

Decree issued on setting up Khazaen Economic City in S Batinah

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued two Royal Decrees on Monday, reading as follows:

Royal Decree No 44/2023 establishes Khazaen Economic City and promulgates its bylaw (articles of association).

Article 1 stipulates that an economic city will be set up in the Governorate of South Batinah named 'Khazaen Economic City' and established on the land area demarcated in

accordance with the layout attached to this decree. The city will be under the supervision of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones and it will be governed by the attached bylaw.

Article 2 states that two free zones will be established within Khazaen Economic City on the specific land area demarcated in accordance with the attached layout, which is specified in the Development Agreement defined in

the attached bylaw.

Article 3 endorses the Development Agreement and the Usufruct Agreement for Khazaen Economic City stated in the attached bylaw.

Article 4 states that Oman Logistics Company LLC will be the operating party of Khazaen Economic City and the two free zones set up therein. Khazaen Economic City Company LLC will be the developer of Khazaen Economic City and the two free zones set

up therein.

Article 5 states that the Chairman of Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones will issue the regulations and decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the attached bylaw.

Article 6 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No 45/2023 endorses Oman's joining the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 21, 1947.

Article 1 endorses the Sultanate of Oman's joining the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies, in accordance with the version attached to this decree while at the same time observing the

reservation of Section 32 of Article 9 of the convention.

Article 2 instructs the departments concerned to deposit the official document for joining the aforementioned convention in accordance with its provisions while at the same time observing the above-mentioned reservation.

Article 3 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. ONA

Plans afoot for flood risk management across Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate is adopting significant measures to enhance preparedness against flash floods and devise emergency plans for all governorates across the country.

To prepare for climate related emergencies, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources floated a series of consultancy service tenders recently to update and prepare flood hazard maps, along with flood risk management and emergency plans for North Sharqiyah, South Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Dakhliyah, Dhahirah, Buraimi, Musandam, Dhofar and Muscat.

The purpose of these flood hazard maps is to identify and illustrate geographical areas at varying levels of risk from potential floods.

Oman's low-lying urban areas along the coast are vulnerable to flooding from the combined impact of sea-level rise and storm surge associated with extreme weather events. Furthermore, 45% of Muscat is vulnerable to wadi floods and



20% to coastal floods.

'It is crucial to design these maps to meet the specific needs of end-users, ensuring effective communication of the complex messages associated with flooding and flood risk,' the ministry stated detailing the scope of work.

The maps will showcase areas susceptible to flooding, categorised into low, medium and high probabilities. These will provide essential information such as flood type, extent

of flooding, water depth, flow velocity and water flow direction.

The project involves three phases to achieve the desired outcomes. Phase A focuses on rainfall and flow data analysis, studying existing analyses and preparing intensity, duration, frequency (IDF) for each governorate. Additionally, a flood design manual will be developed, utilising recorded data for a comprehensive understanding of rainfall-runoff correlations in

each catchment.

Phase B encompasses flood mapping, where consultants will evaluate flood risks using appropriate techniques. This involves hydrological analysis to define the primary wadi channels and their flow during floods of different intensity.

In Phase C, flood risk management and emergency plans will be formulated, which will outline objectives of flood risk management in the affected areas and propose measures to

achieve these, besides identifying flood buffer areas along wadi channels and provide recommendations for emergency protocols during severe events.

Furthermore, the ministry is prioritising the review and supervision of construction of Wadi al Ansab flood protection dams in the wilayat of Bausher. 'These dams will play a crucial role in the overall flood protection of Al Ansab.'

Additionally, the ministry is focusing on updating the water balance computation for the entire sultanate. The objective is to determine the water balance using an appropriate methodology, considering factors such as rainfall, wadi flow, groundwater recharge, surface and groundwater inflow/outflow, evaporation, storage depletion, saline/sea water intrusion, water loss and artificial recharge to groundwater aquifers.

The project aims to establish an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the water balance within each water assessment unit area, contributing to effective water resource management across the country.

Khareef set to host cultural, sports events



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth will organise over 65 events during the khareef season in Dhofar as part of its efforts to revitalise the cultural and sports scene.

Musa Abdullah al Kasabi, Director General for Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar, has announced the completion of preparations for the 2023 Dhofar Khareef cultural and sports programme. "This comprehensive programme encompasses 65 activities tailored to cater to all segments of society, including citizens, residents and tourists," he informed.

The events lined up for the season include a range of engaging workshops on travel, literature and cultural activities management. Additionally, there will be a cultural economy seminar, a series of enlightening lectures and poetry evenings, and a singing competition. Furthermore, the highly anticipated second edition of the Dhofar Theatre Festival will also take place.

The ministry has developed an integrated programme for the public and set up a children's library where competitions and cultural gatherings will be held.

Youth-focused initiatives include workshops covering information technology, marketing and a Toastmasters competition aimed at enhancing communication skills and public speaking.

This comprehensive programme encompasses 65 activities tailored to cater to all segments of society, including citizens, residents and tourists

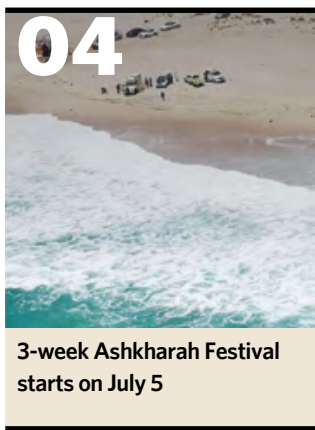
MUSA ABDULLAH AL KASABI

Engaging courses in the field of fashion design and an exhibition to showcase youth creativity and innovation are also part of the programme.

Highlighting the sporting events during the season, Kasabi said a diverse range of tournaments, including swimming, bowling, snooker, billiards, tennis, chess and karate have been organised. An athletics tournament, a table tennis tournament and workshops on sports injuries are other highlights this season.

There will be activities specifically targeting women, such as bowling, chess and e-sports, and an open sports day for individual and team events for clubs. Celebrations of Omani Women's Day will be a highlight of the programme.

Kasabi informed that Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah will serve as the venue for most of these cultural, sports and youth events.



Multipurpose port planned in Masirah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT), in collaboration with the General Secretariat of Tender Board, is inviting local and international companies to bid for the construction of a multipurpose port in Masirah, South Sharqiyah.

The port is a key project outlined in the 10th Five-year Plan (2021-2025). The objective is to create an appealing investment environment for fishing in Oman aligned with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources' plan to maximise the utilisation of fish resources. By expanding and enhancing the fishing fleet, the aim is to establish an attractive and viable work-



ing environment for Omani fishermen. The port will offer various public and private services within its premises, thereby increasing the fisheries sector's contribution to the GDP.

The Masirah Port project encompasses several essential components, including dedicated public and private facilities for the fisheries, tourism and transport sectors. Spread over 240,000sqm, the port will fea-

ture a primary breakwater measuring 3,052m and a secondary breakwater spanning 1,120m. Additionally, there will be a fixed berth measuring 590m and floating berths to accommodate fishing boats, trawlers and pleasure boats. The port basin, covering 1mn sqm, will be dredged to a depth of 5m to 6m.

To maximise the value generated by the new port, the private sector is also invited to establish

commercial and economic activities. Investment opportunities include boat and engine repair and maintenance workshops, ice-making plants, fish processing and fishmeal projects and dhow tourism.

The project is part of a comprehensive port development strategy implemented by MTCIT to drive investments in the sultanate. The deadline for bid submission is August 8, 2023.

MTCIT aims to enhance the country's capacity to manage a higher number of ships and increased volume of goods. In line with this objective, the ministry has initiated the development of various ports, including the recent preliminary approval for the construction of the Shuwaimiya Mining Port in Dhofar by Minerals Development Oman.

Large-scale Israeli army operation kills eight in West Bank

Jenin, Palestinian Territories - Israeli forces killed eight Palestinians in a large-scale operation on Monday in the occupied West Bank in what the army labelled an "extensive counterterrorism effort" involving drone strikes and hundreds of troops.

The military raid launched under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-right govern-



A Palestinian youth walks among burning tyres during a protest by the border fence with Israel east of Gaza City on Monday (AFP)

ment in the northern city of Jenin was the biggest in the West Bank in years, featuring armoured vehicles, army bulldozers and unmanned aerial vehicles.

Gun battles and explosions rocked the city and adjacent refugee camp, a stronghold of armed groups, as Palestinians threw rocks at Israeli troops.

Continued on Page 09

Oman condemns repeated raids in Jenin

Muscat - The sultanate has denounced and condemned the repeated Israeli attacks on the city of Jenin and the Palestinian camps in the West Bank.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry expressed its firm support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of their independent state, in accordance with the two-state solution and the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab peace initiative.

Oman among top three peaceful nations in MENA

Ranked 48th globally, the sultanate is among the countries that improved most jumping 18 places

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is the third most peaceful country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which remains the least peaceful region in the world for the eighth consecutive year, according to the 17th edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI) compiled by the international think-tank Institute for Economics & Peace.

MENA is home to four of the ten least peaceful countries in the world. However, MENA improved by 0.63% over the past year, with significant improvements recorded in the Militarisation and Ongoing Conflict domains. The region has improved in peacefulness year-on-year for the past three years.

Oman, ranked overall 48th, is also among the countries that witnessed the largest improvement in peacefulness - jumping 18 places - after Libya and Bu-

MOST PEACEFUL NATIONS IN MENA

1. Qatar
2. Kuwait
3. Oman
4. Jordan
5. United Arab Emirates
6. Tunisia
7. Morocco
8. Algeria
9. Bahrain
10. Saudi Arabia

rundi, and followed by Côte d'Ivoire and Afghanistan.

Qatar remains the most peaceful country in the region, a position it has held since 2008, followed by Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia making the top ten.

Qatar is the only country in the region to be ranked among the top 25 most peaceful countries



globally. Qatar improved in overall peacefulness in 2023, driven by improvements in political in-

stability, external conflicts fought and UN peacekeeping funding. The index revealed that the

average level of global peacefulness deteriorated for the ninth consecutive year, with 84 coun-

tries recording an improvement and 79 a deterioration. 'This demonstrates that the deteriorations were larger than the improvements, as the post-COVID rises of civil unrest and political instability remain high while regional and global conflicts accelerate.'

Iceland remains the most peaceful country, a position it has held since 2008, followed by Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand and Austria. For the sixth consecutive year, Afghanistan is the least peaceful country, followed by Yemen, Syria, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Highlighting the shifting dynamics of conflict, both Afghanistan and Syria recorded improvements in peacefulness.

Ukraine's overall score recorded a decline of 13%, the largest deterioration in the 2023 GPI, and is now 157th on the index. Libya experienced the largest improvement in overall

peacefulness, improving by 7% and rising 14 places to 137th.

The shift in the global distribution of conflict continued as major conflicts in the MENA region and South Asia declined, while conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and Asia-Pacific intensified. The Russia and Eurasia region recorded the largest deterioration in peacefulness in the world.

Ten of the 23 GPI indicators improved, 11 deteriorated and two had no change. The largest deteriorations were in External Conflicts Fought and Deaths from Internal Conflict. Other notable deteriorations included Neighbouring Country Relations and Political Instability, where 59 countries deteriorated.

Europe is the most peaceful region in the world and is home to seven of the ten most peaceful countries. The other three most peaceful countries are in the Asia Pacific region.

CONDOLENCES

Chairman, the Board of Directors, Management and Staff of Al Omaniya Financial Services SAOG express their heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of



MAQBOOL HAMEED AL SALEH

Founder & Chairman of OHI Group

"We pray and ask the Almighty to give his family the strength to bear this great loss." May his soul rest in peace

Al Omaniya Financial Services (SAOG)
Values stronger than money

Bids invited for recreational centre in Duqm

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To make Duqm a destination of choice for families and entrepreneurs alike, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) is planning to develop a recreational centre catering to people from all walks of life.

Through its Internal Committee, OPAZ is inviting bids from local entities - of excellent and first grade - to participate in the project to design and build 'Social, Lifestyle and Recreational



Amenity' in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. Giving details, OPAZ stated

that the project aims to create a vibrant and engaging space that enhances the quality of life for

residents, workers and visitors within the zone.

'The Social, Lifestyle and Recreational Amenity will serve as a focal point for community engagement and provide a wide range of facilities and services.'

OPAZ mandates that the design should incorporate innovative and sustainable concepts that promote well-being, leisure activities and foster a sense of belonging. 'The amenity should offer diverse spaces for relaxation, entertainment, sports and cultural events,' it stated.

MoCIIP calls on industrial firms to submit data for national survey by July 31

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has urged industrial enterprises to submit their data for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 before the July 31, 2023 deadline of an industrial survey.

Sami bin Salim al Sahib, Director General of Industry in the ministry, emphasised the importance of the periodic industrial surveys in creating an updated and accurate database of industrial facilities in the sultanate. This year's survey aims to gather information from 969 industrial facilities, which will provide valuable insights into their operations, he informed.

According to Sahib, the annual surveys are a crucial component of the national industrial

statistics, as they provide essential information about enterprises and their activities. The surveys target all licensed industrial facilities in Oman with an investment cost exceeding RO5,000 and a workforce of more than nine employees.

"The primary objective of the industrial survey is to assess the performance of the industrial sector, identify investment opportunities and develop plans, policies, and programmes to support the national economy."

As of mid-June, 186 enterprises and factories have already submitted their data. Sahib appealed to the remaining targeted companies and factories, urging them to submit their data promptly.

Failure to comply with the deadline may result in legal action.



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عالي البروتين
و قليل السكر

OBITUARY

The Board of Directors, Management
and Employees of OHI Group are
deeply saddened to announce that
our beloved Chairman

Maqbool Hameed Al Saleh
passed away on 1 July 2023

We pray to the Almighty to rest his
soul in peace and give his family the
strength to overcome such a
profound and irreplaceable loss.

Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un

OHI

3-week Ashkharah Festival starts on July 5

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), in collaboration with the Office of the Governor of South Sharqiyah, will organise Ajwaa al Ashkharah Festival from July 5 to 24.

To be opened under the patronage of H E Salim bin Mohammad al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, in the presence of Dr Yahya Badr Malik al Ma'awali, Governor of South Sharqiyah, the festival will take place at Ashkharah Park.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Humaid al Ghabshi, Wali of Jalan Bani Bu Ali and Chairman of the Organising Committee, informed that the festival will include an array of entertainment, promotional and cultural events aimed to

It will include an array of entertainment, promotional and cultural events aimed to achieve various economic and social goals

SHEIKH MOHAMED AL GHABSHI

achieve various economic and social goals.

"The primary goal of the festival is to promote tourist destinations and support domestic tourism, empowering the governorate to take a leading role in this initiative. It will also serve as a unique opportunity to showcase the archaeological and cultural sites of the governorate to



(Supplied photo)

visitors," Ghabshi said.

Discussing the preparations, Ma'awali said, "All tourist sites in the wilayats of Al Kamil Wa al Wafi, Ras al Hadd and Sur will have promotional activities for the festival."

The event will feature entertainment activities, including a heritage corner and an exhibition in which entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises will participate. Additionally, fun games, beach games and cultural activities will be held at the park theatre.

Kite flying activities will be held in the main events of the festival, adding to the festive ambience. "Several Arab community clubs in Oman will take part in the event, contributing to its vibrancy and diversity," Ma'awali added.



Hotel revenues up 34.7%

Muscat - The latest data from National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicates a 34.7% increase in revenues of 3-to-5-star hotels in the sultanate to RO98.426mn this year till the end of May compared to RO73mn in the same period of 2022.

This revenue growth aligns with a notable 27.3% increase in the number of guests, totalling 800,952 till May end this year, compared to 629,143 in the cor-

responding period of 2022. Occupancy rate rose 13.6%.

Breaking down the figures, the data indicated Omani guests accounted for 274,729 of the total - a modest increase of 0.7%. The number of GCC guests rose 17% to 54,571, while European guests increased 47.2% to 239,686.

There were 26,166 American guests, up 4.1%, while those from the African continent increased 39.7% to 4,542. The number of

Asian guests increased 46% to 110,324, and guests from Oceania surged dramatically by 255.2% to 19,007.

Hotels in the sultanate are experiencing a remarkable growth in revenues fueled by a substantial rise in guest numbers from various regions around the globe. The upward trend highlights the attractiveness of the sultanate as a destination for travellers seeking exceptional experiences.

Leadership programme held in UK to empower outstanding students

Muscat - Participants of the fourth edition of Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company's Leadership Programme for Outstanding Students commenced a study programme in the United Kingdom on Monday.

The programme, conducted by Takatuf Oman in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company, is designed to empower 20 exceptional male and female Grade 10 students from various educational directorates. The programme is of six-week duration.



(Supplied photo)

The objective of the programme is to foster a spirit of cultural curiosity among the students while brushing up their English language and leadership

skills. The students engage in an advanced English language course at the esteemed Oxford International Study Centre, which enables them to broaden their

linguistic abilities. Additionally, they actively participate in a range of sports, tourism and entertainment activities, further enriching their overall experience.

SQU signs pact to accelerate open access to research

Muscat - Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and IOPP Publishing (IOPP) have signed a transformative agreement enabling researchers to publish their work openly for anyone to read at no cost.

IOPP is a society-owned scientific publisher, providing impact, recognition and value for the scientific community and this is its first unlimited publishing agreement in Oman supporting the university's efforts to make scientific research accessible to as many people as possible.

The three-year agreement allows SQU researchers unlimited open access (OA) publishing across all IOPP owned journals and most partner journals while retaining their copyright. The agreement also gives unrestricted reading access to IOPP's entire journal portfolio.

Led by top universities, transformative agreements are gaining traction across MENA. The agreements make it easier for scientists to publish their research as their institution covers the cost of both reading access and OA publishing.

A recent global survey carried out by IOPP together with other physical societies shows that 32% of physical science researchers based in Africa and the Middle East want to publish their work but 77% say a lack of monies from funding agencies prevents them from doing so.



SQU has truly embraced the transition to OA, and we are honoured to have secured this unlimited OA publishing agreement with it

JULIAN WILSON

Researchers can find out if their institution is covered by a transformative agreement or check compliance with funder requirements by using the IOPP Journal Finder tool.

Yaqoob al Busaidi, head of Periodicals Department at SQU, said, "IOPP is paving the way for a successful OA transformation with its unlimited publishing option for researchers worldwide. We are pleased to take our partnership with IOPP to the next level and sign a transformative agreement that will enable SQU research to have more impact and visibility."

The benefits of OA publishing are reflected in IOPP research

which shows that OA content is downloaded 80% more than paywalled content and cited 30% more.

Julian Wilson, Chief Sales Officer at IOPP, said, "SQU has truly embraced the transition to OA, and we are honoured to be the first physics publisher to have secured this unlimited OA publishing agreement with it. The agreement strengthens our commitment to Open Physics which supports our mission to create greater visibility, recognition and impact for the science community."

With this, SQU joins more than 900 institutions in 33 countries which have secured transformative agreements with IOPP.

First amateur weather enthusiasts forum to be held on July 17

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To fulfil its commitment to support Omani weather enthusiasts and uncover their talents, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) will organise the first-of-its-kind gathering of weather enthusiasts in the sultanate on July 17.

CAA recently launched an initiative called Friends of Meteorology, catering to amateur weather analysts. The programme aims to facilitate meetings and training sessions focused on weather forecasting.

Part of the Friends of Meteorology initiative, the first weather enthusiasts meeting is a one-day forum that promises a range of engaging events, including a lecture on the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre, an interaction with the chairman of CAA, and honouring representatives of amateur weather groups in Oman. The forum's primary goal is to bolster weather enthusiasts' skills and support their growth in this field.

Additionally, CAA has introduced a programme called Muzn aimed at enhancing the quality of alerts, meteorological services and early warnings.

Amateur weather enthusiasts interested in participating in the forum can register through bit.ly/46tXBnl

MHT begins restoration project of Sadah Castle

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has started a restoration and maintenance project of Sadah Castle in the wilayat of Sadah, Dhofar, on Monday.

The ministry is currently working with a specialised company to restore and maintain Sadah Castle in order to reopen it to visitors in the coming tourist season,' a statement said.

The project is in line with MHT's efforts to preserve Oman's architectural heritage for future generations. 'The ministry will follow a systematic plan in the restoration work, including comprehensive maintenance of all parts of the castle, while preserving its Omani character, identity and architectural elements by using traditional materials and manual tools.'

According to the ministry, one of the most important aspects



(Supplied photo)

taken into account in the restoration of any monument is the architectural and historical value of the landmark, its geographical location and the proposed use of the site.

According to ministry data, it restored 310 historical monuments and landmarks across several governorates in 2022.

Of the total, 83 are castles,

forts and walls, 145 towers, 80 mosques and two ancient houses. Also, an inventory process resulted in the registration of 3,423 archaeological sites.

The number of historical sites registered rose from 7,064 in 2016 to 22,259 in 2020 - a growth of 215% - according to National Centre for Statistics and Information data.

Isolated rains expected today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The weather in Muscat is expected to be cloudy for the next 24 hours with chances of isolated rains likely in the surrounding areas of the capital.

According to Oman Meteorology Department, development of convective clouds and isolated rains are expected over the Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas, and parts of Al Wusta. Partly cloudy skies are expected along the coastal areas of Dhofar

governorate and adjoining mountains with intermittent drizzle.

Additionally, there are chances of dust rising over the desert and open areas, according to the met department. 'Chances of late night to early morning low-level clouds or fog patches are predicted over parts of the coast along the Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman and the eastern and western coasts of Musandam.'

A met department official said, "The change in the weather pattern is normal for this time of the year. The inclement weather

is due to a low pressure in the Arabian Sea as well as the onset of monsoons in India."

He added that the rains and weather condition will affect sea waves.

The temperature will drop two to three degrees as a result of the weather disturbance. The expected maximum and minimum temperatures on Tuesday will be 36°C and 29°C respectively in Muscat, 47 °C and 34°C in Ibri, 41°C and 29°C in Rustaq, 47°C and 32°C in Haima and 40°C and 30°C in Khasab.



The Renaissance family
expresses heartfelt
condolences on the sad
demise of

**Maqbool Hameed
Al Saleh**

We stand with the bereaved
family in this time of grief and
pray to Allah to grant the
departed soul eternal peace.



إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون.



Saudi extends oil production cut as Russia reduces exports



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia on Monday said that it was extending a voluntary oil production cut, while Russia confirmed it was slashing exports, as major producers tried to prop up slumping prices.

The cut by Riyadh of one million barrels per day was first announced after a June meeting of oil producers and took effect at the weekend.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman noted at the time that it was 'extendable'.

In a report on Monday announcing that the cut would continue through August, the official Saudi Press Agency said it 'can

be extended' further, citing an energy ministry source.

'The source confirmed that this additional voluntary cut comes to reinforce the precautionary efforts made by OPEC+ countries with the aim of supporting the stability and balance of oil markets,' SPA said.

Also on Monday, Russia unveiled its export cut of 500,000 bpd for August 'as part of efforts to ensure that the oil market remains balanced'.

The announcement by Alexander Novak, Russian deputy prime minister responsible for energy policy, came on the back of cuts to Russian oil

production this year by the same volume as part of Moscow's response to Western sanctions levied over the conflict in Ukraine. Recent efforts by OPEC+ to bolster prices by reducing output have not succeeded, and analysts expressed doubt this one would be any different despite initial increases recorded Monday. "It's the usual knee-jerk reaction to reports of production cuts," said IG analyst Chris Beauchamp. "But given... it's not a coordinated move from all (OPEC+) members it seems hard to imagine there's much more upside in this."

AFP

Oil prices advance on output cutbacks; equities rise

London, UK - Oil prices rose on Monday after key producers Saudi Arabia and Russia further cut crude output in a bid to protect their precious revenues.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, and US counterpart WTI jumped after Riyadh extended a voluntary oil production cut of one million barrels per day, while Moscow - whose invasion of Ukraine last year sparked oil market turmoil - said it was slashing exports by 500,000 bpd.

Prices later pared gains as traders continued to digest the news from the two biggest members of the OPEC+ producers' alliance.

Asian and European stock markets meanwhile advanced, as easing inflation data fuelled hopes central banks could be nearing the end of their interest rate hiking cycle.

Investor sentiment was subdued on the eve of the Independence Day holiday in the United States.

"It's the usual knee-jerk reaction to reports of production cuts," IG analyst Chris Beauchamp told AFP, when asked about the latest oil-price

gains. "But given... it's not a coordinated move from all (OPEC+) members it seems hard to imagine there's much more upside in this."

He also warned that "the outlook for oil demand remains firmly under pressure" with many analysts forecasting recession next year.

Recent efforts by OPEC+ to bolster prices by reducing output have not succeeded.

In April, several OPEC+ members opted to slash production voluntarily by more than one million bpd - a surprise move that briefly raised prices but failed to bring about lasting price recovery.

Brent is down 11% since the beginning of 2023 and WTI is down 7%, as a sluggish recovery in China and worries about a possible economic downturn cloud the outlook.

"Recession concern in the Western world continue to weigh on the oil market sentiment," added UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

"We continue to expect the oil market to tighten, and this should lift oil prices."

"But financial investors will

likely stay cautious in the short term."

Stock markets had jumped on Friday as data showed inflation cooling in both the United States and Europe, while Apple ended a session above US\$3tn in market value for the first time.

The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index - the US inflation measure closely watched by the Federal Reserve - dropped in May to 3.8% year-on-year from 4.3% in April.

In Europe, figures showed eurozone consumer prices rose 5.5% in June, slowing from 6.1% in May thanks to a drop in energy costs.

The Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank have warned that more interest rate hikes are likely, but the latest data raised hopes they could soon wind down their monetary tightening.

Tokyo was also boosted after news that the Bank of Japan's closely watched Tankan survey of confidence among the country's largest manufacturers rose for the first time in seven quarters.



MSX gains 17.6 points to close at 4792

Muscat - Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) gained 17.6 points on Monday, comprising a rise by 0.37% to close at 4792.00 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4774.43 points.

The trading value stood at RO4,404,460, comprising a drop by 38.7%, compared to the last session, which stood at RO7,182,925.

The report released by MSX pointed out that the market value went up by 0.095% to reach about RO23.98bn.

The report added that the value of shares bought by non-Omani investors reached RO254,000, comprising 5.77%. The value of shares sold by non-Omani investors reached RO443,000, comprising 10.06%.

The net non-Omani investment decreased by 4.30% to RO189,000.

CBO issues financial stability indicator

Muscat - The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced the publication of a working paper unveiling the first ever Composite Financial Stability Indicator (CFSI) for the Sultanate of Oman.

The CFSI serves as a comprehensive measure to capture the essence of financial stability in Oman, providing stakeholders and policymakers with valuable insights into the current state and evolution of financial stability over time.

The CFSI aggregates five essential sub-indicators that effectively reflect the financial stability landscape in Oman, with the aggregate CFSI rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing lower stability and 5 higher stability. These sub-indicators include banking stability, systemic risk, debt sustainability, currency stability and capital market certainty.

The overall results of the CFSI from 2008 to 2021, demonstrates strong stability. However, during the early stages of the pandemic, the CFSI of Oman saw a drop primarily attributed to deteriorating debt sustainability, capital market deterioration, and increased systemic risk resulting from the contraction of economic activity vis a vis bank lending and higher lending premiums during the pandemic period.

The CFSI will be updated annually and made available to the public through the annually published Financial Stability Report, with the objective of enhancing transparency and ensuring that vital information reaches a wide range of stakeholders. The CBO reiterates its commitment to transparency and open communication with stakeholders.

Oman issues Treasury Bills worth RO35mn this week

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has this week issued Treasury Bills amounting to RO35mn, a report said.

The total issuance of Government Treasury Bills amounted to RO35mn. The value of the allotted Treasury Bills amounted to RO20mn, for a maturity period of 28 days, the report added.

The average accepted price reached RO99.665 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.665 per RO100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.36696% and 4.38164%, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted Treasury Bills amounted to RO15mn, for a maturity period of 91 days.

The average accepted price reached RO98.767 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO89.765 per RO100. The average discount rate and the aver-



age yield reached 4.94689% and 5.00866%, respectively.

Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 5.75% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.25%.

Furthermore, Treasury Bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

China slaps export curbs on essential chip-making metals

Beijing, China - China said on Monday it would slap export controls on two rare metals essential for the manufacture of semiconductors over security concerns, as Beijing and Washington tussle over the global market for chips.

Exports of gallium and germanium, of which China is a major producer, will require a license from August 1, according to a guideline issued by the Ministry of Commerce and China Customs.

The final recipient of the exports and the purpose of their use will have to be specified, the text said.

The need to 'preserve security and national interests' was the reason for the measures, it said.

Gallium, which is found in integrated circuits, LEDs and photovoltaic panels for solar panels, among other things, is considered a critical raw material by the European Union.

China accounted for 80% of



global gallium production, according to a 2020 report by the European Commission.

Germanium, in turn, is essential for making optical fibres and infrared camera lenses, with 80% of it also coming from China, according to the same report.

The export curbs follow Washington blacklists of Chinese companies in recent years aimed at cutting them off from access to American technologies, including the most advanced chips.

China, which is seeking to become self-sufficient in semiconductor design, says those moves are aimed at maintaining US supremacy in the industry.

The United States has also tightened export restrictions on semiconductors in recent weeks and is pushing its allies to do the same.

From September, the Netherlands will impose restrictions on the export of technologies intended for the manufacture of electronic chips.

AFP

Tesla nearly doubles deliveries compared to last year

New York, US - US automaker Tesla beat analyst expectations in the second quarter, delivering 466,140 vehicles despite a difficult market, according to its earnings report released on Sunday.

The nearly half million deliveries represent an 83% increase over the same period last year, and a 10% rise from the previous quarter.

Analysts had expected deliveries to come in under 450,000.

From April to June, the Texas-based electric vehicle giant produced 479,700 cars - an 85% increase compared to the second quarter in 2022.



That brings Tesla's total production by the middle of this year to 920,508, well on its way to its goal of manufacturing 1.8mn cars in 2023 and exceeding expectations from industry watchers.

"Price cuts implemented early in 2023 have paid major dividends for Musk & Co. as demand appears to remain very strong and production efficiencies have allowed for the massive deliveries," analysts from Wedbush Securities wrote in a note to clients.

As competition in the EV sector heats up, Tesla has made several price cuts in the United States, Europe and Asia.

This has also allowed it to weather declining demand in China.

"We've taken a view that pushing for higher volumes and a larger fleet is the right choice here versus a lower volume and higher margin," CEO Elon Musk said on an April call discussing first-quarter results.

In the United States, Tesla has also benefited from its expanded eligibility in the government's US\$7,500 tax credit programme for electric car buyers, part of President Joe Biden's environmental policy.

AFP

Bank Muscat launches payment solutions

Business payment solutions, which enable customers to make payments effortlessly are an essential step in the success of modern businesses.

As the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat partners with thousands of businesses, institutions and organisations of all types and sizes ranging from government entities and large corporates to micro, small and medium sized businesses, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations.

The bank provides different solutions depending on their unique requirements and has invited business partners to check out the full range of payment solutions available to them depending on their unique requirements.

Today, the bank's payment solutions include POS (point-of-sale) terminals, payment links, QR-code based payments, Dynamic Currency Conversions, Self-checkout Terminals, Integrated POS solutions and Payment Gateways.

Speaking on the occasion Abdullah Hamood al Jufaili, assistant general manager, Digital Banking Bank Muscat, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat is committed to empowering our merchant partners with innovative digital solutions that bring efficiency and scale in their respective businesses. We are very



happy to note that our partners are quickly adopting the bank's state-of-the-art digital banking solutions to speed up transactions, optimise the efficiency of their employees, minimise data-entry related risks in payment processes and improve overall security and cash management.

"We encourage all our partners to explore Bank Muscat's full range of digital offerings that can help further supercharge their customer transactions experience. The bank will continue

to launch offer the latest financial services and solutions in line with global financial trends to its customers."

Digital options to supercharge retail businesses

Bank Muscat offers the best-in-class payment products to help businesses to expand and reach newer heights.

The payment acceptance solutions offered by the bank includes Point of Sale (PoS)

Terminals as well as online payment options.

The features of the payment-acceptance solutions include universal compliance with up-to-date security features, acceptance of all domestic and international debit, credit and prepaid cards, prompt payment settlements, on-site support and round-the-clock help desk as well as access to payment reports for ease of reconciliation.

The different options available to merchant partners include the

following:

PoS terminals: These allow merchants to accept card payments from Visa, Mastercard and American Express amongst others. Customers can easily make purchases in line with the latest payment security standards in the market using Tap and Pay, EMV Chip and PIN as well as magnetic stripe cards.

Integrated PoS terminals: Integration of PoS terminals with the checkout counters helps in quick processing of customer's pur-

chase and provides all the necessary information about their purchase. On the business side, duplicate entries of sales transaction with the PoS and cash register is eliminated.

The integration solution can also handle management reports to aid sales, analysis and inventory to suit demanding retail needs.

QR codes: Customers can use their mobile phone and their mBanking app to scan a dynamic or static QR code and make payments to a merchant. Dynamic QR codes are displayed on the PoS device and a customer can scan it using their Bank Muscat mBanking app.

The dynamic QR code generated on the PoS device is individual for each transaction and the payment details are prefilled to avoid data input errors. The customer only needs to accept and complete the payment.

A static QR code on the other hand only displays the merchant's (recipient's) details. The customer has to then manually enter the amount to be paid and complete the transaction.

Dynamic currency conversion (DCC): This is a credit card feature that allows a customer to make a PoS credit card purchase in a foreign country using the currency of the home country.

Payment links: An online payment method where the merchant requests instant payments

by generating a request (creating a payment link) and sharing it with a customer through SMS or email.

Self-checkout machines: They provide a mechanism for customers to complete their transaction at a retail outlet without needing a cashier.

Payment kiosk: They can be used to receive a bill payment and the backend system can be either a PoS or a Payment Gateway.

Payment Gateways: These enable a merchant to accept online and offline card payments.

Bank Muscat's payment solutions enable merchant partners to offer an array of payment options to their customers.

The bank has deployed experts to guide partners through the options available and make the right choice regarding their needs. Also available is a support team that works 24/7 to provide customer support and a straightforward onboarding process.

Whether large or small, Bank Muscat has the right payment solution available for all types of business, depending on their unique needs.

What is more, the bank's payment solutions offer a customised user experience for both merchants and customers.

The bank's ongoing digitalisation drive is in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and will further enhance financial inclusion in Oman.

Unesco awards Lebanese director Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture

Actor and director Kassem Istanbuli has been awarded by Unesco with the 2023 Sharjah Award for Arab Culture and Arts, recognising his prominent contribution to Arab culture.

The international committee of experts in the fields of culture and arts has chosen the work of Kassem Istanbuli, founder of the Lebanese National Theatre, from many nominations for his contribution to the creation of an independent culture and arts net in Lebanon, including the restoration of abandoned cinemas in South and North of Lebanon, the organisation of international cinema, theater, and music festivals, the implementation of workshops for children and the youngers, and the creation of international bridges promoting the exchange of artistic experiences and dialogue, promoting the dissemination of Arab artistic experiences and culture in the world.



Sharjah Award for Arab Culture and Arts was created in 1998 by the initiative of Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad al

Quasimi to celebrate Arab creators and intellectuals, and this 2023 award will be its 19th edition.

OPAZ organises workshop on environmental procedures, laws

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), represented by the Compliance and Environmental Affairs Department, organised a workshop on general environmental procedures for specialists from OPAZ and the affiliated zones.

A number of other stakeholders from different parties concerned about environmental permits issuance also took part in the workshop.

The workshop highlighted the experiences of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and the free zones in Sohar, Salalah and Al Mazunah with regard to developing environmental legislation and regulations in the compliance and environmental affairs sector and the procedures followed in line with the expected expansion of projects and activities in these zones, in addition to discussing the best and latest practices and experiences in this field.

Organising this workshop comes as part of OPAZ efforts to bring the highest standards of compliance with environmental requirements in all operations and unify environmental procedures in all special economic zones and free zones that are



overseen by OPAZ in order to facilitate the procedures for investors, save time and effort, improve work efficiency, and manage roles and responsibilities between OPAZ and the zones.

Accordingly, this will contribute to creating an attractive investment environment.

The workshop concluded with a number of recommendations,

most of which is the establishment of a unified guideline for general environmental requirements for all projects and their various categories. The guideline will be implemented in all the zones as it will contribute effectively to strengthening performance governance and procedures in regards with environmental compliance and legislation.

ARA Petroleum, National University of Science and Technology ink MoU

ARA Petroleum E&P (ARA), a dynamic energy company within The Zubair Corporation group recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National University of Science and Technology in Oman.

The MoU, which was signed by Dr Omar al Jaidi, General Manager of ARA EP, and Dr Salem al Araimi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, on behalf of the university, aims to enhance cooperation between the energy and the academic sectors in the fields of research and innovation.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Jaidi said, "We are aware of the role the National University plays in developing a working system of scientific research and innovation across several fields.

"The MoU with the National University of Science and Technology will enhance ties between the industrial and academic sectors through innovative solutions and applied research to meet challenges and raise efficiency within industrial and energy sectors."

The National University of Science and Technology believes that partnerships with other industrial organisations enables the University to lead in these sectors by utilising the most diverse, highest-attaining student bodies. These partnerships also have the potential to make an impact on curriculum development, collaborative teaching programmes and research networks.

Dr Ali bin Saud al Bimani, Vice Chancellor of National University of Science and Technology, added, "The collaboration aims to find solutions to the challenges faced by the two institutions, whether in the field of education or in the field of energy."

He stressed that the memorandum would help contribute to the professional development of students and faculty members at the University as well as implement joint research projects in areas of interest to both the University and ARA. Results and achievements will be monitored and evaluated over a period of six months. "We hope to evaluate our accomplishments after this period to continue our journey of technological advancements that aid both entities," he added.

Established in 2014, ARA Petroleum is a dynamic member of the Exploration & Production industry in Oman.

The company is a full cycle Exploration & Production company which explores, appraises, develops, and produces oil & gas resources both in Oman and internationally.

ARA operates on the doctrine of No Harm to People, No Harm to The Environment and is taking giant strides towards becoming a carbon neutral operator. ARA operates several companies, namely ARA Petroleum E&P, ARA Petroleum B-44, ARA Petroleum B-31, and ARA Petroleum Tanzania.

The National University of Science and Technology, as a private university in the Sultanate of Oman, was established in the year 2018. The university was established through the merger of Caledonian College of Engineering and Oman Medical College, two institutions known for their excellence in providing undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and scientific research in the fields of engineering, medicine and pharmacy.

The university currently includes the College of Engineering, the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, and the College of Pharmacy, in addition to the Oman International Maritime College and the College of Advanced Technology.



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Qatar top ally, followed by Kuwait, Egypt: Youth survey

Arab youth consider all the GCC countries and Egypt as strong allies, a recent survey showed.

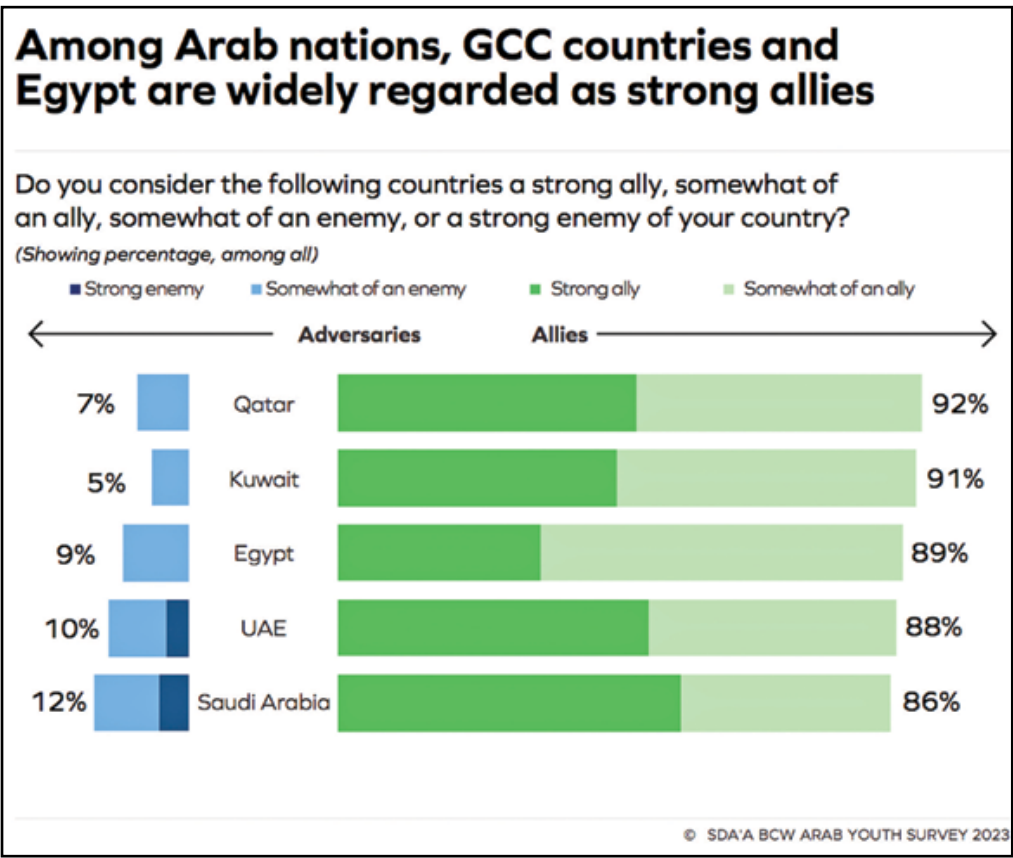
In that survey, Qatar was named as 'a strong ally or somewhat of an ally' by 92%, followed by Kuwait (91%), Egypt (89%), the UAE (88%) and Saudi Arabia (86%).

For the landmark 15th annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey, unveiled by ASDA'A BCW, the Middle East & North Africa's leading communications consultancy, young Arabs were also asked about their views on Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022.

An overwhelming 87% said the event had galvanised the Arab world and enhanced Arab pride, while an equal percentage said events such as the FIFA World Cup and Expo 2020 Dubai have promoted greater understanding of the Arab world in general.

Sunil John, President, MENA, BCW and Founder of ASDA'A BCW, who has led the survey over the past 15 years, said: "The annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey has proven to be an indispensable resource for global decision makers in government and business seeking a clearer understanding of a region that is increasingly influential in world affairs, yet still an enigma for many outside it. Once again, the study sheds new light on the Arab world's changing geopolitical landscape."

"We conduct this independent survey every year because we believe that to understand the Arab world, one must first understand the hearts and minds of its largest demographic, its youth," added John.



"The evidence-based insights, collected through nearly 45,000 face-to-face interviews conducted with young Arabs since the survey was launched in 2008, inform governments, the private sector, multilateral institutions and academics on policymaking, business strategy and emerging trends. To ensure its credibility and the reliability of its data, we fund the survey entirely ourselves," he added.

"All the respondents in this year's study belong to Generation Z and the oldest were just into their teens when the epochal events of 2008 culminated in the Arab Spring," John said.

"Like the generation before them who lived through the

global financial crisis, they are coming to terms with a new reality defined, on the one hand, by simmering conflicts and the involvement of new world powers in regional affairs, and on the other, by regional governments seeking new alliances and a platform of their own on the world stage. The implications of these changes are captured in our latest, and largest, ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey."

In the coming weeks, ASDA'A BCW will publish insights under the other five themes covered in the study: My Politics, revealing what young Arab say about the performance of their government; My Livelihood, detailing their views on education, jobs, and their fi-

nances; My Identity, covering religion and issues of personal identity; My Aspirations, the hopes of young Arabs for the future; and My Lifestyle, highlighting their habits, pastimes, and the media they consume.

"We believe that revealing the six themes independently provides an opportunity to better absorb these findings and understand them in the right context," added John.

Findings on climate change, mental health and gender rights will also be disclosed, making this year's study the most extensive in the survey's history. The overall theme of the 15th edition of the ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey is 'Living a New Reality'.



Sharakah, Muscat Finance collaborate to drive SME growth, support Green initiatives

To empower SME growth and foster impact investment in Oman, Sharakah and Muscat Finance have joined forces through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Ali bin Ahmed Muqabail, CEO of Sharakah, and Hussain al Lawati, CEO of Muscat Finance.

By harnessing their combined expertise and resources, the two entities aim to facilitate the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises while driving sustainable development across the Oman in Green initiatives and projects.

The MoU outlines a comprehensive framework for collaboration, encompassing various key areas. These include joint efforts in co-funding impactful sustainability projects, implementing referral schemes to facilitate equity funding, partnering in co-sponsoring programmes for SME development, and establishing a dedicated think tank for the SME sector in green initiatives.

The MoU sets forth several primary objectives to be pursued by the companies Sharakah and

Muscat Finance. Primarily, its purpose is to establish a dedicated co-funding scheme aimed at supporting impact investing and sustainability projects, with a particular focus on the renewable energy sector.

It also outlines the creation of a referral scheme for equity funding, whereby Muscat Finance will refer clients seeking equity funding to Sharakah. In reciprocation, Sharakah will provide these clients with comprehensive smart funding and support services, subject to mutually agreed-upon terms and conditions.

The parties will also collaborate on the development of programmes that facilitate the advancement of strategic initiatives, including in-country value (ICV) and sustainable projects, with an emphasis on renewable energy and green initiatives.

Sharakah CEO Ali bin Ahmed Muqabail said, "Sharakah always aims to tap into its pillars by actively engaging in capacity building and fostering corporate partnerships, all while promoting an entrepreneurial culture."

"We are excited to collaborate with Muscat Finance in developing a co-funding opportunity for impact investing and sustainability projects, particularly in the renewable energy sector," he further said.

"This partnership will enable us to support Omani entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs by providing them with access to funding and development programs. We look forward to leveraging our expertise and resources to co-sponsor SME development programmes and initiatives, driving the growth of the sector," he added.

Hussain al Lawati, CEO of Muscat Finance said, "Our collaboration with Sharakah holds great potential for the green initiatives. By jointly identifying and supporting Omani entrepreneurs through the co-funding scheme and development programmes, we aim to foster a conducive environment for their growth. Additionally, we will exchange ideas, share best practices, and promote the development of the SME sector in Oman."

More data on travel abroad: Ooredoo

Ooredoo is offering twice the standard data for all prepaid and postpaid customers using their mobile in selected countries across the globe, a release stated.

'Looking to save money when travelling abroad this summer? Want to make calls, share selfies and download stuff without worrying about a holiday phone bill? As always, Ooredoo has thought about you, and with its special summer promotion, we've got you covered on your travels,' the company declared, while informing about the launch of 'Passport World' and 'Passport GCC' bundles for all prepaid and postpaid customers during foreign travels.

Ooredoo offers two main travel bundles; 'Passport GCC' and 'Passport World' plans are available as daily, weekly and monthly bundles to support Ooredoo customers in staying connected and making the most of their travels. Both bundles are available starting from RO4, with a variety of plans to suit their needs.

Ooredoo Passport GCC applies to all six countries in the region. For Passport World, customers can see the 96 popular destinations Ooredoo has covered across Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania by visiting <https://www.ooredoo.om/passport>

Malabar Gold forays into Europe; opens London showroom

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally, has launched their new showroom in the UK in London.

This marks the global jewellery brand's expansion into its 11th country of operation and its first foray into the European continent. Malabar Gold & Diamonds currently has an extensive retail presence of 320 showrooms in India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Malaysia, Singapore, the USA and the UK.

The inauguration of the new showroom was conducted by Lyn Brown, Member of Parliament for West Ham and Shadow Minister for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development affairs, in the presence of Abdul Salam K P, Vice Chairman of Malabar Group, Shamlal Ahamed, International Operations Managing Director of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Faisal A K, Head of Manufacturing at Malabar Gold & Diamonds, other senior Malabar Gold & Diamonds management team members, customers and well-wishers.

"We are immensely proud to launch our inaugural showroom in Europe, in London. What began as a single jewellery showroom in 1993 has now grown into an expansive global enterprise spanning 11 countries," said M P Ahamed, Chairman of Malabar Group.

"Our dedication to delivering an exceptional jewellery shopping experience, encompassing top-quality products and exemplary service, has been the driving force behind our ascent as the premier Indian international jewellery retailer. As we mark the 30th anniversary of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, we are one step closer to our dream of being



crowned as the world's largest jewellery retailer. We express heartfelt appreciation to our customers, shareholders, team members, and associates for their invaluable support throughout the years, as they have been an integral part of our journey," he added.

The showroom in London, which is in the East shopping centre on Green Street, will house a wide collection of gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery in addition to exclusive brands and collections curated by Malabar Gold & Diamonds from over 15 countries. The new store will also showcase an extensive collection of bridal jewellery, alongside a wide range of options for occasional wear, daily wear & office wear.

"The new showroom in Lon-

don not only marks a significant milestone for Malabar Gold & Diamonds but also carries immense importance of being the cornerstone for our growth aspirations in the region and play a pivotal role in shaping our future endeavors and fostering growth throughout the European continent," said Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Over the years, he said, the group has catered to the needs of customers residing in the UK and Europe through its diverse array of stores located in India and the Middle East. "The persistent demand from our customers for a physical presence in Europe has led us to establish our presence in the region as a priority," he pointed out.

In addition to crafting a unique experience for jewellery lovers in London, the group also aims to leverage its experience of adorning over 10mn brides to redefine and make bridal jewellery shopping more accessible and convenient in Europe, he added.

Abdul Salam K P, Vice-Chairman of Malabar Group, highlighted that upholding the motto of 'Make in India; Market to the world', Malabar Gold & Diamonds has been instrumental in the proliferation of Indian jewellery at the global stage; crafting, promoting, and selling jewellery that is an intersection of Indian art, heritage, culture and tradition to a global audience.

"Our expansion into the United Kingdom signifies a significant step in this direction. The

ambitious and exciting plans that we have laid out for the future include strengthening our retail presence in existing markets, as well as expansion into new markets such as Australia, Canada, South Africa, Egypt, Bangladesh, Turkey and New Zealand," he further commented.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has consistently demonstrated a commitment to adapt its operations and practices to the evolving technological and business landscape.

To enhance overall efficiency and provide exceptional and differentiated service to our customers, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has embarked on a journey of technological advancement, transforming into a technology-driven organisation with omnichannel retail capabil-

ity.

To achieve this, they have formed strategic partnerships with renowned global technology giants such as Microsoft, IBM, Accenture, E&Y, and Deloitte.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds is renowned globally for offering an unparalleled jewellery buying experience with convenience, and customer-friendly policies along with the 'Malabar Promise' of incomparable quality and service assurance.

Malabar Promise includes a transparent price tag indicating stone weight, net weight and stone charge of the jewellery, assured lifetime maintenance from any of the showrooms across 11 countries, guaranteed buyback, IGI and GIA-certified diamonds ensuring 28-point quality check of global standards, 100% value on gold exchange, 100% value on diamond exchange, jewellery exchange within 15 days, 100% UK hallmarked jewellery, responsible sourcing, fair price policy, and fair labour practices.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) has been a primary commitment of Malabar Group since its inception in 1993, setting 5% of its net profits towards such causes in every region of operation.

The group operates on the strong belief that the most successful companies are the ones that integrate responsibility and sustainability into their core business. The key focus areas of Malabar Group's ESG initiatives are Health, Housing, Hunger Eradication, Education, Environment & Women empowerment.

The group periodically strengthens its ESG goals to remain a socially conscious and responsible organisation.

INDIA

Manipur: SC asks for updated status report

SC sought updates on rehabilitation camps and recovery of arms

New Delhi - The Supreme Court on Monday sought an updated status report from the State of Manipur regarding the present situation and measures taken to curb the violence in the State.

A bench of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, Justices P S Narasimha and Manoj Misra directed the State to update the position regarding rehabilitation camps, recovery of arms and law and order. The bench posted the matter for hearing on July 10 and asked the government to file a detailed status report.

The apex court was hearing a petition filed by the Manipur Tribal Forum, Delhi seeking the protection of the Kuki tribe by the Indian Army.

At the outset, senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the Manipur Tribal Forum, told the bench that situation in Manipur has worsened.

Solicitor General of India, appearing for the State, however, told the apex court that the 'situation is improving slowly, though slowly'.

Solicitor General said that the curfew has been reduced to 5 hours a day, which indicates an improvement.

Civil police, Manipur Commandos, Indian reserve battalions and 114 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) are among those deployed in areas of violence in Manipur, he added.

Solicitor General also requested advocate Gonsalves, the counsel of Manipur Tribal Forum, to not give any communal angle like Christians or something as real human beings are being dealt with.

Gonsalves alleged that one leader from the Meitei group came to an interview hosted by Karan Thapar and gave open threats against Kukis.

"Last night, three tribals were



Indian Youth Congress workers being detained by security personnel during a protest demanding the resignation of Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

The apex court was hearing a petition filed by the Manipur Tribal Forum, Delhi, seeking the protection of the Kuki tribe by the Indian Army

killed and one was beheaded, the first beheading of tribals. These are the Meities, they are the dominant group... The Kukis are not attacking. The Kukis are in the villages defending. The armed groups are crossing the

lines. Army released two press statements saying women gather in large numbers and stop the army and they are not allowed to do their duty and protect the people," claimed Gonsalves.

Counsel appearing for Meities Organisation said that there should be an investigation into the source of assault weapons and the militant groups behind the violence.

"The suspicion is that the militants have come out of the shelters and are fighting, otherwise how will you explain the assault weapons. There should be a headcount of the militants. Union of India should look into this aspect," he said.

The Manipur Tribal Forum

filing an interlocutory application has that the Centre and State governments' assurances to the apex court in the case concerning the recent outbreak of violence in Manipur are false and non-serious and it shall not rely on the 'empty assurances' of governments.

The application asked for the protection of the tribe by the Indian Army saying the State and its police force are not trusted by the tribe.

It sought "directions to be passed to the Indian Army to take full control of the law and order and public order situation in the districts of Churachanpur, Chandel, Kangpokpi, Imphal East, and Imphal West."

ANI

Next Opposition meeting to be held in Bengaluru

New Delhi - The next meeting of Opposition parties will be held in Bengaluru on July 17 and 18, Congress party's general secretary K C Venugopal said on Monday.

The Congress leader said that Sunday's development in Maharashtra where Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar's nephew Ajit Pawar was inducted into chief minister Eknath Shinde's cabinet will not impact the Opposition unity. "After a hugely successful All-Opposition meeting in Patna, we will be holding the next meeting in Bengaluru on 17 and 18 July. We are steadfast in our unwavering resolve to defeat the fascist and undemocratic forces and present a bold vision to take the country forward," Venugopal took to Twitter to post.

Launching a scathing attack on Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) over the recent political drama in Maharashtra, Venugopal said the development will not affect the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition in Maharashtra.

"PM Modi made a big allegation recently against the NCP leaders for corruption and now we saw this drama. It is a clear sponsored game of ED and their agencies. It will not affect MVA," Venugopal said.

"We will fight against BJP more aggressively. This is not going to affect opposition unity; this is NCP's issue. Sharad Pawar is the tallest leader of the party and he will be able to handle the situation. Some leaders changing the party does not mean that the supporters of the party and other members will go with them," the Congress leader said.

On June 29, NCP chief

Sharad Pawar had said that the next meeting of Opposition leaders has been shifted from Shimla to Bengaluru owing to the prevailing weather conditions in Himachal Pradesh. The meeting he had said will be held on July 13 and 14.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge had earlier said that the next meeting of like-minded parties will be held in Himachal Pradesh's Shimla. He said that the opposition parties will meet in Shimla to chalk out a roadmap for the formation of an anti-BJP front for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

"We will meet again in July in Shimla to prepare an agenda on how to move ahead together while working in our respective states to fight BJP in 2024," Kharge had said.

ANI

Excise Case: Delhi High Court rejects bail petition of Sisodia

New Delhi - The Delhi High Court on Monday rejected the bail petition of Delhi's former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the Enforcement Directorate (ED) case related to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Excise Policy case.

The Court also dismissed bail petitions of Vijay Nair, ex-communication in charge of Aam Aadmi Party, Abhishek Boinpally (Hyderabad-based businessman) and Binoy Babu Binoy, (manager with a liquor company Pernod Ricard) in connection with the same case.

The bench of Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma while dismissing bail petition of Manish Sisodia said that the court does not find any infirmity with the trial court order which had dismissed his bail.

"The possibility of tampering with evidence and influencing witnesses cannot be ruled out and Section 45 twin condition isn't satisfied. Bail Denied," said the court.

The trial court had earlier denied bail to them.

Earlier, Delhi High Court dismissed the bail plea of Sisodia in



This file photo shows Manish Sisodia arriving at his residence in Delhi to meet his ailing wife, on June 3 (ANI)

a CBI case alleging corruption in the implementation of a previous liquor policy in the national capital. The bench of Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma while denying bail to Sisodia in the CBI case, said Sisodia being a powerful person, there was the possibility of him influencing the witnesses.

The Rouse Avenue Court earlier dismissed the bail plea of Sisodia stating that 'this case of economic offences having serious repercussions upon the general public and society at large as the evidence collected

during investigation speaks volumes of his involvement in the commission of the said offence'.

Court also noted that some evidence is also alleged to have surfaced during the investigation to show that some part of the kickback or bribe amount received from South lobby was spent or utilised in connection with the election campaign of the AAP in Goa and some cash payments through hawala channels are alleged to have been sent to Goa for bearing the said expenses.

ANI

Blasts in Khartoum as army renews call for volunteers

Wad Madani, Sudan - Explosions again rocked Sudan's capital Khartoum on Monday as the army rallied civilians to take up arms against a renewed onslaught by its paramilitary foes.

The sound of artillery fire shook the dawn in northwest Khartoum and progressed towards the centre and east of the city, witnesses told AFP.

The fighting 'began at 4am and is still going', one resident said.

The war-torn capital barely saw a few hours of respite after heavy clashes on Sunday between troops loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The army announced on Monday it was ready to 'receive and prepare' volunteer fighters, after Burhan last week urged Sudanese 'youth and all those able to defend' to join the military.

War-weary civilians have largely rejected the call, pleading



People buy fruits from a street vendor at a market in Gadaref city in war-torn Sudan on Sunday (AFP)

for an end to the relentless war between Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

Apart from Khartoum, some of the worst fighting has been in the vast western region of Darfur, where late on Sunday RSF forces 'attacked the military base' in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. Since April 15, nearly 3,000 people have been killed in the vi-

olence. However, medics warn the death toll is likely to be much higher, with about two-thirds of health facilities in combat areas still 'out of service'.

A further 2.2mn people have been displaced within the country, with another 645,000 fleeing across borders, according to the International Organization for Migration.

Darfur is home to a quarter of

Sudan's population and is still scarred by a two-decade war. Residents there as well as the United Nations, United States and others, say civilians have been targeted and killed for their ethnicity by the RSF and allied Arab militias.

Targeting civilians

The RSF has been accused of intentionally targeting civilians in Darfur, including by shooting people fleeing towards the Chadian border.

The paramilitaries have also been identified as the main perpetrators of conflict-related sexual assault by survivors in both Darfur and Khartoum.

According to the governmental Combating Violence Against Women and Children Unit, most of the 42 survivors in Khartoum and all of the 46 survivors in the Darfur cities of Nyala and El Geneina - said they were assaulted by RSF fighters.

Late on Sunday, the RSF an-

nounced it was cracking down on 'looting and vandalism, particularly the theft of civilian cars'.

Since the conflict began, RSF fighters - highly mobile and embedded in densely populated neighbourhoods - have been accused of widespread break-ins and looting.

Residents have been forcibly evicted from their homes, had their vehicles stolen or learned after fleeing Khartoum that their homes were being used as bases.

The force, which traces its origins to the notorious Janjaweed militia recruited in the early 2000s to crush a rebellion by ethnic minority groups in Darfur, announced last week it had begun to try some of its 'undisciplined' members.

More than half of Sudan's population is now in need of aid and protection, according to UN figures. The situation has been especially horrific in Darfur, a region the size of France.

AFP

Israeli army operation kills eight in West Bank

Continued from Page 01

"There is bombing from the air and an invasion on the ground," said Mahmoud al-Saadi, director of the Palestinian Red Crescent in Jenin. "Several houses and sites have been bombed... smoke is rising from everywhere."

Eight people were killed and 50 wounded, 10 seriously, the Palestinian health ministry said - exceeding the toll of seven dead in an Israeli army raid in Jenin two weeks ago which saw the rare use of helicopter missile fire.

Monday's operation featured "brigade-level" troop numbers, said Israeli army spokesman Richard Hecht, while Foreign Minister Eli Cohen told reporters that "we are striking the terrorism hub with great strength".

Jenin resident Badr Shagoul told AFP that "I saw them taking bulldozers into the camp, they were destroying buildings ... These were people's homes."

Israel had already stepped up

armed operations in recent weeks in the northern West Bank. Jenin camp resident Mahmoud Hawashin, speaking at a crowded hospital, said the situation was "catastrophic and for every action there is a reaction. If there is more Palestinian blood shed, there will be more Israeli blood shed."

The Palestinian group Islamic Jihad said "all options are open to strike the enemy in response to its aggression in Jenin".

In a separate incident, a Palestinian youth was killed by Israeli fire near the West Bank city of Ramallah, the Palestinian health ministry said. The Israeli army said that in Jenin it had struck a "joint operations centre" of a group called the Jenin Brigade, as well as a weapons depot, an "observation and reconnaissance" site, and a hideout for those alleged to have carried out recent attacks on Israeli targets.

AFP

Janet Yellen to visit China, raising need to ‘responsibly manage’ ties

Washington, US - Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is set to visit Beijing this week, the United States said on Sunday, marking the second trip by a cabinet official to China since ties between the world’s top two economies deteriorated earlier this year.

Yellen is expected to discuss with her counterparts the importance for both countries ‘to responsibly manage our relationship, communicate directly about areas of concern, and work together to address global challenges’, said the Treasury Department in a statement.

Yellen’s planned July 6-9 trip comes just weeks after Secretary of State Antony Blinken met China’s top leader President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Beijing in June.

Blinken was the highest-ranking US official to visit the Chinese capital in nearly five years, and Xi said on the rare trip that he saw headway in the strained relationship between Washington and Beijing.

In Beijing, Yellen will discuss how the United States views its economic relationship with China, a senior Treasury official said on Sunday.

She will meet with senior Chinese officials and leading US firms, the American spokesperson said without providing specifics.

While the US seeks to secure its national security interests and protect human rights, actions to this effect are ‘not intended to gain economic advantage over China’, the official added.

Washington also looks to-



This file photo shows US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaking about the US-China economic relationship at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. on April 20 (AFP)

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen’s planned July 6-9 trip comes just weeks after Secretary of State Antony Blinken met China’s top leader President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Beijing in June

wards ‘healthy’ ties with Beijing and does not seek to decouple the economies, while pursuing cooperation on urgent challenges like climate change and debt distress, the American official said.

The United States does not expect ‘significant breakthrough’ from this initial trip, but it does aim to build longer-term channels of communication with China, the Treasury official added.

Restarting engagement

“I think the US government is clearly trying to put some floor under the deterioration of the economic relationship,” Edward Alden, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) told AFP, speaking on the Treasury secretary’s intentions to visit China.

A Yellen trip could ‘restart a steady pattern of engagement at lower levels’, he said, adding that

the US has shifted from being ambiguous about how far it was supporting decoupling to explicitly adopting a strategy of ‘derisking’ instead. This means ‘focusing on a narrower range of items that have strategic importance, trying to build fences around those items, but otherwise trying to continue to nurture a reasonably robust US-China economic relationship’, Alden said.

But observers do not expect a quick resolution to tensions.

President Joe Biden’s administration is considering a programme to restrict certain US outbound investments involving sensitive technology with key national security implications - an issue that has riled Chinese officials. Other possible sticking points include amendments to

China’s anti-espionage law which recently broadened the definition of spying while banning the transfer of information relating to national security - a move that has spooked foreign and domestic businesses.

The senior Treasury official told reporters on Sunday that Washington intends to communicate its concerns over the law.

While significant disagreements may not be resolved in a single trip, the US seeks to deepen and increase the frequency of communication with China and to ‘stabilise the relationship’, avoiding miscommunication and expanding collaboration where possible, the official said.

Global growth, debt problems

For the US, discussions with officials from the world’s second biggest economy ‘are important to help spur stronger global economic growth and to tackle the mounting debt problem of the Global South’, said Wendy Cutler, vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute, discussing a prospective Yellen visit.

On Beijing’s part, officials are ‘looking for concrete steps taken by the US to show that ‘decoupling’ and holding back China is not the ultimate goal of the United States’, Cutler added.

But despite US policies that have drawn ire from Beijing, officials likely have an awareness of China’s continued export dependence and the importance of the US market, CFR’s Alden said. AFP



Farmers planting rice at night-time in Hanoi on Saturday (AFP)

Vietnam farmers toil in the dark as heatwave looms

Hanoi, Vietnam - It’s 3 am and pitch black when rice farmer Tran Thi Lan heads into waterlogged fields on the outskirts of Hanoi to begin planting, desperate to finish before the day’s brutal heat arrives.

Planting in the dark has become a saviour for countless farmers in north and central Vietnam during increasingly hot summers as South and Southeast Asian nations battle record-high temperatures this year.

“It’s so hard to plant the rice when the strong sun is directly on my back and the warm water in the field splashes my face,” Lan, 47, told AFP.

Lan had managed a few days of daytime planting during a brief respite from the heat.

But she switched to night work as another heatwave descended on northern Vietnam in early July, with forecasters predicting a long stretch where daily temperatures would exceed 37 degrees Celsius (98 degrees Fahrenheit).

“With not enough light, the planting might not be on a straight line,” Lan acknowledges, as she quickly buries some roots

into a patch of paddy illuminated by her head lamp.

Like Lan, 62-year-old farmer Nguyen Hung Phuong will now work from 4pm to 9pm and again from 3am to 9am.

“With extremely high temperatures, it’s very uncomfortable and exhausting to work during daytime, although of course I can see more clearly,” Phuong said.

Working at night made him ‘more productive and less distracted’, he said.

Night planting began a few years ago at Nguyen Thi Hanh’s farm. “Our parents did not have head lamps. The weather was also not as hot,” 56-year-old Hanh said.

Night planting has its advantages for the rice, which Hahn said is sensitive to extremes in temperature. “It’s in fact much better because the water is cooler, and more suitable for the young plant”, Hanh said.

Day or night, farmers such as Lan and Phuong can earn up to US\$40 a day, a large sum in a country where labourers in rural areas normally earn around US\$250 each month.

AFP

China to widen cooperation with Russian navy: Minister

Beijing, China - China’s defence minister said on Monday he hoped to expand naval cooperation with Russia, in the highest-level public talks between military officials from the two countries since a failed mutiny in Russia last month.

Li Shangfu spoke in Beijing with Nikolai Yevmenov, head of the Russian navy, and said he hoped both countries could ‘strengthen communication at all levels’, according to a readout from the Chinese defence ministry.

He also said the two should ‘regularly organise joint exercises, joint cruises and joint military skills competition’, as

well as ‘expand practical cooperation in professional fields’.

Moscow and Beijing should ‘make positive contributions to maintaining regional and world peace and stability’, he said.

Yevmenov said the two countries should ‘continue to expand exchanges at all levels of the two countries’ navies’ and ‘continuously push the relationship between the two militaries to new heights’, Beijing’s readout said. The talks were the most high-level between Chinese and Russian military officials since the short-lived rebellion by Wagner mercenary group.

AFP

Wagner boss ‘gone off the rails’ over money: Russian TV

Moscow, Russia - A top Russian propagandist on Sunday accused the Wagner boss of going ‘off the rails’ after receiving billions in public funds, as Moscow’s new narrative takes shape after Wagner’s brief mutiny.

Last weekend the head of the Wagner mercenary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, led his forces in a short-lived rebellion against Russia’s top military brass, in a huge embarrassment for the Kremlin.

“Prigozhin has gone off the rails because of big money,” Dmitry Kiselev, one of the main faces of the Russian propaganda machine, said on his weekly television show on Sunday.

“He thought that he can challenge the defence ministry, the state itself and the president



Yevgeny Prigozhin, the chief of Russian mercenary group Wagner (AFP)

personally.”

Kiselev said that Wagner’s operations in Syria and Africa had given Prigozhin a feeling of impunity that was later reinforced by his rag-tag forces’ battlefield successes in eastern Ukraine.

Without providing any evidence, Kiselev said Wagner had

received more than 858bn rubles (US\$9.7bn) in state funds.

In a stunning admission earlier this week, President Vladimir Putin said for the first time that Russian authorities ‘fully’ financed the paramilitary outfit.

Between May 2022 and May 2023, Wagner received more

than 86bn rubles from the Russian state, Putin said.

Private mercenary groups are banned under Russian law.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday that agents from the Federal Security Services have raided the headquarters of the Wagner Group in St. Petersburg to find evidence against Prigozhin.

The headquarters said on Saturday on Telegram that it was moving but would remain operational albeit under a ‘new format’.

Targeted by sanctions from Washington and Brussels, Prigozhin had for years operated in the shadows but has catapulted into the limelight since Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

In profanity-laced diatribes, he

accused the Russian military of attempting to ‘steal’ victories from Wagner in eastern Ukraine and slammed Moscow’s ‘monstrous bureaucracy’ for slowing military gains.

Prigozhin was allowed to recruit fighters from prisons and in March, Russian lawmakers approved legislation introducing lengthy prison terms for those who criticise ‘volunteer groups’ such as Wagner.

Last month Prigozhin abandoned his advance on Moscow and struck a deal with the Kremlin under which he accepted exile in neighbouring Belarus.

Many political observers saw Prigozhin’s attempt at insurrection as a sign that Putin’s grip on power is weakening.

AFP

‘Russian roulette’: Last residents brave shelling in east Ukraine

Avdiivka, Ukraine - Viktor Grozdov was in a hole.

Wearing a cap and thick glasses, the Ukrainian pensioner was lying at the bottom of a shell crater, trying to pick himself up and gather the food that had spilled out of his shopping bags.

In the eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka, battered by shelling since 2014, Grozdov had strayed into the crater while returning from a grocery store in April this year. An AFP team pulled him out, found his shopping and saw him on his way back home.

This week journalists tracked him down again, with help from local officials, since the town has almost no communications.

“I was walking along the avenue and thought I’d quickly walk round the hole where the shell fell - or a bomb, I don’t know,” recalled Grozdov, sitting in his flat near the town’s former cinema.

“I stumbled as I stepped and fell in. I tried to get out but the earth was loose and slipping under me, I couldn’t get out at all.” Despite having no intact buildings, mains water or electricity, Avdiivka still has 1,719 inhabitants, according to Vitaliy Barabash, the head of the town’s military administration.

“Around 60 per cent are people aged 65 and over,” he told AFP.

A suburb of the city of Donetsk built around a huge coke fuel plant, Avdiivka is eerie and very dangerous.

It gets shelled on average 30 times per day, the town’s chief said.

“In the last four months or so, there hasn’t been a day without aerial or rocket strikes.”

Grozdov uses a stick to walk outside and keeps to routes he knows well.



Viktor Grozdov, 77, speaks in the kitchen of his damaged flat in the frontline town of Avdiivka, Donetsk region, on June 28 (AFP)

‘Won’t go anywhere’

Despite his poor vision adding a further obstacle, Grozdov, a wiry 77-year-old, is determined to stay where his wife and son are buried.

“Whatever happens, I won’t go anywhere now,” he said.

“My soul is at home, it’s not trying to leave. I’m not anxious, I’ve become calm.”

In his flat, all the windows have glass blown out and there is a sheet hung across one.

The wallpaper is peeling around formal family photographs. There is a radio set on his bed and bottles of sunflower oil and tinned food in the bath.

Volunteers bring Grozdov water and supplies, and he can cook on a camping stove.

When shelling starts, Grozdov said he hides in the bathroom and sometimes lies flat on the floor.

He appears to pay no attention to the sound of incoming tank rounds outside.

After his mother was killed when he was a baby, he grew up in a children’s home in Donetsk.

He then worked at Avdiivka’s coke plant most of his life.

Despite having no intact buildings, mains water or electricity, Avdiivka still has 1,719 inhabitants

Grozdov’s neighbour, 63-year-old Vitaliy Zemin, sits in the cellar carving wooden animals - a hippo, a turtle, a monkey - wearing a head torch.

“It distracts you from the

thoughts a person has all the time: about people, about Ukraine, about why there isn’t any peace,” he said.

‘Russian roulette’

The main respite for residents is a public shelter in a cellar where volunteers provide food and hot drinks, and they can use Wi-Fi, watch TV and charge devices.

Around 25 people sat there on Wednesday, mostly wearing headphones and engrossed in phones and tablets.

Pavel, 65, whose spectacles only have one arm, was watching war news on a tablet.

The retired factory worker said this was the only time he could relax.

“It’s safe in the cellar. There’s light, there’s internet. At home you wonder if a strike will hit you or not - it’s like Russian roulette.” AFP

UNREST IN FRANCE

Mayors hold anti-riot rallies as arrests fall

Paris, France - Demonstrations began at French town halls on Monday opposing nearly a week of violent protests over a teen's fatal shooting by police, even as the first signs emerged that the unrest was beginning to ease.

The government has battled riots and looting since 17-year-old Nahel M was shot dead by a police officer during a traffic stop on Tuesday, reviving long-standing accusations of racism against the French police force.

During a sixth consecutive night of unrest, a fireman died while seeking to douse burning vehicles north of Paris but it was unclear if there was a link to the violent protests, the interior ministry said.

Monday's demonstrations - called a 'mobilisation of citizens for a return to republican order' - came after the home of the mayor of a Paris suburb was rammed with a flaming car, prompting widespread outrage.

In a statement, an association of the country's mayors noted that areas 'everywhere in France are the scene of serious unrest, which targets republican symbols with extreme violence'.

Seeking to quell what has become one of the biggest challenges to President Emmanuel Macron since he took office in 2017, the interior ministry again deployed 45,000 police and



Perpignan Mayor Louis Alliot speaks during a nationwide action in Perpignan, southern France, on Monday, after France's mayors called to gather in front of all town halls at midday, invoking 'civic mobilisation' (AFP)

Internal affairs investigators on Monday began interviewing a passenger in the car Nahel was driving without a licence

gendarmes nationwide overnight on Sunday to Monday, the same figure as the previous two nights.

A total of 157 people were arrested in relation to the unrest

nationwide, according to the interior ministry - a fraction of the number taken into custody the night before.

Three police officers were also wounded.

Among 3,200 people arrested in rioting since Tuesday, the average age was 17 and some were 'children, there is no other word, of 12 or 13', Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on a visit to eastern city Reims.

Internal affairs investigators on Monday began interviewing a passenger in the car Nahel was driving without a licence, a police source told AFP.

'Threatened with death'

Vincent Jeanbrun, the conservative mayor of L'Hay-les-Roses outside Paris, had his home rammed with a burning car with the aim of setting it on fire, breaking the leg of his wife who was at home with their children aged five and seven.

The attack was condemned across the spectrum including by the hard left, while prosecutors have opened an attempted murder investigation.

'There is no doubt that they wanted to burn the house' and, when 'they realised that there was someone inside, far from

stopping, they set off a broadside of fireworks mortars', Jeanbrun told TF1 late on Sunday.

"I never would have imagined that my family would be threatened with death," he added.

The 24-year-old fireman who died was fighting a fire in an underground car park in the suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis north of the capital, Darmanin said.

'An investigation is underway' to determine the circumstances of the vehicle fires, the interior ministry added.

A police source, who asked not to be named, indicated there was likely no link to the riots: "It would be going too far. Likely this is not the case, it is not an area affected by urban violence."

Nadia, the grandmother of Nahel, who was of Algerian origin, said on Sunday that rioters were only using his death as a 'pretext' and called for calm.

Although the violence appears to be diminishing, questions remain about its origins.

"I can't support people smashing and burning things, who would?" said Fatia Abdouni, 52, founder of a women's association in Nahel's home town Nanterre. Nevertheless, 'now we have to listen to the young people, their frustration and anger', she added.

AFP

International office probing Russia over Ukraine war opens

The Hague, Netherlands - An international office to probe Russia for the war crime of aggression opened in The Hague on Monday in what Ukraine called a 'truly historic' first step towards a tribunal for Moscow's leadership.

The centre will investigate and gather evidence for any future trial that could bring Kremlin and Russian military figures to justice for invading their pro-Western neighbour. Its aim is to plug a legal gap left by the fact that the International Criminal Court (ICC) currently has no mandate to prosecute aggression - the core war crime of launching a war against another country.

The new International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression Against Ukraine (ICPA) features prosecutors from Kyiv, the European Union, the United States and the ICC.

Speaking as the centre opened, Ukraine Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin said a special tribunal for the Russian leadership was now 'inevitable'. "We are gathered here on the occasion of a truly historic moment - I would say an epoch-defining moment," Andriy told a news conference at the EU judicial office Eurojust, where the ICPA is based.

Kostin said the opening of the centre was a 'clear signal that the world is united and unwavering on the path to holding the Russian regime accountable for all its crimes'. He added that the

'crime of aggression is an original sin, the commission of which opened the flood-gate for 100,000 other international crimes'.

Kyiv has been pushing for a special tribunal since the discovery of hundreds of bodies after Russian troops withdrew from the town of Bucha near the Ukrainian capital in April 2022.

'Unlawful war'

International support has grown steadily, and the European Commission then announced the creation of the ICPA in February.

The United States then announced that it would join last month - despite the fact that, like Russia, it is not a member of the ICC.

US Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite said justice officials have now handed over the first tranche of evidence to the centre.

Polite told the news conference that Washington was 'proud to stand with our European partners' in prosecuting 'Russia's unlawful war of aggression against the people of Ukraine'.

The United States also backed a special tribunal for aggression, he added.

EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders said Monday's launch showed Kyiv's allies would 'stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes'. "We cannot tolerate the gross violation of the prohibition of the use of force," he told the news conference.

AFP

Donations for policeman who sparked riots top \$1m

Paris, France - A collection for a French policeman who sparked nationwide riots last week by shooting a teenager dead reached more than €986,000 (US\$1.07mn) on Monday, dwarfing donations to the victim's family.

More than 40,000 people have pledged money to the online fund for the officer, set up on the website Gofundme.com by a far-right media commentator.

The collection easily outstripped the €189,000 gath-

ered for the family of the dead 17-year-old, Nahel, who is of north African origin and lived with his mother on a housing estate in a west Paris suburb.

Nahel's grandmother said she was 'heartbroken' by the support shown for the policeman. "He took the life of my grandson. This man must pay, the same as everyone," she told the BFM channel on Sunday. "I have confidence in the justice system. I believe in justice."

The shooting, during a traf-

fic stop, has exposed deep political divisions in France.

Many right-wing figures are seeking to defend the security forces, while those on the left see the death as a consequence of systemic racism in the police.

Widespread rioting and looting since Tuesday appear to have deepened the polarisation. Politicians from the centrist ruling party and on the left have condemned the collection for the policeman, which was launched by far-

right commentator Jean-Messia - himself close to anti-Islam politician Eric Zemmour.

"Jean-Messia is playing with fire," ruling party MP Eric Bothorel wrote on Twitter, calling it 'indecent and scandalous'. The head of the Socialist party, Olivier Faure, addressed a message to Gofundme, saying they were facilitating a 'shameful' collection.

Senior hard-left MP Mathilde Panot highlighted how a collection for a former

boxer who had punched several police officers during 'Yellow Vest' anti-government demonstrations in 2019 had been quickly closed by authorities. "Killing a young North African, in France in 2023, can earn you a lot of money," she wrote.

Messia, a former advisor to far-right leader Marine Le Pen, celebrated on Twitter when his fund overtook the one for the family of Nahel at the weekend.

AFP

TIGHTROPE WALK



French tightrope walker Nathan Paulin walks on a rope above the Plaza de Catalunya square in Barcelona, with the Sagrada Familia basilica in the background, as part of the GREC festival, on Sunday (AFP)

Ukraine claims making gains after 'difficult' combat

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine on Monday reported making gains in the south and east over the past week in difficult fighting to dislodge Moscow's heavily entrenched forces.

While Russia's security service (FSB) said it had foiled an assassination attempt on the head of Crimea, a southern peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014.

Kyiv's troops, which have faced intense resistance in their counteroffensive launched last month, have urged Western allies for more military support.

"Last week was difficult on the frontline. But we are making progress," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said. "We are moving forward, step by step!"

Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar noted that Ukrainian forces over the past week recaptured nine square kilometres (four square miles) in the east and 28sqkm in the south.

Ukraine's forces have taken



A woman walks past a building damaged by strikes in the town of Shebekino, near the Ukrainian border in Belgorod province, on Saturday (AFP)

back over 158sqkm in the south since the start of the counteroffensive, Malyar said.

Kyiv's troops have come up against heavily entrenched Russian defensive positions both along the southern and eastern

fronts. Malyar said Ukrainian troops were fighting 'fierce' battles around the eastern flash-point city of Bakhmut. Russian forces were also on the offensive, and in recent days launched new assaults towards Svatove, in the

eastern Lugansk region.

On Sunday, Malyar said Russia was advancing near Svatove, as well as near Avdiivka, Mariinka and Lyman.

"The situation is quite complicated," she said.

'Oath and duty'

"Ukraine did not reach its goals in any of the sectors," Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said, claiming that nearly all Leopard tanks provided by Poland and Portugal had been destroyed.

Shoigu and the conventional army faced a serious challenge last month when the head of the Wagner mercenary group led his forces in a rebellion against Moscow's top military brass.

In his first comments addressing the short-lived mutiny, Shoigu said on Monday the rebellion 'did not affect the operations of the troops'.

"The plans failed primarily because the personnel of the armed forces showed loyalty to their oath and military duty," he said.

Following the rebellion, the Kremlin gave Wagner fighters the choice of signing contracts with the Russian defence ministry, returning to civilian life or

going into exile in Moscow-allied Belarus.

Russia however said there was no need for further mobilisation to replace the Wagner troops that left the battlefield.

Kyiv is fighting to try to recapture its territories in the east and

head of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov. The FSB said it had detained a suspect - 'a Russian national born in 1988 who had been recruited by officers of Ukraine's Security Service (SBU)'.

It added that the suspect was held while 'removing the explosive device from its hiding place'. Aksyonov thanked the FSB for preventing the attack and said the perpetrators would be punished. "Only by fulfilling the objectives of the military operation in Ukraine... can we completely get rid of the terrorist threat from the side of Kyiv," he said.

Moscow annexed Crimea from Ukraine after a referendum widely regarded as a sham by Kyiv and Western countries.

Increased attacks on Russian-occupied territories preceded the highly-expected counteroffensive, which Ukraine launched last month after accumulating Western-made weapons.

AFP

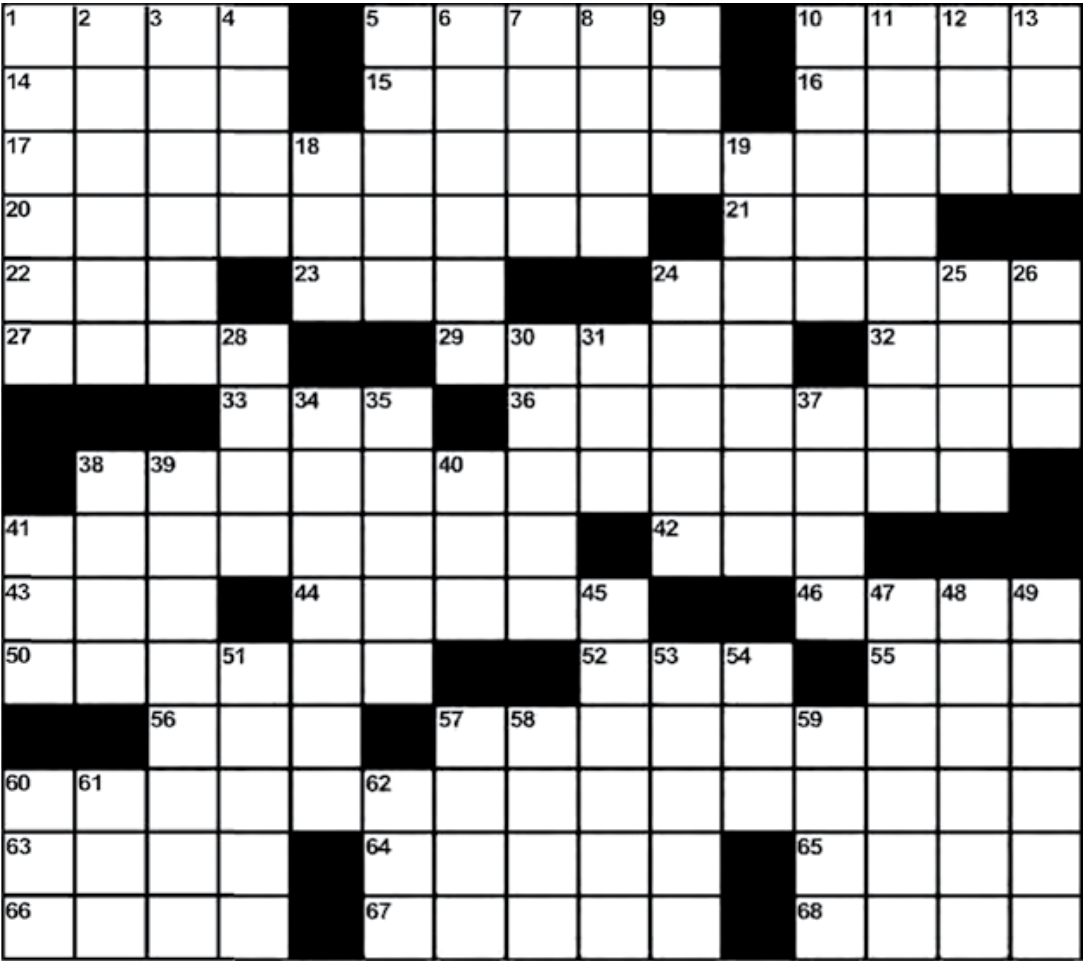
Last week was difficult on the frontline. But we are making progress. We are moving forward, step by step

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

south, including the Crimea peninsula, annexed by Russia in 2014.

In Crimea, the Russian security service (FSB) said on Monday it had foiled an attempt on the life of the Moscow-installed

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
- 1) Voice amplifier
5) Liability's opposite
10) Lowly poker hand
14) With a fresh twist
15) Sparkly headpiece
16) Proficient
17) Bible-reading lisper's "Here's proof"
20) What masseurs work out
21) "Puppet" ending
22) Before of yore
23) Type of Buddhism
24) Tally-keeper
27) Feudal flunky
29) Transparent, as hosieri
32) Affirmative ase
33) Animal in the horse family
36) Entered, as data
38) Like the frustrated lisper who needs to work out?
41) "Try the back door!"
42) Aunt_Marie
43) Thing worn by priests
44) Dashboard device
46) Units of work or energy
- 50) Goodyear vessels
52) Crumpets go-with
55) Major historical time pe-riod
56) Mai_ (rum drink)
57) Mineral in bananas
60) Emulated a lazy lisper?
63) Sister of your father
64) Out of the ordinary
65) Certain building block
66) New York club
67) "Ewww!"
68) Eve's first home
- DOWN
- 1) Some photo finishes
2) "Is it hot_ or is it just me?"
3) Sharper, as vision
4) Some black sheep
5) Make things right
6) Sounds that cause traffic stoppages
7) Expresses orally
8) Arrow-shooting god
9) Greek "T"
10) Bullfighter's entrance march
11) Diverge from the ex-
- pected
12) Needing a doctor's care
13) Decide who is out of bounds
18) Cylindrical hat
19) Boot camp attendee
24) Ninth months, briefly
25) "One-_ Jacks" (Brando film)
26) Like a beet
28) Inside the foul line
30) Official language of India
31) The final word in movies
34) Sign of fall
35) Some Arctic seabirds
37) Weeping willow, for one
38) You pay it as you go
39) Resident
40) Link letters?
41) Tie up the phone
45) Frolicking aquatic ani-mals
47) Restrained, as a horse
48) It may be held or nursed
49) Delilah's victim
51) LeBlanc and Damon
53) Lightens, as a burden
54) "Has" anagram

NOTE PAD

FACT MUSTS SEAM
EURO AREAL ULNA
STATION TRUCKANT
SOWED HEROINE
MESH SPRY
FAR ALAS SPASMS
EWE TURNS KAYO
WALKER EATER IRON
ERIN MIAMI APE
RECESS LIMB HES
ENOS DYAD
SEDUCEE LAMAS
SALEBIRD HYDRANT
ISLE AGGIE TUNA
CHAP LEEDS SLAG

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your charm has no bounds today. You'll be making people smile left and right whether you're trying to or not. Obviously, this is a great day to make the most of your interpersonal connections. People will have an incredibly hard time saying no to you now. If you're looking for a powerful business contact or an introduction to a new cutie, ask away! Your request will not only be honored, but the person you ask will do whatever they can to make it happen.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Today, things could seem topsy-turvy when the people who usually don't see things your way suddenly agree with everything you say. And the people you can always trust to be in your corner are now questioning your suggestions! Have you changed or has everyone else? Well, odds are you're the one who is coming around to a new way of thinking. You're learning how important it is to understand your audience. To win people over, you have to think like them.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

It's easy to stay true to your goals in life right now because you're having so much fun pursuing them! Who knew that working toward your dream could involve so much laughter and friendship? Just because there's a smile on your face doesn't mean you're not working hard, so don't you dare feel guilty about having such a good time when some of your friends are struggling. Your path is one you've created for yourself. You're reaping what you have sown.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Don't be surprised if you're bored with stuff right now. Your soul is looking for more stimulation, but the right way to satisfy it isn't to go out into the world in search of an adventure. It may seem counterintuitive, but the best way to satisfy your restlessness is to spend as much of your day alone as possible. It's a good day to indulge yourself in any way you want. You can let the rest of the world fade away and clearly see what you really want.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Any impulse buys you make today might provide you with a few hours of fun, but you can forget about any long-lasting value, so make sure you don't spend a lot of money on them! If lasting enjoyment is what you're after, you don't have to spend any money at all to find it. Taking a walk with friends or visiting a favorite relative is free and will fill you with a calm and enduring kind of happiness, a happiness you just can't buy.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

This is going to be a very good detail-planning day for you. Your mind is crystal clear, and your day will be free from any major distractions. If you need to take care of any travel arrangements, this is the right time to do it. Everyone you need to talk to will be available, your preferred dates will be available, and if you lay on some of your trademark charm, you can expect some wonderful charm in return, and maybe even an upgrade waiting for you upon your arrival!

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Keep your head on straight today. Upcoming plans are causing you to get a bit distracted right now, but it's important for you to stay focused. Keep you mind on that little square in the calendar marked with today's date. Avoid thinking about what you'll be doing in a few days' time. It won't be easy at first, but with all the activity this afternoon, you'll soon have your mind occupied with the here and now. The more you can live in the moment, the more fun you can have.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Right about the time you think that today is going to be a boring day full of regular sights and sounds, you'll get involved in a lovely little flirting match! It might be a cutie you've had your eye on, or it might be the person you've been seeing for quite a while. But it might also be a total stranger you'll never ever see again. Either way, have some fun! Don't take things too seriously. Enjoy your ability to put a smile on someone else's face.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Rather than be intimidated by a certain smarty-pants today, why not pick their brain and learn something new? You have ideas to offer too, and a strong intellectual connection with someone else could be just what you need to add some zing to your day. Open up and share just a little bit more than you might normally be comfortable with. You have the brains to take the conversation in all the right directions, so trust that. Expect to be treated as an equal by this person and you will be.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your brain is very active right now. So much so, that a few of your ideas will be colliding into each other! Don't be surprised if the gossip and idle chitchat going on around you bores you to tears. You want stimulation! To get it, you might have to strike out on your own and search for a unique experience that will give your brain the challenge it wants. Visit a gallery, museum, or any other place designed for contemplation and thought. It will be quite rewarding for you.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Today, one of your relationships could reach a crossroads, although you might not have an awareness of it until you've already gone one way and they've gone the other. Don't let this growing sense of emotional distance make you lose hope, though. Sometimes people have to go off in their own direction to find what they need. This could be a temporary separation, you know. Roads that diverge can come back around again. Your relationship is not going to end.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Relationship issues might be on your mind today, especially when you see problems arise in a partnership you've always admired. Their tensions will cause you to start wondering if they can hit a rocky patch, what about you? It's fine to think about it, but don't let it cloud over your thinking today. Just because things could go wrong doesn't mean they will. Before you start worrying and wringing your hands, wait until there is something to worry about.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

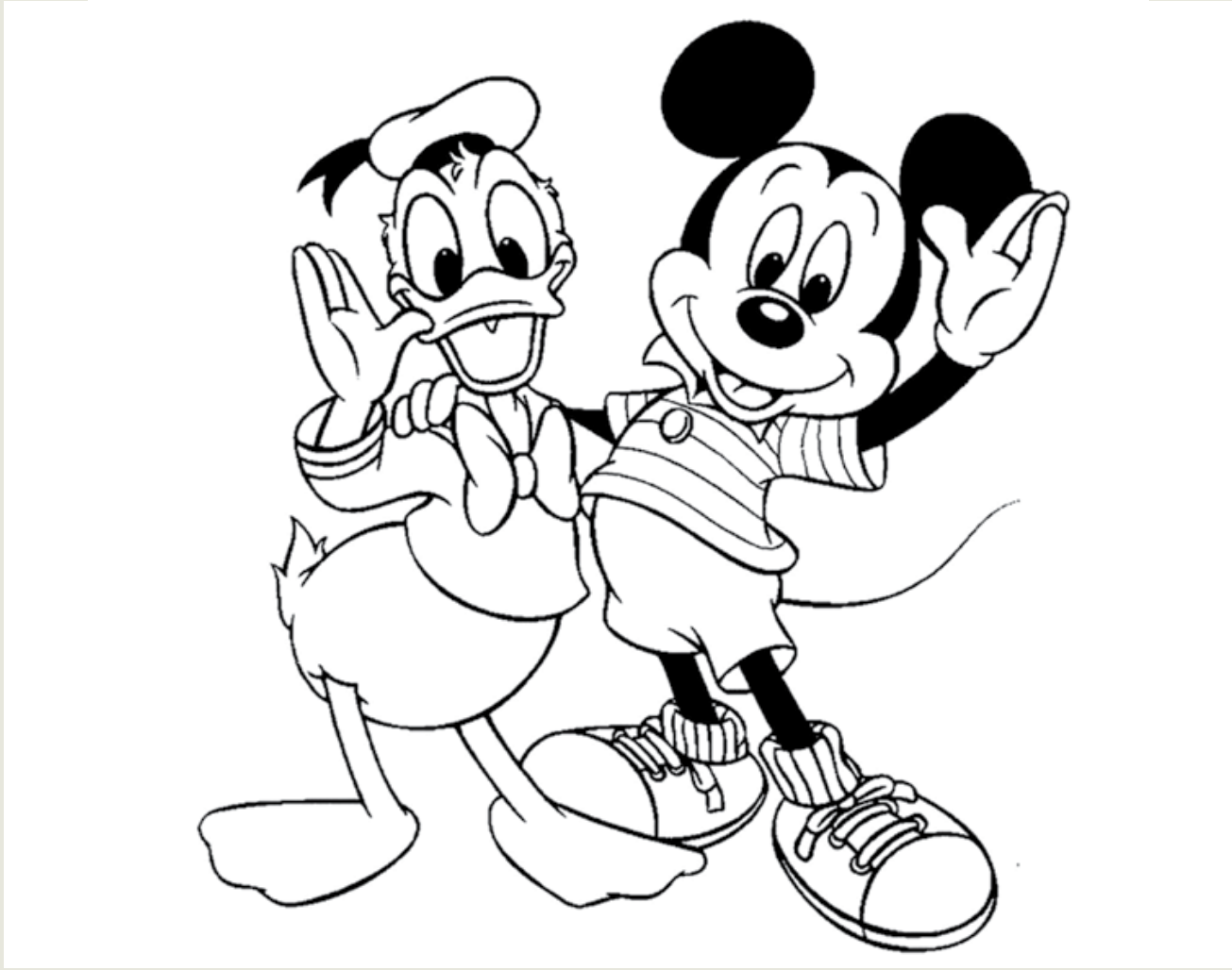
01. The Nazca Plate, part of the earth's lithosphere, lies under which ocean?
A. Pacific
B. Indian
C. Atlantic
D. Antarctic

02. What is a person who studies objects and matter in the universe outside Earth's atmosphere known as?
A. Astronomer
B. Horologist
C. Hopeful
D. Horoscoper

03. Which animal appeared in the opening credits of the British TV series "Coronation Street"?
A. Rabbit
B. Badger
C. Hamster
D. Cat

Answers: 1.A 2.A 3.D

KIDS COLOURING



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D	E	D	E
T	L	N	S
W	K	O	S

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

WHEN LONG ROOM BECAME A CAULDRON

Ashes' short fuses shatter monastic calm of Lord's

London, United Kingdom - It has been described as "the most evocative four walls in world cricket" and somewhere to watch the game in an atmosphere of almost monastic calm, far from the madding crowd.

Yet the usually tranquil Long Room at Lord's became a seething cauldron of hate on Sunday as Marylebone Cricket Club members abused Australia players returning from the field during a lunch break on the last day of the second Ashes Test following the controversial dismissal of England's Jonny Bairstow.

They, and spectators around the ground, were incensed by an incident where Australia wicket-keeper Alex Carey threw the ball at the stumps after Bairstow walked out of his crease after ducking under a Cameron Green bouncer. Bairstow seemingly believed the ball was dead at the end of the over but, following a referral by his colleagues in the middle, TV umpire Marais Erasmus confirmed the batsman had been stumped.

The usually sedate crowd at the 'Home of Cricket' responded by chanting "Same old Aussies, always cheating" while boos rang around the famous old venue in northwest London for several minutes.

Australia, despite a stunning 155 from England captain Ben Stokes, eventually won the match by 43 runs to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match Ashes series.



England's Jonny Bairstow (L) has a bewildered look on his face as Australia players celebrate his wicket on the fifth day of the second Ashes Test in London on Sunday (AFP)

The usually sedate crowd at the 'Home of Cricket' responded by chanting "Same old Aussies, always cheating" while boos rang around the famous old venue in northwest London for several minutes

'Unreserved apology'
An embarrassed MCC later issued an "unreserved apology" to the touring side, with club secretary Guy Lavender adding three members "directly involved" in the lunchtime flare-up had been suspended immediately pending an investigation.

Lord's had seen nothing quite like it since the 1980 Centenary Test between England and Australia, when umpire David Constandant was manhandled on his way into the pavilion by members angry at a lack of play following several rain delays. Few sports make such a fuss about the 'spirit

of the game' as cricket. MCC remains deeply concerned as it still retains worldwide responsibility for cricket's extensive rules, or Laws as they are known, even though it is more than 50 years since it ceased running the English game. The Bairstow row was a clash

of the kind, with even England captain Ben Stokes accepting Erasmus had made the correct decision but questioning whether Australia ought to have proceeded with the appeal.

Built in 1889-90, the Lord's pavilion remains one of the most famous buildings in world cricket. Portraits of the game's greats from WG Grace to modern-day heroes adorn the walls of the Long Room, which spans almost the length of the ground floor -- hence its name.

The biggest problem for cricketers unfamiliar with Lord's has often been finding their way out of the dressing rooms near the top of the pavilion and through the Long Room before entering the field, with England batsman David Steele getting lost on his Test debut in 1975 and ending up in the basement toilets.

It wasn't until 1998 that women were allowed in the pavilion after MCC voted to admit female members thereby ending more than 200 years as a men-only club, although an exception had long been made for Britain's Queen Elizabeth II.

There is now roughly a 20-year wait to join MCC's 18,000 strong membership and follow the likes of British prime ministers Alec Douglas-Home and John Major, as well as rock star Mick Jagger and actor and comedian Stephen Fry, the current MCC president, in watching cricket from the Long Room.



Victor Lafay wins the second stage of the Tour de France in San Sebastian, northern Spain, on Sunday

Frenchman Lafay ends Cofidis Tour de France curse at San Sebastian

San Sebastian, Spain - Frenchman Victor Lafay sprung a surprise by beating an elite breakaway to the finish line on stage two of the Tour de France on Sunday ending a 15-year curse for his team Cofidis.

The win is a first at the Tour de France for French outfit Cofidis since 2008, and elevates Lafay to fourth in the overall standings.

English rider Adam Yates retained the overall leader's yellow jersey while Belgian ace Wout van Aert was second on the day ahead of Tadej Pogacar after the relentless rush for the line.

Coming into the final stretch after the rolling 209km run through the Basque Country, the longest stage of this year's Tour, all eyes were on the duel between defending champion Jonas Vingegaard and Pogacar.

But Lafay gate-crashed the party with a stealth move that caught everyone out as he maintained just enough pace to cross the line ahead of his pursuers.

"I'm so happy to have lifted

this curse from the team," said the winner. "It's crazy. I was hanging on at times today because that was fast. But I believed all the way and that's what got me over the line," he said.

Pogacar picked up four seconds for coming third at the finish.

"It's crazy. I was hanging on at times today because that was fast"

VICTOR LAFAY

ish line along the seafront of San Sebastian's scenic horseshoe bay to add to bonuses he collected the day before and in the sprint to the top of day's final climb, the Jaizkibel.

The first real skirmish of the Tour between Pogacar and Vingegaard broke out atop the Jaizkibel. The Slovenian pipped the Dane to the bonus line at the top to collect eight bonus seconds to the Jumbo man's five.

The battle on the steep 8km climb reduced the peloton to around 20 riders. As they zoomed downhill, rider after rider attempted to escape. With 500 metres to go Lafay succeeded and held on to deliver a first Tour de France stage win in 15 years for the Cofidis team.

Adam Yates leads both UAE team-mate Pogacar and the other Yates twin, Simon, by six seconds in the overall standings. Vingegaard is 22 seconds off the pace.

'Keep it going'
Yates complained that nobody had helped his team UAE Emirates all day, but remained excited. "We have the yellow and the white and we have to keep it going that way," he said.

"Pogacar brings the level of the whole team up, he's definitely great to work with," Yates exclaimed.

The 2021 and 2022 champion Pogacar has a record as a gambler in the saddle but had promised to "hold his horses" this

Stokes urges England to use Lord's row as fuel for Ashes fightback

London, United Kingdom - England captain Ben Stokes wants his players to use the pain of their controversial second Test defeat against Australia as fuel to mount a sensational Ashes fightback.

Stokes' side are trailing 2-0 in the five-match series after Australia survived a brilliant innings of 155 from the England skipper to win by 43 runs at Lord's on Sunday.

It was an extraordinary day's play, even by the dramatic standards of the Ashes, as the match swung on the disputed dismissal of England's Jonny Bairstow.

Chasing a Lord's-record 371 to win, England were still in with a shout of making history when Bairstow was stumped by Alex Carey when he walked out of his crease after ducking a Cameron Green bouncer.

Cricket's Laws showed the decision to dismiss Bairstow was correct, but it arguably went against the spirit of the game.

As chants of "same old Aussies, always cheating" echoed around the usually sedate Lord's stands, Stokes took his



Ben Stokes

frustrations out on the Australian bowlers with a brilliant innings that fell just short of carrying England to victory.

Only once before in 146 years of Test history have a team come from 2-0 down to win a five-match series, when Australia, in-

spired by batting great Don Bradman, did so in the 1936/37 Ashes. But Stokes insisted his men could replicate that feat.

"We won 3-0 against Pakistan and New Zealand last year. All we're thinking about is winning the series 3-2," he said.

"Losing's losing. The emotions will always be the same but when you sit back and understand where we're at, it's actually very exciting.

"The way in which we are playing our cricket couldn't be more perfect for the situation we find ourselves in.

"We have to win these three games to get this urn back. We're a team who are obviously willing to put ourselves out there and do things against the narrative."

'Pretty mad'
Stokes hopes England can feed off the energy of the notoriously raucous Headingley crowd when the third Test starts on Thursday.

The controversy surrounding Australia's victory is sure to add an extra edge to the invective from the stands in Leeds.

"I could see it was ramping up and getting a bit vocal," Stokes said. "I'd never heard Lord's like it. It was pretty mad wasn't it? Lord's has a reputation of not having so much noise, so it was good to hear."

AFP



Rickie Fowler celebrates with his caddie after winning the Rocket Mortgage Classic in Detroit

American Fowler snaps four-year win drought with PGA playoff victory

Washington, United States - Rickie Fowler sank a birdie putt from just inside 12 feet on Sunday to win a playoff for the PGA Rocket Mortgage Classic title and snap a four-year win drought.

Fowler defeated fellow American Collin Morikawa, a two-time major champion, and Canada's Adam Hadwin to capture his first victory since the 2019 Phoenix Open and his sixth PGA triumph overall.

"It's just nice to have this one out of the way," Fowler said. "I'm obviously going to soak this one in and celebrate a bit. It has just been a long road. I'll get emotional at some point."

Fowler, 34, won the 2017 Players Championship but has struggled in recent years, falling to 185th in the world rankings last year before reviving his form this season with nine top-20 finishes in his past 10 events.

"Had to keep putting the time

in, keep grinding, keep pushing," Fowler said. "Then started to see some positive results and to build some confidence and momentum last fall.

"A lot of great stuff this year. I knew it was a matter of time the way I've been playing."

In the four years, four months and 29 days between his titles, Fowler became a husband and father and smiled as he held his daughter Maya on the 18th green.

Ayaan Khan's ton goes in vain

Netherlands defeat Oman to keep qualification hopes alive

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - Netherlands overcame the Oman challenge with ease at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2023 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe on Monday.

Ayaan Khan's (105*) scintillating hundred stood out in the Oman batting effort, but eventually, the mammoth Dutch target proved far beyond their reach. Aryan Dutt (3/31) was the pick of Netherlands bowlers.

In the first innings, a stupendous century from Vikramjit Singh and an aggressive 97 off 65 from Wesley Barresi along

with cameos from Bas de Leede and Saqib Zulfiqar, helped Netherlands to a commanding position.

With this win the Dutch keep their ICC Men's Cricket World Cup qualification chances alive.

Faced with a daunting target of 364 after early rains reduced the match to 48-overs-per-side, Oman got off to a secure yet unthreatening start.

Jatinder Singh (17) and Kashyap Prajapati added 34 off 41 balls for the first wicket, before the former was run out. Ryan Klein had the stand-in captain

Aqib Ilyas soon after for four.

Oman were lucky to have lost only Prajapati (25), by the time they reached the 100-run mark in the 19th over, as the Dutch shelled a number of chances. Netherlands had their fourth success when Aryan Dutt cleaned up Mohammad Nadeem in the 20th over.

It was the fifth wicket partnership between Ayaan and Shoaib Khan which finally brought some energy to the Oman innings. Their stand reached its 50-run mark off 48 deliveries. Ayaan reached his half-century with a

six in the 27th over.

They lifted the Oman scoring rate by taking on the Netherlands' part-time options. The team reached its 200 run-mark in the 34th over.

The duo added 112 runs off 107 balls in what was Oman's best stand in the tournament so far.

Shoaib's fall to an excellent stumping by Scott Edwards ended the partnership in the 38th over.

However, despite their effort, the asking rate had risen to almost 15 an over and a Dutch win

seemed only a formality.

Ayaan achieved the personal landmark of a maiden ODI hundred in the 41st over. The game was eventually called off in the 44th over due to bad light.

Earlier in the day, Oman pacers Bilal Khan and Kaleemullah enjoyed bowling in overcast conditions and got the ball to zip around.

The Dutch openers were tested in trying conditions but held their own till play was disrupted due to rain. The stoppage forced the game to be turned into a 48-over contest.



Ayaan Khan

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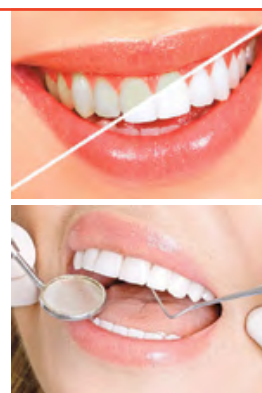
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Russia's Andrey Rublev returns the ball to Australia's Max Purcell during their first round match in Wimbledon on Monday (AFP)

Wimbledon wrong to ban Russians, says Andrey Rublev

London, United Kingdom - Andrey Rublev insisted Monday that Wimbledon was wrong to ban him and his Russian compatriots from the 2022 tournament, claiming the only loser was the All England Club.

Wimbledon banned all Russian players in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Competitors from Belarus, a key ally of Russia, were also banished.

Twelve months on, the sanction has been lifted on condition that players from the two countries sign declarations of neutrality.

However, world number seven Rublev quickly reopened the wounds after becoming the first player into the second round of the men's singles.

"We were talking, and I think we could find the solution," he said.

"If we really want to help or do what is better for tennis and for the people, I think obviously there were better options -- not just to

ban.

"Because in the end, there was no difference. They did only worse to themselves."

The men's ATP tour and women's WTA tour refused to award ranking points to Wimbledon last year in response to the player ban.

Both governing bodies also imposed heavy fines.

The All England Club said the decision to lift the ban was made after talks with the UK government, Britain's governing Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and international tennis bodies.

When the decision was made in April, Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba condemned the move as "immoral".

"Now we are here, I'm really happy to be back and to compete," added Rublev after defeating Australia's Max Purcell 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.

The bitter sporting fallout from the war was brought into sharp focus at the French Open.

Kyrgios withdraws

Wrist injury rules Australian star out of Wimbledon

London, United Kingdom - Nick Kyrgios withdrew from Wimbledon on Sunday with a wrist injury, stripping the tournament of one of its headline acts 12 months after the firebrand Australian finished runner-up to Novak Djokovic.

"I'm really sad to say that I have to withdraw from Wimbledon this year," the 28-year-old wrote on Instagram, explaining that he had hurt his wrist as he prepared in vain to play in Mallorca last week.

Kyrgios had been an injury doubt in the build-up to Wimbledon.

However, that was because he was struggling to recover from knee surgery which has restricted him to just one match in 2023.

"I tried my hardest to be ready after my surgery and to be able to step on the Wimbledon courts again. During my comeback, I experienced some pain in my wrist during Mallorca," he added.

"As a precaution, I had it scanned and it came back showing a torn ligament in my wrist.

"I tried everything to be able to play and I am disappointed to say that I just didn't have enough time to manage it before Wimbledon.



Nick Kyrgios

I tried my hardest to be ready after my surgery and to be able to step on the Wimbledon courts. During my comeback, I experienced some pain in my wrist during Mallorca

NICK KYRGIOS

"I'll be back, and as always, I appreciate the support from all my fans."

Kyrgios had been due to face

wild card David Goffin in the first round at the All England Club on Monday.

His place in the draw will be

taken by a lucky loser from qualifying. Earlier Sunday, Kyrgios, whose lone match in 2023 came in Stuttgart last month, said that his battle to regain full fitness had been "brutal".

He also admitted there remained "question marks" over his ability to play best-of-five sets after such a lengthy absence.

"I feel like to the outside world, people don't understand. Just because it's not contact, it's not that physical. I dare someone to go out there and play four hours with Novak and see how you feel afterwards."

AFP



Qatar players celebrate their victory against Mexico in the Concacaf Gold Cup group match in Santa Clara, California, on Sunday (AFP)

Qatar upset Mexico to reach quarters, Ferreira hits hat-trick

Miami, United States - Qatar upset Mexico 1-0 on Sunday to reach the quarter-finals of the CONCACAF Gold Cup while Jesus Ferreira became the first player to score back-to-back hat-tricks for the United States in the 6-0 win over Trinidad and Tobago.

Jamaica also qualified for the last eight from Group A with ease, behind the USA, after beating St. Kitts and Nevis 5-0 in Santa Clara, California.

In Group B, Qatar shocked already-qualified Mexico to qualify

in second place and denied Honduras, who were eliminated despite beating Haiti 2-1.

Qatar, who are playing for the second time as a guest team in the tournament for North and Central America and the Caribbean, survived a second half onslaught from Mexico to pull off a famous victory.

The 2022 World Cup hosts, coached by Carlos Queiroz from Portugal, took the lead in the 27th minute when Musaab Khidir whipped in a great cross from the right and Hazem She-

hata found the target with a superb angled header.

That proved to be the only real effort on goal from the Gulf side as Mexico dominated but couldn't find a way through.

Santiago Gimenez, who had survived a red card review for a swinging arm on a Qatari defender, fired wide from a promising position and then Edson Alvarez headed against the post.

Deep in stoppage time, Israel Reyes had another chance to level but his header was also off target.

Bangladesh compensate top trio for choosing national team over IPL

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh's cricket authorities said Monday they had compensated three senior cricketers a total of \$65,000 for choosing to play for the national team rather than in the lucrative Indian Premier League this season.

"This is just a small gesture on our part," Bangladesh Cricket Board cricket operations chief Jalal Yunus told AFP, with the cash to be split three ways between Shakib Al Hasan, Taskin Ahmed and Liton Das.

"They did not demand any money from us formally, but we felt they should be at least partially compensated, if not fully".

Jalal said this would not be a regular practice. "We believe playing for the national team should be unconditional," he added.

AFP

Duplantis dominates Stockholm pole vault as hurdlers dodge protesters

Stockholm, Sweden - Pole vault star Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis, watched by his mother, attempted a world record, and climate protesters added "an 11th hurdle" in the rain-hit Diamond League event in Stockholm on Sunday.

The pole vault was delayed for two hours by the wet weather, as the sound system in Stockholm's venerable Olympic Stadium, played "Let the Sunshine In" from the musical Hair.

When it started, Duplantis, the reigning Olympic and world champion, was perfect with his first four jumps in an event

His last clearance was at 6.05m, enough to win the competition comfortably by 23cm from Ernest Obiena. It was fourth time in five summer competitions "Mondo" has cleared 6m.

The American-born Duplantis, who competes for Sweden through his mother Helena who was in the Stockholm crowd, then took off his black leg warmers and raised the bar to 6.23m, a centimetre higher than the world record he set indoors in France in February. He pulled out before jumping on his first two attempts and then brought down the bar on his third and final try.



Armand Duplantis

This is the most important meet, outside of the World Championships, for me

ARMAND DUPLANTIS

"This is the most important meet, outside of the World Championships, for me in the year," said Duplantis.

"I was really fired up and felt I

could conquer the world," he said. "Maybe the conditions and tiredness caught up with me in the end there." Seven weeks ahead of the 2023 World Championships in Budapest, Duplantis again dominates the world rankings.

His best mark is 6.12 metres set in Ostrava, in the Czech Republic on June 27. Sunday's jump was the fourth best in the world this season.

Only American KC Lightfoot, with a clearance of 6.07 metres for third best, intrudes in the top five.

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HOW TO LOSE WEIGHT IN FIVE STEPS



IF YOU ARE KEEN ON LOSING WEIGHT BUT ARE NOT ABLE TO DO SO, MAY BE YOU ARE NOT FOCUSING ON THE RIGHT ASPECTS. CONSIDER THESE FIVE TIPS TO LOSE WEIGHT IN A SHORT TIME

SET REALISTIC GOALS

1 Know where you are today so you know how to get where you want to be. Learn your Body Mass Index (BMI). Set yourself up for success with short-term goals, like "I will make lifestyle changes which will help me lose (and keep off) 3-5% of my body weight." Short-term goals can seem more achievable and keep you on track toward your long-term goals.

UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH AND WHY YOU EAT

2 Use a food diary or tracking app to understand what, how much, and when you're eating. Being mindful of your eating habits and aware of your roadblocks and excuses can help you get real about your goals.

MANAGE PORTION SIZES

3 It's easy to overeat when you're served too much food. Smaller portions can help prevent eating too much. Learn the difference between a portion and a serving and how to keep portions reasonable.

MAKE SMART CHOICES

4 You don't have to give up all your favorite foods. Learn to make smart food choices and simple substitutions instead. Discover healthy snacks and how fruits, vegetables, and whole grains help keep you fuller longer.

BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

5 Physical activity is anything that gets your heart rate up, like walking. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity a week. Move more, with more intensity, and sit less.

NUTRITION & YOU

EGG-CELLENT SUPER FOOD



VANDANA CHAWLA
Online Nutrition Expert

(Vandana Chawla is an Online Nutrition Expert and a Registered Nutritionist-UKVRN)

Eggs are considered as one of the healthiest foods on the planet. Some people refer to it as a multivitamin food packed in a shell.

At the same time, eggs were also linked to heart disease and increased cholesterol levels. An egg contains about 212mg of cholesterol, which appears to be a large amount. We need to understand that our liver produces cholesterol, and if intake through diet is less, then the liver produces more cholesterol. Hence, many studies are now indicating that eggs have a minimal effect on cholesterol.

Let's look at all the facts and understand why eggs are considered as the healthiest food:

Health food

Eggs are loaded with multitude of nutrients. From macro nutrients, like high quality proteins, healthy fats, to micronutrients like variety of vitamins and minerals, eggs have it all.

Eggs contain small amounts of al-



most all vitamins and minerals, like vitamins A, B, E, calcium, iron, potassium, zinc, manganese, folate and many more. Even though the amount is small, the absorption of these nutrients by the body is exceptionally good.

Almost all the nutrients are found in egg yolk, while the egg white is a great source of high quality protein.

This makes eggs a great immunity food as well.

Egg protein is said to be a reference protein against which the quality of other proteins are measured.

Brainy food

Eggs are termed as 'brainy food' as it is loaded with choline, an essential nutrient needed for the synthesis of

brain messengers. Low levels of this nutrient is associated with liver disease and also reduced cognitive functioning in kids.

Great for eyes

Two antioxidants, lutein and zeaxanthin found in the yolk have powerful protective effects on the eyes, protecting them from the harmful sun rays. Plus, they also protect eyes from cataracts and other degenerative eye disorders.

For weight watchers

Eggs are a great breakfast food, keeps tummy full for a longer time and reduces craving for unhealthy foods. Studies have indicated that eating eggs for breakfast reduces the total calorie intake, hence there is a reduction in BMI, and subsequent weight loss.

To conclude, Eggs are truly a perfect Super food, simple, easy to cook, tasty and a healthy way to start the day.

- TIPS**
- Eat mainly Omega 3/pastured eggs, more healthy, more brainy.
 - Try taking eggs, 4 times a week, if your cholesterol numbers are disturbing and one daily if your vitals are all good.
 - Consuming more of egg white in proportion to egg yolk is an intelligent and smart approach.
 - Eat variety, by making it in different forms and ways, egg omelette, scrambled, poached, boiled etc.
 - Use less oil while preparing eggs, and combine it with some healthy greens or avocados and a multigrain bread to make it complete.
 - Using it for making waffles, French toast or pancakes can be an occasional treat.