



SUNDAY, JUNE 05, 2022

Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om To subscribe, call toll free no: 80076000 www.muscatdaily.com

New discoveries to boost oil output by up to 10%

Total oil exports grew by 16.5% in the January–April period of 2022 to 108.8mn barrels

Our Correspondent
Muscat

New discoveries of oil reserves by companies operating in Oman will help the sultanate increase its daily average oil production by five to ten per cent over the next two to three years.

H E Dr Mohammed al Rumhi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, on Saturday announced new oil discoveries by energy companies in Oman and said that the new finds will contribute to increasing the sultanate's daily average production to between 50,000 and 100,000 barrels.

As per the ministry's latest data, Oman's daily average production continued to remain above 1mn barrels per day (bpd) during the first four months of 2022. Oil production during the January–April period of this year increased by more than nine per cent to 1.04mn bpd compared to 952,800bpd in the corresponding period of 2021.

Oman's total oil exports grew by 16.5 per cent in the January–April period of 2022 to 108.8mn barrels compared to 93.3mn barrels recorded in the corresponding period of 2021.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, H E Rumhi assured the continuation of the ministry's efforts in exploration and development of oilfields so that the sultanate can sustain its production at current levels or increase

as per the market situation in the coming period.

The minister added that development of existing projects in the gas sector will also contribute to the overall oil output. He expressed optimism about improvement of conditions for the gas sector in the coming years.

H E Rumhi noted that Oman's reserves of crude oil currently amount to 5.2bn barrels, while gas reserves stand at about 24tn ft³.

The sultanate's total estimated reserves of crude oil and condensates increased by four per cent to reach 4.876bn barrels at the end of 2021, the ministry recently stated.



'Technical team to review Iran gas pipeline project'

Muscat - Oman and Iran have agreed to form a technical team to revive a long-stalled submarine gas pipeline project.

The project - of 400km length, the agreement for which was signed in 2013 - is expected to pump 28mn m³ of gas daily for 15 years from Iran to Oman.

H E Mohammed al Rumhi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, made the announcement in an interview with ONA.

Speaking about a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed during Iranian President



Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Oman last month, he said it is related to the development of a gas pipeline projects linking the two

Oman and Iran are also seeking to develop the Hengam oil field in concession area No 8, located in Musandam

H E MOHAMMED AL RUMHI

countries and the Hengam oil field.

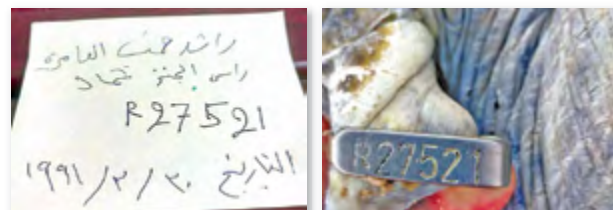
"The MoU was signed after the Iranian side's desire to ben-

efit from re-exports from the gas pipeline," he said.

H E Rumhi added that the two sides have agreed to form a technical team to review the pipeline project. "Oman and Iran are also seeking to develop the Hengam oil field in concession area No 8, located in the Governorate of Musandam on the maritime border between Oman and Iran."

According to an agreement signed in 2013, the pipeline project was estimated to earn Iran more than US\$1bn annually.

TURTLE RETURNS TO NEST IN RAS AL JINZ AFTER 31 YEARS



A green turtle has returned to the shores of Oman to nest in Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve in South Sharqiyah after 31 years. Rashid al Amri, a now retired Environment Authority specialist, had tagged the turtle on March 30, 1991, in the same reserve (Supplied photos)

International flights up 82%, passengers 89%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The number of international flights to and from Oman went up to 10,672 by the end of March 2022, a growth of 81.9 per cent over the same period in 2021. The total number of passengers (arriving, departing and transit-ing) also saw a record growth of 89 per cent to 1.74mn passengers till March 2022.

According to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), international flights at Muscat International Airport rose by 74.4 per cent, while the number of international passengers (arrivals, de-

partures and transfers) increased 79.1 per cent from 707,003 in March 2021 to 1.26mn passengers in March 2022.

Indian passengers topped the number of passengers (106,872) at Muscat International Airport, followed by Bangladeshi passengers (44,869), and Pakistani passengers (35,682) in Q1 2022.

NCSI statistics show that domestic flights from Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm airports increased 25.3 per cent year-on-year in Q1 2022 to 2,914.

International flights through Salalah Airport went up by 138.2 per cent, and domestic by 18.2 per cent. Sohar Airport saw 248 international flights.

Oman played central role in hosting, facilitating dialogue for truce: Biden

UN-brokered Yemen truce extended under terms of original agreement that came into effect on April 2

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's role in the newly announced UN-brokered truce in Yemen for two additional months has been praised by President Joe Biden of the United States as well as the UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg.

The announcement was made on Thursday, the same day the extension of the truce came into effect as the earlier one expired. The truce is extended under the same terms as the original agree-



US President Joe Biden

ment, which first came into effect on April 2, 2022.

"This truce also would not have been possible without co-operative diplomacy from across the region. Saudi Arabia demonstrated courageous leadership by taking initiatives early on to endorse and implement the terms of the UN-led truce. Oman played a central role in hosting and facilitating dialogue," President Biden said in a press briefing.

Welcoming the move, Oman's Foreign Ministry stated that 'the sultanate hopes this important

step will create suitable conditions for ending the war and reaching a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Yemeni crisis'.

Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State, tweeted his appreciation for Oman's efforts. "Had a good call with Omani Foreign Minister (H E) Sayyid Badr al Busaidi. I thanked him for Oman's efforts to strengthen and extend the truce in Yemen and expressed how I look forward to hosting him in Washington soon."

Grundberg thanked the international community for implementation and renewal of the truce. "I note in particular the support of Saudi Arabia and Oman, as well as the members of the UN Security Council. I would also like to reiterate my appreciation of Egypt and Jordan for their support in facilitating the resumption of international commercial flights from Sana'a airport."

Nama Group to sponsor IEEE Power Talks, 3-day energy conference

As part of its efforts to support Omani engineers in the energy field, Nama Group will sponsor a three-day conference at Oman Convention and Exhibition Center from June 6 to 8.

The conference, which will present ten papers by Nama Group, aims to create an effective platform that contributes to building national cadres and competencies, and exchanging technical expertise. The conference also aims to help young Omani professionals and engineers interested in the energy sector to be constantly informed of the latest developments in the energy and renewable energy sector.

In addition, the conference will provide an opportunity to communicate with the most prominent experts in the field of electricity and energy locally and globally.

It is worth mentioning that the conference will highlight the ef-



fective role of the electricity sector in Oman and sustainable plans in the production, transmission and distribution of electricity.

It will also shed light on accelerating the development of a sustainable environment and the demand for energy and water in the sultanate.

During the conference, a number of experts will present working papers that include the latest technologies in the field of production, distribution and

transmission of electricity, renewable energy, energy efficiency, smart networks and its applications and asset management.

On the sidelines of the conference, there will be an exhibition displaying the latest and best methods used in the field of energy and renewable energy, which will contribute to the exchange of expertise and the promotion of the company among the relevant authorities in order to achieve Oman Vision 2040.



IFJ congress ends, calls for journalists' safety



CBO chief commends performance of banks



Japanese man, 83, sails solo across Pacific

Al Mouj Muscat Impact

A recognition of Al Mouj Muscat’s significant contribution to socio-economic impact for the Sultanate of Oman as the first Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) a multi-faceted business and partnership model that has proved itself to be a blueprint and benchmark for future projects. This inspiring destination has delivered unrivalled benefits to stakeholders and here we detail how this has been achieved.

Long-term growth through long-term partnership

Al Mouj Muscat was established in 2006 and its success has been the result of partnership committed to delivering the aims of Oman’s vision. A joint venture between OMRAN, Tania and Majid Al Futtaim, a company that has invested in Oman since 2001, Al Mouj brought together the public sector’s long-term strategic direction with the private sector’s expertise in retail, leisure, hospitality and communities. This combination of clear purpose and proficiency in delivery ensured that Al Mouj Muscat redefined urban living as an engine for growth.

Over the next sixteen years, it created a remarkable property portfolio, luxury hotels, golf course, marina, 20,000sqm of retail and office space, world-class amenities, and landscaping that protect and enhance the environment. With \$3.5 billion in total development costs, the majority of which has been invested in local companies and supply chains, it has generated 777% asset growth, as well as attracting \$884 million in foreign direct investment, and is home to residents from 85 nationalities. This has put Al Mouj Muscat on the global map as a residential location and destination for visitors.

This mix of assets has generated significant growth and opportunities as Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, explains: “Our commitment towards creating a ‘positive socio-economic impact’ that is fully aligned with the country’s national directives and priorities has been embedded in the Masterplan for Al Mouj Muscat since inception. Guided by our sustainability framework we laid the foundation to deliver and to continue delivering long-term returns to stakeholders and the future generation who will live, work and enjoy what Al Mouj Muscat has to offer.”

Driving tourism growth

By creating Oman’s premier lifestyle and leisure destination, Al Mouj Muscat has accelerated growth in the tourism sector. Record numbers of visitors are drawn to this oceanfront community, with the annual figure of 3.9 million set to grow.

Undoubtedly, travellers value Al Mouj Muscat’s commitment to creating memorable experiences. By investing in outstanding amenities, such as its 400-berth Gold Anchor Marina and its award-winning 18-hole golf course, Al Mouj attracts visitors who spend more time and money at the destination.

These achievements have led leading hotel operators to invest in Al Mouj Muscat because of quality, its proximity to the International Airport, and its business potential. The Kempinski Muscat and Mysk by Shaza currently offer 582 rooms. The 5-star St Regis Resort is in opening phase and will offer 440 rooms, along with the Rotana which will have 251 rooms. Three further luxury hotels are in planning phase, which will bring the total number of keys to over 2,000. By carefully curating a mix of cultural, adventure, leisure and luxury experiences, Al Mouj will continue to attract discerning local, regional and international tourists to the Sultanate.

Carsten Wiegandt, General Manager of the five-star Kempinski Hotel Muscat, explains why the destination is optimal for prestigious brands: “The entire philosophy of Al Mouj is key. Its focus on excellence and its intelligent blend of amenities cleverly serves recreational travellers, residents and our business model.

“Travellers have told us that Al Mouj Muscat has created the perfect balance of authentic culture, natural beauty, unique leisure opportunities and a true sense of community. This is an active strategy that allows our sector to be confident that we can partner in growth.”

Driving employment and ongoing opportunity

As all economies and communities benefit from diverse job creation, Al Mouj is committed to boosting employment, along with Omanisation and its impact on both counts is significant. Currently, it has created over 2,200 jobs and is on track to secure permanent roles for 5,500 on project completion.

Its determination to support the Sultanate’s Omanisation targets is clear as 71% of Al Mouj Muscat’s employees are Omani, significantly higher than 45% mandated for the real estate sector. With 40% of leadership positions filled by women, it also has an ongoing training programme designed to upgrade the skills and capacities of its Omani workforce. As it invests in future leaders, its impact will continue to benefit the nation.

Harwa Al Lawati, Head of Customer Experience at Al Mouj Muscat, says: “Al Mouj Muscat is committed to our national interests at every level. We promised to not only create jobs but also opportunities for employees to develop their abilities.

“We have incredibly talented individuals working across highly diverse

roles and our management systems support us to measure and improve performance. It is a holistic approach to creating efficiencies and opportunities to advance that will continue to have an impact far beyond our own organisation.

“We can be confident this generation will go on to use their impressive skills to lead organisations and champion future prosperity for Oman.”

Partnering with SMEs

The government has put in place policies designed to stimulate the growth of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) as they play a critical role in robust and expansive economies. With 57% of Omanis expecting to set up a business in the next three years, creating the optimal conditions for growth is an area that Al Mouj has focused on, and its impact is evident.

Each day, visitor expenditure in its 85 retail outlets, cafés and restaurants drive opportunities for local business and stimulate job growth. Al Mouj’s success at generating footfall, combined with its support for the retail sector through specific marketing initiatives, has resulted in a 95% occupancy rates, despite the challenges of Covid-19.

In total, 150 SMEs are now connected to Al Mouj and benefit from its multiple features. First, location. With 3.9 million visitors and 8,000 residents, there are high number of customers spending on products and services. Its location offers businesses access to regional and international markets as well as cross-border trade, which has facilitated the operations of 30 SMEs within Al Mouj. A further 120 SMEs utilise its trading platforms, hugely benefitting from events hosted by the community such as Souq Es Sabt. Adding to the eco-system of support is access to investment and training, such as in customer service and booking systems for sea tour operators.

Aisha Al Kharusi, owner of fashion brand Junoon Kanga, recognises the impact of an organisation that understands enterprise: “Al Mouj has put in place everything that entrepreneurs need to succeed. First, its wide-ranging lifestyle, retail and leisure offering drives considerable footfall.

“Add to that its determination to support enterprise, whether through training or by providing a platform through its own marketing or a year-round calendar of events. Al Mouj’s strategy has been to unlock opportunities for enterprise, and it is an approach that will continue to fuel growth.”

Securing inward investment

All economies seek inward investment. It provides capital for expansion and further raises the profile of a nation on the world stage. As an ITC, Al Mouj Muscat provides non-Omanis the option to purchase a freehold for a property and the destination’s superb lifestyle has attracted residents from 85 nations and secured \$884 million in foreign direct investment.

Ahmed Al Massan, CFO of Al Mouj Muscat, comments: “We have a long-term commitment to delivering lasting value to our community and to the Sultanate. Along with remarkable asset growth, and \$31 million in tax contributions, our growth strategy has yielded sustainable returns that have attracted significant foreign direct investment. Whether in residential or commercial real estate, we are a business-enabling environment, here to create durable partnerships that secure sustainable prosperity for Oman.”

Development that delivers

Setting the standard for its reputation as an unrivalled location is Al Mouj Muscat’s diverse portfolio of properties, from chic marina-side apartments to ultra-premium ocean-side villas. With 2,500 properties delivered and 75% of the project complete, the project has reached a critical mass, achieving the aims it was set in 2006.

Quality has become synonymous with Al Mouj, an essential component in establishing the destination’s global reputation and appeal. Badriya Al Suqri, Construction Engineer at Al Mouj, is part of the team committed to excellence in the design and build of every property: “Al Mouj is passionate about achieving the highest standards. We take responsibility for every aspect of our homes, from initial soil investigations through to final landscaping. Our attention to detail matters as beyond creating a strong aesthetic appeal, our homes have a direct impact on wellbeing and harmonious living.

“I am involved on site every day, managing contractors and working with consultants. Each home has a distinct character, knowing that we are creating dream homes is what drives us. It is why people from all over the world have invested in homes at Al Mouj and why I am so proud to work here.”

Discover more about Al Mouj Muscat and its impact on Oman at impact.almouj.com

IFJ meet ends, calls for journalists' safety

Congress addresses challenges of women journalists, including pay parity and workplace harassment



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Journalists from all over the world unanimously called for the safety of their colleagues during war, armed conflict, pandemics and political unrest at the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) congress held in Muscat.

The four-day 31st world congress of IFJ concluded at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Friday with new resolutions and targets.

According to Kena-did Ibrahim Houssein, editor of *Jour-*

nal La Nation of Djibouti, the biggest challenge journalists face is security. "Journalists are threatened and are often killed. We have witnessed the problems that journalists in Afghanistan and Ukraine encounter. Here at the meet, we are trying our best to come up with solutions for such journalists. We are also working on plans to free our colleagues who are in jail, some on death row."

Several journalists attending the congress pointed out the direct influence of political parties on news and 'truth'.

These days anyone with a smart phone is a journalist, but this trend is dangerous for society as news becomes very opinionated

INDRANI SARKAR

Ali Marzooei, an op-ed writer for a monthly Iranian magazine, said, "The biggest challenge for the media these days is actual freedom. Everyone says the media is free, but it is not free at all. The main influence is of government agencies and corporates. It is the same globally.

However, I feel these influences are much stronger in our part of the world and in Asian countries. There are direct and indirect threats to journalists and media houses, and political influences are growing day by day."

Indira Priyadarshini Nawagamuwa, a journalist from Sri

Lanka, noted that being a journalist is easy but being an investigative journalist is not. "There is a lot of influence from political parties and businesses because no one wants their dirt and corruption exposed. Media houses suppress the truth."

The congress also addressed the challenges of women journalists, including pay parity, workplace harassment and the problems faced during the pandemic.

Indrani Sarkar, news editor of news agency Hindustan Samachar from India, said,

"Being the national coordinator of IFJ in National Union of Journalists India, I would like to stress on gender issues. At the Woman Journalist Gender Council meeting, we discussed several issues encountered by women journalists across the globe, including workplace sexual harassment, workplace discrimination and salary parity. These don't happen just in India but worldwide."

She informed that at the meeting, figures of the last three years were gathered following which an action plan was adopted for the next three years

to guarantee gender equality in the media.

Indrani said it is "high time" reporters are equipped with the skills needed for digital platforms. "We want the IFJ to support India in organising training programmes for journalists in social media, which is the need of the hour. These days anyone with a smart phone is a journalist, but this trend is dangerous for society as news becomes very opinionated."

More than 350 journalists from all over the world attended the event.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Every sea turtle saved matters: ESO

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Turtles are an integral part of Oman's marine life with populations increasingly at risk from various threats, including coastal development, pollution, fishing activities and more.

Environment Society of Oman (ESO), which is engaged in monitoring sea turtles on Masirah Island, rescued a Loggerhead turtle on Thursday.

In a statement, ESO said, 'Another sea turtle saved! Our field teams on Masirah are out every day monitoring stretches of over 80km of nesting beaches that we survey on the island. Today, the team rescued an adult Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) found over 500m from the coast because of disorientation caused by light pollution. All species of sea turtle found in Oman are endangered. This adult female will lay up to 500 eggs this season; every sea turtle saved matters.'

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



include the Green Turtle, Hawksbill Turtle and Olive Ridley Turtle that all nest in Oman. The Leatherback Turtle, a fifth species, can sometimes be found visiting Omani waters for feeding or whilst migrating. All of these

species are listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List and face high risk of extinction in the wild.

ESO is raising awareness on sea turtles, one of Oman's most beautiful and endangered animals. It is committed to tackling

these threats through advocacy, community outreach and education. The society has been combating the threats through its Sea Turtle Research and Conservation project, based on Masirah Island, since 2008.

Salons must be on ground floor: Muscat Municipality

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has stated that new permits for hairdressing salons and women's beauty centres in residential-cum-commercial and commercial buildings will be issued to only businesses operating on the ground floor.

In a statement, the civic body said, 'New licences for hairdressing and women's beauty salons or similar activities in multi-storey buildings will be restricted to the ground floor.'

Licences of those operating on higher floors will be renewed provided that ownership is not transferred or reassigned to others.



'The decision is based on Muscat Municipality's endeavours to organise licences for women's beauty salons in multi-

storey buildings in a manner that serves the public interest without affecting the people living in these buildings,' it said.

No increase in vehicle insurance fee: CMA



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has clarified that rumours currently circulating in social media regarding an increase in vehicle insurance fee are baseless.

In a statement, it said, 'The Capital Market Authority denies what has been circulated through social networks about an increase in prices of comprehensive and third-party vehicle insurance. It confirms the notice

issued by the Oman Insurance Association, which denies this news.'

CMA added that vehicle insurance fees are subject to follow-up and review of the authority, which coordinates with insurance companies in order to ensure the provision of the best prices and services to customers.

'CMA has not received any notification from insurance companies requesting a change in prices of comprehensive or third-party vehicle insurance,' it stated.

Automated sorting of hajj applications on Sunday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MARA) will conduct an automated sorting of the applications received for hajj this year on Sunday. The number of applications the ministry received is four times the quota of 6,388 granted to Oman this year.

A statement issued by MARA said, 'Those who are eligible will have three days to contact hajj companies through the electronic system.'

MARA received a total of 23,474 applications, including 21,429 from citizens and 2,045 from residents. Of the total, 14,037 are male applicants and 9,437 female.

EA installs tracking devices on steppe eagles in N Sharqiyah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority (EA) has installed tracking devices on steppe eagles in North Sharqiyah governorate to monitor their numbers as well as get an insight into their food and habitat details.

In a statement, EA said, 'The authority, in cooperation with the Office for Conservation of Environment and Environment Society of Oman, carried out a field survey and installed tracking devices on steppe eagles at a number of sites in the wilayat of Dima Wa al Taien in North Shar-



qiyah governorate.'

It added that the aim of the project is to get important data firsthand, 'which will help us monitor the species and collect

accurate information'.

EA stated that these types of birds of prey feed on dead animals - rodents, medium-sized mammals, other birds and vari-

ous reptiles and insects.

While the sex of a bird can only be identified through a blood test, in general the male of the species are smaller than females. The weight of an adult female ranges between 2.3kg and 4.9kg, while the weight of male birds range between 2.5kg and 3.5kg.

The authority affirmed the continuation of existing and fruitful cooperation with various environmental agencies and relevant authorities, within and beyond the sultanate, for the best results and recommendations to strengthen policies and instill appreciation of the environment in Omani society.



CBO chief commends performance of banks

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman on Thursday held the Annual Bankers' Meeting, chaired by H E Tahir Salim al Amri, the executive president of CBO.

The event was attended by the CEOs and senior officials from banks operating in Oman.

Addressing the meeting, H E Amri commended the performance of banking sector during the COVID-19 pandemic and banks' prominent role in supporting various economic sectors.

He also lauded the licensed banks' commitment to implement the instructions and cir-

lars issued by the Central Bank of Oman to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

H E Amri reaffirmed CBO's role in following-up the banks' efforts to raise the awareness of consumers on financial services and protecting their rights.

He stated that there was a need to adhere to the principles of responsible lending in terms of transparency, justice, clarity, honesty and integrity in providing advice and guidance to customers, especially with lending that exceeds consumers' ability to repay.

The CBO chief also commended the banks' role in various areas of social responsibility.

During the meeting, H E Amri underscored the CBO's strategy and importance of its conformity with the priorities and plans of Oman, in a way that would enable CBO to play its aspired role to contribute to the priorities and goals through adopting best practices in the banking and financial sector.

He pointed out the CBO's strategic objectives of achieving monetary stability and ensuring the stability and soundness of banking institutions in Oman, in order to enhance confidence of the public and banking sector stakeholders.

"It is important to move forward with the development, training and credentials of na-

tional capabilities in the Omani banking sector to further develop the services and products provided by the sector," he said.

The executive president of CBO praised the development of financial technology in the sector during the past period, calling on banks to continue empowering companies and SMEs working in the sector.

Moreover, a presentation was given at the meeting on the banking developments and macroeconomic indicators during the last period. The Oman Banks Association (OBA) made a presentation on the cashless society, discussing many issues related to the banking and financial sector in Oman.

Bank Muscat sells its 5% stake in Octal for RO12mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bank Muscat announced that it will receive around RO12.1mn for the sale of its 4.99 per cent stake in Octal Holding to Alpek, a global petrochemicals company incorporated in Mexico.

Bank Muscat - which is one of the minority shareholders in Salalah-based Octal - in February signed an agreement to sell its entire 4.99 per cent stake in Octal, along with all other shareholders of Octal to Alpek.

"We wish to disclose that all the customary conditions related to mentioned sale transaction are now complete. The bank will receive an amount of around RO12.1mn as a sale consideration for its 4.99 per cent stake in Octal Holding resulting in capital gain of RO7.9mn from the transaction," Bank Muscat said in a



disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange. Mexico-based Alpek on Wednesday announced that it has received all necessary approvals from the regulatory authorities and has finalised its acquisition of the 100 per cent shares of Octal for a total consideration of US\$620mn.

Salalah-based Octal is the world's largest PET resin and sheet producer on a single site. With its proprietary direct-to-sheet manufacturing technology and early adoption of advanced PET resin manufacturing processes, Octal has become a global leader in PET packaging.

Symtech Solar introduces solar leases for projects in Oman

Muscat - Commercial and industrial sector clients in Oman can now transition to renewable energy without the upfront investment costs normally associated with transitioning to renewable energy, according to renewable energy firm Symtech Solar MENA.

There is no upfront investment necessary from clients and lease repayments are made via savings in electricity bills. Solar

leases allow commercial and industrial clients to both make saving on their current electricity bills and reduce their carbon footprint, the company said in a press release.

Ken Paton, CEO of Symtech Solar MENA, said, "Our commercial and industrial clients understand the benefits of transitioning to renewable energy, but in the current difficult trading conditions they have

found it difficult to find the investment necessary to be able to reap its benefits." He said, "By partnering with renewable energy funds, we can remove the obstacle of upfront investment that has been a major factor in slowing the uptake of renewable energy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our clients can now lease their solar equipment in the same way that they lease vehicles and capital equipment."

OPEC+ agrees bigger production boost amid Russian isolation

Vienna, Austria - Major oil producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia agreed to open the taps wider than expected amid soaring prices and hard on the heels of an EU ban on Russian oil imports.

Analysts had foreseen OPEC+ producers sticking to their policy of modest output increases, as they have done since May 2021.

However, pressure has been rising for the 23-strong group to boost output further to try to stabilise prices, which have hit record highs since Russia invaded Ukraine, drawing heavy Western sanctions.

OPEC+ has decided to add 648,000 barrels per day (bpd) to the market in July, up from 432,000 bpd in previous months, it announced after monthly videoconference meetings on Thursday that lasted about an hour.

"The meeting highlighted the importance of stable and balanced markets for both crude oil and refined products," the cartel said in a statement.



'Maintaining unity'

Ahead of the meeting, speculation had swirled about a break in the agreement between the 13 members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, chaired by Saudi Arabia, and their 10 partners, led by Russia. The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday that OPEC was considering suspending Russia from the output deal.

OPEC+ drastically slashed output in 2020 as demand slumped when the world locked down under the coronavirus pandemic.

They have increased output modestly to the tune of around

400,000 barrels per day each month since last year, resisting pressure by top consumers, including the United States, to open the taps wider, until now.

But Jeffrey Halley, an analyst at Oanda, said the move would not alleviate the crude supply crunch from sanctioned Russian oil, calling it a "huge disappointment to oil consuming nations".

"It seems that OPEC has thrown the US and Europe a few bones... whilst also maintaining OPEC+ unity," he said.

"Russia will walk away happy as prices will remain firm."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated concerns about

oil supplies, sending prices to record highs this year.

As the economic screws have tightened around Russia, prices have further soared, putting pressure on the cartel to open the valves more widely and relieve the market.

European Union leaders agreed on Monday to ban more than two-thirds of Russian oil imports as part of a sixth package of sanctions on Moscow over the Ukraine war.

Britain has already announced plans to phase out Russian oil imports by the end of 2022 and eventually stop importing its gas.

The United States, too, banned Russian oil and gas days after Russia's invasion began on February 24.

Several other OPEC+ members have been struggling to meet the output quotas, falling short month after month.

Members of the G7 club of industrialised nations last week underlined OPEC+'s "key role" in the face of the tightening of international markets.

AFP

Turkish inflation hits 73.5%

Ankara, Turkey - Turkey's inflation climbed to its highest level since 1998, hitting an annual 73.5 per cent in May, official data showed Friday, an issue dogging President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ahead of elections next year.

Critics have blamed the country's economic woes on Erdogan's unorthodox economic policy of pushing for lower interest rates to combat price rises.

The central bank refused again last week to raise its main rate, keeping it at 14 per cent.

AFP

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMIRAN Group) would like to invite competent and experienced companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender No.	36/2022
Tender Title	Design and construction of Tourism Service Unit at Al Suwaih Park- at South Al Sharqiyah Governorate
Tender Closing Date	22.6.2022
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders/

omran.om

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMIRAN Group)
Tel: +968 24 89 11 11
info@omran.om
omran.om



TENDER NOTICE

The Internal Tender Committee of Port of Duqm Company SAOC, hereby announces the following Tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of receiving Specifications	Date of Bid Submission	Suppliers	Tender Fee OMR	Place of Submission
ITC/T/009 /2022	Port Bathymetric Survey Project (One Year)	16th June 2022	26th June 2022	Only Specialized Companies	50/- OMR Non Refundable	Port of Duqm Company 3rd floor

Taking into consideration the following:

All specialized companies that wish to participate in the tender must deposit the tender amount into the bank account of the Company (details of the bank account is set out hereunder) and submit the original payment receipt of the tender along with a copy of the Commercial Registration Certificate and the contact details of the authorized individual (business card) to the address presented below. From 08:00 - 13:00 and 14:00 (Sunday - Thursday).

Payment Information:

Bank Transfer:

Account Name	Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C
Account Number	0423047518510013
Bank Name	Bank Muscat
Branch	Ghala Corporate Branch
Bank ID Code	BMUSOMRXXXX

Complete Tender documents should be submitted in sealed envelope with red wax with tender number and title and addressed to the "Chairman of Internal Tender Committee". The envelope should not make any reference to the bidder details.

All applicants are required to submit the Tender in the Tender box in the main office of Port of Duqm Company at or before 02:00 PM on the assigned date for submission of the Tender. Tenders submitted after the above mentioned date and time shall not be considered.

- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest offer or any other offer without any justifiable reasons.
- The company reserve the right to issue the order either in part or full for the quoted items without any justifiable reasons.
- The company reserve the right to reject the tenders not complying with the tender documentation requirement.

For any clarification, please contact us through tenders@portofduqm.om

Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C.

PO Box: 2409, PC: 111, Sultanate of Oman,
Almashreq Building, 18 November Street, N. Azaiba
T: (+968) 24342800 | F: (+968) 24587343 | www.portofduqm.om



Bank Nizwa admits second leadership cohort

In line with its agenda to foster human capital and growth, Bank Nizwa has commenced its Leadership Development Programme (LDP) for another year.

The High Potential programme, HiPo, is a part of Bank Nizwa's talent management, which focuses on finding and developing 'A players' or individuals with the highest leadership potential and who are of considerable interest to firms, to fill future leadership roles.

Due to its popularity and high demand the first time around, the management decided to continue the skill enhancement initiative for the second batch of high achievers at Bank Nizwa, a press release said.

Bank Nizwa's HiPo programme is in collaboration with the internationally acclaimed John Maxwell Leadership, which is renowned for its groundwork in value-based leadership principles. During the six-month course of the programme, participants will undergo coaching,



training and assessment sessions to assist them in refining their areas of development, consequently preparing them for future leadership positions in Bank Nizwa. At the end of the programme, participating employees will receive certificates from

Maxwell Leadership.

"In today's competitive labour market, succession planning should be a key component of every company's personnel management and growth strategy. Building a pipeline of professionals ready to assume

the escalating amount of responsibility and leadership in a company is critical to its success, particularly in the ever-changing digital industry," said Haifa al Lawati, assistant general manager HR - chief Human Resources officer.

"Employees are the driving force behind the bank's success. Bank Nizwa believes that employees are the major asset for the organisation and efforts were centered on advancing their capacities and capabilities to become tomorrow's leaders in

Islamic banking. As a result of this aspiration, the bank witnessed higher achievements and stronger performance," she added.

The LDP strives to provide learning opportunities to people who have proven the ability to

thrive in leadership positions in the bank, with the goal of uplifting high-potential workers and bridging the gap between them and the senior management team.

Maxwell Leadership's expert team assessed all staff members to maintain integrity during the selection process. A batch of 13 employees was chosen and admitted into the programme.

The group went through a comprehensive course that began with a business simulation and ended with training in 10 distinct leadership modules. Finally, they were given real-life projects to complete and present to Bank Nizwa's management team.

The projects will be funded for execution as a token of appreciation and recognition for the group's efforts. The LDP will be an ongoing process at Bank Nizwa, with people being selected and taught at regular intervals to ensure that all workers have an adequate opportunity.

ISG alumnus cracks Indian Civil Services exam

Afnan Abdu Samed, an alumnus of class 10, 2012 batch of Indian School Al Ghubra, has cracked the UPSC Civil Services Examination by securing an All India Rank of 274. He has achieved this remarkable feat without any formal coaching.

Afnan's teachers at ISG fondly remember him as a courteous and hardworking student who had scored a 10 CGPA in all subjects in the CBSE Class X Examination. After his schooling, Afnan gained admission to NIT, Trichy, and joined ITC through campus selection, a press release said.

Inspired by the services rendered by the then Pathanamthitta District Collector,

Mohammad Nooh, during the 2018 Kerala floods, Afnan decided to seriously focus on the Civil Services Examination and made it to the list of successful candidates.



Afnan Abdu Samed

Afnan had spent a decade of his formative years in ISG which makes the members of the ISG family immensely proud of his stupendous achievement and they look forward to seeing him scale greater heights in future.

ESO stresses importance of supporting conservation efforts in sultanate

On the occasion of World Environment Day (June 5), the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) is once again reminding people of the importance of conservation.

While the 2022 World Environment Day campaign - #OnlyOneEarth -, calls for collective, transformative action on a global scale to celebrate, protect and restore the planet, ESO is doing its part in this small corner of the world, to encourage action in Oman, a press release said.

ESO has shared a captivating video that highlights its conservation activities and features stunning images of the country's rich natural environment, while relaying a more serious message unless people continue to help, ESO's vital work cannot continue.

As Oman's only non-profit organisation dedicated to environmental conservation, ESO has, for the last 18 years, played a pivotal role in preserving its unique



and diverse environment. As well as spearheading several scientific research programmes and conservation campaigns supporting endangered species in Oman, ESO continues to publish countless awareness mate-

rials and host educational competitions, capacity building programmes, workshops and community activities.

As ESO continues to face the many challenges of environmental conservation, it is de-

pendent on the generosity of the public. Every donation, large or small, makes a difference in ensuring that the wonders of Oman's nature can continue to be enjoyed by future generations.

Barcelo Resort wins ME sports award

Barcelo Mussanah Resort bagged the Silver Award for Best Sports Event of the Year 2021 at the Middle East Sports Industry Awards 2022. The glittering awards ceremony was held on May 31 at W Hotel, Dubai.

Attending the award ceremony, general manager of Barcelo Mussanah Resort, Dermot Birchall paid tribute to the fantastic teamwork of all colleagues at Oman Sail and Barcelo Mussanah Resort, where the famous coastal resort hosted the Youth World Sailing Championships 2021 in December.

"The Middle East Sports Industry Awards distinguishes the best in the industry and is among the most revered in the world. We are honoured to share the silver award in the category of Best Sports Event of the Year 2021 and bring this award back to Oman," Birchall said.

Muzn named Islamic Bank of the Year by Banker Magazine

Muzn, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Islamic banking window, has been named Islamic Bank of the Year 2022 by The Banker Magazine.

Having won the award for the second year in a row, the achievement highlights Muzn's strong performance and growth over the last year. Strengthening its customer-centric approach, Muzn has rolled out several new product launches and invested in new technology to achieve even greater customer satisfaction.

Salima al Marzouqi, chief Islamic Banking officer, said, "At Muzn, we are at the forefront of providing end to end Shari'a-compliant banking solutions. By embracing innovation, we remain highly attuned to the needs of our customers and are able to provide a distinguished banking experience that not only aligns with their values but meets their diverse financial requirements. We're humbled to win this award, which we see as a testament of our efforts as well as motivation to continue to contribute in Islamic banking in Oman."

Muzn has continued to upgrade its mobile app and Corpo-



rate Internet Banking platform to provide a seamless banking experience. Broadening its services further, last year Muzn has entered into a funding arrangement for the development of first ever Penicillin production facilities within the GCC which will provide local capabilities for producing critical medical supplies in the region.

Muzn's most recent product and service innovations over the last year include its Personal Financing facility, Kids Wakala

account, and enabling cash deposits through a diverse network of CCDMs.

With community at its core, Muzn has contributed to a number of social causes and supported the development of the Islamic Banking sector in Oman by sponsoring and participating in industry-wide forums and symposiums, all while upholding its values to provide a Shari'a-compliant banking service to meet the needs of today.

Aster Al Raffah equipped to handle thyroid disorders

Dr Gabriel Rodrigues, consultant general and laparoscopic surgery, Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar, has cautioned about disorders caused due to malfunction of the thyroid gland which can lead to serious conditions that call for immediate attention.

Dr Rodrigues explained that the thyroid gland is a butterfly shaped organ located in the front of our neck and is an important organ that secretes hormones (T3, T4, TSH) required for day to day activities including growth



Dr Gabriel Rodrigues

and development of the human body.

Like many other organs in our body, thyroid gland can also malfunction and cause many problems which affect our daily routine. Malfunction happens when the thyroid gland secretes more or less of its hormones - both these conditions leading to increase in the size of the thyroid gland (goitre) that can be seen in front of the neck.

There can be also occurrence of other swellings in the neck

(other than the thyroid) and are glands (lymph nodes) to which cancer could have spread. This condition requires tests and operation in which the whole of the thyroid gland is removed along with the glands when present.

The Department of General and Laparoscopic Surgery at Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar, with its state of the art facilities is well-equipped to investigate and treat all forms of diseases affecting the thyroid gland, Dr Rodrigues assured.

'Mall of Muscat Festival' concludes

Oman's most luxurious mall, Mall of Muscat concluded its highly successful third anniversary tactical sales and marketing campaign - 'Mall of Muscat Festival' - that attracted over 600,000 visitors, on May 28,

The two-month long campaign included elements like a unique digital Shop, Spin and Win activation stand where close to 5,000 customers instantly won free shopping vouchers worth RO50,000 from the participating brands like Oman Aquarium, Matalan, Fabyland, Xtreme Zone, Novo cinema, H&M, Bath & Body Works,

Cinnabon and many more, a press release said.

As part of this campaign, Mall of Muscat, hosted a unique Vibrant Night Bazaar during the month of Ramadan which created a positive vibe in the community and resulted in phenomenal footfall and business for its participants. The product mix in the bazaar targeted both adults and children and also included engaging entertainment activities such as Drum circles, and roaming acts as an additional attraction for the visitors.

For the kids, every weekend

during campaign was packed with free entertainment and fun activities like magic show, hula hoops and indoor foosball which helped to attract more families to the mall. For Eid, the mall did a block buster musical concert and acrobatic chair balance shows. To top it all, In addition to all the amazing activities and entertainment, most of the tenants in the stores had amazing offers and discounts, some exclusively for Mall of Muscat.

Hussain Jamal - head, Mall Operations, Mall of Muscat, said, "Such campaigns add a unique value to our valued customers

and helps the mall to further strengthen the personal bond and brand loyalty to the mall which, in turn, supports its valued retail partners to improve their business and their connection with customers.

"We thank all our valued customers and retail partners for supporting us in celebrating our three-year journey in a meaningful way. We are also now gearing up to an exciting summer, for which the marketing campaign will be launched soon), which will bring more exciting activities to the mall to sustain the positive momentum."



Oman's parasailing team to compete in Europe

In partnership with BP Oman, Oman Sail and Oman Paralympic Committee has prepared the Oman national parasailing team to compete in three upcoming international championships in Europe.

Through extensive training in line with safety standards, 10 Omani sailors have been selected to compete from the 'Sail-Free' programme.

This achievement is a result of the 'SailFree' programme - launched in December 2019 - with the aim of introducing people with disabilities (specially with physical impairment) to the sport of sailing, a press release said.

The team will compete in the Belgian Sailability Cup, France Hansa Class Championship and 2022 Hansa UK National Championships, representing Oman, with the aim of achieving high rankings as well as gain vital development, skills and experience for their future athletic career. It includes Ali al Ghasaini, Zaher al

Atbi, Ghalya al Jabri, Raiyan al Mujaini, Hassan al Lawati, Sami al Sulaimi, Adil al Siyabi, Muayad al Sheriyan, Sultan al Wahaibi and Hamad al Subhi.

Shamsa al Rawahi, 'BP Oman social investment manager, commented, "In line with our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion agenda, the 'SailFree' programme has offered the unique opportunity for people with disabilities to compete in local, regional and international championships. I've seen the programme develop them beyond the skills of sailing."

"The programme has instilled confidence and capacity building skills to overcome challenges, chase their dream and work together as one team. We wish the team the best of luck and look forward to continue supporting this unique initiative."

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "The progress of the SailFree team has been consistently excellent so far. The opportunity to compete at three



major championships this summer is vital to the ongoing development of the sailors. We have tailored our coaching scheme ahead of these events to prepare our sailors, and it's time to put it to the test.

"We are very proud of our sailors for continuing to grow as athletes and as inspiring individuals, and we have high hopes for the future of SailFree as well as Oman's ongoing participation in para sailing."

Dr Mansoor al Tauqi, president of the Oman Paralympic Committee, added, "Over the years, the SailFree programme has introduced over 200 participants aged from 16 to 30 from communities across the country to the sports of sailing."

"Our partnership with bp and Oman Sail has helped equip sailors with athletic skills, resilience and problem-solving skills, laying the foundation for truly believing themselves in all aspects of their life and their sports career."

OETC participates in international symposium



Oman Electricity Transmission Company OETC participated in the 31st International Symposium organised by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers IEEE, held in the United States from June 1 to 3.

The annual IEEE ISIE gathers researchers, academics, industry experts, and practitioners from more than 100 countries to share their ideas and experiences surrounding frontier technologies, breakthroughs, innovative solutions, research results, as well as initiatives related to renewable energy, the results of academic research, as well as initiatives related to clean energy and its applications, and the development of solutions and the best technologies that will contribute to maintaining stability and resilience of electricity transmission networks, a press release said.

OETC participated in a paper presented by Abdullah Ali al Habsi network planning engineer about the impact of renewable sources on the system inertia and the rate of frequency change of Dhofar transmission system. With the urgent need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, renewable energy sources become the attractive and optimal solution for different countries and the process of decarbonisation takes place. The paper will discuss the method used to indicate the system inertia with different renewable penetration and synchronous rotating generators.

OETC will also participate in the annual conference for the development of national competencies organised by Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) of the Sultanate Oman during June 6 to 8.

UAE to chair UN's committee on peaceful uses of outer space

The UAE is to chair the Committee on The Peaceful Uses of Outer Space "COPUOS". With 100 member states, COPUOS is one of the largest UN committees and plays a major role in governing the exploration and use of space for the benefit of all humanity.

Sarah bint Yousif Al Amiri, Minister of State for Public Education and Advanced Technology, Chairwoman of the UAE Space Agency said: "It's a great honour for the Emirates to take the chair of COPUOS, particularly as we founded our space program on international part-

nerships and collaboration and continue to place these partnerships at the core of our space sector development."

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) was created by the UN General Assembly in 1959 to govern the exploration and use of space, and was tasked with reviewing international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, studying space-related activities, encouraging space research and studying and recommending policy and legal infrastructure supporting space exploration.

UNDP's regional goodwill ambassador to embark on Arctic Walk on June 7

A special ceremony, hosted at the American University in Beirut, marked the first step in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Goodwill Ambassador, Michael Haddad's Arctic Walk for Climate Resilience and Food Security, slated for June 7, in Svalbard, Norway.

Haddad will walk towards the Svalbard Global Seed Vault - a global backup facility that provides secure long-term storage of duplicates of seeds conserved in gene banks around the world to help safeguard global crop diversity - to deliver a 'Package of Hope', comprising seed packets from twelve Arab countries for preservation at the vault, alongside a limited edition of a book by Pope Francis book as a symbolic seed of hope, for safekeeping for posterity, a press release said.

"A global food crisis looming and a deep climate emergency threatening our life on this planet, may drive many to helplessness. But standing together



in solidarity, we must maintain our hope in the future," said Michael Haddad. "I come from the Arab region, where we depend on imports for most of our food and where temperatures are rising faster than the global average. I will walk in Svalbard to call upon us all to act with determination, ambition, and urgency to stave off the climate crisis and ensure our collective food security—both cornerstones for human security."

In coordination with the Food

and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) prepared for Haddad the seed packets as part of the official seed stocks from, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen, intended for deposit in the Svalbard vault. The specially prepared packages include wild relatives of wheat, barley, lentil, chickpea, and other forage

legumes. "Through the second Sustainable Development Goal, the world has committed to end hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture," stressed Melanie Hauenstein, UNDP Resident Representative in Lebanon. "Fulfilling this promise requires concerted efforts to mitigate climate change, to curb rural poverty, and empower small farmers, especially women who shoulder significant burdens in agriculture."



UNITED GCC FUND

البنك الخليجي للتأمينات
UNITED SECURITIES

INVITATION TO ATTEND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Dear Investor,

The Management body of United GCC Fund is pleased to invite the unit holders to attend the fund's Ordinary general meeting, which is scheduled to be held at 3:00 pm on Tuesday, 28 /06/2022, in Afrah (3) hall, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Shatti Al Qurum, Muscat, if the quorum not satisfied, a second Ordinary general meeting will be held on Wednesday, 29/06/2022, at 3:00 pm, in United Securities head office premises in Ghala, to discuss the following agenda:

1- To elect a new management body for the fund from among the units' holders and others, any person who wishes to be nominated to the new management body of the fund is required to fill in a Director's Nomination Form. The completed Form should be submitted to the fund's manager at least five business days prior to the date of the Ordinary General Meeting of the funds (by the end of business hours on Wednesday 22/06/2022). No nomination form will be accepted after that. The candidate must comply with the requirements set for membership in the Fund's management body.

Pursuant to the Articles of Association of the fund, any unit holder has the right to appoint a proxy in writing to attend and vote on decisions taken on his behalf. The proxy must carry the authorized proxy card attached with the notice to attend the general meeting. If the unit holder is a natural person, he is required to attach with the proxy card, a copy of ID for adults, passport for females and minors who don't have an ID card and resident cards or passports for expatriates. If the unit holder is a juristic person, the proxy card shall be signed by an authorized signatory and sealed with the company's seal and submitted together with a copy of the commercial registration certificate and authorized signatories' form.

Shareholders are requested to come at least half an hour before meeting time.

For further information, please contact Mr. Ashishkumar Prajapati on phone No- 99038993.

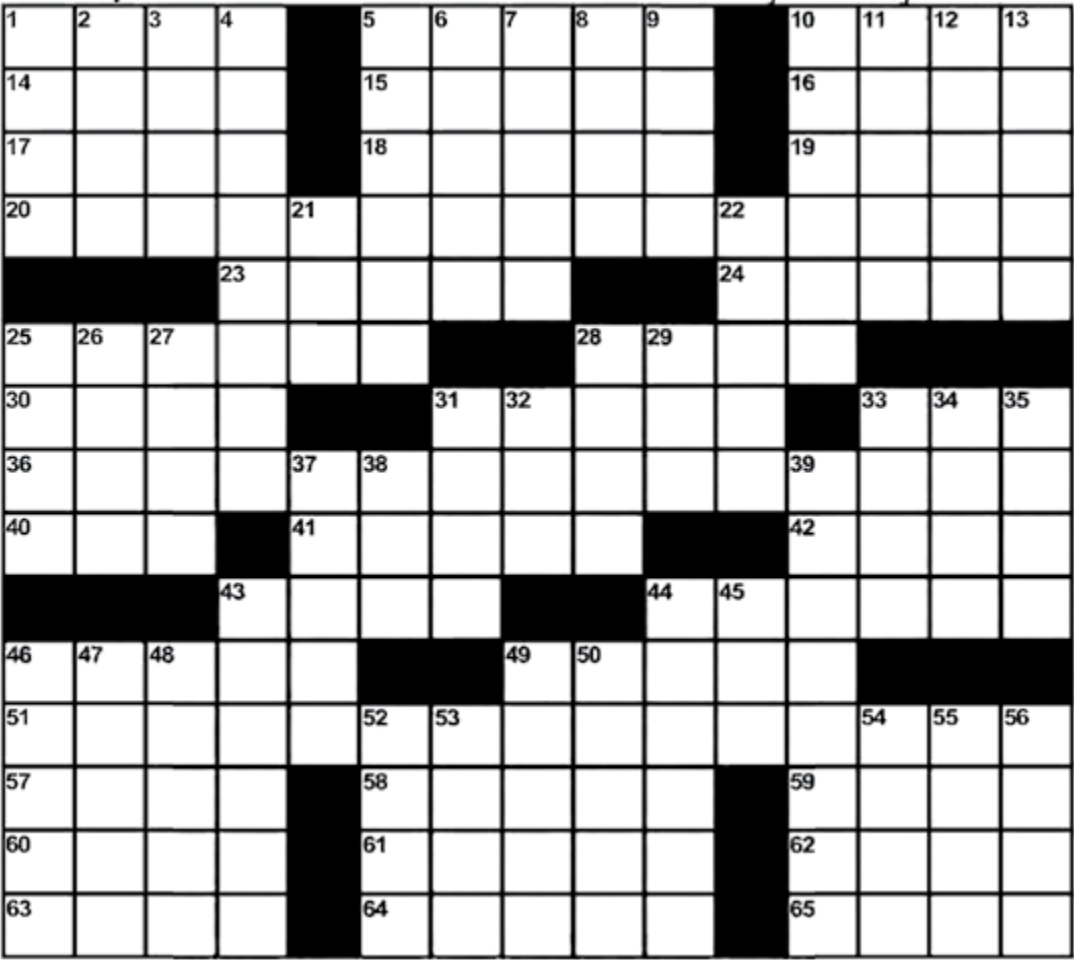
Regards

Chairman of Board

Auditors

LegalAdvisor

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Cannabis product
5) Type of beef
10) Golfer's rental
14) Assert confidently
15) Brown in a pan
16) Ubiquitous cosmetics ingredient
17) What souffles do
18) Kind of panel
19) Unexplainable picked-up feeling
20) Stress
23) Large-eyed lemur
24) Showing signs of wear and tear
25) Total
28) Cause for opening a window
30) What a good pilot knows how to do
31) Den drug of old
33) "7 Faces of Dr..."
36) Project for home-builders
HERE, HERE
40) The avant-garde's Yoko

41) Judicial orders
42) _ spumante
43) Bit of perspiration
44) Larry Bird was one
46) Salesperson's pitch
49) Harmful bacteria
51) Bad OPS revelation
57) Goddess symbolized by a cow
58) Extra
59) Delight or jubilation
60) Convene
61) Sailor buddy
62) Long fishes
63) Blows it
64) Pulled vehicles
65) Becomes compost

DOWN

1) Instrument with 47 strings
2) Good's opposite
3) Large butte
4) Prevent from happening
5) Declare firmly
6) Watts of Hollywood
7) Takes huge drinks
8) Four Corners state

9) "Buona _" (Italian "Good evening")
10) Fancy cracker topper
11) Choice invitees
12) Automaton
13) Itsy-bitsy
21) Long, long, long time
22) Pound the ground
25) "But wait, there's more"
26) Bounding site?
27) Not deceived by
28) Lubricates
29) Double header?
31) "Ars Amatoria" poet
32) Family member who may eat off the floor
33) "_ we forget"
34) Naysayer
35) Applying to ears
37) Took up residence
38) Historic time
39) Avoid work
43) Wild creatures
44) Some New York-style hotdogs
45) Big game
46) Gunk

47) Tough puzzle
48) Less cordial
49) Related maternally
50) Like many hams
52) Doctrines

53) Australian gemstone
54) Fake butter
55) Lash mark
56) Eliot of the Untouchables

NOTE PAD

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

 **ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Nobody ever said you were a stick-in-the-mud, and that's because a stick-in-the-mud is just about the last term anybody would ever choose to describe you. You're a go-getter, and today is a day to get out and go. You're at an important turning point, and whatever you put your energies into will take on dimensions you may never have dreamed of. Likely as not, you'll leave your competitors in the dust.

 **LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Today, you could turn toward all things domestic, in your mind, at least. That is, your living situation is on your mind even if you have to spend the whole day at work. Is there strife over chores? Is the strife itself becoming a chore? Are you so content in your home that there's really no other place you'd rather be? Either way, today is a good day to take stock of the good, the bad, and the semi-functional in your home.

 **SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Yes, you're good at your job. You're intelligent. You love to experience new things. You keep up to date with current events. You work out. But it's really the people who love you who are the most important things in your life. Think about what is happening in your emotional life and within your circle. Chances are good that if there are any problems, you're the first person your loved ones are going to turn to.

 **TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

If you find yourself yearning to restrung your old guitar and spend the whole evening plucking away at songs about lost loves, yellow rivers, or tying yellow ribbons around old oak trees, well, why not do it? If you keep it up, maybe the neighbors will invite you over to play while they barbecue. Let your inner performer shine. Maybe you could even go professional one of these days!

 **VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

If there is a storm brewing somewhere in your circle of friends, chances are you'll get wind of it sooner rather than later. It's a good thing for everybody that you've got your early warning system up and running, because there's a good chance you're one of the best choices for mediating this situation. Don't forget, though, that there's only so much you can do. The parties involved have to do the bulk of the work themselves.

 **CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Don't push too hard. Whether it's a big project at the office or a tricky family situation that's occupying your mind, don't make the mistake of acting too rashly. Ask yourself if you've already done all that you can reasonably do, and if your answer is yes, realize that your continuing urge to act is understandable but that it would be unwise to follow through on it. Why not watch a movie and relax?

 **GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

You turn toward home and hearth now. Whether you seriously need to regroup or you just want a little peace and quiet, a cozy nook in your favorite room is probably the place to be, and a nice cup of tea is probably the thing to drink. While you're there, take advantage of the downtime to see what sorts of ideas are coming up for you. It could turn out you're harboring dreams of traveling far away, or maybe that you're happiest right where you are. Either way, it's good to know.

 **LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It's tempting to just check out when drama begins to unfold between your friends or family members, but you need to make sure that throwing up your hands and saying "forget it" is the right answer. Usually it isn't. Maybe you can help more than you think. Maybe you can point out the obvious to people and help everyone remember how much they care about each other. Your influence can help create a peaceful outcome if you speak up kindly and gently.

 **AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Networking. It's not just for computers. Nope, it's for you too, and the more you network, the stronger your professional position will be. Why? Because you can draw on a network for all kinds of things like new ideas, new contacts, new job offers. This ability is a key tool in your professional toolbox, so go ahead and make yourself as prominent as you can. Don't be shy!

 **CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

You've got a lot going on. You've got a great idea and a great start on how to implement your great idea. And you've got great energy and a great outlook, and you probably have a great outfit too. Does your hair look great? Bet it does. So get out there and get going with turning all of this energy into a "yes I can" burst of activity. Then treat yourself to a healthy lunch. Then, if the sun is shining, go for a walk. Then head back to work and pick up where you left off.

 **SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Have you been thinking about quitting your job and starting a homemade cookie business using your great aunt Myrtle's book of ultra-secret cookie recipes that she left you in her will? Heck, people have made it work before. If you think you've got something special to offer the world, you're probably right. So sit down and look at the finances of the thing and see just where your investigation and imagination take you.

 **PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You could realize (again) just how important the people you love are to you. They're a major source of support, sustenance, and inspiration. They are there for you when you need them, and today is a good day to turn to them. They'll welcome you with open arms and just be happy that you asked and they can help. Heck, they've missed you while you were so hard at work! Make this a day for reconnecting.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. The first African Nations Cup of what, was planned for South Africa in September 2009 although it did not take place?

A. Motocross
B. Ice hockey
C. Kayaking
D. Ski orienteering

02. Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong were the first two Prime Ministers of which country?

A. Brunei
B. Burma
C. Malaysia
D. The Republic of Singapore

03. What is an Afrikaans and South African English word for a roughly circular enclosure for livestock, surrounded by fencing?

A. Kraal
B. Igloo
C. Boma
D. Tepee

Answers: 1. D 2. D 3. A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

I	U	T	A
D	R	R	O
I	E	G	Y
I	V	E	L

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

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

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

Saudi receives first foreign hajj pilgrims since 2019

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia on Saturday welcomed its first batch of hajj pilgrims since before the coronavirus pandemic, which prompted authorities to sharply restrict the annual ritual.

The group from Indonesia landed in the city of Medina and was set to travel south to the holy city of Mecca in the coming weeks to prepare for the hajj next month, state media reported. "Today we received the first group of this year's pilgrims from Indonesia, and the flights will continue from Malaysia and India," Mohammed al-Bijawi of the country's Hajj Ministry told the state-run Al-Ekhbariya channel.

"Today we are happy to receive the guests of God from outside the kingdom, after a two-year interruption due to the pandemic," he added, describing Saudi Arabia as 'fully prepared' to accommodate them.

One of the five pillars of Islam, the hajj must be undertaken by all Muslims who have the means at least once in their lives.

Usually one of the world's largest religious gatherings, about 2.5mn people participated in 2019.

But after the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Saudi authorities announced they would only let 1,000 pilgrims take part. The following year, they in-



Indonesian pilgrims prepare to depart from Juanda International Airport in Surabaya on Saturday for the first time since the absence of the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia for several years due to pandemic (AFP)

creased the total to 60,000 fully vaccinated Saudi citizens and residents chosen through a lottery.

Barring overseas pilgrims caused deep disappointment among Muslims worldwide, who typically save for years to take part.

In April, the kingdom announced it would permit one million Muslims from inside and outside the country to participate in this year's hajj, which will take place in July.

The hajj consists of a series of religious rites that are completed over five days in Islam's holiest city, Mecca, and surrounding areas of western Saudi Arabia.

Hosting the hajj is a matter of prestige for the rulers of Saudi Arabia, as the custodianship of Islam's holiest sites is the most powerful source of their political legitimacy.

Before the pandemic, Muslim pilgrimages were major revenue earners for the kingdom, bringing in about US\$12bn annually.

This year's pilgrimage will be limited to vaccinated Muslims under age 65, the hajj ministry has said.

Those coming from outside Saudi Arabia, who must apply for hajj visas, are required to submit a negative COVID-19 PCR result from a test taken within 72 hours of travel.

AFP

Iran supreme leader accuses 'enemy' of using protests

In the past few weeks, protests against the rising cost of living and corruption have occurred in several Iranian cities

Tehran, Iran - Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday accused the 'enemy', a reference mainly to the United States, of seeking to use protests to weaken the Islamic republic.

In the past few weeks, demonstrations against the rising cost of living and corruption have occurred in several Iranian cities. "Today the enemy counts on popular demonstrations to strike the Islamic system," Khamenei said during a televised address.

The May 23 collapse of a building under construction in the southwestern city of Abadan has sparked protests demanding that 'incompetent officials' be executed after the tragedy killed at least 37 people.

The enemy 'hopes to turn the people against the Islamic re-



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei delivering a speech during a ceremony marking the death anniversary of his predecessor Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in Tehran on Saturday (AFP)

public by psychological means, through the internet, money, and the mobilisation of mercenaries', Khamenei said.

He spoke before a crowd including officials at the mausoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, at a ceremony marking his 1989 death.

Khomeini founded the Islamic republic after the collapse of the US-backed shah's government in 1979.

"The Americans and the

Westerners made miscalculations in the past on various questions," Khamenei said.

"Still today, it's a miscalculation that they think they can make the Iranian nation oppose the Islamic republic."

Khamenei repeated his call for punishment of officials responsible for the collapse of the 10-storey Metropol tower block in Abadan.

According to the provincial judiciary 13 people have been

arrested, including the mayor and two former mayors.

Iran has been reeling under the effect of sanctions imposed by the United States since 2018 - exacerbated by rising prices worldwide since Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

Iran has witnessed waves of protests over living conditions in recent years, most notably in 2019 after an unannounced fuel price hike.

AFP

Tankers seized as Greece 'stole' oil, says Iran

Tehran, Iran - Iran's supreme leader on Saturday said that the country's seizure of two Greek oil tankers late last month was a retaliation against Greece because it 'stole' Iranian oil.

The Revolutionary Guards boarded and took control of the two vessels in the Gulf on May 27, citing 'violations', which Greece condemned as 'tantamount to acts of piracy'.

The seizure came two days after Greece confirmed it would send 115,000 tonnes of Iranian oil from a Russian-flagged tanker, seized in April, to the United States at the request of the US Treasury and in line with the latter's sanctions regime.

"The Iranian fuel was stolen off Greece, then the brave (forces) of the Islamic republic made up for that by seizing an enemy ship," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said.

"It's you who stole our oil," Khamenei said, addressing the country's 'enemies'.

AFP

Japanese man, 83, is world's oldest to sail solo across Pacific

Tokyo, Japan - An 83-year-old yachtsman arrived in Japan early on Saturday morning after a solo, non-stop trip across the Pacific, becoming the oldest person ever to achieve the feat.

Famed ocean adventurer Kenichi Horie's arrival in the Kii Strait off western Japan capped a two-month trip that started from a yacht harbour in San Francisco in March.

It was only the latest seagoing achievement by the Japanese octogenarian, who in 1962 voyaged from Japan to San Francisco at age 23, becoming the first person in the world to sail alone across the Pacific.

The public relations team for his most recent voyage said Horie's Saturday return to Japan made him the world's oldest person to pull off a solo, non-stop crossing of the largest and deepest ocean on Earth.

"I'm about to cross the finish line," Horie wrote on his blog on Friday after what he described as a three-day battle with the push-back from a current.

"I'm exhausted."

His 1962 Pacific crossing made headlines as he embarked on the trip without a passport, essentially smuggling his way into the United States. Sixty years ago, "I was constantly anxious and stressed that I might get caught... My condition was the worst," he blogged in April.

"But this time it's different, I was sent off by many people and have their support through track-



Japanese sailor and adventurer Kenichi Horie (AFP)

It was only the latest seagoing achievement by the octogenarian, who in 1962 voyaged from Japan to San Francisco at age 23, becoming the first person to sail alone across the Pacific

ing systems and wireless radio. I couldn't be more grateful."

Aside from his 1962 Pacific crossing, Horie is known for sailing around the world solo in 1974 and his longitudinal voyage around the world between 1978 and 1982. The latest expedition was the first he had undertaken since 2008, when he sailed from Honolulu to the Kii Strait on a wave-powered 31-foot boat.

AFP

Scant progress in constitution talks for Syria

Geneva, Switzerland - An eighth round of talks on a new constitution for Syria concluded on Friday with rival parties having made very little headway, the United Nations mediator said.

The Syrian Constitutional Committee was created in September 2019 and first convened a month later.

The tentative negotiations are aimed at rewriting the war-torn country's constitution. It is hoped the talks could pave the way towards a broader political process.

The discussions between 15 representatives each from President Bashar al-Assad's government, the opposition, and civil society are mediated by UN envoy Geir Pedersen.

But the Norwegian diplomat said this week's eighth round of talks, co-chaired by the leaders of the government and the opposition delegations, had made scant progress.

AFP

Myanmar junta says will carry out first judicial executions in decades

Yangon, Myanmar - Myanmar's junta will execute a former lawmaker from Aung San Suu Kyi's party and a prominent democracy activist, both of whom were convicted of terrorism, in the country's first judicial executions since 1990, a spokesman told AFP on Friday.

Four people, including former MP Phyo Zeya Thaw and democracy activist Ko Jimmy, 'who were sentenced to death will be hanged according to prison procedures', junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told AFP.

The junta has sentenced dozens of anti-coup activists to death as part of its crackdown on dissent after seizing power last year, but Myanmar has not carried out an execution for decades.

Phyo Zeya Thaw, a former lawmaker from Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy who was arrested in November, was sentenced to death in January for offences under anti-terrorism laws.

Prominent democracy activist

Kyaw Min Yu - better known as 'Jimmy' - received the same sentence from the military tribunal.

"They continued the legal process of appealing and sending a request letter for the amendment of the sentence," the spokesman said.

"But the court rejected their appeal and request. There is no other step after that," he added.

Two other men, who were convicted and sentenced to death for killing a woman they alleged was an informer for the junta in Yangon, will also be executed, the spokesman said.

No date has been set for the executions, Zaw Min Tun said.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the junta's decision, calling it 'a blatant violation to the right to life, liberty and security of person', according to his spokesman Stephane Dujarric.

Guterres called for the two pro-democracy activists to be released and all the charges against them to be dropped.

"The Secretary-General con-



Democracy activist Kyaw Min Yu (left) and former lawmaker Maung Kyaw, who are on death row in Myanmar (AFP)

They continued the legal process of appealing and sending a request letter for the amendment of the sentence. But the Court rejected their appeal and request.

ZAW MIN TUN

siders that the death penalty cannot be reconciled with full respect for the right to life,"

Dujarric told reporters.

"Abolition is necessary and desirable for the enhancement of

human dignity and the progressive development of human rights."

A spokesperson for Amnesty International called on the junta to 'immediately drop such plans and for the international community to step up its efforts to intervene'.

'Fuel to the fire'

The junta's decision to 'move towards executing two prominent political leaders will be like pouring gasoline on the fire of popular anti-military resistance in the country', said Phil Robertson, a deputy director at Human Rights Watch.

"Such a move will also lead to global condemnation and cement the junta's reputation as among the worst of the worst human rights abusers in Asia."

Phyo Zeya Thaw had been accused of orchestrating several attacks on regime forces, including a gun attack on a commuter train in Yangon in August that killed five policemen.

A hip-hop pioneer whose sub-

versive rhymes irked the previous junta, he was jailed in 2008 for membership of an illegal organisation and possession of foreign currency.

He was elected to parliament representing Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD in the 2015 elections, which ushered in a transition to civilian rule.

The country's military alleged voter fraud during elections in 2020 - which the NLD won by a landslide - as justification for its coup on February 1 last year.

Suu Kyi has been detained ever since and faces a slew of charges in a junta court that could see her face a prison sentence of more than 150 years.

Kyaw Min Yu, who rose to prominence during Myanmar's 1988 student uprising against the country's previous military regime, was arrested in an overnight raid in October.

The junta issued an arrest warrant for him last year, alleging he had incited unrest with his social media posts.

AFP

HK strives to erase Tiananmen memories

Hong Kong, China - Hong Kong authorities strove on Saturday to stop any public commemoration of the 33rd anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown, with police warning gatherings could break the law as China vies to remove all reminders of the deadly event.

On June 4, 1989, Beijing sent troops and tanks to break up peaceful protests, crushing demonstrations calling for political change and curbs on official corruption.

Hundreds, by some estimates more than 1,000, were killed in the crackdown.

Discussion of what happened is all but forbidden on the mainland. Semi-autonomous Hong Kong had been the one place in China where large-scale remembrance was still tolerated - until two years ago when Beijing imposed a national security law to snuff out dissent after huge pro-democracy protests in 2019.

Authorities have warned the public that 'participating in an unauthorised assembly' on Saturday risks a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment. They have also closed large parts of Victoria Park, once the site of packed annual candlelight vigils attended by tens of thousands.

'Infringing individual freedom'

The park and nearby Causeway Bay shopping district were heavily policed on Saturday, and mul-



Police stop a woman as she holds blank sheets of paper in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong on Saturday (AFP)

tiples people were stopped and searched.

One man, wearing a black T-shirt and carrying a white chrysanthemum, a sign of mourning, spoke to reporters after being searched.

"The police warned me not to do anything to attract people to gather," said the man, surnamed Lau. "But people are going to

work and I am just passing by with a white chrysanthemum."

"This is infringing on Hong Kong people's individual freedom," Lau said he used to join the vigil every year.

One former leader of the now-disbanded vigil organiser, Hong Kong Alliance, was surrounded by police as he walked around with a bunch of red and white

roses, and his bag searched.

Pedestrian areas where in the past pro-democracy groups would set up booths were cordoned off, and local media said some reporters had their information taken down and were restricted into a press area.

"Keep going. Nothing to see here," an officer told passersby through a loudspeaker.

AFP journalists saw one man in a black T-shirt being taken away in a police van.

The night before in the same area, a performance artist who whittled a potato into the shape of a candle and held a lighter to it was also taken away.

'Scared of assembly'

Security was heightened in Bei-

jing on Saturday as well, with officer numbers bulked up, and ID checks and facial recognition devices set up on roads leading to Tiananmen Square.

China has gone to exhaustive lengths to erase the crackdown from collective memory, omitting it from history textbooks and scrubbing references to it from the Chinese internet and social media platforms.

A similar approach is now beginning to be applied to Hong Kong as authorities remould the city in the mainland's image.

Since last September, the Victoria Park vigil's organisers have been arrested and charged with subversion, their June 4 museum has been closed, statues have been removed and memorial church services cancelled.

Commemoration events in Macau were also cancelled this year.

"The government is so scared of any possible assembly," said Dorothy, a 32-year-old coach who spoke to AFP near Victoria Park on Saturday morning. She said she had not been a regular attendee at the vigils, but that it was 'a great loss for the society'.

Multiple Western Consulate Generals in Hong Kong on Saturday posted Tiananmen tributes on social media, despite local media reports that they had been warned by the city's Chinese foreign ministry office to refrain from doing so.

AFP

Train driver killed in China high-speed rail crash

Beijing, China - A high-speed rail driver was killed and several passengers injured after a train derailed in southwest China's Guizhou province on Saturday, state media reported.

The train, which was en route to Guangdong province, derailed after running into debris that had fallen onto the tracks near a tunnel, official broadcaster CCTV reported.

Video footage published by multiple Chinese outlets showed severe damage to the driver's car, which was pulverised by the impact while the rest of the train remained largely intact.

A rail conductor and seven passengers were injured and sent to hospital, CCTV said, adding that 'their lives were not in danger'. "The train driver unfortunately died," CCTV said.

The footage in Chinese media showed confused passengers and children screaming in one of the train cars after the crash, with food and belongings strewn across the floor of the otherwise undamaged car.

AFP

Texas fugitive dies in shootout after 'killing 5'

Washington, US - An escaped murderer suspected of killing five people while on the run was gunned down by Texas police, bringing an end to a three-week-long manhunt after the fugitive's dramatic escape from a prison bus.

Gonzalo Artemio Lopez, 46, was serving a life sentence for murder, when he escaped from a prison bus on May 12.

Three weeks after a search that involved local, state and federal officers - as well as a US\$50,000 reward offered to the public for his capture - police said late on Thursday that Lopez was killed during a shootout with authorities.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) spokesman Jason Clark said that on the day of Lopez's getaway, he had escaped his restraints and sawed through a metal cage in which he was being held on the bus before assaulting the driver and fleeing.

Authorities became aware of his whereabouts after police were contacted Thursday by someone who had not heard from relatives who were visiting a vacation home in Centerville.

When police went to the



Gonzalo Lopez (AFP)

We are very saddened that the murders happened but... we are breathing a sigh of relief that Lopez will not be able to hurt anyone else

JASON CLARK

home, they discovered the bodies of an adult and four boys - three brothers and their cousin, aged between 11 and 18, as well as their grandfather - and put out an alert for a Chevy Silverado pickup truck that was missing from the residence.

The stolen truck was located later that evening in Jourdan, about 200 miles (320km) from where Lopez escaped, authorities said, and was disabled with 'spike strips'.

Lopez, who was armed with an AR-15 assault rifle and a handgun, was shot and killed during a gun battle with law enforcement, TDCJ spokesman Clark said.

"Those officers very swiftly shot and killed Lopez, bringing this whole ordeal to an end," he said, adding that it was 'an absolute tragedy' that five individuals have lost their lives.

"We are very saddened that the murders happened but I will tell you that we are breathing a sigh of relief that Lopez will not be able to hurt anyone else," he said.

The shaven-headed and heavily-tattooed Lopez, a Mexican mafia gang member, was sentenced to life in prison in 2006 for a murder committed with a pickaxe and kidnapping.

Lopez was being transported some 160 miles by bus from one prison facility to another in Leon County for a medical appointment when he escaped.

AFP

Indian climber who faked Everest ascent scales the peak for real after 6-year ban

Kathmandu, Nepal - An Indian climber banned from Everest after faking a summit of the world's highest mountain has successfully scaled the peak for real, telling AFP he returned to 'prove' himself.

Narender Singh Yadav claimed to have reached the top of the 8,849-metre (29,032-foot) mountain in May 2016.

But photos of the 26-year-old at the summit were later shown to have been digitally altered, prompting the Nepal government to revoke recognition of his feat.

Yadav and two other climbers were issued a six-year ban backdated to 2016, and this was the first year he was able to return to the mountain.

"Everest is a dream for all of us but Everest is life for me," Yadav told AFP on Friday. "There were a lot of allegations on me... that's why I (had to) prove myself and climb Everest."

Yadav maintains he reached the summit but that the expedition leader doctored his photos and posted them on social media after he was nominated for India's prestigious Tenzing-Norgay Adventure Award in 2020.

The award was subsequently



Indian mountaineer Narender Singh Yadav posing at the summit of Mount Everest on May 27 (AFP)

withheld, an experience Yadav said was 'very painful for me and my family'.

His ban ended on May 20. Seven days later, he was on the summit - this time with an ample

cache of photos and videos to prove his feat.

"We granted him a certificate on Wednesday after he presented enough evidence of his Everest summit," said Nepal

tourism department official Bishma Raj Bhattarai.

Pemba Rita Sherpa, a guide with expedition organiser Pioneer Adventure, said that two guides accompanied him instead of the usual one to make sure there were no disputes.

"We took many photos and videos of him," he said. "We have to speak what is real. It is about our Sherpas' reputation and the company's reputation."

A successful Everest summit is the crowning achievement of any climber's career, and many go on to forge careers as motivational speakers and authors.

The current system of authentication requires photos along with reports from team leaders and government liaison officers stationed at the base camp - but it has been open to fraud attempts.

An Indian couple were banned for 10 years in 2016 after they published doctored photos purporting to show them at the top of Everest.

The pair - both police constables - superimposed themselves and their banners onto photos taken by another Indian climber at the summit.

AFP

Shoot 'em up video game a refuge for war-scarred Afghans

Kabul, Afghanistan - The crackle of gunfire. A gasp of a stranger. Explosions rumbling in the distance. In the Afghan capital of Kabul, such sounds would normally prompt panic.

But they are coming from the tinny speaker of a mobile phone clutched by a young man, hunched over and absorbed in the bloody shoot 'em up video game 'PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds', or PUBG.

"In this country, we are living but we are not alive," said gamer Abdul Musawir Raufi, after peeling his gaze away from the phone screen, where his avatar duels with other players in an online arena.

"We don't know what will happen from one moment to the next. It's the only way to pass the time," said the 23-year-old.

Afghanistan has been wracked by four decades of very real conflict, now largely subsided since the withdrawal of US-led troops and the return of the Taliban last year.

But in a striking irony, youngsters say the wildly popular virtual violence simulator offers respite from the turmoil of the transition and the strictures of the headline Islamist regime, as well as a rare channel of communication with the outside world.

Meanwhile, the Taliban - who spent the past 20 years waging



Afghan boys play the video game 'PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds' or PUBG on mobile phones at a house in Kabul (AFP)

their own vicious and bloody insurgency - are currently working to cut off access to PUBG, having

deemed it a corrupting influence.

Since storming back to power in August, the Taliban have not

curtailed entertainment as harshly as they did during their previous stint in power between 1996 and 2001, when TV, cinema, photography and kite flying were all banned.

In the capital, a few arcades and bowling alleys remain open and some sports are still being played. But music has been banned alongside female-fronted or foreign television series.

Many Kabul residents are wary of the Taliban fighters who patrol the streets and man checkpoints, and prefer to stay at home rather than risk an outing for entertainment.

Raufi was once a keen football player, but most of the friends he

played with fled the country during the chaotic mass evacuation in the final days of the international withdrawal.

"The fun we used to have, the laughing with friends... it's all over," he said.

But PUBG, published by Chinese digital giant Tencent and downloaded on mobiles more than a billion times globally, has allowed him to stay in touch with friends and make new connections with foreign players online.

"It allows us to learn about the culture of other countries and their language. The bonds I've created are very strong," he said.

Former student Abdul Mujeeb, 20, has also found refuge in

the video game from the spiralling economic crisis that accompanied the Taliban's return.

The United States has seized billions of dollars in Afghan assets, while international aid that propped up the domestic economy has dried up.

"During the previous government, we were mostly busy with our jobs and studies," said Mujeeb. "Now, we can't study and there are no jobs."

That leaves PUBG and TikTok - the social media video app is also in the crosshairs of Taliban censors - as 'the entertainment we have at home and that keeps us busy', he said.

AFP

Fierce fighting in Ukraine's eastern city

Ukraine said its forces were managing to push back against Russian troops in fierce fighting in Severodonetsk

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine said on Saturday its forces were managing to push back against Russian troops in fierce fighting in Severodonetsk despite Russia 'throwing all its power' into capturing the strategic eastern city.

At least seven civilians were reported killed in the Lugansk region where Severodonetsk is located and in the southern city of Mykolaiv, while a revered wooden church was reported to be on fire because of the fighting.

Lugansk regional governor Sergiy Gaiday said in an interview posted online that the invading forces had captured most of Severodonetsk, but that the Ukrainian military was pushing them back.

"The Russian army, as we understand, is throwing all its power, all its reserves in this direction," said Gaiday, who on Friday claimed Ukrainian troops had managed to win back a fifth of the city.

Russia's army however claimed some Ukrainian military units were withdrawing from the city.

The press service of Ukraine's presidential office said that



Local residents carry their belongings as they walk near a residential building partially destroyed by shelling on the northern outskirts of Ukrainian city of Kharkiv on Saturday (AFP)

'street fighting' was continuing in Severodonetsk and 'assault operations are underway' in an industrial part of the city.

Severodonetsk is the largest city still in Ukrainian hands in the Lugansk region, where Russian forces have been gradually advancing in recent weeks after retreating or being repelled from other areas, including around the

capital Kyiv.

Thousands of people have been killed, millions forced to flee and towns turned into rubble since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an all-out assault on his pro-Western neighbour on February 24.

Western powers have slapped increasingly stringent sanctions on Russia and supplied

arms to Ukraine but divisions have emerged on how to react.

French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday said Putin had committed a 'fundamental error' but said Russia should not be 'humiliated' so that a diplomatic solution could be found.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba reacted on Saturday saying such calls 'only humil-

iate France' and any country taking a similar position. "It is Russia that humiliates itself. We all better focus on how to put Russia in its place. This will bring peace and save lives," he said.

Foreign volunteers killed

Regardless of diplomatic efforts, the conflict has raged in the

south and east of the country.

Ukrainian officials on Saturday announced the death of four foreign military volunteers fighting Russian forces but did not specify when or under what circumstances they died.

The International Legion of Defence of Ukraine, an official volunteer brigade, named the men and published photos of

them, saying they were from Germany, the Netherlands, Australia and France.

The deaths of the two men named from the Netherlands and Australia had already been reported and France's foreign ministry on Friday said a French volunteer fighter had been killed in combat.

Ukraine also reported two victims from a Russian missile strike on Odessa in the southwest, without specifying if they were dead or injured.

Russia's defence ministry said it had struck a 'deployment point for foreign mercenaries' in the village of Dachne in the Odessa region.

It also claimed a missile strike in the northeastern Sumy region on an artillery training centre with 'foreign instructors'.

Apart from the human toll, the conflict has caused widespread damage to Ukraine's cultural heritage. On Saturday, Ukrainian officials reported that a large Orthodox wooden church, a popular pilgrim site, was on fire and blamed Russian forces.

Russia continues to prove 'its inability to be part of the civilised world', Culture Minister Olexandr Tkachenko said in a statement. Russia's defence ministry blamed 'Ukrainian nationalists' for the blaze and said its forces were not operating in the area.

The church was built in 2009 on the site of another church that was blown up in 1947.

Russian troops now occupy a fifth of Ukraine's territory and Moscow has imposed a blockade on its Black Sea ports.

AFP



This file photo shows Mariah Carey participating in the ceremonial lighting of the Empire State Building in New York City on December 17, 2019 (AFP)

Mariah Carey sued for \$20mn over hit song

New York, US - Mariah Carey has been sued in the United States for alleged copyright infringement over her global hit 1994 song *All I Want for Christmas Is You*, court documents show.

The plaintiff, a musician named Andy Stone, says he co-wrote and recorded a festive song of the same name in 1989 and never gave permission for it to be used.

In the suit filed on Friday in Louisiana, Stone alleges that Carey and her co-writer Walter Afanasieff 'knowingly, willfully, and intentionally engaged in a campaign to infringe' his copy-

right. He is seeking damages of US\$20mn for alleged financial loss.

Carey's song is one of the most successful music singles of all time, topping the charts in more than two dozen countries and enjoying considerable air-time every Christmas.

It features prominently in the 2003 Christmas-themed romantic comedy film *Love Actually*.

The song has sold an estimated 16mn copies worldwide and earned Carey a reported US\$60mn in royalties over the last three decades.

AFP

German train crash toll rises to five

Burgain, Germany - The death toll from a German train derailment near a Bavarian Alpine resort climbed to five on Saturday as a further body was recovered from the wreckage, police said.

Investigators were combing the overturned carriages for victims and clues as to the cause of Friday's accident near Garmisch-Partenkirchen, a region gearing up to host the G7 summit in late June. "At the moment we do not believe there were further victims, but I cannot yet say for sure," regional deputy police chief Frank Hellwig told reporters.

He said four of the dead were women, with another 44 people injured, some of them children.

The accident occurred just after midday on Friday as school holidays were starting in the two southern German regions Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria.

Police said the regional train was 'very crowded' with about 140 people on board as a new nine-euro (US\$10) monthly public transport ticket valid across Germany also boosted demand.

Federal transport minister Volker Wissing visited the site of the accident on Saturday, saying he was 'very moved' to see the 'dramatic' extent of the damage.

"We will continue to investi-



Workers use cranes to salvage a railway carriage at the site of a train derailment near Burgain, north of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, southern Germany, on Saturday (AFP)

At the moment we do not believe there were further victims, but I cannot yet say for sure. Four of the dead are women, with another 44 people injured, including children

FRANK HELLWIG

gate and get to the bottom of what happened," he told reporters. The head of the German rail company Deutsche Bahn,

Richard Lutz, also at the scene of the crash, said he was 'saddened' by the deaths and pledged a thorough probe.

The train had just left popular mountain resort Garmisch-Partenkirchen for the Bavarian state capital Munich when the accident took place in the Burgain district.

The region has begun preparations to host the G7 summit of world leaders later this month.

From June 26-28, the heads of state and government are due to meet at Schloss Elmau.

AFP

Evacuation on as wildfire blazes through Athens' south

Athens, Greece - A wildfire whipped by gale-force winds blazed through vegetation in a southern suburb of Athens on Saturday, the Fire Brigade said, forcing residents to evacuate.

The Greek Civil Protection issued an emergency appeal via sms for people to leave Ano Voula and the surrounding areas as the flames spread to within metres of houses. Six water-bombing aircraft, three helicopters and municipal water tankers supported firefighters with 20 fire engines. Ant1 tv station showed policemen telling people they should leave.

Media reported a power cut in the area where some roofs, gardens and vehicles had been damaged by the blaze.

Skai tv station showed footage of a burning house with flames licking inside.

"The situation is very difficult and the wind does not help," said Giannis Konstantatos, mayor of Ellinikon-Ar-giroupoli, a neighbouring municipality, who also heads a conservation group for nearby mount Imittos.

"The atmosphere is suffocating, we have difficulty breathing," he told Athens News Agency.

Giorgos Papanikolaou, the mayor of Glyfada, said it all started at a high voltage electricity power station.

Last summer, Greece's most severe heatwave in decades saw fires destroy more than 100,000 hectares of forest and farmland, the country's worst wildfire damage since 2007.

AFP

'More than 700 global cases of monkeypox, including 21 in US'

Washington, US - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Friday it was aware of more than 700 global cases of monkeypox, including 21 in the United States, with investigations now suggesting it is spreading inside the country.

Sixteen of the first 17 cases were among people who identify as men who have sex with men, according to a new CDC report, and 14 were thought to be travel associated.

All patients are in recovery or



Generally confined to western and central Africa, monkeypox cases have been reported in Europe since May (AFP)

have recovered, and no cases have been fatal.

"There have also been some cases in the United States that we know are linked to known cases," Jennifer McQuiston, deputy director of the CDC's Division of High Consequence Pathogens and Pathology, told reporters on a call.

"We also have at least one case in the United States that does not have a travel link or know how they acquired their infection."

Monkeypox is a rare disease

that is related to but less severe than smallpox, causing a rash that spreads, fever, chills, and aches, among other symptoms.

Generally confined to western and central Africa, cases have been reported in Europe since May and the number of countries affected has grown since.

Canada also released new figures on Friday, counting 77 confirmed cases - almost all of them detected in Quebec province, where vaccines have been delivered. Though its new spread may be linked to particular gay festi-

vals in Europe, monkeypox is not thought to be a sexually transmitted disease, with the main risk factor being close skin-to-skin contact with someone who has monkey pox sores.

A person is contagious until all the sores have scabbed and new skin is formed.

Raj Panjabi, senior director for the White House's global health security and biodefense division, added that 1,200 vaccines and 100 treatment courses had been delivered to US states.

AFP

UNLEARNING THE PAST

SENEGAL'S SOUL

In Dakar, Rwandan director breathes life into plundered African art



1 Belgian actor and musician Francois Sauveur, from the performative play and installation *The Supreme Remnants*

2 French comedian Marc-Emmanuel Soriano

3 Senegalese comedian Malang Sonko

4 Rwandan actor and composer Michael Makembe

5 French comedian Nathalie Vairac

In Rwandan playwright Dorcy Rugamba's latest work, a young African steps into an austere European museum and tells an ancient mask he is looking for the soul of Africa. The artefact comes to life as a woman.

"You will find neither the truth about your ancestors, nor your past - here Africa is extinguished," it responds, with shrill laughter.

The unconventional performance, 'Supreme Remains', premiered at this year's Biennale of Contemporary African Art being held in the Senegalese capital Dakar until June 21.

"If you follow me, I will take you on a tour of the rivers that led us from your ancestors to these places," says the mask, played by the French actress Nathalie Vairac. But, she warns, "We will have to walk through mud."

As she leads the museum visitor through one large room after another, she invites audience members to examine the blind spots in the official narrative of colonial history.

In one, they meet a scientist from the late 19th century who measured skulls hoping to prove alleged European superiority. In another, they encounter a Belgian army general - based on a real historical figure - who kept the skulls of three African dignitaries at home.

Rugamba, the play's director, said the performance was rooted in history.

"Scientists ordered human remains from the conquerors by the thousands, which were then used to develop racial theories and stereotypes," he said.

Age of disquiet

Towards the end of the tour, spectators find themselves among the rolling hills of Rwanda for an initiation ceremony. The character of the museum visitor learns to 'unlearn the past'.

French academic Benedicte Savoy said she was overwhelmed by the performance.

"It seemed to convey in just one hour things that we normally have to read in hundreds of pages," she said at a debate after a performance last week.

She and the Senegalese writer Felwine Sarr published a landmark report on the restitution of African cultural heritage in late 2018. Sarr said much progress had been made since, as what was once a niche topic had made its way into public debate.

"Now museums have to be transparent and reflect on so-called ethnographic collections - it's unprecedented," he said. "These museums have entered an age of disquiet."

In November 2021, France returned 26 artefacts to Benin. The works - part of the royal treasures of Abomey that colonial troops looted in 1892 - had been held in the Musee du Quai Branly in Paris.

An exhibition of the returned treasures

recently attracted nearly 200,000 visitors to Benin's city of Cotonou in just 40 days, according to the authorities. France also returned a sabre to Senegal in 2019 and a crown to Madagascar in 2020.

The play's director Rugamba, who is also an actor, asked how an entire continent could be emptied of its cultural heritage.

"An African researcher who wants to work on the history of his country must travel to a thousand places without even being sure that he'll be given a visa," he said. "It's an untenable situation."

Move forward

Hundreds of thousands of African works of art continue to be held in Western museums and private collections, but there have been mounting calls for them to hand back the colonial spoils. Sarr said he welcomed African nations demanding restitution.

In 2019, "seven West African countries requested the equivalent of 10,000 ob-

jects, including countries that were at war and that you would expect to have other concerns," he said.

The Biennale's symposium last week featured a debate on how to re-invest meaning into returned artefacts and reconnect them to contemporary Africa.

"If we believe an object to have historical, artistic value and that it must be there to tell a story, then we should put it in a museum," said Sarr.

Objects that have ritual functions, however, can be returned to communities, while those that researchers would like to study can go to universities or art centres, he added.

Dialika Haile Sane, a screenwriter in her thirties, said she felt the "full force" of emotion while watching the theatrical performance. She said there was no reason artworks should not be returned to where they were born.

"If we don't reclaim what belongs to us, we can't really move forward," she said. AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com



أوربت
ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

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

URGENTLY REQUIRE

**Indian cooks (3 numbers)
for labor mess in Muscat.**

Experienced candidates
may call 93215672

AUDIT, VAT, TAXATION

Accounting, Auditing,
Vat Services, Taxation

**Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Chartered Accountants**

Contact: 92469602/93949235

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



EVERYONE'S PROBLEM

Maria Nissan, an environmental activist and artist, creates an art installation from plastic waste collected from the streets in the Jordanian capital Amman

Amman's

An Iraqi-American artist in Jordan converts the country's plastic trash into art with a message – 'Plastic comes back to us in one way or another... It's nobody's responsibility until it becomes everyone's problem'

Frigh out

Jordan-based artist Maria Nissan is on a mission: to rid the world of single-use plastics and to raise public awareness about the environmental scourge through eye-catching art.

One of her best-known murals graces the side of a building in the capital Amman, a giant work made from more than 2,000 plastic bottles, almost 1,000 shopping bags and over 150 hookah pipe hoses.

A US citizen of Iraqi origin, Nissan said she became enchanted with Amman when she first visited three years ago, but also felt frustration and anger at the piles of garbage on the streets and in areas of natural beauty.

"Despite the beauty of the city, walking its streets can be a journey filled with all kinds of trash," the 35-year-old said.

"My eyes cannot turn away from the abundant shiny plastic bags, glass bottles, soda cans, candy bar wrappers," said Nissan, who occasionally sports a dress made from a sturdy blue Ikea bag. Trained in painting and drawing in the United States and Italy, Nissan decided to collect and repurpose the trash to create art - often collages themed on women's faces, flowers and Oriental motifs.

Her home, where she has a rooftop workspace under a large canopy, is filled with every imaginable kind of discarded plastic object, from razors and tooth-

“Art made of plastic is a concrete and powerful way to raise concerns on environmental issues that affect Jordanians

MARIA NISSAN

brushes to lighters, pens and plastic spoons.

"Art made of plastic is a concrete and powerful way to raise concerns on environmental issues that affect Jordanians, their children, their communities and natural environments in the kingdom," she said.

Everybody's problem

"A bottle littered in a valley will take up



to 450 years to decompose," said Nissan, pointing out that the effect is "micro-plastics polluting the soils, water and the wildlife.

"Because plastics are littered indiscriminately in fields and water, livestock and fish feed themselves indirectly with plastic pieces that we will ultimately find on our plates."

Nissan's work has been exhibited in 12 shows in Jordan as well as in Italy and

Greece, and features on her Instagram channel @marianissanart, all with the purpose of changing minds and habits.

Jordanians use three billion plastic bags every year, part of the country's annual solid waste load of 2.2 million tonnes, of which only seven per cent is recycled, according to the UN Development Programme.

Nissan urges people to avoid buying plastic products and to go shopping with

reusable bags, and also advocates a tax on single-use plastics.

"The consequences of single-use plastic pollution are often delayed, and therefore it is difficult to have people feel accountable and responsible for their own acts," she said.

"Plastic comes back to us in one way or another... It's nobody's responsibility until it becomes everybody's problem."

AFP

POLE POSITION

Poland's Iga Swiatek brushes aside Coco Gauff of the US to win second French Open title

Paris, France - Iga Swiatek cruised to her second French Open title by dominating teenager Coco Gauff in the final on Saturday, as the world number one claimed her 35th successive victory.

The 21-year-old Polish star stormed to a 6-1, 6-3 win in only 68 minutes on Court Philippe Chatrier, equalling Venus Williams' record for the longest winning run by a woman in the 21st century.

Swiatek celebrated her sixth straight title this year in the players' box with her friends and family.

"I told Coco 'Don't cry' and that's what I am doing. Congrats to Coco," said an emotional Swiatek.

"You are doing an amazing job. At your age, I was on my first year on tour and I did not know what I was doing. You will find it, I am sure of that."

A disconsolate Gauff was left sitting on her seat in tears after a nervous performance, punctuated by 23 unforced errors and three double faults.

The 18-year-old American came up short in her bid to become the youngest Grand Slam singles champion since Maria Sharapova won Wimbledon in 2004.

"I want to congratulate Iga, what you've done on tour in these past couple of months has been amazing," said Gauff, as the tears flowed again when she thanked her team.



Poland's Iga Swiatek poses with the trophy after beating Coco Gauff of the US in the French Open final on Saturday (AFP)

You (Coco Gauff) are doing an amazing job. At your age, I was on my first year on tour and I did not know what I was doing. You will find it, I am sure of that

IGA SWIATEK

"I hope we can play in more finals and maybe I can win one... I want to thank my team, I'm sorry I couldn't get this one today."

Swiatek, only the 10th woman to win multiple French Opens in the Open era, lost just one set in the tournament - against China's

Zheng Qinwen in the fourth round. She has now won all three of her career meetings with Gauff, who was playing in her first major final.

Gauff will now turn her attentions to Sunday's doubles final, where she will face home

favourites Caroline Garcia and Kristina Mladenovic alongside compatriot Jessica Pegula.

Swiatek improved her remarkable record in finals, having won her last nine on the WTA Tour.

Swiatek expressed her support for Ukraine during the trophy presentation, despite saying before the final that she does not feel ready to speak about off-court issues.

"I want to say to Ukraine, 'Stay strong'. The war is still there," she said, to cheers from the stands.

Gauff looked nervous in the opening exchanges and a flurry of unforced errors handed Swiatek

a break in the very first game.

The 18th seed found herself 3-0 and a double break down just 16 minutes into the match, as Swiatek's powerful backhand helped her win a lengthy third game on her fifth break point.

Gauff finally got on the board with a scrappy hold, but she had dropped a set for the first time in the tournament just minutes later.

Swiatek was not playing her best, but a cross-court backhand winner brought up two set points and she took the second opportunity when Gauff fired wide.

The Pole gifted her opponent a

potential route back into the match, making four unforced errors to throw away her serve in the first game of the second set.

Swiatek recomposed herself though as the mistakes continued to come from Gauff, breaking back to level at 2-2. She made it five straight games to move within one of the title, losing only five points in the process.

Gauff dug deep to force Swiatek to serve for the trophy. But the top seed did just that on her first match point, dropping to the red clay in celebration as Gauff sent a return flying long.

AFP



A protestor tied herself to the net at French Open on Friday

French Open semi-final interrupted as protestor ties herself to net

Paris, France - The French Open semi-final between Casper Ruud and Marin Cilic was held up for 13 minutes Friday when a protestor ran onto the court and tied herself to the net.

The woman leapt from the Court Philippe Chatrier crowd during the sixth game of the third set.

She wore a shirt which bore the slogan: "We have 1028 days left."

She was eventually removed from the court while the players headed back to the locker room.

The match later resumed, Ruud running out a 3-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 winner to become the first Norwegian man to reach a Grand Slam final.

French Open organisers said the "environmental activist managed to get onto Philippe-Chatrier court and attached herself to the net with metal wires and glue".

"The security team needed to formally identify the objects she used to get onto the court before they could remove her."

Organisers added: "The young woman, of French nationality, entered the grounds with a valid ticket early in the day.

AFP

ROWA

AIR CONDITIONERS

A New Cooling Experience

Super Fast Cooling

Quiet Operation

6 in 1 Filter

Gold Fin For Rust Protection

4 way swing

RAC-18CSA/XA61T | RAC-24CSA/XA61T | RAC-36SC20

جينتكو Genetco GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. L.L.C.

51 years of excellence

MUSCAT 97693496, 96742452 Available at Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

C.R. No. 1009680 SALALAH 79011363

www.genetco.net @GenetcoOman @GenetcoOman Genetco Oman



Norway's Casper Ruud (L) will have the unenviable task of meeting 13-time French Open champion Rafael Nadal in Sunday's final

Nadal aims to be French Open's oldest champion against pupil Ruud

Paris, France - Rafael Nadal will become the oldest man to win the French Open title if he defeats Casper Ruud, the Norwegian whose clay court talents he has personally helped foster.

Nadal was 7-6 (10/8), 6-6 ahead in the semi-final against Alexander Zverev when the German was forced to quit while Ruud saw off Marin Cilic 3-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 in his last-four clash which was held up when an environmental protester ran onto the court and tied herself to the net.

Nadal will be playing in his 14th Roland Garros final on Sunday and 30th overall at the Grand Slams.

Victory will deliver a record-extending 22nd major and 14th French Open, 17 years after his title winning debut in Paris.

The 36-year-old Nadal is,

Nadal will be playing in his 14th Roland Garros final on Sunday and 30th overall at the Grand Slams. Victory will deliver a record-extending 22nd major and 14th French Open

however, as surprised as anyone to have got this far.

A chronic left foot injury which has plagued him throughout his career flared up again in Rome last month, putting a serious question mark over even making it to the French capital.

"Without a doubt, I'd prefer to lose the final and have a new foot," admitted Nadal who has not hidden the brutal reality that every match he plays at Roland Garros may be his last.

Despite his fears, Nadal has

impressively battled his way into Sunday's championship match.

He needed five sets and more than four hours to see off Felix Auger-Aliassime in the last 16 and another four hours to get past Novak Djokovic in the quarter-finals.

Zverev then pushed him all the way for three hours in the semi-finals until a sickening ankle injury forced the world number three to quit.

Despite Zverev's bold all-or-nothing challenge, Nadal still cut

an impressive presence on court, at one point coming out on top in a lung-busting 44-shot rally.

His record at the French Open now stands at 111 wins and just three losses. Djokovic was responsible for two of those defeats.

Nadal was only 19 when he won his first French Open in 2005.

Victory on Sunday will make him the tournament's oldest champion, eclipsing 34-year-old compatriot Andres Gimeno who took the title 50 years ago.

World number eight Ruud, 23, is the tour's in-form clay court player.

Not only have seven of his eight career titles come on clay, but he has won 66 matches on the surface since 2020 and played in nine finals.

AFP



Aleix Espargaro

Aleix Espargaro scorches to pole in record time in Catalonia GP

Montmeló, Spain - Aleix Espargaro rode his Aprilia into pole position for the Catalonia MotoGP after a “crazy” lap in a track record time in Saturday’s qualifying for the ninth round of the world championship.

The Spaniard will be joined on the front row on Sunday by Ducati’s Francesco Bagnaia, who won last week in Italy, and the Yamaha of world champion Fabio Quartararo.

Espargaro lies eight points adrift of Quartararo in the standings and will have high hopes of lifting his local race after emerging fastest in practice.

In the third session he blitzed to a new lap record of 1min 38.771 at the circuit outside Barcelona in scorching conditions with track temperature hitting 55 degrees celsius.

And then he promptly broke his own mark shortly after in qualifying with a time of 01:38.742, to deny Bagnaia by 0.031sec.

“I did a totally crazy lap, slipping around everywhere and in truth I didn’t really appreciate this

lap, I was on the limit on each bend,” said the pole-sitter. This was the 32-year-old’s fourth career pole and second of 2022.

Quartararo approaches Sunday’s race with optimism, saying: “I still have a card to play”.

Ducatis dominate the second row with Prima Primac’s Johann Zarco and Jorge Martin either side of Gresini Racing’s Fabio di Giannantonio.

Starting towards the rear of the grid after qualifying 21st is Stefan Bradl called up to replace Honda’s Marc Marquez.

The six-time world champion underwent surgery on his right arm in the United States with doctors declaring on Friday the operation was a success.

Marquez will remain in America for a few days before returning to Spain to continue his recovery. He is expected to miss the rest of the 2022 season.

Alex Marquez, his brother, was also absent from qualifying after falling hard in fourth practice with the Honda-LCR rider taken to the medical centre

AFP

KYLE AND PACE!

Jamieson strikes as New Zealand push for win against England in the Lord’s Test

London, United Kingdom - Kyle Jamieson took three wickets as New Zealand pressed for victory by once again ripping through England’s infamously weak top order in the first Test at Lord’s on Saturday.

England were 99 for four at tea on the third day, still needing a further 178 runs to reach a victory target of 277, with towering paceman Jamieson returning fine interval figures of three for 24 in nine overs.

England, with just one win from their previous 17 Tests, were left looking to new captain Ben Stokes (15 not out) and former skipper Joe Root (23 not out) to pull off an improbable win in the first of this three-Test series.

Stokes, on his 31st birthday, received a lifeline when on one he played on, after recklessly charging at Colin de Grandhomme, only to be reprieved when replays revealed his opposing all-rounder had bowled a fractional no-ball.

Earlier, England great Stuart Broad sparked a sensational New Zealand collapse after Daryl Mitchell made a hundred as the World Test champions, who had been 251 for four, were dismissed for 285 in their second innings.

But by then Mitchell, who made 108, and Tom Blundell (96) had shared a stand of 195 - more than either New Zealand (132) or England (141) managed in their first innings.

There have been only three successful fourth-innings run chases of over 200 in Lord’s Test history, with England’s best their 282 for three against New Zealand in 2004.

Alex Lees made a fluent start



New Zealand’s Kyle Jamieson celebrates after bowling out England’s Alex Lees on the third day of the first Test at Lord’s on Saturday (AFP)

There have been only three successful fourth-innings run chases of over 200 in Lord’s Test history, with England’s best their 282 for three against New Zealand in 2004.

to Saturday’s pursuit, however, hitting four boundaries in his 20, only for the left-hander to be bowled leaving a Jamieson deliv-

ery.

England’s 31 for one at lunch became 32 for two soon afterwards when Jamieson had Zak

Crawley caught in the slips for nine. Ollie Pope then fell cheaply for the second time this match, bowled by a brilliant Trent Boult ball from around the wicket that came back up the slope.

Boult had got straight back in the groove after only arriving in England on Monday after playing in last weekend’s Indian Premier League final.

But Jonny Bairstow appeared

to be still stuck in IPL mode as he too fell for his second low score this Test, bowled trying to drive Jamieson.

England, in sunny conditions seemingly ideal for batting and on a good pitch, were now reeling at 69 for four.

Mitchell hundred

New Zealand had resumed on 236 for four, a lead of 227.

Mitchell was 97 not out overnight and Blundell unbeaten on 90 after they had come together Friday with the Black Caps in trouble at 56 for four.

The 31-year-old Mitchell wasted no time in reaching his second Test century and first abroad, off-driving Broad for three from his first ball Saturday to bring up a 189-ball hundred including 11 fours.

After waiting 366 deliveries to take the fifth wicket, England then astonishingly collected three in three balls.

Broad, recalled with James Anderson after England’s two all-time leading Test wicket-takers were controversially left out of a series loss in the Caribbean, dismissed Mitchell and Jamieson, either side of Pope running out de Grandhomme.

Broad had Mitchell caught behind and his next ball led to a huge lbw appeal against de Grandhomme, who carelessly left his crease and was run out for a golden duck by Pope’s direct hit from the slip cordon.

And with the following delivery, Broad bowled Jamieson.

Blundell, who had seen wickets tumble from the non striker’s end, took his score to 96 only to fall short of a hundred when plumb lbw to Anderson.

AFP

Harigae, Lee share halfway lead in US Women’s Open

Washington, United States - World number four Minjee Lee fired a five-under-par 66 on Friday to grab a share of the 36-hole lead alongside Mina Harigae at the 77th US Women’s Open in North Carolina.

Australia’s Lee, chasing a second major title after her triumph at the Evian Championship last year, had four of her six birdies on the front nine and rebounded from her only bogey at 14 with birdies at 15 and 16 to join Harigae on nine-under-par 133 at Pine Needles in Southern Pines.

America’s Harigae, whose first-round 64 was one off the US Women’s Open record, followed up with a two-under-par 69 that featured five birdies and a pair of bogeys.

The duo were two strokes in front of Sweden’s Anna Nordqvist and South Korean Choi Hye-jin. Nordqvist had four birdies in her three-under-par 68 while Choi raced up the leaderboard with an impressive seven-under-par 64 that featured nine birdies.

Lee said putting was again the key to her round. She poured in



Minjee Lee of Australia plays a shot from the seventh fairway during the second round of the US Women’s Open on Friday (AFP)

long birdie putts at the first, eighth and ninth holes and rapped in a four-footer at the second, making the turn at eight-under -- one shot behind the early target set by Harigae.

“My putting was pretty solid today, and even when I was in kind of tough spots I was able to get up and down,” said Lee, who won the LPGA Founders Cup last

I just tried to take advantage of my birdie opportunities and that’s pretty much what I did today

MINJEE LEE

month for her seventh LPGA title and her first since her Evian triumph. “I just tried to take advantage of my birdie opportunities and that’s pretty much what I did today.”

Lee said her approach on the weekend would be “pretty much the same as the first two days.”

She said regardless of how the light rain that began falling late in the day might alter the course, she would “just take whatever’s in front of me and just take one step at a time because this golf course can really catch up to you quick.”

Harigae said her round was “a little shaky” compared to her sizzling effort on Thursday.

“A little more stressful today for sure, and things got a little shaky there, but I was really happy with the way I hung in there and made some good birdies coming in,” said the 32-year-old from California, whose parents are from Japan.

Seeking her first LPGA title and a first top-10 finish in a major, Harigae said she believes she has the maturity now to contend on the weekend.

“Today, even when things weren’t going great, I was really able to keep myself calm and just try to be really level-headed out there,” she said.

She led the Women’s British Open at Carnoustie last year, ultimately finishing tied for 13th.

AFP

Eid Offer

30 REFILL COUPONS

• Hot & Cold Dispenser

• 2 Full Bottles

RD 50 ONLY

12 REFILL COUPONS

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

• 2 Full Bottles

RD 20 ONLY

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

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

Offer valid from 1st April to 30th June 2022

MM No.: 07/30/2022 CR.No.: 1365452

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

Toll-free 800 71 222 or 9275 5522

Les Bleus get the blues

Cornelius double helps Denmark recover from Benzema goal and beat France in Nations League

Paris, France - Substitute Andreas Cornelius scored twice as Denmark recovered from conceding to a brilliant Karim Benzema goal to beat France 2-1 on Friday in the UEFA Nations League at the Stade de France, the first match at the venue since the chaos that marred last week-end's Champions League final.

Benzema's stunning strike put World Cup holders France in front six minutes after half-time, only for Trabzonspor striker Cornelius to turn in Denmark's equaliser midway through the second half and then smash in an 88th-minute winner.

That meant it was a disappointing night for France who saw both Kylian Mbappe and Raphael Varane come off injured.

"We have players who have played a lot of games this season and we clearly lacked freshness," said France assistant coach Guy Stephan, who added that Mbappe was struggling with a knee knock and Varane had a hamstring problem.

There was a near-full house of 75,833 inside the Stade de France, including 1,400 Danish supporters, but the atmosphere outside the ground ahead of kick-off was calm.

That was in stark contrast to the scenes six days earlier, when serious organisational problems led to fans being unable to get into the stadium while many peaceful supporters were tear-gassed ahead of Real Madrid's 1-



Denmark's Andreas Cornelius celebrates after scoring against France in their UEFA Nations League match at Stade de France in Saint-Denis, Paris, on Friday (AFP)

0 win over Liverpool.

Because of the pandemic, Friday's match was the first France national football team game at the stadium without crowd restrictions since November 2019.

Home supporters were hop-

ing to see Les Bleus start with a victory as they defend the Nations League title they won last year by beating Spain in the final.

This was the first of four matches they will play this month in League A, Group 1 be-

fore their players can depart on holiday, and the game did not really come to life in the first half.

Mbappe, Varane come off

France, whose coach Didier De-

schamps was absent following the death of his father, were dealt a blow when Paris Saint-Germain star Mbappe pulled up just before the interval.

He did not reappear after the break, with Christopher Nkunku

taking his place, and the RB Leipzig forward played a part in the opening goal in the 51st minute.

Benzema, on the same ground where he won the Champions League last weekend, collected

the ball on the right, played a one-two with Nkunku and left the Danish defence for dead before slotting in on the occasion of his 95th cap.

Manchester United centre-back Varane then also hobbled off, with William Saliba replacing him, and Denmark capitalised as they turned the match on its head.

Cornelius had not long been on the field when he appeared completely unmarked in the area to apply a first-time finish to Pierre-Emile Hojberg's floated assist.

Hugo Lloris kept out Andreas Skov Olsen's rasping drive shortly after, before N'Golo Kante crashed an effort off the woodwork at the other end.

Christian Eriksen then squandered a great chance to put the away side in front in the 86th minute as Lloris denied him from point-blank range.

However, the Danes did win it moments later as Cornelius beat the offside trap before running through and holding off Saliba to fire past Lloris from a tight angle.

Croatia suffered a 3-0 home defeat by Austria on Friday with Marko Arnautovic, Michael Gregoritsch and Marcel Sabitzer all scoring.

Meanwhile the Netherlands romped to a 4-1 win over neighbours Belgium in Brussels in League A, Group 4.

AFP

Karim Benzema -the good, the bad and the ugly side of French football

Paris, France - French football star Karim Benzema, who provokes passionate opinions - being adored or disliked in equal measure - has made a spectacular return to "Les Bleus" despite the "sex tape" scandal in which he has finally waived an appeal against his one-year suspended sentence.

The 34-year-old's talent on the pitch is indisputable. He has a swathe of league titles with both Lyon and Real Madrid as

well as five Champions League trophies and is a serious contender for the next Ballon d'Or.

But on Friday, his brilliant opening goal was not enough to save France from a 2-1 defeat against Denmark in Paris.

The match came just hours before the surprise news that Benzema had decided to drop his appeal against a one-year suspended sentence for complicity in a bid to blackmail former France teammate Mathieu Val-

It's (Algeria) my parents' country, it's in my heart. I will be always present for the French team.

KARIM BENZEMA

buena with a sex tape. His talent for becoming em-

broiled in off-the-field controversies has only fuelled the opinion of many in France that he is more trouble than he is worth.

That was certainly the view of France coach Didier Deschamps, who until a surprise call-up for last year's Euro 2020 finals had kept the star player out in the cold for five-and-a-half years due to the sex-tape allegations.

The far right in France have led the charge against Benzema since a 2006 interview with

French radio station RMC in which he suggested his footballing ambition had been pivotal in choosing to play for France.

"It's (Algeria) my parents' country, it's in my heart," said Benzema, whose grandfather emigrated from Algeria. "I will be always present for the French team. Then it's more for the sporting side, because Algeria is my country, my parents come from there."

AFP



France's Karim Benzema celebrates after scoring against Denmark in their UEFA Nations League match on Friday (AFP)



Gerard Pique and Shakira

Shakira and footballer Gerard Pique separate

Madrid, Spain - Colombian superstar Shakira and FC Barcelona defender Gerard Pique announced Saturday they were calling time on their relationship of more than a decade.

The 45-year-old "Hips don't Lie" songstress is one of the biggest names in the global music industry.

Spain footballer Pique, 35, won the 2010 World Cup and the 2012 European Championship, and is a three-time Champions League winner with Barcelona.

The couple share two sons and had been living together for years on the outskirts of

Barcelona. "We regret to confirm that we are separating. For the well-being of our children, who are our upmost priority, we request respect for privacy," they said in a statement.

With her mix of Latin and Arabic rhythms and rock influence, three-time Grammy winner Shakira is one of the biggest stars from Latin America.

The couple announced their separation just over a week after Spanish court documents inched Shakira closer to standing trial in Spain for tax fraud after a Barcelona court dismissed an appeal from the singer.

AFP

Ukraine aim to complete World Cup dream

Cardiff, United Kingdom - Ukraine's footballers made a war-torn nation proud by beating Scotland in their first competitive clash since Russia's invasion, but the job of getting to the World Cup is only half done ahead of Sunday's play-off final against Wales.

A place in Qatar later this year is the prize for the winners at the Cardiff City Stadium, where history also beckons for the home side.

Wales have not reached a World Cup since 1958 and manager Rob Page has described the Ukraine clash as "the biggest match in Welsh history".

The same could be said for different reasons for Ukraine as they aim to provide some solace and national pride to a country devastated by Russian aggression.

"We played for those who fight in trenches, who fight with their last drop of blood. We played for Ukrainians who suffer every day," said Ukraine coach Oleksandr Petrakov after his side outclassed Scotland to win 3-1 in Glasgow on Wednesday.

"We still have the Wales game in front of us. We will do



Ukraine fans cheer for their team during their World Cup qualifier against Scotland on Wednesday (AFP)

everything to make Ukrainians proud."

Petrakov admitted to being emotionally "empty" in the aftermath of victory at Hampden Park.

However, the 64-year-old, who tried to sign up to Ukraine's territorial defence when war broke out, and his players must

summon another huge effort to deliver their World Cup dream.

Six of the starting line-up against Scotland are still contracted to Ukrainian clubs and had not played a competitive game this year.

As Artem Dovbyk broke clear to score the visitors' third goal with the final kick of the game,

his teammates sank to their knees in exhaustion rather than joining in the celebrations.

"We all understand that the game with Wales will no longer be about physical condition or tactics, it will be a game of survival," said Oleksandr Zinchenko.

"Everyone will fight to the

end and give their all, because we will play for our country."

Ukraine's visit to Scotland was postponed from March, just weeks after the war began, to give the visitors the chance to fulfil the fixture.

But that change could still have a lasting effect on who joins England, USA and Iran in Group B of the World Cup.

Wales beat Austria in their play-off semi-final three months ago thanks to Gareth Bale's brilliant double and were able to name a second-string side for their 2-1 Nations League defeat by Poland on Wednesday.

Bale and Aaron Ramsey were among the key players given the night off to keep them fresh for Sunday.

"We are well aware of the situation that Ukraine is in right now, and it must be incredibly tough to be in their shoes," said Tottenham defender Ben Davies.

"We know it will be an emotional event and a lot of people will be wanting some good news for Ukraine, but we have to try and stay out of that and focus on 90 minutes of football."

AFP