

MTCIT earmarks RO890mn for strategic road projects

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) is implementing more than 240 projects listed under 19 programmes related to priority sectors of Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Saif bin Saeed al Sanani, the ministry's Director General of Planning, highlighted the commencement of 35 projects aimed at enhancing the vital sectors of transport, logistics, communications and information technology.

In the transport sector, the projects include development of alternative roads and specialised ports, and enhancing operational capacities of existing ports like Khasab, Shinas, Suwaiq and Dhalkut. Significant emphasis has been placed on collaborative efforts with the private sector, as seen with initiatives related to marine and land services such as marine crew replacements, ship repairs and luxury ship berthing areas.

"These endeavours not only aim to attract both domestic and international investments but also closely align with our broader goals of economic diver-



These projects are expected to fortify the nation's infrastructure, making it world-class and ensuring seamless interconnectivity across various logistics and economic sectors

DR SAIF BIN SAEED AL SANANI

sification, financial sustainability and job creation," Sanani informed.

Elaborating on the road projects, he said MTCIT has earmarked over RO890mn for

strategic road projects in the current Five-Year Plan. These projects are expected to fortify the nation's infrastructure, making it world-class and ensuring seamless interconnectivity across var-

ious logistics and economic sectors.

Sanani pointed out key ventures like the Sharqiyah Expressway, links to Batinah Expressway and dualisation projects of roads

in various governorates. Notably, the Rusayl/Nizwa road project, which is 70% complete, is slated for completion in the first quarter 2024.

Sanani emphasised the importance of digital initiatives being implemented in parallel.

"In the first half of 2023, 20% of our year-end goal for digitising government services has been achieved. Additionally, 68% of our year-end target for simplifying government procedures is already in place," he said.



Oman, S Korea ink MoU on green energy transition

Muscat - Oman signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with South Korea in the field of green energy transition on Sunday.

The MoU reflects the advanced status of bilateral relations and the two countries' keenness to consolidate cooperation in green energy transition. The MoU was signed by H E Salim Nasser al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Han Hwa-jin, Minister of Environment in Korea.

The MoU seeks to achieve better understanding of green transition policies and technologies, discuss various aspects of cooperation between the two countries' governments, industrial establishments, organisations and research institutions, and enhance coordination between the two sides at forums around the world.

The MoU encourages the two countries to cooperate in devising green transition policies and programmes and developing technologies for environment conservation during the production, storage, delivery and use of green energy. It also provides for building capacities to respond to the climate crisis.

The MoU covers cooperation in industries that contribute to green transition, research activities, development affairs and other areas related to green transition.

Oman is developing strategic plans for energy transition to help cut down carbon emissions, strike a balance between sustainable development and climate change, benefit from clean technology and diversify sources of energy in line with its 2050 carbon neutrality goals.

ASMED amends financing rules to bolster national economy

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has unveiled key amendments to regulations concerning financing for SMEs and craftsmen.

These changes are expected to spur local and international entrepreneurial initiatives, persuade potential entrepreneurs to commence and nurture their businesses, bolster the GDP, and subsequently enhance the national economy, ASMED stated.

One of the changes announced is raising of the loan ceiling from RO5,000 to RO20,000. Another noteworthy modification is in the maximum age limit of applicants, introducing specific age criteria for different financing programmes. Additionally, Article 14 of the previous regulation, which limited financing to 50% of the project value, has been annulled.

The new rules also offer a more adaptable approach, en-



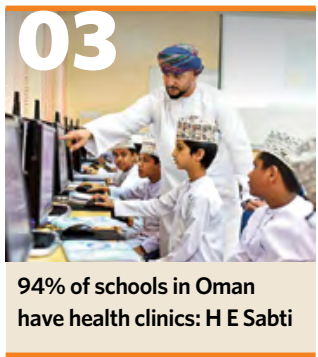
abling financing for projects not previously funded. To ensure transparency and clarity of roles, the regulation separates the responsibilities and accountabilities of ASMED and Oman Development Bank. It further stipulates the prerequisites for prospective entrepreneurs and craftsmen seeking financing.

For those keen on applying, there is a designated portal with a checklist of mandatory documents and details. Notably, the new regulations commit to a decision-making period of 60 days post application completion.

Other highlights include a grace period for due installments, disbursement mechanism and financing beneficiary obligations.

Recent data released by ASMED shows that 170 financing requests have been approved - valued at RO15,777,431 - till August 10. These are across four distinct programmes with the most being for industrial and service projects, which saw 110 applications being financed to the tune of RO11,490,905.

Muscat governorate led in the number of applications; 63 approved valued at RO4,996,762.



94% of schools in Oman have health clinics: H E Sabti



Colombian community wins fight to protect 'paradise'

Power outage reported in large parts of Musandam

Our Correspondent Muscat

Large parts of Musandam governorate were affected by power outage for most part of the day on Sunday.

Nama Electricity Distribution Company informed of the outage on its social media platforms, apologising to its subscribers who were affected 'by the emergency outage' in the wilayats of Dibba, Khasab and Bukha.

It further informed that its emergency teams were working to restore supply as soon as possible.

At around 5pm, the company

informed that supply to 75% of affected areas had been restored and 'assured everyone that technical teams are working with maximum efficiency to restore power'.

However, till 8pm large parts of the governorate remained without electricity supply.

Raed al Shehhi, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Musandam branch, demanded an explanation from the authorities. "What is the cause of this power outage? What is the role of the reserve station in Mahas? We demand financial compensation for all affected subscribers."



TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (NAMA WATER SERVICES) hereby announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2460879/2023	Construction of Sewer Network in Bausher - Package B7A (Main Trunk Sewer & Pumping Station)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	14/09/2023	30/10/2023
T/2460880/2023	Construction of Sewer Network in Bausher - Package B7B (Bausher & Bausher Heights)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	14/09/2023	30/10/2023
T/2460881/2023	Construction of Sewer Network in Bausher - Package B7D (Ansab)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	14/09/2023	30/10/2023
T/2460892/2023	Construction of Sewer Network in Bausher - Package B7E (South Azaibah)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	14/09/2023	30/10/2023
T/2456808/2023	Design, Supply, and Construction of Tanker Unloading Facility, Collection Tank, and Other Related Works for the Existing Sewage Treatment Plant in Haima	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	14/09/2023	2/10/2023

The applicants shall pay the tender fee through electronic payment gateway through Supplier Login. Applicants who are not registered with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) shall register from <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> to have the login credentials of Supplier portal. All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login). All participating Companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 3:00 pm on the bid submission date. Bid Bond must be obtained from a Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman and it should be addressed in favour of Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services). The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 3:00 pm on the date specified above.

For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om or Email to: tender@owwsc.nama.om



1442

www.owwsc.nama.om



MAKING MARRIAGE WORK



Shakila Javed
Lecturer

Spouses should extend more economic and social freedom to each other, and build a strong bond that is based on the principles of mutual cooperation and trust.

Manna Prasad
Church official

Marriage shouldn't be a fragmentation of lives but fermentation of love. Reduce friction; trouble shouldn't tumble us but make us bubble in love. Love till you can love no more. Love

should be the fuel that drives our ship towards fellowship. Marriages shouldn't resound with chants of discord but with cymbals of devotion. Maintain a noble, stable and reliable relationship. Never condemn, complain or criticise. Always trust, touch and talk. Forgive and forget, stop complaining and start appreciating.

Anjali
Blogger

Communication, acceptance, respect, empathy and forgiveness are the five main pillars of any relationship. Married individuals should al-

ways consider themselves a team and work towards making their marriage stronger and not get influenced by any other external factors.

Mohtesan Maqsood
Private sector employee

Mutual understanding, time for each other, and listening and talking with each other are important foundations of a strong and stable marriage. Don't rush to such a decision. Always remember the phase of your parents - how they brought you up and what they taught you.

The sultanate has witnessed a notable shift in its social landscape with a significant surge – of 8% - in divorce rate in 2022. There are many reasons for this complex problem, including the dwindling support system of extended families and the demands of professional life. As the nation grapples with this disturbing trend, it is now the time for young couples to communicate and devise strategies to resolve marital discord. What measures should young couples take to reduce chances of marital discord? Here's what *Muscat Daily* readers said –

Evris Theni
Private sector employee

Don't you have to put the reason for why you are divorcing on the paperwork? Maybe that information should be released first. Otherwise we are all just making random assumptions and giving our opinions without knowing what were the actual recorded reasons and the median length of time that couples were married before divorcing.

Sanarab Kazi
Housewife

For a successful marriage, practise understanding, selflessness, love, sacrifice, tolerance, togetherness and occasional playful arguments.

Afreen Mir
Private sector employee

Be open, have honest communication and willing to compromise. It can also be helpful to show appreciation for each other, spend qual-

ity time together, and make an effort to understand each other's needs and feelings. Remember, small gestures of love and kindness can go a long way in maintaining a healthy relationship. Don't compare your marriage or partner with anyone.

Subhan Salim Bhatkar
Sales executive

Mutual understanding, trust and the effort to make marriage work are important. Remember, divorce hurts Allah, too.

Sayyed Ashraf Ahmed
Sales executive

To mitigate the 8% rise in Oman's divorce rate, young couples should prioritise effective communication, active listening and conflict resolution skills. Pre-marital counselling, setting realistic expectations and maintaining individual identities, while nurturing the partnership are crucial. Regular quality time and a willingness to adapt and grow together can also foster a strong marital bond.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has announced a timetable to implement its decision requiring taxi owners to join licensed apps by October 1, 2023. Do you think the decision will make taxi services convenient and curb illegal transport?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram

SEND US ON OUR NEW WHATSAPP NO 91953774

sifr
SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

COOL SUMMER SPECIALS

50 ONLY

HOT & COLD DISPENSER

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 30 REFILL COUPONS

20 ONLY

WHITE TAP DISPENSER OR TAP DISPENSER OR MANUAL WATER PUMP OR CRADLE WITH TAP

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 15 REFILL COUPONS

Offer valid from 1st August to 31st October 2023.

C.R. No.: 1365452 1PM: 06/789/2023

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

Oman takes part in G20 trade, investment meet in India

Muscat - Oman participated in the ministerial meeting of the G20 Trade and Investment Ministers in Jaipur, India last week.

Oman's delegation at the meeting was headed by H E Qais bin Muhammad al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The meeting discussed issues related to trade and investment, the most important of which is supporting multilateral trade for global growth and prosperity, digitising trade (digital transformation in government services), building comprehensive and flexible trade, benefitting from technology to achieve global growth, managing supply chains, supporting small and medium enterprises and increasing their



competitiveness in global trade.

In his speech, Yousef indicated that one of the main goals of the G20 is to facilitate trade, adding that collective international efforts must be made to achieve sustainable global growth and to strengthen global supply chains

and electronic commerce. He stressed that the sultanate, under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, has made many achievements in various fields, including investment, logistics and digital transformation and in facilitating the investment environment by modernising the legislative system and infrastructure projects to keep pace with investment developments in the world.

He noted that the outcomes of the meeting will lead to clear benefits for Omani companies as they enter and expand their operations in global markets.

OHB gives RO86mn loans for subsidised housing

Muscat - Oman Housing Bank (OHB) sanctioned housing loans exceeding RO86mn in the first half of 2023. This disbursement enabled over 2,000 families across the sultanate to realise their dreams of home ownership.

Disbursing loans through its branches nationwide, the Rustaq branch led the effort with 515

loans, followed closely by the Muscat branch with 502 loans. Sohar, Nizwa and Salalah branches sanctioned 276, 267 and 92 loans respectively, while branches in Sur, Buraimi, Ibra and Khasab together facilitated over 360 loans.

"The surge in Oman's housing sector aligns seamlessly with our

broadier vision for urban development and progress. Our endeavour mirrors Oman Vision 2040's core principle: fostering modern urban communities while enhancing the lives of Omanis across the nation," said Moosa Masoud al Jadidi, CEO of OHB.

Since its establishment in 1977 through the end of 2022, OHB

has facilitated 52,000 loans, cumulatively valued at over RO1.4bn. "Our core objective remains elevating living standards. By offering subsidised housing loans to eligible citizens, we're fulfilling the government's mandate and actively contributing to the development of the housing sector," Jadidi added.



ESTABLISHED SINCE 1920

SEND USD WORLDWIDE FOR BUSINESS, EDUCATION, FIXED DEPOSITS & MORE

OMR 4 SERVICE FEE

SIMPLE | SECURE | SWIFT

SEND MONEY TO ANY BANK ACCOUNT IN UAE FOR CORPORATES AND INDIVIDUALS

OMR 2.5 SERVICE FEE

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE

شركة برشوتم كانجي للصرافة

OMAN'S EXCHANGE

www.gkschange.com

MoH prioritises student well-being

94% of schools in Oman have health clinics: H E Sabti

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Presence of health clinics in 94% of schools across the sultanate is a testimony of priority that Oman accords to health and well-being of children attending schools.

This was stated by H E Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, while noting that “school health remains pivotal in our health promotion strategy” given the fact that “our school-going population forms the very foundation of our society’s future”.

In alignment with this, the ministry, through its Department of School and University Health, endeavours to foster a conducive school environment for holistic student development - spanning physical, psychological, and social spheres.

Latest statistics show around 732 nurses are actively providing school health services.

Reflecting the nation’s forward-thinking ethos, the National School Health Strategy resonates with Oman Vision 2040’s objectives - establishing a globally benchmarked health system. This vision entails delivering comprehensive and equitable health care throughout Oman’s governorates.

For the academic year 2023-24, H E Dr Sabti elucidates the ministry’s plans to further elevate the health prospects of the school-going community. “Our intent is holistic. By nurturing our students, we indirectly uplift the general health of our entire community,” he said. The approach is comprehensive: School health awareness, mental health, nutrition, and family and community engagement, to name a few.

Notably, the ministry’s health blueprint for the upcoming year encompasses a myriad of programmes targeting students across different educational levels. H E Dr Sabti particularly highlighted three core initiatives -



(Supplied photo)

MoE employs 5,693 teachers for academic year 2023-24

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has announced the appointment of 5,693 educators for the academic year 2023-24.

Women dominate this new batch, constituting 4,953 or 87% of the appointees, while the male teachers’ strength stands at 740.

This major recruitment drive was initiated to meet the increasing educational requirements across diverse disciplines in various schools.

With the new session beginning, 60,840 educators returned to government schools on Sunday. Along with them, supervisors, administrative personnel, and support groups began their preparatory work,



We have introduced various mechanisms for welcoming new educators... introduction programme is tailored for them

DR SULAIMAN AL JAMUDI

ahead of the students’ arrival on Tuesday.

On the issue of recruitment, the ministry revealed that the Omanisation rate reached

87.5% for the teaching staff in government schools, distributed across 1,270 establishments. Notably, 11,509 administrative and technical roles in these schools have a near-complete Omanisation rate (99.8%). In the realm of special education, the figures remain impressive with 93.5% of the 284 teaching positions held by Omanis, while 85.4% of administrative roles are filled by local talent.

Dr Sulaiman bin Abdullah al Jamudi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, said, “We have introduced various mechanisms for welcoming our new educators,” he said, adding, “a standout initiative is the introduction programme tailored for them in their residential areas”.

expansive immunisation for children from grades 1 to 6, an all-encompassing health awareness and education programme, and initiative for health promotion in different schools.

He further outlined four early detection services offered by the ministry, ranging from comprehensive medical examinations for specific grades to specialised programmes for eye, oral, dental,

and ear health. Beyond school premises, university health is also on the agenda. The ministry laid out a variety of programmes tailored for higher education institutions.

MoSD partners with OMIFCO to boost social care initiatives

Muscat - In a move to strengthen the social care fabric of the country, the Ministry of Social Development has inked four agreements with the Oman India Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) with a commitment to invest RO130,000 for the upliftment of Oman’s vulnerable citizens.

The most prominent among the agreements is the funding of the ‘Kader’ programme. This initiative aims to extend educational assistance to families under social security and those grappling with financial constraints.

The remaining three agreements will ensure smooth procurement and distribution of



(ONA)

prosthetic devices via prominent NGOs. The beneficiaries of these accords will be the Omani Association for Persons with Disabilities, the Omani Association for Persons with Hearing Disabilities, and the Al Noor Association for the Blind.

H E Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development, and Qasim Mohammed al Balushi, Director of Strategic Planning for Sustainability at OMIFCO, were at the helm of formalising these agreements.

Heatstroke fear grows with rising temperatures

Muscat - The Directorate General of Meteorology has warned of a rise in temperature accompanied by an increase in humidity in Muscat and the coastal areas of Batinah, which may cause heatstroke.

Although the temperature in Seeb in Muscat governorate was 39°C on Sunday, the humidity was 85%. A noticeable rise in the apparent temperature will be witnessed as a result of high humidity in Batinah and Muscat.

According to the Met Department’s weather bulletin for Monday, isolated rains may be witnessed in the Al Hajar Mountains.

Dakhliyah announces design competition for 3 tourism projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Dakhliyah governorate, in a bid to bolster domestic tourism, has announced a competition inviting designs for the facelift of three of its iconic landmarks.

This competition welcomes entries from Omani nationals, students from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, the University of Nizwa, and entrepreneurs to present their ideas and designs for making Nizwa Public Park, Jabal Akhdar Park, and Al Hamra Park more striking.

The governorate emphasised the need for these designs to be adaptable for both electronic and print media platforms. While each entrant can present up to three designs, the governorate chose to retain the discretion to modify the winning design if deemed necessary.

Submissions should be rendered in both 3D and PDF formats, accompanied by an



(Supplied photo)

explanation outlining the design’s concept and the rationale behind the chosen colours, the announcement stated.

The competition offers a cash prize of RO3,000 to the victors. Aspiring designers are encouraged to email their entries to DakGo@dg.gov.om by September 30.

In tandem with this competition, the Dakhliyah governorate has displayed its keen interest in improving the region’s tourism infrastructure. The governor’s office is seeking bids for the establishment of two integrated

tourist complexes in the Jabal Akhdar and Bahla wilayats.

A tourist complex, spanning 27,873sqm, is envisioned for the Hail al Yemen neighbourhood of Jabal Akhdar. On the other hand, Bahla is set to house a sprawling integrated centre over a 50,000sqm area, boasting facilities like a mall, hotel apartments, a fuel station, and an artisan market.

Investors can anticipate a 50-year period for both projects, indicative of the governorate’s long-term commitment to tourism development.



Sultanate of Oman
سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender No.		Tender Name	
112/2023/MHT/HQ-22		Management and maintenance of the civil, mechanical and electrical installations of the Ministry's General Office building for the year (2024)	
113/2023/MHT/HQ-23		Providing cleaning services to the Ministry's general office 2024	
114/2023/MHT/HQ-24		Providing cleaning services for the Ministry's sites in Muscat Governorate for the year 2024	

Fees of Tender Documents For Local Company	25 O.R	
Fees of Tender Documents For SME	10 O.R	
Tender Document Sales End Date	27/8/2023	
Last Date for Bid Submission	10/10/2023	
Grade	112/2023/MHT/HQ-22	Excellent
	113/2023/MHT/HQ-23	Excellent, First
	114/2023/MHT/HQ-24	First, Second, Third, Fourth SME

E-Tendering Portal	https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
--------------------	---------------------------------------

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.

The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.

The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids

The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before 10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : sotic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085



عالي البروتين
و قليل السكر



Distributed by



Please contact +968 22060236/237

MARKET WATCH

MSX304,772.12
Sensex64,886.51

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian	214.53
Pakistan	787.94
Bangladesh	284.09
Philippines	147.11
Sri Lanka	842.55

*Rates as on August 27
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka orders lending rate cap

Sri Lanka's central bank has capped maximum lending rates after accusing commercial banks of failing to pass on benefits of a relaxed monetary policy to borrowers.

Colombo defaulted on its \$46bn foreign debt in April 2022 and most of its 22mn people endured months of food, fuel and medicine shortages, sparking civil unrest that eventually toppled then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

His successor Ranil Wickremesinghe has doubled taxes, removed generous subsidies on energy and sharply raised prices to shore up state revenue.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka reduced benchmark policy rates 450 basis points to 12% over June and July, but commercial banks had not correspondingly lowered their lending rates.

Oman's oil exports drop on reduced shipments to India

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's oil exports saw a 5.7% year-on-year decline in the first seven months of 2023, primarily due to a significant drop in shipments to India.

The sultanate's total oil exports decreased to 178.9mn barrels during the first seven months of 2023, compared to 189.7mn barrels recorded in the corresponding period last year, as per data released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Oman's oil exports to India, which was the second-largest buyer of Omani crude last year, plummeted by 90.1% to 2.71mn barrels in the January - July period of 2023, compared to 27.37mn barrels during the same period in 2022, the NCSI data showed.

India's crude oil imports from traditional Middle Eastern suppliers have significantly declined this year, largely due to increased imports of Russian oil.

However, the sultanate's oil exports to China, the largest buyer of Oman's crude, increased 12.8% in the first seven months of this year, reaching 163.1mn barrels compared to 144.7mn barrels in the corre-



Oman's total oil exports decreased 5.7% year-on-year to 178.9mn barrels during the first seven months of 2023

sponding period last year.

China accounted for approximately 91% of Oman's total oil shipments from January to July 2023.

On the other hand, Oman's oil exports to Japan and South Korea decreased during the first seven months of 2023. Exports to Japan fell by 20% to 5.84mn barrels, while exports to South Korea dropped by 78% to 1.95mn barrels this year.

2023, in comparison to the same period last year, according to NCSI data.

The daily average output increased marginally by 0.2% this year to 1.054mn barrels per day during the January-July period, compared to 1.052mn barrels per day for the same period in

Oman's oil exports to India dropped by 90% to 2.71mn barrels in the first seven months of 2023, compared to 27.37mn barrels during the same period in 2022

2022.

Of the sultanate's total oil production during the first seven months of 2023, crude output decreased by 1.5% year-on-year to 174.6mn barrels, while condensate production grew by 6.6% year-on-year to 48.9mn barrels.

The average price at which Oman sold its crude during the first seven months of 2023 remained 13.3% lower at \$80.5 per barrel, compared to \$92.8 per barrel achieved in the same period in 2022.

On Friday, the Oman crude price at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange increased by 1.4% to \$86.39 per barrel (for October delivery).

China halves stock trade tax to boost market

Beijing, China - China halved the stamp duty on securities transactions, state media reported Sunday, in an effort to restore confidence in the world's second-largest stock market as the country battles an economic slowdown.

The cut, which will take effect on Monday, is the country's first since 2008.

China's Ministry of Finance and its State Taxation Administration said in a joint statement the move was designed to "invigorate the capital market and boost investor confidence".

Chinese markets have eagerly awaited the reduction of the duty from its current rate of 0.1% after being shaken by slower-than-expected growth figures, as well as a property debt crisis, weak consumption and record youth unemployment.

The CSI 300 index of the top stocks traded on the Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges has fallen by around four per cent so far this year, following two consecutive years of declines, according to Bloomberg.

The fall can be partly blamed on China's slowing economic recovery following the pandemic. The stamp duty cut is expected to generate large transactions when trading resumes on Monday.

AFF



Aramco is undertaking investments to ramp up national production capacity to 13mn barrels per day by 2027

UN experts challenge Saudi Aramco over climate change

Geneva, Switzerland - UN experts have written to oil firm Saudi Aramco and its financial backers challenging them on allegations that their activities are fuelling climate change-related negative impacts.

A cache of correspondence was published Saturday on a United Nations human rights special procedures website, exactly two months after it was sent.

The letters said UN experts had received information "concerning Saudi Aramco's business activities... which are adversely impacting the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change".

The allegations accused Aramco of "maintained crude oil production, exploration for further oil and gas reserves, expansion into fossil fuel gas, and misrepresentation of information", the letters said.

"Such activities have negative impacts on the enjoyment of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment."

The letters to Aramco and its backers were sent by a number of experts including the UN working group on human rights

and transnational corporations, as well as UN special rapporteurs dealing with rights and climate change; a clean and sustainable environment; management of hazardous substances; and on safe drinking water and sanitation.

The UN experts also alleged Aramco's activities appeared to be "contrary to the goals, obligations and commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change", which was signed in 2015 and set the ambitious target of limiting the world to a temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

'Largest emitter' claim

The UN experts claimed these activities were funded by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, as well as 11 major international banks, investment banks and firms, which also received similar letters.

Letters also went to the home states of these companies: Britain, France, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Some of these letters were made public on Saturday.

The letters asserted that fossil

fuels account for more than 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and cited reports claiming that over half of such emissions could be traced to 25 fossil fuel business enterprises, "with Saudi Aramco ranking as the largest greenhouse gas emitter".

"Therefore, through its historic emissions, it is alleged that Saudi Aramco has already significantly contributed to adverse climate change-related human rights impacts.

"The company's current exploitation of fossil fuels and proposed business plans will continue to cause adverse climate change-related human rights impacts."

UN experts are unpaid independent figures who do not speak for the UN but are mandated to report their findings to it.

Aramco's "refusal to reduce its production of oil and gas - and continued exploration for more oil and gas - contributes to the risk of overshoot of the 1.5C carbon budget, with resultant significantly worsened climate change-related human rights impacts".

AFF

Sohar Freezone inks deal to establish industrial gases production facility

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar Port and Freezone on Sunday signed a land lease agreement with Air Care Systems Company (FZC) to establish a manufacturing unit for industrial and medical gases in Sohar Freezone.

Under the terms of this agreement, Air Care Systems Company will produce industrial and medical gases, including liquid oxygen, liquid nitrogen, and liquid argon. This advanced production unit will be powered by Air Separation Unit (ASU) technology, ensuring top-tier quality and efficiency.

The agreement signing ceremony took place in the presence of H H Sayyid Juland bin Jaifair Salim al Said, chairman of Pak Oman Investment Company, and Imran Chaudry, Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman, along with the executive management of Sohar Port and Freezone and Air Care Systems Company.



The project will be established on a land area of 15,000 sqm with an investment of \$10mn

Pak Oman Investment Company is the structural and financial advisor for the project.

Covering a land area of 15,000 sqm, the project is a convergence of Chinese and European technologies, backed by a robust \$10mn investment.

Leveraging natural air as a feedstock, the ASU project

manages power and fuel resources strategically for optimal production efficiency.

With a target daily production capacity of 110 tonnes per day, the project aims to extend its market reach across the GCC, Yemen, and the MENA region, positioning Oman as a key player in the gas manufac-

turing industry.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Ahmed Ali Babar, director of Air Care Systems, said, "Choosing Sohar Freezone to anchor this project was a strategic decision driven by the unparalleled opportunities it offers to investors. By leveraging the strategic advantages provided by Sohar Freezone and its proximity to key markets, this signing aligns with our vision to enhance the availability of critical gases locally, benefiting healthcare and industries."

The primary objective of Air Care Systems Company's project is to cater to the growing regional demand for industrial and medical gases while simultaneously reinforcing the self-reliance of the healthcare sector.

The project aligns with several objectives, including fostering industrial growth, supplying local contractors with essential gases, and promoting technological advancement.

UAE's BRICS membership will create huge economic opportunities: Minister

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Abdullah bin Touq al Marri, UAE's Minister of Economy, said that the UAE's inclusion into the BRICS group opens up significant development prospects thanks to the presence of a number of the world's fastest growing economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

"UAE's BRICS membership creates huge economic, trade, and investment opportunities that will bring about a paradigm shift not only in the BRICS coun-



Abdullah bin Touq al Marri

tries' economic environment, but also in the global economy," the minister said in statements

after the international bloc announced the UAE's BRICS membership last week.

Marri added, "Today's economic blocs are one of the most visible trends shaping the current and future economic landscape, and they would make a significant contribution to the global economy's stability and growth, the development of international trade and investment flows, and the flexibility of global supply chains."

He further explained that the membership in this new eco-

nomic bloc is becoming increasingly important as the UAE promotes its economic openness policy and grows its network of global commercial contacts.

"This development also promotes the establishment of new businesses in essential areas, which contributes to the long-term growth of the UAE economy and strengthens its positive and significant position in the global economy," the minister added.

WAM

India holds important place for efficient global supply chain: Modi

New Delhi, India - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that India holds an important place in building an efficient and trusted global supply chain.

In his keynote address at the closing session of B20 Summit 2023 in New Delhi on Sunday, Modi recalled how India supplied vaccines beyond its borders and became the 'Pharmacy of the World' during the "once-in-a-century pandemic".

"India holds an important place in building an efficient and trusted global supply chain," Modi said, referring to supply chain issues during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"When the world needed medicines, during the Covid pandemic, India, as the 'Pharmacy of the World', provided life-saving drugs to more than 150 countries. When the world needed a Covid drug, India enhanced production of its own vaccines to save the precious lives of millions across the globe," he said.

Advocating a sustainable approach to business, Modi said global businesses should understand that sustainability itself is



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the gathering at B20 Summit in New Delhi on Sunday (AFP)

an opportunity and a business model. He noted when lifestyle and business become pro-planet, problems are poised to decline.

The three-day B20 summit started on August 25. The theme for the event this year is 'R.A.I.S.E

- Responsible, Accelerated, Innovative, Sustainable and Equitable Businesses'.

The event this year logged the participation of over 1,500 delegates from 55 countries.

B20 Summit India brings pol-

icymakers, business leaders and experts from across the world to deliberate and discuss the B20 India Communique. The B20 India Communique includes 54 recommendations and 172 policy actions for submission to the

Modi calls for African Union to join G20

New Delhi, India - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Sunday for the African Union to be made a G20 member, while also pitching his country as the solution to supply chain woes ahead of the bloc's summit in New Delhi next month.

The Group of 20 major economies consists of 19 countries and the European Union (EU), making up about 85% of global GDP and two-thirds of the world's population - but South Africa is the only member from the continent.

In December, US President Joe Biden said he wanted the African Union "to join the G20

as a permanent member", adding that it had "been a long time in coming, but it's going to come".

On Sunday, current G20 host Modi also called for including the pan-African bloc, which collectively had a \$3tn GDP last year.

"We have invited the African Union with a vision to give permanent membership," Modi said at B20, a business forum and prelude to the September 9-10 G20 summit.

Headquartered in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, the AU at full strength has 55 members. AFP



Emerging markets rates start to diverge: Fitch

Muscat - The direction of policy interest rates in emerging markets has begun to diverge, Fitch Ratings said in a report.

The majority of central banks in emerging markets are either keeping interest rates on hold, while some are starting to cut rates, it said.

"Policy rates look to be on hold in Korea, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, India and Poland for now, while Brazil and Chile have recently cut rates, given their improving inflation outlooks and slowing activity, as past monetary tightening works through the economy," Fitch said.

Central banks in developed countries, on the other hand, continue to raise interest rates due to high and persistent core inflation, the report added.

The global rating agency, however, noted that central banks in emerging markets "remain vigilant" on inflation.

Google unveils changes as strict EU tech rules kick in

Brussels, Belgium - Google vowed to be more transparent about content moderation across its services, including its ubiquitous search engine, as tech firms rush to meet stricter European Union rules that kick in on Friday.

Sweeping rules started applying from Friday to Google, alongside 18 other large social media platforms and websites including Meta-owned Instagram, Twitter (rebranded as X) and TikTok, forcing the companies to better police content, or face the risk of billions of euros in fines.

Among the Google products listed were YouTube, Google Maps, Play, Search, and Shopping.

The wide-ranging Digital Services Act (DSA) means the EU will be able to get a closer peek at the 19 platforms - labelled as "very large" because they have at least 45 million monthly active users - and how



their algorithms work.

The DSA means stricter regulation on targeted advertising, and forces firms to implement a better mechanism to flag and remove illegal content.

Google's latest steps include expanding its "Ads Transparency Center", where users will find more information about targeting for ads in the European Union, and giving researchers more data access to understand how Google's products work in practice.

The measures were announced in a blog post by Laurie Richardson, Google's vice president for trust and safety, and

Jennifer Flannery O'Connor, YouTube's vice president for product management.

They also said Google would publish transparency reports with extra information about how content moderation has been handled for more of its services including Maps, Play, Search, and Shopping.

In the past weeks, the biggest tech companies including TikTok have announced the steps they have taken to comply with the DSA, vowing to give users more control over their feeds on popular social media websites like Instagram and Facebook.

AFP

Germany's economy stagnates

Frankfurt, Germany - Germany's economy stagnated in the second quarter, final official data confirmed, adding to a bleak outlook as the country battles an industrial slowdown and stubborn inflation.

Europe's biggest economy registered zero growth from April to June compared to the previous quarter, according to complete data from the federal statistics agency Destatis.

Preliminary data released last month showed the same reading, and it was in line with a forecast from analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet.

By registering flat growth, Germany officially exited a downturn that it fell into around the turn of the year after the economy contracted for two straight quarters, the technical definition of a recession.

The economy was supported by improved consumption and rising investments but exports - a key contributor to German GDP - fell slightly.

The data will bring little com-



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (right) stands next to Economy Minister Robert Habeck at the Chancellery in Berlin on August 23, 2023 (AFP)

fort to policymakers battling myriad economic fires.

These range from still-high inflation that began surging when Russia invaded Ukraine, to lacklustre exports as key markets such as China face trouble, weakness in manufacturing and the impact of interest rate rises.

"We continue to see economic difficulties triggered by the aftermath of the energy crisis, the (European Central Bank's) necessary fight against inflation and the weakening of

important global economic partners," said German Economy Minister Robert Habeck in a statement.

"The restrictive interest rate environment and weak global economy - especially developments in China - are making it difficult for us as an exporting nation."

The IMF has forecast that Germany will be the only major advanced economy to shrink this year.

ING economist Carsten

Brzeski said the data will "do very little to end the debate on Germany being the new sick man of Europe."

"In fact, both the short-term and the longer-term outlook look anything but rosy."

Habeck, however, insisted that, in the domestic economy, the "first rays of hope" were becoming visible.

"Net incomes have recently risen slightly in real terms, private consumption has stabilised, the inflation rate is continuing to fall," he said.

Earlier this week, the Bundesbank central bank added to the flurry of bleak assessments, predicting Germany's "lacklustre" economy will continue to stagnate in the third quarter.

It is "still experiencing a period of weakness", the bank said in its monthly report.

Germany's annual inflation rate slowed to 6.2% in July, mainly on the back of falling energy prices, but it is still far above the ECB's two-per cent target.

AFP

Ecuador banned Amazon oil, but Brazil's Lula wants to drill

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - The timing spoke volumes: just as Ecuador announced its historic decision to halt oil drilling in a sensitive Amazon rainforest reserve, Brazil trumpeted its massive fossil-fuel investment plans - which include oil exploration near the mouth of the Amazon river.

Oil is an increasingly uncomfortable subject for Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who casts himself as a climate crusader, but also faces criticism for his plans to grow Latin America's biggest economy with fossil fuels.

Brazil's climate contradictions got a glaring spotlight Monday, after Ecuador announced voters had decided in a first-of-its-kind referendum to halt oil drilling in the biodiverse Yasuni National Park.

"We hope the Brazilian government will follow Ecuador's example... and leave the oil in the Amazon estuary underground," Marcio Astrini, head of the Cli-

mate Observatory, a coalition of environmental groups, said in a statement.

Brazil, home to 60% of the Amazon, also faced criticism when it hosted a high-profile summit this month on the world's biggest rainforest, where Lula and other regional leaders ignored calls to adopt Colombian President Gustavo Petro's pledge to stop oil exploration.

Just hours after Ecuador's referendum result was announced - winning praise from climate campaigners worldwide - Lula's office sent out a press release from the energy ministry touting his administration's plans to invest 335bn reais (\$69bn) in the oil and gas sector in the coming years.

The ministry wants state-run oil company Petrobras to explore offshore block "FZA-M-59," near the estuary where the Amazon river, the rainforest's pulsing aorta, empties into the Atlantic.

The project has triggered a battle within the Lula administra-



Aerial picture of the Ishpingo oil platform of state-owned Petroecuador in Yasuni National Park, northeastern Ecuador, taken on June 21, 2023 (AFP)

tion.

After the environmental protection agency, IBAMA, denied Petrobras an exploration license in May, citing a lack of environmental studies, the attorney general's office said Tuesday the studies were "not indispensable" and called for a reconciliation

process.

Lula's big-oil 'dream'

Veteran leftist Lula returned to office in January vowing to protect the Amazon, a vital resource against climate change, after four years of surging destruction under far-right ex-president Jair

Bolsonaro (2019-2022).

But the 77-year-old ex-metalworker has also said he is "dreaming" of striking oil off northern Brazil.

Guyana, Brazil's small neighbor to the north, has made billions since 2019 drilling in nearby waters, earning the nickname

"South America's Dubai."

But the Brazilian project has drawn protests from environmentalists, Indigenous groups and residents of Marajo, the island at the heart of the Amazon estuary.

They say oil drilling could be catastrophic for an environmentally sensitive region known for its mangroves, wildlife, vibrant fishing communities and connection to the rainforest.

"Most of the planet is suffering the consequences of plundering nature for riches," said Indigenous leader Naraguassu, 60, whose people, the Caruana, believe the spot where the Amazon meets the Atlantic is sacred.

"Temperatures are rising. The Earth is telling us something is wrong," she told AFP.

Luis Barbosa of the Marajo Observatory, a local rights group, emphasized that rising sea levels caused by global warming threaten places like the Amazon estuary.

"Continuing to burn fossil

fuels puts the very existence of Marajo at risk," he said.

'Energy frontier'

Petrobras says the project "will open an important energy frontier" and contribute to a "sustainable energy transition."

It points out the proposed exploration site is more than 500 kilometers (300 miles) from the mouth of the Amazon, and says it has "robust" containment procedures in case of an oil spill.

But Brazil, the world's eighth-biggest petroleum producer, is already self-sufficient in oil, says Suely Araujo, senior public policy specialist at the Climate Observatory. "There's simply no reason to insist on exploring for oil in sensitive areas. We're in a climate crisis," she told AFP.

She knows the conflict well: as head of IBAMA, the environmental agency, from 2016 to 2019, Araujo rejected French oil giant Total's bid to explore the same region, on similar grounds.

AFP

Oman's leading international food, hospitality event to begin on Sept 18

The 16th edition of the Food and Hospitality Oman (FHO) is all set to begin on September 18 in Hall 4 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

To highlight the immense potential within Oman's dynamic food and hospitality industry, the sultanate is poised to host the much-anticipated annual event to be organised by CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organizing Company LLC).

The three-day event from September 18 to 20 will witness the convergence of more than 150 local and global exhibitors and 14 participating countries, said a press statement, adding that the FHO is anticipating a footfall of over 5000 attendees.

'With the local government playing a proactive role in boosting the tourism landscape, the hospitality domain has gained heightened prominence in Oman. This strategic emphasis aligns with the sector's anticipations of substantial expansion,' the organisers said.

To be inaugurated under the auspices of H E Dr Saud bin Hamood bin Ahmed al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries,



Wealth and Water Resources of Oman, the event will host venerable delegates from different ministries, industry veterans, and

high-ranking dignitaries hailing from distinguished companies.

Annually organised under the patronage of the Ministry of

Agriculture, Fisheries, Wealth, and Water Resources, Oman Air Catering is on board as the Host Organization for FHO; and the

event is supported by A'Saffa Foods SAOG as Poultry Sponsor.

Commenting on the significance of the Food & Hospitality

Oman 2023 for the hospitality sector in Oman, Dr Khalid Mubarak al Zuhaihi, Head of Research, Studies, and Statistics Section, Food Safety and Quality Centre, said that the country's hospitality and food industry has been facing a genuine challenge to keep pace with the rapid developments in the global food and hospitality sector.

"Food and Hospitality Oman 2023 represents a crucial opportunity for stakeholders to engage with leading global companies and benefit from modern innovations in the field and enhance human resources efficiency. The private sector's participation in this event is part of its contribution towards realising The Ministry's vision of enhancing food security, as well as the quality and safety of food in the Sultanate of Oman."

An important highlight of the event will be the FHO Knowledge Hub which will feature an array of seminars and conferences led by industry luminaries. Scheduled to take place from 11.00am to 6.00pm on all three days, the sessions are free to attend, and will delve into Oman's hospitality

landscape, highlighting aspects of tourism, hospitality management and marketing, and other hospitality services. All individuals attending will be granted CPD accredited certificates.

Creating a thriving ground for exhibitors to amplify brand visibility, engage in meaningful dialogues, and form strategic partnerships, FHO's dynamic platform will bring together professionals from different sectors that include agriculture, aquaculture, food, and packaging.

Visitors, on the other hand, can take the opportunity to gain insights into the latest market trends, cutting-edge concepts, and product innovations, as well as network with industry experts.

To ensure a captivating experience for attendees, FHO will also host the Oman Qahwa Competition which will showcase the country's finest Qahwa makers. The competition will be a true testament to cultural heritage and expertise where contestants will be evaluated on their knowledge of Qahwa history, its preparation techniques using traditional utensils, Qahwa serving etiquette, and taste.



ISM organises 7th edition of Model United Nations

The seventh edition of the Indian School Muscat Model United Nations Conference-2023 (ISM-MUN 2023) was convened on August 17 and 19 with over 600 delegates, 40 Dais Members, 30 topics, and 17 committees participating in the two-day event.

Model United Nations is an academic replication of the United Nations, wherein students endeavour to unravel real-world issues with the strategies and perspectives of their assigned country, as delegates hail from them.

In the inaugural ceremony, the chief guest of the occasion, Mohammad Imran Khan, treasurer, school management committee (SMC), reiterated the importance of fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and inclusive environment.

The platform of United Nations would occupy the student community with comprehensive and practical resolutions to the problems that they deliberated representing the world leaders.

Officiating Principal Saji S Nair extended his appreciation and

encouragement for achieving the radiant objectives of Model United Nations which undoubtedly encourage the student community to embark upon world peace.

Secretary-General Justus Sebastian, while declaring conference open, highlighted that in a world often beset by challenges, the Model United Nations serves as a beacon of hope - a testament to the belief that when diverse perspectives converge, they create a mosaic of solutions that can shape our shared destiny.

The delegates were divided into 15 committees namely DISEC, UNSE, UNEP, WHO, UN-OOSA, UNW, UNODC, UNHRC, Unicef, UNODC, NATO, and ICJ, AIPPM, PC, HCC and were allocated countries. They deliberated a wide range of topics ranging from Countering Transnational Organised Crime and Legal Drug Traffic, Chemical Industry Disasters and Protecting Marine Life across the Globe.

Chief guest of the closing ceremony Aleem Mohiuddin, Chair

IT Subcommittee, Indian School Muscat appreciated the hard work and commitment that each student has put in showcasing their leadership qualities. He urged the student community to grab any occasion that would unveil their skills in diplomacy and negotiation, opening the gateways of reconciliation in peace-building. On the final day, after the committee sessions, the delegates of each committee, who displayed exceptional skills were commended by their respective Dias members.

Ooredoo offers Smart Pay Service for 'safest' online payment

Thanks to Ooredoo's all-new Smart Pay service, using your phone abroad has never been easier! Want to quickly and securely pay your phone bill online while travelling overseas? Now you can, because on top of the many ways to pay online for your Ooredoo services, you now have the choice to pay by card, including Visa and Mastercard, through Ooredoo's digital channels, including the Ooredoo MyAccount page and eShop.

It is that simple and easy-breezy for you to enjoy a seamless and effortless trip to wherever in the world!

Ooredoo is committed to evolving their already hassle-free digital customer experience by swiftly responding to trends, understanding the

needs and expectations of customers, and incorporating their feedback. The Smart Pay feature is quick and easy to use for those with busy lifestyles, and paying by card is a convenient and easy way to settle phone bills while abroad.

By leveraging cutting-edge technologies and providing outstanding connectivity, accessibility and consistent round-the-clock support across all touchpoints, Ooredoo creates a seamless omnichannel digital experience to upgrade the world of their customers.

Providing flexible solutions and the ability to choose a plan that suits individual objectives or lifestyle, Ooredoo is there to meet everyone's expectations.

Malabar Gold launches its first manufacturing unit in India's Bengal



Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer in the world with over 325 showrooms in 11 countries, has launched its first state-of-the-art jewellery manufacturing facility in West Bengal, India.

The manufacturing unit, built with an investment of US\$18mn, was inaugurated by Dr Shashi Panja, a minister in West Bengal

holding independent charges of Industries, Commerce & Enterprises, Child Development and Women Development & Social Welfare Department.

Malabar Group chairman M P Ahammed, group's India Operations managing director O Asher and executive director Nishad A K attended the event along with other senior members of the

company, dignitaries and well-wishers.

Located at Gems and Jewellery Park, Ankurhati in Howrah district and spread over 50,000sqft, the manufacturing unit employs over 850 people to produce a varied range of exquisitely crafted jewellery including gold, diamonds, precious gemstones, and diamonds.

OTM brings elegant drapes for unique personality

Naseejoman, the flagship brand of Oman Textile Mills (OTM), has been defining the fashion landscape of Oman and GCC for over three decades with its wide range of Womenswear designs, colours, and prints.

Each design is a woven tale of modernity that entwines with Oman's rich culture and heritage to offer a range of exquisite dress materials that provide comfort, versatility, and style, empowering women to embrace and express their individuality.

Emphasising on the brand's commitment to empowering women through fashion, Huda al Falahi, of OTM, says, "Today's woman knows what she wants. She is strong and independent, who uses her style as a means of self-expression and empowerment. Our aim is to ensure we continue to inspire and do our bit to support women achieve this sense of unique style through our designs."

Faseem P P, the Chief Marketing Officer of Oman Textile Mills,



adds, "Our highly experienced in-house team of experts carefully curate designs that seamlessly blend ethnic charm of the Sultanate's rich culture and tradition with evolving modern flair in the fashion landscape. Our mission is to empower every woman to feel beautiful, confident, and comfortable as she continues to scale new heights every day."

Made from the finest, luxurious High Twist Cotton and spun Polyester yarns NaseejOman's highly popular Voile creations

are brought to life through Flat Bed and Digital printing machines. Be it 100% Cotton or Polyester Voile, 100% Cotton Cambric, Lawn, and Satin or 100% Silk Satin, Chiffon, and Georgette, all come in multitude of captivating hues and designs, offering the best in fashion, comfort, and versatility.

The in-house design and technical teams offer a bespoke service that can help you create co-branded textile products that include laysoo, lihaaf, and

Scarves, all tailor-made to meet every fashionista's requirement.

All materials are meticulously manufactured in the mill in Rusayl, Muscat, which houses an impressive set up of state-of-the-art European production lines, including the best Shuttleless Projectile Looms in its weaving department. Explaining the stringent manufacturing process, Devraj Mehta, Factory Manager, Oman Textile Mills - says, "Equipped with cutting-edge dyeing and finishing machines, as well as screen and digital printing technologies in its Process House, OTM leaves no stone unturned in its quest for excellence."

"With an annual processing capacity of 6mn metres, OTM possesses the remarkable ability to dye and print a wide range of fabrics comprising various fabrics such as cotton, polyester, silk, and viscose. In addition, the mill is outfitted with specialised machinery designed to create high-value embellishments."

Three US Marines killed in air crash in Australia during drills

Darwin, Australia - Three US Marines were killed on Sunday when an Osprey aircraft crashed on a remote tropical island during war games north of the Australian mainland, US military officials said.

Rescue workers toiled in fading light to evacuate survivors from the isolated crash site, with US officials saying five crew members had been flown to Royal Darwin Hospital in a 'serious condition'.

The US Marine Rotational Force in Darwin said there were 'a total of 23 personnel on board' at the time of the crash and Australia's military said only Americans were involved. Rescue efforts were complicated by the location of the crash - the remote and sparsely populated Melville Island about 60km (37 miles) north of the nearest city, Darwin.

The Osprey - a mix between a helicopter and a plane - was taking part in the Predators Run exercises, a series of warfighting drills involving thousands of soldiers from the US and Australia, as well as other militaries such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Defence Minister Richard Marles extended their 'deepest condolences' to the US military.

"This incident is a reminder of the significance of the service undertaken by our personnel and those of our partner nations," they said in a joint statement.

Albanese earlier described the



A Care Flight helicopter is seen on the tarmac of the Darwin International Airport in Darwin on Sunday, as rescue work is in progress (AFP)

crash as 'tragic' and 'regrettable' but stressed that authorities were still trying to piece together what had happened.

"We want to make sure that any information that is provided is absolutely accurate," he told reporters. "This is a difficult incident, we are responding fully, and our priority is on providing every assistance possible."

Local authorities said Royal Darwin Hospital had activated its highest emergency alert as intensive care staff braced for the influx of injured crew.

Northern Australia has become an important staging ground for the US military in recent years, as Washington and Canberra work

together to counter China's growing clout in the Asia-Pacific region.

Troubled aircraft

Investigators will now begin piecing together what led to the crash on Melville Island, known for coral reefs, pristine beaches, and the vibrant culture of its Indigenous-Australian inhabitants.

The Osprey aircraft has a troubled history, blighted by a string of fatal crashes over the years. Four US Marines were killed in Norway last year when their V-22B Osprey aircraft went down during NATO training exercises.

Three Marines were killed in 2017 when an Osprey crashed after clipping the back of a trans-

This is a difficult incident, we are responding fully, and our priority is on providing every assistance possible

ANTHONY ALBANESE

port ship while trying to land at sea off Australia's north coast.

And 19 Marines died in 2000 when their Osprey crashed during drills in Arizona.

The US Army earlier this year temporarily grounded all pilots who were not involved in critical missions, forcing them to complete further training after a series of safety incidents.

Ospreys are rapidly quick tilt-rotor aircraft that combine the features of both helicopters and turboprop planes, according to the US Air Force. The hybrid aircraft has two swivelling engines positioned on fixed wingtips that allow it to land and take off vertically, but also travel much faster than a conventional helicopter.

Sunday's incident follows a fatal training crash last month, in which four Australians died when their Taipan helicopter plunged into the sea during a series of multinational war games in Queensland.

AFP

Shelling kills one child in Malian city of Timbuktu

Bamako, Mali - Shelling killed one child and wounded at least two other people in the ancient Malian city of Timbuktu on Saturday, a local official and a hospital source told AFP.

"On Saturday... at 5:30pm, armed terrorist groups... targeted the town of Timbuktu with a shell that fell near the market not far from the (Malian Solidarity Bank)", said an army spokesman. Four civilians were taken to hospital.

A local elected official said two shells launched by 'terrorists' had 'crashed in the city centre of Timbuktu' and killed an 11-year-old girl.

One of those wounded was a four-year-old girl, the official said.

"We confirm the death of a little girl - we have launched an appeal for a blood donation," one of the hospital sources said.

On Monday, local officials told AFP that Islamist fighters had had the city under blockade for several days.

Earlier this month, social media messages attributed to a commander from the Al Qaeda-affiliated Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) said it had 'declared war' on the Timbuktu region.

AFP

BOG SNORKELLING



A competitor takes part in the World Bog Snorkelling Championships held at the Waen Rhydd peat bog, Llanwrtyd Wells, Mid Wales, on Sunday. The race is held along a 55-metre bog trench, in which the contestants must complete two lengths. Conventional swimming strokes are not allowed, though snorkels and flippers are mandatory (AFP)

Myanmar expels top East Timor diplomat

Bangkok, Thailand - Myanmar's junta on Sunday ordered the expulsion of East Timor's top diplomat in the country over a meeting his government held with a banned shadow administration.

The Southeast Asian nation has been locked in crisis since the military seized power in February 2021, ending a brief experiment with democracy and sparking violent clashes.

The military has designated the shadow administration known as the National Unity Government (NUG) - dominated by exiled lawmakers working overseas to overturn the coup - as a terror organisation.

Last month, East Timor's President Jose Ramos-Horta met with NUG foreign minister Zin Mar Aung in the capital Dili.

On Sunday, Myanmar's ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the 'irresponsible actions' of East Timor, ordering the country's Charge d'Affaires in Yangon 'to leave no later than 1 September 2023'.

The ministry said in a Facebook post that East Timor was 'encouraging the terrorist group to further committing their violations in Myanmar'.

East Timor condemned the expulsion order.

AFP



President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa looks on as he addresses a press conference at State House in Harare on Sunday (AFP)

Zimbabwe leader hails 'mature democracy' after disputed re-election

Harare, Zimbabwe - President Emmerson Mnangagwa on Sunday called Zimbabwe a 'mature democracy' after winning a second term in office despite the opposition rejecting the result of a vote that international observers said fell short of democratic standards.

Mnangagwa, 80, won 52.6 per cent of the ballots against 44 per cent for his main challenger, Nelson Chamisa, 45, according to official results announced late on Saturday by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

"We have demonstrated that we are a mature democracy," the president said, praising a high turnout. "We take pride in the fact that we are an independent and sovereign nation."

Zimbabweans voted on Wednesday and Thursday for president and parliament in polling marred by delays that sparked opposition accusations of rigging and voter suppression.

Promise Mkwanzani, a spokesman for Chamisa's Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), said the party did not sign the final tally, which he described as 'false'.

"We cannot accept the results," he told AFP, saying the party would soon announce its next move.

The vote has been watched across southern Africa as a test of support for Mnangagwa's ZANU-PF party, whose 43-year rule has been accompanied by a moribund economy and charges of authoritarianism.

Foreign monitors announced on Friday that the elections had failed to conform to regional and international standards.

Observer missions from the European Union, the Commonwealth and the 16-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) listed a number of concerns, including the banning of opposition rallies, issues with the voter registration rolls, biased state media coverage and voter intimidation.

That did not stop Mnangagwa from thanking 'various election observation missions who have been witnessing our electoral processes without bias'.

AFP

Years of coal plant expansion torment Turkey's villagers

Soma, Turkey - Kneeling in the morning shade under a tree, Osman Arslan brews tea behind a coal-fired power plant that rises above his Turkish Aegean village like a beast.

Having just returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca with his wife, the middle-aged man recalls the golden days when there was no thermal power plant in Soma. His olive trees were much healthier back then, Arslan says as smoke from the fire he lit for his tea mixes with that rising from the plant's smokestacks.

Since at least 300 people died here in Turkey's worst mining disaster in 2014, hardly anyone supports the Soma plant. Yet like others belching pollution across the vast country, it has used up most of the local coal and is looking to expand in search for more.

This has led to protests and occasional attempts by locals to physically block the expansion.

Villagers and environmental activists have been locked in



Turkish farmers pose in their corn field situated close to the Afsin power plant, at Afsin, in Turkey on August 22 (AFP)

clashes with the police in the southwestern Mugla province since their plant began cutting down trees and olive groves in search for more coal last month.

Human cost

An AFP tour of five Turkish coal-

fired power plant villages witnessed the high human cost of relying on the outdated, highly polluting energy source.

Olive trees in the Aegean town of Milas, and tomatoes and beans in the southeastern Afsin plain, are no longer flourishing, while respiratory diseases have become the most life-threatening problem in southwestern Yatağan. The Yatağan plant, one of Turkey's oldest, emits a heavy methane smell that permeates the air. Visible layers of dust cover trees and gardens.

AFP

Fukushima discharge: Japan reports phone harassment

Tokyo, Japan - Tokyo has urged Beijing to 'ensure the safety of Japanese residents in China' after a wave of telephone harassment targeting businesses in Japan sparked by the controversial discharge of Fukushima wastewater.

While Japan insists the release of the treated water is safe - a view backed by the UN's nuclear watchdog - China has staunchly opposed it and banned all Japanese seafood imports, saying it contaminates the ocean.

The Japanese government on Sunday published new data showing waters off Fukushima continued to post radioactivity levels well within safe limits.

Calls from China began flooding Japanese businesses from Thursday, when operator TEPCO started releasing water used to cool the stricken nuclear reactors at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

Japanese businesses and groups, ranging from a concert hall in Tokyo to an aquarium in northern Iwate, reported that they had started receiving so many calls from Chinese speakers that they had difficulty conducting normal operations.

Hiroyuki Namazu, a senior Japanese diplomat in charge of Asian and Oceanian affairs, voiced his regret about the calls and told senior officials at the Chinese embassy in Tokyo to call for calm in China, the Japanese foreign ministry said in a statement late on Saturday.



Police and security personnel stand outside the entrance of the Japanese embassy in Beijing on Saturday (AFP)

Calls from China began flooding Japanese businesses from Thursday, when operator TEPCO started releasing water used to cool the stricken nuclear reactors at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant

Similar incidents have also occurred in China against Japanese facilities, Namazu told Chinese embassy officials, according to

the statement.

"We strongly urge the Chinese government to take appropriate measures, such as calling

on its citizens to act calmly, and to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of Japanese residents in China and Japanese diplomatic missions in China."

Tokyo's embassy in Beijing has separately urged its nationals there to refrain from speaking loudly in Japanese.

A Fukushima businessperson told the Kyodo news agency that his four restaurants and pastry shops received a total of about 1,000 calls on Friday, mostly

from China.

His businesses had to unplug their phones, Kyodo said.

Fukushima city mayor Hiroshi Kohata said in a Facebook post on Saturday that the city hall had received around 200 similar calls in two days, while local schools, restaurants and hotels also became targets.

"I will report this to the Japanese government and demand action," he wrote in his post.

AFP



This video grab shows a press conference screen displaying a handgun found on the scene of a shooting in Jacksonville, Florida on Saturday (AFP)

Florida gunman driven by racial 'hate' kills 3: Authorities

Washington, US - A white man driven by racial hatred shot dead three Black people in a Florida discount store on Saturday before taking his own life after a standoff with police, authorities said.

"He targeted a certain group of people and that's Black people. That's what he said he wanted to kill. And that's very clear," Jacksonville Sheriff TK Waters told a news conference about the gunman, who was in his early 20s.

According to the sheriff's office, the shooter, who has not yet been identified, entered a Dollar General store wearing a tactical vest, armed with an AR-style rifle and a handgun. Manifestos discovered by the gunman's family shortly before the attack 'detail the shooter's disgusting ideology of hate', Waters said, and at least one of the guns had hand-drawn swastikas on it.

The shooting took place near Edward Waters University, a historically Black college in the southern US state.

The university said in a state-

ment that the shooter had been on campus earlier that day, though no one was harmed.

"An on-campus Edward Waters University security officer engaged an unidentified male in the vicinity of the Centennial Library on campus," it said.

"The individual refused to identify themselves and was asked to leave."

The university added that the individual - later identified as the shooter - left 'without incident'.

The FBI will investigate the shooting as a hate crime, said Sherri Onks, the bureau's special agent for Jacksonville, a city of nearly one million in the northeast corner of the state.

There was no evidence the shooter was part of a larger group, officials said.

"We know that he acted completely alone," Waters said.

Mass shootings have become common across the United States, with easy access to firearms in most states and more guns in the country than citizens.

AFP

North Korea lets citizens abroad return in easing of COVID curbs

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea has allowed citizens stranded abroad by its strict COVID curbs to return home, state media reported on Sunday, as the country moves towards a full reopening after three years of pandemic isolation.

The country had sealed its borders since early 2020 to protect itself from COVID-19, which prevented even its own nationals from returning. But there have been increasing signs of a shift in border control in recent weeks, including the resumption of international commercial air travel.

In a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency, the State Emergency Epidemic Prevention Headquarters said North Korean citizens abroad had been allowed to return home



Pedestrians use umbrellas as they walk along Pothongmun Street in Pyongyang on August 11 (AFP)

in line with 'the eased worldwide pandemic situation'. "Those returned will be put under proper medical observation at quarantine wards for a week," it added.

The move signals that North

Korea will shift its stringent COVID policy and gradually ease quarantine measures, Cheong Seong-chang, a researcher at the Sejong Institute, told AFP.

"With the latest announce-

ment, it's expected that a large-scale return of North Koreans will be made via the land route as well," he added.

Last month, high-level Chinese and Russian delegations visited Pyongyang for a key anniversary celebration, the first foreign dignitaries allowed to visit the country in years.

And earlier this month, a delegation of North Korean athletes was allowed to attend a taekwondo competition in Kazakhstan, while state-run Air Koryo made its first international commercial flight in three years last week.

Despite the signs of easing of its pandemic isolation, analysts say North Korea is not yet ready to fully reopen its borders.

AFP

FEARLESS FIGHTERS



Romanian firemen during an intervention in Crevedia village, Romania on Sunday. One person died and 47 were injured after two explosions rocked a liquefied petroleum gas station close to Romania's capital Bucharest on Saturday, officials said. The injured included 26 firefighters who rushed to the scene in Crevedia commune, north of the capital, following the first explosion, according to the government (AFP)

Russian teen eco-activists fight for future as risks mount for 'undesirable'

Penza, Russia - Egor Chastukhin, an 18-year-old environmental activist, holds a flask to a drain spouting out warm, putrid water near the historic city of Penza in western Russia. "It smells like herbal tea," he jokes after taking a waft of the sample while Sonia, his wife, jots down notes.

She records the odour and its yellowish colour as two other teenage activists, Alexei Zetkin and Yakov Demidov, look on.

The water's source is a nearby paper factory previously fined for pollution. Its destination is a tributary of the Sura river, around 600km (372 miles) from Russia's capital Moscow. The group carries out a spot test on the liquid, which shows excess levels of chlorine, iron and organic matter. "People who drink this water,

fish in it and bathe in it need to understand the danger," Egor told AFP. The chances of that happening are slim.

Environmental groups in Russia not linked to the government - those like Egor's - have long faced pressure from authorities.

And since an unprecedented crackdown on dissent launched after Russia's full-scale military intervention in Ukraine, their future is in doubt.

Russia has outlawed the work of Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature, branding them and dozens of other Western-linked groups 'undesirable'.

The exiled coordinator of the climate action nonprofit Bellona, Ksenia Vakhursheva, told AFP there were no longer any Russian environmental organisations



Environmental activists inspect a landfill on the outskirts of Penza on August 22 (AFP)

powerful enough to bring about 'systemic change'.

'Threat to the state'

What remains of ecological advocacy in Russia rests on the

shoulders of under-resourced activists like Egor, who are still trying to raise awareness in spite of

the risks. "What we're doing is legal and harmless. But tomorrow they could link it to extremism or terrorism. The slightest transmission of information could become an alleged threat to the state," Egor says.

Suddenly, a press officer and factory employee holding a camera arrive on the scene, with the rag-tag group taking off after a security guard appears - a move that is sometimes followed by a police visit. Several metres away, men under some trees continue to fish the polluted water.

The group regularly inspects rivers and dumps. Together with a more experienced activist with a legal background, they report violations to local prosecutors or the environmental protection agency. Sometimes with surpris-

ing success.

In November 2021, Egor and his friend Alexei, then high school students, tested the water discharged by the paper factory.

Alexei sent the results to the authorities, who fined the factory manager about US\$5,000 after confirming violations. The factory is run by a local politician from United Russia party, and says it has since invested in modernising its equipment.

Following the probe, Alexei, then a member of a pro-government environmental group, was accused of carrying out the inspection without the approval of his superiors and kicked out.

In February last year, he set up Eko-Start, and he and Egor campaigned together.

AFP

Hundreds flee floods as super typhoon brushes past Philippines

Manila, Philippines - More than a thousand people fled their homes as floods unleashed by Super Typhoon Saola swept through mainly rural villages in the northern Philippines, rescue officials said on Sunday.

Saola brushed past the northeast of the main island of Luzon overnight on Saturday and continued south just off the Pacific coast packing winds of up to 185km (115 miles) per hour, the state weather bureau said.

No casualties or substantial

damage have been reported.

Residents of coastal communities vulnerable to high winds and large waves were moved to higher ground on Isabela province's Pacific coast, as were those on the northern tip of Cagayan province to the north and Ilocos Sur province on Luzon's northwest coast, officials said.

"These coastal towns have no protection because they are directly facing the Pacific," said Isabela rescue official Constanste Foronda, putting the number of evacuees in Isabela



A man braves heavy showers and winds while evacuating his cattle as Typhoon Saola brushes past Ilagan City, north of Manila on Sunday (AFP)

at 372.

"It's raining constantly but the winds are not that strong," he told AFP by telephone, adding: "We got lucky."

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 major storms each year that kill hundreds of people and keep vast regions in perpetual poverty.

In neighbouring Cagayan, rescue official Ruelie Rapsing told AFP 388 people were evacuated overnight amid flooding on several coastal municipalities on Luzon's northeast tip.

There were also widespread electricity cuts across the province of 1.2mn people due to downed power lines, he added.

The provincial government's press office released photos on its Facebook page of knee-deep floodwaters swamping homes in the municipality of Aparri.

The civil defence office in Manila also reported the evacuation of 421 people from four municipalities in Ilocos Sur, which were hit by a landslide, flooding and overflowing rivers.

The eye of Saola was within

90km of the remote coastal town of Casiguran at 2pm (0600 GMT) but was forecast to remain over water over the next few hours before turning east then northwest towards Taiwan in the coming days.

The weather service said the main threat was from heavy rain that could trigger flash floods or landslides.

Up to 200mm (nearly eight inches) of rain was forecast to fall along Cagayan and Isabela's coasts over the next 24 hours.

AFP

Key Johnson ally resigns with scathing attack on British PM

London, UK - A key ally of former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson formally resigned on Saturday, delivering a blistering attack on his successor in her resignation letter.

Former culture minister Nadine Dorries announced her intention to resign 11 weeks ago but had remained as member of parliament while she investigated why she was not given a seat in the upper house of parliament.

In her resignation letter, Dorries accused Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of abandoning 'the fundamental principles of Conservatism' and said 'history will not judge you kindly'.

Dorries was unexpectedly not awarded a seat in the upper chamber of parliament, the House of Lords, in Johnson's resignation honours list. He rewarded fellow Brexit die-hards and even those implicated in the 'Partygate' scandal that contributed to his downfall last

year.

The omission prompted accusations from Johnson's camp of meddling from Sunak and Downing Street.

In her letter, which she released on social media, Dorries accused Sunak of leading attacks on her resulting in 'the police having to visit my home and contact me on a number of occasions due to threats to my person'.

"The clearly orchestrated and almost daily personal attacks demonstrates the pitifully low level your government has descended to," she wrote.

She also attacked his record in Government.

"Since you took office a year ago, the country is run by a zombie parliament where nothing meaningful has happened," she wrote.

"You have no mandate from the people and the Government is adrift."

Resignation honours lists, in



Britain's PM Rishi Sunak (AFP)

which key political allies of outgoing prime ministers are rewarded, are normally waved through by their successor.

Political revenge

Sunak's spokesman told reporters earlier it was 'entirely untrue' that the prime minister or officials removed names from Johnson's list before it was sent to a House of Lords vetting committee.

Since you took office a year ago, the country is run by a parliament where nothing meaningful has happened. You have no mandate from the people

NADINE DORRIES

The row in June over the honours prompted the resignation as MPs of both Nigel Adams, who was also omitted from the list, as well as Johnson himself.

At the same time Dorries announced her intention to resign.

Political observers have interpreted the resignations as Johnson's revenge on Sunak for forcing him out of office last July after 'Partygate' and a string of other scandals.

Johnson resigned as an MP claiming a stitch-up by political opponents on a cross-party inquiry probing whether he lied to parliament over the COVID lockdown-breaking parties at Downing Street.

The resignations meant Sunak's Tories had to face by-elections at a time when they were trailing in the polls to the main opposition Labour party and ahead of a general election next year.

The Conservatives lost Adams' seat but held on to Johnson's constituency, aided by Labour mayor Sadiq Khan's contentious expansion of a vehicle pollution tax to outer London.

The government now faces the prospect of another by-election, possibly within weeks, although Dorries' 24,000 majority in her constituency might prove more difficult for the Labour opposition party to overturn than Adams' 20,000 majority.

AFP



A rise in the water level of Brahmaputra river led to a flood-like situation in several parts of Assam amid incessant rains, on Sunday (ANI)

India: Flood situation in Assam turns grim

Guwahati, India - The flood situation in Assam deteriorated on Sunday, with over 53,000 people across six districts of the state reported marooned.

Nearly 24,000 locals have been affected in Dhemaji while another 12,000, 8,500 and 7,500 have been stranded in Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, and Dibrugarh districts respectively.

According to the Central Water Commission (CWC), incessant rainfall led to an increase in the water level of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, inundating surrounding areas.

The river is reported to be flowing over the danger mark in many parts of the state.

The Brahmaputra is currently flowing over the danger level mark at Dhubri and Neamatighat in Jorhat district, Beki River at Road Bridge in Barpeta district, Dikhou River in Sivasagar, Sankosh River at Golakganj in Dhubri district.

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), the flood has affected 120 villages under 11 revenue circles and submerged nearly 3000 hectares of crop area in the flood-hit districts.

In Sonitpur district, 38 villages are currently under water and the flood waters have submerged 426.50 hectares of crop area.

ANI

Russia downs 2 drones as 1 man killed

Moscow, Russia - Russia said it downed two Ukrainian drones flying over border regions on Sunday, after the governor of Belgorod region said a drone carrying explosives had killed a man.

Russia and the Moscow-annexed Crimean peninsula have been hit by a wave of attacks in the past month, since Kyiv warned in July it aimed to 'return' the conflict to Russian territory. "(During) the night and morning hours... Two unmanned aerial vehicles were detected and destroyed in flight over the territory of the

Bryansk and Kursk regions," Moscow's defence ministry said.

The governor of Russia's Kursk region, which lies next to the Ukrainian border, said a drone had crashed into an apartment building in Kursk city overnight, blowing out windows on several floors.

It was not clear whether this was one of the drones reportedly shot down by the defence ministry earlier.

"There were no fires, none of the residents were injured," governor Roman Starovoit said on social media, sharing an

image of what appeared to be a charred mark on a tower block. The attack came a day after the governor of Russia's neighbouring Belgorod region said a drone attack killed a man in the village of Shchetinovka, less than one mile (about two kilometres) from the Ukrainian border.

"The Ukrainian armed forces dropped an explosive device from a drone when the man was on his dacha plot cutting grass," governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Saturday evening, announcing the man died from shrapnel wounds.

AFP

'The risk is real': UK fire service preps to tackle possible wildfires

Godalming, UK - At a military training site in Surrey, southeast England, a small team of firefighters blast the surrounding heathland with water as they practise tackling a different kind of enemy: climate change.

The county's fire service is investing in new equipment, training and tactics to respond to the threat of wildfires, which is growing as Britain's climate becomes drier and more unpredictable.

Last summer, as the country recorded droughts and its highest-ever temperature, it saw a spate of wildfires, including one of the largest in recent UK history in Surrey that stretched over 10km (6.2 miles).

Parts of the region are also seeing wildfires outside the typically hotter, drier summer months, according to the fire service.

However, Surrey is not unique within the UK, as wildfires increasingly occur across a country, despite its reputation for wet weather and rolling green hills.

"We're now treating wildfires as business as usual," said Surrey fire investigation officer Matt Oakley, as colleagues showed off their new kit at the site, which was scorched by a wildfire last year.

"And the conditions are going to get more extreme as the next two decades move on," he told AFP, blaming rising global temperatures.



Firefighters from the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service use small pressure hoses used to extinguish small fires during a press preview at Hankley Common, in Surrey, southeast England, on August 24 (AFP)

warned in a new study last month that the extreme heat experienced nationwide in 2022 would become more frequent and intense because of climate change.

With that comes the increased risk of wildfires in more places.

At the height of last year's heatwave, where temperatures passed 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) for the first time, a grass fire on the edge of east London spread across 40 hectares (nearly 100 acres), damaging 17 houses as well as other structures and vehicles.

The level of destruction was unprecedented, with Britons normally associating wildfires with southern Europe, north America and Australia.

Oakley, who advises other British fire services on wildfire tactics, said the scenes in east London 'could happen almost anywhere' that rural and urban environments meet.

"We've got a massively populated island... we've got a real interaction between natural habitat and people, and when that occurs the potential for ignition is always there," he warned.

After last year's wildfires, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service invested an additional £1mn (US\$1.26mn) into its wildfire prevention and response capabilities. The force, which has four wildfire stations spread across the 648 square-mile (1,679sqkm) county southwest of London, now holds regular wildfire drills at each.

It boasts four 'Unimog' fire-fighting vehicles - able to spray 1,500 litres of water per minute up to 60 metres away using a mounted hose - and 25 Land Rover Defender trucks kitted out for wildfires.

Firefighters have new lightweight jackets, goggles and helmets tailored for challenging outdoor conditions.

The service has also developed dozens of 'risk plans' for different parts of England's most wooded county, mapping out what is needed and where to mitigate the potential impact of wildfires.

This summer may have been largely a washout across much of Britain, reducing the immediate risk of outbreaks.

AFP

A SWEET INTERACTION

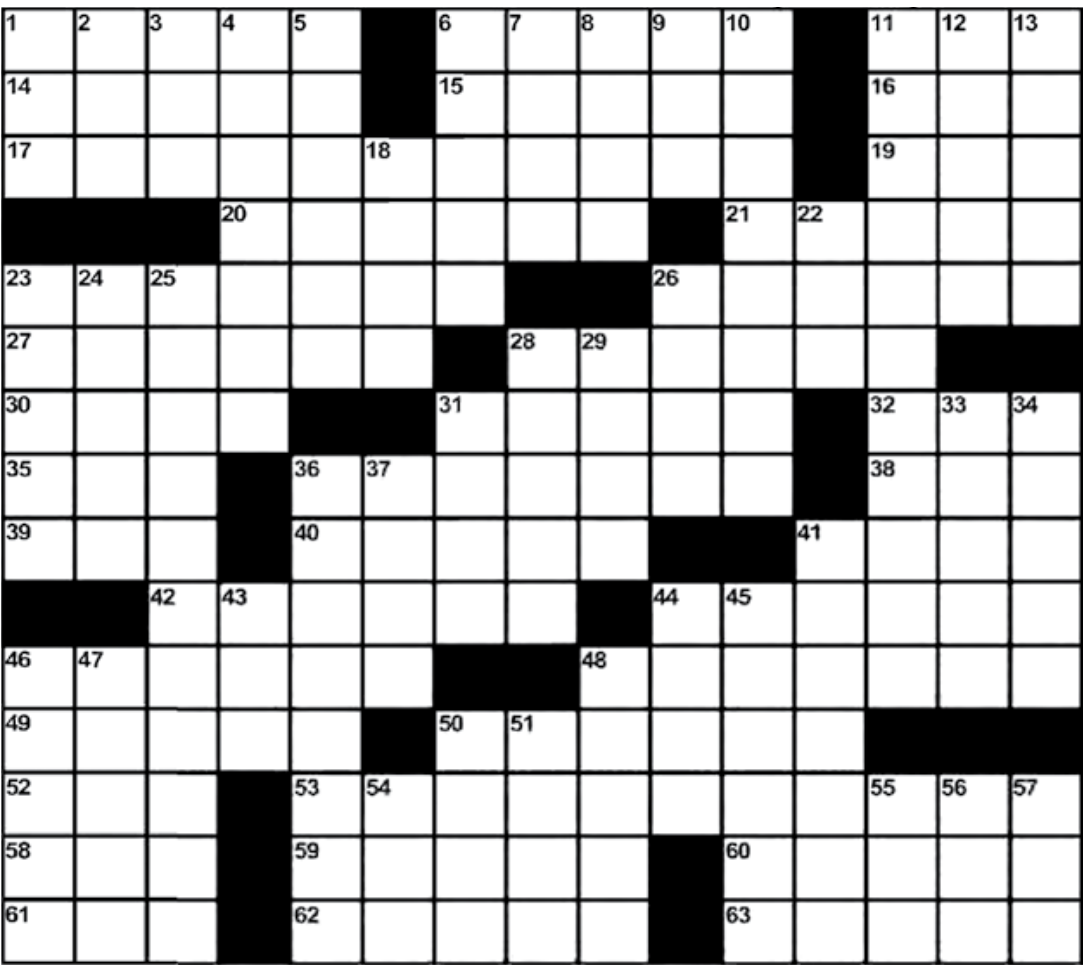


Indian Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi interacts with the staff during his visit to a chocolate factory, in Ooty, in southern state of Tamil Nadu, on Sunday (ANI)

'Ignition' potential

Britain's Meteorological Office

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Helicopter blade
- 6) Native of an Arabian Peninsula monarchy
- 11) "Ahas" relatives
- 14) Pop superstar
- 15) City in Georgia
- 16) Grand Canyon viewing area
- 17) Some restaurant VIPs
- 19) First lady McKinley
- 20) Fountain drink
- 21) Book collection
- 23) Makes less offensive?
- 26) Somewhat broad
- 27) They're not perfectly round
- 28) Stone of "Basic Instinct"
- 30) "... better watch out ..."
- 31) Rock containing crystal
- 32) Pendulum's path, e.g.
- 35) Be wrong
- 36) First book of the Bible
- 38) Grassy meadow
- 39) Big Apple initials.
- 40) Here and there
- 41) Nile denizens with fangs

- 42) Wetland birds
- 44) Mad Magazine's genre
- 46) City in southeastern Wisconsin
- 48) Game with dotted tiles
- 49) With no one else
- 50) Kidman film "... Rouge"
- 52) Job estimate
- 53) Weeder's chore
- 58) Nectar inspector
- 59) Like Halloween sound effects
- 60) Partner of wiser
- 61) Outs' counterparts
- 62) Big-ticket wedding purchase
- 63) Be responsible for
- DOWN
- 1) Generic cheer
- 2) Flowery lyrical poem
- 3) Coffee's alternative
- 4) Classic card game
- 5) Incentive in a "lost" ad
- 6) Leaves off a list
- 7) Do more than check
- 8) Got a hole in one
- 9) Neither counterpart

- 10) Motivates to greatness
- 11) Infamous Eden event
- 12) Animal skins
- 13) Vicious tennis stroke
- 18) Charitable goods
- 22) "... Without any further ..."
- 23) Senior fellow
- 24) Elephant tusk composition
- 25) App "blueprints"
- 26) African ravine
- 28) Fortune-tellers
- 29) Parasite's quest
- 31) Buzzing annoyance
- 33) Glossy paper proof
- 34) Lawyers' jobs
- 36) Collected, as praise
- 37) Fencing sword
- 41) Bursting with excitement
- 43) Martini ingredient
- 44) One-man performances
- 45) Mexican friends
- 46) Bar mitzvah presider
- 47) Ewok or Klingon, e.g.
- 48) Ranch guys
- 50) "But wait, there's ...!"
- 51) Name in many elevators
- 54) "... the ramps at ..."
- 55) Suffix used with chlor-

- or fluor-
- 56) It bisects a tennis court
- 57) Miracle-... (garden product)

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

When you get a closer look at someone's plans today, you'll see quite a few holes in their way of thinking. This is a tough call. Do you burst their bubble or let them live in blissful ignorance? You'll have to use all your tact and charm to get what you want, which is for them to reevaluate their idea and not get defensive about the fact that you're not completely in love with it. They need a dose of reality, and you are the best person to give it to them.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Don't confuse having fun with having no responsibilities. You might wish you had less on your plate right now, but you don't, and you have to accept that fact and deal with it. But why not make a game out of doing everything you need to get done? Organize your to-do list alphabetically and try to get halfway done by noon. Give yourself a little treat every time you complete a task. Put some of your famous creativity to work trying to turn obligations into fun challenges.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You are right on schedule in your life, so don't worry that you're lagging behind or zooming too far ahead. Just because you're not exactly in sync with others doesn't mean that you aren't where you need to be. Concern yourself less with what other people are doing and more with what you're doing! Enjoy the power you have over your life, and show the Universe you appreciate it by using it. Your mood will stay strong and positive today. Be prepared for fits of uncontrollable laughter.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

It's time for you to reacquaint yourself with the art of living. Work can wait. It's time to take it slow and appreciate the simpler pleasures of life. Things like a good cup of coffee, a pretty sunset, a cute puppy, and a giggling child will give you more joy than ever before. Today, it's not about pushing forward with your workload or networking with the big boss; it's about appreciating where you are and thinking positively about where you want to go.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Beware of making too many impulse buys right now. They could lead to more financial commitments down the road than you initially anticipated, especially if you have an eye for shiny techy gadgets. Try to avoid making any purchases whatsoever today, even if that means packing your lunch. Also, a new relationship is starting to feel unbalanced to you. Are they expecting more from you than you're willing to give? Make sure you two have clear boundaries and expectations.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Kudos! You've been on quite an impressive roll lately, but right now you should turn off your engine and coast for a while. Don't push yourself to start anything new, and give yourself a lot of time to do simple tasks. Be careful with every movement today, and consider the effects of your behavior. This might require being extra considerate of strangers, so hold open a few doors, turn off your phone, and don't be impatient in the checkout line.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You're going to wake up itching to be smack dab in the middle of everything, so get up, get dressed, and get to wherever the action is! Do whatever it takes to make sure you're one of the first of your friends to try the latest craze, eat at the latest restaurant, or listen to the hottest new band. Getting there first isn't always important for you, but right now you'll get an incredible charge out of experiencing something before anyone else does.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Follow any urge you have to be alone right now. Even if everyone else is in the mood to paint the town red or plan an elaborate outing, you don't necessarily need to join in. Listen to what your heart is telling you to do, then do it. Yes, it sounds too simple to work, but it isn't. Try it out today when a friendly yet unwanted invitation arrives. Politely say no and remind yourself that you and only you are in charge of your time.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You don't have to be an intellectual to understand what is a smart thing to do and what's a stupid thing to do today. The difference will be obvious. Unfortunately, it might not be clear to someone you care about. Confused friends are stressed friends, so if you want to help them relax, help them understand the situation from a different perspective. Share your insight, but don't tell them what to do. Just give them some new information. You'll be doing them a huge favor.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Do you feel left out of a secret, like there is something going on that no one is telling you about? Your paranoia might be justified today, so go a little slower and watch for other people who might be planning stuff. Are they having conversations behind closed doors? Suddenly getting quiet when you walk into the room? These are definitive signs. But if you can find no more evidence than what your gut is feeling, you're barking up the wrong tree. Let it go.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Today is the day to search for a new tactics to solve an old or recurring problem. Your vision will enable you to see things differently, so look at the situation once more and evaluate your options. Then choose the one that is the most intimidating to you. You might be looking at this opportunity and subliminally seeing nothing but pressure, and a fear of failing is what could be preventing you from accepting a new challenge. But you will only fail if you don't try.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

The transitions you've been going through lately have all been very exciting, but you need to be careful not to assume that big changes equal big improvements! A new routine becomes an old routine eventually, so unless you are more conscious of the new things and people in your life, this transformation will be lost on you. If you've ever contemplated keeping a journal, now is the time to start. Reading about where you've been in your own words is always enlightening.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Who was on the English throne at the time of the "Gunpowder Plot" to blow up the House of Lords?

- A. James I
- B. William I
- C. King Canute
- D. Harold I

02. It originated in the 5th century BCE or earlier as training for the military, could involve up to 200 a game, was fêted for both men and women in Persian poetry and art. Which game is it?

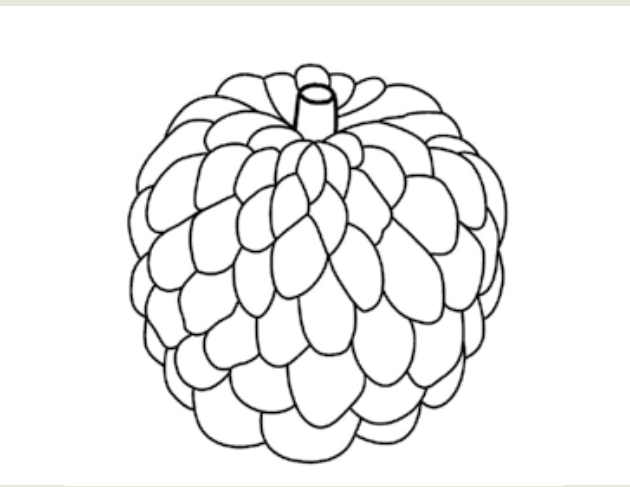
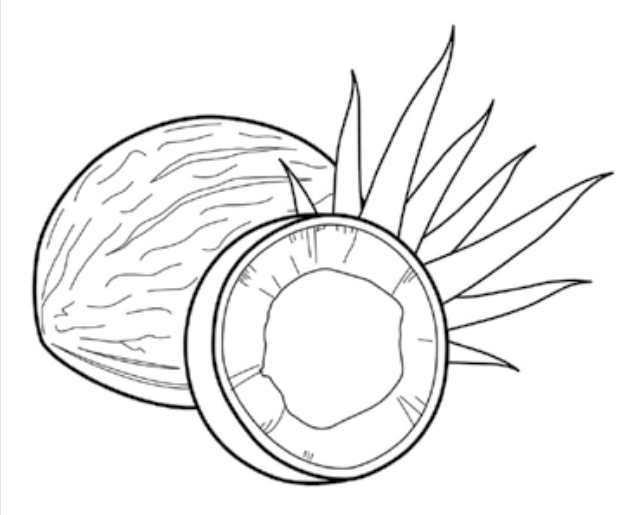
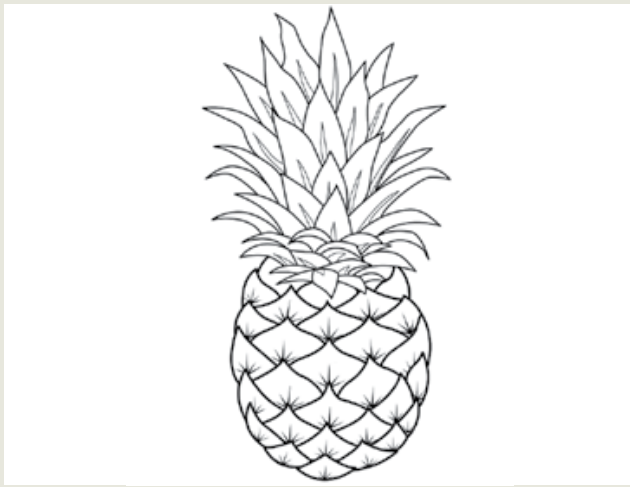
- A. Shinty
- B. Lacrosse
- C. Polo
- D. Football

03. Before 1972, what was Sri Lanka known as?

- A. East Pakistan
- B. Burma
- C. Ceylon
- D. Persia

Answers: 1. A 2. C 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



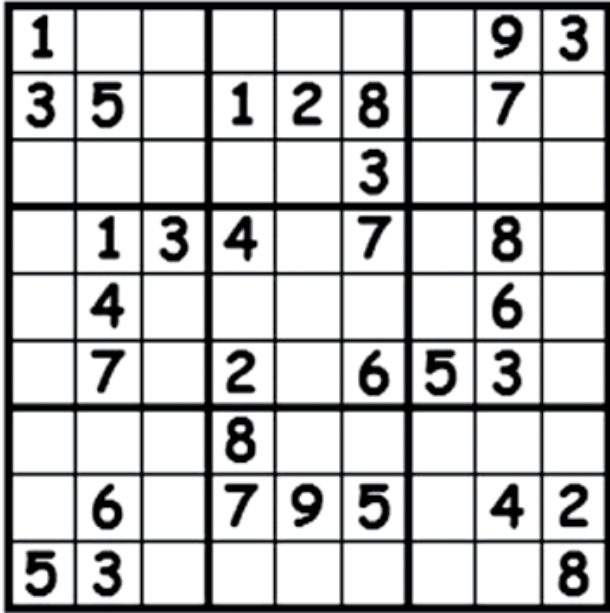
BOGGLER



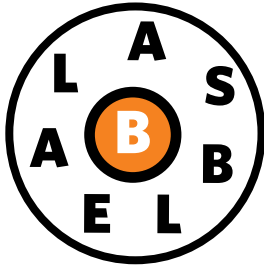
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. 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



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



THE GOLD RUSH

Noah Lyles wins third world gold after anchoring US to relay victory

Budapest, Hungary - Noah Lyles and Sha'Carri Richardson, the two faces of the World Athletics Championships, won their third and second golds respectively by anchoring the United States to 4x100m relay triumphs in Budapest on Saturday.

On an enthralling night's action Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis and Faith Kipyegon rubber-stamped their authority in their events.

Charismatic Swede Duplantis retained his pole vault title, although he fell short of bettering his own world record, whilst Kenyan Kipyegon became the first woman to achieve the 1500 and 5,000m double, when she won the latter.

It was a night of firsts for Canada, who had earlier in the championships swept both the men's and women's hammer titles.

Marco Arop and Pierce LePage became the first Canadians to win the men's 800m title and decathlon respectively.

Olympic champion Damian Warner gilded the lily for Canada in the decathlon, taking silver.

Yet another medal came



Noah Lyles celebrates after anchoring US to gold in the men's 4x100m relay at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest on Saturday (AFP)

Canada's way with Sarah Mitton finishing second in the women's shot put. Mitton lost out to USA's Chase Ealey, who, like Duplantis, retained her title.

Lyles and Richardson, though, stole the show. Lyles held up three fingers as he raced across the line, a big grin spread across his face as he added relay gold to his 100/200m double.

In achieving the double he became the fifth man to do so and with the treble the first since Usain Bolt in 2015 to sweep the lot. Bolt, however, did it three times.

catlhon, even more so as he had a problematic hamstring.

"I went all in from this morning and it makes me really proud," said the 27-year-old. "It is nice to share this podium with him (Warner).

"This morning I pulled my hamstring before the hurdles.

"But it is decathlon, we are used to a lot of injuries, you get through it."

Arop produced a masterful run, calmly staying at the back of the field until pushing the button down the back straight. The 24-year-old was never in trouble

I went all in from this morning and it makes me really proud. It is nice to share this podium with him (Warner). This morning I pulled my hamstring before the hurdles

PIERCE LEPAGE

"This is the third gold for me here," said 26-year-old Lyles.

"It's sensational, amazing. You can't do better. It's out of control."

Richardson's run over the line ended in less elegant fashion as her momentum carried her into Lyles's teammate Christian Coleman, both of them ending up on the ground.

"Dreams like this come true," said Richardson of her relay gold.

'The craziest atmosphere'

LePage turned silver last year into gold with a fabulous performance on the second day of the de-

once he hit the front.

"Now it's going to be hard to beat a gold medal," said Sudan-born Arop, who won bronze in last year's worlds. "I'll just have to repeat it, I guess. I'm going to work twice as hard now to make sure I stay on top. I don't want to be known as the guy who can only run one way."

The 4x400m relay finals round off the championships on Sunday with India outsiders for a surprise medal.

They set a new Asian record of 2:59.05 in finishing second behind the USA in their semi-final.

AFP

Duplantis 'happy to keep winning' after retaining title

Budapest, Hungary - Sweden's Armand Duplantis retained his world men's pole vault title in Budapest on Saturday, going close on three occasions in a bid to better his own world record.

Duplantis finished with a best vault of 6.10 metres. Ernest John Obieno of the Philippines took silver with 6.00m, while Australian Kurtis Marschall and American Chris Nilsen shared bronze (5.95m).

Remarkably it was a sixth successive title for the 23-year-old US-born Swede: he was European, world outdoor and world indoor champion in 2022 and Olympic and European indoor winner in 2021.

"I'm really happy about all these consecutive golds. I don't know where this one ranks but I'm happy to keep winning," said Duplantis.

"This was maybe the craziest atmosphere I've ever competed in so it meant a lot to be able to turn on a pole vault show for them. I felt a bit of pressure as defending champion but I'm glad to come through it. It feels pretty



Sweden's Armand Duplantis competes in the men's pole vault final on Saturday (AFP)

good to be on top again."

Duplantis sailed clear at the opening mark of 5.55m, skipped 5.75 and went over with a lot to spare at 5.85.

Only four other vaulters from the 12-strong field went clear at 5.85m: France's Thibaut Collet (for a personal best), Marschall, Obiena and Nilsen, the latter on the third time of asking.

Obiena, Collet and Nilsen then cleared 5.90m as Duplantis

opted not to compete at that height.

Marschall failed once at that height, but skipped successfully straight to a personal best of 5.95. Collet mirrored the Australian's strategy as the bar was raised to the mythical 6.00m mark.

Duplantis flew over that height easily, as did Obiena on his second effort for what was an Asian record.

Kipyegon wins 5,000m for historic double

Budapest, Hungary - Kenya's Faith Kipyegon underlined her status as one of the all-time greats of distance running by sealing a historic 1500m/5000m double at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest on Saturday.

After claiming a third world 1500m title on Tuesday, Kipyegon delivered another masterclass, this time in the 5,000m, to win her second gold in the Hungarian capital. The 29-year-old bided her time and produced a perfectly calm last lap for the win in 14min 53.88sec, her victory underlining her dominance this season, especially given that the field contained six of the 10 fastest women of all time.

Dutch rival Sifan Hassan claimed silver in 14:54.11, with another Kenyan, Beatrice Chebet, taking bronze (14:54.33).

"This has been an amazing year for me," said Kipyegon, the two-time Olympic 1500m champion having this year set three world records in the 1500m, 5,000m and mile.

"Making history today, winning two gold medals in a championships is what I was dreaming



Kenya's Faith Kipyegon wins the women's 5000m final ahead of Netherlands' Sifan Hassan (AFP)

for this season. "I have been patient waiting to be able to break world records and win double golds. But my dream just came true, it is amazing."

Kipyegon added: "I have been pushing myself to the limits and I will continue to push myself in the future."

"I believed in myself. I have been consistent, focused on the finish line and on writing history."

Ethiopia's 10,000m world champion Gudaf Tsegay shot out into the lead, splitting the field immediately.

Teammate Ejgayehu Taye took up the front running as Kipyegon was surrounded by two of their teammates as the two distance powerhouses from east Africa worked on their race tactics.

The Ethiopian surge eased, Kipyegon and compatriot Lilian Kasait Rengeruk moved to the front of the pack with eight laps left, Hassan sat three off the back.

Tsegay was back in front to lead the field with four laps remaining and once again spurred down the far straight, causing Hassan to move away from the absolute tailenders.

Uganda's Kiplangat wins men's world marathon title

Budapest, Hungary - Ugandan Victor Kiplangat won the men's marathon at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest on Sunday after producing a devastating final third to leave his rivals trailing in his wake.

The Commonwealth champion clocked a winning time of 2hr 08min 53sec on the streets of the Hungarian capital after breaking free in the last 15 kilometres.

Israel's Ethiopian-born Maru Teferi followed up on his European silver last year with second place in 2:09.12, while Ethiopian

Leul Gebresilase took bronze (2:09.19).

"This has been my dream and it has come true at last," said Kiplangat. "Last year I was Commonwealth Games champion and that made me think this year I must become world champion. Now my prayers have been answered and hopefully next year in Paris I will become Olympic champion too."

Kiplangat added: "It was hard today because it was so hot but I felt comfortable because I prepared well for this weather. I knew it was possible because I

had trained well."

Well-timed surge

Kiplangat and teammate Stephen Kissa, along with Ethiopians Gebresilase, Tsegaye Getachew and Tamirat Tola, and Kenya's Timothy Kiplangat went through the 30km mark in a tight grouping in 1hr 32.

Kissa then took a tumble after catching Kiplangat's heel, leaving Kiplangat to move clear with Gebresilase.

Over the next 5km, Kiplangat, 23, surged to successfully drop the lead pack, Gebresilase falling

15sec behind.

"When I reached 30km I knew I felt strong and decided to push," said Kiplangat. "I had great energy and that allowed me to go. Then at 35km I could surge again. That was always my plan and I managed to do it. The pace was high but I had more to give. It was tough but I always felt I had the power."

Teferi moved up through the field for silver, while reigning world champion Tola, who set a championship record when winning in Eugene last year, dropped out.



Uganda's Victor Kiplangat on his way to gold in the men's marathon (AFP)

NORMAL BUSINESS RESUMES

Mbappe dominates on home return as PSG outclass Lens in Ligue 1

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe dominated his first home start of the season, scoring twice as Ligue 1 champions Paris-Saint Germain defeated last season's runners up Lens, 3-1, on Saturday.

In a meeting of two teams winless in their first two league matches, PSG emphatically put their season back on track.



Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring against Lens in their French Ligue 1 match in Paris on Saturday (AFP)

I'd always like things to go the way they did tonight, but in football there are always surprises. There was a Champions League rhythm. My players were very brave

LUIS ENRIQUE

"There was a Champions League rhythm," the Spaniard said. "My players were very brave and against a team that defends well. We created a lot of chances."

Mbappe, making his first home start since being reinstated to the team following a contract dispute, posed a threat from the start.

In the first half, he had one shot saved by goalkeeper Brice Samba and another cleared off

the line by Kevin Danso before Marco Asensio scored his first goal for the club in the 44th minute.

PSG's Portuguese midfielder Vitinha surged up the field before moving the ball on to Warren Zaire-Emery who passed to Asensio just outside the box. The Spaniard curled a left foot shot in off the base of the post.

Mbappe added a ferocious second after 51 minutes, meeting a return pass from Lucas Hernandez with a first-time side-foot shot from the edge of the box that rocketed past Samba.

Mbappe forced another good save from Samba as PSG dominated possession.

On a rare Lens counter-attack, Elye Wahi, the club's record signing, who came on after 57 min-

utes, outpaced the home defence and forced a sprawling save from Gianluigi Donnarumma. Ousmane Dembele, making his first PSG start since moving from Barcelona, lashed an opportunity for a first goal for the club wide.

Mbappe added a second in the 90th minute with a shot from near the penalty spot that took two deflections on its way into the net.

As PSG's defence relaxed, Wahi forced another flying save from Donnarumma before Morgan Guilavogui scored with the last kick of the match, his shot deflecting in off Milan Skriniar.

"In the second half, we opened up and if you open up

against this team, things happen too quickly. We didn't give up but there was too much difference between the two teams," said Lens coach Franck Haise.

Earlier, Marseille jumped to second place after ending visiting Brest's winning start to season with a lacklustre 2-0 victory.

Knocked out of the Champions League in the third qualifying round by Panathinaikos at the start of the month, Marseille's rebuilt squad had a week to prepare.

The hosts started brightly when Chancel Mbemba opened the scoring with a header from Jordan Veretout's impeccable free kick after three minutes.

AFP



Rodri celebrates after scoring against Sheffield United

Rodri strikes late as Man City extend perfect start

London, United Kingdom - Manchester City extended their perfect start to the Premier League season as Rodri sealed a dramatic 2-1 win against Sheffield United after Erling Haaland scored once and missed a penalty for the champions on Sunday.

Haaland drove a first half spot-kick against the post before his header put City in front after the break at Bramall Lane. City were in danger of squandering the points when Jayden Bogle equalised against the run of play with just five minutes left.

But Rodri saved City with a blistering strike three minutes later as Pep Guardiola's side moved to the top of the table after a third successive victory.

City's latest success was achieved without Guardiola, who was watching on television while he recuperates after back surgery in Barcelona.

The City boss was in constant contact with his assistant Juanma Lillo, who took

the reins at Bramall Lane and will also be in charge for the champions' clash with Fulham on Saturday. Guardiola's rehabilitation will have been aided by the knowledge that City can thrive in his absence.

Although he achieved it from afar, it was a landmark victory for Guardiola, who now has 200 league wins with City in just 269 games, beating the previous Premier League record of 326 matches to reach that milestone set by Jose Mourinho in 2020.

"We played really well, especially bearing in mind how difficult games like these are," Lillo said. "Thirty shots is a lot, but not being able to finish just at the right time made it more difficult."

For the first time since 2016, City have opened a season with three consecutive league wins in an ominous statement to their title rivals that last season's treble triumph has not sated their appetite for success.

Messi comes off bench to score as Miami win at Red Bulls

New York, United States - Lionel Messi came off the bench and scored as Inter Miami began their push for the Major League Soccer playoffs with a 2-0 win at New York Red Bulls on Saturday.

After a week in which Miami won the Leagues Cup and reached the final of the US Open Cup, Messi was left on the bench by coach Gerard "Tata" Martino but came into the game on the hour mark.

The Argentine World Cup winner had limited involvement after entering with former Barcelona team-mate Sergio Busquets but made his mark on his regular season debut with an



Inter Miami's Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring against New York Red Bulls in their Major League Soccer match on Saturday (AFP)

He's unbelievable, every day it's something new, on and off the field. He's an amazing person to play with and I am so blessed to play with him

NOAH ALLEN

89th-minute goal.

Jordi Alba acrobatically hooked the ball into the box to Messi who twisted and turned then slipped a sublime pass with the outside of his foot to Benjamin Cremaschi whose low first-time cross was tapped in by the seven-times Ballon d'Or winner. Messi has now scored 11 goals in nine appearances in all

competitions since joining Inter Miami.

"He's unbelievable, every day it's something new, on and off the field," said Miami's 19-year-old defender Noah Allen.

"He's an amazing person to play with and I am so blessed to play with him."

Martino had indicated that several of his players needed a

break after an intense run of eight games within a month and stuck to his word with his team selection, to the disappointment of the capacity crowd at Red Bull Arena.

There were chants of 'We want Messi' at regular stages throughout the game which was also shown on a giant screen in Times Square.

A makeshift Miami had taken the lead in the 37th minute when Noah Allen played in a cross from the left and Paraguayan Diego Gomez was given time to turn and then slot home a left-foot effort.

Miami keeper Drake Callender had to make a series of

saves to keep his side in the lead but with Red Bull pressure mounting, Martino opted to bring on his star man and the momentum of the game inevitably shifted.

The win lifts Miami off the bottom of the Eastern Conference and reduces the gap to the last playoff sport to 11 points with 11 games remaining.

Martino defended his decision to start his 36-year-old compatriot on the bench despite the hopes of the crowd.

"I understand the desire of the people who want him to play, this will happen everywhere we go," he said.

AFP

Malen's goal helps disappointing Dortmund rescue point at Bochum

Berlin, Germany - Donyell Malen's second-half goal salvaged a point as Borussia Dortmund were held at local rivals Bochum 1-1 on Saturday.

Dortmund fell behind early as Bochum's Kevin Stoeger unleashing a rocket from the edge of the box to catch the visiting defence off guard.

Malen replied early in the second half, his third goal in his past three matches, to level the scores.

The goal sparked Dortmund into action but Bochum held firm. English teenager Jamie Bynoe-Gittens had a late chance to win it for the visitors, but he missed from close range.

Despite the point, the draw raises more questions for Dortmund coach Edin Terzic, with his side's attacking riches failing to find fluency up front.

Dortmund goalie Gregor Kobel said Bochum "overran us in the first half."

Captain Emre Can admitted



Borussia Dortmund's Donyell Malen shields the ball from Bochum's defender Maximilian Wittek (AFP)

that "a lot is missing" from his side's performances at present.

In Saturday's late game, Bayer Leverkusen continued their stellar form under manager Xabi Alonso as striker Victor Boniface hit a double in a 3-0 win at Borussia Moenchengladbach.

Boniface headed Leverkusen in front after 18 minutes, his first

Bundesliga goal, after a superb defence-slicing pass in the lead-up from former Arsenal captain Granit Xhaka.

Germany defender Jonathan Tah scored in the shadows of half-time, before Boniface latched onto a perfect Florian Wirtz pass to bring up his brace early into the second stanza.

Pulisic on target as Milan beat Torino, Roma crash at Verona

Milan, Italy - Cristian Pulisic continued his bright start at Serie A leaders AC Milan with another goal in Saturday's 4-1 win over Torino, while Roma slumped to a 2-1 defeat at Verona.

A second strike in as many games by Pulisic since signing from Chelsea in the 33rd minute got Milan on their way to their second straight win, this time in front of a packed San Siro watching a new-look team for the first time this season.

Olivier Giroud was also on target with a penalty in each half while Theo Hernandez struck with a brilliant finish as Milan put on an entertaining display.

"You can see on the pitch how much we have fun," said Giroud to DAZN. "We can compete in both competitions, in Serie A and the Champions League. We have a lot of quality, we have a lot of weapons and attacking solutions."

USA forward Pulisic rolled in the opener after a brilliant exchange of passes with fellow former Chelsea star Ruben



AC Milan's Christian Pulisic celebrates with teammates after scoring against Torino (AFP)

Loftus-Cheek, before Peer Schurs stunned the home supporters by diverting Samuele Ricci's wayward shot past Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan. However Giroud then put Milan back in the lead from the penalty spot after Alessandro Buongiorno was pe-

nalised for handball - while pushing the France striker in the back - following a VAR check.

Theo Hernandez then extended Milan's lead in first half stoppage-time by dinking over Vanja Milinkovic-Savic from a tight angle following brilliant

combination play with Rafael Leao. Torino already had little chance of victory by that point and coach Ivan Juric shook his head on the touchline when another VAR check ended with another debateable spot-kick for Milan for a foul on Leao.

TWO TO TANGO

New York, United States - Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz are on a US Open collision course as the final Grand Slam tournament of the season gets under way on Monday with American teenager Coco Gauff chasing a breakthrough first major title.

A little more than six weeks after world number one Alcaraz defeated Djokovic in an enthralling finale to the Wimbledon championships, the two men could meet again at Flushing Meadows if the seedings go to play over the next fortnight.

Djokovic and Alcaraz whetted the tennis world's appetite for another blockbuster showdown at the Cincinnati Open last week, with 23-time Grand Slam singles winner Djokovic downing the 20-year-old Spaniard in a four-hour classic. Djokovic, 36, is making a long-awaited return to the US Open this year after his refusal to be vaccinated against Covid-19 meant he was unable to gain entry to the United States.

In Djokovic's absence at last year's tournament, Alcaraz announced his arrival on the world stage with a brilliant run to his first US Open crown.

Second seed Djokovic, who opens his campaign on the Arthur Ashe main arena against France's Alexandre Muller on Monday, says Alcaraz's relentless, swashbuckling style is reminiscent of Rafael Nadal, the 22-time Grand Slam singles champion who misses this year's US Open due to injury.

"Each point is a hustle. Each point is a battle. You feel like you're not going to get maybe in



Carlos Alcaraz



Novak Djokovic

Djokovic, Alcaraz poised for US Open collision

total five free points in the entire match," Djokovic said of Alcaraz. "You've got to basically earn every single point, every single shot, regardless of the conditions."

Alcaraz, who faces Germany's Dominik Koepfer in the first round on Tuesday, said he is flattered by the Nadal comparison. "It's great that he knows that every time he's going to play

against me, it reminds him playing against Rafa or against the best ones because that means we are in a good path," he said. Djokovic will reclaim the world number one ranking with a vic-

tory over Muller on Monday, regardless of how Alcaraz performs in the tournament. The Spaniard, meanwhile, must navigate a tricky route to the final that could include 2021 US Open champion

Daniil Medvedev and Italy's Jan-nik Sinner.

Gauff chasing breakthrough

In the women's tournament

meanwhile, all eyes will be on the in-form 19-year-old Gauff, who is chasing a first Grand Slam title that would make her only the fifth Black woman in the open era to win the US Open.

After struggling in the early part of the season, Gauff felt she had hit rock bottom after exiting in the first round at Wimbledon.

But the addition of veteran guru Brad Gilbert to her coaching team has sparked a transformation in her form and fortunes.

She won the Washington Open in early August, reached the quarter-finals of the Canadian Open in Montreal and then scored a superb victory in the Cincinnati Open - her first WTA 1000 title.

The win in Cincinnati included a morale-boosting first ever victory over world number one Iga Swiatek, the defending US Open champion.

Gauff, who could face Swiatek in the quarter-finals in New York, says her late season resurgence is the result of a shift in mindset.

"I think now I'm going in with a lot more confidence," the sixth-seeded teenager said on Friday.

"I feel like no matter the scoreline in the match, I can be able to problem solve and troubleshoot my way out.

I know I can win matches not playing my best game now... I do feel I'm much more confident in my B or C game."

Poland's Swiatek meanwhile says she is gradually learning to live with the fact that as world number one, she is the player everyone wants to beat.

AFP



Paula Badosa

Spain's Paula Badosa withdraws from US Open

New York, United States - Former world number two Paula Badosa withdrew from the US Open with a back injury on Saturday, days before she was due to open her Flushing Meadows campaign against Venus Williams.

Spain's Badosa hasn't played since Wimbledon, missing the hard court series build up to the US Open with a nagging back injury.

She was the second former top-10 woman to withdraw on Saturday, after 2019 US Open winner Bianca Andreescu of Canada.

After the announcement, Badosa said in a social media post that her 2023 season

was over.

"After struggling for many months to compete again, I am ending my season," she wrote. "Those of you who know me know how much I like to compete and how difficult it has been to make this decision.

"We tried everything together with my team but the pain is not letting me move forward.

"See you next year, stronger than ever," she concluded.

Badosa's departure means Williams, whose seven Grand Slam titles include two US Opens, will face a qualifier or lucky loser in the first round.

AFP

Argentina's Baez downs Lehecka to win ATP Winston-Salem Open

Washington, United States - Argentina's Sebastian Baez won his first ATP hard court title with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Czech Jiri Lehecka in the final of the Winston-Salem Open on Saturday.

The tournament victory was the third this year for the 22-year-old following his wins on clay at the Austrian Open earlier this month and the Cordoba Open in his homeland in February. Baez was 3-1 down in the first set but won three straight games to take control.

Lehecka, playing in his first ATP final, broke Baez's first serv-

Baez, who struck 28 winners and saved five of seven break points, moves up to 32nd in the world rankings

ice game of the second set, but the Argentine immediately broke back and never looked in danger from that point.

It was an impressive perform-

ance from Baez who had played late on Friday in a gruelling 3 hours, 20 minute three-set battle against top-seed Croatian Borna Coric, while Lehecka had a walkover after Sebastian Korda withdrew with injury.

Baez struck 28 winners and saved five of seven break points and the win means he moves up 10 places in the world rankings to 32nd ahead of next week's US Open.

Baez also becomes the first Argentine since Juan Martin del Potro to win three titles in the same season.



Sebastian Baez of Argentina celebrates after his victory against Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic

Verstappen bags Dutch GP for ninth successive win

Zandvoort, Netherlands - Max Verstappen won a chaotic, deluge-hit and red-flagged Dutch Grand Prix on Sunday to match Sebastian Vettel's record run of nine consecutive victories.

Fernando Alonso for Aston Martin took second with Alpine's Pierre Gasly completing the podium at Zandvoort.

"Fantastic job, the weather didn't make it easy for us," said Red Bull's double world champion. The home favourite's 11th success from the 13 races staged this season extended his lead to 138 points in the championship over teammate Sergio Perez, who finished fourth.

"I'm incredibly proud, I had goose bumps with the national anthem playing at the start, an incredible atmosphere" said Verstappen, to roars of delight from his orange army of fans.

"He's done it, matched the nine victories of Sebastian, I mean what a performance today," said Red Bull boss Christian Horner.

For Red Bull this latest display



Red Bull Racing's Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after winning the Dutch Formula One Grand Prix on Sunday (AFP)

of dominance in trying circumstances extended their record unbeaten run to 14 stretching back to Abu Dhabi last year.

In front of the massed ranks of his fans Verstappen maintained his iron hold over Zandvoort since the circuit carved into the dunes by the North Sea rejoined the F1 calendar, this being his third straight win from pole.

A carnival atmosphere rocking to Max's beat greeted the grid at the start, US actor Steve Carroll among the sell out 305,000 crowd over the weekend. Unlike Red Bull's metronomic form the weather was proving unpredictable, a thunderstorm rolling off the North Sea towards the track.

After the national anthem splendidly performed by Andre Rieu and his orchestra it was lights out at the seaside.

Verstappen got off to a flyer, holding off his front lane companion Lando Norris of McLaren to turn one as the rain arrived.

A fleet of cars came in to switch from dry to soft tyres,

leaving Perez leading from Zhou Guanyu's Alfa Romeo.

In a personal landmark Liam Lawson, the New Zealand rookie called in to replace injured Daniel Ricciardo by AlphaTauri, clocked an early fastest lap in his first ever grand prix.

But he was then slapped with a 10sec time penalty for impeding in the pitlane.

Verstappen was in fourth, 14sec off his Mexican teammate, after a frantic opening four laps.

He charged past Gasly and Zhou to go in hot pursuit of Perez, nine seconds up the road.

On a drying track Verstappen pitted, with Perez doing likewise to give back the lead to the local hero on lap 13.

Logan Sargeant then embedded his Williams in the barrier at turn eight, triggering a safety car on lap 16.

"I don't know what happened man, I crashed," the American rookie muttered disconsolately, getting out of the car and collapsing on a nearby dune, his head in his hands.

PAKISTAN TOP ODI RANKINGS

Rizwan and Azam star in final one-dayer as Pakistan whitewash Afghanistan 3-0

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Pakistan rose to the top of the one-day international rankings with a 59-run win against Afghanistan in the third and final match in Colombo on Saturday, claiming a 3-0 series whitewash.

Pakistan were helped to 268-8 in 50 overs by a solid 79-ball 67 from Mohammad Rizwan and an 86-ball innings of 60 from skipper Babar Azam.

They then dismissed their opponents for 209 in 48.4 overs with number nine Mujeeb Ur Rahman top-scoring for Afghanistan with a 37-ball 64 for his maiden half century.

Rahman smashed five sixes and as many boundaries, racing to a new Afghan record for the fastest ODI fifty off just 26 balls before he stepped on to his stump and was out hit wicket off Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Rashid Khan was the previous record holder for Afghanistan with a 27-ball fifty against Ireland in Abu Dhabi last year.

Rahman and Shahidullah Kamal (37 off 65 balls) shared a valiant stand of 57 for the eighth wicket to give some respectability to the total after their team were reeling at 97-7.

Rahman also added 45 for the ninth wicket with Fareed Ahmad Malik who scored 17.

Pakistan won the first match by 142 runs and by one wicket in the second -- both games played in Hambantota.

Pakistan had been at number two in the International Cricket Council ODI rankings before the series but the 3-0 triumph lifted them above Australia.

Pakistan were briefly number one earlier this year.

Pakistan medium pacer Fa-



Pakistan players celebrate the fall of an Afghanistan wicket in their third one-day international in Colombo on Saturday (AFP)

Yes, we are number one. All credit to boys. We have worked hard for the last of couple of months and it has taken us to this point, so I am really happy

BABAR AZAM

heem Ashraf removed Rahmanullah Gurbaz, who made a century in the last game, for five and Ibrahim Zadran for an 11-ball duck to finish with 2-43.

Pakistan rested frontline bowlers Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah in four changes but they were still good enough with the

ball as spinners Shadab Khan (3-42) and Mohammad Nawaz (2-45) shared five wickets.

"Yes, we are number one," said Azam, who is also the number one batsman in the ODI rankings. "All credit to boys. We have worked hard for the last of couple of months and it has

taken us to this point, so I am really happy."

Afghanistan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi admitted his team was not up to the mark.

"We didn't apply ourselves," said Shahidi. "We are disappointed with the performance but there is a lot of learning."

It was Rizwan and Azam who anchored Pakistan's innings after they won the toss and batted.

Rizwan hit six boundaries and a six while Azam knocked four boundaries and a six to help Pakistan to a fighting total.

The Rizwan-Azam pair added 110 runs for the third wicket to steady the innings after pacer

Gulbadin Naib removed openers Fakhar Zaman (27) and Imam-ul-Haq (13).

Pakistan stuttered in the middle overs with four wickets lost for the addition of just 27 runs, including Azam's wicket who scored his 28th half century.

Saud Shakeel was run out for nine and Shadab for just three as Pakistan were struggling at 189-6. Agha Salman (38 not out) and Nawaz (30) added 61 for the seventh wicket as Pakistan added 80 in the last ten overs.

Salman hit four boundaries and a six in his 31-ball quickfire knock.

AFP

Spain coach Vilda condemns Rubiales for 'inappropriate' behaviour

Barcelona, Spain - Spain women's coach Jorge Vilda criticised the behaviour of suspended federation chief Luis Rubiales on Saturday, after 81 players went on strike and the majority of his coaching staff offered to resign.

"I deeply regret that Spanish women's football's triumph has been harmed by the improper behaviour of our leader Luis Rubiales, which he himself has acknowledged," said controversial coach Vilda in a statement to domestic EFE news agency.

Spanish football federation president Rubiales has been widely criticised for kissing player Jenni Hermoso on the lips as the Spanish team celebrated winning the Women's World Cup in Sydney last Sunday.



Jorge Vilda

World football governing body FIFA suspended Rubiales on Saturday, while the Spanish government confirmed they are taking action against the RFEF chief.

Hermoso says she did not consent to being kissed by Rubiales but the 46-year-old federation head says the kiss was "consensual".

AFP

Sevilla players pay 'It's Over' tribute to Hermoso in Rubiales battle

Barcelona, Spain - Sevilla players paid tribute to Spanish women's team star Jenni Hermoso and the country's other top female footballers ahead of their 2-1 defeat by Girona on Saturday in La Liga.

Hermoso, 33, was forcibly kissed on the lips by Spanish football federation chief Luis Rubiales at the Women's World Cup final medal ceremony on Sunday.

World football governing body FIFA suspended Rubiales on Saturday, while on Friday 81 Spain players including Hermoso said they would not play for the women's national team while the

current "leadership" continued.

Sevilla players wore warm-up t-shirts with the phrase "It's Over" written on the front in Spanish, which several Spain women's players and Hermoso herself had used on Friday on social media and in statements, apparently referring to Rubiales' reign in Spain.

La Roja's World Cup final goalscoring hero Olga Carmona watched the match from the presidential box at Sevilla's Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan stadium, less than a week after she netted the winning goal against England in Sydney.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

An expert in business development and management, project analysis, economic feasibility study, preparation of marketing and future plans, strategic planning and development of work mechanisms, with more than 26 years of experience in the Gulf. Contact: +968-97629179

An Indian female (Keralite) having an MBA in Finance and SAP-FICO is looking for a job of an accountant. Contact: +968-97894195 sumsumiya501@gmail.com

An Indian male (Keralite) having an BBA in supply chain with logistics with one year experience in logistics is looking for an opening in logistics, administration, sales. Contact: +968-91793559 mummumckenzie13@gmail.com

Experienced instrumentation engineer/QC (Indian) with 11 years of experience in the Gulf is currently looking for new opportunities in Oman. Ready to join immediately. Contact: +968-98126927

FLAT FOR RENT

A five bedroom flat with 4 bathrooms, kitchen, store, AC fitted and balcony sea view, near the Indian School Darsait for rent at RO275 monthly only. Contact: +968-99315986

BIRTHDAY WISHES



ANGEL MARIA JITHESH
AUGUST 28

Wishing you the best day, my darling girl. It has been a dream to watch you grow every day!

SITUATION VACANT

BAHWAN METAL & GLASS ENGINEERING LLC



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

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

BIRTHDAY WISHES



MOHAMMED ZULFIKAR ALI
AUGUST 28

Wish you many more returns of Happy Birthday to you my dear Daddy Mohammed Zulfikar Ali. May Allah Grant Peace, Health & Successful Life. From your Daughter and Wife Ikhlal al Samaa & Shaik Dilshad

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic
Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine,
Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage,
Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty
therpay & post Delivery Care



Zaher Building ,1st Floor, Flat 8A,
Al Khuwair Service Road, near Al Zawawi
Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280,
GSM: 95371664 , 92504980 ,
Website:www.siddhayur.com

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

mai alkaline

pH 9.1 to 9.5

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

Hydrate Smartly

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing
- ✓ Electrolytes

800 71 222
9275 5522

OmanOasis OmanOasisOfficial OmanOasisWater



Van, eastern Turkey, shows the shrinking waters of Lake Van also impacting animal husbandry in the region

SHRINKING SHORELINES

Shepherd Ibrahim Koc recalls his youth with fondness as he grazes cattle on a barren field that was once lush with vegetation on the edge of Turkey's largest lake. An occasional shrub marks the spots from where Lake Van has retreated over years of global heating and drought. "The animals are thirsty," the 65-year-old lamented. "There is no water," Koc said, echoing sentiments expressed by a growing number of Turks who have watched their mountains lose ice caps and their water reservoirs dry up. A weather map of Turkey - an agricultural superpower stretching from Bulgaria in the west to Iran in the east - shows much of the country suffering from a prolonged drought. Shrinking shorelines are exposing lakebeds that pollute the air with a salty dust. Scientists fear the problems could grow only worse. "I think these are our good days," Faruk Alaeddinoglu, a professor at Van Yuzuncu Yil University, said. "We will witness the lake continuing to shrink in the coming years." Lake Van covers approximately 3,700sqkm, reaching a maximum depth of 450m. Its surface area has shrunk by around 1.5% in recent years, according to measurements Alaeddinoglu carried out last autumn. "That is a terribly large amount of water for a 3,700sqkm area," he said.

Barren land
In the Celebibagi neighbourhood on the lake's northern shore, the waters have receded by around four kilometres. A long walk along the exposed lakebed is littered with bird bones, craggy bushes and dried dirt covered with sodium and other minerals. "We are walking in an area which was once covered with the lake's waters," said Ali Kalcik, a local environmentalist. "Now, it's a barren land without a living thing." The sight of dazzling flamingos dancing in the air against the backdrop of mountains signals the spot where the lake

Dust and bones on Turkey's shrinking lake Van indicate a dismal picture of times ahead



Tourists visit Van Castle, an Iron Age fortress, which now stands as a ruin on the rocks

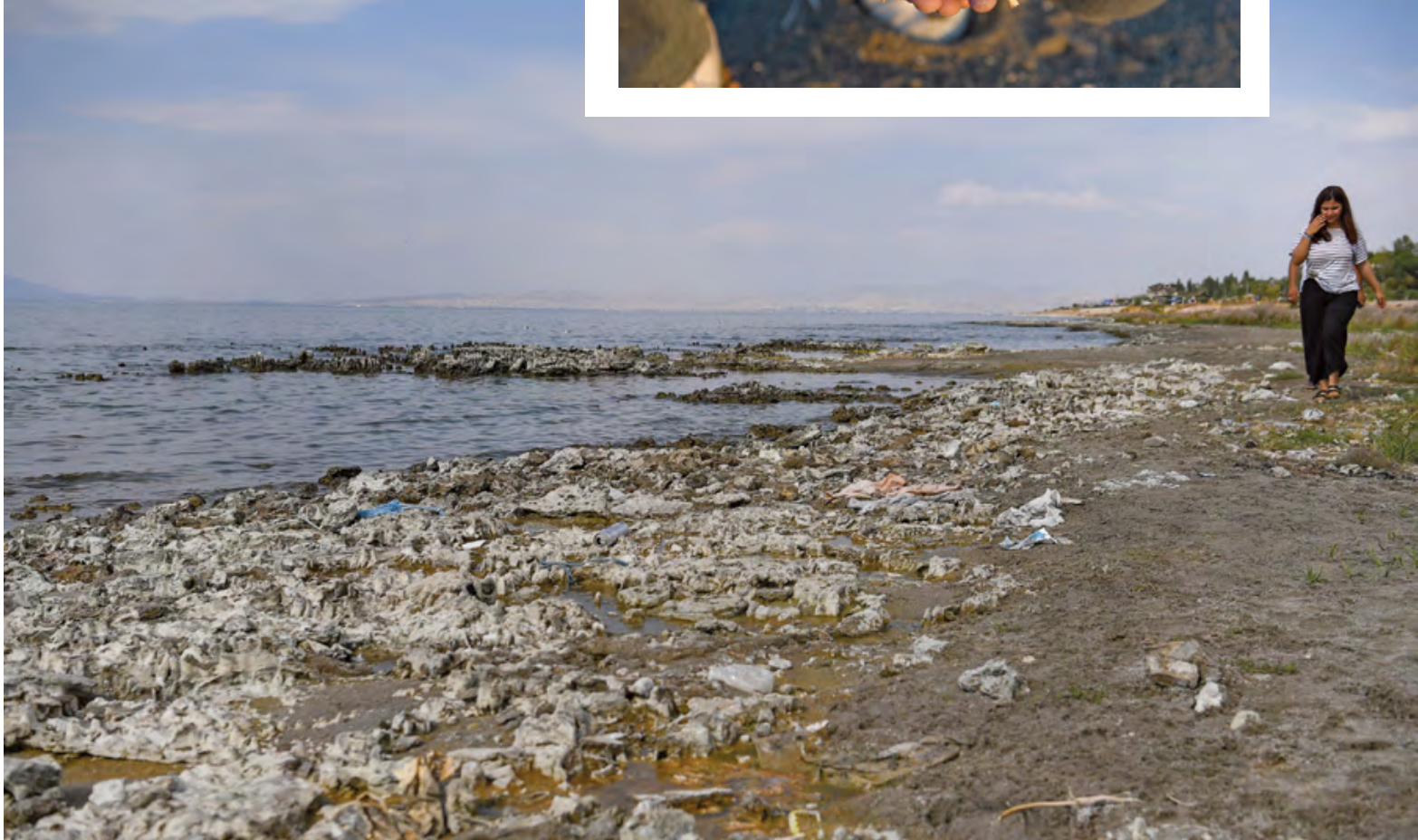


Ali Kalcik, a Local environmentalist shows birds' bones that starved to death when pearl mullets that form their diet migrated early this year because of the drought

finally begins. Alaeddinoglu said the lake's size had changed in the past because of rifts in tectonic plates that make Turkey into one of the most active earthquake zones in the world. But he blamed the ongoing water loss on rising temperatures that result in 'less precipitation and excessive evaporation'. Almost three times as much of the lake's water evaporates than comes back down in the form of rain, Alaeddinoglu said. Lush gardens of newly-built summer cottages are also draining water from the region, where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has built a government retreat.

Business is dying
The problem has become so severe that officials are urging local farmers not to grow crops requiring too much water. This means farmer Kinyas Gezer can no longer afford to grow sugar beets, which are a particularly thirsty vegetable. "All my labour has been wasted," the 56-year-old lamented, pointing to his shrivelled apricots. "If it goes on like this, we will abandon farming. The business is dying." The water's loss also exposes pollution, according to Orhan Deniz, a professor of Yuzuncu Yil University, whose campus sits on the lake's shore. "Large patches of slime mixed with mud give off a bad smell and make human pollution more evident," he said. "In the 1990s, we would swim during lunch break and then go back to university," he said, gazing at the lake from his office. "Now it's not possible to step in the water, let alone swim in it," he said.

A bird massacre
The lake is still popular with tourists and some locals swim along its more scenic parts. Van Governor Ozan Balci said his office has spent 80mn lira (US\$3mn) cleaning up the lake. "We are doing our best to protect the lake because of its cultural heritage and people's common memory," he told AFP. In the shoreline village of Adir, some locals swam and others picnicked under a tree. But dead gulls lying not too far



Underwater rock-like structures, called microbialites, remaining on the surface as the waters of Lake Van have shrunk in recent years

In the 1990s, we would swim during lunch break and then go back to university. Now it's not possible to step in the water, let alone swim in it

ORHAN DENIZV
Professor of Yuzuncu
Yil University

away betrayed the ecological problems facing the lake. Experts say pearl mullets that form the basis of the gulls' diet migrated early this year because of the drought. Deprived of food, the gulls simply starved to death. "The remaining birds here have one more week. Then they will also die," local villager Necmettin Nebioglu, 64, said. "In the past, the seagulls would follow us while we were swimming. Now look, it's a bird massacre," he said, pointing to a pile of carcasses on the shore. AFP



GULF OF TRIBUGA

Colombian Piangueras - women who cook with piangua, a mollusk used in the ancestral cuisine of the Pacific - arrive in a boat at a mangrove swamp to search black shells or Piangua

LOCAL

lifeline

In Colombia, a community wins fight to protect 'a slice of paradise'

In the remote west of Colombia, where virgin rainforest and pristine beaches collide, a group of politicians and businessmen dreamed of building a massive port on the Pacific.

It took almost two decades, but a small community managed to sink the project, betting on a different development model to preserve their slice of paradise.

In June, UNESCO declared the Gulf of Tribuga a biosphere reserve, putting a definitive end to plans to build a deepwater port and some 80km of highway through the untouched jungle.

The remote region, with no roads linking it to the interior, boasts a bounty of plant species, while its warm Pacific waters are a breeding ground for humpback whales and turtles.

In a region where unemployment stands around 30%, and poverty affects some 63% of inhabitants, the project promised 'a lot of jobs', recalls Marcelina Morena, a 51-year-old Colombian of African descent.

"On the other hand, it was going to bring us destruction of the mangroves, the land, everything. So we said no to the port," she said. Wearing rubber boots and gloves, she clambers through thick mangrove branches in search of pianguas, a mollusk considered a delicacy in Ecuador and Mexico.

She says, "The Gulf of Tribuga is going to be for the children, so that in the future they have something to live on. We will not allow anyone to destroy it, because it is a natural heritage."

BENEFITS TO A FEW

The project was first proposed in 2006 by a group of around 30 local officials and businessmen. It progressed at a snail's pace until Ivan Duque, elected president in 2018, made it a priority.

He, however, faced fierce resistance from some 18,000 Afro-Colombians and members of the Embera Indigena com-

munity who rejected an offer of a minimum share in profits.

Environmental groups and studies argued over and over again how the construction of the port would damage the unique area. At the same time, the company backing the project struggled to get the right approvals to move forward with construction.

The local community also pointed to the case of Buenaventura, Colombia's largest Pacific cargo terminal, only 200km south, which has been in operation for decades.

Nevertheless, the mainly Black population there still suffers from unemployment, a lack of public services, and lives under the threat of armed groups who traffic drugs around the port.

Local media have also reported that the



Aerial view showing beaches of Nuqui municipality



The Gulf of Tribuga is going to be for the children, so that in the future they have something to live on. We will not allow anyone to destroy it, because it is a natural heritage

MARCELINA MORENA



Colombian Piangueras prepare black shells or Piangua - a mollusk used in the ancestral cuisine of the Pacific

port is operating at less than half of its capacity.

"Buenaventura is like a mirror. The port only brings benefits to a few," said Arnold Rincon, director of Codechoco, the local environmental body that fought against the project.

In February 2022, under pressure from an aggressive environmental campaign, Duque backtracked and asked UNESCO to designate the zone as a biosphere reserve, without explaining his change of heart.

ECO-TOURISM

Residents want a different path to prosperity. Locals speak of ecotourism and artisanal fishing, the sale of carbon credits, and different strategies that do not affect the biome, said Rincon.

Small-scale eco-tourism to the hard-to-reach area grew 126% between 2019 and 2021, according to official data, and is seen as an engine for further growth.

With little connection to bigger markets, one company is helping carry fresh fish from the region by plane to restaurants in the interior.

The women who spend their days searching for the piangua mollusks, which sell for seven dollars a pound, hope their product will soon find a similar market.

Mangroves - which trap carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases - are 'life', says Arisleda Hurtado, president of the local association of piangueras.

"When you survive off something, you have to take care of it, you can't destroy that which sustains you," Hurtado asserts.

AFP



BACK TO SCHOOL WITH BMW.

Take your kids to school in style in the safest and more luxurious BMW SUV. Get your brand new 2023 BMW X-Model at amazing starting prices:

BMW X1 starting OMR 19,999*
BMW X3 starting OMR 24,999*
BMW X4 starting OMR 25,999*
BMW X5 starting OMR 29,999*

Every brand new BMW SUV comes with:

- BMW Service Inclusive for 5 years/100,000 kms*
- BMW Warranty for 5 years/200,000 kms*
- 1st Year Free Registration
- Free Window Tinting from AutoSpa

* Terms and Conditions apply.

* Whichever comes first.

* Prices exclude VAT.

Offer valid from August 1st till September 30th 2023.

Image is for illustration purposes only.

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles

Toll-free 800 50008

www.bmw-oman.com