorate of Musandam.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) seeks to develop degraded land, safeguard biodiversity and augment green cover as a source of relaxation for society.

The MoU was signed under the auspices of H E Sayyid Ibrahim Said al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam, by Musallam Mubarak al Mahri, Acting Director of the Environment Department in the governorate, and Ahmed Mohammed al Kharousi, GM of HR and Corporate Affairs, Sohar Aluminium.

According to the MoU, the company will meet the financial obligations related to the planting of 100,000 trees in the governorate, as well as any other direct consultancy services,

based on agreed budgets and cultivation sites.

In January 2020, EA in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) launched the initiative to plant 10mn indigenous tree saplings in the next ten years. The initiative aims to improve plant cover and enhance natural resources, including grazing areas in depleted zones, besides raising awareness on the benefits of green cover, both to the environment and society.

It highlights the significance of society's contribution to environment conservation and the economic potential of some species of local flora.

According to EA, the national initiative has been progressing well. 'The process of cultivation of saplings has been going on in various governorates, and nurseries have been expanded and new nurseries established. These have been provided with seeds from a seed bank established for the purpose.'

ONA

'Commandos' to continue protecting turtles in second edition of campaign

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) has launched the second edition of the 'Turtle Commandos' programme, a project to protect endangered turtles and preserve Oman's biodiversity.

The programme aims to encourage youth to volunteer for environmental causes, rid beaches of fishing and plastic waste, implement workshops to find solutions to challenges that threaten turtles, educate participants about the importance of turtles and in turn transfer the knowledge to the community.

The second edition of the programme will last for six months, with the participation of a group of volunteers every week from different governorates. 'They will participate in a unique and enriching experience by protecting turtles, educating visitors and deterring violators,' EA stated.

Participants will be spread across two locations in Ras al Hadd and Masirah Island, during the turtle nesting and hatching seasons.

During the first edition, which



was conducted over three months from mid-October to mid-January, Turtle Commandos succeeded in guiding 19,732 turtles back into the sea after losing their way.

Additionally, commandos collected 8,242 bags of garbage and denied entry to 8,549 cars at night into Ras al Hadd Nature Reserve.

Following the travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and consequently the challenges faced by foreign tourists in visiting Oman, domestic tourism flourished. This led to crowding at turtle sanctuaries with a large number of visitors eager to watch turtles nest and baby turtles hatch without knowledge of the guidelines and

laws of the reserve.

"Without observers to monitor these large crowds, there was no control and protection for turtles in the reserve in the last two years," an EA official said, explaining what led to setting up the commandos programme. "Turtle Commandos will find effective solutions to meet this challenge."

EA working on sustaining loggerhead turtle population in Masirah Island

Muscat - Within the framework of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Oman and the USA in the field of environment and wildlife conservation, specialists from Environment Authority are participating in fieldwork to study the success of nesting of loggerhead turtles in Masirah Island.

Environment Authority (EA) signed an agreement with United States' Fish and Wildlife Service in May to draft a strategy for the conservation and protection of sea turtles in Oman. Under the agreement, loggerhead turtles will be studied and tracked by satellite on Masirah Island.

Surveys of turtle nests that were identified at the beginning of the project are currently being studied to enumerate and count the hatched and non-hatched eggs, as well as the dead hatchlings.

A 30-year study of Oman's loggerhead turtles has highlighted the need for urgent additional conservation actions. The study found a 79 per cent decline in the nesting population on Masirah Island.

The study evaluated the long-term population trend of the



Environment Authority signed an agreement with United States' Fish and Wildlife Service in May to draft a strategy for the conservation and protection of sea turtles in Oman

globally important loggerhead population nesting on Masirah Island. The island has historically been one of the largest nesting grounds of loggerhead turtles in the world.

Oman is home to four of the seven species of turtles found in the world, including the world's second largest population of loggerhead sea turtles. Others in-

clude the green turtle, hawksbill turtle and the olive ridley turtle that all nest in the sultanate.

The leatherback turtle, a fifth species, can sometimes be found visiting Omani waters for feeding or whilst migrating. All of these species are listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List and face high risk of extinction in the wild.

Read Muscat Daily
Stay Informed



R024
1 YEAR
(Actual price: R052)
R015
6 MONTHS

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Toll free no: 80076000
E-mail: customer@apexmedia.co.om
Call Shamshad: 99104345

an **apex** media | منشور PUBLICATION | الأمة للعلوم

www.apexmedia.co.om

MARKET WATCH

MSX304,664.77
Sensex58,350.53

FOREX RATES
(RO1 equals)

Indian	205.58
Pakistan	591.14
Bangladesh	245.86
Philippines	144.87
Sri Lanka	926.58

*Rates as on August 03

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Maersk profits double on higher freight prices
Global shipping giant Maersk said Wednesday its profits doubled in the second quarter as freight prices have soared due to persistent bottlenecks on trade routes.
Demand for shipping plunged at the start of the Covid pandemic, but it has rebounded strongly since the second half of 2020, causing massive disruptions in supply chains. Maersk, the world's largest container shipping line along with Italy's MSC, has posted robust profits since the second half of 2020.
Its net profit for the second quarter reached US\$8.6bn, compared to US\$3.7bn for the same period in 2021, up from record profits in the first quarter.
The company's revenue rose to US\$21.7bn in the second quarter, up from US\$14.2bn a year earlier. "We delivered an exceptionally strong result for the second quarter and consequently recorded the 15th quarter in a row with year-on-year earnings improvements," Soren Skou, CEO of Maersk said in a statement.

S&P assigns 'BB-' rating to EDO, keeps outlook stable

Our Correspondent
Muscat

S&P Global Ratings has assigned Energy Development Oman (EDO) a 'BB-' long-term issuer rating with a stable outlook.
In a research update released on Wednesday, S&P said its business risk profile assessment for EDO is supported by company's access to sizeable reserves, leading domestic share of Omani hydrocarbon production, and low operating cost structure, all of which support cash flow visibility.
S&P views positively EDO's access to sizable reserves via concession agreements until 2044. These total more than 1.5bn barrels of oil equivalent in proven reserves and include more than 60 per cent of Oman's proven oil and non-associated gas condensate reserves.
'We believe the company's strong track record of proven and probable reserve replacement, above 100 per cent on average, and successful history of executing complex mega projects, such as the Yibal Khuff construction, should support cash flow visibility,' the ratings agency said.
It added that EDO's 60 per cent stake in Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) makes it the largest oil and gas producer in Oman – accounting for about half of the country's combined



S&P Global Ratings estimates EDO's average annual oil capital expenditure and gas capital expenditure of about US\$2.6bn and US\$1.1bn, respectively, until 2026

hydrocarbon production. PDO also owns oil pipelines and gas processing plants, which, coupled with good quality oil and a record of sufficient annual re-

serve replacement, supports low operating costs and cash flow visibility.
S&P said its 'stable outlook' on EDO mirrors that on the sovereign.
'Any upward or downward pressure on Oman's sovereign rating will be reflected in that on EDO. We would lower the rating on EDO if we take a similar action on our Oman sovereign rating,' the ratings agency said.
S&P expects EDO has a 'moderately high' likelihood of extraordinary government support from Oman, given the government's 100 per cent ownership of EDO and its board representation, EDO's alignment with the country's Vision 2040 development plan, the company's significant contribution to employment and GDP, and a historical track record of government support.
Key player in energy sector
'We think EDO will remain a key player in Oman's energy sector. As a result, our assessment on EDO factors our expectation

of a moderately high likelihood of government support and we consider EDO to have an integral link with and very important role for the government,' S&P noted.
The integral link with the government is underpinned by the state's 100 per cent direct ownership of EDO, S&P said, adding that the government also has a strong influence on EDO's strategic plans.
'We also view that the company plays a very important role in the Omani economy as its largest oil and gas producer, through its 60 per cent ownership of PDO and its position as a significant employer,' the ratings agency added.
Moreover, S&P estimates EDO's average annual oil capital expenditure and gas capital expenditure of about US\$2.6bn and US\$1.1bn, respectively, until 2026.
In August 2021, EDO successfully secured a US\$2.5bn debut financing which had attracted an overwhelming response from international investors.
EDO was established in December 2020 through a Royal Decree and is wholly owned by Oman. In 2021, the government transferred its 60 per cent stake in the Block 6 oil concession, through its ownership in PDO, to EDO and granted EDO 100 per cent of the new Block 6 gas concession.

Maha Energy awards contract for drilling campaign in Block 70

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Maha Energy, a Swedish international upstream oil and gas company, has announced the signing of an agreement with Gulf Drilling Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of MB Petroleum Services Worldwide, for the drilling of a minimum of six wells in Block 70 onshore Oman.
Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals had awarded the exploration and development rights for the concession Block 70 to Maha Energy in October 2020.
'The drilling rig, Gulf Drilling 109, is a 1,000hp kelly rig and is currently located in Adam. The rig will now be prepared for the campaign and expected mobilisation is in October 2022. The drilling programme will consist of a minimum of six wells on the Mafraq structure,' Maha Energy said in a statement on its website.
The company's immediate plans for the Mafraq oilfield include obtaining important reser-



voir information to assist in developing a full field development plan. 'Information that will be acquired from two appraisal wells includes, but is not limited to, the oil water contact, petrophysical and structural properties, and the identification of possible water disposal zones.'
As per Maha Energy's plan, four horizontal pilot production test wells will also be drilled on

the structure to ascertain oil productivity. These four wells will be completed with state-of-the-art PCP pumps from Canada and then placed on an extended flow test.
Maha Energy was successful in securing Block 70, which contains the Mafraq heavy oil discovery, in a 2019 – 2020 bid round. The Mafraq structure is a delineated heavy oil field that

85% consumers in Middle East embrace digital payments

Muscat – Adoption of a broader range of digital payment methods is accelerating in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the technology fueling the future of payments is already here, according to Mastercard's New Payments Index 2022.
In addition to being aware of solutions like digital cards, biometric payments, BNPL (Buy Now Pay Later) and open banking, consumers in MENA are increasingly and actively using these solutions in their everyday lives.
Mastercard's New Payments Index 2022 found that 85 per cent of people in MENA have used at least one emerging payment method in the last year, including tappable smartphone mobile wallets, BNPL, biometrics, and payment-enabled wearable tech devices, according to a press release.
Consumers are also making purchases in increasingly diverse ways, including through voice assistants and social media apps.
While traditional payment methods still have traction, one in five (19 per cent) consumers in MENA indicated they used less cash in the past year. By contrast, 64 per cent of MENA users (compared to 61 per cent globally) increased their use of at least one digital payment method in the last year, including digital cards, SMS payments, digital money transfer apps and instant payment services. These behaviors are expected to continue, with comfort and security key to growing adoption.
The survey confirmed security is top of mind when deciding

what payment methods to use, globally and in the MENA region (41 per cent). Other considerations are ease of use, rewards and promotions. Highlighting sustainability as a key driver in the region, 31 per cent of MENA consumers said they also consider social and environmental benefits.
As per the Mastercard New Payments Index 2022, the majority of MENA consumers have heard of BNPL with 79 per cent saying they are familiar with the concept, and almost half (45 per cent) are already comfortable using it today. Consumers want the flexibility and convenience of BNPL, but with the sense of security associated with a trusted provider like a bank or payment network.
Those that have used BNPL find it useful for emergency and big-ticket purchases, as well as increased purchasing power. Consumers also find BNPL useful for unique use cases, including as a budgeting and financial planning tool.
The majority of MENA consumers are also seeking greater agility to optimise bill payments, prioritizing control, flexibility, convenience, and integrated

payment technologies. Most consumers are open to direct account-to-account payment options, by linking their account to a merchant site for future purchases. Around 81 per cent of MENA consumers using account-to-account payments have maintained or increased their usage in the last year.
Two thirds (68 per cent) agree they are interested in a bill payment option that allows them to change the date they pay their monthly bills, mostly due to an irregular income.
Consumers are relying on digital finance options for their everyday financial tasks, with the benefits of open banking like speed, convenience, and transparency. About three quarters (73 per cent) know about open banking, and are using it to pay their bills, do their banking, secure or refinance loans, and make BNPL payments.
Six in ten (59 per cent) MENA consumers feel safe using apps to send money to people or businesses from their phone. Four in ten are willing to share financial data information with apps to have access to payment tools that help them manage their money.

France warns winter gas cuts possible

Paris, France – The French government warned Wednesday that companies might have to reduce energy use this winter even with the country's natural gas reserves at full capacity, as Russia continues to reduce its gas exports to Europe.
"The main players, government agencies and businesses, must reduce their consumption" of gas as well as electricity, because "the two systems are linked," Energy Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher told CNews television.
Moscow has slashed its exports to Europe in response to punishing Western sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces, forcing countries to scramble for alternatives.
Even though France is less reliant on Russian supplies than other EU countries, generating around three-quarters of its electricity from nuclear power plants, its industrial sector still relies on gas and millions of people use it to heat their homes.
Winter shortfalls will be a risk even though France is racing to top up its gas reserves.
"Right now our strategic gas reserves are at 80 per cent capacity... which means we will reach our goal of 100 per cent before November 1," Pannier-Runacher said.
But she later insisted on RMC radio that full stocks might not be enough to avoid gas cuts as the government seeks alternative sources.
"It's not so simple... We might have a particularly cold day and because of the size of

the pipelines, we can't pump all of the gas we have," she said.
And France is also facing a winter with fewer of its nuclear plants online because of either maintenance or safety concerns, meaning that electricity supplies could be strained.
"We are counting on solidarity, notably with Germany, to import electricity," she said.
"And we need to support Germany with the gas we import via our liquefied natural gas terminals."
AFP

OPEC+ cartel agrees small oil output rise despite Biden plea

Vienna, Austria - The OPEC+ oil cartel agreed to a small increase in production Wednesday, likely disappointing US President Joe Biden who lobbied for a big hike to tame soaring energy prices on a recent trip to Saudi Arabia.

The cartel led by Saudi Arabia and Russia decided to raise production by 100,000 barrels per day for September, much lower than previous increases, according to a statement issued after a ministerial videoconference.

Oil prices had fallen earlier this week but they rose more than one per cent on news of the OPEC+ decision, with the main international contract, Brent, climbing back above US\$100 per barrel.

"The smallest increase in OPEC+ history will do little to help the ongoing global energy crisis," Edward Moya, analyst at OANDA trading platform, told AFP.

"Oil looks like it will still remain stuck around the US\$100 barrel level even as the global economic slowdown accelerates. The Biden administration



will not be happy and this will be a setback in improving US-Saudi relations," Moya said.

With energy prices soaring following Russia's war in Ukraine, Biden made a controversial trip to Saudi Arabia in July in part to convince the kingdom to loosen the production taps to stabilise the market and

curb rampant inflation.

The US president met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman despite his promise to make the kingdom a "pariah" in the wake of the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Biden said after his meetings with Saudi officials that he was "doing all I can" to increase the

oil supply.

But OPEC+ includes Russia, putting Saudi Arabia in a tight spot between Washington and Moscow.

"A 100,000 barrel per day output hike is a pittance," said Han Tan, chief market analyst at Exinity.

"It's likely that the Biden ad-

ministration will feel let down, considering its overtures to Saudi Arabia have yielded scant results, at least this time around," Tan said.

Western lobbying

Biden is not the only Western leader to have lobbied bin Salman.

Turkish inflation stabilises at under 80%

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's annual inflation rate stabilised in July at just under 80 per cent, official data showed on Wednesday, helping support President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's pledges that runaway price increases would soon stop.

The official annual rate of consumer price increases reached 79.6 per cent in July compared to 78.6 per cent in June.

Turkey plunged into a fresh economic crisis when Erdogan set off on an unusual economic experiment nearly a year ago that attempted to bring down chronically high inflation by slashing interest rates.

Conventional economic theory, accepted by world governments, states that lower interest rates drive growth and push up prices by building up demand.

Turkey now has a real interest rate that factors in inflation of negative 64.4 per cent - the lowest in the world by a substantial margin.

This means that Turks have a strong incentive to spend as much as they can before their liras lose even more value.

AFP

Sanctions have huge toll on Russian economy: Report

Washington, US - The Russian economy has been deeply damaged by sanctions and the exit of international business since the country invaded Ukraine, according to a new report by Yale University business experts and economists.

Even though Moscow has been able to pull in billions of dollars from continued energy sales at elevated prices, largely unpublished data shows that much of its domestic economic activity has stalled since the February 24 invasion, according to the report released in late July.

"The findings of our comprehensive economic analysis of Russia are powerful and indisputable: Not only have sanctions and the business retreat worked, they have thoroughly crippled the Russian economy at every level," said the report from the Yale School of Management.

"Russian domestic production has come to a complete standstill with no capacity to replace lost businesses, products and talent," the 118-page report said.

The report was produced by Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, president of the Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute, and other members of the institute, a mix of economists and business management experts.

With Moscow having halted or pared the release of official economic statistics, including crucial trade figures, Sonnenfeld's group tapped into data held by companies, banks, consultants, Russian trading partners and others to build a picture of Russian economic performance.

They also said they obtained unreleased data from experts on the Russian economy, and data in other languages which supported their conclusions.

Even if Russia is able to earn more foreign exchange on gas and oil exports, that has not offset the impact of Western sanctions.

And, they argue, the country's dependence on Europe to buy



83 per cent of its energy exports leaves it under a greater medium-term threat.

"Russia is far more dependent on Europe than Europe is on Russia," they said.

Russia's industry remained heavily driven by foreign capital investment and the import of higher-tech inputs that the country had not mastered, like semiconductors.

The barrage of deeper sanctions after the invasion took aim at both of those vulnerabilities, the report said. Some 1,000 foreign companies halted their activities in the country, potentially impacting up to five million jobs, according to the report.

Industrial output plunged, and Russian retail sales and consumer spending have fallen at an annual rate of 15-20 per cent.

Imports have plunged across the board, the report said; crucial imports from China fell by more than half.

A key example of Russian problems, according to the report, is the automobile sector.

Car sales went from 100,000 a month to 27,000 a month, and output has stalled due to a lack of parts and machinery.

Without access to imported components, Russian producers are putting out cars without airbags or modern anti-lock brakes, and only with manual transmissions.

Threat to gas revenues

The report challenged the belief that the Russian economy was surviving thanks to the tens of billions of dollars the country reaps each month from oil and gas exports.

Last week the IMF said the Russian economy, though contracting, was doing better than expected due to its energy and commodity export income.

The Yale report said data indicates energy revenues have been falling for the last three months. If Western Europe succeeds in cutting itself off from Russian natural gas, Moscow faces an "unsolvable" situation with a lack of a market for its output, according to the report.

"Any decrease in oil and gas revenues or oil and gas export volumes would immediately put a strain on the Kremlin's budget," it said.

AFP



Shell Oman Marketing Company SAOG

P.O. Box 38, Mina Al Fahal, Postal Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: 24570100 • Fax: 24570121 • www.shelloman.com

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH JUNE 2022

In its meeting held on 28 July 2022, the Board of Directors approved the Company's unaudited financial results for the period ended 30th June 2022.

SUMMARY FINANCIALS

	Quarter			6 Months		
	Q2/22	Q2/21	%	2022	2021	%
Revenue	124,525	92,093	35.2%	236,593	184,847	28.0%
Gross profit	9,568	7,123	34.3%	17,946	14,994	19.7%
Add: Other income	1,045	1,012	3.3%	1,958	2,155	(9.1%)
Less: Selling, distribution and administrative expenses	(7,464)	(7,143)	4.5%	(14,597)	(13,855)	5.4%
Less: Financing and taxation	(852)	(569)	49.7%	(1,575)	(1,268)	24.2%
Profit and comprehensive income	2,297	423	443.0%	3,732	2,026	84.2%

■ Six Months Revenue was OMR 236,593 million, 28% higher than the same period last year.
■ Six Months Gross Profit was OMR 17,946 million, 19.7% higher than the same period last year mainly due to higher sales volumes during the second quarter of 2022 in comparison to the same period last year.
■ Six Months Profit and Comprehensive Income was OMR 3,732 million. This is higher than the same period in 2021 mainly due to the increase in the overall sales during the first six months by roughly 28%.

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Mobility Business continued its focus on providing customers with a world class retail experience delivering high quality products and services through a widespread Retail network across the country. The business volumes have seen an improvement in sales over the last quarter with investments in the quality and strategically located service sites as well as on-going enhancements to existing sites resulting in better retail volumes. In the second quarter, the company commissioned its Floor Express Way site in addition to two mobile stations in Al Rustaq whilst continuing to offer its differentiated Shell V-Power fuel across Oman for which several attractive marketing campaigns were launched in the last two months and more planned in the coming period.

The growth of the Non-Fuel Retailing (NFR) segment continues to be a key focus area with additional Shell Select store commissioned during the quarter whilst focusing on enhancing product and service offerings to customers for an improved and more convenient fueling and shopping experience throughout our network.

Fleet Solutions Business remained a steady contributor to the mobility business. The overall Business-to-Business (B2B) market has shown signs of recovery due to improvement in market activity and positive economic indicators during the quarter. The business continues to focus on increasing its portfolio, addressing evolving customer needs through acceleration of its digitalization journey and continuous improvement in operational excellence through leveraging the Cards Management System to provide better transactional controls and digital value propositions.

Commercial Fuels Business continues to be challenging, given the prevailing Business to Business (B2B) market environment with limited commercial and infrastructure projects. The Company remains committed to support business continuity for its customers through efficient cashflow management, operations excellence and providing effective mobility solutions. The last quarter witnessed improvement in economic activity with deals signed for new upcoming infrastructure projects.

Marine Business continues to serve local and international marine customers at the key ports. The Company remains committed to the highest HSSE and operational excellence standards leveraging on its global expertise to ensure successful delivery of bunkering solutions to its local and international marine customers. The company's focus remains on strengthening its position in Marine business and developing new business opportunities to expand its footprint across all major ports in the Sultanate.

Lubricants Business Considering the current challenging geopolitical global situation, commodity prices including base oil continued to increase significantly across the globe and are expected to remain under pressure in the coming months. The global market has witnessed a significant shortage of base oil but our Lubricants business remained committed to securing required product grades to its customers throughout. In Q2, the business enhanced its product portfolio in the B2C segment by introducing a number of new grades including Rotella which has been re-introduced in the market after 13 years.

Additionally, the business continued raising awareness for its newly introduced Shell Helix Ultra OW carbon neutral product and the market response has been positive. This launch is part of the largest carbon neutral programme in the lubricants industry reflecting our focus and commitment towards the energy transition journey.

The lubricant business team conducted a Shell Technology Seminar promoting Shell's diverse range of "Made in Oman" lubricants and innovative solutions that are offered to our customers. In the indirect channel and in collaboration with our partners, several promotions were launched focusing on Shell lubricants premium grade products which are produced with the GTL (gas-to-liquid) fully synthetic technology contributing to high performance and lower emission to various vehicle brands.

Aviation Business The global aviation and tourism sectors are experiencing rapid increase in air travel compared to the last 2 years. Volumes from both domestic and foreign travels increased but profitable volumes remained challenged as the market recovers from the impact of the pandemic and adjusts back. During this time, the company focused on retaining key contracts at Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport and managed to secure new contracts.

HEALTH, SAFETY, SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENT (HSSE)

The company ended the quarter with Zero Recordable and Zero Loss of Primary Containment (LOPCs) Incidents. This year the company celebrated its annual safety day in the second quarter, this year in the theme of "starting the work is not the first step" in which several companywide initiatives were conducted with an aim to sustain and enhance the safety culture internally with its staff and externally with its stakeholders including partners, contractors, and frontliners.

Continuing its "Goal Zero" journey of "No Harm, No Loss" and commitment to care for people and the environment, Shell Oman Marketing conducted important HSSE activities in the second quarter including: safety refresher sessions for the frontliners, fatigue management awareness during the holy month of Ramadan and ahead of the summer period, medical health check-up as well as local safety contractor forum sessions were held. In addition to this and to further reduce fatigue-related risks and accidents, fatigue detection devices were installed in contractors' trucks.

A risk assessment review was conducted with focus on traffic, health and general risks and the company continued delivering its defensive driving trainings to promote road transport safety and compliance. Several assurance and awareness activities were conducted too including focus on permit to work process, product discharge session for frontliners, first aid sessions, enhancing safety measures when working at heights, firefighting sessions, service champion big rules and emergency response awareness.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In recognition for its commitment to corporate social responsibility, Shell Oman Marketing Company SOAG

was recognized by the Ministry of Social Development marking the company's efforts and contributions in social responsibility and its support to the Ministry and various charitable organizations.

During the second quarter, the company led several collaborative initiatives with different stakeholders and partners, including charitable groups and associations. As part of that, the company extended its support to Oman Association for the Disabled by being their fuel partner to help facilitate their day-to-day activities and ensure their services are reachable by those who need them. Shell Oman also provided support to the Oman Charitable Organization through sponsoring training workshops to youth in disaster relief.

As part of its strategic partnerships with government stakeholders and in alignment with Shell's Powering Progress strategy, the company signed an MoU with the Ministry of Education as the official gold sponsor for Oman Science Festival in its 3rd edition. The festival is planned to take place at Oman Convention and Exhibition Center during October 2022 with the main theme being "With Science, We Meet Again".

The company will continue to collaborate and work with all stakeholders to reinforce its role and do its part in serving Oman and its people under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tark and to support his vision for the Sultanate.

Walid Hadi
Chairman, Shell Oman Marketing Company SAOG
Muscat, July 28, 2022

Unaudited Financial Statements for the 6 months ended 30 June 2022

	Unaudited 6 months ended 30 Jun 2022	Unaudited 6 months ended 30 Jun 2021	Audited 12 months ended 31 Dec 2021
	OMR'000	OMR'000	OMR'000
Revenue	236,593	184,847	398,429
Cost of sales	(218,647)	(169,853)	(368,390)
Gross profit	17,946	14,994	30,039
Other income	1,958	2,155	4,035
Selling, distribution and administrative expenses	(14,597)	(13,855)	(28,030)
Operating profit	5,307	3,294	6,044
Interest expense	(934)	(908)	(1,797)
Interest income	10	10	20
Profit before income tax	4,383	2,396	4,267
Income tax expense	(651)	(370)	(656)
Profit and comprehensive income for the period	3,732	2,026	3,611
Basic and diluted earnings per share (OMR)	0.037	0.020	0.036

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 30 JUNE 2022

	Unaudited At 30 Jun 2022	Unaudited At 30 Jun 2021	Audited At 31 Dec 2021
	OMR'000	OMR'000	OMR'000
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	58,728	53,221	56,843
Right-of-use assets	28,233	28,819	27,986
Intangible assets	109	58	49
Deferred tax assets	39	74	-
Total non-current assets	87,109	82,172	84,878
Current assets			
Inventories	9,512	7,802	8,551
Receivables and prepayments	43,625	35,282	39,222
Cash at bank and in hand	22,069	15,632	8,796
Total current assets	75,206	58,716	56,569
Total assets	162,315	140,888	141,447
EQUITY			
Share capital	10,000	10,000	10,000
Legal reserve	3,587	3,587	3,587
Retained earnings	40,045	38,328	39,913
Total equity	53,632	51,915	53,500
LIABILITIES			
Non-current liabilities			
Long-term loans	-	3,333	3,334
Long-term lease liabilities	25,536	25,356	24,216
Deferred tax liabilities	197	277	38
Employee terminal benefits	25,733	28,966	27,860
Total non-current liabilities	-	-	-
Current liabilities			
Short-term loans	18,333	13,333	3,333
Short-term lease liabilities	2,576	3,051	3,063
Payables and accruals	61,301	43,025	52,890
Unpaid dividends	-	-	-
Income tax payable	734	493	667
Provisions	6	105	126
Total current liabilities	82,950	60,007	60,079
Total liabilities	108,683	88,973	87,947
Total equity and liabilities	162,315	140,888	141,447
Net assets per share (OMR)	0.536	0.519	0.535

* The complete financial statements are available from the Muscat Securities Market (MSM).
* The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder on request, in either Arabic or English, within 7 days of receipt of the request. The request should be sent to the Chief Financial Officer at the address shown above.
* The previous year's figures have been reclassified to conform to the presentation adopted in the current year.

Bank Muscat makes digital payment easy

In line with its customer-centric vision and in accordance with directives from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Bank Muscat is offering its merchant partners a revolutionary payment experience that expedites digital payments by their customers at the checkout counter.

It is easy for businesses across the country to implement QR-code based payments. This means that retail outlets can easily accept digital payments by customers using the mBanking app or Wallet of any bank in Oman.

Merchants can easily implement the new payment solution by downloading the Bank Muscat Merchant Wallet App and transforming their smartphones into a payment channel using either Dynamic QR or Static QR codes.

Alternatively, merchants may also choose to implement Bank Muscat PoS machines, which enable QR-code based payments apart from those through regular Credit, Debit and Prepaid Cards.

Most importantly, the QR-



Abdullah Hamood al Jufaili

code scanning option allows merchant partners to accept e-payments from customers quickly and securely, irrespective of their bank or wallet.

Payments can be easily initiated from a customer's Mobile Banking application or Wallet application to the merchant's account by scanning a QR code. A merchant can also request money from a customer using the Mobile Payments System registered mobile number/ Alias/QR code.

Abdullah Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager, Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, said,



"The currently ongoing digital transformation will bring about a huge positive change as both businesses and customers shift to digital payments, which offers prompt and highly secure payment options that boost economic growth and development. "QR-code payments enable

small businesses to accept cashless transactions in secure and reliable manner in line with legal requirements," Jufaili explained, further adding that "merchants can easily track sales and payments, leading to better overall responsiveness and customer experience".

"We are delighted to have already on-boarded over 800 merchants to the QR-based payments facility and look forward to welcoming more partners in the coming days."

QR-code payments are based on the Central Bank of Oman's Mobile Payment System (MPS),

which also enables customers to easily make payments, transfer funds or request funds from others.

Funds can be transferred instantaneously using one of the following modes. For person to person transfers, money can be sent or collected from the recipient's default account or wallet.

'Send money' can be initiated by using mobile number, Alias or by QR code scanning and 'collect money' can be initiated using recipient Alias/Mobile Number if both the sender and recipient are registered on MPS. Bank Muscat customers have the facility to register on the MPS via both its BM Wallet and the mBanking app.

Funds can be transferred instantly and at zero cost to both Bank Muscat and non-Bank Muscat accounts or wallets by using their MPS -registered mobile number/alias/QR code. There is no need to enter an account number. Beneficiaries can be instead selected from one's phone contact list to initiate a payment.

As the sultanate's largest financial services provider in Oman with 174 branches, over 800 ATMs and CDMs, and a large number of secure and convenient digital payment options that benefit its customers, Bank Muscat is committed to providing the largest portfolio of banking services that meet the varied needs of its customers.



mobUX finds smart device penetration surging in Mid-East

In response to the growing demand for mobile-focused digital transformation in the Middle East, mobUX, the leading mar-tech digital platform for mobile experiences, is expanding its presence to the region.

The company will be supporting businesses in the Middle East, where the current smart device penetration is only 40 per cent, to connect with their consumers through unique digital experiences, the company stated.

The startup was born out of Antler's incubator programme based out of the Brooklyn Navy Yard when Founder, Martin Barrow, realised the potential mobile websites had to offer brands.

Despite the fact that mobile has more than double the brand interactions than any other medium, mobile websites perform significantly worse than desktop.

"Business in the Middle East market are missing out on a huge opportunity to connect and converge their consumers in the digital space," said Martin Barrow, founder at mobUX, adding that "we are excited to be part of the fastest grown mobile device market and we believe that our technology will help brands compete on a global scale".

"As first movers in the region, we plan to be the go-to mobile digital experience platform for D2C companies," he added.

mobUX has found its niche supporting large brands with landing flows used to amplify the user experience around events and product launches. It worked with a number of luxury clients, such as Audemars Piguet and Armani Beauty. "mobUX brings a fresh mobile perspective to the shopper marketing space that we have yet to see. It's fast, it looks great, and the interactivity is immersive. It's something we haven't encountered before and it is exactly what we need to grow our business," said Wayne Cowden, CEO & founder of Dass Inc.

Etihad Airways scales up its cargo operations

Etihad Airways has firmed up its order with Airbus for seven new generation A350F freighters, following its earlier commitment announced at the Singapore Airshow.

The freighters will upgrade Etihad's freight capacity by deploying the most efficient cargo aircraft available in the market, the airline stated.

This order of the A350F sees the national carrier of the UAE expanding its relationship with Airbus, and adding to its existing order of the largest passenger version of A350-1000s, five of which have been delivered.

"In building one of the world's youngest and most sustainable fleets, we are delighted to extend our long-term partnership with Airbus to add the A350 Freighter to our fleet," said Tony Douglas, Group Chief Executive Officer of



Etihad Aviation Group.

"This additional cargo capacity will support the unprecedented growth we are experiencing in the Etihad Cargo division. Airbus has developed a remarkable fuel-efficient aircraft that, in tandem with the A350-1000 in our passenger fleet, supports our commitment to reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050."

Christian Scherer, Chief Commercial Officer and Head of Airbus International said, "Airbus is delighted to extend its long standing partnership with Etihad Airways, who recently introduced the A350 passenger services and is continuing to build on the Family with the game-changing freighter version, the A350F."

"This new generation large freighter brings unprecedented

and unmatched benefits in terms of range, fuel efficiency and CO2 savings, that support customers by enhancing operational efficiencies at the same time as reducing environmental impact," Scherer added.

Etihad has also firmed up a long-term agreement for Airbus' Flight Hour Services (FHS) to support its entire A350 fleet, to maintain aircraft performance

and optimise reliability. This marks the first agreement for an Airbus FHS contract for an A350-fleet in the Middle East.

Separately, Etihad has also opted for Airbus' Skywise Health Monitoring, allowing the airline to access real-time management of aircraft events and troubleshooting, saving time and decreasing the cost of unscheduled maintenance.

As part of the world's most modern long-range family, the A350F provides a high level of commonality with the A350 passenger versions.

With a 109 tonne payload capability, the A350F can serve all cargo markets.

The aircraft features a large main deck cargo door, with its fuselage length and capacity optimised around the industry's standard pallets and containers.

Swiss Embassy celebrates national day in Muscat



The Embassy of Switzerland in Muscat celebrated the Swiss national day on August 1 with an innovative approach to traditional celebrations.

Both Oman and Switzerland have rich traditions and boost innovation in various fields including sustainable energy and zero emission technologies, the embassy said. To celebrate this, the Embassy brought the two countries' two fields together for this year's national day, it added.

With a solar raclette oven, the Embassy combined the tradi-

tional Swiss dish of molten cheese with the modern innovation of solar power. A parabolic mirror reflects and focusses the power of the strong Omani sun onto a black surface, ideal to heat the traditional raclette pans.

The Embassy invited friends from Oman to share this feast and to exchange on their views and memories of Switzerland. Hear their stories of connections and exchange between our two countries in the video that has been produced as a part of the official national day celebrations.

Suhail Bahwan Automobiles extends special offers on Nissan X-Terra

Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) is offering a special promotion on the off-roading superster Nissan X-Terra.

With exceptional capabilities, the SBA said the X-Terra is a catalyst for new experiences, allowing owners to connect with the people in their lives.

The vehicle delivers a robust four-wheel drive system, including a four-wheel lock, brake limited slip differential and electronic locking rear differential - while leading the class in interior room and comfort, the company said.

As part of the special scheme Nissan X-Terra customers can enjoy free periodic vehicle serv-



ice package (three-years/60,000km), free insurance and free registration. Customers can also avail additional benefits on purchase of second Nissan in the family.

The offer, which is available on Nissan X-Terra model purchased for personal use, will go on till August 19 this year.

Vehicles purchased with commercial registration will not be eligible for the scheme. Vehicles bought for taxi, driving school, ministries, fleet and rent-a-car usage will not be eligible for this scheme.

A spokesperson for the SBA said, "Designed for adventure and the outdoors with a roomy

interior and advanced technologies Nissan X-Terra ensures safety and comfort."

It is equipped with an active safety suite, which comprises blind-spot warning, lane departure warning, intelligent driver alert, and intelligent forward collision warning. The SUV also has multiple airbags and a digital rear-view mirror.

"The offer makes it the best time to buy X-Terra," the spokesperson added.

Customers can avail low EMI rate as part of the offer. Starting EMI for Nissan X-Terra is RO138. These EMIs are calculated on the price of the base model with 20 per cent down

payment, three per cent rate of interest for ten years loan tenure, through Bank Muscat. Subject to credit approvals.

All customers purchasing Nissan X-Terra will be eligible for free periodic maintenance service package for three years/60,000km (whichever is earlier), limited to six services only.

This offer includes only the service intervals of 10,000kms.

All customers purchasing Nissan X-Terra during this scheme period will be eligible for free first year vehicle insurance (Oman and the UAE only) and free first year vehicle registration.

Pomegranate season adds flavour to Anantara resort

Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar is in all praise for the season that marks pomegranate harvest on Oman's Green Mountain.

From now until early October the mountains that surround the resort are full of bright green and pink pomegranates.

Guests can experience the season with an interactive visit to local pomegranate farms, a spa treatment that embraces the health properties of the fruit, seasonal cocktails and menus.

Situated 610m above sea level, two hours from Muscat, the area around Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar benefits from its own semi-Mediterranean micro-climate that is conducive to growing pomegranates.

More than 23,000 pomegranate trees grow on the mountaintop, and they are the oldest and most valuable source of in-



come for farmers in the region.

With temperatures about 15 degrees cooler than the surrounding area it is the ideal temperature to explore the fruit farms in the nearby villages of Al Aqr, Al Ayn and Ash Shirayjah.

Together with the resorts local 'Mountain Guru', guests can meet farmers from now until the end of October and learn how to pick and cut the pomegranates from the tree, keeping the fruit they cut. The farmers will explain the season, the benefits of the fruit and where it can be used such as in jam, salads, juice and pomegranate molasses. The excursion costs RO15 per person.

Rich in antioxidants pomegranates have long been revered for their ability to regenerate, nourish and protect skin, offering the perfect polish for a smooth and radiant body. Those in need of rejuvenation can head to the Anantara Spa for a 'Revitalising Pomegranate Journey', which utilises the antioxidant and anti-aging properties in a body scrub.

This is followed by a foot cleansing ritual and tailored massage. During pomegranate season the spa journey will end with a refreshing pomegranate juice. 90 minutes at RO85.

The health benefits of pomegranates can also be experienced in Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar's culinary offering. Guests can take part in a dedicated 'Spice Spoons' cookery class where they will learn how to create an organic pomegranate salad and pomegranate marinated local grouper fillet.

Bella Vista restaurant will be serving the organic pomegranate salad as its dish of the month in August.

ahlibank's 'Bancassurance' offers comprehensive insurance solutions

ahlibank has continued to provide its existing and new customers with a diverse bundle of banking and financial products that stand apart from the rest.

One such offering is the bank's 'Bancassurance' products bouquet, which has been created in collaboration with Dhofar Insurance Company, a market leader with strong expertise and proven track record, the bank said.

Under the portfolio, both existing and new customers across the bank's branches can avail comprehensive insurance solutions that include Motor, Travel, Personal Accident, Family Protection Plans, Home, Home Contents, against natural disasters & other policies.

Commenting on ahlibank's Bancassurance products, Muneer al Balushi, AGM, Head of Retail Distribution from ahlibank said, "As one of Oman's leading financial solution providers, we are always striving to offer comprehensive and flexible solutions to customers, both existing and new. We are extremely delighted that our Bancassurance portfolio has been such a success."

By offering 'Bancassurance', the bank's AGM pointed out that "we have not only expanded our suite of services but also strengthened the trust endowed



upon us by our customers".

The wide range of insurance products under this portfolio, he said offers protection for both individual assets as well as property from any potential financial risks and liabilities.

"We have invested great efforts to ensure that all products are tailored to suit individual customer requirements. Both existing and new customers across the bank's branches can avail of insurance coverage due to best rates, hassle-free documentation process, and quick turnaround time."

Keeping customer centricity and evolving needs in mind, Bancassurance provides comprehensive insurance for vehicles, personal accidents, travel, and insurance against natural disasters.

Customers can also opt-in for the comprehensive family protection long-term plan that comes with extensive coverage, offering them peace of mind.

Home insurance comes with complete solutions to mitigate loss and covers the building and the contents of the building and devices against any loss or damage.

The bank, which was established in 2007, has a comprehensive suite of technologically advanced services across its branches in Oman. All its product offerings and account types are aimed at inculcating a culture of savings and developing financial stability.

The bank also offers top-class retail, commercial, and investment banking solutions.

Alizz Islamic Bank extends 'more benefits through HalalBooking.com

As part of the banks efforts to provide its customers with the best sharia'a complaint offers and benefits and discounts, Alizz Islamic Bank has entered into a partnership with HalalBooking.com which will benefit all Alizz Islamic Bank debit and credit card holders.

This partnership comes within Alizz Islamic Bank vision to provide its customers with services to meet their needs and exceeds their expectations, the bank stated. These exciting bundles and packages are up for grabs by the customers until the end of December in 2023.

To take advantage of these discounts, cardholders only need to visit the HalalBooking.com website and enter the first 6 digits of their card number in the designated area, then follow the easy registration instructions to benefit from a world of offers from the best hotels around the world.

Upon registration in HalalBooking.com, Titanium Debit or Credit Card holders will have access to some special offers and discounts. They can get up to 15 per cent discounts on a variety of selected hotels, and a free upgrade to the Platinum Category of several services, including late check-out, room upgrade, breakfast at selected Platinum Partner Hotels upon the availability of reservation, plus a one-time US\$30 cash discount on the first reservation with a minimum booking amount of US\$300.

Alizz Islamic Bank Platinum



Debit Card, Platinum, World, World Elite retail Credit Card cards, and World and Executive Corporate Credit Cards, will be directly upgraded to Diamond Category, upon registering at HalalBooking.com.

Moreover, they will have access to a diverse world of discounts and rewards, such as up to 20 per cent discounts and free Platinum Privileges at selected hotels and upgradation to complimentary Diamond Privileges.



NATIONAL ALUMINIUM PRODUCTS COMPANY S.A.O.G
P.O. Box: 15, Rusayl, P.Code: 124, C.R. No. 1/22025/0, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24446450, Fax: +968 24446453/24446449
E-mail: info@napco.co.om, Website: www.napcooman.com

**Board Of Directors’ Report
For The Half Year Ended 30 June 2022**

Dear Shareholders,
On behalf of the Board of Directors of National Aluminium Products Company SAOG (NAPCO), it gives me great pleasure to present you the 1st Half Report containing the unaudited financial statements for the quarter ended 30 June 2022 and an overview of the performance of the Company.

Economic environment
The current geopolitical instability remains the top-cited threat to global economy and more over the worldwide inflation has overtaken volatile energy and material prices has become the second most cited concern besides it Supply chain disruptions rising interest rates making things more complicated, the affects of above-mentioned crises quite visible on raw material prices and on liquidity availability.

Performance Review
The financial performance of the National Aluminium Company Products Company SAOG (parent company) and Novel Aluminium Products Company LLC (subsidiary company) collectively represent as a "group" during the 1st Half 2022, as compared to 2021, is summarized in the table below:

Summary of Income Statement			
Particulars	Group	Parent	
	Year 2022	Year 2022	Year 2021
RO in 000's			
Revenue	12,873	12,866	15,081
Net loss before taxation	(2,103)	(2,078)	(1,212)
Income tax	311	311	174
Net loss after tax	(1,792)	(1,767)	(1,038)

The group realized revenue and other income of RO 12.873 million and reported a net loss after tax of RO 1.792 million.

This is a result of reduction of total production and dispatch quantity in 1st Half of 2022.

The company's profitability was mainly affected by the below key drivers:

- Shortage in liquidity effected the company's ability to procure its raw materials hence reducing the production quantity required to fulfill its customers demands.
- Increasing competition due to additional capacities in the neighboring countries which effected on metal margin.
- A persistent liquidity condition in the GCC market has stressed the operations of the company resulted in significant delay in collections.
- Significant cost of borrowing due to high interest rates for the working capital.

Future outlook
The uncertainty in Aluminium price and alarming reduction in the LME warehouses worldwide is the factor causing uncertain condition despite a significant recovery in Europe, North America and Australia supported by government rebate taxes on renovations and new buildings. The global conflicts, rising power tariffs and curtailment of primary Aluminium capacity in the major economies resulted in shortage of supply in primary Aluminium

The GCC aluminium extrusion shall continue facing a challenging environment due to the over capacities verses the low demand especially in the construction segment. The uncertainties are expected to continue during the year 2022, where larger GCC players continue to be extremely aggressive in terms of pricing strategies.

The company is exercising all available options by effectively utilizing the operational resources, cost curtailment initiatives and improving efficiencies to sustain operating margins. Your company has extended its export market to overseas countries where the margins are higher, and the payment terms are more sustainable. This shall reflect as an enhancement in the operating margins and reducing the cash flow cycle. NAPCO will remain keen to meet all the challenges ahead to enhance the Company's image and financial strength to generate returns on the shareholder's funds.

Compliance with internal regulations and control system:
The Company is committed to maintain a high standard of internal regulations and control system commensurate with the size and nature of the operations. A manual of financial authorities approved by the Board is in place, which specifies authority levels for various day to day operations. The system of internal control is monitored regularly by the Board, its Committees, Management, Internal and external auditors for its compliance.

Acknowledgement and Appreciation
I would like to extend my deep thanks to our honorable shareholders and to all my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their valuable contributions. I would also like to thank the Management and staff for their loyalty, hard work, dedication, and contribution in the achievement of our goals and acknowledges, with sincere gratitude, the support extended by all the investors, clients, vendors, banks, regulatory and government authorities, MSM and CMA and look forward to having the continued support from all of them.

I wish to place on record, personally and on behalf of the Board of Directors and employees, our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tareq bin Taimour and his wise government for continued support, encouragement, and guidance for our company and wish him all success in leading Oman to achieve greater progress and prosperity.

For & on behalf of the Board of Directors
National Aluminium Products Co. S.A.O.G.

Dr. Zakia Hassan Al-Naseeb
Chairperson

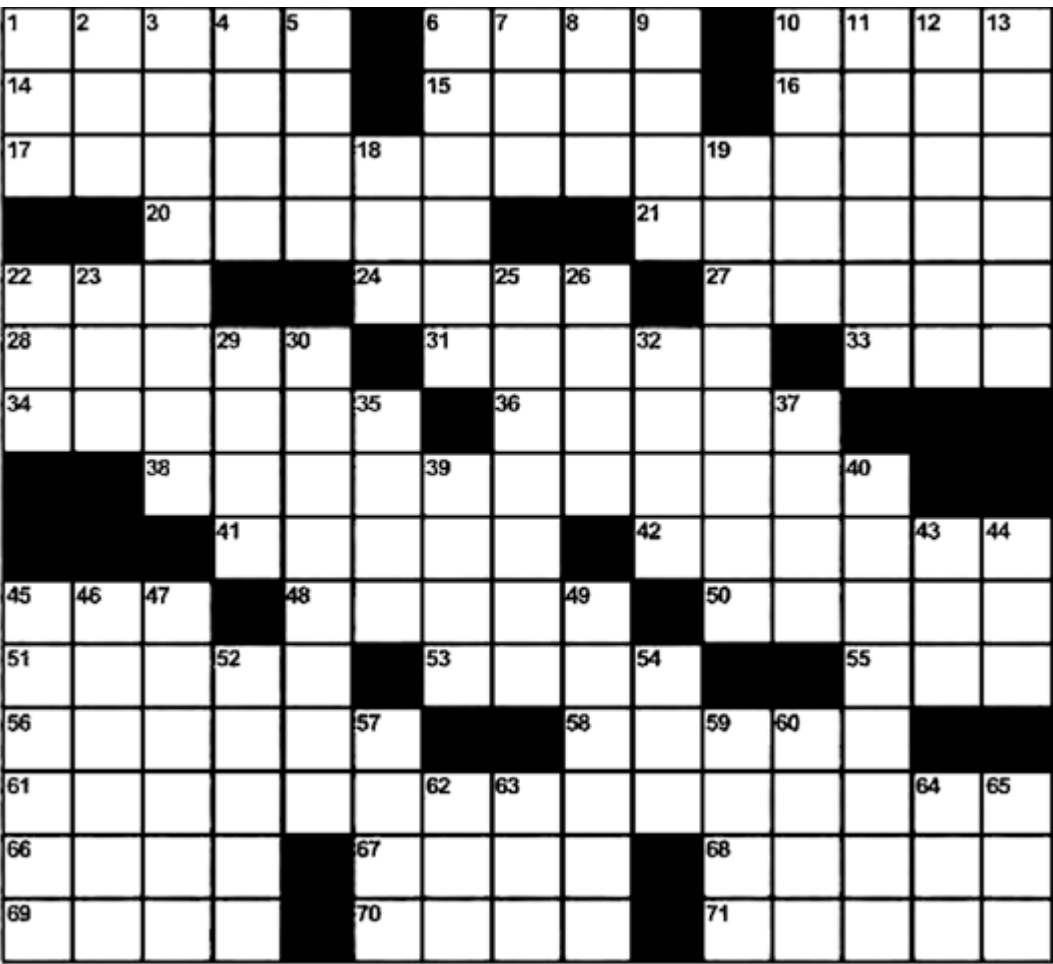
Condensed interim statement of financial position As of 30 June 2022

	Group	Parent		
	Unaudited period ended 30 June 2022 RO	Audited year ended 31 December 2021 RO	Unaudited period ended 30 June 2022 RO	Audited year ended 31 December 2021 RO
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	11,272,107	11,830,992	11,267,865	11,821,066
Intangible assets	81,457	86,542	75,345	86,542
Right-of-use asset	965,707	984,404	965,707	984,404
Investment property	460,000	460,000	460,000	460,000
Investment in subsidiary	-	-	31,500	31,500
Deferred tax asset	311,182	-	311,182	-
Total non-current assets	13,090,454	13,361,938	13,111,599	13,383,512
Current assets				
Inventories	2,994,492	3,283,246	2,999,492	3,283,246
Trade and other receivables	8,695,201	12,722,867	8,415,121	12,716,924
Amounts due from related parties	-	-	298,690	4,477
Cash and cash equivalents	110,309	201,156	72,139	201,156
Total current assets	11,800,002	16,207,269	11,780,442	16,205,803
Total assets	24,890,456	29,569,207	24,892,041	29,589,315
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity:				
Share capital	3,357,145	3,357,145	3,357,145	3,357,145
Legal reserve	1,119,048	1,119,048	1,119,048	1,119,048
Revaluation reserve	1,647,787	1,744,976	1,647,787	1,744,976
(Accumulated losses)/retained earnings	(2,648,374)	(954,020)	(2,603,680)	(933,912)
Total equity	3,475,606	5,267,149	3,520,300	5,287,257
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities				
Lease liability	1,051,876	1,045,256	1,051,876	1,045,256
Employees' end of service benefits	308,073	292,487	308,073	292,487
Total non-current liabilities	1,359,949	1,337,743	1,359,949	1,337,743
Current liabilities				
Lease liability	65,128	65,128	65,128	65,128
Borrowings	16,423,128	19,444,487	16,423,128	19,444,487
Trade and other payables	3,566,645	3,454,700	3,523,536	3,454,700
Total current liabilities	20,054,901	22,964,315	20,011,792	22,964,315
Total liabilities	21,414,850	24,302,058	21,371,741	24,302,058
Total equity and liabilities	24,890,456	29,569,207	24,892,041	29,589,315
Net assets per share	0.104	0.157	0.105	0.157

Condensed interim statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 June 2022

	Group	Parent Company	
	Unaudited period ended 30 June 2022 RO	Unaudited period ended 30 June 2021 RO	Unaudited period ended 30 June 2021 RO
Revenue	10,706,005	10,699,342	12,976,095
Scrap sales	2,167,089	2,167,089	2,104,911
Cost of sales	(13,200,516)	(13,193,267)	(14,433,196)
Gross Profit	(327,422)	(326,836)	647,810
Other income	85,880	85,880	307,389
Expenses:			
General and administrative expenses	(550,351)	(546,960)	(516,848)
Selling and distribution expenses	(383,800)	(364,577)	(515,359)
Allowance for expected credit losses	(158,729)	(158,729)	(377,713)
Net finance costs	(768,303)	(766,917)	(757,591)
Loss before tax	(2,102,725)	(2,078,139)	(1,212,312)
Income tax	311,182	311,182	174,557
Loss for the period	(1,791,543)	(1,766,957)	(1,037,755)
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-
Total Comprehensive loss for the period	(1,791,543)	(1,766,957)	(1,037,755)
Basic loss per share	(0.107)	(0.105)	(0.062)

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Active sorts
 - 6) Fall preceder?
 - 10) The backup one is B
 - 14) Come after
 - 15) "L_ a dream ..."
 - 16) Change in Rome, once
 - 17) Made to wait
 - 20) Principle
 - 21) Pill relative
 - 22) Not he
 - 24) Chris of the Miami Heat
 - 27) Sierra_ (African country)
 - 28) Kismet
 - 31) Place for books
 - 33) Become man and wife
 - 34) Everyday expressions
 - 36) Basketball stadium
 - 38) Certain Hall-of-Fame location
 - 41) Bridge declaration
 - 42) Bar seats
 - 45) Blood classification syst.
 - 48) More exact
- DOWN**

 - 1) 12 of 12, briefly
 - 2) Lennon's wife
 - 3) Arcane
 - 4) Hard-and-fast thing
 - 5) "As_ on TV!"
 - 6) Vacation souvenirs
 - 7) Competed in a race
 - 8) "_Maria"
 - 9) Analyze
 - 10) USNA newcomer
 - 11) Remain inconspicuous
 - 12) Actress Dahl
 - 13) Like some Russian
- dolls
 - 18) Coming-out girl, briefly
 - 19) Music sheet mark
 - 22) Alpine runner?
 - 23) Gave birth to
 - 25) Use a whetstone on
 - 26) Terrycloth term
 - 29) Kind of point
 - 30) Write off gradually
 - 32) Permits
 - 35) Boot jingler
 - 37) "Over the hill" in the military
 - 39) Big birds that cannot fly
 - 40) Name for office
 - 43) Hilo souvenir
 - 44)_Lanka
 - 45) Cochise or Geronimo
 - 46) Big monkey
 - 47) Alternative to black or green
 - 49) Kenny or Roy
 - 52) Shaq was one
 - 54) Foundation item
 - 57) Advantage
 - 59) Southern soup ingre-dient
 - 60) Off in the distance
- 62) Request over and over
 - 63) Kind of doll
 - 64) Confessional subject
 - 65) New talker and walker
- NOTE PAD**
-

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
How long has it been since you've treated yourself? That doesn't just mean some bout of retail therapy that only left you feeling temporarily better and with a big hole in your finances! It's time to do some genuine self-care. Take yourself somewhere calming and check in with your soul. Are you feeling cared for? Are you feeling spiritually, mentally, and physically nourished? If not, get right to work!

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You seem to be acting like the opposite of your normally exuberant and outgoing self. All you really want to do right now is sit at home reading philosophy. It could be that you haven't gone quite that far, but you're definitely behaving in a much more retiring and subdued fashion. If someone close is starting to worry about you, there's no need. You just need a little downtime. You'll be back at it soon!

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21
If someone in your life (your boss, maybe) is acting like an insane person, you can easily de-escalate the situation by refusing to take responsibility for their bad mood. Don't fret about what you may or may not have done. That's not at all relevant. If they do get careless and aim their temper tantrum your way, leave your ego out of it and don't jump into the fray. You might actually end up feeling a little sympathetic!

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Life is looking great right now! You've got your friends and your sweetie (or crush, anyway), plus all the invitations that keep coming and, of course, your immediate surroundings. It all just looks so wonderful! You might fear that you have on rose-colored glasses, but life really is this good. Take advantage of your enhanced view and try to spread some of the joy around to others who may need it.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Having your dreams actually come true can be a whole lot scarier than you might think! It means that the Universe is actually listening to your wishes, for one thing. For another, you have to figure out what to do once you get what you want. If you're feeling overwhelmed after a sudden rush of good fortune, just relax and sit still. Take a moment to enjoy your luck. You should have plenty of time to make decisions later.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Stop staring at that screen for a second and stretch your limbs. Back so soon? Didn't it feel great? Isn't the human body amazing? With such a fantastic, resilient piece of machinery under your control, shouldn't you take better care of it? Now is the perfect time to direct your energy toward maintaining the body that keeps you going day after day.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
When you try to squeeze your car into a tiny parking spot, bad things can happen to the bumper, and forget about dealing with insurance companies! Your energy today is trying to help you avoid forcing situations that aren't meant to be. You might think that something absolutely has to happen in a certain way, but it could end up doing more harm than good. Think about it some more before you make your decision.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You need to stick around longer. Just because this relationship or situation is heading into unfamiliar territory, that doesn't mean you have to head back home! Dealing with the gray, ambiguous areas of life is a valuable skill that should help you in many circumstances, so take a deep breath and promise yourself you'll see this through. You'll learn something, no doubt.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
The answer to what you seek is elsewhere at the moment, so stop the frantic searching and sit still for a while. When big decisions come along, it's easy to simply thrash around and get too caught up in the drama to pay attention to what actually matters: how you feel. Rather than asking for advice (which might just confuse you more than it helps you right now), ask yourself what it is you really want.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You have one thing in common with lasers: focus. Thanks to some very strong energy coursing through you now (another way you're laser-like), your powers of concentration are rising. You can pinpoint solutions and see underlying causes that no one else can. Share your newfound knowledge with those who need it most, diplomatically. While you really do have all the answers right now, it doesn't hurt to frame them as suggestions.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Big changes look easy in the movies. The frumpy librarian lets down her hair and is a femme fatale, or maybe underneath that boring trench coat is a superhero's costume. In real life, of course, monumental movement only happens when you commit to making small changes first. If you want to leap tall buildings in a single bound (metaphorically speaking), it might not happen right away, but with enough persistence, it can happen eventually.

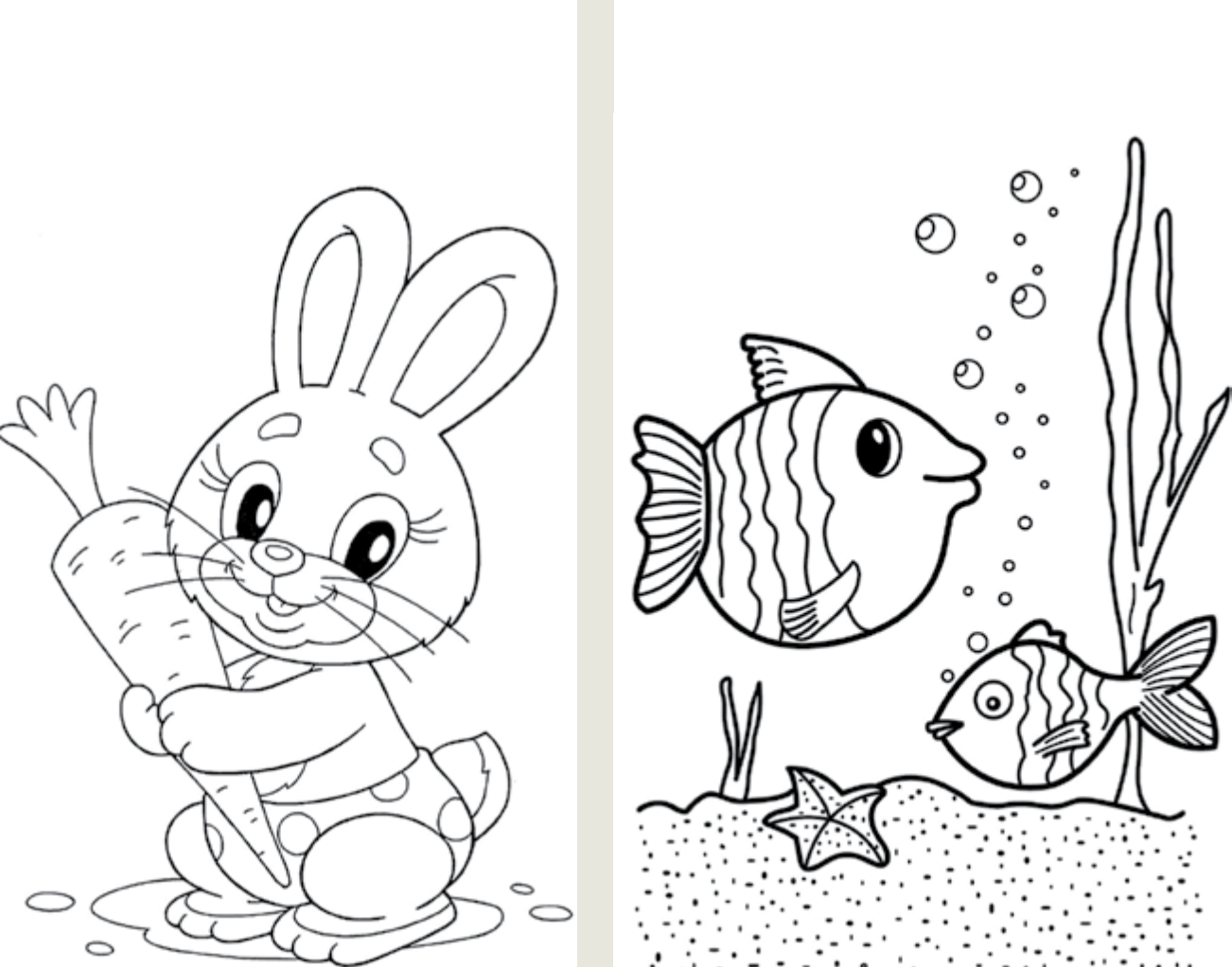
PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
It might seem like things have gotten out of hand between you and someone close. It's too easy to get caught up in all the high emotion, but you should realize that you want to stop it before it gets too far away from reality. If the situation seems like a bucking bronco, you can either get thrown off or take hold of the reins. Which one would you rather choose?

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. In the 2021 SailGP tournament the Spanish boat was given the first what in the league?
- A. Automatic promotion to the match final
 - B. Black flag
 - C. Change of skipper mid-tournament
 - D. Change of boat mid-tournament
02. What was the nationality of the composer of the three piano pieces called "Gymnopédies"?
- A. Spanish
 - B. British
 - C. Greek
 - D. French
03. "Stationery" refers to what?
- A. A parked vehicle
 - B. Consumable office supplies
 - C. A type of spacecraft
 - D. The area around a railway terminus

Answers: 1.B 2.D 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

Y	I	I	R
B	E	D	S
U	I	R	S
A	G	A	A

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

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

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

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

Ukrainian grain shipment checked in Turkey

A Russian and Ukrainian team on Wednesday completed a high-stakes inspection of the first shipment

Istanbul, Turkey - A Russian and Ukrainian team on Wednesday completed a high-stakes inspection of the first shipment of grain from Ukraine since the Kremlin's invasion five months ago helped spark a global food crisis.

The checks aboard the Sierra Leone-flagged Razoni in Istanbul were being watched closely for signs of how well the first agreement signed by Moscow and Kyiv since Russia invaded its pro-Western neighbour can hold.

A deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations last month lifted a Russian naval blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea cities and set terms for millions of tonnes of wheat and other grain to start flowing from Ukraine's filled silos and ports.

Ukraine exports roughly half of the sunflower oil used on the world market and is one of the world's main supplies of grain.

An almost complete halt to its exports helped push up global food prices and make imports prohibitively expensive in some of the poorest countries in the world.

The Razoni is due to deliver more than 26,000 tonnes of maize to Lebanon - a crisis-wracked country that imports more than 80 per cent of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia.

The ship sailed through a specially designated corridor in the mine-infested waters of the Black Sea before reaching the northern edge of the Bosphorus Strait on Tuesday.

A team of 20 inspectors from the two warring parties and the



An inspection delegation boards the Sierra Leone-flagged cargo ship Razoni carrying 26,000 tonnes of corn from Ukraine, off the coast of north-west Istanbul, on Wednesday (AFP)

The Razoni is due to deliver more than 26,000 tonnes of maize to Lebanon, which imports 80% of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia

UN and Turkey strapped on orange helmets and boarded the ship early Wednesday for a check that officials said lasted less than 90 minutes.

Arms depot

The 186-metre long vessel is now due to sail down the Bosphorus Strait in the heart of

Istanbul before moving on to the Marmara and Aegean seas.

The UN secretary general's spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said he hoped for 'more out-bound movement' from Ukraine on Wednesday. Kyiv says at least 16 more grain ships are waiting to depart.

But it also accuses Russia of

stealing Ukrainian grain in territories seized by Kremlin forces and then shipping it to allied countries such as Syria.

But Turkish hopes that the grain deal could help build trust and lead to ceasefire talks have so far proved futile.

Russia has continued to pound southern Ukrainian cities

near the Black Sea with missiles and pressed on with its grinding ground assault across the east.

Officials in Mykolaiv said no one was killed on Wednesday in shelling on one of the southern city's supermarkets that came just days after the region's grain mogul and his wife died in a targeted strike on their house.

Moscow said on Wednesday that it had destroyed another foreign arms depot in western Ukraine - a region the furthest removed from the fighting.

Donetsk evacuations

Kyiv has launched mandatory evacuations from the eastern Donetsk region - now bearing the brunt of Russia's offensive - because the government does not expect to be able to provide it with heat in the cold winter months. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has urged the estimated 200,000 remaining residents of the Donetsk region to leave.

Kyiv's forces have been pressing a counter-offensive to drive out the Russians from the southern Kherson region near the Kremlin-annexed Crimea peninsula. The Ukrainian presidency said it had 'liberated' seven more villages in the region while 53 remained under Russian control.

Ukraine has been bolstered by more supplies of Western weapons - particularly long-range rockets - ahead of the planned push to retake Kherson city. The United States announced a new tranche of weapons worth US\$550 million for Ukraine's forces.

These include longer-range ammunition for increasingly important HIMARS rocket launchers and artillery pieces. Ukraine is using the HIMARS and similar Western weapons to smash Russian arms depots and break down its lines of ground communication across the east.

AFP

Iran ratifies Belgium prisoner swap treaty

Tehran, Iran - Iranian lawmakers voted on Wednesday to ratify a prisoner exchange treaty with Belgium, where the deal has been criticised for potentially enabling an Iranian diplomat jailed on terrorism charges to return home.

Iran's parliament approved the treaty by 195 votes to two, its Icana news agency reported. Two weeks ago, the Belgian parliament passed it by the much narrower margin of 79 votes to 41.

The Belgian opposition alleged the treaty was 'tailor made' to permit the release of Assadollah Assadi, the diplomat sentenced last year to 20 years in prison for orchestrating a foiled 2018 bomb plot targeting a meeting outside Paris of Iran's exiled opposition.

The Belgian government said the deal was the only

way to free aid worker Olivier Vandecasteele who was detained in Iran in February.

But critics of the treaty, who also include Iran's vocal exiled opposition, argue that Belgium is backing down in the face of what is in effect hostage-taking by Tehran.

The Assadi case sparked a furious reaction in Iran.

The Antwerp court ruled that he had masterminded the bomb plot, under diplomatic cover as an envoy to Austria - and thus had no immunity in Belgium.

Tehran has demanded that Belgium recognise Assadi's diplomatic status and release him. Belgian judges last month granted a request from opponents of the prisoner swap treaty to block any attempt to send Asadi home, until the decision can be challenged in court.

AFP

US travelers warned of increased violence risk after Zawahiri killing

Washington, US - The US State Department on Tuesday warned Americans traveling abroad they face an increased risk of violence after US forces killed Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri.

His death in a drone strike in Kabul over the weekend dealt the biggest blow to Al-Qaeda since the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011, prompting US President Joe Biden to declare that 'justice had been delivered.'

Following the strike, the State Department on Tuesday urged US citizens to 'maintain a high level of vigilance and practice good situational awareness when traveling abroad.'

"Current information suggests that terrorist organisations continue to plan terrorist attacks against US interests in multiple regions across the globe," the department said in a statement.

"These attacks may employ



The building (centre bottom) in which Ayman al-Zawahiri was probably located at the time of the strike (AFP)

a wide variety of tactics including suicide operations, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings and bombings."

A senior official in the Biden administration said the 71-year-old Egyptian militant was on the balcony of a three-story house

in the Afghan capital when targeted with two Hellfire missiles after dawn on Sunday.

It was the first known over-the-horizon strike by the United States on a target in Afghanistan since Washington withdrew its forces from the

country on August 31 last year, days after the Taliban swept back to power.

The Taliban condemned the drone strike on Tuesday, but made no mention of casualties nor did they name Zawahiri.

AFP

At least four killed in Iran May protest crackdown: Amnesty

Paris, France - At least four people were killed in May when the Iranian security forces launched a violent crackdown on protests over the rising cost of living, firing live ammunition and bird-shot, Amnesty International said on Wednesday.

It is the first time a top rights group has given a toll based on analysis of the evidence. In a report, Amnesty said the Iranian authorities needed to be held accountable for the 'torrent of violence' unleashed against the protesters in the southwest of the country.

"The authorities' militarised response laid bare once again their utter disregard for the sanctity of human life and international legal standards on the use of force and firearms," said Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

The protests over rising food prices erupted in southwestern Khuzestan province in early May, then spread to neighbouring Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province. Amnesty said video and audio evidence indicated that the security forces 'fired weapons loaded with live ammunition and birdshot on multiple occasions during the protests'.

Birdshot 'is inherently indiscriminate and designed to cause widespread harm', Amnesty said.

AFP

Sri Lanka faces 'great danger' as crisis set to continue: President

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka faces a 'great danger' with fuel shortages sparked by its unprecedented economic crisis set to continue at least till the year's end, President Ranil Wickremesinghe warned on Wednesday.

The 73-year-old, who was propelled to power last month after his predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa was forced to flee the country and resign after months of protests, said the financial meltdown had turned into a serious political crisis.

"Today we are facing an unprecedented situation that our country had never faced in re-



Sri Lanka's President Ranil Wickremesinghe (centre) leave the Parliament after opening a new session in Colombo on Wednesday (AFP)

cent history," he said while opening a new session of parliament.

"We are in great danger."

Tens of thousands of people overran Rajapaksa's official residence last month over acute shortages of food, fuel and medicines endured by Sri Lanka's 22mn people since late last year.

Wickremesinghe said the only way to escape the crisis was 'if we all face this challenge together as one people', and asked all parties in parliament to join his initiative for a 'unity government'.

Sri Lanka was considered a

prosperous middle-income country before defaulting for the first time on its foreign debt of US\$51bn in mid-April.

The country has run out of foreign exchange to finance imports with officials estimating the country urgently needs at least US\$4bn to bring in essential goods and address current shortages.

Wickremesinghe has been leading talks with the International Monetary Fund to secure a four-year bailout programme. He told parliament the negotiations were progressing but did not provide a timeline for when a deal would be finalised.

Motorists spend days waiting to buy rationed fuel while the country faces lengthy electricity blackouts. Inflation has crossed 60 per cent.

Wickremesinghe thanked India for granting credit lines to import petrol and diesel, but said Colombo must be able to pay with its own foreign exchange earnings and that rationing would continue at least till the end of this year.

He also criticised Rajapaksa for rejecting two major infrastructure investments from Japan which could have brought in US\$3bn.

AFP

Russia backs Myanmar junta's efforts to 'stabilise' country

The military government has sought to deepen ties with major ally and arms supplier Russia

Yangon, Myanmar - Russia backs the Myanmar junta's efforts to 'stabilise' the crisis-racked country and hold elections next year, its foreign minister said in talks with top generals on Wednesday, according to Russian state media.

The Southeast Asian nation has been in turmoil since the putsch last year, with the junta accused by rights groups of committing war crimes as it struggles to crush resistance to its rule.

Isolated internationally and with Western governments imposing sanctions, the military government has sought to deepen ties with major ally and arms supplier Russia - whose invasion of Ukraine it has said was 'justified'.

"We are in solidarity with the efforts (by the junta) aimed at stabilising the situation in the country," Sergei Lavrov said during talks in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw, according to the TASS news agency.

"Next year, you will hold legislative elections and we wish you success," Lavrov added, referring to proposed August 2023 elections that opponents of the coup have said will be neither free nor fair.



Russian FM Sergei Lavrov (right) with Myanmar's Min Aung Hlaing in Naypyidaw on Wednesday (AFP)

On Monday junta chief Min Aung Hlaing - who travelled to Moscow last month - said polls could only take place when the conflict-racked country was 'stable and peaceful'.

The putsch has sparked renewed fighting with established ethnic rebel groups in border areas, while dozens of civilian 'People's Defence Force' militias have also sprung up to battle the military.

Russia - along with ally China - has been accused by rights groups and a UN expert of arming the military with weapons used to attack civilians.

Lavrov and junta chief Min Aung Hlaing also discussed opening new consulates to promote an increase in travel between their two countries, TASS said.

The junta has yet to comment on Lavrov's visit.

Lavrov is scheduled to travel on to an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) foreign ministers' meeting in Cambodia from which the junta's top diplomat has been excluded.

The bloc joined a chorus of international outrage last week after the junta announced it had executed four prisoners, including a former lawmaker and a democracy activist, in the coun-

try's first use of capital punishment in decades.

'Disappointed and disturbed'

ASEAN has been growing increasingly frustrated at Myanmar's lack of progress on a five-point peace plan agreed last year.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen - the current ASEAN chair - on Wednesday warned Myanmar against further hangings. He said the regional bloc was 'disappointed and disturbed' by last month's executions, and that the further use of capital punishment would mean a 'rethink' of the five-point peace plan.

Isolated on the international stage, the junta has turned increasingly to allies including China and Russia.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing was in Moscow on a 'private' visit in July and reportedly met with officials from Moscow's space agency Roscosmos and nuclear agencies.

In Naypyidaw, Lavrov said Roscosmos would build 'new infrastructure' in Myanmar in cooperation with the junta.

The army has justified its power grab by alleging massive fraud during the 2020 elections, in which Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) trounced a military-backed party.

Last year, it cancelled the results of the polls, saying it had uncovered more than 11mn instances of voter fraud.

International observers said the voting was largely free and fair.

AFP

Three killed in stabbing in China kindergarten

Beijing, China - Three people were killed and six others wounded in a knife attack on Wednesday at a kindergarten in southeast China's Jiangxi province, police said.

A 'gangster wearing a cap and mask' stormed the private kindergarten in Anfu county at about 10am local time (0200 GMT), police said in a statement published on China's Twitter-like Weibo.

The 48-year-old suspect is still at large, they added.

"Public security organs are making every effort to hunt down the suspect," the police statement said.

In a video of the scene shared by state-run *Beijing Daily*, a police officer can be seen carrying a tiny child in his arms to an ambulance.

The ages of the victims have not been announced.

Mass violent crime is rare in China, which strictly prohibits citizens from owning firearms, but there has been a spate of mass stabbings in recent years.

And fatal attacks specifically targeting kindergarten and school students have occurred nationwide, carried out by people reportedly wishing to wreak revenge on society or because of grievances with colleagues.

The attacks have forced authorities to step up security and prompted calls for more research into the root causes of such violent acts.

Last April, two children were killed and 16 others wounded when a knife-wielding man entered a kinder-

garten in southern China.

In 2020, a knife-wielding attacker wounded 37 students and two adults at a primary school in southern China. Local media identified a security guard as the perpetrator. And later that year a man was sentenced to death for poisoning dozens of children in an act of revenge against a colleague that left one toddler dead.

A court in the central Chinese province of Henan said the accused, Wang Yun, put

A gangster wearing a cap and mask stormed the private kindergarten in Anfu county at about 10am local time (0200 GMT)

POLICE

sodium nitrite into porridge being prepared for her colleague's students, sickening 25.

In other more recent attacks, four people were wounded in a stabbing at a major Shanghai hospital last month before the knife-wielding assailant was shot and subsequently arrested by the police.

Six people were also killed and 14 wounded after a man stabbed passersby on a pedestrian shopping street in the eastern Chinese city of Anqing in June last year.

AFP

112 women hospitalised in India industrial gas leak

New Delhi, India - At least 112 women have been hospitalised after a gas leak at an apparel manufacturing plant in India, police said on Wednesday.

The workers complained of nausea and vomiting at a plant in the Atchyutapuram district of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday night.

"The women are all stable. There are no deaths. Investigations are going on," senior police official M. Upendra told AFP. The hospitalisations follow a similar accident in June when around 200 women fell unconscious after a gas leak in the same area, broadcaster NDTV reported.

In 2020, at least five people

were killed and hundreds were hospitalised after a gas leak at a chemical plant in Visakhapatnam, an industrial port city in the same state.

In 1984, India witnessed one of its worst industrial disasters in history when gas leaked from a pesticide plant in Bhopal, a city in central India.

Around 3,500 people living around the plant operated by Union Carbide died in the days that followed the leak. People continue to suffer the effects of it to this day. Children are still born disfigured, with webbed feet and hands, and stunted growth because of the gas that affected their mothers.

AFP

Rare white elephant born in Myanmar: State media

Yangon, Myanmar - A rare white elephant has been born in western Myanmar, state media said on Wednesday, unveiling what many in the Buddhist-majority country believe to be an auspicious creature.

Born last month in western Rakhine state, the baby weighs about 80kg and stands roughly 70cm tall, according to the *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper.

Footage released by state TV showed the tusker tot following his mother to a river and being washed by its keepers, and later feeding from her.

The mother - a 33-year-old called Zar Nan Hla - is kept by the Myanma Timber Enterprise in Rakhine state, the *Global New Light* said, adding the baby pos-

sessed seven of the eight characteristics associated with rare white elephants.

'Pearl-coloured eyes, plantain branch-shaped back, white hair, a distinctive tail, auspicious plot signs on the skin, five claws on the front legs and four on the back legs and big ears,' the newspaper reported.

Social media users first posted about the birth of the elephant - which has not been named yet - late last month.

Historically, white elephants were considered extremely auspicious in Southeast Asian culture, and the region's ancient rulers acquired as many as they could to boost their fortunes.

But the ruinous cost of keeping the beasts in appropriately lavish style gave rise to the modern ex-



A newborn baby white elephant walking on the ground at Taungup township in Rakhine state on Tuesday (AFP)

pression in which a 'white elephant' is a useless, if beautiful, possession.

There are currently six white elephants in captivity in the military-built capital Naypyidaw, according to state media - which are mostly from Rakhine state and the southern Ayeyarwady region.

With Myanmar reeling from a military coup last year and its bloody crackdown on dissent, the reaction of many on social media was muted or sceptical.

"Am I colourblind if it just looks brown to me?" posted one user.

"Elephants were important only in the old eras," said another.

"Now the poor elephant will have to go to jail."

AFP

Solar-powered electric tricycles give Zimbabwean women a lift

Domboshava, Zimbabwe - For years, selling eggs was a joyless business for Danai Bvochora, as most of the money she made went to cover minibus fares to the market in a rural area of Zimbabwe.

That was until an earth-brown solar-powered electric tricycle changed her life.

"We used to carry loads on our heads before. The tricycle has lessened the burden," said the 47-year-old from Domboshava, about 40km north of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare.

She carefully loads eggs onto the tricycle's trailer before embarking on a bumpy eight-kilometre journey to the market.

"We even use it to go to church and worship," Bvochora said, explaining a single trip to



Danai Bvochora arrives at market on her renewable energy electrical tricycle in Domboshava (AFP)

buy chicken feed from a local business centre used to cost her US\$12.

But charging her new solar-powered vehicle sets her back only US\$2.50 every two weeks,

and the mother of two is now making a profit.

Bvochora is among groups of

women in Domboshava, a district renowned for its picturesque hills and giant boulders, who received a tricycle last year as part of a European Union-funded project to assist small-scale farmers.

Assembled by Harare-based social enterprise Mobility for Africa, the three-wheelers were first introduced in Zimbabwe in the year 2019 to help women develop their businesses, said the company's director Shantha Bloemen.

Transport has historically been inadequate in sparsely populated rural areas of Zimbabwe, where women often have to walk long distances carrying heavy loads on their heads to trade products - which sometimes spoil on the way in the heat.

Electric push

Yet the idea of addressing that with electric three-wheelers raised a few eyebrows at first, said American-born Bloemen, who is a permanent resident in Zimbabwe and lived in the country in the 1990s when she worked for UNICEF.

"It was very lonely when we started," Bloemen said, explaining her team had to work hard to prove to funders that the idea was viable.

"No one was talking about electric mobility in Africa let alone for rural women."

Three years later, the social enterprise is planning to more than triple its current fleet of 88 motorised vehicles by the end of 2022. It operates three solar-powered stations, where drivers

can come to swap their lithium battery for a fully charged one when running low on energy - and foots the bill when something breaks.

Zimbabwe has for more than two decades faced tough economic conditions, with rural areas particularly hard hit. The country's economy is mainly driven by the informal sector, to which Domboshava women farmers such as these belong.

While some of the three-wheelers - nicknamed 'Hamba' or 'go' in the local Ndebele language - were bought by the EU and then gifted to locals, others are rented out for US\$5 a day.

Phyllis Chifamba, a 37-year-old mother of four, uses her rented vehicle as a taxi.

AFP

China readies military drills over Pelosi visit

Taipei, Taiwan - Taiwan struck a defiant tone on Wednesday as it hosted US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, with a furious China gearing up for military exercises dangerously close to the island's shores in retaliation for the visit.

Pelosi landed in Taiwan on Tuesday despite a series of increasingly stark threats from Beijing, which views the island as its territory and had said it would consider the visit a major provocation. China responded swiftly, announcing what it said were 'necessary and just' military drills in the seas just off Taiwan's coast - some of the world's busiest waterways.

"In the current struggle surrounding Pelosi's Taiwan visit, the United States are the provocateurs, China is the victim," Beijing's foreign ministry said.

But Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said that the island of 23mn would not be cowed.

"Facing deliberately heightened military threats, Taiwan will not back down. We will... continue to hold the line of defence for democracy," Tsai said at an event with Pelosi in Taipei.

She also thanked the 82-year-old US lawmaker for 'taking concrete actions to show your staunch support for Taiwan at this critical moment'.

China tries to keep Taiwan isolated on the world stage and opposes countries having official exchanges with Taipei. Pelosi, second in line to the presidency, is the highest-profile elected US official to visit Taiwan in 25 years.

"Today, our delegation... came to Taiwan to make unequivocally clear we will not abandon our commitment to Taiwan," she said at the event with Tsai.

She added her group had come 'in friendship to Taiwan'



Visiting US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (centre) waves to journalists during her arrival at the Parliament in Taipei on Wednesday (AFP)

We will not be cowed. Facing deliberately heightened military threats, Taiwan will not back down. We will... continue to hold the line of defence for democracy

TSAI ING-WEN

and 'in peace to the region'.

Pelosi's delegation left Taiwan on Wednesday evening headed to South Korea, her next stop in an Asia tour.

'High alert'
The administration of President

Joe Biden said in the run-up to the visit that US policy towards Taiwan remained unchanged.

This means support for its government while diplomatically recognising Beijing over Taipei, and opposing a formal independence declaration by Taiwan or a

forceful takeover by China.

While the White House is understood to be opposed to Pelosi's Taiwan stop, its National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said she was entitled to go where she pleased.

Beijing summoned US Ambassador Nicholas Burns over Pelosi's visit, while the Chinese military declared it was on 'high alert' and would 'launch a series of targeted military actions in response' to the visit.

The drills will include 'long-range live ammunition shooting' in the Taiwan Strait, which separates the island from mainland China and straddles vital shipping lanes.

The zone of Chinese exercises will be within 20km of Taiwan's shoreline at some points, according to coordinates released by the Chinese military.

"Some of the areas of China's drills breach into... (Taiwan's) territorial waters," defence ministry spokesman Sun Li-fang said at a press conference on Wednesday.

"This is an irrational move to challenge the international order."

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs

Council, which sets the government's China policies, accused Beijing of 'vicious intimidation' that would 'seriously impact the peace and prosperity of the entire East Asia'.

It added that democratic countries should 'unite and take a solemn stand to punish and deter' Beijing.

Japan, a key US ally in the region, said on Wednesday it had expressed concern to China over the exercises, while South Korea called for dialogue to maintain regional peace and stability.

Both countries are on Pelosi's

Asia itinerary, following stops in Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan.

'We shouldn't be too worried'
Beijing has long used diplomatic, military and economic pressure on Taiwan.

On Wednesday China announced curbs on the import of fruit and fish from Taiwan - citing the detection of pesticide residue and the coronavirus. It also halted shipments of sand to the island.

"Those who offend China will be punished," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters on Thursday while on a trip to Cambodia.

Outside the Taiwanese parliament, 31-year-old computer programmer Frank Chen shrugged off the Chinese warnings against Pelosi's visit.

"I'm not too worried about China's intimidation," he told AFP. "I think China will take more threatening actions and ban more Taiwanese products, but we shouldn't be too worried."

There was a small group of pro-China demonstrators outside parliament as well.

"The United States uses Taiwan as a pawn in its confrontation with China, to try to drag China down so (it) can dominate the world," Lee Kai-dee, a 71-year-old retired researcher, told AFP.

"If the United States continues to act this way, Taiwan will end up like Ukraine."

China has vowed to annex self-ruled, democratic Taiwan one day, by force if necessary.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February heightened fears in Taiwan that China may similarly follow through on its threats to annex the island.

AFP

UN calls for solutions to Iraq political crisis

Baghdad, Iraq - The United Nations mission in Iraq called on leaders on Wednesday to put their country first and end a long-running political power struggle, as tensions soar in the war-scarred nation.

Nearly 10 months on from elections, the oil-rich country still has no government and no new prime minister or president.

"We appeal to all actors to commit, actively engage and agree on solutions without delay," the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) said in a statement.

"Leaders must prioritise (the) national interest," it said.

On Wednesday, followers of powerful Shiite Muslim preacher and political kingmaker Moqtada Sadr continued a mass sit-in at parliament for a fifth day.

The Sadr bloc opposes a nomination for prime minister by the Coordination Framework, a rival, Iran-backed Shiite faction.



Supporters of Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr, protesting at their sit-in inside Iraq's parliament headquarters in the capital Baghdad's high-security Green Zone, on Wednesday (AFP)

Outgoing prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi has called for a 'national dialogue' in a bid to bring all sides together to talk, and on Wednesday spoke with President Barham Saleh.

Both men stressed the importance of 'guaranteeing security and stability' in the country, according to the Iraqi News Agency. "Meaningful dialogue among all Iraqi parties is now more urgent than ever, as recent events have demonstrated the rapid risk of escalation in this tense political climate," the UN mission warned.

On Tuesday, a top Sadrist official gave followers 72 hours to shift their protests from the main meeting halls of parliament to the entrance of the building and a surrounding encampment.

"Iraq is facing an extensive list of outstanding domestic issues: it is in desperate need of economic reform, effective public service delivery as well as a federal budget - to name a few," the UN added.

AFP



John Lee (left) and his wife Janet celebrate after Lee was named as the city's new leader in Hong Kong on May 8, this year (AFP)

New Hong Kong chief Lee among world's highest-paid politicians

Hong Kong, China - Hong Kong's new leader John Lee received a salary bump that would make him among the world's highest-paid politicians, according to figures provided by his office on Wednesday, even as the financial hub's economy undergoes a downturn.

The government announced this week that its economy has tipped into a technical recession, after being battered by the pandemic, mounting interest rates and weakened global trade.

Despite the city's dip in fortunes, the chief executive will still be comfortably compensated, according to figures provided by his office.

The former security chief, who assumed office in July, is paid HK\$452,200 (US\$58,000) a month, and will receive an entertainment allowance of over US\$10,000 as well, his office told AFP on Wednesday.

His salary is a step-up from that of his predecessor Carrie Lam, who used to earn around US\$54,000 a month.

This means Lee earns more

than US President Joe Biden - whose annual salary is US\$400,000 - and is second only to Singaporean leader Lee Hsien Loong, who nets around US\$1.6 million a year.

The 64-year-old was chosen for Hong Kong's top job earlier this year after running unopposed, with his campaign receiving around US\$1.4mn in donations.

Like Lam, he is also subject to sanctions by the United States for his role in China's ongoing crackdown on freedoms in the city. Lam once revealed she had 'piles of cash' at home as she was denied banking services due to the US sanctions.

It is unclear whether Lee receives his salary in cash.

But he has on multiple occasions denounced the American sanctions as 'bullying' and said he paid them no attention.

The Chinese city regularly tops the chart as one of the most expensive cities to live in, with world-beating levels of wealth inequality.

AFP

Driest July in memory imperils Europe's crops

Paris, France - As much of Europe bakes in a third heatwave since June, fears are growing that extreme drought driven by climate change in the continent's breadbasket nations will dent stable crop yields and deepen the cost-of-living crisis.

The European Commission on Wednesday urged EU member states to re-use treated urban waste water as irrigation on the continent's parched farms, after France and parts of England saw their driest July on record.

In France, where an intense drought has hammered farmers and prompted widespread limits on freshwater use, there was just 9.7mm of rain last month,



A dried corn field is pictured near Monfort en Chalousse, southwestern France, on Wednesday (AFP)

Meteo France said. That was 84 per cent down on the average levels seen for July between 1991 and 2022, making it the driest month since March 1961, the agency added.

Farmers nationwide are reporting difficulties in feeding livestock because of parched

grasslands, while irrigation has been banned in large areas of the northwest and southeast due to freshwater shortages.

Environment Minister Christophe Bechu said July's rainfall represented 'just 12 per cent of what's needed'.

France is the fourth-largest exporter of wheat and among the top five exporters of maize globally. Poor harvests due to drought may heap further pressure on grain supplies after Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused global shockwaves.

"Our food system has been under stress for a while, and with the supply issues from Ukraine, that has only gotten worse," said Shouro Dasgupta, environmental economist at the Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change.

"These heatwaves are on top of droughts and will see crops wither faster."

Shouro Dasgupta said that extreme heat driven by climate change is also contributing to food price inflation for consumers and harsher conditions for producers.

"Droughts and heatwaves impact people's livelihoods. People will be less able to afford food," he told AFP.

"And during heatwaves outdoor workers are only able to work fewer hours, which brings cascading impacts for supply."

AFP



{ ANGKOR WAT }

The melodic songs from families of endangered monkeys ring out over the jungle near Cambodia's Angkor Wat temple complex - a sign of ecological rejuvenation, decades after hunting decimated wildlife at the site.

The first pair of rare pileated gibbons were released in 2013 as part of a joint programme between conservation group Wildlife Alliance, the forestry administration and the Apsara Authority - a government agency that manages the 12th-century ruins.

The gibbon duo, named Baray and Saranick, were born from parents rescued from the wildlife trade and produced offspring a year later.

"We have now released four different pairs of gibbons within the Angkor forest and they have gone on to breed and now seven babies have been born," Wildlife Alliance rescue and care programme director Nick Marx told AFP. "We are restoring Cambodia's natural heritage back into their most beautiful cultural heritage."

Globally, gibbons are one of the most threatened families of primates, while the pileated gibbon is listed as endangered.

Marx says his team rescues some 2,000

animals a year and many more will soon call the Angkor jungle home. There are hopes that once the baby gibbons reach sexual maturity in about five to eight years, they will also pair up and mate.

"What we are hoping for the future is to create a sustainable population of the animals... that we released here within the amazing Angkor forest," Marx said.

Big victory

Cambodian authorities have hailed the gibbon baby boom that began in 2014. "This means a big victory for our project," Chou Radina from the Apsara Authority said, adding that as well as gibbons, tourists could now see great hornbills flying over Angkor Wat.

The programme has released more than 40 other animals and birds including silvered langurs, muntjac deers, smooth-coated otters, leopard cats, civets, wreathed hornbills, and green peafowl. All were rescued from traffickers, donated or born in captivity at the Phnom Tamao wildlife sanctuary near Phnom Penh.

The Angkor Archaeological Park - which contains the ruins of various capitals of the Khmer Empire, dating from the ninth to 15th centuries - has some of the oldest rainforest in Cambodia. It is also the kingdom's most

popular tourist destination.

Since Angkor Wat became a world heritage site in 1992, its jungle, which covers more than 6,500 hectares, has benefited from increased legal and physical protections. There are hopes that wildlife sightings will also spark interest in local and foreign tourists and boost conservation education efforts.

Ongoing threats

Rampant poaching, habitat loss from logging, agriculture and dam building has stripped much wildlife from Cambodian rainforests.

Last year, authorities removed 61,000 snare traps, environment ministry spokesman Neth Pheaktra said, adding that the government had launched a campaign to

discourage hunting/eating of wildlife meat.

Widespread poverty even before the pandemic, however, left many households without much choice but to continue hunting, so their families could eat protein. Animals are also hunted for traditional medicine and to be kept as pets.

According to Global Forest Watch, from 2001-2021, Cambodia lost 2.6 million hectares of tree cover, a 30 per cent decrease since 2000.

Commercial interests are trumping protection efforts in some quarters - the Phnom Tamao zoo and wildlife rescue centre is under threat from a shadowy rezoning development plan, Marx said.

At Siem Reap - the gateway city to Angkor Wat - villager Moeurn Sarin says they are happy to feed, conserve and be entertained by the gibbons' antics.

AFP



Wildlife Alliance conservationist Nick Marx takes a look at the otters in the forest at Angkor Park in Siem Reap province



CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Logistics/Marketing
27 year old female Sri Lankan with an MSc and BSc in Logistics and Supply Chain and 4 plus years of experience seeking a job in Oman.
Email ID: chamindrin@gmail.com
Phone: +94-760200699

Shipping & Logistics Operations
27 year old male Sri Lankan with an

MSc in Logistics and Supply Chain and over 6 years of experience looking for a job in Oman. Email ID: meu.mithuranga@gmail.com
Phone: +94-773492287

E-commerce Assistant Manager : Indian female with 6 years experience in ecommerce with skills in cataloging, order management, logistics, customer service seeks suitable placement.

Contact : 96629331

Looking for an investor for ceramics business which is located in Musannah.
Contact:92942702

Pakistani man having experience 29 years in electrical supervisor, Oil and Gas and have a driving licences looking for a job.
Please contact on:95196847

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION
Contact:97239696/95355638
Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur
Kumar@gccaoman.com

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING
Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories: **Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/ Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)**
Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

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

SITUATION VACANT

BAHWAN METAL & GLASS ENGINEERING LLC

Required Sales Representative with minimum 2 years of work experience in sales. The candidate should have 1 year working experience in Oman. Having a driving license and a car is a must.

Please send your CV to mazzan@bahwanmge.com
Tel: +96896666685

Send your request for Birthday/Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

TREADMILL STRUT

FITNESS FOR A SONG

IF YOU DON'T FEEL
MOTIVATED TO USE YOUR
ONCE 'PRIZED' TREADMILL
AT HOME, TRY THE
'TREADMILL STRUT'
AS A COOL MOTIVATOR
AND SOON WALK
YOURSELF INTO FITNESS
FOR A SONG



Does strutting along to Taylor Swift, Lizzo, and Arianna Grande count as a workout? Or may be working up a rhythmic stride with your favourite music accompanying you on your personal stereo?

Allie Bennett, the self-proclaimed 'CEO of the treadmill strut', skyrocketed to viral TikTok fame in April 2022 when she decided to create a 36-minute treadmill workout set to a playlist of Taylor Swift songs - the original treadmill strut workout, a recent article in *Everyday Health* states.

In that first video, which has garnered 3.7 million views so far, she posted instructions for the workout - Starting with the first song on the playlist, find your pace. When the song changes, increase the pace of the treadmill by 0.1 miles per hour. When you get to the final two songs, either stay at the pace you land at, or crank it up to jogging speed. Then lower the pace for the last song to whichever speed allows you to cool down (and strut it out).

"It's not just a playlist. It's a full 36-minute treadmill workout," she said about the Taylor Swift Treadmill Strut in an accompanying video.

The Taylor Swift treadmill strut is her most popular video, but others, also inspired by her favorite singers, have gone viral as well. Her Lizzo workout has amassed 1.6 million views, the Dua Lipa workout has 1.9 million views, and the Ariana Grande and Doja Cat workouts have 3.6 and 3.7 million views respectively. All playlists are available on Bennett's Spotify page.

The hashtag #treadmillstrut has over 81.8 million views, with users sharing their own treadmill strut challenge videos and playlists. And even singer Lizzo has tried out the workout she inspired and posted a TikTok video about how it went. "I did it. I feel great," she noted in the video.

What is the 'Treadmill Strut' workout?

As Bennett explains in her videos, for the treadmill strut workout, you start at a comfortable pace and up your pace by 0.1 miles per hour for each new song on your playlist (which should be about 30 minutes total). Bennett's playlists are all curated so that the pace of the songs increases to match the increasing pace of the workout.

For the last two songs, Bennett suggests running or choosing a challenging pace. And for the last song, Bennett suggests picking a pace

that feels like a good cool down for you.

Ramona Braganza, a Los Angeles-based celebrity personal trainer certified by the Canadian fitness education organization Canfitpro, says the walking workout is a great one for beginner exercisers looking for some extra motivation to keep with a workout.

It can also be modified for more experienced athletes by starting at a higher speed and pushing the pace up accordingly. Or, it might be a great low-intensity workout for advanced athletes to sandwich between more challenging workouts.

The approach is a simple one that includes elements of a healthy workout, she says, "It follows the principles of warming up, walking to a slower-paced song, and then increasing the pace gradually (in this case with each subsequent song)."

Enjoy the extra effort

By the end of Bennet's workout, you're walking vigorously or jogging at a slow pace. And if you picked a playlist with beats you enjoy, you may not even notice (or mind) the extra effort you're exerting, she says.

Walking is a form of cardiovascular or aerobic exercise, Braganza adds. If you're doing it at a pace that gets your heart rate up (think about working at around 70 per cent of your maximum) it can definitely count toward the 150 minutes of weekly moderate-intensity aerobic exercise.

Braganza says if a workout gets you moving and you enjoy it, then it's going to be good for your overall fitness.

She notes that there's nothing revolutionary about the approach. Many trainers use a gradually-pick-up-the-pace style of workout, she says.

Keep to a comfortable pace

While the Treadmill Strut workout is a good one for people of most fitness levels (given that it's highly customisable and you choose the pace), Braganza notes that it might be especially beneficial for beginners. "For non-exercisers, this is a way to start," she says, adding that it can also be motivating for anyone who loves music.

More advanced athletes and those who exercise regularly, however, may find it less challenging. This amount of pace adjustment may not even feel noticeable to people who usually move at a much faster pace, she says.

And, while the final sprint is optional, she points out that non-exercisers or beginner exercisers might consider skipping the 7-mile-per-hour final two-song sprint. "This could prove to be unsafe," she says. Instead, she recommends keeping the speed at a comfortable walking pace or making a more gradual transition from a walk to a jog to a run.



Uganda’s Jacob Kiplimo dances to stunning 10,000m Commonwealth Games title

London, United Kingdom - Uganda’s Jacob Kiplimo made light of the absence of two-time world 10,000m champion Joseph Cheptegei by destroying his compatriot’s Commonwealth Games record to win gold on Tuesday.

Kiplimo, who took bronze at the recent world championships, celebrated with a dance on crossing the line after finishing in 27min 09.19sec to finish ahead of Kenyan pair Daniel Ebenyo and Kibiwott Kandie.

“I think for me for winning this Commonwealth Games title was

everything, the most important thing for me this season,” said Kiplimo.

“But I still have a lot of things to do in the future at the Olympics and world championships.”

There were golds too for Australia’s Nina Kennedy, who built on her bronze in the world championships to take the pole vault title with a best of 4.60 metres, and Chioma Onyekwere of Nigeria in the discus (61.70m).

England’s Jake Jarman claimed a fourth gold medal on the final day of gymnastics while compatriot Joe Fraser grabbed

I think for me for winning this Commonwealth Games title was everything, the most important thing for me this season

JACOB KIPLIMO

his third with victory in the parallel bars.

On another stellar day for the home nation, Alice Kinsella won the women’s floor while Australia’s Kate McDonald won gold in the women’s balance beam. Cypriot Ilias Georgiou won the men’s horizontal bar.

“We woke up with the mindset that this is a new day, a new beginning, and that we have the opportunity to do something very special,” said India’s Rupa Rani Tirkey. “We are glad we been able to achieve that.”

Samoan weightlifter Don Opeloge won 96kg gold after his dreams of competing in the Tokyo Olympics were dashed by Covid-19 travel restrictions.

On Tuesday he performed a celebratory dance and hopes there will be more to come from his compatriots.

AFP



Australia’s Emma McKeon, Matthew Temple, Zac Stubblety-Cook and Kaylee McKeown at the 4x100m mixed medley relay medal ceremony

McKeon makes CWG history as Peaty roars back

Birmingham, United Kingdom - Australian swim star Emma McKeon became the most decorated athlete in Commonwealth Games history on Tuesday by winning her 19th medal as Adam Peaty bounced back to win the 50m breaststroke.

McKeon reached the landmark in the mixed 4x100m medley relay final in Birmingham - the final race of a pulsating night of action at the Sandwell Aquatics Centre - with Australia taking gold.

The 28-year-old now has a total of 13 golds, five bronze medals and one silver across three Commonwealth games.

She moved one clear of shooters Michael Gault and Phil Adams and Chad le Clos, who slumped, devastated after South Africa finished fourth in the relay, denying him a share of the record.

He also finished an agonising fourth in the men’s 100m butterfly earlier in the evening.

Olympic champion McKeon, 28, suffered a shock defeat earlier in the session in the 100m freestyle as the Australians locked down the podium.

Teenage star Mollie O’Callaghan took gold in a time of 52.63sec, with Shayna Jack pushing McKeon into third.

England’s world record holder Peaty recovered from his surprise defeat in the men’s 100m breaststroke earlier in the Games by holding off Australia’s Sam Williamson to win the Commonwealth 50m event for the first time, touching in 26.76sec.

A fired-up Peaty, who won by 0.21sec, was roared on by a passionate home crowd and thumped the water in delight after sealing victory.

On another glorious night in the pool for Australia, defending champion Ariarne Titmus (8:13.59) led a 1-2-3 for the team in the women’s 800m freestyle and Elizabeth Dekkers won the women’s 200m butterfly in 2:07.26.

South Africa started the penultimate evening of swimming action in Birmingham with a one-two in the women’s 100m breaststroke, with Lara van Niek-erk touching in 1:05.47, ahead of defending champion Tatjana Schoenmaker.

AFP

Australian Kyrgios cruises in first match since Wimbledon

Washington, United States - Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios won in his first match since making his Grand Slam final debut, ripping American Marcos Giron 6-3, 6-2 on Tuesday at the ATP and WTA Washington Open.

The 27-year-old Australian fired 12 aces and saved the lone break point he faced to oust Giron in 59 minutes for a triumphant return at the US Open hardcourt tune-up. After a 3-3 start, Kyrgios won nine of the last 11 games for the victory despite memories of a poor effort in a first-round exit last year during “a dark time in my life.”

“I just really wanted to force myself to have high energy and pull out a performance,” Kyrgios said. “My confidence was a bit low coming out just because just being on that court again. I got disgraced last year first round, and it was tough to stomach.”

World number 63 Kyrgios, whose most recent title came at Washington in 2019, booked a second-round match against US 14th seed Tommy Paul.

Top seed Andrey Rublev advanced to the third round by defeating Britain’s Jack Draper 6-4, 6-2.

World number eight Rublev dispatched the 81st-ranked English left-hander in 83 minutes without surrendering a break.

Rublev will play for a quarter-final berth Thursday against an American, either Jack Sock or Maxime Cressy.

Rublev, 24, seeks his fourth ATP title of the year and the 12th of his career after crowns at Marseille and Dubai in February and Belgrade in April.

Rublev, who wrote “No War Please” on a camera lens at Dubai, was among Russian players banned from Wimbledon because of his homeland’s military invasion of Ukraine.

AFP



Nick Kyrgios plays a shot against Marcos Giron in their first-round match at the Citi Open on Tuesday (AFP)

GENETCO CARNIVAL

NOW BIGGER & BETTER!!

29th June to 27th August 2022

GS18GMAX60 18000 BTU	GS24GMAX60 22178 BTU	GS26GMAX60 24000 BTU	GS30GMAX60 27500 BTU
-------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

GMAX60

MAXimum Power. MAXimum Cooling.

MAX Power - Stable Operation at high temperature
High-efficiency heat dissipation technology, results in stable cooling even at 55°C....

MAX Guard - 5 Anti-corrosion Measures
5 Anti-corrosion measures, for all-round protection, Longer service life and less maintenance.

MAX Safety
The Main board and electric box is enclosed in fire proof material for additional safety.

GS18GMAX60 18000 BTU EER: 11.70	GS24GMAX60 22178 BTU EER: 11.60	GS26GMAX60 24000 BTU EER: 12.00	GS30GMAX60 27500 BTU EER: 11.96
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

جي نتكو

Genetco

GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. L.L.C

MUSCAT

97693496, 96742452

Available at
Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

C.R. No. 1009680

SALALAH

79011363

www.genetco.net

@GenetcoOman

@GenetcoOman

Genetco Oman

Suryakumar Yadav of India celebrates his half century in the third T20I match against the West Indies in Basseterre on Tuesday (AFP)

Yadav blitz restores series lead for India

Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis - Suryakumar Yadav epitomised his team’s new all-out attacking approach with a blazing 76 at the top of the order as India romped to a seven-wicket victory over the West Indies in the third T20 international in St Kitts on Tuesday.

After his Caribbean counterpart, Kyle Mayers, anchored the home side’s total of 164 for five with a boisterous 73 off 50 balls batting first, Yadav’s effort off 44 deliveries with eight fours and four sixes ensured the visitors cantered to the target with an over to spare to take a 2-1 lead in the series ahead of the final two matches at the weekend in Florida.

Beaten in the final over of the second match a day earlier when their batting failed to fire consistently, India looked focused and purposeful from the start of their

innings with the only concern being over the fitness of the captain. Rohit Sharma was forced to retire in the second over after it appeared that he hurt his lower back attempting a violent swing to the on-side.

However Yadav, given free reign to play his shots from ball one, then dominated an 86-run stand with Shreyas Iyer (24) which effectively ended the match as a contest.

An unbeaten 33 from Rishabh Pant then formalised the win.

“When Rohit went inside it was important for someone to bat through to the 17th over but I was still able to be myself and express myself,” said Yadav.

“I really loved it because I have done it in the IPL (Indian Premier League) as well. I just backed myself and enjoyed it.”

AFP

'FOURMIDABLE' FIELD

Premier League's top four hopefuls primed for tense race

London, United Kingdom - Desperate to close the gap on Manchester City and Liverpool at the top of the Premier League, Chelsea, Tottenham, Arsenal and Manchester United have spent the close season aggressively pursuing new recruits with varying degrees of success.

All four have little margin for error if they are to have any hope of rivaling champions City and perennial contenders Liverpool in the title race. But even if the top two pull away once more, another tight race is expected for the final two lucrative places in the Champions League.

Here is a look at how the battle for the top four could shape up.

Chelsea

Charged with ensuring Chelsea's new era gets off to a flying start, Blues boss Thomas Tuchel has showed signs of feeling the heat during his club's hectic summer.

With former owner Roman Abramovich's lieutenants all swept away as part of the housecleaning at Stamford Bridge, Tuchel took on more responsibility as the German worked with new co-owner Todd Boehly on overhauling his squad.

Raheem Sterling became Chelsea's first signing of the Boehly era after a £47.5 million (\$57.8 million) move from Manchester City.

The Blues paid £33 million for Napoli's Kalidou Koulibaly and are reportedly close to a £50 million deal for Brighton's Marc Cucurella.

Manchester United

Erik ten Hag's first pre-season as United manager has been overshadowed by Ronaldo's demand to leave Old Trafford.

The studious Ten Hag is said to have impressed his squad with his attention to detail and intense



Gabriel Martinelli of Arsenal is challenged by Kai Havertz of Chelsea during their Florida Cup match at Camping World Stadium in Orlando, Florida, last month (AFP)

training sessions since arriving from Ajax in May.

But the Dutchman's ability to lift United from the depths of their dismal sixth-place finish last season will hinge on how he handles the fall-out from Ronaldo's bombshell.

The Portugal striker wants to join a club in the Champions League and missed United's pre-season tour to Thailand and Australia for "family reasons".

Adding to Ten Hag's woes, United have found it impossible to land his top target - Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong.

tralia for "family reasons".

Adding to Ten Hag's woes, United have found it impossible to land his top target - Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong.

Spurs and Arsenal

In north London, Tottenham and Arsenal have been engaged in a frenzied arms race after their battle for local supremacy reached a dramatic conclusion last season.

Tottenham knocked Arsenal out of the top four in the penultimate game of the season after reeling in Mikel Arteta's side with a blistering run that included a 3-0 win over the Gunners.

Antonio Conte's response to achieving what he described as a "miracle" in qualifying for the Champions League was to demand Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy loosen the purse strings, a request which has so far yielded the signings of Richarlison, Yves Bissouma, Djed Spence, Ivan Perisic and Fraser Forster.

Arsenal have bounced back from the bitter disappointment at how last season ended by splashing over £100 million in new signings.

Arteta raided his old club Manchester City for Brazil striker Gabriel Jesus and Ukraine defender Oleksandr Zinchenko in deals worth a combined £75 million.

Fabio Vieira, a £34 million signing from Porto, arrives heralded as a potential future star.

AFP

Premier League clubs to stop taking knee before every match

London, United Kingdom - English Premier League football players said Wednesday they will no longer take the knee before every match in the upcoming season, confining the anti-racism gesture to selected games.

"We have decided to select significant moments to take the knee during the season to highlight our unity against all forms of racism, and in so doing we continue to show solidarity for a common cause," club captains said in

a Premier League statement.

The league said it supported the captains' decision, and would elevate anti-racism messaging as part of its "No Room for Racism" campaign - words that already feature on players' sleeves.

Premier League players began taking the knee at the start of every game in June 2020, when the season resumed following a Covid shutdown, a month after the killing in the United States of

We have decided to select significant moments to take the knee during the season

CLUB CAPTAINS

George Floyd. Ex-NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick started kneeling to

protest against racial injustice in 2016, and the gesture has become a familiar sight across a range of sports since Floyd's murder by a US police officer.

But several Premier League players have said the gesture was losing its impact - and some right-wing politicians in Britain have criticised its identification with the Black Lives Matter protest movement.

Wilfried Zaha, a black striker for Crystal Palace, was an early

dissident, labelling the gesture "degrading" and opting to stand instead.

Last season, Chelsea's white defender Marcos Alonso decided to stand and point instead to the anti-racism badge on his shirt sleeve. Alonso's then teammate Romelu Lukaku said football had to take "stronger" action in the fight against racism, with abuse still rife against black footballers on social media.

AFP



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah takes the knee before a match

Ronaldo's early exit from Man United game 'unacceptable', says boss Ten Hag

London, United Kingdom - Erik ten Hag said it was "unacceptable" for Cristiano Ronaldo and other Manchester United players to leave Old Trafford before the end of Sunday's friendly against Rayo Vallecano.

After taking a strong team to Oslo to face Atletico Madrid on Saturday, United wrapped up their pre-season preparations against another Spanish side the following day.

United drew 1-1 with Rayo at Old Trafford as star man Ronaldo made his first appearance of pre-season, playing the first 45 minutes.

The 37-year-old missed the pre-season tour of Thailand and Australia due to a family issue, and the wantaway forward was pictured with Diogo Dalot leaving Sunday's game before full-time.

Ten Hag did not speak to the media after the match but has now expressed his annoyance to broadcaster Viaplay.

"There were many more (as



Cristiano Ronaldo

I tell them that it's unacceptable, that we are a team, a squad and that you should stay until the end

ERIK TEN HAG

well as Ronaldo) who went home," the United boss said.

"This is unacceptable for everyone," he said. "I tell them that it's unacceptable, that we are a team, a squad and that you should stay until the end."

Ten Hag will take charge of his first competitive match as United manager on Sunday, when they face Brighton at home in the Premier League.

Abused on Twitter

Ronaldo and team-mate Harry Maguire have received the most Twitter abuse of any Premier

League players, a report published Tuesday has found.

Analysis by British media regulator Ofcom of 2.3 million tweets in the first half of last season found nearly 60,000 abusive posts, affecting seven in 10 top-flight players. Half of that abuse was directed at just 12 individuals - eight from United.

Twitter was chosen due to its popularity with players, and because it makes data available for research but the study does not take into account the safeguards that are in place.

Ofcom is preparing to regulate technology companies under new Online Safety laws aimed at protecting users.

"These findings shed light on a dark side to the beautiful game," Ofcom group director for broadcasting and online content Kevin Bakhurst said. "Online abuse has no place in sport, nor in wider society, and tackling it requires a team effort."

AFP

Free home delivery & timely service

oman OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

Oasis Water Co. SAOC,
PO Box 817, Ruwail 124,
Sultanate of Oman,
www.omanoasis.com

CALL TOLL-FREE
800 71 222
or GSM: 9275 5522

Winner of
His Majesty's Cup Award
in 2012 & 2013
for Best Five Factories

C.R. No.: 1365452

mai alkaline

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

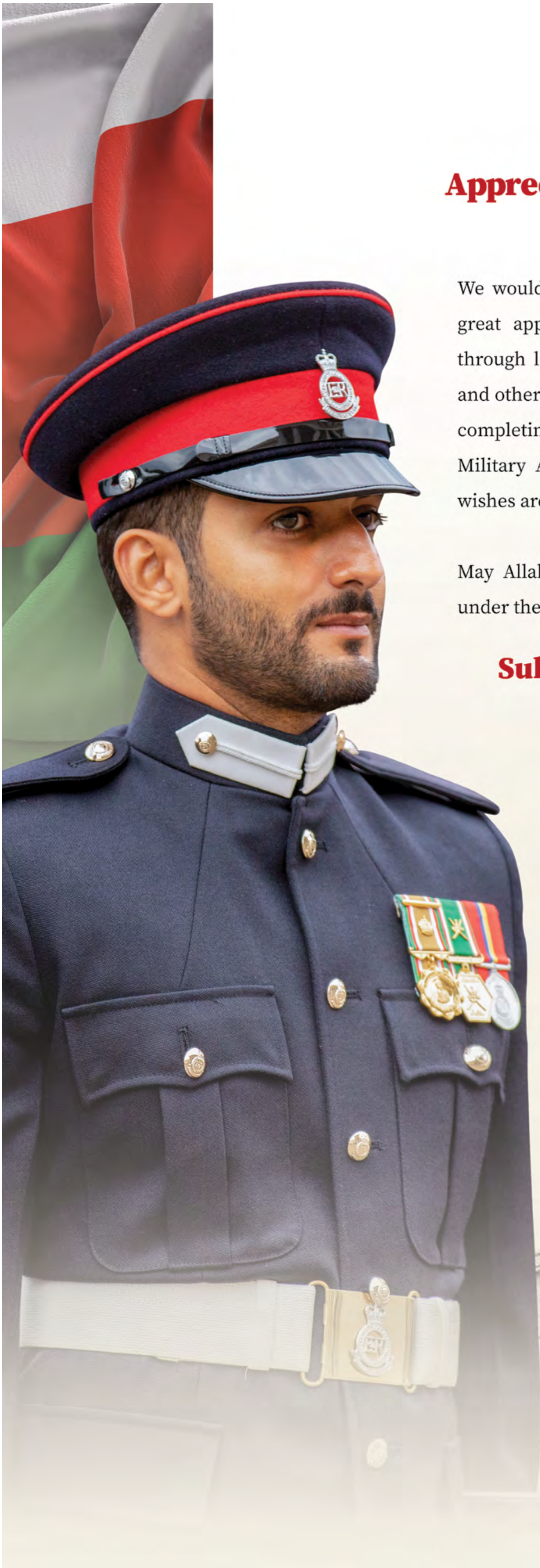
HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

pH 9.1 to 9.5

Toll-free
800 71 222 or
9275 5522

C.R. No.: 1365452



Appreciation For Felicitations

We would like to express our sincere thanks and great appreciation to all who congratulated us through local newspapers, social media networks and other means of publication, on the occasion of completing the training program at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Your greetings and wishes are highly appreciated.

May Allah help us all to serve our country well under the wise leadership of His Majesty

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

may Allah protect him

Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said

NEW. *arrivals*



OMAN AVENUES MALL, AL KHUWAIR, MUSCAT ☎ 22 060 999

🌐📷📱📺 MARINAHOMEINTERIORS

MARINA
H O M E