



SAYYID FAHD RECEIVES PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH



H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, affirmed that Oman respects all religions when he received the Patriarch of Antioch in Syria, His Beatitude John X, on Sunday. H H Sayyid Fahd conveyed the appreciation and respect Oman has for all religions. His Beatitude John X, who is currently visiting Oman on an invitation of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, expressed his happiness with his visit and the interest and welcome he received from officials, praising the benevolent efforts undertaken by Oman and its policy of moderation.

Trade up, poised for more growth: Yousef

Total trade exchange increased by 47.1% to RO28.986bn at the end of 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, stated on Sunday that his ministry is adopting a host of measures to stimulate the economy and to attract foreign investment.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion is working with several state units to develop packages of facilities and incentives in order to raise the contribution of various sectors to the sultanate's GDP, the minister said.

Providing details when he was hosted by Majlis A'Shura on Sunday, Yousef said, "The contribution of domestic trade to the sultanate's GDP increased to RO2.8bn in 2021, accounting for



Committee to look into foreign investors' grievances

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has issued a decision on the system of functioning of the Grievance Committee mentioned in the Foreign Capital Investment Law.

The decision seeks to provide assurances for the protection of foreign investment projects in Oman. In this context, a grievance has to be submitted to the committee within 60 days of the date the defendant is notified or made fully aware of the claim.

8.06 per cent of the total GDP. The contribution of services sector to the GDP increased to RO16.5bn in 2021, up 50.2 per cent compared to 2020."

The manufacturing sector contributed RO3.2bn to the economy, representing about 9.7 per cent of the total GDP in 2021,

which amounted to RO33bn. The sultanate's total trade exchange with the world increased by 47.1 per cent to RO28.986bn.

"Non-oil exports grew from RO3.03bn in 2020 to RO5.79bn in 2021, while total merchandise exports grew from RO11.73bn to RO17.06bn in 2021."

Yousef informed that at the end of December 2021, the number of trade records registered with the ministry was 349,894, and the total number of transactions completed through the Invest Easily platform was 789,493, an increase of 39 per cent compared to 2020. The ministry is working to establish an investor lounge in the Directorate General of Investment, which will support investors with all requests.

"The lounge will play the role of a one-stop shop, taking care of the legislative and administrative aspects to support the investor and find solutions. We hope to establish the lounge this year, as the site has already been chosen," the minister said.

Yousef informed the shura that work is underway to launch 28 investment opportunities in the industrial sector, and presenting these to investors. "We are determined to move forward to achieve Oman Vision 2040, which was laid down by the Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, and will be completed under the patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, placing Oman among the ranks of developed countries."

‘Russia-Ukraine conflict needs a European solution’

H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, in an interview with the French newspaper Le Figaro, talks about Oman's diplomatic efforts towards achieving international as well as regional peace. He spoke on the Russian-Ukraine conflict, relations with Iran and Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Oman recently received Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Was this visit due to your moderate position on the war?

We are neutral, even if we voted for the UN General Assembly resolution condemning the war. This war is taking place in Europe, which presumably needs a European solution. We are counting on the ability of European leaders and others to find a solution because the posture 'you are with us or against us' will not solve the problem. Space must be left for diplomatic engagement.

Are you telling the Russians that they made a mistake?

No, we are not saying that, otherwise we would be stuck in a 'blame game' that will not allow us to move towards ending this war. Mistakes were made on both sides. There was no doubt a bad appreciation of the situation, a disconnection from reality and a misunderstanding that led to this war.

The United States and the European Union are imposing sanctions on Russia. Will you implement them?

We are a small country and we don't really want to be dragged into this kind of process. We are already affected by the situation in general. Rather, we are more interested in investing our time and effort in finding a solution than making things more complicated. Show me a country where you succeeded by imposing sanctions!

Are you optimistic about the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action? Do you confirm the existence of secret negotiations in Oman between the Iranians and the Americans, as was the case in 2013?

I can't really vouch for that. We are always happy to help if asked and I hope that new momentum will come to complete this agreement. This is in the interest of security and stability, not only for our region, but for the world as well. In the current negotiations, there are still points of con-



tention to be settled. I really hope that the current US administration can come to terms with the administration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

Going back to talking about the Americans, do you have a feeling that they are withdrawing from the Middle East?

Personally, I don't think the United States is withdrawing. But there is undoubtedly a reorganisation of their presence, because there are other priorities for the US. It is clear that a certain number of countries have developed their own capabilities and structures, and the question is - how do we integrate with each other?

Do you intend to join the Abraham Accords and normalise your relations with Israel?

When we talk about Israel, we have always supported peace efforts and this is a historical fact. We have hosted three Israeli prime ministers in Oman: Rabin, Peres and Netanyahu. We were the first Gulf country to do so. And since the Camp David Accords, we have always supported peace efforts and were one of the few countries in the region to do so. We have always supported the sovereign choice of our neighbours, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, of signing the Abraham Accords with Israel. But at the same time, we support initiatives that include the Palestinian voice. We continue to believe that a final, lasting and just settlement of the Palestinian issue can only be achieved on the basis of the two-state solution.

Oman proposes global strategy on infection prevention, control

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, headed the sultanate's delegation in the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) meeting at the 75th World Health Assembly (WHA75) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Oman has submitted a draft

resolution of 'Global Strategy on Infection Prevention and Control' and has garnered support from a number WHO member states.

The resolution is a critical step forward to ensure a coordinated approach to IPC globally.

The meeting, focusing on protecting health workers and health systems, aimed at describing the current state of IPC across the world. It further emphasised on

the need for a coordinated IPC global strategy, in addition to demonstrating commitment to IPC as a key piece of global health security.

"There is need for a robust and resilient healthcare system that includes functional multisectoral IPC programmes to ensure patient safety, combating emerging infections, including antimicrobial resistant bacteria," Oman stated.



Oman could be a gateway for Lebanese products: Rizk

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

Oman could play a major role in facilitating Lebanese companies export their products to the world, thanks to the good reputation of Lebanese products and Oman's strategic geographic location on the East-West trade lane.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* ahead of a visit of a high level Lebanese business delegation to Oman, Elie Rizk, president of Lebanese-Gulf Business Development Commission, said, "As many as 25 industrialists from Lebanon are coming to Oman who will pave the way for foreign investments in the country. They are coming to look for investment

I am very optimistic about the future of Oman because it has good relations with all countries

ELIE RIZK

opportunities and see what industrial and free zones in Oman are offering in terms of incentives and growth.

"With the reputation of their products around the world, Lebanese companies can take advantage of Oman's geographical location in reaching Europe,



Asia, Africa, America and the Arab world."

Rizk informed that the delegation's visit and business meetings will create excellent opportunities for partnership between Omani and Lebanese businesses. "We as Lebanese investors are looking to invest in three major sectors -

food industry, manufacturing and tourism," he said.

"We are also investing in the tourism sector and have already started developing a seven-star restaurant chain called Anna Beirut which will be opened in Qurm, Al Khuwair, Mabella and Al Hail. In the next two years, we

are also going to invest in two more restaurants. This is in addition to other tourism projects including hotels and resorts."

Oman has offered a number of incentives to attract foreign investments, including treating foreign investment companies as national companies and granting residence to expat investors.

"A number of initiatives have been taken aimed at attracting foreign investments and improving operating levels, such as allowing the practice of business and commercial, and investment activities by obtaining an initial licence, treating foreign investment companies as national companies, and granting residence to investors," Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister

of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, has stated.

According to Rizk, making investments in Oman is easy. "The process is very fast and we didn't find any delay in registering a company, all thanks to the government. However, our main challenge lies with banking. They delay with processes. They delay just opening an account by several months," he said.

Expressing his confidence about future business prospects in Oman, Rizk said, "I can see that Oman is growing and the policies of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik are excellent. Oman has a huge potential to grow. I am very optimistic about the future of Oman because it has good relations with all countries."

MHUP inks 23 development project agreements costing RO37mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) signed 23 agreements with several companies and private establishments worth RO37mn on Sunday.

The agreements have been signed for development of projects related to sports, education, rehabilitation, agriculture and health, besides fuel stations.

The projects are spread over the governorates of Muscat, North Batinah, South Batinah, North Sharqiyah, Dhahirah, Dakhliyah and Al Wusta.

MHUP stated that the agreements aim to support development of governorates and provide services in line with the policies of the National Urban Development Strategy 2040.

South Batinah projects

As part of the agreements, three factories will be set up in the wilayat of Wadi al Ma'awil. These are an automated brick factory costing RO650,000, an insulator factory for RO500,000 and paint factory at a cost RO200,000.

A wooden furniture factory (RO150,000) and a plant for bottling and purifying drinking water (RO350,000) will come up in Barka.

'An agreement was also signed for a project to raise and sell livestock in Barka on an area of 21,000sqm at a total cost



RO99,000,' MHUP stated.

Muscat projects

Spread over an area of 5,000sqm to be built at a cost of RO15mn, Muscat will have a private hospital for maternal and foetal care. The wilayats of Amerat and Seeb will both get private schools, to be built at a cost of RO2mn and RO500,000 respectively. Seeb will also see the construction of a fuel station at a cost of RO200,000.

North Sharqiyah projects

An usufruct agreement was signed for a greenhouse farming project in the wilayat of Mudhaibi on an area of 200,000sqm to be built at a cost of RO11.5mn.

A bottling and water purifying project in the wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid will cost of RO350,000, while a centre for packaging products for Omani Agriculture Association will be set up in the wilayat of Ibra costing RO50,000.

Projects in North Batinah, Dakhliyah and Al Wusta

A sports academy will be set up in the wilayat of Khabourah, North Batinah, on an area of 45,000sqm at a cost RO1.5mn.

In Adam, Dakhliyah, labour camps and workshops will be set up on area of 4,200sqm at cost of RO140,000.

A fuel station will be constructed in the wilayat of Haima, Al Wusta, costing RO200,000.

Ministry invites bids to manage Quriyat Fort

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has invited bids for the management of Quriyat Fort.

A statement issued by MHT said, 'Interested parties are expected to submit a letter of expression of interest and an action plan on how to develop and manage the site.'

Applicants will also have to provide details of their organisational structure, including detailed data on shareholders and partners, and previous experience in the field.

The ministry stated that interested companies must submit a report on how they plan to market the fort commercially and culturally - hold cultural workshops,



organise artistic and cultural events, and introduce activities to revive the fort.

'Bids must highlight the architectural uniqueness of the fort and involve the local community in various cultural and social events.'

The deadline for bid submission

is June 29, 2022.

Quriyat Fort is counted among the most important historical landmarks of the sultanate, built more than 200 years ago. It has a single-storey citadel with a rectangular structure. A tower in the southern corner stands tall over the fort.

MHT launches contest to enrich visitors' museum experiences

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has launched a digital competition to commemorate International Museum Day and enrich the experience of museum visitors.

The day is observed on or around May 18, and this year was held under the slogan 'The Power of Museums'.

In a statement, MHT said, 'The ministry is pleased to invite individuals to participate in an electronic competition on the occasion of International Museum Day. The competition aims to enhance and enrich the experience of visiting museums.'

The ministry has set conditions for participants, including presentation of a creative idea in



113,600 people visited museums in the sultanate in 2021

Arabic and English using artificial intelligence and age (18 to 30 years).

The last date of submission of entries is June 18. According to the National

Centre for Statistics and Information, 113,600 people visited museums in the sultanate in 2021, of which 49 per cent visited the National Museum of Oman.

GEN NU'MANI RECEIVES KAZAKH, SWISS AMBASSADORS



H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'mani, Minister of Royal Office, received in his office ambassadors of Kazakhstan and Swiss Confederation to the sultanate on Sunday. H E Mohammed Ali Najmuddin, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and H E Gen Nu'mani reviewed areas of joint cooperation and means of enhancing relations between the two countries. H E Gen Nu'mani welcomed H E Thomas Oertle, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation, wishing him success in carrying out his duties as the ambassador of his country to Oman. On his turn, the ambassador expressed his sincere appreciation for Oman and his keenness in enhancing areas of cooperation to serve the joint interests of the two countries. The two sides also discussed several matters of mutual interest (ONA)

'Qatar World Cup to stimulate tourism'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The FIFA World Cup in Qatar is a great opportunity for Oman to boost tourism. The agreement for 48 daily Oman Air flights between Muscat and Doha will greatly help in achieving tourism targets, say experts.

The pact is part of agreements signed with Gulf airlines that will see operations of more than 180 daily shuttle flights to Qatar, allowing fans to fly in from nearby cities and ease accommodation pressure in Doha.

H E Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, has tweeted that this agreement will support the tourism sector and small and medium enterprises as a large number of football fans are expected to visit the sultanate.

"The ministry will hold recreational activities to revitalise a few tourist areas in different wilayats, including the establishment of Olympic villages," he said.



Qatar hosting the World Cup is a great opportunity to stimulate tourism in the region, especially in Oman

AMIR AL BALUSHI

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Amir al Balushi, CEO of Peace Gate for Investment, said, "Qatar hosting the World Cup is a great opportunity to stimulate tourism in the region, especially in Oman. This is an opportunity to showcase Omani hospitality, culture and heritage - which is unique in the region - to the guests arriving during the World Cup."

He added that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism should prepare tourism brochures and short films to help attract football fans to Oman. "We should also have special souvenirs to present to tourists who will visit during

the Qatar World Cup."

Nasser al Hosni, an economic analyst, noted that a global event of this scale is happening for the first time in the Middle East. He described it as a "good enough reason" for tourists from all over the world to come and experience the region.

"This an opportunity to stimulate the economy, create job opportunities, and support small and medium enterprises to promote their products. There will be a huge demand for hotel reservations and a revival of tourist traffic. The transport and communications sector will also be active because fans will come in thousands," Hosni said.

H E Basil bin Ahmed al Rowas, Undersecretary for Sports and Youth in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, informed that there is coordination with Oman Football Association to attract a few teams that have qualified for the World Cup to set up camps in the sultanate to acclimatise before the start of the tournament.



Omani olive oil wins two gold, two silver medals in Italy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Royal Gardens and Farms of Royal Court Affairs bagged four prizes in the prestigious EVO International Olive Oil Contest, held in Italy on May 21.

Oman won two gold and two silver medals for its high quality extra virgin olive oil and compliance with international specifications and standards in the seventh edition of the award.

Founded in 2016, the contest was inducted by World Ranking Extra Virgin Olive Oil among the top five international extra virgin olive oil contests in the world and the first in Italy in its first edition.

The Royal Gardens and Farms won two gold medals in the Coratina and Blend extra virgin

The olives were produced in the Riad al Jabal farm in Jabal Akhdar

olive oil product categories, and two silvers in the Koroneiki and Arbequina categories. The olives were produced in the Riad al Jabal farm in Jabal Akhdar.

The EVO International Olive Oil Contest aims to promote the highest quality of extra virgin olive oil. For this reason, it allows access to the competition only to producers able to guarantee traceability and origin of their products. A highly qualified jury tasted the products over four days from May 16 to 19.

1,035 debtors freed in 2022: Fak Kurbah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A total of 1,035 debtors were released through the Fak Kurbah initiative this year, according to Omani Lawyers Association (OLA). The initiative helps raise funds to pay off debts of people serving sentences in insolvency cases.

Dr Mohammed Ibrahim al Zadjali, president of OLA, said, "Fak Kurbah has proved in the past few years that our society is conscientious and thrives by sharing and giving."

"We, at Fak Kurbah, highly appreciate every effort that has been exerted in order to achieve the initiative's goals in helping in-



solvent individuals who were imprisoned as a result of financial difficulties resulting from circum-

stances not in their hands. We are keen to extend our hand to them with the help of generous

institutions and individuals."

Zadjali informed that the initiative has been able to secure the release of 3,934 individuals in prison or about to be imprisoned in the last eight years. "In the current ninth edition of Fak Kurbah, we helped the release of 1,035 prisoners, bringing the total to 4,969."

This year, the highest number of released prisoners - 209 - was from Muscat governorate, followed by North Batinah (194), South Sharqiyah (148), South Batinah (117), Buraimi (98), Dakhliyah (78), Dhofar (72), Dhahirah (57), North Sharqiyah (49), Musandam (nine) and Al Wusta (four).

The ninth edition was special owing to the fact that it saw wide

participation and the launch of a dedicated website (fakkurba.om), through which donors were able to donate and see the numbers being released, helping boost donations.

"We have been able to reach unprecedented numbers, reflecting the solidarity of our generous society. We ask Allah Almighty to accept their good deeds and provide us with His help to move forward with this important humanitarian initiative."

The cooperation of government and private institutions, besides social media influencers, contributed to spreading awareness on the initiative which helped the participation of donors grow, Zadjali said.

Roja Parfums launches new men's fragrance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

British perfume maker Roja Parfums launched a new fragrance, called Apex, at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel on Saturday. Turandot, a fragrance launched earlier, was showcased alongside the new product.

Apex is a fragrance for men inspired by a deep-rooted connection to nature and to Earth. Speaking about the perfume, celebrated British perfumer and owner of Roja Parfums Roja Dove, said, "Apex connects man and nature. The citrus opening represents the beginning of



reaching your Apex with a bright blend of bergamot, lemon, mandarin and pineapple. Base notes of patchouli and fir balsam evoke the feeling of being surrounded

by nature, while notes of leather add warmth and sensuality. We have also used sandalwood and frankincense to give it a spiritual feel."

Turandot was released to celebrate the tenth season of Royal Opera House Muscat in 2020. Elaborating on how the opera of love inspired him to create the

perfume, Dove recalled dissecting Puccini's dynamic score for sensory cues. "Those familiar with the opera will remember the opening of Turandot being almost discordant. So I wanted the beginning of this perfume to feel very connected with the Earth, so it opens with these notes of mosses and woods," he said.

Roja Parfums opened its first standalone boutique in Oman at Royal Opera House Muscat in 2017.

"Oman is entrenched in culture and I found that people in this region have an incredible appreciation for good perfumes," Dove said.

Dar al Atta'a Let's Read writing competition celebrates friendship

Muscat - The prize distribution ceremony of the Dar al Atta'a Let's Read programme's 16th children's writing competition was held on Saturday. The event was held at the Let's Read charity bookshop and library in Oman Avenues Mall.

This year, children aged eight to 18 years were asked to write an essay, in English or Arabic, about friendship. The competition was held in three age categories - 8-11, 12-15 and 16-18.

Jane Jaffer, chairperson and founder of Let's Read, said, "I believe friends hold up a mirror so that we can see ourselves in a more positive light."

Quoting French novelist Marcel Proust, she said, "Let us be grateful to the people who make



us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom."

According to Jane, the theme prompted many participants to write about classmates; some

also wrote essays on parents as friends.

Ward Rami Ali Abudayyeh, a 15-year-old student from Al Injaz Private School, who claimed the first place in the 12-

15 years category, wrote an essay his Grade 6 classmate who he was separated from after changing school. "Though we are not in the same class anymore, I have amazing mem-

ories of our friendship," he said.

Amna Nadeem, student of Hay al Sharooq International School, Sur, claimed third place in the 8-11 category. "I wrote about my cousin because she is the 'bestest' friend I have. She is also very kind, and she makes serious things funny. She always helps me when I am in difficulty, for instance if I fall while I am playing."

Sajad Alani, a 17-year-old student of Al Injaz Private School, who won second place in the 16-18 category wrote about a classmate who helped him catch up with schoolwork. "When I am absent from school, he takes extra notes for me. He comes straight from school to my house and, sometimes, even

writes notes in my books".

Sajad described his friend as having a "big effect on him".

He wrote on his experiences and feelings about his friend in a 500-word essay. "But I feel even 5,000 words are not enough to express his true friendship".

Al Jouri al Qartoobi, a 13-year-old student of Omar bin al Khattab Institute for the Blind, was given a special prize for her essay written in Braille. Her teacher translated it into Arabic for submission for the writing competition. She wrote about her classmate and friend who is partially blind.

The nine judges for the competition had a difficult task assessing hundreds of entries received for the competition.

Mila Gabruck, one of the judges, said, "These entries, written by children and teenagers, reveal a complex world where friends are celebrated and offered emotional support. They laugh together and share positive experiences. But these essays also reveal loneliness, longing and sadness."

Another judge, Elizabeth al Sarhani, noted and commended the fact that there were more entries written in Arabic this year.

"The writers have shown how it is possible to have a meaningful friendship, whether it be with a parent, a family member, a classmate or a pet," Elizabeth said.

(Text and photo by Syed Fasiuddin)

MARKET WATCH

MSX30 4,120.54
Sensex 54,884.66

FOREX RATES

(ROI equals)

Indian Rs	201.92
Pakistani Rs	520.05
Bangladeshi taka	228.23
Philippines peso	135.99
Sri Lankan Rs	921.97

*Rates as on MAY 29

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Moody's affirms Kuwait's A1 rating

Moody's Investors Service affirmed the government of Kuwait's long-term local and foreign currency issuer ratings at A1.

The outlook remains stable. The decision to affirm the ratings is underpinned by Moody's assessment that Kuwait's balance sheet and fiscal buffers will remain strong for the foreseeable future, which preserve macroeconomic and external stability and anchor the credit profile.

The stable outlook reflects balanced risks to the ratings.

Effective implementation of measures to reduce the government's exposure to oil revenue and diversify the economy, which Moody's does not currently factor into its baseline assumptions.

Qatar's Snoonu acquires Omani food delivery platform Akeed

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Qatar's leading tech start-up Snoonu announced on Sunday its acquisition of Akeed, a leading Omani food delivery platform with a network of more than 1,000 restaurants and grocery stores.

The agreement to acquire Akeed will shore up Snoonu's business objectives that aim to diversify and expand the company's operations across the region, Snoonu said in a press statement.

'This milestone is considered the first ever achieved by a local tech start-up in Qatar. It serves as a step propelling the rising company forward and bringing it closer to achieving its goal of becoming the first Qatari tech unicorn company,' the company said.

The acquisition announcement was made during an event that took place last Saturday, which was attended by members from the executive management of both companies, as well as high profile delegates, prominent stakeholders and leading figures across the local and regional



Hamad Mubarak al Hajri (left), CEO and co-founder of Snoonu and Gaurav Anil Nahar, CEO and co-founder of Akeed signed the acquisition agreement

business and entrepreneurship sectors. Commenting on this partnership agreement, Hamad Mubarak al Hajri, CEO and co-founder of Snoonu, said, "Our acquisition of Akeed was a decision made based on the company's stellar reputation as one of the leading food delivery platforms in our sisterly Sultanate of Oman. Akeed's wide network of restaurants and grocery stores will enable us to establish a solid foothold in the Omani market as our initial step towards an expanded regional presence and

the world and to contribute towards the fulfillment of Qatar's national vision of 2030," he added.

From his side, Gaurav Anil Nahar, CEO and co-founder of Akeed, said, "We are excited about this agreement with Snoonu and we look forward to a future vision that will bring the latest in the e-commerce and logistics services industry to Oman.

Akeed team is happy to be joining hands with such a successful brand from Qatar, and we believe that this deal will add more value to both markets."

Founded in 2019, Snoonu is the first Qatari one-stop-shop application, facilitating online shopping, lifestyle, food, grocery delivery, and third-party logistics services for start-ups and SMEs in Qatar.

In November 2020, Snoonu launched its own 24x7 online grocery store, offering a wide range of locally sourced products and supporting Qatar's merchants. The company aims to become a leader in delivery services, and the first super-app in Qatar with plans to expand internationally.



BP Oman awards rig contract to Abraj

Our Correspondent
Muscat

BP Oman, which operates the Khazzan and Ghazeer gas fields projects in the sultanate, has awarded the extension of the land rig services contract to Abraj Energy Services.

'As part of our commitment to the In-Country Value and the long-term relationship with Abraj Energy Services, we signed today the extension of the land rig services contract with Abraj Energy Services for a period of two years,' BP Oman said in a tweet on Sunday.

BP is the operator of Block 61 which was developed in two stages - Khazzan gas field, that began production in 2017, and Ghazeer, that started up in 2020.

SEZAD readies 10mn sqm industrial land for investors

Duqm - The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) on Sunday announced the readiness of a group of land allocated in the masterplan for various industrial projects that will be developed in the zone.

The leveling and grading works for these plots, which cover a total area of about 10mn sqm, have been completed. SEZAD is also working to enhance the infrastructure of these plots by providing electricity, water and gas services to get them ready for investors who are interested to start their industrial projects in the zone.

The industrial land leveling and grading project comes in response to the ongoing growth witnessed by SEZAD, with the anticipated completion of installing the modern cranes in the Port of Duqm and the arrival of the gas main pipeline.

This complements the package of facilities and incentives offered by SEZAD to investors, serving to expedite completing the investors' land usufruct applications and procedures to



start their investment projects. It, further, backs SEZAD's serious efforts to attract local and foreign investments in various sectors, especially industrial ones.

On the other hand, investors can take advantage of the electronic service for the direct selection of lands that was recently launched by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Investors could select the plot

of land directly from the zone's masterplan once they determine the type of their investment projects and the plot of land required.

This enables investors to quickly and easily choose the appropriate location among the already leveled and graded land with the possibility to know the distance between the land and nearby available utilities.

In a press release, Eng Saleh bin Rashid al Hashmi from the Special Economic Zone at Duqm

stated that the zone is constantly seeking to enhance and increase its support for investors and provide an attractive investment environment by enriching the system of various facilities and incentives it offers to investors.

In addition, SEZAD works on developing its various electronic services to facilitate the procedures of land usufruct and invest in Duqm, where investors can submit their applications and choose the land to invest in

SEZAD from around the world with all the relevant services and facilities available to start his project.

Hashmi stressed the readiness of industrial land, which enjoy completed infrastructure that enable investors to start their projects without bearing additional costs on the leveling and grading works for the plots. He also pointed out that these plots are distinguished by their proximity to different services, facilities and projects in Duqm. As well, they are connected with a network of roads leading, while SEZAD is also awarding a number of tenders to connect all the plots with paved roads in order to facilitate its accessibility. It is worth noting that the Special Economic Zone at Duqm stands as the largest in the Middle East and North Africa, covering an area of 2,000 sqkm.

It offers ready land to attract commercial, tourism, economic and industrial investment projects, renewable energy projects and others.

MSX rises 0.34% as volumes increase

Our Correspondent
Muscat



The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange rose 0.34 per cent on Sunday to close at 4,120.54 points.

The gains in the main index were supported by all the sectoral indices led by Sharia Index which rose 0.85 per cent. While Financial Index increased 0.36 per cent on Sunday, Industrial Index and Services Index rose 0.34 per cent and 0.45 per cent, respectively.

Total trading volumes increased by 49.2 per cent to 20.6mn shares against 13.8mn shares traded on Friday. Market turnover grew 51 per cent to RO2.99mn compared with RO1.96mn recorded in the previous trading session.

The market breadth of the MSX remained highly posi-

tive with 24 advancing stocks to just four decliners. As many as 22 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

The gainers for the day were National Aluminium Products (8.24 per cent), Muscat Finance (7.35 per cent), Construction Materials Industry (6.17 per cent), Al Anwar Investment (5.06 per cent) and Global Investment Holding (4.41 per cent).

Four losers were Dhofar International Development and Investment (-3.57 per cent), United Finance (-2.2 per cent), Oman Cement (-1.57 per cent) and Renaissance Services (-0.94 per cent).

Companies in UK and Europe plan to trial four-day workweek

London, UK - Louis Bloomsfield inspects the kegs of beer at his brewery in north London, eagerly awaiting June, when he will get an extra day off every week.

The 36-year-old brewer plans to use the time to get involved in charity work, start a long-overdue course in particle physics, and spend more time with family.

He and colleagues at the Pressure Drop brewery are taking part in a six-month trial of a four-day working week, with 3,000 others from 60 UK companies.

The pilot - touted as the world's biggest so far - aims to help companies shorten their working hours without cutting salaries or sacrificing revenues.

Similar trials have also taken place in Spain, Iceland, the United States and Canada. Australia and New Zealand are scheduled to start theirs in August.

Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, a programme manager at 4 Day Week Global, the campaign group behind the trial, said it will give firms "more time" to work through challenges, experiment with new practices and gather data.

Smaller organisations should find it easier to adapt, as they can make big changes more readily, he told AFP.

Pressure Drop, based in Tottenham Hale, is hoping the experiment will not only improve their employees' productivity but also their well-being.

At the same time, it will reduce their carbon footprint.

The Royal Society of Biology, another participant in the trial, says it wants to give employees "more autonomy over their time and working patterns".

Both hope a shorter working week could help them retain employees, at a time when UK busi-



nesses are confronted with severe staff shortages, and job vacancies hitting a record 1.3mn.

Not all rosy

Pressure Drop brewery's co-founder Sam Smith said the new way of working would be a learning process.

"It will be difficult for a company like us which needs to be

kept running all the time, but that's what we will experiment with in this trial," he said.

Smith is mulling giving different days off in the week to his employees and deploying them into two teams to keep the brewery functioning throughout.

When Unilever trialled a shorter working week for its 81 employees in New Zealand, it

was able to do so only because no manufacturing takes place in its Auckland office and all staff work in sales or marketing.

The service industry plays a huge role in the UK economy, contributing 80 per cent to the country's GDP.

A shorter working week is therefore easier to adopt, said Jonathan Boys, a labour econo-

mist at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

But for sectors such as retail, food and beverage, healthcare and education, it's more problematic.

Boys said the biggest challenge will be how to measure productivity, especially in an economy where a lot of work is qualitative, as opposed to that in a factory.

Indeed, since salaries will stay the same in this trial, for a company to not lose out, employees will have to be as productive in four days as they are five.

Yet Aidan Harper, author of "The Case for a Four Day Week", said countries working fewer hours tend to have higher productivity.

"Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands work fewer hours than the UK, yet have higher levels of productivity," he told AFP.

"Within Europe, Greece works

more hours than anyone, and yet have the lowest levels of productivity."

'Hiring superpower'

Employees in the UK work roughly 36.5 hours every week, against counterparts in Greece who clock in upwards of 40 hours, according to database company Statista.

Phil McParlane, founder of Glasgow-based recruitment company 4dayweek.io, says offering a shorter workweek is a win-win, and even calls it "a hiring superpower".

His company only advertises four-day week and flexible jobs.

They have seen the number of companies looking to hire through the platform rise from 30 to 120 in the past two years, as many workers reconsidered their priorities and work-life balance in the pandemic.

AFP

G7 nations vow to stop fossil-fuel financing abroad by end of 2022

Berlin, Germany – Japan Friday for the first time joined fellow members of the Group of Seven (G7) industrialised nations in pledging to end public financing for fossil fuel projects abroad by the end of the year to help combat global warming.

"We commit to end new direct public support for the international unabated fossil fuel energy sector by the end of 2022," G7 energy and climate ministers said in a joint statement following talks in Berlin.

The term "unabated" refers to projects that do not employ techniques to offset some of the pollution caused by carbon dioxide emissions.

Ending subsidies for the international fossil fuel energy sector was already part of a series of commitments agreed to by around 20 countries at last year's COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.

Six of the G7 club of rich nations were among the signatories at the time – Britain, Canada, Germany, France, Italy and the United States – but Japan had resisted until now.

"It is good that Japan, the world's largest financier of fossil fuels, has now joined the other G7 countries in making a shared



(From left) Germany's special climate representative Jennifer Morgan, US's Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry and German Minister of Economics and Climate Protection Robert Habeck address a press conference during the G7 Ministers Meeting in Berlin on Friday (AFP)

commitment to end overseas fossil fuel financing," said Alden Meyer, senior associate at climate policy think tank E3G.

Friday's pledge still allows for some "limited" exceptions of fossil-fuel financing so long as they are consistent with the 2015 Paris pact to curb global temperature increases. But Meyer said

countries wishing to do so would face "a very stiff bar to clear".

At their G7 talks, ministers also committed to largely end the use of fossil fuels in their electricity sectors by 2035, despite heavy tensions in the power market over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We further commit to a goal

of achieving predominantly decarbonised electricity sectors by 2035," they said.

To achieve this, member states promised to ramp up "the necessary technologies and policies for the clean energy transition" and accelerate the phase-out of coal.

The pledge was welcomed by

environmental campaigners, at a time when the war in Ukraine has sent energy prices soaring and Western countries are scrambling to wean themselves off Russian imports.

"In a very difficult geopolitical situation, the G7 are united behind an end to fossil fuels by 2035 in the power sector. This is

significant progress," said David Ryfisch of the Germanwatch environmental group.

Speaking at the closing press conference, German Energy Minister Robert Habeck welcomed the pledges made by G7 nations, saying they sent a "strong signal for more climate protection".

As well as a pledge to stop bankrolling fossil fuel projects abroad by the end of the year, Habeck highlighted the club's agreement to ditch all "inefficient fossil fuel subsidies" by 2025.

"That we reward climate-damaging behaviour, either through direct subsidies or through tax advantages... is absurd and this absurdity has to stopped," he told reporters.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), in order to maintain the goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, all financing of new fossil fuel projects must be stopped immediately.

The Oil Change International campaign group has calculated that between 2018 and 2020, G20 countries alone provided US\$188bn in financing for overseas oil, coal and gas projects.

AFP

Russia sees \$14bn in additional energy revenue

Moscow, Russia – Russia expects to receive one trillion rubles in additional oil and gas revenues this year, the finance minister said, adding that part of the windfall will be spent on Moscow's offensive in Ukraine.

"We expect to receive up to a trillion rubles (US\$14.4bn) in additional oil and gas revenues, according to the forecast that we have developed with the ministry of economic development," Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said in remarks broadcast on state television.

Siluanov said the government planned to spend the additional revenue this year rather than put it aside.

He said the money will be spent on "additional payments" to pensioners and families with children and conducting a "special operation" in Ukraine, referring to Moscow's offensive in the pro-Western country.

"There are resources for this," Siluanov added.

President Vladimir Putin has recently derided the sanctions, saying Europe's "chaotic actions" have led to an increase in oil and gas revenues for Russia.

AFP

US deficit to drop to \$1tn in 2022

Washington, US – The US government deficit will fall dramatically this year to US\$1tn, down from levels not seen since World War II hit during the pandemic, the Congressional Budget Office said Thursday.

The budget shortfall in the current fiscal year will shrink significantly from the prior year, when it reached nearly US\$2.8tn due to the massive spending pumped out to keep the US economy afloat amid the Covid-19 downturn, which caused massive layoffs and business closures.

But even with the decline the deficit remains "large by historical standards" and is expected to rise over the next decade, CBO Director Phillip Swagel said in a statement.

The CBO expects the deficit to fall again in the next fiscal year – which runs October 1 to September 30 – but rise to 6.1 per cent of gross domestic product



(GDP) by 2023, significantly higher than the average recorded over the past 50 years, Swagel said.

Meanwhile, federal debt is projected to dip to 96 per cent of GDP by 2023, according to the report from the independent and nonpartisan CBO, which produces regular forecasts and analyses the costs of proposed US legislation.

With surging consumer demand and low unemployment, the economy is expected to expand over the rest of the year, growing 3.1 per cent, according to the CBO's latest estimates.

AFP

Sri Lanka gets Russian oil to ease shortages

Colombo, Sri Lanka – Cash-strapped Sri Lanka took delivery Saturday of Russian oil – which could soon be subject to a European embargo – to restart operations at the country's only refinery, the energy minister said.

The island nation is suffering its worst economic meltdown since independence, with shortages of fuel and other vital goods making life miserable for its 22mn people.

The state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) refinery was shuttered in March in the wake of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange crunch, which left the government unable to finance crude imports.

The Russian crude delivery had been waiting offshore of the capital Colombo's port for over a month as the country was unable to raise US\$75mn to pay for it, energy minister Kanchana Wijesekera said.

Colombo is also in talks with Moscow to arrange direct supplies of crude, coal, diesel and



An employee prepares to transfer petrol from a tanker truck to a Ceylon petroleum corporation fuel station in Colombo on Thursday (AFP)

petrol despite US-led sanctions on Russian banks and a diplomatic outcry over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"I have made an official request to the Russian ambassador for direct supplies of Russian oil,"

Wijesekera told reporters in Colombo.

"Crude alone will not fulfil our requirement, we need other refined (petroleum) products as well."

Around 90,000 tonnes of

Siberian light crude will be sent to Sri Lanka's refinery after the shipment was acquired on credit from Dubai-based intermediary Coral Energy.

Wijesekera said Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) was already in arrears of US\$735mn to suppliers and no one came forward to even bid for its oil tenders.

He added that the Siberian grade was not an ideal match for the refinery, which is optimised for Iranian light crude, but no other supplier was willing to extend credit.

Sri Lanka will nonetheless call for fresh supply tenders in two weeks before the stock of Siberian light runs out, Wijesekera said.

The Sapugaskanda refinery on Colombo's outskirts will resume work in about two days.

European Union leaders are meeting on Monday in an effort to negotiate a fresh round of sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine conflict, including an oil

embargo.

Russian oil is already subject to a US embargo and its barrels have traded at a steep discount from international benchmarks, which have risen substantially since the conflict began.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has seen long queues of motorists outside gas stations, waiting hours and sometimes even days for scant supplies of petrol and cooking gas.

Its people are also grappling with acute shortages of imported food and pharmaceuticals, along with record inflation and lengthy daily blackouts.

Anti-government protests erupted into riots earlier this month, leaving nine people dead and many more wounded.

A demonstration outside President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office in Colombo demanding his resignation over the government's economic mismanagement entered its 50th day Saturday.

AFP

UK taxes oil giants to help tackle inflation fallout

London, UK – Britain's finance minister Rishi Sunak unveiled a multi-billion-pound support package for consumers hit by soaring domestic energy bills, with help from a temporary windfall tax on oil giants.

A government package worth £15bn (US\$19bn) will be funded in part by an exceptional levy on soaring profits enjoyed by the likes of BP and Shell that have benefited massively from surging oil and gas prices.

Sunak acknowledged rocketing inflation is causing "acute distress" for Britons and ravaged household budgets nationwide, adding: "I know they are worried, I know people are struggling."

The windfall tax marked a U-turn for embattled Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who previously insisted such a move would hinder efforts by oil ma-

jors to invest in greener energy.

But Sunak told parliament on Thursday: "It is possible to both tax extraordinary profits fairly and incentivise investment."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer acted after British annual inflation surged to a 40-year high on rocketing energy costs, squeezing household budgets.

"We need to make sure that for those (for) whom the struggle is too hard and for whom the risks are too great they are supported," Sunak added.

"This government will not sit idly by while there is a risk that some in our country might be set so far back they might never recover.

This is simply unacceptable and we will never allow that to happen."

One in five Britons are struggling or unable to make ends



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak makes a statement on the cost of living crisis in the House of Commons in London (AFP)

meet, pollsters YouGov said Thursday.

Countries around the world are experiencing decades-high inflation as the Ukraine conflict pushes up energy and food prices, in turn forcing the Bank of England and other central

banks to hike interest rates.

25% windfall tax

Sunak said the new energy tax would be charged on the profits of oil and gas companies at a rate of 25 per cent.

"It will be temporary and

when oil and gas prices return to historically more normal levels the levy will be phased out."

The tax would raise about £5bn of revenue over the next year, according to the Treasury.

The money, plus a further £10bn, will fund support pay-

ments helping especially the poorest.

However, all households will benefit from a £400 payment to cushion energy bills that are set to rocket further in the autumn. Offsetting the windfall levy, meanwhile, would be a near doubling of investment tax relief for oil and gas firms.

"The more a company invests, the less tax they will pay," Sunak told MPs.

His address came one day after Johnson sought to "move on" from a critical report about his leadership that allowed lockdown-breaking parties at Downing Street.

Johnson and Sunak were fined by police over a breach of the laws they set for the public, causing widespread outrage.

Downing Street's chief of staff Steve Barclay dismissed suggestions Thursday's cost-of-

living announcement was timed to deflect attention from the "Partygate" scandal.

The main opposition Labour party, which had repeatedly called for a windfall tax on energy giants, blasted the government over the delayed move.

While welcoming the levy, Labour finance spokeswoman Rachel Reeves demanded to know why the Conservative government had taken "so long".

"This government's dither and delay has cost our country dearly."

She accused Johnson of simply seeking to move the news agenda on from Partygate.

"Labour called for a windfall tax because it is the right thing to do; the Conservatives are doing it because they needed a new headline," Reeves said.

AFP

Thawani highlights FinTech potential at COMEX 2022

Building on its efforts to accelerate Oman's digital transformation, Thawani Technologies, Oman's pioneering digital payments platform, participated in the Communications and Information Technology Exhibition (COMEX 2022) at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center.

Throughout the exhibition, Thawani presented its innovative products and services that utilise the latest FinTech solutions while partaking in a workshop focusing on 'The Role of Emerging Technology Companies in Developing the Banking Sector', under the umbrella of the Central Bank of Oman's (CBO) Banking and Financial Technology Department, a press release said.

"The rapid technological advancements have been developing the financial sector in an unprecedented manner, while



also making people's lives easier. That's why, through our participation at COMEX this year, we aim to reach a wider segment of the public and familiarise them with FinTech solutions and highlight the role

it plays in the development of the banking sector," said Eng Majid al Amri, founder and CEO of Thawani Technologies.

"In addition, we showcase our diverse portfolio and latest products and services, as well as

an application update to enhance customers' experience ensuring maximum security, reliability and convenience offering users new billing services and electricity recharge options," he added.



Audi floats approved pre-owned vehicle range

Audi Oman, represented by Premium Motors, caters to the increasing demand for high-quality pre-owned luxury cars in the country through its Audi Approved: plus section.

At Audi Approved: plus, buyers can trade in any Audi model or any other brand to buy a pre-owned Audi. The pre-owned Audi cars undergo mechanical, body work, interior and electrical inspections at 300+ multi-point checks, along with a full road test, a press release said.

Audi Approved: plus section stocks the biggest selection of

Audi used cars and all of them in perfect condition. Every feature and function of the car is carefully inspected, and is restored to its original condition using Audi genuine parts.

Christian Nehme, general manager of Premium Motors Oman, said, "We are happy to cater to the growing demand for pre-owned luxury cars in Oman. When one buys a pre-owned Audi from Audi Approved: plus, buyers are provided assurance that the cars they buy meet meticulous standards. To ensure confidence in buyer's purchase,

all pre-owned Audi Approved: plus vehicles pass through rigorous 300+ multi point check and 12-month warranty for the vehicle."

He added, "When one chooses an Audi Approved: plus model, we will be happy to accept your old car as trade-in and it doesn't need to be an Audi Model. An Audi Approved: plus, procurement consultant will assess the condition of your vehicle, and offer you a fair market price for it. Trade-in options for other automobile brands are also available as well."

Ooredoo wins COMEX Excellence in Technology Award 2022

Forging its path as a data and tech leader, Ooredoo has bagged the COMEX Excellence in Technology Award 2022 for its state of the art Data Centre.

Announced during COMEX 2022 at the Oman Exhibition and Convention Centre, the award recognised the facility's success in advancing Ooredoo's own operations, while propelling Oman's digital transformation, broadening internet accessibility and strengthening digital communications across the country, a press release said.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah al Abri, Chief Technology and Information officer at Ooredoo, said "We opened our latest facility in Bousher in 2021, which ranks as a Tier 3 Plus data centre in Oman. It represents a major breakthrough in hosting and data processing, and has set the founda-



tions for the development of transformative technologies such as 5G, cloud services, IoT, and other high-potential, high-growth areas."

Meanwhile, as data experience leaders, Ooredoo continues to keep up with the evolving digital requirements of its customers, offering everything from cloud storage to customisable

and scalable solutions.

With the Data Centre as the backbone of this strategy, it is already stacking up the awards, having previously won at the COMEX Excellence in Big Data & Analytics Awards 2021 and named Best Network Readiness - Data Centre services Oman 2021 at World Economic Magazine Awards.



New Azure prioritises comfort and wellbeing

Effortless performance and comfort over long distances have long been hallmarks of Bentley, which is now building on this reputation with a new family available across all five model lines.

The new Azure range will provide Bentley customers with a curated selection of features

designed to enhance the wellbeing and comfort of the vehicle's occupants, making every journey a relaxing experience regardless of distance, a press release said.

Azure is more than a specification, it includes tactile and visual cues designed to reduce stress and promote wellbeing,

along with driver assistance technologies for smoother, safer journeys, allowing driver and passengers to alight at journey's end feeling refreshed, alert and ready to resume their busy lives.

Seating is the foundation for driving comfort and control, and all Bentley Azures feature the Front Seat Comfort specifica-

tion. With up to 22-way adjustable seats, passengers of all heights and weights, from the 95th percentile male to the 5th percentile female, can find their ideal seating position, while the heating and ventilation function helps to maintain the body's optimum temperature for comfort and alertness.

Anantara Resort celebrates Wellness Day

Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort marks Global Wellness Day on June 11 with a day of wellness activities for guests, the launch of new wellness treatments at Anantara Spa, and wellness cuisine by award-winning Chef Gabriele Kurz.

Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort provides the perfect setting for guests to retreat, unwind and recharge, with a remote setting, fresh mountain air and inspiring vistas. Located in the Hajar Mountains of Northeast Oman, a two-hour drive from Muscat, an active and healthy lifestyle comes easily, with hiking, mountain climbing and archery in the open surrounds.

For Global Wellness Day this year, the resort has an exciting programme of activities lined up for guests. The day begins with yoga overlooking the wadi, followed by a couple's connection massage class. Guest chef and consultant Gabriele Kurz will also introduce a healthier way of eating, with a garden tour to highlight health benefits.



Mastercard partners with Musafir to boost travel bookings

As recovery of the travel industry picks up steam, payments technology company Mastercard and travel website Musafir have partnered to take travel bookings originating in the Middle East and North Africa, to new heights.

The exclusive partnership will digitise end-to-end payment flows and launch new innovative payment products with attractive travel benefits to both consumers and corporates, a press

release said. According to an analysis by the Mastercard Economics Institute, if flight booking trends continue at their current pace, an estimated 115 million more passengers in Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa will fly in 2022 compared to last year. Research reveals that global leisure and business flight bookings have surpassed pre-pandemic levels with an estimated 1.5 bil-

lion more passengers predicted to fly in 2022 compared to 2021.

"At Mastercard we are committed to contribute to the continued recovery of the travel and tourism sector through insights, data analysis, innovative digital solutions and unique partner collaborations. We are continuously investing to innovate across the travel value chain. We are excited to partner with Musafir to provide digital-first experiences

to their consumers," said Amnah Ajmal, executive vice president, Market Development, Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, Mastercard.

"Our partnership with Mastercard is a testament to our belief that travel is back and our commitment to providing both consumers and corporates with technology-led travel solutions," said Sachin Gadoya, co-founder and CEO of Musafir.com.

Ahli Islamic's finance offers extended

Reaffirming its commitment to foster a savings culture among its customers and champion their goals with flexible schemes and ventures, Ahli Islamic has extended its popular Ramadan offer of auto, home and personal finance.

The finance bundle, launched during Ramadan, was designed to assist customers with their personal obligations and aspirations, was a major success, and will be extended further, providing account holders with a convenient finance facility to tide over budgetary constraints. While the provision of auto finance will bolster plans of car enthusiasts who could not avail the offer during the month of Ramadan, when car sale campaigns were in full swing, the comprehensive home and personal finance will provide anchorage for customers seeking to renovate/construct/purchase home or fulfill personal requirements, a press release said.

Salary-transfer customers of Ahli Islamic can avail mortgage-free auto finance starting from as low as 3.49%; the same will also be available for customers whose salaries are not trans-



ferred to ahli islamic, at the profit rate of 4.99%. Personal and Home Finance will be offered at 4.75%, encouraging customers to take conclusive decisions on their home plans or to fulfill any immediate/long-term personal needs.

Highlighting the bank's intent to extend the finance offer, Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of Ahli Islamic said, "Our main objective is to strengthen our customers' purchasing powers with requisite financial packages. We are constantly creating stronger avenues for our customers' growth and focusing on delivering exceptional banking experiences. The extension of these offers stems from our objective to support customers."

Changan Oman launches UNI range luxury models in Oman

Futuristic and fashionable

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), which is part of Bahwan International Group, has launched Changan auto's luxury model range - UNI in Oman.

Positioned as futuristic and fashionable, the UNI range features progressive design and smart technologies offered only in luxury brands, a press release said.

Changan UNI range of automobiles is devoted to creating a new experience with highly technological and sporty exterior design coupled with avant-garde interiors. For a luxury model to be 'sporty at a glance', the UNI range adopts a short overhang and long axle design, adding the sporty feeling to a luxury range. This improves the overall handling of the UNI range having high agility and high-speed stability when driving.

The UNI range has adopted pure, precise and agile exterior design elements. The hidden door handle design blends in with the body, making it simple and sophisticated. The UNI family's classic borderless grille design is combined with the narrow, sharp headlamps on both sides for an intense look.

The aerodynamic airship-shape spoiler improves driving stability and fashionable in aesthetics.

The space battleship gear shift knob has a sporty design, giving the user a sense of exploration in every trip.

Equipped with IACC system, the UNI range can achieve L2 autonomous driving having features of FCW+AEB+LDW+LAS+TJA+AEB+LCDA. UNI range is equipped with four high-definition wide-angle cameras giving 360-degree view around the vehicle in real time to park your vehicle safely.

The UNI range adopts a simplistic yet avant grade interior design. It uses an asymmetrical design in the instrumentation and center console as well as bright colours that create technically dynamic interiors.

It adopts the Intelligent Cockpit Interaction System which appears to be two screens staggered on the surface, but internally they are connected as one have a high-resolution display



play and adaptive backlight control to protect the eyes from fatigue to the max while reading and driving.

The UNI range features newly designed

seats with fuller side wings which also provide more reliable support and confidence when cornering. The wireless

charging provides ultra-fast charging with wide-range compatibility. A spokesperson for AGAE

said, "We are delighted to bring the futuristic and fashionable luxury model range UNI to Oman.

The range offers commanding road presence, superb capabilities, and solid performance."

Further with 6 years or unlimited kilometres manufacturer's super warranty (whichever is earlier) on

UNI series range (UNI-T, UNI-T Sport, UNI-K Models) is more compelling to own.

Changan SUV UNI-K

Top of the range in UNI range is the futuristic SUV UNI-K. Under the hood, the premium UNI-K carries a 233 horsepower 2ltr turbocharged engine, paired with eight speed Auto Transmission which makes the UNI-K as thrilling to drive as it is to look at. It has exterior features that distinguish it to be a futuristic SUV including 21" Alloy Wheels, Panoramic Sunroof, Split and Auto LED Headlamps, Trident DRLs, ORVM - Electrically Folding.

The Changan UNI-K is equipped with innovative features not previously available in this segment of cars like the 8-way Electrically Adjustable Driver Seat with Electric Lumbar Support, 4-way Electrically Ad-

justable Co-driver Seat and a premium quality audio system with 12 speakers.

It has unique features like streaming inside rear view mirror, remote Engine Start/ Stop, driver seat headrest with speakers and triple HD screen with 12.3" Infotainment system. The rear seats can be almost fully flattened creating a superior large space.

The trunk volume is 518 litres and can be extended to 1,412 litres when rear seats are folded down.

Premium compact SUV - UNI-T

UNI range's SUV - UNI-T is equipped with a 175 horsepower 300 Nm torque 1.5ltr turbocharged engine, mated with a 7-speed DCT transmission, a two-wheel-drive system. Its fuel-efficient engine offers a fuel economy of 17.3 km per litre as per GSO.

Its exterior feature includes 20" Alloy Wheels, LED DRLs, LED Headlamps, extra large Panoramic Sunroof, Electrically Adjustable & Folding ORVMs. Changan UNI-T SUV has a very stylish and modern look and has a unique and sharp split headlights on the front, polygonal tail lights, quad exhaust pipes, skid plate and V Shaped spoiler.

Its interior features include electrically adjustable co-driver seat and front seats heating , a T- shaped centre console, and a D-shaped steering wheel. Infotainment facets include 10.3" LCD IC Display, 10.3" Infotainment Screen, Navigation, Voice Control Function, Mirror Link with Apple CarPlay, and six speakers. It has comfort features such as remote engine start/stop, electric tailgate, and remote parking.

Changan UNI-T 2WD, Sport

Changan uni-t 2wd includes luxury features and its additional exterior features include uni sports kit - front and rear bumpers, side skirtings, rear sports spoiler, brake calipers in contrast colour, exterior elements in high gloss black and bilateral quad exhaust pipes. Interior elements include contrast colour (trims & seat belts), black interior and sports seats.



NBO introduces network-wide customer experience training

Aiming for greater customer satisfaction, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has introduced a dynamic new customer experience programme for all branch employees. Known as 'Dhiyafa', a value that cascades down from the aim to implement a long-term company-wide mindset towards exceeding customer expectations and delivering a seamless experience.

The course will run for three months and focus on communication etiquette, customer expectations, standards for serving customers, face-to-face interactions and all aspects of the NBO customer experience, a press release said.

'Dhiyafa' reflects NBO's commitment to staff development and customer satisfaction by enhancing frontline services.

One of the most important



Said al Marhoobi

objectives of Dhiyafa to ensure the connection between the bank and customers remains strong, mirroring NBO's approach to delivering the right innovative products and services through the right channel to empower customers to reach their financial goals and achieve an ultimate customer experience.

Said al Marhoobi, head of Customer Experience at NBO,

said, "NBO places people at the heart of everything it does and Dhiyafa intersects our strategy across all of the bank's operations and our dedication to our customers. The objectives of Dhiyafa reflect NBO's core values and will help to create a sustainable and self-perpetuating culture across the bank's entire branch network. Our mission is to continue innovating our products as well as ways to exceed expectations and delight customers."

Enhancing the capabilities and effective deployment of NBO's people through empowering career development programs have been identified as key to achieving and delivering the bank's strategic and business objectives.

The bank will continue to equip its employees with the skills required to better serve our customers.

Shell Oman hosts Shell Technology Seminar

To showcase Shell's latest developments, Shell Oman conducted the Shell Technology Seminar 2022 that took place in both Muscat and Salalah and saw the attendance of business customers, partners, and leading regional experts from Shell.

The event, which was dedicated to showcasing Shell's extensive range of lubricant solutions, also introduced guests to Shell's newly rolled out Lube Advisor, a press release said.

Responding to the increased reliance on remote technological solutions, Shell's Lube Advisor is a breakthrough in modern technology. A wearable gadget, it supports customers in optimising their lubricant operations by providing remote consultations.

With a keen focus on safety, the Lube Advisor also provides real-time monitoring of field technicians while offering them audio-visual assistance when performing maintenance services. The seminar announced that Shell's customers in Oman and the Middle East can now access the Lube Advisor to en-



hance the safety of workers, increase on-ground efficiency, and boost overall operational decision-making.

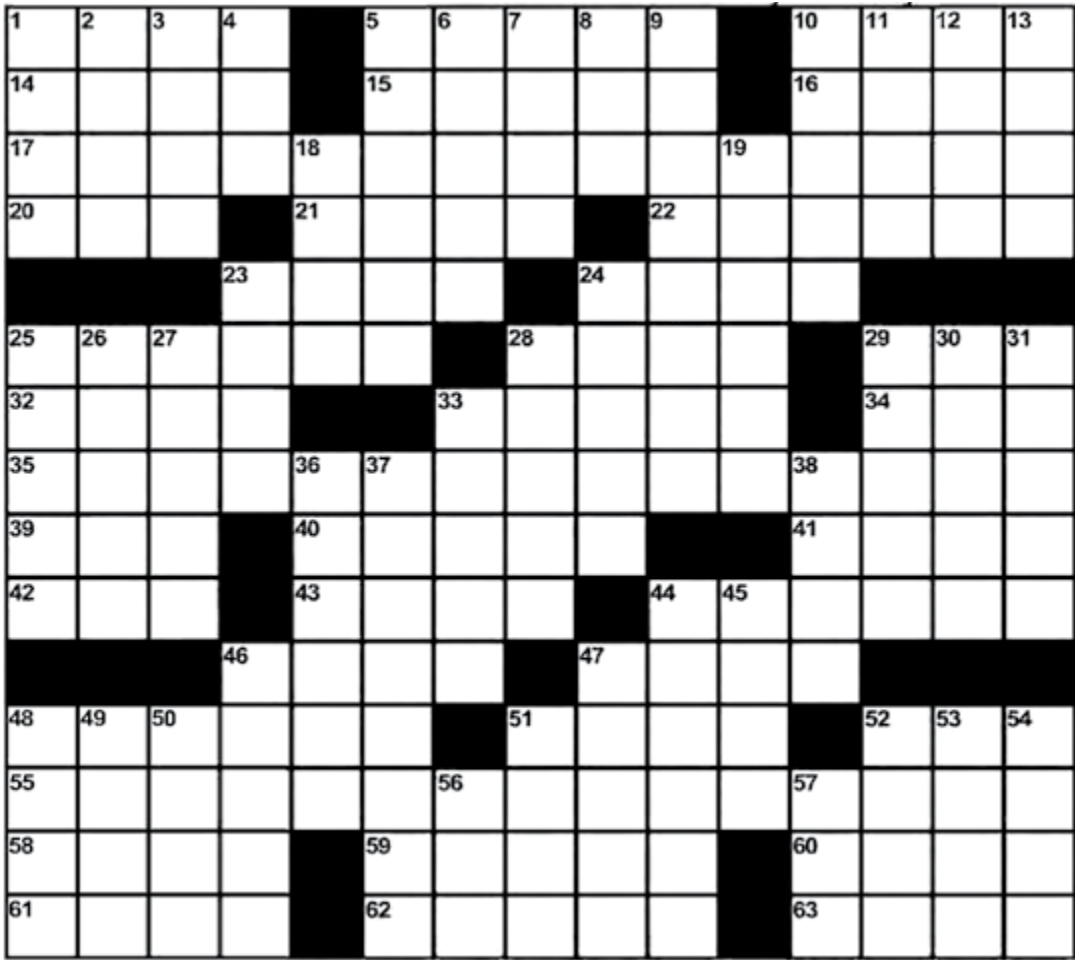
Dedicated to maximising equipment efficiency by reducing downtime and improving efficiency, the seminar also highlighted the various applications of Shell's diverse range of lubri-

cants and how the improved technology could save time, money, and even lives.

Commenting on the company's take on innovation in the Lubricants sector, Mahmoud al Abri, Commercial Lubricants - general manager, Shell Oman, said, "As a local company with a global brand, Shell Oman is com-

mitted to utilising our access to global know-how and share knowledge with our customers and partners, and the Shell Technology Seminar is an ideal platform for us to connect, engage and learn more especially in the presence of the Shell Lubricants experts and subject matter experts."

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Volcanic anagram for "ante"

5) Where something can be flat or sharp

10) Military lockup

14) Asian cuisine choice

15) Chocolate source

16) An apple on a computer, for one

17) One taking others to great heights

20) Color attribute

21) Brought into the world, as eggs

22) Dough or bread

23) Deeply engrossed

24) Give in to pressure

25) Chant

28) Certain beach bird

29) Monopolist's portion

32) " ... lender be"

33) Painful pang

34) Deception

35) Good feature for cars stuck in the snow

39) Tall Australian bird

40) Raise, as a flag

41) Bibliographical abbr.

42) Fink

43) First-class

44) Not-quite-round shapes

46) Jekyll's alter ego

47) Kind of individual pricing

48) Certainly not alert

51) Mixed assortment

52) Schuss, e.g.

55) Some supports for motorists?

58) Kai's place, often

59) Legendary actress Sophia

60) " ... not always what they ..."

61) Places of rejuvenation

62) Decorative jugs

63) Amazes

DOWN

1) Carve in stone

2) Holier than who?

3) Soon-to-be parents' concern

4) Order between "ready" and "fire"

5) Knee abrasion

6) Implied but not verbalized

7) Battery contents

8) Air-traffic control org.

9) Poppycock

10) Place for a hunter

11) Casting director's handout

12) Fictional hunchback

13) "... Jail" (Monopoly bumper)

18) Brio or panache

19) Immobilized (with "down")

23) Bookbinding leather

24) Certain chapeau

25) Derive by reasoning

26) _ Jean (Marilyn Monroe)

27) "Rainbow" fish

28) All the ones before us?

29) Accused's need

30) Enraged

31) City on the Aire

33) Biblical possessive

36) "Casey at the Bat" poet

37) Stack of fireplace logs

38) Reason for tear gas

44) Veggies sometimes served in rings

45) Cello's little relative

46) Complies with, as advice

47) Gastric woe

48) Some dangerous snakes

49) Cease

50) Legendary entertainer Home

51) Shrek, for one

52) Type of duck

53) "Trick" joint

54) "Capital" and "alcohol" endings

56) "... what?"

57) "Made in the "

NOTE PAD

HALTS RADAR AMP
APEAK OXIDE BOA
MEANINGLESS SIN
MOUE INURE
MANMADE ANGERED
AROUSE STONED
MINSK CITES LIKE
MESS MURAL ETNA
ALE CATER SLIER
NIACIN RESELL
MUSTSEE HONESTY
AMISS FETA
NBC IMPRACTICAL
TEA UBOAT ORATE
ALL SAITH RATED

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

It's time to relax and have some fun, not alone, but not in a crowd of thousands either.

You want to enjoy yourself, but you probably also want to spend your time with just one special person, someone you've been anxious to spend more time with. Instead of dragging yourself out and pretending to have a good time if you're not really in the mood, snuggle up, kick back, and enjoy a party of two.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

When you least expect it, a burst of anger could change the tone of a conversation that started out sane, respectable, and downright civil.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to temper the rhetoric of all parties concerned with a bit of tact and diplomacy by translating it in your own inimitable fashion. You know, it's the "what he really meant to say was" kind of thing. Fortunately, you'll have some very valuable help. The heavens are feeling quite harmonious.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

Stop me if this sounds familiar. Someone you know and love could soon be offended by something you're about to say, quite off the cuff, in an entirely playful way -- something that comes out sounding like you think it's a lot less serious than you really do. Easy, there. Don't hurt a friend inadvertently. They'll undoubtedly forgive you, but why risk it? Think, just for a second, about how you'd feel if the tables were turned.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You're due to catch someone's eye and touch their heart in a very nice way, and thanks to the Universe, you're in a tender, romantic mood. As a result, your already sensual nature is running on high, but you'll also be ready to have a nice heart-to-heart chat in private. If there's something you need to say either to create or improve the closeness between you, go right ahead. There's no time like the present.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You've probably already got more penciled into your schedule than you can possibly pull off, that is unless you're careful with your time, and of course we all know you are. That said, don't go right over the top. The invitations to come out and play could pour in all day, and you really should save just a few hours for the delightful offers that haven't yet presented themselves. You may find that folks are feeling unusually sociable these days.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

An elder relative or authority figure who's had their eye on you for a while now is just about ready to let you know how well you've done, especially based on recent difficult situations that you've survived with flying colors. In the meantime, don't ignore someone new and interesting (who's due to come along soon) sent by the Universe to take your mind entirely off these situations and anything else that's even remotely unpleasant.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Any romance you're having right now is going to be especially easygoing. You two are totally on the same wavelength, and you'll have absolutely no problem agreeing on something amusing to do together. If you're enjoying being single right now, you will feel this synchronicity with your closest friends. The timing is perfect for this harmony in your life because you're ready to move out of your insular frame of mind and get back into a more social scene.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Don't be surprised if you're attracting an awful lot of admiring attention for at least the next couple of days. You're charming, you're sociable, you're magnetic, and folks are loving your sensitivity and tenderness. Needless to say, your dance card might be overflowing, but it won't be difficult for you to manage it all. In fact, one admirer in particular might let it be known that you're exactly what they're wishing they'd found earlier.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You're about to rush headlong into something you were never expecting was even possible. You could have an intimate encounter with someone who's so interesting and unusual, even downright fascinating, that you might actually see yourself hanging out with them for more than a few dates. If that's truly the case, don't bother making plans to see a movie. Why waste valuable getting-to-know-you time in silence and the kind of darkness that makes you feel awkward, not closer?

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Family matters could be tricky, but that won't keep you from getting involved and possibly being able to solve something that's been ignored for far too long. This ability to mediate comes to you courtesy of the Universe sensitizing you in the department of house, home, and family. You're equipped to talk anyone into anything at the moment. Why not use it to help heal an age-old wound? At least one. You know you want to.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

All of your perceptions about a recent conflict are accurate, so don't believe people who accuse you of being too dramatic or blowing things out of proportion. Move forward with the approach that you feel is warranted, and if other people haven't caught on to what's really happening, that's their problem. You can't always slow your pace and wait for other people to catch up. You'll actually be doing them a favor if you let them speed up on their own.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

The Universe is in a peace-loving, cooperative mood, inspiring one and all to make amends and deliver or accept apologies. If you've been feeling the need to try to put an end to a dispute between dear ones, rest assured that you can do it with just a tiny bit of effort. Since you're famous for having the most sensitive intuition, you're a shoo-in for the position, especially since you'll probably offer to help. And when you do, they'll no doubt accept.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. A pangolin can extend its long narrow tongue over half the length of its head and body; where in the body is its tongue attached?
- A. On its hyoid bone
B. Just behind the tip of its snout
C. Between the trachea and the sternum, ventral to the opening of the pharynx
D. On the roof of its mouth
02. French actress Catherine Deneuve has been married once, from 1965 to 1972, to whom?
- A. Director Roger Vadim
B. Photographer David Bailey
C. Director François Truffaut
D. Actor Marcello Mastroianni
03. Among the hyped contests in world boxing was the match in October 2021 between heavyweight WBC ex-champion (2015-2020) Dontay Wilder and whom?
- A. Manny Pacquiao
B. Israel Adesanya
C. Joseph Parker
D. Tyson Fury
- Answers: 1. C 2. B 3. D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

O	E	P	D
N	I	Y	G
G	S	I	N
A	Y	L	I

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Nepal flight missing with 22 on board

Kathmandu, Nepal - A passenger plane with 22 people on board went missing in Nepal on Sunday, the operating airline and officials said, as poor weather hampered a search operation.

Nepal's air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas as well as foreign trekkers and climbers. But it has a poor safety record.

The Twin Otter aircraft operated by Tara Air took off from the western town of Pokhara bound for Jomsom at 9:55am (0410 GMT) but air traffic control lost contact after 15 minutes.

"We are trying to locate the possible area where the aircraft might be," Sudarshan Bartaula, spokesman for Tara Air, told AFP. "Search and rescue teams from both the police and the army are heading towards that direction." He said there were 19 passengers on board and three crew members. The passengers included two Germans and four Indians, with the remainder Nepali.

Jomsom is a popular trekking destination in the Himalayas about 20 minutes by plane from Pokhara, which lies 200km west of the capital Kathmandu.

Phanindra Mani Pokharel, a spokesman at the Ministry of



Family members and relatives of passengers on board the Twin Otter aircraft operated by Tara Air, weep outside the airport in Pokhara on Sunday (AFP)

Home Affairs, said two helicopters had been deployed for a search operation. But he said visibility was low. "The bad weather is likely to hamper the search operation. The visibility is so poor that nothing can be seen," Pokharel said.

Poor record

Nepal's aviation industry has

long been plagued by poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance.

The European Union has banned all Nepali airlines from its airspace over safety concerns. The Himalayan country also has some of the world's most remote and tricky runways, flanked by snow-capped peaks with approaches that

pose a challenge for even accomplished pilots.

The weather can also change quickly in the mountains, creating treacherous flying conditions. In March 2018, a US-Bangla Airlines plane crashed near Kathmandu's notoriously difficult-to-approach international airport, killing 51 people. The flight from the

We are trying to locate the possible area where the aircraft might be. Search and rescue teams from both the police and the army are heading towards that direction. There were 19 passengers on board and three crew members

SUDARSHAN BARTAULA

Bangladeshi capital Dhaka crash-landed and skidded into a football field where it burst into flames. Twenty passengers miraculously escaped the burning wreckage but sustained serious injuries.

An investigation found that the captain suffered an emotional breakdown during the flight, distracting the freshly qualified co-pilot who was at the controls when it crashed.

The report said air traffic control also confused the two ends of the runway, but concluded

this had no impact on the flight.

Pakistan Airlines

The accident was Nepal's deadliest since 1992 when all 167 people aboard a Pakistan International Airlines plane died when it crashed on approach to Kathmandu airport. Just two months earlier a Thai Airways aircraft crashed near the same airport, killing 113 people.

In 2019 three people died when a plane veered off the runway and hit two helicopters while taking off near Mount Everest. The accident happened at Lukla airport which is the main gateway to the Everest region and is reputed to be one of the most difficult in the world for landing and take-off.

Also in 2019 Nepal's tourism minister Rabindra Adhikari was among seven people killed when a helicopter crashed in the country's hilly east.

This month Nepal's second international airport opened at Bhairahawa, aiming to give Buddhist pilgrims from across Asia access to the Buddha's birthplace at nearby Lumbini.

The US\$76m project will ease pressure on the overburdened Kathmandu international airport.

AFP

Drugs smuggler arrested in Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanese authorities on Sunday arrested a Saudi man at Beirut airport who attempted to smuggle 18.3kg of the illegal stimulant Captagon out of the country, the interior ministry said.

Lebanon's interior ministry said in a statement that the drugs were destined for Kuwait.

The ministry added that the man is a Saudi citizen and a Kuwait resident who holds documents saying he works in 'security' there.

Under its normal practice, it did not name the suspect.

Trade in captagon in the Middle East grew exponentially in 2021 to top US\$5bn, posing an increasing health and security risk to the region, a report by the New Lines Institute said in April.

Syria is the main producer of the amphetamine-type drug, and Saudi Arabia the main consumer. A security official at the airport told AFP the man had placed an estimated 110,000 Captagon pills inside bags that were 'stitched in clothing'.

AFP

United States 'concerned' after UN human rights chief visits China

Washington, US - The United States expressed concern on Saturday over China's 'efforts to restrict and manipulate' the UN human rights chief's visit to the Xinjiang region where Beijing is accused of detaining over a million people in indoctrination camps.

Michelle Bachelet's long-planned trip this week took her to the far-western Xinjiang region, where the United States has labeled China's detention of a million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities a 'genocide'.

"We are concerned the conditions Beijing authorities imposed on the visit did not enable a complete and independent assessment of the human rights environment in (China), including in Xinjiang, where genocide and crimes against humanity are ongoing," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. The top US diplomat reiterated his country's stance that Chinese authorities would not



Antony Blinken (AFP)

allow Bachelet full access during her long-planned trip, saying the United States was 'concerned' about China's 'efforts to restrict and manipulate her visit'.

Bachelet defended her visit earlier on Saturday while still inside China, saying it was 'not an investigation' but called on Beijing to avoid 'arbitrary and indiscriminate measures' in its crackdown in Xinjiang.

She said the trip was a chance for her to speak with 'candour' to Chinese authorities as well as civil society groups and academ-

ics. Her visit was the first to China by a UN high commissioner for human rights in 17 years and comes after painstaking negotiations over the conditions of the visit.

'Warned not to complain'

"We are further troubled by reports that residents of Xinjiang were warned not to complain or speak openly about conditions in the region, that no insight was provided into the whereabouts of hundreds of missing Uyghurs and conditions for over a million individuals in detention," Blinken said. "The High Commissioner should have been allowed confidential meetings with family members of Uyghur and other ethnic minority diaspora communities in Xinjiang who are not in detention facilities but are forbidden from traveling out of the region."

Bachelet's remarks were also swiftly criticised by activists and

NGOs, who accused her of providing Beijing with a major propaganda win.

"Resignation is the only meaningful thing she can do for the Human Rights Council," said Dilxat Raxit, spokesperson for the World Uyghur Congress advocacy group, while US-based Uyghur activist Rayhan Asat called it a 'total betrayal' on Twitter. The trip included a virtual meeting with President Xi Jinping in which state media suggested Bachelet supported China's vision of human rights.

Her office later clarified that her remarks did not contain a direct endorsement of China's rights record.

Witnesses and rights groups say more than one million people have been detained in indoctrination camps in the western Chinese region that aim to destroy the Uyghurs' Islamic culture and forcibly integrate them into China's Han majority.

AFP

At least 27 civilians killed by rebel group in DR Congo: Army

Beni, DR Congo - At least 27 civilians were killed by members of a notorious rebel group in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on Saturday, the army and Red Cross said.

The Kivu Security Tracker (KST), which monitors violence in the region via a team of experts on the ground, posted on Twitter to say that at least 27 civilians had been killed in the attack. "We heard bullets at dawn in the village of Beu Manyama," army spokesman Anthony Mualushayi told AFP earlier on Saturday.

"When we arrived, it was already too late because the enemy ADF had already killed more than a dozen of our fellow citizens with machetes."

Described by the so-called Islamic State as its local affiliate, the rebel Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have been accused of killing thousands of civilians in DRC's troubled east.

After the attack early on Sat-



Internally displaced people from Kibumba take refuge at Kunyaruchinya school trying to shelter from the ongoing clashes (AFP)

urday, in the Beni region in North Kivu province, soldiers pursued the attackers and 'neutralised seven ADF' and captured another, Mualushayi said.

Earlier on Saturday, local Red Cross head Philippe Bonane had put the civilian death toll at 24 and was supervising the transfer of bodies to the morgue.

The massacre comes after almost a month of relative calm

in Beni, where the Congolese and Ugandan armies have been conducting joint military operations against the ADF since late November.

On Friday another Red Cross representative said that soldiers in the neighbouring Ituri province had found 17 decapitated bodies, also believed to be victims of the ADF.

AFP

Final touches as English village prepares four-day Jubilee party

Bidford-on-Avon, UK - Next weekend, people across the UK and beyond will celebrate the 96-year-old queen's Platinum Jubilee, marking her 70th year on the throne.

And in the little village of Bidford-on-Avon, everything has to be perfect for the occasion.

Here, as in most parts of the UK, Queen Elizabeth II remains extremely popular, and a small team of volunteers are putting in long hours to make sure the event is one to remember.

"I wake up at three or four o'clock in the morning, and I suddenly think of something that we might have forgotten to order," said Suze Meredith, chair of the village's Platinum Jubilee committee.

With just days left before the celebrations start, she is working against the clock to get everything ready on time.

Her role in this pretty village in central England has been 'full-time for three months', she told AFP.

That morning, firefighters

came with a long ladder to hang red, white and blue bunting along the main street. A few hours later, a group of traditional dancers were to hold a final rehearsal.

Every detail has been attended to for the long weekend from June 2 to 5, over which the celebrations will run.

Four days of celebrations

The Platinum Jubilee committee began meeting last summer in Bidford, with its 15th-century stone bridge.

Its programme for the four days of celebrations is impressively long: a best-decorated home and garden competition, a fancy-dress contest, a torch run and lighting of a beacon, cricket, tennis, football, bowling, a concert by the local choir as well as exhibitions and talks.

The village is also holding a cake competition and opening a Jubilee garden where several time capsules will be buried - one to be reopened in 50 years' time



Children pose with their crowns made of woods during a class in Bidford-on-Avon, central England, on Friday (AFP)

- recording aspects of life in 2022.

The celebrations will culminate on Sunday with a street party with a band playing, Irish dancers and Morris men, a children's fairground ride and refreshments. The streets of neighbouring Alcester village are also decked with red-white-and-

blue pennants and large portraits of the Queen against a background of Union Jack flags.

Village shops have window displays featuring commemorative mugs and other china, teaspoons from the 1981 wedding of Prince Charles and Diana - even two little porcelain corgis (the Queen's favourite dogs).

"I know lots of people think we shouldn't have a monarchy any more, but for me, it's part of tradition and it's part of our original identity and culture," said Bidford resident Tabitha Gibson.

She has two young sons now, but she recalls how her grandmother every Christmas would insist on watching the Queen's

speech on television.

"I feel that she's somebody that sort of steered the country ... a figurehead for the country and also the leader of the (Anglican) Church. I think that's quite important," she says.

"She's a remarkable woman and really, you know, is a great asset to the country," says another villager, Philomena Hodgetts, 73. She describes the queen as 'unflappable' and 'someone to look up to'.

Emotional memories

In the feverish preparations for the Jubilee, some share their memories of the monarch.

Phyllis Losh, whose son fought in the Gulf War, recalls being invited to meet the Queen at a military base.

"I am tiny, and she was on a par with me. She's got the most beautiful, beautiful eyes," she said.

She laughed as she remembered having 'to do a curtsy with a cup and saucer and a handbag.

"She is amazing, absolutely

amazing," she added. "She does everything with such dignity."

Steve Jackson, a retired local man who has organised the concert of the local Community Choir stresses how much the monarchy has changed during his lifetime.

"We never used to see much of the royal family. They were very private, living in Buckingham Palace. These days they're much more open," he says, citing the 73-year-old heir to the throne, Prince Charles, and even more so his 39-year-old son William, who is next in line.

No one gives much credit to speculation that the Queen, who has cut down on public appearances due to mobility issues, could abdicate, or that the throne could pass directly to her grandson William.

"I don't think she's going to abdicate. Because I think she sees it as a duty to be queen," said Jackson. "And I think Charles will take over because it's tradition."

AFP

Russia tightens grip around key Ukraine cities

French and German leaders ‘insist on an immediate ceasefire and a withdrawal of Russian troops’

Kramatorsk, Ukraine - The battle for control of the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas raged on Sunday as Russian forces tightened their grip around the key cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk.

The situation in Lysychansk had become ‘significantly worse’, the regional governor of the Lugansk region, Sergiy Gaiday, said on the messaging service, Telegram.

“A Russian shell fell on a residential building, a girl died and four people were hospitalised,” he said.

Meanwhile, on the eastern bank of the Donets river, Russian forces ‘carried out assault operations in the area of the city of Severodonetsk’, according to the Ukrainian general staff.

Fighting was advancing street-by-street in the city, Gaiday said.

More than three months after Moscow invaded its pro-Western neighbour, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for ‘direct serious negotiations’ between Russian leader Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky.

The two European leaders also ‘insisted on an immediate



Ukrainian servicemen walk next to a destroyed military vehicle in the village of Rus’ka Lozova, north of Kharkiv, on Saturday (AFP)

ceasefire and a withdrawal of Russian troops’ in an 80-minute phone call with the Russian leader on Saturday, the German chancellor’s office said.

‘Very difficult’

Since failing to capture the capital Kyiv in the early stages of the war, Russia has shifted its focus to the eastern Donbas region as it attempts to consolidate areas under its control.

“The situation is very difficult,

especially in those areas in the Donbas and Kharkiv regions, where the Russian army is trying to squeeze at least some result for itself,” Zelensky said in his daily address to the nation late on Saturday.

Earlier, Russia’s defence ministry had said the ‘town of Krasny Liman (Moscow’s name for Lyman) has been entirely liberated from Ukrainian nationalists’.

Lyman lies on the road to Kramatorsk and Severodonetsk,

which is ‘now surrounded’, according to a police official in Lugansk province cited by Russian state media. But governor Gaiday insisted that ‘Severodonetsk has not been cut off’.

“There is still the possibility to deliver humanitarian aid,” he told Ukrainian television.

‘Constant shelling’

In Severodonetsk, where an estimated 15,000 civilians remain, a local official said ‘constant

shelling’ made it increasingly difficult to get in or out.

“Evacuation is very unsafe, it’s isolated cases when we manage to get people out. Now the priority is for the wounded and people who need serious medical assistance,” said Oleksandr Stryuk, head of the city’s military and civil administration.

The water supply was also increasingly unstable, as a lack of electricity meant the pumps at city wells no longer functioned,

he said.

Residents had gone more than two weeks without a mobile phone connection, he added.

Governor Gaiday said the sole road link to the outside world was expected to be the focus of continued Russian attacks.

“Next week will be very hard, as Russia puts all its resources into seizing Severodonetsk, or cutting off the (area) from communication with Ukraine,” he said.

Putin ‘ready’ to export grain

In their call with Putin, Scholz and Macron pointed to a looming global food security crisis.

In addition to capturing key ports such as Mariupol, Russia has used its warships to cut off other cities still in Ukrainian hands, blocking grain supplies from being transported out.

Russia and Ukraine supply about 30 per cent of the wheat traded on global markets.

Russia has tightened its own exports and Ukraine has vast amounts stuck in storage, driving up prices and reducing availability across the globe.

Putin has repeatedly rejected any responsibility, instead blaming Western sanctions.

But on Saturday, he told

Macron and Scholz that Russia was ‘ready’ to look for ways to allow more wheat onto the global market.

“Russia is ready to help find options for the unhindered export of grain, including the export of Ukrainian grain from the Black Sea ports,” the Kremlin quoted him as saying.

He also called for the lifting of sanctions to allow ‘an increase in the supply of Russian fertilisers and agricultural products’ to the global market.

Urgent calls by Zelensky for more advanced weaponry from Ukraine’s Western allies appear to paying off, with Washington agreeing to send advanced long-range rocket systems, according to US media reports.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby did not confirm the plans to deliver the M270 Multiple Launch Rocket System, highly mobile equipment capable of firing up to 300km that Kyiv has said it badly needs.

But he said Washington was ‘still committed to helping them succeed on the battlefield’.

Putin warned Macron and Scholz that ramping up arms supplies to Ukraine would be ‘dangerous’ and risk ‘further destabilisation’.

AFP



People are seen near Nigeria’s opposition party convention arena at the Central Area, Abuja, Nigeria on Saturday (AFP)

Nigeria’s main opposition names former VP as 2023 election candidate

Abuja, Nigeria - Nigeria’s main opposition party on Saturday named former vice president Atiku Abubakar as its candidate for the 2023 election to replace President Muhammadu Buhari.

Abubakar, 75, a northern Muslim and stalwart of the People’s Democratic Party or PDP, has made numerous bids to capture the presidency of Africa’s most populous country.

He won most ballots from PDP party delegates who voted in a primary election in Abuja on Saturday, beating a challenge from Rivers State Governor Ezenwo Nyesom Wike.

“Today, we are making another history, history which we believe will bring about fundamental changes,” Abubakar told supporters in a national arena in Abuja where the primary took place. “PDP, PDP, power to the people.” In his acceptance speech he accused Buhari’s party of dividing Nigeria along ethnic and religious lines and promised to tackle insecurity and the country’s economic woes.

The PDP and Buhari’s ruling All Progressives Congress party (APC) were both scheduled this weekend to select candidates for the presidential race in February.

But a day before its primaries were to start, the APC announced that it had pushed its party convention back a week to June 6 through June 8.

Buhari, 79, leaves office with Nigeria still struggling to end a more than decade-long militant

conflict in its northeast and a wave of violent banditry and mass kidnapping in its northwest. Africa’s largest economy is also still recovering from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and fallout from the Ukraine war that has pushed up fuel and food prices across the continent.

The PDP ruled Nigeria for a decade and a half before its then-president Goodluck Jonathan was ousted by the APC alliance in 2015 to bring Buhari to power.

A veteran of Nigerian politics, Atiku was vice president to president Olusegun Obasanjo when Nigeria returned to democracy after military rule in 1999. He lost to Buhari in the 2019 election.

But his long political career has also been dogged by some allegations of graft, although he always denied any wrong-doing.

He was head of the customs service during the military era before entering the private sector investing in oil and agriculture and becoming one of Nigeria’s wealthiest and well-known figures. The APC said the delaying of its own primaries decision followed a ruling by electoral authorities to extend the deadline for the submission of candidates’ names.

The APC gave no further details, but the ruling party has been caught in fierce wrangling over who should run, with former Lagos governor Bola Tinubu and current Vice President Yemi Osinbajo among the possibles.

AFP

Pacific ‘very positive’ on Australian re-engagement: PM

Sydney, Australia - Australia’s newly elected prime minister has said Pacific leaders have been ‘very positive’ about his government’s renewed engagement, even as Beijing continues its diplomatic blitz across the increasingly contested region.

The comments from Anthony Albanese - aired on Sunday in an interview with Sky News - came as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Fiji for closely watched meetings with the island nation’s leaders and other Pacific foreign ministers.

The Chinese Foreign Minister, who began his South Pacific tour on Thursday in Solomon Islands, is expected to discuss with his fellow foreign ministers a wide-ranging draft agreement and five-year plan, which was



Australia’s new PM Anthony Albanese (centre) with his cabinet ministers Penny Wong (left) and Richard Marles in Canberra on May 23 (AFP)

leaked last week.

The leaked drafts, obtained by AFP, were circulated to at least 10 Pacific nations ahead of the Fiji meeting, sparking concern about Beijing’s ambitions to dramatically expand security and economic cooperation within the

South Pacific.

Albanese was scathing in his assessment of the former Australian government’s Pacific plan, saying it had ‘dropped the ball’ in the region - blaming both foreign aid cuts and ‘a non-engagement on values’.

“For our Pacific Island neighbours, the issue of climate change is an absolute national security issue,” he said.

In addition to increased action on the environment, Albanese touted a boost in aid and a plan to set up a defence training school in the Pacific.

During Australia’s recent election campaign, Albanese’s centre-left Labour party said the school would involve forces from Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

Albanese said Australia’s renewed diplomatic push in the Pacific, which began with a visit to Fiji by new foreign minister Penny Wong, had been well-received. “The response has been very positive,” he said.

Australia and China have

been locked in a tense duel for influence in the Pacific, after Beijing last month surprised Canberra by securing a wide-ranging security pact with the Solomon Islands.

Foreign Minister Wong urged South Pacific nations to spurn China’s attempts to extend its security reach across the region while in Fiji on Friday.

“We have expressed our concerns publicly about the security agreement,” Wong told reporters in the capital of Suva.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang is expected to remain in Fiji’s capital until at least Tuesday, meeting with the country’s leaders and hosting the second China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers’ meeting.

AFP

Suspicious plastic plant fires in Turkey: Experts

Kartepe, Turkey - The number of fires breaking out in plastic recycling plants has soared in Turkey.

Experts and activists suspect it’s not a coincidence, believing that some entrepreneurs want to get rid of unwanted rubbish sometimes imported from various European countries.

In Kartepe, an industrial town in the country’s north-west, one of these sites was closed by the authorities in December after the outbreak of three fires in less than a month.

One burned for more than 50 hours, spewing toxic black smoke over the area wedged between the mountains and the Sea of Marmara.

“We don’t want our lakes and springs to be polluted,” said Beyhan Korkmaz, an environmental activist in the city.

She is concerned about the polluting dioxin emissions from a dozen similar fires within a five-kilometre radius in less than two years.

“Should we wear masks?” she said.

There was a fire every three days in Turkey’s plastic reprocessing plants on average last year. The number rose from 33 in 2019 to 121 in 2021, according to



Stacks of plastic waste collected near to the plastic recycling plants in Kartepe district of Kocaeli (AFP)

Sedat Gundogdu, a professor specialising in plastic pollution at Cukurova University in the southern city of Adana.

‘Plastic lobby’

Over the same period, Turkey became the leading importer of European plastic waste - ahead of Malaysia - after China banned imports at the start of 2018.

Nearly 520,000 tonnes arrived in Turkey in 2021, adding to the four to six million tonnes the country generates each year, according to data compiled by the Turkish branch of the NGO

Greenpeace.

Much of this waste ends up in the south of the country, especially in Adana province, where companies operating illegally have been closed down in recent years.

Other waste containers arrive at the ports of Izmir in the west and Izmit, not far from Kartepe.

“The problem is not importing plastic from Europe, the problem is importing non-recyclable or residual plastics,” said Baris Calli, professor of environmental engineering at Marmara University in Istanbul.

“My feeling is that most of these fires are not just a coincidence,” he said.

He explained only 20 to 30 per cent of imported plastic waste is recyclable.

“The remaining residues should be sent to incineration plants but the incineration plants charge some money... that’s why when some companies have significant amounts of residues on their hands they try to find some easy way to get rid of them,” he said.

Gundogdu finds it curious that ‘most of these fires are happen-

ing at night’ and in outlying storage sections of reprocessing centres, away from the machines.

In a report published in August 2020, international police organisation Interpol expressed concern about an ‘an increase in illegal waste fire and landfills in Europe and Asia’, citing Turkey in particular.

Following an October 2021 regulation, companies in the sector found guilty of arson can have their permits withdrawn.

The environment ministry and the vice-president of the waste and recycling branch of the Union of Chambers of Commerce of Turkey did not respond when asked by AFP how many companies in the sector have been sanctioned.

“The ministry cannot investigate really carefully, or maybe they don’t want to find out,” Calli said. He said the plastic industry lobby has grown stronger in Turkey in recent years.

According to Turkish recyclers’ association GEKADER, the plastic waste sector generates US\$1bn a year and employs some 350,000 people in 1,300 companies.

AFP

Tension in Jerusalem at start of Israeli annual ‘flag march’

Jerusalem - Thousands of Israelis on Sunday started the annual nationalist ‘flag march’ through Jerusalem that regularly stokes Palestinian anger, a year after tensions in the disputed Holy City exploded into war.

Some 2,000 police were deployed for the event that marks Israel’s 1967 capture of east Jerusalem, home of the Al-Aqsa mosque compound located on what Jews revere as the Temple Mount. Across annexed east Jerusalem, many Palestinian flags flew from rooftops ahead of the ‘Jerusalem Day’ march, which began at 4pm (1300 GMT) in west Jerusalem, with participants heading towards the Old City.

Earlier on Sunday, flag-waving Jewish nationalists chanting pro-Israel slogans, among them a far-right lawmaker, visited Al-Aqsa, where Israeli police said several Palestinians threw rocks toward the officers. Isolated clashes also broke out at the Old City’s Damascus Gate where dozens of Jewish nationalists danced in front of Palestinians, one of whom raised his shoe in an Arab insult.

Police reported more than 20 arrests over ‘disorderly conduct’.

The march comes a year after tensions and unrest in Jerusalem led the Islamist armed group Hamas to fire rockets at Israel from the blockaded Gaza Strip, triggering an 11-day war.

Hamas warned last week that marchers must not pass through the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, saying it would use all means to



Palestinian protesters run during clashes with Israeli forces following a protest to denounce the annual nationalist ‘flag march’ through Jerusalem, near the Beit El settlement at the northern entrance to the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Sunday (AFP)

confront them.

The route of the march has never included Al-Aqsa, a site which Jewish groups are permitted to visit but where they are not allowed to pray. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said on Sunday the march follow ‘the regular route’ and urged participants to be ‘respectful’.

Pro-Israel chants

Police said that some 2,600 peo-

ple had ascended to the compound during Sunday’s regular visitation windows - a figure that is higher than normal and includes tourists.

Some Jews had ‘violated visitation rules’ and several people were detained, police said without providing further details, before the day’s visits concluded.

One group sang pro-Israel chants, including ‘Yerushalayim rak shelanou’ or ‘Jerusalem be-

longs to us only’.

Far-right nationalist lawmaker Itamar Ben Gvir, who was among those who went to Al-Aqsa, later said his visit aimed ‘to reaffirm that we, the State of Israel, are sovereign’ in the Holy City.

Most of the international community does not recognise Israeli control over east Jerusalem, which Palestinians see as the capital of a future state.

Some participants in Sunday’s march were set to pass through Damascus Gate on their way to the Western Wall, a controversial route for which police force Palestinians businesses to close.

Israel has since April been hit by a series of attacks targeting mostly civilians, and has in turn launched military raids targeting armed groups in the occupied West Bank.

AFP



Police use tear gas shells to disperse students taking part in an anti-government protest, in Colombo on Sunday (AFP)

Sri Lanka police tear-gas students in fresh clashes

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Police fired tear gas to disperse thousands of students trying to storm the Sri Lankan president’s home on Sunday as the government offered an olive branch to demonstrators demanding his resignation.

Anti-riot squads used water cannon followed by tear gas, as protesters pulled down yellow iron barricades across a road leading to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s official residence in Colombo.

Nearby, thousands of men and women demonstrated for the 51st straight day outside Rajapaksa’s seafloor office on Sunday, demanding that he step down over the country’s worst economic crisis since independence.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe went on national television on Sunday evening offering young protesters a greater say in how the country is administered. “The youth are calling for a change in the existing system,” Wickremesinghe said, laying out plans for 15 committees that would work with parliament to decide national policies. “I propose to appoint four youth representatives to each of the 15 committees,” he said, adding that they could be drawn from the current protesters.

Wickremesinghe is not from Rajapaksa’s party, but was given the job after the president’s elder brother Mahinda resigned as prime minister on May 9 after weeks of protests, when no other legislator agreed to step in.

Wickremesinghe is the sole parliamentary representative of the United National Party, a once-powerful political force

that was nearly wiped out in Sri Lanka’s last elections.

Rajapaksa’s party, which has a majority in the legislature, has offered to provide him with the necessary support to run a government.

Sunday’s student action came a day after a similar clash when protesters tried to storm Rajapaksa’s heavily guarded colonial-era official residence, where he has

Anti-riot squads used water cannon followed by tear gas, as protesters pulled down yellow iron barricades across a road leading to President Rajapaksa’s official residence in Colombo

bunkered down since thousands surrounded his private home on March 31.

An unprecedented shortage of foreign exchange to import even the most essential supplies, including food, fuel and medicines, has led to severe hardships for the country’s 22mn population.

The government last month asked the IMF for urgent financial assistance and talks are still underway. The country has also defaulted on its US\$51bn foreign debt. Its currency has depreciated by 44.2 per cent against the US dollar this year, while inflation hit a record 33.8 per cent last month.

AFP

Left eyes historic presidential win in Colombia

Bogota, Colombia - Colombians headed to the polls on Sunday in a first round of presidential elections with a leftist poised for victory for the first time ever, as voters clamour for ‘change’.

Polls opened at 8am (1300 GMT) amid a tense atmosphere, a year after a brutal security crackdown on street protests fueled by deepening socioeconomic woes.

Opinion polls show that many Colombians are pinning their hopes on Gustavo Petro, an ex-guerrilla and former mayor of Bogota, to address poverty, rural violence, urban crime and endemic corruption in a country historically governed by the right.



People cross the Simon Bolivar International Bridge in Cucuta, Colombia on Saturday, on the eve of the Colombian presidential election (AFP)

“For many years the people who have run the country have torn it apart. We must change,”

said security guard Luis Hernan Alvarez, 59, who intends to vote for Petro in the capital Bogota,

where rain greeted early voters. “There is too much poverty. There are resources, but they are lost to corruption... We need new leaders,” he told AFP.

About 39mn of Colombia’s 50mn people are eligible to cast their ballot, though the recent abstention rate has been high, at around 50 per cent.

About 300,000 armed police and soldiers were deployed to keep the peace, as voters headed to some 12,000 polling stations countrywide under the watchful eye of observers from the Organization of American States and the European Union.

Petro, 62, is hoping to avoid a June 19 run-off against 47-year-

old Federico Gutierrez, a former mayor of second city Medellin who represents an alliance of right-wing parties.

To do so, he would need to garner more than 50 per cent of first-round votes cast.

Ivan Duque - who beat Petro in a runoff election in 2018 - leaves office with record disapproval numbers. Colombian presidents serve only one four-year term.

About 40 per cent of Colombians live in poverty, and the country has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world, according to the World Bank.

AFP

Afghan women demand work and education at Kabul protest

Kabul, Afghanistan - About two dozen Afghan women chanting ‘bread, work, freedom’ protested in the capital on Sunday against the Taliban’s harsh restrictions on their rights.

Since seizing power in August, the Taliban have rolled back the marginal gains made by women during the two decades of US intervention in Afghanistan.

“Education is my right! Reopen schools!” chanted the protesters, many of them wearing face-covering veils, as they gathered in front of the ministry of education. Demonstrators marched for a few hundred metres before ending the rally as authorities deployed Taliban fighters in plain clothes.

AFP

Torrential rains in Brazil leave at least 34 dead: Civil Defence

Brasília, Brazil - Torrential rains that have plagued Brazil’s northeastern Pernambuco state since Tuesday have left at least 34 dead, 29 of which occurred over the previous day, according to the latest official update.

“From last Wednesday until midday this Saturday, 34 deaths were recorded in the state,” said the Civil Defense in a statement.

The most dramatic event occurred early on Saturday morning when 19 people died in a major landslide in the Jardim Monteverde community, on the border between state capital Recife and another in Jaboatao dos Guararapes.

Six others were killed in another landslide in the municipality of Camaragibe. Two died in Recife and another in Jaboatao dos Guararapes. Five others died earlier in the week, according to the Civil Defense.

Local press reports said three were killed by a landslide in Olinda, and a fourth person died after falling into a canal, also in Olinda.



Firefighters working after a landslide in the community Jardim Monte Verde, Ibura neighbourhood, in Recife, Pernambuco State, Brazil, on Saturday (AFP)

The heavy rains have also forced almost 1,000 people to flee their homes due to the flooding and landslides.

President Jair Bolsonaro, in a tweet, expressed his ‘sorrow and solidarity to the victims of this

sad disaster’ and said his government will do everything possible ‘to alleviate the suffering’.

He added that teams from the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Citizenship are being deployed ‘to

assist in relief operations and provide the necessary aid to affected families’.

Videos posted on social media show wide flooded avenues in several municipalities, collapsing houses and landslides.

According to meteorologist Estael Sias, of the MetSul agency, the heavy rains lashing Pernambuco and, to a lesser extent, four other northeastern states, are the product of a typical seasonal phenomenon called ‘eastern waves’.

He explained that those are areas of ‘atmospheric disturbance’ that move from the African continent to Brazil’s northeastern coastal region.

“In other areas of the Atlantic this instability forms hurricanes, but in northeastern Brazil it has the potential for a lot of rain and even thunderstorms,” he said.

‘Red alert’

The National Institute of Meteorology (Inmet) maintained its ‘red alert’ through Sunday in Pernambuco, its highest level of warning for flooding and landslides.

Between Friday night and Saturday morning, the volume of rainfall reached 236mm in some parts of the Pernambuco capital, according to the mayor’s office.

That is equivalent to more

than 70 per cent of the forecast for the whole month of May in the city.

The Pernambuco Water and Climate Agency said the situation could worsen as rain will continue for the next 24 hours in the state.

Over the past year, hundreds of Brazilians have died in flooding and landslides brought on by torrential downpours.

In February, more than 230 people were killed in the city of Petropolis, the Brazilian empire’s 19th-century summer capital, in Rio de Janeiro state.

Heavy rainfall turned streets in the area to gushing rivers and triggered landslides in poor hillside neighbourhoods that wiped out virtually everything in their path. Early last month 14 more people were killed, also by flooding and landslides in Rio de Janeiro state.

The victims included a mother and six of her children, who were buried when a landslide swept away their home, officials said.

AFP

JAPAN TO REOPEN



LAND OF THE RISING SUN

JAPAN WILL SOON ALLOW MASS TOURISM, BUT ONLY IN TOUR GROUPS, FOLLOWING A REVISION IN BORDER CONTROLS

The land of the rising Sun will reopen to tourists from 98 countries and regions starting June 10, ending a two-year pandemic closure. However, travellers will only be allowed in with tour groups.

The decision comes after the government last week said it would test allowing small group tours with visitors from the United States, Australia, Thailand and Singapore from this month.

On Thursday, the government revised border controls to resume accepting package tours from 98 countries and regions including Britain, the United States, France, Spain, Canada, and Malaysia.

Japan will also expand the number of airports that accept international flights to seven, adding Naha in its southern Okinawa prefecture and New Chitose near Sap-

poro in northern Hokkaido. Japan welcomed a record 31.9 million foreign visitors in 2019 and had been on track to achieve its goal of 40 million in 2020 before the pandemic hit

For most of the pandemic, Japan has barred all tourists and allowed only citizens and foreign residents entry, though even the latter have periodically been shut out.

All arrivals have to test negative before travel to Japan and many must be tested again on arrival, though triple-vaccinated people coming from certain countries can skip the additional test as well as a three-day quarantine required for others.

Tour groups are expected to take responsibility for ensuring visitors respect Japan's near-universal mask-wearing and other measures that have helped keep the toll from COVID-19 comparatively low.

Just how many people will be able to take advantage of the careful reopening is unclear as Japan is planning to double a daily entry cap, but only to 20,000.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said he wants to ease border control measures, but moves are expected to proceed slowly, with strong public support for the current restrictions.

Japan welcomed a record 31.9 million foreign visitors in 2019 and had been on track to achieve its goal of 40 million in 2020 before the pandemic hit.



Japan is often called 'the land of the rising Sun'. This term might baffle many people around the world who wonder why Japan gets this credential. The fact is, Japan is the first country to see the Sun? In Japanese, Japan is called Nihon (Nippon). Both, Nihon and Japan, originate from the same words which literally mean 'where the Sun rises'.

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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



The Arctic faces a tricky quest for sustainable tourism amid untouched nature which calls for tourists to be respectful and responsible

Home to polar bears, the midnight sun and the northern lights, a Norwegian archipelago perched high in the Arctic is trying to find a way to profit from its pristine wilderness without ruining it.

The Svalbard archipelago, located 1,300km from the North Pole and reachable by commercial airline flights, offers visitors vast expanses of untouched nature, with majestic mountains, glaciers and frozen fjords.

Or, the fjords used to be frozen. Svalbard is now on the frontline of climate change, with the Arctic warming three times faster than the planet.

The local coal mines - the original reason for human settlements here - have closed one after the other over the years, and tourism has become one of the main pillars of the local economy, along with scientific research.

"It's always hard to defend because we know that tourism worldwide creates challenges to all the places people visit, but also in the bigger climate change perspective," acknowledged Ronny Brunvoll, the head of tourism board Visit Svalbard.

"But we can't stop people from travelling. We can't stop people from visiting each other, so we have to find solutions," he said.

Around 140,000 people visit these latitudes each year, according to pre-pandemic data, where 65 per cent of the land is protected.

Like the 3,000 local residents, visitors must follow strict rules that bar them from disturbing the animals - tracking a polar bear can lead to a big fine - or picking flowers in an ecosystem almost devoid of vegetation. "You are really confronted with nature. There are not a lot of places like this left," said Frederique Barraja, a French photographer on one of her frequent trips to the region. "It attracts people, like all rare places. But



Tourists visiting an ice cave inside Larsbreen Glacier, near Longyearbyen, on Spitsbergen island, Svalbard Archipelago, northern Norway

these places remain fragile, so you have to be respectful when you visit them."

Ultra-polluting heavy fuel, commonly used by large cruise ships, has been banned in the archipelago since the start of the year, ahead of a ban to be progressively implemented across the Arctic as of 2024. The

ban may be another nail in the coffin for the controversial cruise ships that sail into the region.

The biggest of the behemoths can drop off up to 5,000 passengers in Longyearbyen, the archipelago's modest main town whose infrastructure, such as roads and toilets, is not designed to accom-



Tourists arrive at Svalbard Airport in Longyearbyen on the Svalbard Archipelago, northern Norway

modate such large crowds.

Electric wave

With tourism here already attracting a rather exclusive clientele, some operators are going further than regulations require, such as Norwegian cruise line Hurtigruten which aims to become the most environmental

tour operator in the world.

Sustainability shouldn't be a competitive advantage, said a senior executive with the group, Henrik Lund. "It should just give a right to play," he added.

The company banned single-use plastics back in 2018, and now offers outings on electric snowmobiles. It



Ronny Brunvoll, head, Tourism Board

also recently launched excursions on board a small cutting-edge hybrid vessel, the Kvitbjorn (Polar Bear, in Norwegian), combining a diesel motor and electric batteries.

"In the idyllic exploration areas, we go full electric. We go silent and we don't have any combustion fumes," said Johan Ilden, head of marine engine maker Volvo Penta.

Electrification efforts in the archipelago, however, are currently hobbled by the fact that electricity comes from a coal plant - a fossil energy source that contributes to global warming.

"Electrification makes sense, regardless of the energy source," insisted Christian Eriksen of the Norwegian environmental group Bellona.

Regardless of whether it comes from dirty or clean sources, electricity makes it possible either way to reduce emissions, Eriksen said, citing a study on electric cars that came to the same conclusion.

Longyearbyen plans to close the plant by the autumn of 2023, invest in renewable energies, and reduce its emissions by 80 per cent by 2030. But Brunvoll, head of the Tourism Board, noted the main problem is travel.

"Even when addressing the things we can do locally, like the emissions from snowmobiles or cars, we must still acknowledge that the really big problem is the transport to and from Svalbard, both, in tourism but also for us locals," he said. "We have a climate footprint per capita in Longyearbyen that is insane."

AFP



Francesco Bagnaia is flanked by second-placed Fabio Quartararo (L) and third-placed Aleix Espargaro as they celebrate on the podium (AFP)

Bagnaia wins Italian MotoGP, Quartararo extends overall lead

Mugello, Italy - Francesco Bagnaia won the Italian MotoGP on Sunday while Fabio Quartararo extended his lead at the top of the championship standings.

Ducati rider Bagnaia flew up from fifth in the starting grid to finish comfortably ahead of reigning champion Quartararo on home turf at Mugello.

The Italian took over the lead midway through the race and never let go, finishing over half a second ahead of Quartararo in a controlled display from the front.

"It's incredible I'm really happy to have won at home in front of our fans, it's really great," Bagnaia told Sky Sport Italia.

Quartararo's overall lead over Aleix Espargaro is now 16 points after the Spanish rider finished third behind the Yamaha man.

Bagnaia trails France's Quartararo by 41 points after his second win over the season.

It's incredible I'm really happy to have won at home in front of our fans

FRANCESCO BAGNAIA

Quartararo called Sunday's race "the best of my career" after he rose from sixth on the grid to finish behind Bagnaia.

"I told myself 'you have nothing to lose' ... I'm super happy to have raced as best as I can," he told Sky.

Six-time champion Marc Marquez finished 10th in his last race before going under the knife to solve problems with his right arm after fracturing it nearly two years ago.

AFP



Francesco Bagnaia rides ahead of Fabio Quartararo, Luca Marini, and Fabio Di Giannantonio during the Italian Moto GP on Sunday (AFP)

A walk in the park

Novak Djokovic eases into possible Rafael Nadal quarter-final at French Open



Serbia's Novak Djokovic has no problem beating Diego Schwartzman of Argentina in the fourth-round of the French Open in Paris on Sunday (AFP)

Paris, France - World number one and defending champion Novak Djokovic reached a 16th French Open quarter-final on Sunday where old rival and 13-time winner Rafael Nadal could be waiting.

Djokovic, bidding to equal Nadal's record of 21 Grand Slam titles, eased to a 6-1, 6-3, 6-3 last-16 victory against 15th seed Diego Schwartzman of Argentina.

"I have a lot of respect for him (Schwartzman). He's a good person off the court," said Djokovic who has now beaten Schwartzman seven times in seven meetings.

Djokovic is still to drop a set at Roland Garros after cruising through the first week.

'Ethics'

"Of course not. I told Felix that my ethics do not allow me to give him advice on beating my nephew. It's as if I were telling someone how to defeat my own son," said Toni ahead of his first meeting with Rafael since their split. Toni said he would not sit in Auger-Aliassime's player box for the match, taking his place instead in the presidential box on Court Philippe Chatrier.

In the wide open women's event, which saw nine of the top 10 seeds fall before the second week, Canadian teenager Leylah Fernandez reached the quarter-finals for the first time.

Fernandez, seeded 17th, and who was US Open runner-up last year, fired an impressive 40 win-

Of course not. I told Felix that my ethics do not allow me to give him advice on beating my nephew. It's as if I were telling someone how to defeat my own son

TONI NADAL

He has also won 22 sets in a row, stretching back to his Italian Open title triumph in Rome earlier this month.

"I've made a good start but I have a lot of work to do," added Djokovic who will face Nadal for the 10th time at Roland Garros and 59th overall if the Spaniard defeats Felix Auger-Aliassime later Sunday.

In an interesting twist, Auger-Aliassime has Nadal's uncle and former long-time coach Toni working with him.

Toni coached his nephew for the best part of three decades during which time Nadal won 16 of his record 21 Slam titles.

When asked if he will divulge to Auger-Aliassime the secret of how to become just the third man to defeat Nadal at Roland Garros, the 61-year-old coach was unequivocal.

ners past 2019 semi-finalist Amanda Anisimova to secure a 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 win.

The 19-year-old has made the quarter-finals on the back of an impressive 23 service breaks over four rounds at Roland Garros.

"It was a very complicated match. Amanda is a very good player but I was happy to win in front of you," said the 2019 junior champion.

She next faces Martina Trevisan for a place in the semi-finals. The world number 59 from Italy booked her place in the quarter-finals for the second time in three years, edging out Aliaksandra Sasnovich from Belarus 7-6 (12/10), 7-5.

American Coco Gauff reached the last-eight for the second successive year with a 6-4, 6-0 win over Belgium's Elise Mertens.

AFP

Oman eye WC qualifiers as they take on USA, Nepal

Muscat: The final leg of Oman's qualification run for the berth in the Qualifiers of the ICC ODI World Cup 2023 in India will begin on June 8, with a tri-series against the hosts USA and Nepal.

The double-round robin series will be a part of the ICC Men's CWC League 2 2019 - 22.

Duleep Mendis, Head Coach and Chief Development Officer of Oman Cricket, said: "As a team, we are very positive to get started with these next set of games in the CWC League 2. Our last 2 tri-series in the UAE were fairly successful and we will look to deliver at a similar level this time around too.

"The boys have had a good recovery and regaining period over the last three-four weeks and also have trained hard to for this tour.

"We will be heading to USA a week prior to play a couple of practice games and get accustomed to the conditions," said Mendis.

"USA and Nepal are both formidable sides and we are looking forward to some competitive and high-quality cricket over the next two weeks," he added.

Oman currently hold a 16-point advantage over second-placed Scotland in the table.

But they have played almost twice the number of matches than the other six teams, which makes the four matches very



USA and Nepal are both formidable sides but Oman head coach Duleep Mendis is confident of his team's chances

OMAN'S FIXTURES	
(Matches start at 7:30pm GST)	
June 8	Oman v USA
June 9	Oman v Nepal
June 12	Oman v USA
June 14	Oman v Nepal

crucial.

Oman need to take as many points as possible to book a slot at the Qualifiers of the ICC Cricket World Cup in 2023.

All matches will be streamed live on icc.tv worldwide and Willow TV in the US.

Perez claims 'dream' Monaco win

Monaco, Principality of Monaco - Sergio Perez won a rain-disrupted Monaco Grand Prix on Sunday as pole-sitter Charles Leclerc suffered another dose of ill luck on his home circuit.

Perez, the first Mexican to win at the iconic circuit, claimed his third career win ahead of Carlos Sainz for Ferrari.

Perez's Red Bull teammate Max Verstappen took third to extend his lead in the world championship over Leclerc, fourth after a bungled pit stop strategy.

A deluge caused chaos and an hour delay to the start but Perez kept his cool for a "dream" victory after his crash in qualifying 24 hours earlier.

"Checo you have won Monaco, what a brilliant drive," Red Bull team boss Christian Horner told him over the team radio.

"It's a dream come true. As a driver you dream of winning here. After your home race there is no other more special weekend to win," said the man of the hour.

"It's a massive day for myself and my country," added Perez for whom this was a remarkable turn around in fortune after being left frustrated a week ago at relinquishing the race lead in Spain to Verstappen under team orders.

World champion Verstappen extended his lead over Leclerc to nine points in the drivers' title battle. Perez moved up to only six points behind Leclerc in third.

AFP

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IPL 2022



GT VS RR

GUJARAT'S TITAN

Hardik Pandya leads from the front as Gujarat Titans win IPL title



Skipper Hardik Pandya made 34 as Gujarat Titans beat Rajasthan Royals by seven wickets to win the Indian Premier League final in front of a record crowd of 104,859 on Sunday.

Chasing a modest 131 for victory in their debut season, Gujarat depended on a 63-run third-wicket partnership between Shubman Gill, who made 45 not out, and Pandya to achieve their target with 11 balls to spare in Ahmedabad.

Earlier, Pandya led an inspired bowling attack to restrict Rajasthan to 130 for nine.

Pandya, a fast bowler, returned figures of 3-17 including the prized scalp of Jos Buttler who made 39 at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

Buttler, who hit an unbeaten 106 in Rajasthan's win in the second qualifier, finished this season as the leading batsman with 863 runs and his wicket brought the house down at the nearly full 132,000 capacity stadium.

Afghanistan's Rashid Khan returned impressive figures of 1-18 from his four overs of leg-spin to keep down the opposition scoring.

Pandya, who sent back his opposite number Sanju Samson for 14, kept up the pressure and got the big-hitting Shimron Hetmyer out for 11 with a caught and bowled.

Fast bowlers Mohammed Shami and Yash Dayal, who got opener Yashasvi Jaiswal for 22, worked up good pace to keep Rajasthan, who elected to bat first, on the backfoot from the start.

BRIEF SCORES:
Rajasthan Royals 130 for 9 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 22 (16) 1x4, 2x6, Jos Buttler 39 (35) 5x4; Hardik Pandya 3 for 17) lost to Gujarat Titans 133 for 3 in 18.1 overs (Shubman Gill 45 (43) 3x4, 1x6, Hardik Pandya 34 (30) 3x4, 1x6, David Miller 32 (19) 3x4, 1x6) by 7 wickets

Rajasthan Royals campaign built on the Warne way of playing cricket

Mumbai, India - The shadow of Shane Warne, their captain, coach and talisman during their remarkable title run in the inaugural season of the IPL, has loomed over Rajasthan Royals' campaign of 2022, and it almost feels like fate that they've reached the final for the first time since the heady days of 2008.

After scoring his fourth hundred of the season to steer Royals into the final, Jos Buttler was inevitably asked about Warne. "He is such an influential figure for the Rajasthan Royals and having led the team to success in that first season, we will miss him dearly, but we know he is looking down on us with a lot of pride today," Buttler said at the presentation ceremony. "He made us believe."

The 2022 Royals have an identity of their own, of course, forged by their coach Kumar Sangakkara, their captain Sanju Samson, and a core group of immense

Shane Warne led Rajasthan Royals to the title in 2008

skill and experience that includes Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, R Ashwin, Yuzvendra Chahal and Trent Boult. But if you look for it, you'll find bits of Warne that remain in the team's DNA.

Chahal bowls the pressure overs

Where most wristspinners in the IPL fire the ball into the pitch, attack the stumps relentlessly, and bowl the wrong'un almost as

often as their stock ball, Chahal shows immense faith in his leg-break, and is unafraid to give the ball a bit of air and challenge batters to go after him. He'll never be as good as Warne - who ever will? - but his style of bowling isn't all that different. And like Warne, he puts his

Chahal has a role very few spinners have ever performed in the IPL. He's bowled 78 balls in the death overs already

hand up and bowls the difficult overs. Australia's captains loved using Warne in the high-pressure overs during his ODI career. At Royals this season, the team management has given

Chahal a role very few spinners have ever performed in the IPL. He's bowled 78 balls in the death overs already.

Ashwin tees off (not recklessly)

There's a bit of Warne in Ashwin's bowling. The drift, the variations, the intricate plotting of wickets, and above all the competitive edge he brings to contests - and this season, Royals have also looked to maximise Ashwin's batting ability by pushing him up the order to make up for their lack of depth. They've used him in a variety of roles - as a pinch-blocker after a top-order collapse, as a pinch-hitter at No. 3, and even as a genuine finisher - and he's responded with his best IPL season by far with the bat: 185 runs at an average of 30.83 and a strike rate of 146.82.

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MAGIC REALISM!

Vinicius Junior strikes as Real Madrid beat Liverpool in Champions League final

Paris, France - Vinicius Junior scored the only goal of the game as Real Madrid beat Liverpool 1-0 in Saturday's Champions League final in Paris to become kings of Europe for a record-extending 14th time after a night marred by problems outside the ground that led to the kick-off being delayed by over half an hour.

Brazilian winger Vinicius turned in Fede Valverde's low cross in the 59th minute at the Stade de France and Liverpool could not find an equaliser as Jurgen Klopp's side lost to the Spanish giants in a Champions League final for the second time in five seasons.

Liverpool will wonder what might have been had the outstanding Thibaut Courtois not pushed Sadio Mane's shot onto the inside of a post when they were on top in the first half, as they fell short of a trophy treble.

Winners of the English League Cup and FA Cup this season, they just missed out to Manchester City for the Premier League title and were denied a victory here which would have put them level with AC Milan on seven European Cups.

"These boys played an outstanding season. The two competitions we couldn't win, we didn't win for the smallest possible margin," said Klopp.

Instead Real have a fifth Champions League in nine seasons to go with their Spanish title, as Carlo Ancelotti becomes the first coach to win European club football's greatest prize for a fourth time.

Ancelotti was also in charge of Real when they won the 2014 final having triumphed with AC Milan in 2003 and in 2007, the



Real Madrid players and coach Carlo Ancelotti celebrate as Marcelo lifts the Champions League trophy after they defeated Liverpool in the final at the Stade de France on Saturday (AFP)

latter victory coming against Liverpool.

"We managed the game very well," said Ancelotti, who called himself "a record man".

"I had luck to come here last year and have a fantastic season. A fantastic club, a really good squad with a lot of quality and mental character," he said.

Delayed kick-off
The match kicked off 35 minutes later than the planned 9:00 pm

We managed the game very well. I had luck to come here last year and have a fantastic season. A fantastic club, a really good squad with a lot of quality and mental character

CARLO ANCELOTTI

(1900 GMT) start in the French capital after chaos at entrances to the stadium led to thousands of Liverpool fans being unable to get to their seats.

UEFA blamed the build-ups of supporters at the gates of the stadium on "thousands of fans who had purchased fake tickets which did not work in the turn-

stiles".

Police also fired tear gas as a handful of younger fans could be seen trying to scale fences around the perimeter of the stadium.

The final was only moved to the French capital after Saint-Petersburg was stripped of the game following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The delayed kick-off may have been responsible for the slow start to the game, as it was

16 minutes before there was an incident of note, Mohamed Salah turning a low Trent Alexander-Arnold cross towards goal only for Courtois to save.

Liverpool were seen as favourites to avenge their loss to the Spanish giants in the 2018 final in Kyiv and they began to take control of the game.

Mane came agonisingly close in the 21st minute as he skipped his way into a shooting position inside the box only for Courtois

to tip his net-bound shot onto his right-hand post.

Klopp's side, with Fabinho and Thiago Alcantara starting in midfield after overcoming fitness worries, were in control but could not turn their superiority into a lead.

Outstanding Courtois
Real, meanwhile, created almost nothing in the first half with Karim Benzema quiet, but their captain briefly thought he had got the breakthrough two minutes before the interval.

The Frenchman prodded home after the ball broke back to him inside the area but the off-side flag was raised.

The decision to disallow the goal was upheld after a lengthy VAR check, despite Fabinho deflecting Valverde's touch through to Benzema. Yet Ancelotti's side kept their nerve and were rewarded with the goal as the hour mark approached.

Valverde drove forward down the right before firing a low ball across the face of goal for Vinicius to turn it in at the far post past his Brazilian national team colleague Alisson.

Just like in 2018, Real had drawn first blood, but this time there was no need for them to send on Gareth Bale in order to ensure victory.

Courtois was superb, flying to his right to keep out a curling Salah shot before two saves in quick succession late on.

First the Belgian got down low when substitute Diogo Jota deflected Salah's effort towards goal, and then he produced a strong arm to turn a Salah strike behind.

It was Real Madrid's night.

AFP



Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti celebrates his team's victory (AFP)

‘Record man’ Ancelotti puts his landmark down to luck

Paris, France - Carlo Ancelotti typically played down becoming the first manager to win four European Cups after Real Madrid beat Liverpool 1-0 in Paris on Saturday saying luck had a part to play before acknowledging "I am a record man".

Ancelotti now stands alone as the only manager to win four Champions League titles, surpassing Bob Paisley's three with Liverpool and Zinedine Zidane's hat-trick as Madrid boss between 2016 and 2018.

A 59th minute goal by Vinicius Junior secured Real their record-extending 14th European Cup

"I am a record man," the 62-year-old Italian told BT Sport.

"I had luck to come here last year and have a fantastic season. A fantastic club, a really good

squad with a lot of quality and mental character.

"The season was top."

Ancelotti had described the change from leaving Liverpool's city rivals Everton last year to be back on the biggest stage in world football 12 months later as "vertigo" on the eve of the game.

Typically unflappable even in the moment of victory he kept his feet on the ground as his players hugged as winners usually do.

"I can't believe it," said Ancelotti.

"We had a fantastic season. We did really well. It was a difficult game and we suffered a lot, more so in the first half.

"In the end I think we deserved to win this competition.

"We're really happy. What can I say? I can't say more."

Ancelotti's side had made it through to the final thanks to stirring fightbacks at the Santiago Bernabeu to see off the petrodollars of Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City.

Ancelotti never the dictatorial type had even consulted his players as to who to send on in the dying stages of the City clash and it had paid off handsomely.

"I think we passed through really difficult games," said Ancelotti.

"The supporters helped us a lot in the last game. They helped us tonight. We're happy and they're happy."

He adds Saturday's victory to those with AC Milan in 2003 and 2007 as well as Real Madrid in 2014.

AFP

Courtois earns respect with heroics

Paris, France - If Real Madrid's Champions League final win in 2018 was remembered for a nightmare performance by Loris Karius in the Liverpool goal, the Spanish club's victory over the same opponents in Paris on Saturday was in no small part down to the heroics of Thibaut Courtois.

The Belgian showed the importance of having a top-class goalkeeper as he produced a string of crucial saves to deny Jurgen Klopp's side and help Real seal a 1-0 win that allowed them to lift their 14th European Cup.

Vinicius Junior may have got the only goal at the Stade de France just before the hour mark, but Real's victory would not have been possible without Courtois.

He was credited with a total of nine saves, including a superb strong arm to turn behind a Mohamed Salah strike late on and, perhaps most importantly, a fine early stop to turn a Sadio Mane shot onto the post when Liverpool were in the ascendancy.



Real Madrid's Thibaut Courtois makes a save during their Champions League final against Liverpool on Saturday

"The most important was the save from Mane. I really had to use my two metres to get there and turn fast to get the rebound," Courtois said after collecting his award for man of the match.

"It is one of the nicest feelings in my life along with the birth of

my children," said Courtois.

The 30-year-old has enjoyed remarkable success in his career ever since winning the Belgian league in 2011 with Genk alongside a young Kevin De Bruyne.

Domestic titles have followed at Atletico Madrid, Chelsea and

with Real, while he also won the Europa League in his time with the red and white half of Madrid.

Yet his spell at Atletico also included an agonising defeat at the hands of Ancelotti's Real in the 2014 Champions League final.

AFP

Liverpool will 'come again' after anticlimactic finish

Saint-Denis, France - A season that will live in the memory for Liverpool fans ended on a night that will be remembered for all the wrong reasons as Jurgen Klopp's men were beaten 1-0 by Real Madrid in Paris.

The result rubbed salt into the wounds of thousands of supporters who were locked out of the Stade de France amid chaotic scenes.

Kick-off to European club



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp consoles captain Jordan Henderson (AFP)

football's showpiece was delayed by over half an hour.

Fans described being targeted by tear gas from police, who tried to disperse the crowds on the perimeter of the stadium.

"This is the greatest match in European football and supporters should not have to experience the scenes we have witnessed tonight," Liverpool said in a statement.

AFP

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