

Omran to set up tourism complex in S Sharqiyah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran) has invited bids to establish a tourist complex in South Sharqiyah as part of its mandate to develop tourism and increase national income.

Companies are invited to submit a proposal for design and implementation of the tourism services complex in the Suwayh area of the governorate. The deadline for bid submission is June 22.

Omran, in cooperation with Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, is also developing several tourist destinations in Dhofar.

Commenting on the upcoming tourism projects, H E Mohamed al Mahrrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, tweeted, "Tourist service facilities will be established in Suwayh area in South Sharqiyah and in Shanna in the wilayat of Mahout, Al Wusta governorate. Soon similar facilities will be announced in Dhofar."

According to the minister, the ministry's plan to build diverse tourism infrastructure in various governorates is being steadily implemented.

Last month, Omran signed a cooperation agreement with the office of the Governor of South Sharqiyah to develop a number of tourism projects in different locations in the governorate.

According to the agreement, Omran will provide technical support and supervision for the implementation of projects that will be developed in several phases in tourist destinations in the governorate.

The first phase includes the development of a park in the Suwayh area, on an area of more than 65,000sqm. Another park will be developed in Al Ashkharah, spread over 14,000sqm.

The two parks will provide a variety of tourism and entertainment facilities, including dining areas, retail outlets, children's playgrounds, and camping sites.

WEATHER WATCH			PRAYER TIMINGS	
	Max	Min		
Abu Dhabi	43	28	Fajr	3.53am
Doha	39	27	Sunrise	5.20am
Kuwait City	44	32	Duhr	12.11pm
Manama	40	29	Asr	3.29pm
Muscat	38	29	Maghrib	6.57pm
Riyadh	45	27	Isha	8.19pm

Oman marks Gulf Youth Day, honours 42

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY), celebrated Gulf Youth Day, which is observed June 6.

The event was presided over by H E Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harassi, Minister of Information.

A statement issued by MCSY, said, 'This day honours and celebrates the creative and distinguished Gulf youth, and reiterates the belief in the pioneering role of youth in the advancement of nations.'

At the event, 42 youth were honoured for excelling in various sports and sectors.

Hilal bin Saif al Siyabi, Director General of Youth Affairs in MCSY, said that Oman believes in the vital role of youth in continuing the nation-building process for a renewed renaissance and setting aspirations and hopes for a brighter future.



"We dedicate this day to celebrate athletes; to honour our Omani youth athletes with Olympic, international and continental achievements. We also congratulate all the athletes who have local, Gulf and Arab-level

achievements," Siyabi said.

Salim al Kaabi, one of the 42 honoured, said, "Today, I was honoured in the category of innovation. Thank you for this recognition. I congratulate all the Omani youth who have made

achievements in their respective fields." Kaabi developed an ecofriendly varnish from frankincense called Lubanium.

The list of honourees included Nibras al Shukaili, who received Apex Media's Woman of the

Year Award in the Young Achiever category 2021, Razan al Kalbani, who obtained a patent for production of a natural material that absorbs X-rays, and Hajar al Azriya for a sustainable biofuel extracted from algae.

Go First commences Muscat-Kochi direct service

Muscat - In line with its vision to strengthen international connectivity between India and the Middle East, Go First (formerly GoAir) announced the commencement of direct flights between Kochi to Muscat starting June 2, 2022.

The new service between Muscat and Kochi will offer connectivity and convenient travel options to blue collar workers and migrant working class passengers flying abroad for employment, a press release stated.

Speaking on the development, Kaushik Khona, CEO of Go First, said, "As we eventually come out of the pandemic, we are pleased to strengthen our in-



ternational presence and commence operations between Kochi and Kuwait as well as Kochi and Muscat. We believe that the situation is improving,

and we are hopeful that this will further ease travel between India and the Middle East."

On the occasion, Shyamaprasad Kallat, general

manager of Mezzoon Travel, said, "India is a very important partner country for Oman. We feel that the relationship between India and Oman is so strong that the

air connectivity has to expand more. With demand for travel returning and countries lifting restrictions, we are pleased to announce the flights from Muscat to Kochi. We are excited to further grow and give passengers more options to travel."

He added that the direct route will enable tourism between the two cities and strengthen direct airlinks between Oman and Kerala.

"We are grateful for the support we have received from the authorities in Oman and India. The airline will remain committed to serving the market. We are extremely pleased to represent Go First here in Oman," Kallat said.

Namaa Group Strategic sponsor of Oman Electricity and Energy Conference



Muscat, 6 June 2022: As Oman's power and energy sectors are undergoing a major shift towards the use of renewable energy sources while adopting innovations and technological advancements to ensure overall efficiency to meet rising power demand, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Power Talks and Energy Conference under the sponsorship of Nama Group will look into the several emerging challenges that the sectors are facing.

During the event, which will be held from June 6 to 8 at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, the challenges, plans, strategies, solutions and outlook will be discussed and presented by top regional power and energy industry experts and policymakers.

The event's Technical Committee, represented by prominent officials from Nama Group, Ministry of Energy and Minerals,

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), OQ, Majan Electricity Company, Tanweer, Muscat Electricity Distribution Company and Al Shawamikh Oil Services, will provide direction that will offer a meaningful platform and an opportunity to discourse, share ideas, and build collaboration amid a swiftly evolving energy landscape.

IEEE Power Talks, which will be inaugurated by Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani, Under-Secretary of Communications and IT, at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology features a two-day conference with main topics such as Oman Energy Market Outlook, Renewables and Energy Storage Solutions, The Future of Power Grids, Energy Management and Efficiency, Asset Management and Optimization alongside case studies and panel discussions.

It will feature renowned power and energy experts including Dr Amer al Hinai, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Scientific Research, SQU; Eng Abdulaziz S al Shidhani, Director General for Renewable Energy and Hydrogen — Ministry of Energy and Minerals; Yaqoob bin Saif al Kiyumi, CEO of Oman Power & Water Procurement Company; Dr Ralf Blumenthal, SVP and Head of Grid Software Middle East — Siemens and Dr Fahd Hashiesh, Global Director, Renewable Energy Centre of Excellence — Air Products.

The event is organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and supported by Oman Society of Engineers. Nama Group is the event Strategic Partner and Schneider Electric the Sustainability Partner, while the sponsor lineup includes Siemens, Solar Wadi, Safe Line and Fortescue Future Industries.

Over 500 wild saplings planted as part of national drive in Nizwa

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Commemorating World Environment Day observed on June 5, the Environment Authority (EA), represented by the Environment Department in Dakhliyah governorate, planted more than 500 wild saplings on Monday.

A statement issued by EA said, 'The Environment Department in Nizwa, implemented the second phase of planting Omani wild trees in a public site designated for cultivation, with wide community participation.'

Issa bin Abdullah al Yahmadi, director of the Environment Department in Dakhliyah governorate, said, "More than 500 saplings of sidr and ghaf have been planted."



The initiative was part of an ongoing national drive. In January 2020, EA in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman, launched an initiative to plant 10mn saplings of indigenous tree species in the next ten years

'The initiative aims to increase

green spaces, reduce desertification, and use treated sewage water to irrigate these trees,' a statement said.

The wild tree species in the ongoing drive will include ghaf, al samar and sidr, for which nurseries are being set up.

Search continues for Omani missing in Turkey

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Turkish authorities are still searching for an Omani national who lost his balance and fell into a river near the city of Ayder in northern Turkey. The Embassy of Oman in Turkey informed about the incident on Friday.

Fawzi al Rawahi went to Turkey with a group of friends last week. The sultanate's embassy in Ankara on Sunday denied rumours circulating in social media about a shirt worn by Rawahi being found. 'Search is still going on to find him,' the embassy stated.

'The embassy denies what is



being circulated on some social media sites about finding a shirt worn by the missing citizen in the river. The shirt is among his personal belongings in the hotel,' the embassy said.

'Efforts have been exerted

by civil defence teams, the police and the Turkish army to search for the missing individual. The embassy calls on citizens to follow safety guidelines for tourists in Turkey to avoid accidents.'

Youth travel to Europe to promote Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A group of Omanis has set out to promote Oman abroad by meeting people at busy tourist sites in Europe and distributing brochures on the sultanate's diverse tourism offerings.

Ten young Omanis from Salalah Traveller, which was established in 2020, embarked on a tour of two European countries on May 27. "With the support of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, our group is touring France and Norway to promote Oman, especially Dhofar. Team members have distributed brochures at famous tourist attractions, including the Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum and Avenue des Champs-Élysées in France," said Asim Omar ba Hajjaj, a member of the team.

The team is currently visiting Norway and will complete the trip on June 12. In 2021, the team had undertaken a similar trip to promote Oman in Turkey, Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia and Albania.

Elaborating on the goals of the team, Hajjaj said, "We hold lectures with the help of local community organisations to raise awareness on tourist sites and facilities in various governorates of the sultanate."

The team also organises monthly trips in the sultanate. "Partic-



(Supplied photos)

Team members have distributed brochures at famous tourist attractions, including the Eiffel Tower and Louvre Museum, in France

ASIM OMAR BA HAJJAJ

ipants visit plains, wadis and mountains. We mostly choose an unexplored site. Additionally, we organise hiking, swimming and mountaineering events."

Hajjaj informed that careful consideration is given to deciding



the number of people for each trip and the activities included in it based on the terrain of the area. "Dhofar is one of the best tourist destinations in the sultanate, but it needs more projects to attract more tourists," he said.

"We need financial support from private companies to continue promoting Omani tourism. We will continue to conduct trips outside the sultanate to promote tourism and attract tourists to the sultanate."

Over 47,000 register for admissions for higher studies

Muscat - The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has completed a two-month registration phase, which started in April.

A total of 47,271 students of General Education Diploma (GED) have registered in the electronic admission system for the academic year 2022/2023.

Of the total who registered, 24,050 are male and 23,221 female. 'As many as 42,024 students have made their initial study programme choices,' HEAC stated.

The centre is preparing for the admissions stage, which is as important as the initial registration. An official of HEAC explained that the admission dates will coincide with the announcement of GED results for the academic year 2022/2023.

HEAC will announce the number of seats allocated for the next academic year after approval by higher education institutions. The results of the screening will be announced on July 1.

Students develop drone to sanitise public areas efficiently

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Four students of University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Shinas have developed a drone to sanitise public places.

Mohammed Abdullah al Muqbali, Mazen bin Rashid al Badi, Samah Marhoon al Maktoumi and Sumaya Fahd al Maamari, students of electrical engineering, have made use of drone technology to disinfect public areas in a short time.

"The idea behind the project is to disinfect public places efficiently to protect people from direct contact with unclean surfaces. The technology helps



(Supplied photo)

The technology helps sanitise public spaces more quickly than manual means

SUMAYA FAHD
AL MAAMARI

sanitise public spaces more quickly than manual means," Sumaya said.

She informed that the programme can be automated by specifying points on a map, which results in saving time. "The objec-

tive of our project is to keep pace with the Fourth Industrial Revolution in line with Oman Vision 2040."

The programme took two months to develop, from assembly, installation to finally execu-

tion. The team is currently working on developing drone technology for other tasks, including transportation of goods and survey of residential areas to facilitate planning and development of modern cities.



(ONA)

Oman, EU discuss Schengen visa waiver

Muscat - The third round of political consultations between senior officials of Oman and the European Union's External Action Service was held at the Foreign Ministry in Muscat on Monday.

The Omani side was headed by H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin

Issa al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry, and Enrique Mora Benavente, Deputy Secretary General of the European Union's External Action Service.

The talks reviewed bilateral relations between Oman and the European Union (EU) and ways

to enhance and develop these to serve the common interests of both sides.

The two sides also discussed exemption of Schengen visa for Omani citizens and exchanged views on regional and international developments of common interest.

MUSCAT DAILY IMPACT



Paid parking signboards in Ruwi creating confusion

MUNICIPALITY TAKES ACTION, COVERS PAID PARKING SIGNBOARDS

I live near Qaboos Mosque in Ruwi. I am glad and relieved that the paid parking signboards are now covered. Good job by Muscat Daily for highlighting the concerns of residents and thanks to Muscat Municipality for taking swift action and covering all the newly installed paid parking signboards. Areas near hospitals and mosques should have ample free parking (Received via email from Muscat Daily reader)



Many patients visit hospitals in emergency. They don't have time to look for a parking space or book through app or call 330.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (16 / 2022)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Description	Document Fee	Last date for inquires submission	Last date for obtaining Tender Docs.	Last date for Submission
34/2022/MM/ PA-8	Supply of Irrigation Materials (Specified for SMEs)	25/- OMR	26/06/2022	11/07/2022	17/07/2022
35/2022/MM/ PA-9	Supplying Water Suction Pumps	25/- OMR	26/06/2022	11/07/2022	17/07/2022

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

Website: www.mm.gov.om

MARKET WATCH

MSX30

4,135.00

Sensex

55,675.32

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs

202.15

Pakistani Rs

520.48

Bangladeshi taka

238.32

Philippines peso

137.44

Sri Lankan Rs

940.29

*Rates as on JUNE 6

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

US suspends solar panel tariffs

US President Joe Biden on Monday suspended tariffs for two years on solar panel imports from four countries and invoke a key power to compel domestic manufacture of clean energy technology, the White House said. The moves are aimed at boosting renewable capacity and combating climate change, a priority for the president whose green ambitions have met with mixed success. Duties will be lifted on certain solar parts from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam – but not China – as a "bridge" to ensure the United States has access to sufficient parts to meet electricity needs while domestic capacity scales up.

"Today's clean energy technologies are a critical part of the arsenal we must harness to lower energy costs for families, reduce risks to our power grid, and tackle the urgent crisis of a changing climate," the White House said in a fact sheet.

Oil hits \$120 on China boost



London, UK – Oil prices and global stock markets advanced on Monday, helped by an easing of Covid lockdowns in the world's second-biggest economy China.

Oil prices also extended recent gains as a pledge by OPEC and other major producers to boost output fell short of what markets hoped for.

Brent crude gained 0.6 per cent to reach at US\$120.5 per barrel in London on Monday, while US benchmark West Texas Intermediate increased 0.6 per cent to US\$119.6 per barrel.

"Despite OPEC+'s increased output, prices could remain elevated driven by the EU partial ban on Russian imports, the easing of covid restrictions in China and peak driving season in the United States," said Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor.

With supplies tight, Saudi Arabia has raised the price of the oil it sells to Asia.

Adding to the upbeat mood were comments from US commerce chief Gina Raimondo that she was considering lifting tariffs on some goods from China to help in the battle against inflation.

Eurozone stock markets climbed ahead of a European Central Bank meeting Thursday

when the ECB is set to draw a line under its massive bond-buying stimulus programme.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Wall Street also opened higher.

London's stock market, reopening after a British public holiday to mark Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, shrugged off news that embattled British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was Monday to face a confidence vote from MPs in his own conservative party.

Stocks "have started the week on a positive note buoyed by a strong US jobs report on Friday", said Scholar.

Oil and stock traders took



Bank Muscat to close down Kuwait branch by 2025

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Bank Muscat, the largest financial institution in Oman, on Monday announced that it is planning to complete the closure of its Kuwait branch by 2025.

'In accordance with the bank's strategic objectives of achieving long-term sustainable value, operational efficiency and business growth, both local and international; Bank Muscat would like to inform that it intends to gradually reduce the operations of its branch in Kuwait with the aim of complete closure of the branch by 2025,' Bank Muscat said in a disclosure submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange. It said, 'The bank takes this opportunity to express

its sincere thanks and gratitude to all the employees at its Kuwait branch, and is fully committed to provide banking services to the existing customers of the branch until the closure process is completed.'

In the meantime, Bank Muscat will work towards completion of all required procedures and meeting all obligations in this regard, in coordination and consultation with the relevant regulatory authorities, the bank added.

Bank Muscat noted that its Kuwait branch constitutes only about 0.5 per cent of the bank's total assets of RO13bn.

'The bank will keep the market informed in the future of any material developments in this regard,' Bank Muscat said.

Oman hosts IMF staff mission

Muscat – The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) and the Ministry of Finance, is hosting experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for meetings that will take place from June 5 to June 12.

The meetings between IMF delegation and Omani authorities are taking place in the context of preparing for Article IV consultations of the IMF Membership Agreement.

The IMF delegation will meet a number of officials from the CBO, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, Oman Investment Authority, the National Center for Statistics and Information, as well as other entities.

This visit aims at informing the IMF of the economic and financial situation of Oman and providing them with the required data in preparation for the Article IV consultations.



During the meetings, the IMF team will discuss a number of topics with officials and specialists related to the latest macro-economic developments and its expected prospects, in addition to a number of topics related to financial and monetary policies and government measures as part of its Medium-Term Fiscal Plan, including the financial adjustment measures.

The IMF conducts such visits to follow up and implement its primary responsibilities to supervise the international monetary system, follow-up economic and financial policies in its 190 member states, and monitoring potential risks that could threaten financial stability. This allows the IMF to give appropriate recommendations on the monetary and fiscal policies in a way that enhances international financial and economic stability.

ONA

MSX rises 0.28% amid thin trading

Our Correspondent

Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange rose 0.28 per cent on Monday to close at 4,135.00 points.

The gains in the main index were supported by Financial and Services indices which grew 0.22 per cent and 1.0 per cent, respectively. Industrial Index, however, decreased 0.16 per cent on Monday. MSX Sharia Index also inched down 0.25 per cent.

Total trading volumes decreased by 14.3 per cent to 8.71mn shares against 10.17mn shares traded on Sunday. Market turnover decreased 3.7 per cent to RO1.23mn compared with RO1.29mn recorded in the previous trading session.

The market breadth of the MSX remained neutral with 14 advancing stocks to 14 decliners. As many as 16 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers for the day were Sembcorp Salalah (9.86 per cent), Barka Desalination (2.17 per cent), Phoenix Power (2.04 per cent), Al Jazeera Steel Products (1.68 per cent) and Ominvest (1.3 per cent). Top losers were Sohar Power (-24.4 per cent), Al Batinah Power (-2.04 per cent), Al Anwar Ceramics (-1.36 per cent), Al Anwar Investment (-1.15 per cent) and Aman Real Estate Investment Fund (-1.1 per cent).



Global food prices slightly fall again but wheat soars

Paris, France – World food prices fell slightly for the second consecutive month in May but wheat prices rose again as Russia's war in Ukraine rages on and India banned exports of the commodity, a UN agency said.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent food prices to a record high in March as both countries are major exporters of agricultural goods, sparking fears of a global hunger crisis.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index fell 0.6 per cent in May from April as the prices of dairy products and vegetable oils dropped. Prices, however, were still 56.2 per cent higher than a year ago.

Wheat prices, meanwhile, rose by 5.6 per cent in May compared to the previous month.

They "rose in response to an



export ban announced by India and concerns over crop conditions in several leading exporting countries as well as reduced production prospects in Ukraine due to the war," the FAO said.

Citing inflation and its own food security needs, India banned last month any new wheat exports without government approval after the hottest March on record – blamed on climate change – hit harvests.

Vegetable oil prices fell 3.5 per cent in part due to Indonesia lifting an export ban on palm oil, the FAO said.

AFP

Elon Musk accuses Twitter of withholding data, says may withdraw bid

New York, US – Elon Musk threatened Monday to withdraw his bid to buy Twitter, accusing it of failing to provide data on fake accounts, in the latest twist in the Tesla billionaire's push to acquire the social network.

Twitter has committed "a clear material breach" of its "obligations under the merger agreement and Mr Musk reserves ... his right not to consummate the transaction," according to a document filed with securities regulators.

The filing marks an escalation of Musk's prior statements that have highlighted fake accounts as a threat to his proposed US\$44bn deal to take over Twitter.

Musk has said that the real number of bots may be four times higher than Twitter estimates.

Bots can be used on social



media to spread false news or create a distorted impression of how widely information is being consumed and shared.

Twitter chief executive Parag Agrawal has said that fewer than five percent of accounts active on any given day at Twitter are

bots, but that analysis cannot be replicated externally due to the need to keep user data private.

Musk has been dismissive of Twitter's responses and reiterated that stance in Monday's filing.

To execute the deal, Musk "must have a complete and accurate understanding of the very core of Twitter's business model – its active user base," said the filing.

"Mr Musk believes Twitter is transparently refusing to comply with its obligations under the merger agreement, which is causing further suspicion that the company is withholding the requested data due to concern for what Mr Musk's own analysis of that data will uncover."

Shares of Twitter fell 3.6 per cent to US\$38.70 in early trading.

AFP

UAE's Masdar to develop 4,000MW clean energy projects in Azerbaijan

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Masdar, one of the world's leading renewable energy companies, has signed implementation agreements with the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan to develop clean and renewable energy projects in the country with a combined confirmed capacity of 4,000 megawatts (MW) as an exclusive concession.

Under the agreements, Masdar also has the right to develop an additional 6,000MW as a second phase, bringing the total production capacity of these projects to 10,000 MW - the largest such signing in Azerbaijan's history.

Masdar signed two implementation agreements, one relating to the development of onshore wind projects with a capacity of 1,000MW, and 1,000MW of solar photovoltaic (PV) projects. The second agreement covers integrated offshore wind and green hydrogen projects with a capacity of 2,000MW. The implementation agreements were signed by Parviz Shahbazov, Azerbaijan's Minister of Energy, and Fawaz al Muharrami, acting executive director of Masdar Clean Energy, at an event in Shusha, held as a special session of Baku Energy Week.

Dr Sultan bin Ahmed al Jaber, UAE's Minister of Industry and



Advanced Technology and managing director and chairman of Masdar, said, "The 4,000MW of renewable energy projects announced today reinforce the close relationship between the United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan and are a testament to our shared commitment to progressive climate action. These clean energy projects also demonstrate the valuable economic opportunities of the energy transition and will contribute to the energy diversification and energy security of Azerbaijan. Today's announcement also underscores the UAE and Masdar's position as a global leader in renewable en-

ergy, as we progress our strategy toward a portfolio of at least 100GW globally."

Shahbazov said, "Today we are going to sign mega projects with Masdar in accordance with the green energy course of the President of Azerbaijan, which defines renewable energy sources as a strategic priority for the country's development. These 4,000MW solar, wind and green hydrogen projects, being the largest renewable energy production capacity in the region and in our energy history, provide ample opportunities for the development of Azerbaijan as a green growth country, green energy producer and ex-

porter, as well as allow for involving multibillion-dollar green investment." The agreement for onshore wind and solar projects includes measures to study and strengthen the network and implement processes for the export of electricity. The second agreement includes measures to create wind power for production and export purposes, decarbonisation, hydrogen production and export.

At the same event, Masdar also signed an MoU with the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) for the joint development of renewable energy sources.

WAM



Global tourist arrivals tripled in first quarter: UN

Madrid, Spain - International tourist arrivals tripled in the first quarter compared with the same period in 2021, with Europe leading the rebound as Covid restrictions were eased, the UN's tourism agency said Monday.

In the first three months of 2022, there were 117mn global tourist arrivals, up from 41mn in the same period a year earlier, with the figures showing an increase of 182 per cent, the Madrid-based UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) said.

Although the figure remained 61 per cent lower than the first quarter of 2019, a year before the pandemic, it showed tourism was continuing to recover "at a strong pace" as "restrictions ease and confidence returns", it said.

"Of the extra 76mn international arrivals for the first three months, about 47mn were recorded in March, showing that the recovery is gathering pace."

The increase was particularly notable in Europe, which welcomed almost four times as many arrivals as in 2021, an increase of 280 per cent.

Strong growth was also seen in the Americas, where arrivals more than doubled (up 117 per cent) and in the Middle East, up 132 per cent. "The gradual recovery is expected to continue throughout 2022, as more destinations ease or lift travel restrictions and pent-up demand is unleashed," the agency said, pointing to "a significant increase in flight reservations".

By June 2, 45 destinations (two thirds of which were in Eu-

rope) no longer had Covid-related restrictions in place, while in Asia, an increasing number of destinations had begun easing restrictions. However, the UNWTO retained a prudent outlook for the coming months, given the risks linked to the "challenging economic environment" and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The Russian offensive on Ukraine seems to have had a limited direct impact on overall results so far," it said.

But it was having "major economic repercussions globally" by exacerbating fuel and energy costs "which results in higher transport and accommodation costs for the tourism sector" that could weigh on the sector's recovery, it warned.

AFP

New car sales in Russia down 83.5% in May

Moscow, Russia - New car sales in Russia sank by 83.5 per cent year-on-year in May, industry data showed on Monday, as the effects of unprecedented Western sanctions hit the country's economy and consumers.

Only 24,268 cars and light commercial vehicles were sold in Russia in May, said the Association of European Businesses in Moscow.

The collapse in sales in May came after a 78.5 per cent drop in April.

Sales of the country's most popular and affordable brand, Lada, whose AvtoVAZ manufacturer was majority-owned by the Nissan-Renault group, fell 84 per



cent to 6,000 units year-on-year. The West slapped Russia with debilitating sanctions after the start of Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine in February.

In May, Renault handed over its local assets to the Russian government, marking the first major nationalisation since the

onset of sanctions. Renault controlled 68 per cent of AvtoVAZ but was under pressure to pull out of the country.

Numerous carmakers have stopped sales of their cars or parts to Russia including Audi, Honda, Jaguar and Porsche.

Makes that have halted Russian production include BMW, Ford, Hyundai, Mercedes, Volkswagen and Volvo.

Last week the statistics service said the country's industrial output shrank for the first time since the start of the military campaign, falling by 1.6 per cent in April compared to the same period last year.

Car production was hit particularly hard, falling by 85.4 per cent year-on-year.

Faced with a shortage of imported parts in factories, authorities eased safety and emission standards for locally produced cars in May - including dropping the requirement for airbags.

AFP

ian production include BMW, Ford, Hyundai, Mercedes, Volkswagen and Volvo.

Last week the statistics service said the country's industrial output shrank for the first time since the start of the military campaign, falling by 1.6 per cent in April compared to the same period last year.

Car production was hit particularly hard, falling by 85.4 per cent year-on-year.

Faced with a shortage of imported parts in factories, authorities eased safety and emission standards for locally produced cars in May - including dropping the requirement for airbags.

AFP

India's central bank says no proposal to replace Mahatma Gandhi's picture on banknotes

Mumbai, India - The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday clarified that it has no proposal to replace the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi's picture on currency notes.

Referring to media reports that claimed that the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank of India were considering a proposal to also use images of famous personalities like Rabindranath Tagore and APJ Abdul Kalam on banknotes, the RBI clarified that there is no such proposal.

"There are reports in certain sections of the media that the Reserve Bank of India is considering changes to the existing currency and banknotes by replacing the face of Mahatma Gandhi with that of



others. It may be noted that there is no such proposal in the Reserve Bank," Yogesh Dayal, chief general manager, said in a statement.

The RBI's statement comes a day after reports appeared in several publications claiming that the central bank and the Finance Ministry were considering a proposal to use the image of some other famous

personalities alongside Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation.

The reports had claimed that new series of banknotes of some denominations would be released with watermark images of Rabindranath Tagore and the late former president of India APJ Abdul Kalam.

ANI

Russia braces for economic upheaval amid sanctions

Moscow, Russia - At his garage in the south of Moscow, 35-year-old mechanic Ivan is starting to worry. With billions of dollars in financial reserves and money still coming in from oil and gas exports, Russia has yet to feel the full impact of the barrage of Western sanctions imposed over its offensive in Ukraine.

But Ivan sees storm clouds on the horizon.

The foreign parts he needs to fix his clients' cars are getting harder to find, and prices have jumped by at least 30 per cent after many brands halted exports to Russia.

"We're running out of stock. At some point, there won't be anything left," said Ivan, who declined to give his last name when speaking to international media.

"People who have foreign cars are worried, they are wondering what to do in the future," he said.

Faced with a shortage of imported parts in factories, authorities eased safety and emission standards for locally produced cars in May - including dropping

the requirement for airbags.

President Vladimir Putin has been defiant in the face of Western sanctions, insisting that the Russian economy will emerge stronger, and pointing to "chaotic measures" in Europe that have boosted global energy prices.

Officials say the damage from sanctions will be temporary, with the economy expected to shrink by eight per cent this year and then bounce back to growth in 2024.

VAT points to spending drop

But Russia is heavily reliant on imports of everything from manufacturing equipment to consumer goods, and economists believe the worst effects of the sanctions are still to come.

Now almost 100 days into the conflict, officials and ordinary Russians are reporting a litany of problems, including shortages of everything from paper to medicine.

Authorities have stopped releasing key data, making it difficult



cult to assess the impact of sanctions.

But the few available economic indicators point to significant problems.

Strict capital controls, high energy prices and a collapse in imports have led to a surge in the ruble, prompting Russia's central bank to slash its key rate last week in a bid to rein in the cur-

rency.

Inflation meanwhile hit 17.8 per cent year-on-year in April, the highest for 20 years.

And revenues from domestic value-added or sales tax collapsed by more than a half in April, VAT fees on imported goods dropping by a third compared to the same month in 2021.

"In April, the revenues of the overwhelming majority of companies in Russia took a hit," Andrei Grachev, head of tax practice at Birch Legal, told The Bell, an independent Russian business website.

"This didn't merely affect those who ceased operations in Russia, but also those who continued to work but lost clients

and profits."

That hit is evident on the streets of Moscow, which are now lined with shuttered shops: from McDonald's and Starbucks to clothing retailers H&M and Zara.

Central bank chief Elvira Nabiullina warned in April that problems were emerging "in all sectors, both in large and small companies."

Textile manufacturers are having trouble buying buttons, while paper producers are struggling with a shortage of bleaching agents, Nabiullina said.

Prices for white paper have skyrocketed and some businesses in Moscow have started printing out receipts on unbleached beige paper.

The aviation and tourism sectors have been hit especially hard. Direct air links with Europe have been severed and Russians are unable to use their bank cards abroad.

Authorities are trying to convince Russians to holiday at home, but the country's balmy

Black Sea coast has become hard to reach due to the closure of airspace in the south over the fighting in Ukraine.

Russian Railways has launched additional train services to compensate for the absence of flights.

For now, the surge in oil and gas prices prompted by the Ukraine conflict is helping to keep the Russian economy afloat, despite the tens of thousands out of work or put on leave and paid a reduced salary while factories halt production for lack of foreign components.

Chris Weafer, the founder of consultancy Macro-Advisory and a long-time observer of the Russian economy, said sanctions mainly hit the financial system in March and April.

"What will start in the next few months are pay cuts," Weafer told AFP.

"There will be a drop in income, and that combined with inflation will cut very deeply into people's disposable income."

AFP

Roadshow to help connect O&G suppliers

In keeping with its robust commitment to In-Country Value (ICV) creation, Business Gateways International (BGI) has launched a multi-city roadshow called 'Meet-JSRS' spanning Oman and the United Arab Emirates as part of a vigorous drive to engage directly with suppliers eager for procurement opportunities linked to the Omani Oil & Gas industry by obtaining the JSRS Certification.

On May 31, Ibri played host to the inaugural stop of the 13-city roadshow, that will potentially cover hundreds of Omani SME, Large and International suppliers over the course of the summer season, a press release said.

The next leg of the roadshow will take place on June 9 in Muscat at the Centara Muscat Hotel in Ghala Heights.

Invitations have gone out to registered members of the JSRS network encouraging them to be part of an event that will have a game-changing impact for their businesses.

The initiative 'Meet-JSRS' exemplifies the ongoing efforts of



Business Gateways International (BGI) to help the vast and diverse suppliers unlock procurement opportunities offered by Oil & Gas operators and leading oilfield contractors.

Certification under the Joint Supplier Registration System (JSRS) is a compliance prerequisite for national and international contractors or vendors to qualify to bid for oilfield tenders or procurement requests.

It's a process designed to ensure a transparent, equitable and credible procurement system governing all oilfield contracts.

With resurgent international oil prices promising to usher in a fresh tide of investment inflows into Oman's hydrocarbon sector, BGI is eager to make sure that the suppliers community makes the most of the business opportunities that are expected to flow from these investments.

To this end, the national roadshow has been organised with the support of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the SMEs Development Authority (Riyada).



Vincent Maitre

OSFA welcomes new Swiss patron

The Oman Switzerland Friendship Association (OSFA) has announced their new patron from the Switzerland side - Vincent Maitre, serving member of the Swiss parliament.

Maitre described how his love for Oman began during a visit in 2014 where he experienced the true beauty and hospitality of the country. "It is my privilege to become patron for the Oman Switzerland Friendship Association and I would like to congratulate everyone involved, especially my predecessor, former president of the Swiss Federation, Adolf Ogi, for establishing this wonderful initiative.

It is important we nurture the positive momentum created by OSFA as it provides such a valuable platform to share and learn from our counterparts in key sectors, such as economy and trade, science and technology, health, tourism, education, culture, youth, and sport. I look forward to further developing my relationship with Oman and promoting the excellent work of the Friendship Association."

Current chairman of the Board of Directors of OSFA, Hani al Zubair expressed his greetings to Maitre adding that his close connection to the economically and culturally important region of Geneva could help encourage more members to join the Association. Zubair looks forward to welcoming their new patron - H E Sayyid Abdulla al Busaidy, to the Association's Business Forum in Muscat, in October.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds inaugurates new showrooms



Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 285 outlets across 10 countries, inaugurated its new showrooms in Makkam, Calicut (Kerala) and Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, (Odisha).

The Makkam showroom was inaugurated by Panakkad Sayyid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal, Kerala state president of the Indian Union Muslim League. M P Ahammed, Malabar Group chairman, Abdul Salam KP, vice chairman - Malabar Group, Shamlal Ahamed, managing director - International Operations, O Asher, managing director - India Operations, , senior man-

agement officials and well-wishers were also present at the event, a press release said.

The new showroom at Chandrasekharpur was inaugurated by Indian Film actor Sabyasachi Mishra, Sulochana Das, mayor of Bhubaneswar, Susant Rout, MLA (North Bhubaneswar), Anant Narayan Jena, MLA (Central Bhubaneswar) and Preetinanda Routray, corporator, BMC in the presence of senior management officials and other dignitaries.

The store spanning 6500 sq. ft, located near Chandrasekharpur Police Station, Bhubaneswar, provides the largest design variety as well as fair prices for jewellery with rea-

sonable making charges.

Ahammed said, " We are delighted to launch our newest stores, one being in my hometown Calicut and the other in Odisha at Chandrasekharpur. With every new store launch, we aim to be more accessible to our customers and cater to their every need.

Our stores will provide customers with a world-class shopping experience, superior craftsmanship and a wide variety of designs suitable for every occasion.

Our goal is to become the leading jewellery retail brand in the world in terms of both showroom count and sales."



Tech Mahindra opens innovation, technology development center

Muscat - Tech Mahindra, a leading provider of digital transformation, consulting and business re-engineering services and solutions, inaugurated an Innovation and Technology Development Center, in Muscat on Sunday.

The centre will cater to the telecom, oil and gas, BFSI (Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance), energy and utilities and public sector by leveraging Artificial Intelligence, Big Data & Analytics, Cloud and 5G technologies.

This is in line with Tech Mahindra's commitment to invest in upskilling and reskilling of the local Omani talent to take on

projects in Oman and around the world.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by H E Dr. Ali al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology at MTCIT, H E Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to Oman, and the top management team of Tech Mahindra led by its MD and CEO CP Gurnani.

H E Dr Shidhani said, "Developments like these are milestones in achieving the success we envision of being a competitive nation and one of the top countries in Digital Economy in the region. It also supports our talent, upskilling to compete in

the job market."

Gurnani said, "I believe the vision of Oman based on the pillars of People and Society, Economy and Development, and Governance and Institutional Performance will transform and enhance the country's economy. Tech Mahindra is pleased to play a part in this strategic narrative and support in building a resilient tomorrow for Oman, that thrives on growth and innovation, with a keen focus on empowering women."

"As a global organization, we are committed to honing talent across geographies, and our initiatives have been warmly embraced in Oman."

Indian school board organises 'Synergy 2022'

'Synergy', an annual event conducted by the Indian School Board for interacting with the members of the School Management Committees of Indian Schools across the sultanate was held to underscore their concerted commitment in serving community through the education of the young.

The programme was organised as part of the induction of the new members of the Management Committees of different Indian Schools. The ideas transpiring on the occasion would acquaint the newly inducted members with their roles and responsibilities and enable them to be effective social leaders in the cause of education. As for the existing members, 'Synergy' would give them an opportunity to rededicate themselves in their commitment to the voluntary service in the over-all development of the schools.

'Synergy 2022' was inaugu-



rated by Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, in the presence of vice chairman Syed Salman, Ashwini Sawrikar, finance director, and other esteemed members on the board. The board has

also launched an 'Integrated Recruitment Portal for Indian Schools' which is expected to streamline and facilitate staff recruitment processes in schools.

The chairman applauded the

phenomenal growth of the Indian Schooling system in Oman and thanked the yeomen services rendered by the management committees of the past and the present.

"The journey that began 47 years ago with 135 students and 7 teachers in a rented building has grown from strength to strength and today we have 21 Schools across the sultanate

with 40,000 students and 2,000 staff, the largest community school network with unique features that stand as a model to educationists around the world", Dr Manickam said.



Ominvest congratulates Injaz students for winning global award

As part of its corporate citizenship initiative to encourage entrepreneurship and support the growth of SMEs in the Sultanate of Oman, Ominvest held a congratulatory function at its headquarters for the founders of Bioplastics - an Injaz School-Student Company.

Ominvest and Injaz Oman applauded Neeam al Harrasi and Do'aa al Hashmi, the founders of Bioplastics, whose project secured fourth place out of 1800 other students from around the world at the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) 2022, a press release said.

For the past four years, Ominvest's partnership with Injaz Oman's Student Company Programme has not only empowered the youth of Oman to become future entrepreneurs but has also helped develop

start-ups and entrepreneurship projects through the establishment of outstanding training experiences that combine theoretical learning with real life application.

As an eco-friendly company, Bioplastics aligns with Ominvest's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) efforts. The business manufactures bioplastics that are made using natural materials, which makes it a great alternative to industrial plastics. This newly developed material will not only make the mass production of bioplastics affordable but also contribute to the wider goal of protecting the planet by putting a curb on plastic pollution.

Commending the founders of Bioplastics at the congratulatory function, Khalid Muhammad al Zubair, chairman of Injaz Oman,

said, "Neeam and Do'aa's pioneering achievement at ISEF has made us at Injaz Oman very proud. Injaz Oman's dedication and commitment to fostering entrepreneurial talents and the growth of SMEs in Oman has been exemplary.

"Our programmes have managed to support around 155,760 students so far, and we have received the 'Best Student Company' award at the regional level for three years in a row now. In our effort to develop the skills and abilities of Oman's youth and to motivate them to achieve their dreams, Injaz Oman has been working very closely with schools, universities and training centres all of which have been a fundamental part of the formula of Injaz Oman's success across the years."

Highlighting Ominvest's sup-

port of entrepreneurial pursuits in Oman, AbdulAziz al Balushi, CEO of Ominvest said, "At Ominvest, we are committed to fostering the growth of SMEs and entrepreneurship in the country. We encourage entrepreneurial projects by students, especially those that make a positive contribution to the environment or the society. Projects like Bioplastics have a significant potential to create such a desired scalable and sustainable impact. We are delighted to support projects that are aimed at preserving the environment using innovative methods such as Neeam and Do'aa's project and we wish them all the success."

Commenting on Neeam and Do'aa's ground-breaking project, Khaula al Harthy, CEO of Injaz Oman, said, "We are proud of our students and their incredible

achievement. To feature in the top four innovations in the field of science and technology at a forum that attracts more than a thousand students from around the world is an amazing feat. This achievement goes to show the capability of our students and proves that perseverance and hard work are essential for success.

We are keen on contributing to the development and enhancement of the skills and abilities of Oman's youth in the field of research and innovation. Empowering and enabling the next generation will lead to the development of a knowledge-based economy with innovation at the heart of it. We hope that this achievement will be the first of many, and an incentive to reach new heights at both the regional and international level."

Alizz Islamic Bank app well received

The new and improved Alizz Islamic Bank mobile banking application has been received with overwhelming success for its banking features and services offered to the users.

The app has been rated as the very best digital banking application among other mobile banking applications. The app is available on the Apple App Store, Google Play Store and Huawei Gallery Store and has been downloaded by users that have also rated the app based on its seamless user experience, a press release said.

Speaking about the update, Sayyida Nadira al Said, senior manager of Digital Banking at Alizz Islamic Bank, highlighted that the latest version of the mobile banking app features cutting edge mobile banking technologies including a new user interface and user experience which is visually attractive and convenient with an enhanced customer experience. The colours and the interface were selected based on the best international standards demonstrating the bank's leadership in innovative digital banking services.

Sayyida Nadira further said that among the important features added to the application are the useful shortcuts on the dashboard that enables users to monitor and execute recurring banking transactions without the need to go into many steps or clicks. These shortcuts enable users to save time while enjoying a host of smart solutions in the bilingual application.

Another valued added feature



Sayyida Nadira al Said

is the ability to easily and conveniently share the transfer slips with recipients following cash transfer operations by tapping the transfer icon. The application contains another exciting tool that enables user to search for and locate Alizz Islamic Bank branches and ATMs by tapping the 'Find Us' icon. Moreover, throughout the app, customers are offered the convenience of requesting for cheque books, credit cards and debit cards, with a seamless push notification feature to keep the customer in the loop about their requests.

Further, the bank has sustained its investment on the current digital platforms with strong focus and presence in fintech solutions. The bank's infrastructure has been developed to provide high quality customer service while fostering the culture of innovation and excellence. Through this approach, the number of the users of the mobile and internet banking services has doubled with an increase of 26% compared to last year.



KR Eshraqa felicitated by Ministry of Social Development

The Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) recently honoured Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa's contribution to social development activities and initiatives in the sultanate. The event was held at the Avani Muscat Hotel in the presence of H E Laila Ahmed Awad al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, a press release said.

On receiving the MOSD's appreciation, Nailesh Khimji, director of the Khimji Ramdas Group, said, "We are grateful to be part of the nation's socio-economic progress and deeply appreciate this prestigious accolade. I wholeheartedly thank the MOSD for bestowing this honour on us. We are committed towards inclusive growth to work towards the goal of ensuring the success and well-being of Omani communities in particular, and the society at large", he said. Established in 2016, as the Corporate Social Responsibility

arm of the Khimji Ramdas Group, Eshraqa's vision is aligned with the national agenda and goals outlined in Oman's Vision 2040. Eshraqa's initiatives focus on Education, Health, Community Wellbeing, and Training, with unique partnerships being made with various governmental institutions and associations on a not-for-profit basis to enrich the lives of the people of Oman.

On the role of corporates participating in Social Responsibility - H E Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development, said, "We are reassured by the fact that the collaboration between the public and private sectors will strengthen and grow in the years to come. We need to adopt the best practices of social responsibility to reinforce our resolve to contribute effectively to the socio-economic growth of the sultanate.

Eshraqa's strategy of going to 'one wilayat at a time' has created avenues for better health, education, community wellbeing and entrepreneurship

Mahmood Khalifa Ali al Saqri, head of Eshraqa, said "We are thankful to receive such an important recognition from the MOSD. KR Eshraqa will continue to implement projects that contribute to social causes by developing solutions that enhance the community's wellbeing, and at the same time empower people with tools and skills to become self-reliant and lead their best lives."

Eshraqa's primary beneficiaries are Omani youth, women and persons with disabilities. Under its developmental scheme, communities in the wilayats of Samail, Izki, Bidbid, Ibra and Bidiyah have benefited. The project's focus is currently on the Wilayat Dima Wattayeen.

National Finance welfare work awarded by Ministry of Social Development

As a company that is built on strong pillars of ethicality, transparency, and philanthropy, National Finance has remained committed to fulfilling not only its responsibilities toward its customers, employees, and shareholders but also to the communities in which it operates.

Under its Imtidad programme, which is an independent wing established for sustainable community initiatives, the company has joined hands with leading charitable organisations and demonstrated its keenness to enhance community welfare and meet environmental goals.

Acknowledging the same, the Ministry of Social Development has honoured National Finance with a CSR award for its ongoing efforts that have had a significant positive impact on the community.

The highly prestigious award



ceremony was conducted on June 5 2022, at the Avani Muscat Hotel in Seeb. The event witnessed the presence of H H Sayyid Kamil al Said as the chief guest alongside H E Dr Laila Ahmed al Najjar.

Commenting on the award, Tariq al Farsi, CEO at National Finance, said, "We are indeed delighted to have received such a

prestigious award from the Ministry of Social Development.

At National Finance, the spirit of community welfare runs through each member of our team.

This award comes as a testament to the dedication of our team to help enhance the lives of people, protect the environment, and raise a more socially con-

scious society."

He further said, "Given the ever-changing market scenario and the complexities that it brings with it, it is critical that we look at social issues through a strategic lens so we can conceptualise programs that address the needs of our communities.

Our CSR initiatives contribute to building individual capabilities, generating sustainable employment opportunities, and nurturing an empowered community."

National Finance's Imtidad programme has undertaken a number of initiatives that are centered on education, community, health, and environment. Following a holistic approach to CSR, National Finance will continue to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country while leading programmes that are thoughtful, strategic, and encompass the broad vision of the country.

Bank Muscat rewards family referrals

Bank Muscat continues to receive excellent feedback for its efforts to provide customers with attractive offers and benefits in line with its customer-centric vision. The bank's currently ongoing Al Jawhar referral scheme, which is open to Privilege Banking customers has been receiving an excellent response over the last many weeks.

The scheme, which will be open till December 31, gives all existing Al Jawhar customers a chance to earn up to RO5,000 by referring their friends and family members to join Privilege Banking. Customers can now earn an incentive of RO50 for every successful referral, up to a maximum of 100 referrals. All new referrals who successfully open and maintain their Al



Jawhar account will also receive RO50 each making the scheme a win-win proposition for both, existing customers as well as their family and friends, a press release said.

To participate in the exciting promotion, Al Jawhar customers have to download and fill the form given in the link below with

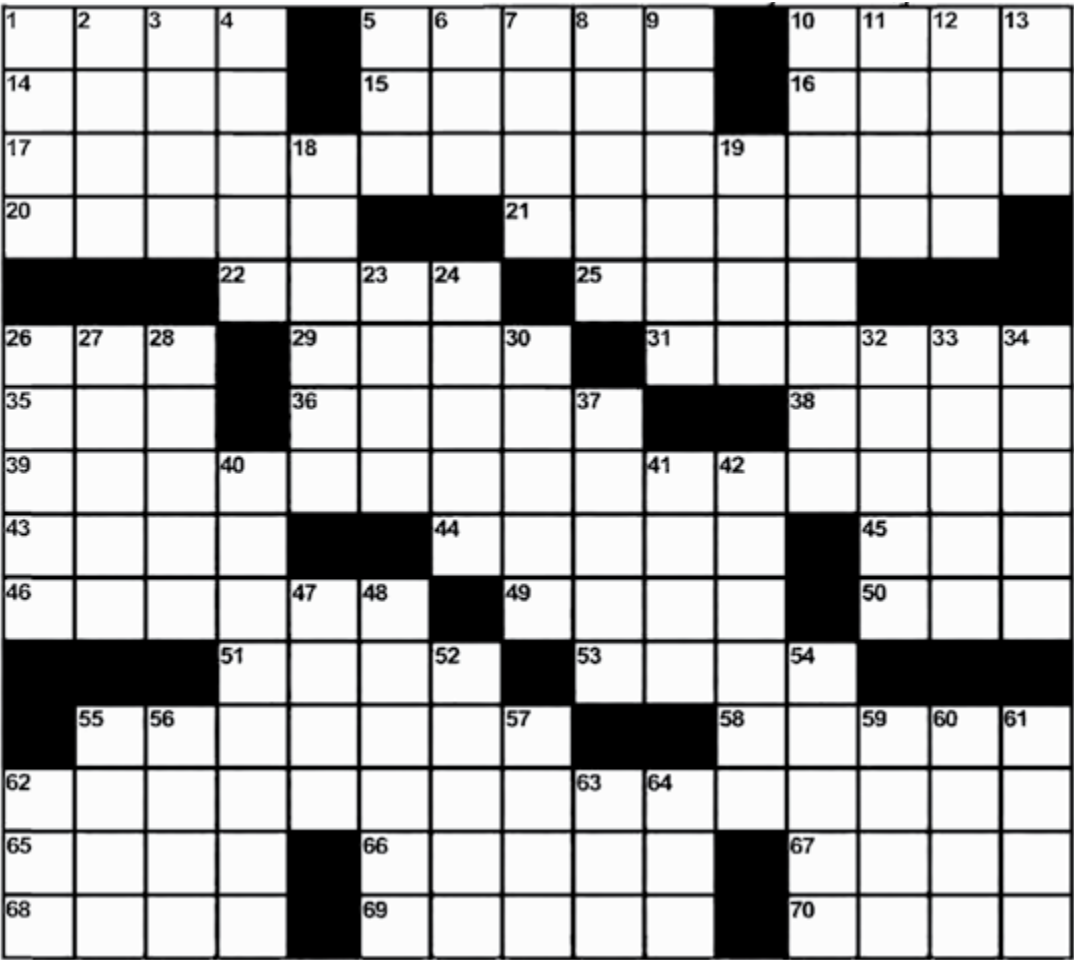
both the customer's and referee's details and then email it to AlJawharCampaign@bankmuscat.com. The scheme is open to all existing Privilege Banking customers who successfully refer their friends and family to open new Al Jawhar salary accounts. The incentives will be credited on a quarterly basis into the ac-

counts of both referrer and the referee on successful completion of a three-month eligibility period.

Al Jawhar is designed to provide Privilege Banking customers with an exceptional banking experience and opens a world of opportunities for its exclusive clientele. Customers are eligible for exclusive 2-for-1 deals on food; entertainment and shopping that are available through the 'xperience with the Entertainer' app on their smartphones. They also have access to a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO800.

Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Cardholders offers access to 25 premium lounges around the world in addition to lounges at Muscat airport.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Boys

5) They're effective when nutty?

10) "For goodness' _!"

14) Between continents, perhaps

15) Cognizant

16) Blender sound

17) Three hard things

20) Asparagus unit

21) Holds high

22) Fizzles out

25) Cause for a lawsuit

26) Summit

29) Spanish appetizer

31) Lunch or dinner, e.g.

35) Physicians' org.

36) Desktop pictures

38) Carve in stone

39) Three hard things

43) Knowing about

44) Andean animal

45) "We _ the World"

46) Afternoon nap

49) Clapton of music fame

50) Bow maker's wood

51) Little ones

53) Bowl over

55) Sort of cigar

58) Bang or boom, e.g.

62) Two hard things

66) "Encore!"

67) _ mortals

68) Former communist country

69) Harps' kin, way back when

70) "Thank you, Jesus!"

DOWN

1) Research sites

2) " ... and make it fast!"

3) Editor's notation, sometimes

4) "Rabbit food"

5) Barnyard noise

6) Possess

7) Put on board, as cargo

8) Chancy get-together

9) Pie chart part

10) Climbing flowering plant

11) "Beg pardon ... "

12) Smooch

13) "... he drove out of sight..."

18) One making pans

19) Not there

23) A head

24) Sewing kit feature

26) Crunchy munchies

27) Yemeni's neighbor

28) Adhesive stuff

30) Cronelike

32) Cornered

33) Accompanying music for a film

34) Tossed

37) Accident reminders, sometimes

40) Innkeeper

41) Give off, as light

42) Missing portion of text

47) Spelling of T V

48) Hardly melodious

52) Damp and spongy

54)_ Jean (Marilyn Monroe's birth name)

55) Corporate leaders, briefly

56) Barnyard cluckers

57) Bygone autocrat

59) Gossip tidbit

60) Arid

61) Eve's garden

62) Winter weakener

63) Get a move on

64) Naval rank (abbr.)

NOTE PAD

MAGE BATON ECHO
OPAL AGORA GOOF
HORSE SHOEMAGNET
ALGERIANS TAG
ILL ENS TIRADE
ROES TALUS IRE
AAH PERSONAL
HORSE AND BUGGY
HERITAGE OER
ERA AREAL EDAM
PETARD APP IVE
ORT FACES AVER
HORSE BACKRIDING
OLIO RUNES INGE
PEON OXEYE TEES

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

 **ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You're a pretty darned sociable creature, ordinarily ready, willing, and able to mingle with others at any time and have them over to your place too. Right now, however, you don't want to be with just anyone, and you'll be quite clear about that.

Whoever is foolish enough to insist that you put up with them will already be planning the end of your relationship. Be patient. It will all work out.

 **LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

The heavens are primed for new beginnings, and you've been champing at the bit for one anyway.

Well, here's your chance. If a financial arrangement is in the cards, don't worry about it fizzling out before it has a chance to bear fruit.

You've got a cosmic safety net in place, guaranteeing that whatever you devote your time and energy to will turn out to be a solid, grounded investment.

 **SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's time for a fresh start, and you're feeling the urge. You've probably been in this frame of mind for some time, and knowing you, you might want to make it a very extensive (and secret) fresh start. And while moving to Paris or India might seem extreme to some, to you it's just another leg in this adventure called life. After all, life is really just a series of extended vacations, right?

 **TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

You're done talking about it: That issue that's been making you crazy for weeks, if not months. You're so done that even when a certain someone who's ordinarily quite good at getting you to open up starts poking at you, it just won't work.

Well, give in. It won't be fair, and it won't even be fun. You know you can easily win, but why? You can't justify the energy, so it's just as well. You've got bigger fish to fry.

 **VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

If ever there was a time that was destined for the beginning of a romance, this is definitely the moment.

All the cosmic lights are green. So when you're invited out, do yourself a favor and forget all about washing your hair, doing your grocery shopping, sorting your sock drawer or any other shallow excuse you had lined up to avoid this.

Get dressed and go!

 **CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

There's a wonderful astrological safety net in place, the kind that just about guarantees you a happy landing no matter where it is you happen to land. This doesn't mean you should get it into your head that you're ten feet tall and bulletproof, but if you never take a risk, you'll never know if it would have worked out.

Go ahead. Assess the odds and take any necessary precautions before you give it a shot.

 **GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

Keep a sharp eye out for minor differences that could create some major problems today. You might have a tendency to get mixed up a bit here and there, and details really matter! People's names could be a big problem especially, so take special note when you meet someone new.

If you've been itching to make some changes in your personal life, today offers you a great opportunity to do just that. Challenge yourself and you will rise up, excel, and impress the people around you.

 **LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

There's romance in the air. That's a definite. Whether it's the kind that you can talk about or not is an entirely different story.

If either of you isn't quite available at the moment, keep totally quiet.

Once jealousy becomes involved, things could spiral entirely out of control, and while you're an expert at restoring balance, even you can only do so much.

 **AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If you're in the mood to shop around for a new job (and when aren't you?) get out there with your resume and have a look around.

Chances are great that you'll find exactly what you want and more.

Instead of just taking what you're offered, feel free to do some serious negotiating over salary and benefits. When it comes to your needs, the Universe is in an extremely generous mood. Take advantage of it.

 **CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

The romance in your life will be greatly amplified today, and whether or not you actually have a partner is irrelevant. People will want to be as close to you as you let them, so try to take advantage of the closeness. Barriers are coming down between you and someone you know in an official or professional capacity, and you will get a nice glimpse of their great big soft heart. Make sure you let them know you noticed their generous act.

 **SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

When you say you're going to do something, you do it unflinching. You couldn't live with yourself if you didn't. You've noticed, however, that others don't always put as much pride into that sort of thing. Still, at the moment, you can absolutely count on whoever you ask for help to say and do the right thing and to keep a promise.

Once they've given their support, you'll want to actually deliver your thanks for it.

 **PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Been thinking about redecorating, redecorating yourself, that is? Sure you have. You've been thinking about it for days and maybe even longer, in fact. If you're ready to take the first step physically, get a move on. Whether you get yourself to the gym, join a walking or running group or just start watching your carbohydrate intake, rest assured that it's definitely going to work. This is the perfect time to make changes that will stick.

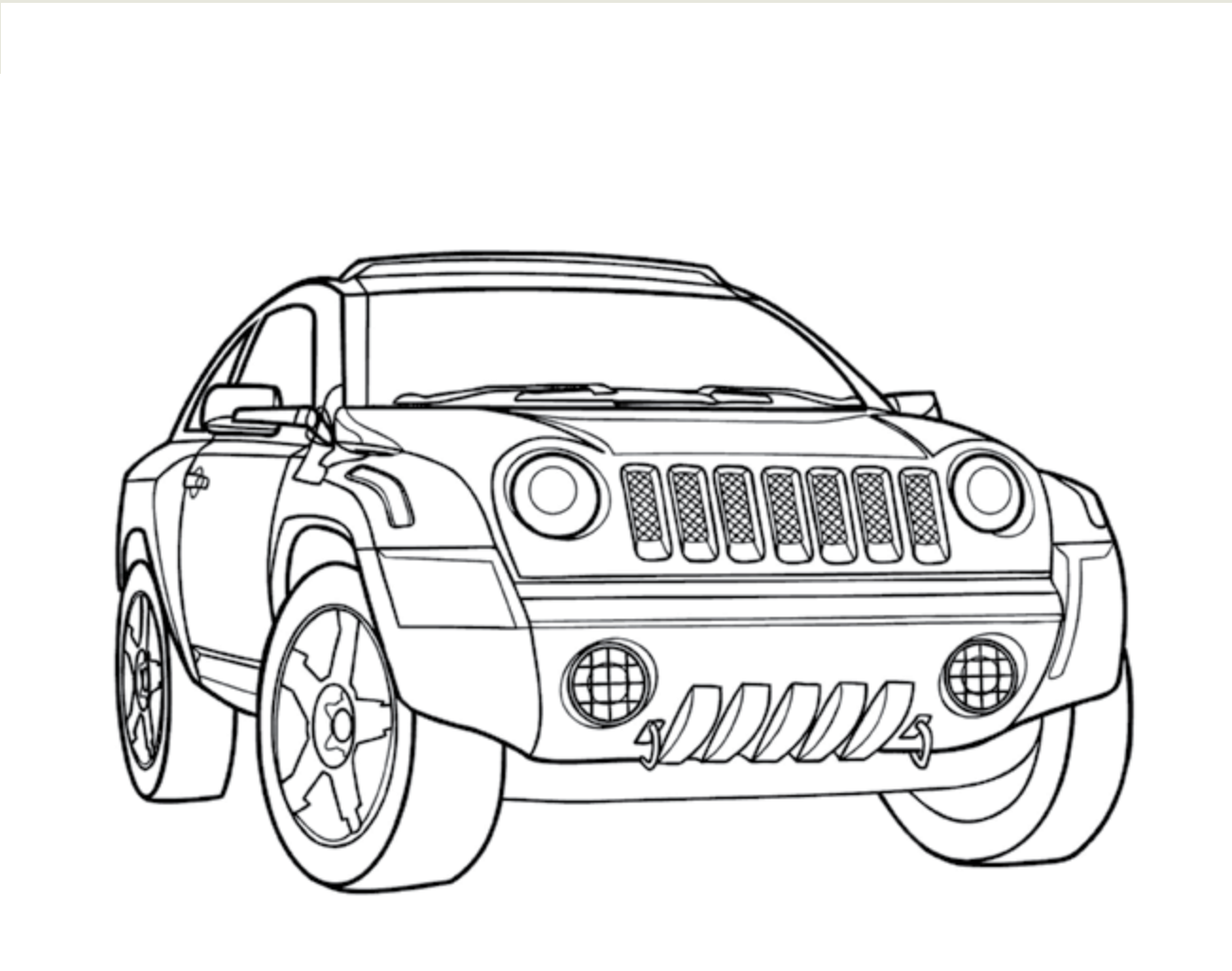
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. In the USA it is called a bathrobe. What do the British call it?
- A. Dressing gown
- B. Smoking jacket
- C. Dickey suit
- D. Sou'wester
02. The phrase "Victorian Values" is most associated with which 20th century British Prime Minister?
- A. John Major
- B. Harold Wilson
- C. Edward Heath
- D. Margaret Thatcher

03. How many teams competed in the Rugby World Cup 2011?
- A. 22
- B. 20
- C. 12
- D. 84

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

Y	S	O	C
O	P	H	P
O	O	K	I
R	L	P	I

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

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

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

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

India's ruling party faces Mideast furore

Row grew on Monday over an Indian ruling party official's remarks about Prophet Mohammed

Kuwait City, Kuwait - Anger in the Middle East spread on Monday over comments made by an official of India's ruling party about Prophet Mohammed, with various countries summoning New Delhi's envoy and a Kuwaiti supermarket removing Indian products.

The United Arab Emirates became the latest country to voice its condemnation of the remarks, saying they were "contrary to moral and humanitarian values and principles."

The UAE's foreign ministry underlined the "need for respecting religious symbols... and countering hate speech", state news agency WAM reported.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other countries in the region, as well as the influential Al-Azhar University in Cairo, have condemned the comments by a spokeswoman for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, who has since been suspended.

In Kuwait, supermarket workers piled Indian tea and other

products into trolleys in a protest against comments denounced as "Islamophobic".

At the Al-Ardiya Co-Operative Society just outside Kuwait City, sacks of rice and shelves of spices and chillies were covered with plastic sheets. "We have removed Indian products", signs in Arabic read.

"We, as a Kuwaiti Muslim people, do not accept insulting the Prophet," Nasser Al-Mutairi, CEO of the store, told AFP. An official at the chain said a company-wide boycott was being considered.

Comments by Bharatiya Janata Party spokeswoman Nupur Sharma describing Prophet Mohammed's relationship with his youngest wife have sparked a furore among Muslims.

Sharma's remarks during a televised debate last week were blamed for clashes in an Indian state and prompted demands for her arrest.

Anger spread overseas to



Supporters of Pakistan's Islamic and political Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) party shout anti-India slogans against the remarks about the Prophet Mohammed during a demonstration in Karachi on June 6, 2022. (AFP)

Muslim countries about the remarks.

Modi's party, which has frequently been accused of acting against the country's Muslim minority, on Sunday suspended Sharma for expressing "views contrary to the party's position" and said it "respects all religions".

Sharma said on Twitter that her comments had been in response to "insults" made against the Hindu god Shiva.

"If my words have caused discomfort or hurt religious feelings of anyone whatsoever, I hereby unconditionally withdraw my statement," she said.

'Incitement to religious hatred'



A British and a German detainee, dressed in yellow prisoners' clothing, arrive at Karkh Appeal Court in Baghdad on Monday (AFP)

Antiquities case: Briton sentenced to 15 years in Iraq

Baghdad, Iraq - An Iraqi court on Monday sentenced a British retiree to 15 years' prison for trying to smuggle antiquities out of the country, but acquitted his German co-accused.

The maximum penalty for the offence is death by hanging but the court decided on a lesser sentence for James Fitton, 66, 'because of the advanced age of the accused', the judge said.

Fitton's lawyer said that he would appeal.

The court found 'insufficient evidence' to convict co-accused Volker Waldmann, 60, who was visiting Iraq with Fitton on an organised tour when they were arrested in March at Baghdad airport.

War-ravaged Iraq's tourism infrastructure is almost non-existent but the country is timidly opening to visitors.

Iraq has also been trying to recover antiquities that were looted over a period of decades from the country whose civilisation dates back thousands of years.

When the judge asked the men whether they were guilty or not guilty 'of trafficking antiquities', each replied: "Not guilty."

They appeared in court dressed in yellow prisoners' clothing, but not handcuffed, said an AFP journalist at the hearing.

They were charged under a 2002 law against 'intentionally taking or trying to take out of Iraq an antiquity'.

According to statements from customs officers and witnesses, Fitton's baggage contained about a dozen

stone fragments, pieces of pottery or ceramics.

Waldmann, a Berlin psychologist, allegedly had two pieces but at the trial's opening on May 15 denied they were his.

When the judge asked Fitton why he tried to take the artefacts out of Iraq, he cited his 'hobby' and said he did not mean to do anything illegal.

"I didn't realise that taking them was against the law," Fitton said, adding that some of the ancient sites were open and unguarded.

In his verdict the judge found that Fitton was 'aware' that the location from where he collected the fragments was 'an archaeological site' and that it was illegal to take them.

The judge concluded there was criminal intent.

Defence lawyer Thaeir Massoud denied this, and called the judgement as 'extreme'.

In Waldmann's case the judge accepted the defence argument that the German did not know the pieces from Fitton were antiquities.

The two men were not acquitted before their trip to Iraq.

They heard the verdict two weeks after court had adjourned to allow time for further investigations at the request of Waldmann's lawyer, Furat Kuba.

"We don't have any more details: what site do these pieces come from? What era, what civilisation do they date back to?" Kuba said at the time.

AFP

S Korea, US fire missiles to counter N Korea tests

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea and the United States fired eight ballistic missiles on Monday in response to North Korean weapons tests the previous day, Seoul's military said.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said the allies launched the ground-to-ground Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) at targets in the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, in the early morning on Monday.

The 10-minute volley comes a day after North Korea launched eight short-range ballistic missiles following a South Korea-US joint military exercise involving a US aircraft carrier.



The Army Tactical Missile System firing a missile from an undisclosed location on South Korea's east coast on Monday (AFP)

"Our military strongly condemns the North's series of ballistic missile provocations and sternly urges it to immediately stop acts that raise military tensions on the peninsula," the Joint Chiefs of Staff added.

The US Indo-Pacific Command said one US army missile and seven South Korean missiles

were fired from the northeast of South Korea during Monday's live-fire exercise, which was aimed at demonstrating their ability to 'respond quickly to crisis events'.

Monday's missile launches are the second such joint show of force by the allies under South Korea's hawkish new President Yoon Suk-yeol, who has vowed a tougher stance against Pyongyang.

"Our government will respond decisively and sternly to any provocations from North Korea," Yoon said on Monday during a speech on Memorial Day.

Last month, Seoul and Wash-

ington carried out combined launches after Pyongyang fired three ballistic missiles - including a suspected intercontinental ballistic missile - in their first such joint move since 2017.

Pyongyang has doubled down on upgrading its weapons programme, despite facing crippling economic sanctions, with officials and analysts warning that the regime is preparing to carry out a fresh nuclear test.

North Korea has carried out a blitz of sanctions-busting weapons tests this year, including firing an intercontinental ballistic missile at full range.

AFP

Turkey aid lifeline to Syria in jeopardy

Cilvegözü, Turkey - Trucks loaded with humanitarian aid queue bumper-to-bumper amid the olive groves at the Turkish-Syrian border, waiting to be allowed across into war-torn Syria.

Inside are baby nappies and blankets, but also 15kg bags of flour, bulghur wheat, sugar, chickpeas and peanut-based pastes for children suffering from malnutrition.

Each month the United Nations sends some 800 lorries through the Cilvegözü crossing to deliver aid to millions in need in Syria's last major rebel bastion.

The frontier post, called Bab al-Hawa on the Syrian side, is the only point of passage allowed for UN relief supplies to reach the Idlib stronghold.

But many fear the crossing will close to UN trucks from July 10, cutting off large swathes of the Idlib population from desperately needed assistance.

Russia, an ally of the Damascus regime, has threatened to use its veto power at a UN Security Council vote and block efforts to renew permission for the cross-border deliveries.

Observers say Russia is using it as a bargaining chip in the face of punishing sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"I think it's going to be a catastrophe if the resolution is not renewed," senior UN humanitarian official Mark Cutts said last week as he visited a UN trans-shipment hub near the border.

Eleven years into Syria's civil war, three million people live under the rule of militants and allied rebels in the Idlib bastion on the Turkish border.

Half of them have been up-



Thomas-Greenfield (third from left), and US Ambassador to Turkey Jeff Flake (second from left), inspect aid trucks during a visit at the UN World Food Programme Transfer Centre at the Reyhanli district of Hatay on June 2 (AFP)

rooted from their homes in other parts of the country and rely heavily on international aid.

'No alternative'

Also visiting on Thursday, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US envoy to the United Nations, said she feared what would happen if supplies could no longer transit through Bab al-Hawa.

"It's going to increase the suffering," she said.

Russia has argued aid can instead transit via Damascus-controlled parts of the country across conflict lines. But critics have argued this would mean far less aid to rebel-held areas.

In the Turkish province of Hatay, Syrian rescue worker Ammar al-Selmo described conditions inside Idlib to the visiting US envoy, and said the cross-border authorisation not being renewed would be disastrous.

"There is no alternative for this mandate. Cross-line aid is not an alternative," said the member of the White Helmets, a group most known for rescuing civilians after Russian air strikes on opposition-held areas.

Rebel backer Turkey is especially keen to maintain the flow of aid into Syria as it does not want to add to the 3.7mn refugees already on its soil.

Already Ankara has said it plans to return one million Syrians to a strip of land it seized from Syrian Kurds further east along the border, a project that has angered Damascus.

As trucks were scanned one by one in Cilvegözü, Turkish official Orhan Akturk sought to be reassuring. "Our local non-governmental organisations will continue to bring in aid," said the vice-governor of the surrounding Hatay province.

A humanitarian worker, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to speak to the press, said the Turkish Red Crescent had offered to ferry in all the humanitarian assistance on the UN's behalf.

Turkish Red Crescent chief Kerem Kinik, whose organisation sends an average of 500 trucks across the border each month, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

But Sara Kayyali, Syria researcher at Human Rights Watch, was dubious.

There are very few 'viable alternatives to the UN's cross-border operation', she told AFP.

It would be difficult for Turkish charities and other international non-governmental organisations to match the scope of the UN operation or even donor confidence in it, she said.

AFP

Attack on church in Nigeria kills 21 devotees

Lagos, Nigeria - Gunmen who attacked a Catholic church on Sunday with explosives in southwest Nigeria killed at least 21 worshippers, including some children, local officials said.

The violence in St Francis Catholic Church in Owo town during a Sunday service prompted international condemnation after a rare attack in Nigeria's usually safer southwestern region. Richard Olatunde, spokesman for the Ondo State governor's office, said that dynamite exploded inside the church before gunmen opened fire.

"They did not even enter the church, they were shooting through the windows," he said, confirming a death toll of 21 people. National Emergency Management Agency local representative Olanrewaju Kadiri said 22 people were killed, including several children.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack and the motives were not clear.

One witness told AFP he saw at least five gunmen on the church premises during the attack. President Muhammadu Buhari condemned 'heinous killing of worshippers' while Pope Francis offered prayers for the victims. The UN Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, condemned what he called a 'barbaric terrorist attack'.

AFP

Bangladesh depot accused over blast which left at least 49 dead

Sitakunda, Bangladesh - Bangladesh authorities accused a container depot operator on Monday of not telling firefighters about a chemical stockpile before it exploded with devastating consequences, killing at least 49 people - nine of them from the fire service.

The toll from the giant blast, which followed a fire at the B.M Container Depot in Sitakunda and sent fireballs into the sky, was expected to rise further.

Some containers were still smouldering on Monday, more than 36 hours after the explosion, preventing rescuers from checking the area around them for victims.

Around a dozen of the 300 injured were in critical condition, and were flown to the capital Dhaka.

The nine dead firefighters were the most the department has ever lost in a single incident in the industrial-accident-prone country, where safety standards are lax and corruption often enables them to be ignored.

Two more firefighters are among several people still missing, officials said.

"Never in the history of the fire department, have so many firefighters died," said Purnachandra Mutsuddi, who led the fire-fighting effort at the 26-acre facility on Saturday night.

"How do you feel when you recover your brothers? No event is as painful as this."

The depot 'didn't have any fire safety plan', he told AFP, and it



Firefighters try to extinguish an ongoing fire that broke out at a shipping container storage facility in Sitakunda, about 40km from the key port of Chittagong, on Monday (AFP)

did not inform the firefighters about the chemicals, specifically hydrogen peroxide, stored on site.

"If they did, the casualties would have been much less," he said.

Mutsuddi, an assistant director of the Chittagong fire station, said that as soon as the firefighters entered the depot on Saturday they unwittingly doused the hydrogen peroxide with water, setting off an explosive reaction that sent 'a container flying more than 500 feet'.

"There are some rules to keep hydrogen peroxide. Had we known this, we would never throw water. We would never

take our vehicle inside the depot," he said.

In Chittagong, hundreds of relatives of the missing and the dead queued at a hospital to give DNA samples in an effort to identify the deceased, as most of the fatalities were burned beyond recognition.

The B.M Container Depot in Sitakunda, an industrial town 40km from Chittagong Port, is a joint venture between Bangladeshi and Dutch businessmen with around 600 employees, and began operations in 2012.

Its chairman is named on its website as Bert Pronk, a Dutch citizen, but AFP was unable to

reach him for comment. Few European businessmen operate in the country.

Local newspapers said another of its owners is a senior official of the ruling Awami League party based in Chittagong, who is also the editor of a local Bengali daily.

Police have yet to lay charges over the fire. "Our investigation is going on. We will look into everything," said local police chief Abul Kalam Azad.

'Falling like rain'

Wisps of smoke rose into the bright morning sky from dozens of twenty-foot containers at the depot on Monday.

"Some 30 to 40 containers are still smouldering," said fire department inspector Harunur Rashid. "The fire is under control. But the chemicals are the main problems."

Once the flames are entirely out rescuers will search the area for more victims, he said.

Mujibur Rahman, a director of B.M. Container Depot, said the cause of the initial fire remained unknown.

Witnesses said the entire town shook when the cache of hydrogen peroxide exploded.

"The explosion sent fireballs into the sky," said Mohammad Ali, 60, who runs a nearby grocery store. "Fireballs were falling like rain. We were so afraid we immediately left our home to find refuge," he added. "We thought the fire would spread to our locality as it is very densely populated."

Elias Chowdhury, the chief doctor in Chittagong, said doctors at multiple hospitals had been called back from holidays to help treat the hundreds of injured. Around 90 per cent of Bangladesh's roughly US\$100bn in trade - including clothes for H&M, Walmart and others - passes through the Chittagong port at the top of the Bay of Bengal.

Rakibul Alam Chowdhury, from the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said that about US\$110mn worth of garments were destroyed in the fire. AFP



Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (right) and Australia PM Anthony Albanese riding bicycles at the Presidential Palace in Bogor on Monday (AFP)

New Australia PM, Indonesia president hold talks, boost ties

Jakarta, Indonesia - Australia's new prime minister and Indonesia's president rode bamboo bicycles together on Monday as they held talks to boost ties, as Canberra embarks on a diplomatic charm offensive aimed at countering China's growing assertiveness in the region.

Anthony Albanese hailed relations with Indonesia and vowed to strengthen them on his first bilateral trip since being elected last month, heading to Southeast Asia's biggest economy in what has become a traditional tour for new Australian premiers.

After a guard of honour, Indonesian President Joko Widodo presented Albanese with a bicycle at the presidential palace in Bogor - a city south of capital Jakarta - where the pair removed their jackets, donned helmets and rode around the grounds.

"Australia's relationship with Indonesia is one of our most important. We are linked not just by geography, we are linked by choice," Albanese said in a joint

press conference held after talks.

"Our relationship is ever-deepened by the strategic and economic interests we share," he added, saying Indonesia was on course to become one of the five biggest economies in the world.

Widodo said good relations between the two would contribute to 'the peace and prosperity of the region'.

About the bike ride, Albanese later tweeted, 'it was a privilege to have such a personal and enjoyable tour of the magnificent grounds'. Widodo tweeted the bikes were 'designed for use on the highway' and made from bamboo by Singgih Susilo Kartono, an East Javan designer known for his woodcraft.

Albanese confirmed he would attend the G20 summit, which Indonesia will host in November, despite reservations from predecessor Scott Morrison about sitting around the table with Russian President Vladimir Putin after his invasion of Ukraine. AFP

Dancing 'old heart-throbs' become sensation in Japan

Tokyo, Japan - Showing off their awkward moves in shirts, ties and brightly coloured belly warmers, four men in their 50s and 60s have become Japan's latest TikTok sensation.

The group's mission? To promote their small countryside town, whose population is in decline, through dance routines to pop tunes that fans call 'adorable'.

Since their first post in February, the videos, filmed in choice locations from playgrounds and shrines to municipal buildings, have been viewed more than 16mn times.

The four call themselves 'ojiquin' - a slang word used by young people that mixes 'ojisan', which means 'old men' in Japanese, and 'kyun', meaning 'heart-throb'. They wear suit trousers, smart shoes and belly-warmer bands in different colours - blue, green, yellow and red - and keep



Members of the group 'Ojiquin', Japan's latest TikTok sensation, dancing while wearing neckties and coloured belly warmers in Wake town, western Okayama prefecture (AFP)

a straight face even when they struggle to stay in time.

One of the members, 52-year-old Takumi Shirase, runs an IT firm and a gardening company when not on TikTok.

He told AFP he had created ojiquin with three friends to try and put the rural town of Wake, in western Japan's Okayama region, back on the map.

"We wanted to come up with

something that would revitalise our ageing countryside community, which is suffering from population decline with fewer and fewer children," he said.

Wake currently has around

14,000 residents, and Shirase said his old primary school was closed due to lack of demand.

A local shopping mall has also disappeared, while some annual festivals are no longer held in the town. But with more than 34,000 TikTok followers, 'we hope to encourage people to come to Wake, either as tourists or as new residents', Shirase said.

Ojiquin's latest post, 'centipede dance', shows the four men doing a goofy Madness-style walk in single file in front of a concrete building to a rendition of 'House of Fun'.

Fans have peppered the comments under each video with heart symbols, calling them 'splendid' and 'adorable'.

"I laughed again and again," said one recent comment.

"I have a peaceful smile, for the first time in a long while," said another.

AFP

China warns Australia risks 'serious consequences'

Beijing, China - Beijing on Monday warned Australia to 'act prudently' or face 'serious consequences' after Canberra accused a Chinese fighter jet of dangerously intercepting one of its spy planes over the South China Sea.

Australia has argued it is not unusual for it to undertake surveillance flights in the South China Sea - a region Beijing insists comes under its domain despite a 2016 Hague ruling that dismissed its claims. China's stance has heightened tensions with the United States and its allies, which insist on freedom of navigation in the area.

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said on Sunday that a Chinese J-16 fighter intercepted a P-8 surveillance aircraft late last month, in a 'dangerous' manoeuvre that put the safety of the Australian Defence Force

crew at risk.

But Beijing hit back on Monday, saying it would 'never allow any country to infringe upon China's sovereignty and security... under the pretext of freedom of navigation'.

"China once again urges Australia to earnestly respect China's national security interests and core interests, act and speak prudently to avoid a miscalculation occurring that results in serious consequences," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters.

The incident comes three months after Australia accused the Chinese military of shining a military-grade laser at one of Canberra's defence planes over waters north of Australia, which the previous government labelled an 'act of intimidation'.

AFP

At least 10 killed in four weekend shootings across US

Philadelphia, US - At least 10 people were killed and more than two dozen wounded in four shootings across the United States this weekend, as lawmakers struggle to respond to the country's long-running epidemic of gun violence.

The shootings came after a spate of mass killings that have sparked renewed calls for reform of the nation's gun laws.

An eruption of violence in Chattanooga, Tennessee on Sunday resulted in 14 people being shot, including two killed, while another person died and two more were injured after they were struck by vehicles fleeing the scene, police chief Celeste Murphy said, adding 'several' victims remained in critical condition.

The pre-dawn incident oc-



A note and flowers honouring the victims of a mass shooting in South Philadelphia are taped to a traffic light post in Philadelphia on Sunday (AFP)

curred near a nightclub.

In Philadelphia on Saturday, two men and a woman were killed when multiple people opened fire on a crowd at a popular South Street nightlife area.

Philadelphia Police Commis-

sioner Danielle Outlaw said one of the victims got into a fight with another man, which could have been the cause of the shooting.

The two others were 'innocent bystanders', she told reporters.

In Saginaw, Michigan, three people were killed and two others wounded in a shooting on Sunday, MLive.com and WELY television reported, citing police.

And in Clarendon County, South Carolina, five teens and a 12-year-old were among seven people wounded in a shooting at a graduation party on Saturday that killed one adult, police said in a statement.

Cries for action

Gun attacks are common in America, but the shock felt over recent mass shootings at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York and an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas - which killed 10 and 21 people respectively - have spurred cries for action.

Democratic Senator Chris Murphy has been working with a

bipartisan group of senators on reform measures - a heavy lift with Republicans routinely rejecting most forms of gun control. Senator Murphy said on Sunday the group hoped to hammer together a legislative package that draws at least 10 Republican votes on top of expected support from nearly every Democrat.

"I think the possibility of success is better than ever before," he told CNN.

The emerging package, he said, would probably include 'significant mental health investment, school safety money, and some modest but impactful changes in gun laws,' including an expansion of background checks for gun buyers.

"Congress needs to do their jobs and pass commonsense

regulation that will help stop this nonsense," an angry Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly told reporters. He called for 'mandatory background checks and prohibiting high-capacity magazines that allow shooters to hurt dozens of people without even having to reload.' In addition to the massacres in Texas and New York, recent weeks have seen mass shootings at a hospital in Oklahoma and a church in California.

While Republicans have successfully blocked most efforts at gun control for years, some have recently spoken out for change.

In conservative, gun-loving Texas, more than 250 self-declared firearm enthusiasts, including donors to Republican Governor Greg Abbott, signed an open letter supporting efforts at bipartisan gun reform, the Dallas

Morning News reported.

The letter, running as a full-page ad in the newspaper, endorsed an expansion of background checks, raising the age to buy guns to 21, and creating 'red flag' laws intended to keep guns from people deemed to be at risk of violence.

US President Joe Biden last week called for new gun-control legislation. On Sunday he renewed his call for restrictions on semi-automatic rifles.

"If we can't ban assault weapons as we should, we must at least raise the age to buy assault weapons to 21," he tweeted. A CBS News/YouGov poll published on Sunday shows 62 per cent of Americans back a nationwide ban on semi-automatic rifles.

AFP

Iran to face censure amid stalled nuclear talks

The International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors meets Monday through Friday in Vienna

Vienna, Austria - Major European countries and the United States are expected to seek to censure Iran as the UN atomic watchdog started meeting on Monday with talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal stalled.

The resolution drafted by the United States, Britain, France and Germany is a sign of their growing impatience as diplomats warn the window to save the landmark agreement is closing.

The International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors meets Monday through Friday in Vienna.

If the resolution urging Iran to ‘cooperate fully’ with the IAEA is adopted, it will be the first motion censuring Iran since June 2020.

Talks to revive the accord started in April 2021 with the aim of bringing the United States back into the deal, lifting sanctions and getting Iran to scale back its stepped-up nuclear programme. The 2015 landmark deal - promising Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs in its nuclear programme - started to fall apart in 2018 when the then US president Donald Trump withdrew from it.

Talks to revive the agreement have stalled in recent months.

The coordinator of the talks, the EU’s top diplomat Josep Borrell, warned in a tweet this week-end that the possibility of returning to the accord was ‘shrinking’.



Diplomats attend the quarterly IAEA Board of Governors meeting at the agency headquarters in Vienna, Austria on Monday (AFP)

‘Ready to re-engage’

In a report late last month, the IAEA said it still had questions that were ‘not clarified’ regarding traces of enriched uranium previously found at three sites, which Iran had not declared as having hosted nuclear activities.

“The agency remains ready to re-engage without delay with Iran to resolve these matters,” IAEA head Rafael Grossi said in his opening statement to the board.

“I hope that as a result of the

deliberations of the board this week, we will come out of this with a sense of commitment to solve these things once and for all - because as I said, this is not going to disappear,” he told reporters later on Monday.

Iran will reject the resolution, Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told state TV.

“Not only do we not view the resolution as constructive, but we believe it will have a negative impact both on the general direc-

tion of our cooperation with the IAEA and on our negotiations,” he said.

Kelsey Davenport, an expert with the Arms Control Association, told AFP a resolution was ‘necessary to send a message that there are consequences for stonewalling the agency and failing to meet safeguards obligations’. “There is no excuse for Iran’s continued failure to provide meaningful cooperation with the agency’s investigation,” she said.

China and Russia - who with Britain, France and Germany are parties to the Iran nuclear deal - have warned that any resolution could disrupt the negotiation process.

In shadow of Ukraine

Despite the tensions, negotiations are unlikely to fall apart, said Clement Therme, associate researcher at the Rasanah International Institute for Iranian Studies.

“Given the war in Ukraine, the

Europeans are not ready to trigger a new crisis with Iran when they are already dealing with a crisis with Russia” which invaded its neighbour in February, he said.

The resolution would be worded ‘in a way that does not close the door to further negotiations’, said Therme.

A key sticking point of the negotiations is Tehran’s demand for Washington to remove the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the ideological arm of

Iran’s military, from the official US list of terror groups.

US President Joe Biden’s administration has refused to do so ahead of tough November midterm elections.

According to the latest IAEA report, the Islamic republic now has 43.1kg of 60-per cent-enriched uranium.

If enriched to 90 per cent, this could be used to make a bomb in under 10 days, Davenport warned in a report last week.

AFP



A Ukrainian serviceman gets out of an underground makeshift bunker after a shelling at a field camp near the front line at an undisclosed location in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas on Monday (AFP)

Ukraine suffers setbacks in strategic eastern city

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukrainian troops suffered setbacks after retaking parts of flashpoint eastern city Severodonetsk from Russian forces, local officials said on Monday, as the see-saw battle raged on for the strategically important city.

With Russia bringing the weight of its artillery to bear around Severodonetsk - the largest city in the Lugansk region not under Russian control - more help was promised from abroad.

The United Kingdom said it would follow the United States and send long-range missile systems to Ukraine, defying warnings from Russian President Vladimir Putin against supplying Kyiv with the advanced weapons.

Thousands of civilians have been killed and millions forced to flee their homes since Putin ordered Russian troops into Ukraine on February 24.

Fighting since April has been concentrated in the east of the country, where Russian forces have made slow but steady advances after being beaten back from other parts of Ukraine, including the capital Kyiv.

“Fighting is very fierce in Severodonetsk,” regional governor Sergiy Gaiday told Ukraine’s

1+1 television.

“Our defenders managed to counter-attack and liberate half of the city, but the situation has worsened for us.”

Russian forces ‘are destroying everything with their usual scorched earth tactics’ so that ‘there’s nothing left to defend’, he said.

Fighting is very fierce in the city of Severodonetsk. Russian forces are destroying everything ... so that there’s nothing left to defend

SERGIY GAIDAY

Gaiday said on Sunday that Kyiv’s troops had ‘cleared half of Severodonetsk and are moving forward’, after Ukrainian forces earlier appeared on the verge of being driven out of the city.

‘It’s a horror show’

Artillery strikes have intensified on Severodonetsk and neigh-

bouring city Lysychansk, where pensioner Oleksandr Lyakhovets said he had just enough time to save his cat before the flames engulfed his flat after it was hit by a Russian missile.

“They shoot here endlessly... It’s a horror show,” the 67-year-old told AFP. Lysychansk was among areas visited on Sunday by President Volodymyr Zelensky, who ‘got himself acquainted with the operational situation on the front line of defence’, the presidency said.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Monday blasted European countries for blocking his plane from travelling to Serbia, saying: “The unthinkable has happened.”

“This was a deprivation of a sovereign state of the right to carry out foreign policy,” Lavrov told an online press conference in Moscow after several of Serbia’s neighbours prevented his plane from passing through their airspace.

Lavrov had been due to hold talks with top officials in Belgrade, one of Moscow’s few remaining allies in Europe since the launch of its military offensive in Ukraine.

AFP

Sri Lanka minister convicted of extortion

Colombo, Sri Lanka - A cabinet minister in crisis-hit Sri Lanka was convicted on Monday of extorting money from a businessman over a land deal.

Prasanna Ranatunga - whose elder brother Arjuna captained the country’s cricket World Cup winning team - was given a two-year suspended prison sentence and fined 25mn Sri Lankan rupees (US\$68,500).

He is currently the urban development minister and was previously responsible for tourism, before a brief spell as public security minister. Sri Lanka ranks 102nd out of 180 countries in Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index for 2021.

AFP

Lebanon asks for US mediation after Israel moves gas vessel

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanon on Monday called for US mediation after Israel moved a gas production vessel into an offshore field, a part of which is claimed by Beirut.

The ship operated by London-listed Energean PLC arrived in the Karish gas field on Sunday and will immediately commence operations, Energean said in a statement. The move immediately drew condemnation from Lebanon’s president and prime minister who held talks on Monday to discuss next steps.

The two agreed to ‘invite US envoy Amos Hochstein to Beirut to look into restarting negotiations to demarcate Lebanon’s southern maritime border’ which stalled last May, said a statement by Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

“Any exploration, drilling or extraction carried out by Israel in the disputed areas constitutes a provocation and an act of aggression,” the statement said.



A tugboat pulling an Energean Floating production storage and offloading (FPSO) ship along Egypt’s Suez Canal on June 3 (AFP)

Lebanon and Israel last fought a war in 2006, have no diplomatic relations and are separated by a UN-patrolled border.

They had resumed negotiations over their maritime border in 2020 but the process was stalled by Beirut’s claim that the map used by the United Nations in the talks needed modifying.

Lebanon initially demanded 860sqkm of territory in the dis-

puted maritime area but then asked for an additional 1,430sqkm, including part of Karish. Lebanese officials said on Sunday that any Israeli activity in disputed waters would constitute a ‘hostile act’ and an ‘attack’ on Lebanon’s natural resources.

But for Israel, Karish lies ‘within Israel’s UN-recognised exclusive economic zone’.

AFP

Kazakhs vote to bury ‘super-presidential’ rule

Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan - Kazakhs overwhelmingly voted for constitutional changes in a referendum that marks the end of founding leader Nursultan Nazarbayev’s three-decade grip on Central Asia’s richest country, authorities announced on Monday.

The amendments will finally bury ‘super-presidential’ rule, according to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev - a claim that has been greeted with scepticism from local political observers.

The incoming constitution removes special privileges for 81-year-old Nazarbayev and prevents Tokayev and future leaders from having relatives in government posts.

The central electoral commission said 77 per cent of voters had backed the move and claimed a turnout of 68 per cent.

Widespread violence in January - which grew out of peaceful



A man casts his vote at a polling station as part of the vote for a referendum to overhaul the constitution in Almaty on Sunday (AFP)

protests over a spike in car fuel prices - left more than 230 people dead and prompted authorities to call in troops from a Russia-led security bloc.

‘New Kazakhstan’

The drive for a ‘New Kazakhstan’ in the wake of the violence has come from the man that

Nazarbayev hand-picked to replace him as president in 2019, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

Tokayev, 69, on Sunday said that the referendum was only the beginning of his reform bid and that ‘the paradigm of relations between the state and society is changing’. Prior to January’s crisis, Tokayev was widely seen as

ruling in the shadow of Nazarbayev and his relatives.

Even after stepping down as president, Nazarbayev retained the constitutional title of ‘Elbasy’, or ‘Leader of the Nation’ - a role that afforded him influence over policymaking regardless of his formal position.

Another amendment prevents relatives of the president from holding government positions - a clear nod to the influence of Nazarbayev’s family and in-laws, who lost powerful positions in the aftermath of the violence.

Sergey Duvanov, a rights defender living in the largest city Almaty, called the changes cosmetic and said reports of students being forced to vote showed little has changed.

“There is nothing to stop him going beyond a second term as president and becoming a second Elbasy,” Duvanov told AFP.

AFP

OILY SKIN

Summer skin solutions

If you deal with naturally oily skin on a daily basis, shine is your No 1 enemy. And it gets worse in summer – unless you do what needs to be done



If you think, you are the only one struggling with oily, shiny skin in summer, look around. Skin really does get oilier in the summer and scores of people tackle it in numerous ways. However, it is important to do it right.

According to a recent article in www.glamour.com, as with wrinkles and dark spots, you can blame oily skin on the Sun and on warmer weather too. It is a known fact that a 1-degree increase in temperature can cause skin to increase oil production by 10 per cent.

"Heat has a naturally stimulating effect, causing more secretions from oil glands," says New York City dermatologist Dennis Gross, M.D. It's a kind of defence mechanism, since the higher-than-usual amount of sebum creates an extra physical barrier over your skin. And while this sounds great, it means your skin also gets oilier more quickly.

Shine for starters

Shiny-looking skin is annoying but it won't necessarily kill you. What it can do, however, is give you a fresh breakout.

"The increase in temperature, plus Sun exposure can lead to additional clogging of the pores with more sebum," explains Dr Gross.

So if, for example, you're trying to dry up your existing acne by lying out in the sun, it turns into a catch-22, because you're incidentally causing more zits to pop up."

And, that's not all. "When it's hot outdoors, the increase of blood flow naturally increases heat and sensitivity in the skin," says Rouleau, a skin expert. "So not only are you oilier, but you're also more red and prone to irritation."

Combating the extra oil

The solution is so obvious. Heat ramps up oil production and cold, conversely, does the opposite. "Cooling skin can reduce the sebum released, since a colder temperature causes the pores to contract," says Dr Gross. With closed-up pores, oil is less likely to squeeze out and hang out on your face. Rouleau suggests both, storing skincare products in the fridge and washing your face with cool or at least lukewarm water.

There are benefits to this, besides easing up on oiliness. "Cleansing, toning and moisturising with cool-temperature products will constrict the capillaries to ease redness and irritation," adds Rouleau. So, store your face-wash and skincare products in the refrigerator and feel the cooling effect when you use them everyday.

MORE COOL SOLUTIONS

- Infused with mineral-rich seawater and caffeine, a well-known depuffer cools on contact. Rub it on before your makeup and use it for a touch up during the day - it'll refresh skin and give it a dewy sheen.
- If you have combination skin, an H2O-heavy moisturiser hydrates skin without weighing it down or packing on even more oil. Plus, the gel-like texture feels cool and light on skin.
- If you want to de-shine without ruining your makeup, try face mists. This goes above and beyond - it chills skin and also keeps makeup locked in place for up to 12 hours.
- If you're in day two of a heatwave, it calls for more heavy-duty measures. In case of emergency, keep a gel mask in the fridge and wear it as long as possible. Not only does it cool skin, but the vitamin C and botanical extracts in it smooth and hydrate too.



CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian female characterd account having more than 5 years pre qualification experience in India I. Looking for job opportunity in Oman. Available to join on immidiate basis.
Contact detail 94972040. unadkat.aditii@gmail.com

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

WJ Towell Group Company



**Quality car rentals
at competitive prices.**

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

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



AUDIT, VAT, TAXATION

Accounting, Auditing,
Vat Services, Taxation
Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Chartered Accountants

Contact: 92469602/93949235

Offices at Muscat, Salalah, Sohar & Sur
Email: kumar@gccaoman.com

PLATINUM PAGEANT

Sovereign salute

QUEEN ELIZABETH II ENDS HISTORIC JUBILEE WITH VOW TO CARRY ON



Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday brought the curtain down on her historic Platinum Jubilee celebrations, making another public appearance on the last of four days of festivities and vowing to maintain her record-breaking reign.

The 96-year-old monarch, who has been troubled by mobility problems, appeared for the first time in person since Thursday on the Buckingham Palace balcony after the Trooping the Colour military parade.

Her exertions at the start of the celebrations had forced her to pull out of a thanksgiving church service on Friday, plus the Epsom Derby horse race and a star-studded concert on Saturday.

Huge crowds stretching hundreds of metres down The Mall outside the palace cheered as she re-emerged onto the balcony briefly on Sunday afternoon. It followed a public parade reflecting changes in music, dance, fashion, culture and society since she came to the throne in 1952.

Dressed in green with a matching hat, her white gloved hand clutching a walking stick, she was flanked by the future kings - princes Charles, William and George.

In a statement issued shortly after, the monarch said she had been 'humbled and deeply touched' by the turnout for her Platinum Jubilee celebrations and 'inspired by the kindness, joy, and kinship that has been so evident in recent days'.

Britain's longest-serving sovereign added, "While I may not have attended every event in person, my heart has been with you all, and I remain committed to serving you to the best of my ability, supported by my family."

Platinum Jubilee Pageant

Sunday's £15-million (US\$18.7mn) 'Platinum Jubilee Pageant', featuring some 10,000 people, began with a parade of armed forces from the UK and the Commonwealth she heads.

The queen's hologram was projected onto the sovereign's 260-year-old Gold



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II stands on Buckingham Palace balcony with (from left) Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, Prince George of Cambridge, Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, and Prince Louis of Cambridge.

State Coach that led the celebration of her reign.

Some 6,000 disabled and non-disabled performers joined in to celebrate the queen's life and reign. Highlights included an aerial artist suspended under a vast helium balloon, known as a heliosphere, bearing the sovereign's image.

A carnival included a giant oak tree flanked with maypole dancers, a huge mov-

ing wedding cake, bhangra drummers, steel bands, African-Caribbean carnival animals, and a towering dancing dragon.

In the royal box, Charles kept his four-year-old grandson Prince Louis entertained, bouncing him on his knees to the rhythm of the music.

Singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran wrapped up the pageant with a rendition of his 2017 hit *Perfect*, and the national anthem *God*

Save the Queen.

Elsewhere across the country, more than 10 million people are estimated to have braved overcast skies to share food with friends, family and neighbours to mark the occasion.



End of era

Two public holidays on Thursday and Friday, longer pub opening hours, street parties, and other events have temporarily lifted the gloom of soaring inflation, political turmoil, and two years of enforced COVID-19 closures.

Many saw it as a once-in-a-generation event to mark the closing of an extraordinary chapter in British life and to recognise its most famous national symbol.

A peak of 13.4 million viewers watched Saturday night's concert on television, the BBC said. During the celebrations, the queen put in a surprise on-screen appearance, taking tea with the beloved children's book and film character Paddington Bear, in a pre-recorded sequence that had been kept a carefully guarded secret.

She previously made a cameo with James Bond actor Daniel Craig for the opening of the London 2012 Olympics.

A running theme has been the dramatic social, political and technological changes in Britain and the world since the queen came to the throne - and her constant presence through it all.

Long goodbye

A spectacular light show illuminated the palace and the night sky above it on Saturday, including images of a corgi, a handbag and a teapot. One message said simply - Thank you, Ma'am.

"Inevitably, this celebration had a valedictory feel," the *Sunday Telegraph* said of Saturday's concert. "But there is also the keen awareness that we will never see the likes of this monarch again."

"It won't be the same without our queen," Julie Blewitt, 56, from Manchester, said outside St Paul's Cathedral on Friday.

The *Observer* weekly called it 'part of a long goodbye that began with her solitary attendance at Prince Philip's funeral last year'.

In her statement of thanks, Sunday, the queen said she hoped that the 'renewed sense of togetherness' generated by the weekend's celebrations 'will be felt for many years to come'.

AFP

Gareth Bale hails 'greatest result' as Wales beat Ukraine to deny them World Cup dream



Gareth Bale of Wales celebrates after leading his team to victory in the World Cup 2022 play-off final qualifier against Ukraine at the Cardiff City Stadium on Sunday (AFP)

"The result is the greatest result in history of Welsh football," said Bale, who previously led his country to the semi-finals of Euro

"I think we did everything we

OLEKSANDR PETRAKOV

land in midweek, the visitors

"We gave everything today,

The 32-year-old is without a club having brought down the curtain on nine years at Real Madrid by picking up a fifth Champions League winner's

"In big matches he delivered for us," said Wales manager Rob Page. "He did it against Austria (in the play-off semi-final) with two goals and he's done it tonight with a free-kick. Somebody with that quality, he always

AFP

جينتكو
Genetco



C.R. No. 1009680

MUSCAT	SALALAH
97693496, 96742452	79011363
Available at	
Major supermarkets & Electronic Retailers	

C.R. No. 1009680

SALAH
79011363

 www.genetco.net
 @GenetcoOman
 @GenetcoOman
 Genetco_Oman



Messi celebrates after scoring

At the World Cup finals in Qatar later this year Argentina are drawn with Saudi Arabia, Mexico and Poland.

Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo takes a feekick during their Nations League match against Switzerland on Sunday (AFP)

In Prague, Jakub Pesek put the hosts in front before Gavi levelled with a low curling left-footer at

"We lacked fluency so the game was really tough" shrugged

Spain reached the final of last year's Nations League, beating European champions Italy in the semis before losing to France, and they enjoyed a relatively smooth qualification for the World Cup. But they are now on the back foot in this competition and after their opening 1-1 stalemate with Portugal on Thursday are placed third in the group, two points adrift.



Oman Sail to host 2022 RS Venture Connect World Championships

Muscat – Oman Sail will host the 2022 RS Venture Connect World Championships in November.

The first exclusive para sailing championship to be held in Oman will take place from November 20 to 27 at the Barcelo Mus-sanah Resort. Around 36 teams from 15 nations will compete in the RS Venture boat, designed specifically for people with disabilities, including members of Oman Sail's SailFree team.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, Oman Sail CEO, said; "We are honoured to be chosen as the hosts of the RS Venture Connect World Cham-pionships and have the opportu-nity to welcome para sailors from around the world to Oman in No-

This is a huge step forward for the discipline in the region and will provide valuable training for coaches, race officials and classifiers which will help grow the sport in Oman

DR KHAMIS AL JABRI

vember. This is a huge step forward for the discipline in the re-gion and will provide valuable training for coaches, race officials and classifiers which will help grow the sport in Oman.

"The championships and Par-alympic Development Program (PDP) will be integral in support-ing the athletes as we build to-

wards our long-term goal of de-veloping a national parasailing team and continue to support World Sailing's campaign to rein-state sailing at the Paralympics in Los Angeles 2028," said Al Jabri.

Khamis al Anbouri, Oman Sail Commercial Director, said, "The RS Venture Connect World Championships will allow the

sailors from SailFree, the first parasailing programme in the re-gion, to gain valuable experience and compete against sailors from around the world on home wa-ters as we continue to make progress in the sport.

"We are also looking forward to hosting such a prestigious championship and furthering Oman's reputation as a world-class sailing venue, creating new pathways for staff and coaches to be part of this and future events, and share Oman's famous warm hospitality with our visitors."

Dan Jaspers, Head of Interna-tional Sales and Business Devel-opment for RS Sailing and the Manufacturer's Representative

for the RS Venture Connect Class stated: "I am very excited that the World Championship will be headed to Oman this year and I am happy that we have been able to partner with our friends at Oman Sail and their sponsors to make this event a reality.

"Having been to Oman on a number of occasions, I can say for certain that it will not only be the on-water competition that will be enjoyed by those taking part, but also the hospitality of the hosts and the culture of this amazing country," he added.

Those wishing to participate in the event should do so via the dedicated registration platform: <https://bit.ly/3Q5uFuB>

Ruthless Minjee Lee on path to 'golf greatness'

Sydney, Australia - Minjee Lee was hailed in Australia Monday as "on the path to greatness" after her composed victory at the US Women's Open, which her proud golfing brother Min Woo admitted brought tears to his eyes.

The 26-year-old from Perth raced to a four-stroke win in North Carolina to capture her second major following her breakthrough at last year's Evian Championship in France.

But it was the manner in which the world number four achieved the feat under huge pressure that won plaudits in her homeland, holding her nerve to finish with a 72-hole event record 13-under-par 271.

"Minjee Lee's ruthless US Women's Open victory proves this 'kid from Perth' is on the path to golf greatness," public broad-caster ABC said.

"Her performance in the final round... at Pine Needles must rank among the greatest in Aus-tralian golf history.

"Lee was brilliant in establish-ing her 54-hole lead, but the mental strength and physical skill required to close out the victory as she did is hard to quantify."

Lee, whose parents are from South Korea, captured her eighth LPGA title by holding off Ameri-can Mina Harigae to claim a record \$1.8 million top prize from a \$10 million purse, the richest in women's golf history.

Lee's brother Min Woo is also a professional golfer who plays on the European Tour, where he has posted two wins, and he too was in awe of his big sister.

"This one hits hard. Tears in my eyes," he tweeted alongside a picture of the pair as young children after phoning her during the trophy ceremony.

"So so proud. Just a kid from Perth. Two major wins to her name now."

The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* said Lee had earned the right to be recognised as "one of Aus-tralia's biggest sports stars".

AFP



Minjee Lee of Australia poses with the trophy after winning the US Women's Open at Pine Needles Lodge and Golf Club on Sunday (AFP)

Warholm injured , Thompson-Herah wins 100m

Rabat, Morocco - Karsten Warholm, the Olympic cham-pion and world-record holder in the 400m hurdles, pulled up in-jured on his return to competi-tion at the Diamond League meet in Rabat on Sunday, just weeks before the Norwegian star defends his world title.

After a blistering start out of the blocks, Warholm abruptly stopped after clipping the first hurdle, clutching the back of his right thigh.

By the time the rest of the field had finished the 26-year-old had placed ice on his right leg as coach Leif Olav Alnes looked on.

"I am very disappointed for this injury. I think it's a hamstring tear, I will focus on treating it and come back stronger. I also feel sorry for the crowd," said Warholm.



Elaine Thompson-Herah

There are less than six weeks left for the two-time defending world champion to recover be-fore the world championships in Eugene, Oregon from July 14-25.

American Khalifah Rosser went on to win the 400m hur-dles in 48.25 seconds.

Earlier, Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah eased to victory in the women's 100m.

The 29-year-old clocked 10.83sec to remain unbeaten this season, finishing ahead of Ivorian Marie-Jose Ta Lou in 11.04 and fellow Jamaican Natasha Morri-son, 11.22.

Thompson-Herah, a triple Olympic gold medallist in Tokyo over the 100m, 200m and 4x100m relay, could not improve on her season best 10.79sec achieved in Eugene a week ago.

"I feel amazing about the race

today," said the Jamaican.

"This is my third time in Rabat and I'm super excited about the new meeting record of 10.83. For the next event in Rome, I'm fol-lowing the same process and keeping up the same pace."

Morocco's Soufiane El Bakkali gave the home crowd a boost with a blistering performance on his way to victory in the 3,000m steeplechase, the final race of the evening.

The Olympic champion of-fered a new high-flying duel against his runner-up from Tokyo, the Ethiopian Lamecha Girma.

Stalled behind Girma, the Mo-roccan pulled ahead on the last lap and took advantage of the pace set by his rival to achieve a very fast time of 7min 58.28sec.

AFP

sifr
SODIUM FREE
DRINKING WATER

Eid Offer

30
REFILL
COUPONS

50
ONLY

• Hot & Cold
Dispenser

• 2 Full Bottles

12
REFILL
COUPONS

20
ONLY

• White Tap
Dispenser/
Tap Dispenser/
Manual Water
Pump/ Cradle
with Tap

• 2 Full Bottles

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

OASIS WATER COMPANY SAOC
P.O.Box: 87, Rusayl 124, Sultanate of Oman.

Offer valid from 1st April to 30th June 2022

MM No.: 07/30/2022 C.R.No.: 136545Z

mai alkaline

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

Toll-free **800 71 222** or
📞 **9275 5522**

oman
OASIS



and Roland Garros, the love affair continues

Rafael Nadal, a modest warrior with iron will to win, wins his 14th French Open title against all odds

Paris, France - There are three certainties in life - death, taxes and Rafael Nadal winning the French Open.

The Spaniard secured a 14th title at Roland Garros with a straight-sets rout of Casper Ruud on Sunday, swelling his record-setting Grand Slam collection to 22.

Nadal, the oldest ever champion in Paris at 36, now has 112 match wins on the famous crushed red brick against just three defeats in 17 years.

"He is a great champion, he is humble. He is the best athlete I have ever seen in any sport," another tennis legend, John McEnroe said in January when Nadal collected the Australian Open.

However, you will never hear Nadal indulge in any similar self-praise.

Just as happy fishing or playing golf in Manacor, Nadal is ruthless on the tennis court but disarmingly humble off it.

"I have doubts every day but that's good as it makes me work hard with more intensity," said Nadal, whose career has been

constantly under siege from knee, wrist and foot injuries.

"Life is never clear. If you have no doubts, then you are very arrogant. I am not an arrogant person."

It is that forthright modesty which endears Nadal to his legion of fans as is his respect for opponents.

I have doubts every day but that's good as it makes me work hard with more intensity. Life is never clear. If you have no doubts, then you are very arrogant

RAFAEL NADAL

Respect

He applauds every vanquished foe off court at every tournament.

When Alexander Zverev was forced to retire with an ankle injury in their semi-final on Friday, Nadal stayed with his tearful German rival in the medical room.

"If you are human, you have sympathy for a colleague," he explained.

Nadal's idiosyncracies are just

as charming to his supporters even if the time it takes him to complete his rituals can drive opponents to distraction.

His picking at the rear of his shorts and mopping of his brow, aligned with his obsessive devotion to lining up his water bottles, labels facing out, are part of the Nadal DNA.

His Grand Slam CV now boasts 14 French Opens, four US Open titles, two at Wimbledon and two at the Australian Open.

His 2008 Wimbledon final triumph over Roger Federer is widely regarded as the greatest ever final at the majors.

He has 92 career titles in total of which 63 have been on clay. As well as his 22 majors, he possesses 36 Masters.

Gold in singles at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing was followed by doubles gold at the Rio Games in 2016. He has also led Spain to five Davis Cups.

Along with Federer and Novak Djokovic, he has comfortably passed the \$100 million prize money barrier. Tennis has been good for Nadal but he has been just as influential as a key driver of the sport's growth.

'Great champion'

"I could probably tell you all the finals and who he has played and who he has beaten, because I watched them all on TV," said Ruud in the build-up to Sunday's final.

Nadal won an under-12 regional crown at age eight and by 12 had captured Spanish and European age-group junior titles.

By 15, he had turned professional and, two years later, won his first match against Federer.

At 19, he won the 2005 French Open on his debut.

Nadal has Wimbledon crowns in 2008 and 2010, an Australian Open title in 2009 and com-

pleted the career Grand Slam in 2010 by defeating Djokovic in the US Open final, becoming the youngest in the Open era to complete the four-event sweep.

Injuries have taken a toll throughout his career, however, costing him numerous Slam appearances.

A recurrence of a chronic left foot injury which has plagued him throughout his career almost saw him miss Paris this year as well.

Such is the pain that Nadal said he'd prefer to lose Sunday's final in exchange for a new foot.

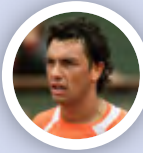
However, he's been here before. After he failed to even reach a Grand Slam semi-final in 2015 and 2016 many figured his best days were behind him.

But Nadal roared into the 2017 Australian Open final, losing to Federer, then captured a 10th French Open crown, setting the stage for another title run in the Flushing Meadows fortnight at the US Open in September.

"Never underestimate a great champion. Your incredible work ethic, dedication and fighting spirit are an inspiration to me and many others around the world," said Federer when Nadal snapped the tie for 20 Slams he shared with the Swiss and Djokovic in January.

AFP

RAFAEL NADAL'S 14 FRENCH OPEN TITLES



2005: BT MARIANO PUERTA (ARG)
6-7, 6-3, 6-1, 7-5

At just 19, Nadal became the youngest winner of a Grand Slam title since Michael Chang won at Roland Garros in 1989 at 17.



2006: BT ROGER FEDERER (SUI)
1-6, 6-1, 6-4, 7-6

Nadal became the first man to beat Federer in a Slam final, ending the Swiss star's hopes of holding all four majors at the same time.



2007: BT ROGER FEDERER (SUI)
6-3, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4

The 21-year-old Nadal became the first man since Bjorn Borg in 1980 to win three successive titles at Roland Garros.



2008: BT ROGER FEDERER (SUI)
6-1, 6-3, 6-0

Nadal condemned his great rival to his worst ever loss in a Grand Slam event. The Spaniard also won the title without losing a set.



2010: BT ROBIN SODERLING (SWE)
6-4, 6-2, 6-4

Nadal avenged his defeat to the Swede at Roland Garros 12 months earlier. Again, Nadal did it without having dropped a set.



2011: BT ROGER FEDERER (SUI)
7-5, 7-6, 5-7, 6-1

Nadal claimed his sixth French Open to equal the record of Borg, also taking his Slam total into double figures at 10.



2012: BT NOVAK DJOKOVIC (SRB)
6-4, 6-3, 2-6, 7-5

Nadal goes past Borg's record of six titles and ends Djokovic's bid to be the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to hold all four majors.



2013: BT DAVID FERRER (ESP)
6-3, 6-2, 6-3

Nadal comfortably beats his compatriot for an eighth French Open but the hard yards were achieved in the semi-finals against Djokovic



2014: BT NOVAK DJOKOVIC (SRB)
3-6, 7-5, 6-2, 6-4

Title number nine in his ninth final for Nadal and his 14th Grand Slam success on an afternoon where temperatures nudged 30 degrees.



2017: BT STAN WAWRINKA (SUI)
6-2, 6-3, 6-1

Nadal coasts to a record 10th French Open title, demolishing Wawrinka, which also earns the Spaniard a 15th Grand Slam crown.



2018: BT DOMINIC THIEM (AUT)
6-4, 6-3, 6-2

Nadal moves to 17 Grand Slam titles with a straightforward victory over Austrian Thiem despite needing treatment for a finger injury.



2019: BT DOMINIC THIEM (AUT)
6-3, 5-7, 6-1, 6-1

Nadal overcomes dropping the second set by racing to victory over Thiem for the second successive year.



2020: BT NOVAK DJOKOVIC (SRB)
6-0, 6-2, 7-5

Nadal demolished Djokovic to equal the all-time record of 20 Grand Slam titles held by Roger Federer.



2022: BT CASPER RUUD (NOR)
6-3, 6-3, 6-0

Nadal arrived at Roland Garros hampered by a left foot injury, and went back as the oldest male Roland Garros champion.



Poland's Iga Swiatek is in a class of her own, both in performance and rankings (AFP)

Champion Swiatek extends lead on top of WTA rankings

Paris, France - Poland's Iga Swiatek extended her lead at the top of the WTA rankings released on Monday after her French Open triumph in Paris over American Coco Gauff, who moves closer to the Top 10.

The 21-year-old Polish star took the world number one ranking after Australian Ashleigh Barty retired early in April.

And after claiming her 35th successive victory in Roland Garros, she now has over 4,300 points advance on new world number two Anett Kontaveit of Estonia.

Kontaveit climbed three spots despite her first round exit in Paris, benefiting from French Open title-holder Barbora Krejickova's early upset.

Gauff moves up 10 places to 13th.

American Jessica Pegula, loser in the quarter-finals to Swiatek, moves up three places into the Top 10.

French Open semi-finalists Darya Kasatkina of Russia and Italian Martina Trevisan moved up to 12th and 27th respectively.

AFP

WTA RANKINGS (TOP 10)

1. Iga Swiatek (POL) 8631 pts
2. Anett Kontaveit (EST) 4326 (+3)
3. Paula Badosa (ESP) 4245 (+1)
4. Ons Jabeur (TUN) 4150 (+2)
5. Maria Sakkari (GRE) 4016 (-2)
6. Aryna Sabalenka (BLR) 3966 (+1)
7. Karolina Plisková (CZE) 3678 (+1)
8. Jessica Pegula (USA) 3255 (+3)
9. Danielle Collins (USA) 3255
10. Garbiñe Muguruza (ESP) 3060

