

H M THE SULTAN ADMINISTERS OATH OF OFFICE TO 16 AMBASSADORS



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIQ ADMINISTERED THE OATH OF OFFICE TO 16 NEW AMBASSADORS APPOINTED TO VARIOUS COUNTRIES AT AL BARAKAH PALACE ON MONDAY

Full report on [Page 02](#)



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said launches the Wosool project on management of electronic documents on Monday (ONA)

Sayyid Theyazin launches NRAA's Wosool project

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over a ceremony to launch the Wosool project on management of electronic documents.

Wosool constitutes a significant component of Oman's national digital transformation strategy and embodies the e-government approach towards the realisation of Oman Vision 2040.

H E Dr Hamad Mohammed al Dhawyani, chairman of National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), said, "Wosool is one of the most important national projects related to digital transformation and includes all the characteristics necessary to manage a document from the moment it is created until it reaches its final destiny in an ideal manner complying with the National Procedures Manual for the Management of Electronic Documents."

The project aims to unify poli-

cies, increase efficiency and effectiveness of government agencies, enabling them to communicate electronically and quickly, as well as protect data.

"The first phase of the project will include 20 government agencies that are in the process of launching the operational work, while we look forward to the inclusion of 38 other entities in the second phase," H E Dhawyani said.

He added that the project received attention for harnessing expertise and capabilities in providing support and security of the National Defence Centre and security follow-up that guarantees the project's ability to achieve its objectives in all fields.

Wosool constitutes a cornerstone initiative of digital transformation in the government sector. Besides enabling government departments to electronically manage their information records applying the latest global practices in the field, the new system will furnish a streamlined secure environment for data.



Call to vote for Sumaiya in 'Stars of Science'



Oman's economic recovery in 2022 is commendable: Report

90% of jobs target achieved

31,354 citizens employed till Q3 2022; 9,657 in public, 13,544 in private sector

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The government's efforts to employ citizens are progressing well with the Ministry of Labour (MoL) recently intensifying an ongoing programme to create employment opportunities.

According to the latest figures from MoL, more than 31,000 jobseekers have been employed in public and private sectors in 2022 till the third quarter. The number represents 90 per cent of the total jobs targeted this year.

In a statement issued on Sunday, MoL said, 'A total of 31,354 jobseekers have been employed in the public and private sectors till Q3 of 2022.'

Of the total, 9,657 were em-



ployed in the government and 13,544 in the private sector, while 5,460 were placed through training and rehabilitation in the government and 2,693 in the private sector.

Earlier this year, H E Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, stated that the ministry is working towards providing 35,000 job opportunities through recruitment, re-

placement and training for citizens in 2022.

According to the minister, the government is exerting efforts to ensure the wellbeing of youth in the labour market. To-

wards this goal, it negotiated terms with a number of private sector establishments that were considering termination of services of Omani workers last year. He also informed that a new Labour Law is in finalisation stages, currently awaiting approval of the Council of Ministers.

A total of 23,271 citizens were employed in the first six months of 2022, according to Salim Said al Badi, Director General of Labour Welfare, MoL. Of the total number of citizens appointed in H1 2022, 10,454 appointments were in the government sector and 12,817 in the private.

In July this year, MoL issued a decision to Omanise 207 professions.

2nd edition of Sayyid Bilarab architectural design award launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H H Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said launched the second edition of the Bilarab bin Haitham Architectural Design Award on Monday. The launch came on the heels of the success of the first edition and completion of handing over the first-place winning project to Muscat Municipality to start its implementation and development.

H H Sayyid Bilarab confirmed that the award, in its current edi-

tion, was honoured to receive a Royal blessing from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

One of the national projects will be adopted for Royal blessing as part of the award competition. The Museum of Maritime History in Sur, South Sharqiyah, was chosen as the award's project this year.

H H Sayyid Bilarab urged Omani youth to harness all their technical capabilities and architectural skills to participate in the competition, and to present innovative and creative models and



Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said

designs capable of achieving the project's mission and objectives.

The project will be imple-

mented in Sur adjacent to the sea. H H Sayyid Bilarab stressed that the heritage of the wilayat boasts of many achievements related to maritime activities.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has provided 14,154sqm of coastal land for the project.

The time period for the award has been increased to four month from the first edition's two.

The programme will also include technical workshops for those who qualify the first stage. "We have made sure to provide more room to accommodate

qualified candidates. Of the two qualifying stages, the first one will be selection of 30 participants from all the applicants, and ten will be selected in the second stage."

H H Sayyid Bilarab concluded his statement with an invitation addressed to the youth. "We call upon the Omani youth working in the field of architectural design to be creative and be motivated by what they witness in this field for our further development. We are confident that the youth of the sultanate are capable of that."

RUSSIA, UKRAINE CONFLICT ESCALATES

This video grab taken from an AFP TV footage shows vehicles destroyed in Kyiv on Monday as security and emergency forces work on the scene after several missile strikes were heard in the Ukrainian capital. Russian forces launched a barrage of fatal bombardments across Ukraine early on Monday as President Vladimir Putin vowed even more "severe" retaliation against Kyiv (AFP)

See also [Page 10](#)



Oman Rail, a government constituted agency for the development of railway networks in the country, recently signed an agreement with Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of UAE National Rail Network, to jointly establish an equally-owned Oman-Etihad Rail Company for the development of a railway network connecting the two countries.

The newly created entity will hold an overall investment power of US\$3bn to design, develop and operate a 303km network connecting Sohar Port to the UAE National Rail Network. The much-anticipated railway will primarily link Sohar to Abu Dhabi - featuring the best international safety, security and environmental standards to provide faster and safer passenger and freight services. Passenger trains - running at a maximum speed of 200km/h - will reduce the travel time from Sohar to Abu Dhabi to 1 hour and 40 minutes, and just 47 minutes to reach Al Ain.

Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers had to say on how they see the project would change the fortunes of the region:



Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee

The proposed rail network between Sohar Port and Abu Dhabi would be a game changer with regard to trade and people movements between the two countries. Movements of commercial goods and locally made agricultural products will become faster and cheaper besides facilitating enhanced people to people movements and flow of tourists. In order to reap these benefits, the project must be given top priority and rolled out as quickly as possible.

Ruskeen S
Private sector employee

The project will bring about a major change in Oman's infrastructure. Our authorities will help our dream come true at the earliest.

Mohammad Hinai
Businessman

The rail line will help transport food as well as other goods faster; so it will be good for everyone. This will also engage more tourists come to the country by rail and thus boost the economy as well as tourism.

Abdullah al Balushi
Government employee

This is high time for a rail system to come up in the country. Both the destinations, Sohar and Abu Dhabi, are business hubs; and a rail link will be of great help for the economy of the country. It will benefit both businessmen as well as common people.

Salim Yousuf
Salesman

Every country lays importance on transport system and rail network is one of the

prime ones. It saves time and cost for everyone. It is indeed high time that the proposed network start at the earliest to yield benefits for both government and public.

Prem Chauhan
Private company employee

Rail lines anywhere in the world is an initiate that helps everyone. Sohar is a place which is business hub of Oman and with a rail line, the necessary goods will be transported to and fro easily.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

IMF has praised Oman's efforts in reviving the economy after the pandemic. Have you seen improvement in the economic situation? In what ways it has made life better for you?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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Global dignitaries, academics gather as Oman Science Festival kicks off

Muscat - The six-day long Oman Science Festival 2022 got underway with an opening ceremony presided over by H E Said bin Hamoud al Mawali, Minister of Transportation, Communication and Information Technology at the Oman Conventions and Exhibitions Centre on Monday.

The ceremony was attended by H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniya, Minister of Education and H E Abdullah al Sawaha, Saudi Minister of Information Technology and Communications, besides a number senior officials.

The festival - raising the slogan 'Together we live the Passion of Science' - targets pupils, educators, parents, students of both government and private institutions of higher education, researchers, scientists, specialists and academics, apart from those engaged in governmental, military and private institutions working in the field of science and technology.

"I am proud to open the third edition of the Oman Science Festival, and we have great hope for the future of our children as we witness their interaction with technology," said H E Mawali.



The Saudi Minister was high praises for the festival. "What we saw today is an indication that Oman is moving in the right direction in accordance with Oman Vision 2040 under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq," he said.

"This is an opportunity to highlight the latent talents of young men and women. We have seen scientific models and

projects in the field of renewable and sustainable energy, environment, and many projects in the field of technology."

H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaiddi, Undersecretary for Education in the Ministry of Education and Chairman of the organising committee of the festival, said, "The third edition is more extensive than ever, with an increase in the number of halls, events and activities, and the presence of external participation in seminars and workshops. The great turnout at the

opening is a proof that this festival has its special place in our country."

On the sidelines of the festival, the Ministry of Education signed two agreements. The first was on equipping and financing the Ibn al-Nadhar Centre for Science and Innovation in the wilayat of Samail, in Dakhiliyah governorate, with the Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

The second was with Khimji Ramdas to support 16 schools in the wilayat of Dima wa Al Tayyin in North Sharqiyah governorate.

Oman's newly appointed ambassadors take oath

Muscat - Sixteen newly appointed ambassadors of Oman took oath before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, at Al Barakah Palace on Monday morning.

Those who took oath are:

- Badr Mohammed Badr al Manthri, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
- H H Sayyid Nizar al Julanda Majid al Said, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Italian Republic.
- Maithaa Saif Majid al Mahrouqi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federal Republic of Germany.
- Talal Sulaiman Habib al Rahbi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federative Republic of Brazil.
- Hilal Abdullah Ali al Sinani, appointed-ambassador of the

Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Tunisia.

- Dr Ahmed Mohammed Said al Sa'eedi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Lebanese Republic.
- Abdulghafar Abdulkarim Issa al Balushi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- Saif Nasser Rashid al Bada'ei, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.
- Ahmed Ali Said al Rashdi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.
- Mahmoud Hamad Nasser al Hassani, appointed-ambassador of Oman to the Swiss Confederation.
- Mohammed Abdullah Awadh al Nahdi, appointed-ambassador of Oman to the

Republic of Cyprus.

- Hamoud Salim Abdullah al Tuwayah, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation.
- Irma Said Mohammed al Kathiri, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Brunei Darussalam.
- Ru'aa Issa Ashraf al Zedjali, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Belgium.
- Sayyid Faisal Hareb Hamad al Busaidi, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- Omar Said Omar al Kathiri, appointed-ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Spain.

The oath taking ceremony was attended by Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and Dr Abdullah Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs.

Call to vote for Sumaiya

Omani in 'Stars of Science' TV show final urges all to vote for her before Oct 13

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A young Omani innovator is vying for top honours in *Stars of Science*, a Qatari edutainment reality TV show where Arab innovators compete to develop tech solutions for their communities.

Sumaiya Said Sulaiman al Siyabiya's remediation and marine microplastics disposal device can help serve as an invaluable tool to address the issue of marine plastics, which account for at least 85 per cent of the total marine waste, according to the UN Environment Programme report *From Pollution to Solution*.

Free of chemicals and environmentally friendly, the device is a floating sphere comprising of microbial mats and nanomaterials that dissolve microplastics it comes into contact with converting these into carbon dioxide and water.

The device can easily float among patches of plastic garbage in oceans, trapping and disposing of microplastics.



(Supplied photo)

Challenges are part of life. I needed a lot of perseverance and patience for this project

SUMAIYA SAID SULAIMAN AL SIYABIYA

Describing Sumaiya's project, organisers of the programme said, 'Innovative and simple, it could be invaluable in protecting our natural water resources and the wildlife within.'

Sumaiya has a Master's degree in biology from Sultan Qaboos University. Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, she said, "The final will be held on October 14. I urge everyone to support me by voting on the programme's website starsofscience.com, where public vote represents 50 per cent and the jury determine the remaining 50 per cent."

Voting will continue until October 13, she added.

"My project is called EcoSphere. This kind of device has never been applied in the world."

Juggling a career and family, Sumaiya said challenges are part of life. "I live in the wilayat of Ibra, and have a family and three children. I needed a lot of perseverance and patience for this project."

She added that her device can be used in aquaculture projects as various studies have shown that fish food contain large

amounts of microplastics which threaten their lives.

Sumaiya has won many accolades, chief among these is the Excellence Youth Award in Science from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in 2021. She also won the first place in the Sheikhha Fadia al Saad al Sabah Scientific Competition held among Arab nations.

About future plans, she said, "Oman and the world need this project because it will help get rid of plastics."

She advised young Omani researchers to work hard and not be satisfied with conducting research only "but strive to apply it to make it a reality".

Thanking those who have supported her, Sumaiya said she's hopeful of winning the final of Stars of Science.

Oman, Saudi sign pacts on technology, training

Muscat - Implementing a memorandum of understanding signed by the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in November 2021, the two sides signed two executive programmes - one on digital transformation and the other on training of personnel - on Monday.

The two programmes aim to make optimum use of digital technologies, notably in business areas, besides initiatives related to the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and training personnel engaged in the fields of leadership, development and management.

The first executive programme was signed by Ahmed Mohammed al Suwaiyan, Governor of Saudi Digital Government Authority, and H E Dr Ali Amer al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology in the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

The programme covers cooperation in e-government practices, feasibility studies of new digital solutions serving e-government strategies and research in the respective areas.

The second executive programme was signed by H E Shidhani and Faris Saleh al Saqabi, Deputy Minister for Future Jobs and Capabilities in the Saudi Min-



istry of Communications and Information Technology.

The programme reflects the two sides' keenness in training nationals and integrating efforts for preparation of human resources to keep pace with updates in the field of modern technologies and their applications.

Omani-Saudi relations are making progress in the fields of economy and e-government. To this effect, the two sides signed a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding, including the Omani-Saudi E-Skills Initiative, which seeks exchange of best practices in developing skills to meet labour market requirements in the communications and information technology sector.

As many as 120 Omanis re-

ceived training as part of the first phase of a programme in the field of cybersecurity, the Internet of Things and programming. Following an agreement, the programme seeks to augment competitiveness for advanced jobs in the digital labour market.

The second phase of the programme, scheduled to begin later this month, provides for training 240 Omanis in areas of self-learning, e-games, cybersecurity, network protection and the Internet of Things.

The two sides have signed three agreements in the field of enhancing partnership and expertise among Omani and Saudi technology firms. Seven more agreements will be signed shortly by companies from the two countries.

ONA

ROP, family of missing citizen appeal for information

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the family of citizen Hamida bint Hammoud al Amri, from the wilayat of Izki, are seeking information on her. She has been missing since last week.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Hamida's son Yousef said, "My



Hamida bint Hammoud al Amri

mother, who is 75 years old, went out on October 3 to the local Qur'an memorisation school and has not returned since."

Yousef informed that his mother is diabetic. "We request the public to contact us in case they have any information about her whereabouts. I also request people not to spread

any rumors about her on social media," he said, adding that the family is in shock and struggling to cope with the situation.

Yousef and the family can be contacted on 92522959. Alternatively, anyone with information on Hamida can call the Police Operations Centre on 9999 or the nearest police station.

Three-day forum to explore impact of COVID-19 on economy starts in SQU

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In order to analyse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, Sultan Qaboos University started a forum on Monday.

The forum was held under the patronage of H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Dr Ashraf Saad el Din, president of the forum, said, "The three-day forum will analyse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and how to develop effective mechanisms to deal with such crises in the future. It also aims to develop a realistic vision of the post-COVID-19 world and to come up with new data and ideas that help decision-makers to develop programmes and policies based on the requirements of the next stage."



(Supplied photo)

He added that 110 scientists and researchers from 16 countries are participating in the forum, which will include four workshops and discuss 87 scientific papers.

Redha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Com-

merce and Industry, and the keynote speaker at the forum, presented a working paper on the chamber's efforts in facing the effects of the spread of COVID-19 and the measures it had taken to support private sector institutions during the pandemic.

Municipality starts campaign to combat mosquitoes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To reduce the spread of mosquitoes in the governorate, Muscat Municipality launched a vector control campaign on Monday.

The campaign aims to combat mosquitoes by creating a healthier environment for citizens and residents in several parts of Muscat.

A statement issued by the municipality on Monday said, "Our Pest Control Team in Great Muttrah commenced a campaign to combat *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes by sending six task forces targeting Muttrah and Muscat."

"We continue our mosquito control campaigns targeting breeding sites, and call on members of the community to adopt hygienic practices to eliminate breeding environments."

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Philippines	153.15
Sri Lanka	950.50

*Rates as on october 10

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Burjeel Holdings lists on ADX raising over AED1.1bn

Burjeel Holdings on Monday listed on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX), following the completion of its initial public offering (IPO).

The IPO, which raised gross proceeds of more than AED1.1bn for the offering of 11 per cent of the company's total issued share capital, attracted total gross demand of more than AED32bn and was 29 times oversubscribed in aggregate.

Burjeel Holdings' shares were priced at AED2.00, implying a market capitalisation for the company of AED10.4bn at the time of listing. At the time of listing, Burjeel Holdings is the largest healthcare company trading on ADX.

The group intends to pay cash dividends from 2023 onwards, on the expected basis of a pay-out ratio of 40 to 70 per cent of net income, dependent on the required investment for additional growth plans.

Burjeel Holdings operates an integrated healthcare network of 61 assets, including 16 hospitals and 23 medical centres across primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary care, with its expansion into Saudi Arabia commencing shortly.

World Bank raises GCC growth forecast to 6.9% for 2022

Our Correspondent

Muscat

The economies of the GCC region are expected to grow by 6.9 per cent this year – the fastest growth rate in a decade – followed by a slowing of growth to 3.7 per cent in 2023, according to the World Bank.

The bank has raised its 2022 growth forecast for the GCC region by one percentage point from its earlier estimate of 5.9 per cent growth.

The World Bank's latest economic update, titled 'A New State of Mind: Greater Transparency and Accountability in the Middle East and North Africa,' finds that the region's oil exporting countries are benefiting from high hydrocarbon prices.

'The GCC countries are on track to grow by 6.9 per cent in 2022, buoyed by high hydrocarbon earnings, slowing to 3.7 per cent in 2023 as hydrocarbon prices subside,' the World Bank said.

The economies of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are expected to grow by 5.5 per cent this year – the fastest rate since 2016 – followed by a slowing of growth to 3.5 per cent in 2023, the World Bank report said.

Yet this growth is uneven across the region, as countries, still struggling to overcome the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, face jolting new



shocks from higher oil and food prices brought on by the war in Ukraine, rising global interest rates, and slowdowns in the United States, China, and the Euro area, the report noted.

Developing oil exporters in MENA, the World Bank said, are forecast to experience trends like those of the GCC but at lower levels—with 2022 growth expected to increase to 4.1 per cent, led by Iraq, before falling back to 2.7 per cent in 2023.

Developing oil importing countries are expected to grow by 4.5 per cent in 2022 and 4.3 per cent in 2023. However, the MENA oil importers face heightened stress and risk from higher import bills, especially for food and energy, and tightening fiscal space as they spend more on price subsidies to cushion the pain of price rises on their populations.

"All countries in the MENA region will have to make adjustments to deal with significantly higher prices for food and other imports, especially if they lead to an increase in government borrowing or currency devaluations," said Ferid Belhaj, World Bank's vice president for the MENA region.

"What countries need now is smart governance to weather the storm and begin to rebuild after multiple shocks on top of the pandemic."

Roberta Gatti, World Bank's chief economist for the MENA region, said, "Moving towards greater data transparency and accountability is a game changer for the region; it can help countries identify what is working and needs improvement and to act on it. It will help them manage risk and shape progress towards a more sustainable and inclusive future."

Across the region, policymakers have introduced measures – especially price controls and subsidies – to make the domestic price of certain goods, such as food and energy, lower than the global price. The World Bank report finds that this has had the effect of keeping inflation in MENA lower than in other regions.

The World Bank said that governments will incur additional expenses as they increase subsidies and cash transfers to mitigate the damage to the living standards of their populations from higher food and energy prices.

'For the GCC and developing oil-exporting countries, this is not of much concern now. Windfall increases in state revenues from the rise in hydrocarbon prices have greatly increased their fiscal space and will result in fiscal surpluses for most oil exporters in 2022 – even after the additional spending on inflation mitigation programs,' the bank added.



Indian rupee dives to fresh record low

Mumbai, India – The Indian rupee on Monday dropped to a fresh record low against the US dollar, with an increased sell-off resulting from the good US jobs report which hints at more aggressive hikes from US Federal Reserve.

The Indian currency declined 37 paise, to a record low of 82.67 versus the greenback.

Rupee had been depreciating and posting record lows from concerns over foreign investors' outflows, rising oil prices, ebbing interests from domestic investors, rising US Treasury yields and demand for the greenback.

The interventions of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) couldn't do much to arrest the rupee's decline. Traders said that the central bank had sold dollars through state-run banks as the local currency went past the 82-mark for the first time.

India's foreign exchange reserves went down to US\$532.66bn, the lowest since July 2020, in the week through September 30. It was US\$537.5bn the week before.

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Oman's economic recovery in 2022 is commendable: Report

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Oman's economic recovery in 2022, a substantial reduction in the country's debt-to-GDP ratio and its focus on investment spending are all promising and commendable, according to a report released by SICO, a Bahrain-based leading regional investment bank.

SICO shared insights into Oman's current economic climate in a report analysing progress in achieving targets set forth in Oman's tenth five-year plan (2021-2025) including debt management, fiscal reforms, and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).

The report is based on insights gained from an exclusive discussion between Sumaya Al-jazeeri, assistant vice president from SICO's Investment Research, and H E Dr Said al Saqri, Oman's Minister of Economy, in addition to insights from government representatives from the Ministry of Finance and Oman Vision 2040 team during the MSX Roadshow Conference.

'For Oman, 2022 is a year of re-arranging the books, and can be best described as a year of transitioning towards stronger growth in the medium-term (2023-2025). The recovery witnessed in the Omani economy, lowering debt-to-GDP ratio, and focusing on investment spending are all promising and commendable,' the report said.

However, it said that Oman continues to face challenges from upcoming debt maturities of nearly US\$12bn-US\$13bn by 2025, inflationary pressures resulting in higher subsidy bills, slower return of expats, and modest lending growth to the private sector.

The SICO report noted that Oman's key focus has been debt management, which saw debt-to-GDP ratio drop from 60 per cent in 2021 to 55 per cent of GDP in the first half of 2022, well below its stated target, after cutting debt levels by RO2.2bn to RO18.6bn.

Earlier in 2022, Oman had reaffirmed its earlier commitment to curbing increase in net government debt over the next three years in its 2022 budget, projecting debt-to-GDP to reach 60 per cent levels by 2024.

'In parallel, the introduction of the VAT has positively contributed to revenues, and the income tax – if implemented as scheduled in 2024 – is another step in fiscal revenue diversification,' the report said.

It said Oman's fiscal spending has seen a change in direction in 2022 after a slowdown in public spending in the last three years. Capitalising on higher oil and gas revenues, the government has increased capital expenditure allocation and is adopting proactive investment planning across sectors.

The government's pipeline is focused on multiple key projects in the services' sector, mainly logistics, transport, and the oil and gas sector, the report said.

'Nonetheless, the rate at which the economy picks up and investment spending becomes reflected in projects on the ground will set the momentum of growth for Oman and show sincerity to foreign investors,' the SICO report added.

It further said that investment spending will be a key driver in sustaining the upward trajectory of real GDP growth.

The report concluded that Oman is in a transitory phase progressing towards higher growth albeit slower than its GCC peers, as it makes strides in achieving set targets in the tenth five-year development plan.

US trio win economics Nobel for work on financial crises

Stockholm, Sweden – A US trio, including ex-Federal Reserve chief Ben Bernanke who played a key role battling the 2008 financial crisis, won the economics Nobel on Monday for research on banks in times of turmoil.

Bernanke, together with Douglas Diamond and Philip Dybvig, were honoured for having “significantly improved our understanding of the role of banks in the economy, particularly during financial crises, as well as how to regulate financial markets”, the jury said.

Bernanke, 68, has been both credited for spurring recovery after the 2008 recession and pilloried by critics for doing little to avert it, allowing investment bank Lehman Brothers to collapse.

He received the award for his analysis, conducted in the early 1980s, of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the worst economic crisis in modern history.

In particular, Bernanke showed “how failing banks played a decisive role in the global depression,” making the downturn “not only deep, but also long-lasting,” the Nobel jury noted.

In his role as chief of the central bank, Bernanke “was able to



(From left) 2022 Nobel Economics Prize laureates Ben Bernanke, Douglas Diamond and Philip Dybvig are seen on a display during an event to announce the winners in Stockholm, Sweden on Monday (AFP)

put knowledge from research into policy,” during the financial crisis of 2008-2009, the Nobel Committee said.

Bernanke has been hailed for the Fed’s unorthodox response of slashing interest rates and flooding the financial system with liquidity.

Bank runs

Diamond, a professor at the University of Chicago born in 1953, and Dybvig, 67, a professor at Washington University in St. Louis, were honoured for showing how “banks offer an optimal solution” for channelling savings to investments by acting as an intermediary.

The pair also showed how these institutions were vulnerable to so called banks runs.

“If a large number of savers simultaneously run to the bank to withdraw their money, the rumour may become a self-fulfilling prophecy – a bank run occurs and the bank collapses,” the Nobel Committee said.

The committee added that this dangerous dynamic can be avoided by governments providing deposit insurance and giving banks a life-line by becoming a lender of last resort.

“The laureates’ insights have improved our ability to avoid both serious crises and expensive bailouts,” Tore Ellingsen,

chair of the Committee for the Prize in Economic Sciences, said.

“In a nutshell, the theory says that banks can be tremendously useful but they are only guaranteed to be stable if they are properly regulated”, he added.

Diamond, speaking to reporters after the announcement, reflected Monday on the decision by US authorities not to bailout US investment bank Lehman Brothers, as they later did other financial institutions.

The bank’s collapse sent shockwaves through financial markets when it filed for bankruptcy in September 2008.

“It would have been better to find a more accommodating

way, a less unstable way and unexpected way to resolve Lehman Brothers,” Diamond said, stressing there were questions about what regulators were legally able to do at the time.

“Had they found a way, I think the world would have had less of a severe crisis than it did,” Diamond said.

'False Nobel'

Of all the Nobels, the economics prize has the fewest number of female winners, just two since it was first awarded in 1969 – Elinor Ostrom in 2009 and Esther Duflo in 2019.

The economics prize, set up by the Swedish central bank, was the only award absent from the original five created by scientist Alfred Nobel, sometimes earning it the moniker of “false Nobel”.

But like the other prizes it comes with a medal and an award sum of 10mn Swedish kronor (around US\$900,000).

The winners will receive the prize from King Carl XVI Gustaf at a formal ceremony in Stockholm on December 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of scientist Alfred Nobel who created the prizes in his last will and testament.

AFP



World food prices fall for sixth straight month: UN

Paris, France – World food prices have fallen for a sixth month in a row in September, UN data showed, as they continued to decline since a record reached following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The Food and Agriculture Organization said its price index, which tracks the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, averaged 136.3 points in September, a 1.1 per cent drop from August.

The index, however, was 5.5 per cent higher than in September 2021.

The monthly decline was driven by a “sharp fall” in the prices of vegetable oils, the United Nations agency said.

There were also moderate decreases in the prices of sugar, meat and dairy products.

The declines more than offset a rebound in cereal prices.

The FAO said wheat prices jumped due to “heightened uncertainty” about the continuation

beyond November of a UN-brokered deal that has allowed Ukraine to ship its grains via the Black Sea.

The deal lifted a Russian blockade that has raised fears of triggering famine in nations reliant on grains from Ukraine, one of the world’s breadbaskets. Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24. Dry conditions in Argentina and the United States have also contributed to the increase in global cereal prices.

The FAO lowered its world cereal production forecast for this year again, with a decline of 1.7 per cent expected.

The agency said 45 countries, including 33 in Africa, nine in Asia, two in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one in Europe “are in need of external assistance for food”.

The UN warned in September that more than one million people are at risk of famine and death without humanitarian aid.

AFP

Biden hails IBM's \$20bn investment announcement

Poughkeepsie, US – IBM hosted US President Joe Biden to celebrate the announcement of a US\$20bn investment in semiconductors, quantum computing and other cutting-edge technology in New York state.

CEO Arvind Krishna on Thursday unveiled the spending, which will take place over a decade, in a speech alongside Biden in the tech giant’s Poughkeepsie facility.

“We are proud to announce that IBM is pledging to invest US\$20bn across the region,” he told cheering workers.

“This investment includes breakthroughs in semiconductor technology, mainframe computers, quantum computers and artificial intelligence,” Krishna said.

Biden, who flew in to Poughkeepsie earlier for a tour of the site, hailed the pledge from the “iconic American company” as another sign that his strategy of rebuilding the US innovative edge is working.

“It’s here at this factory and the factories of other companies



US President Joe Biden

across America where America’s future is literally being built,” he said.

The Democrat has made a priority of encouraging growth in high-tech manufacturing, hoping to rebuild domestic supply chains in crucial components such as microchips that for years have been left to foreign companies based as far away as Taiwan.

Other major projects currently underway include Micron’s announcement of a US\$100bn investment to manufacture semiconductors in New York and Wolfspeed’s pledge to

spend US\$5bn on a new semiconductor plant in North Carolina.

In early September, Biden visited the nascent site of Intel’s future US\$20bn facility in Ohio.

“We’re better positioned globally than any time in a long time,” Biden said, hailing the US investment climate created by “the most productive workers in the world,” the “best research universities,” dynamic venture capitalists and his administration’s pushing through of the biggest federal infrastructure spending plans in decades.

AFP

Stocks down, dollar up as markets expect more big US rate hikes

London, UK – Stock markets mostly retreated and the dollar firmed Monday as forecast-beating US jobs data fanned expectations for more large interest rate hikes from the Federal Reserve.

A rally across equity trading floors last week has given way to gloom as investors grow increasingly worried that central bank rate hikes to tame runaway prices will plunge the global economy into recession.

Adding to the stress is the upcoming corporate earnings season, which many fear will show that companies are feeling the pain of tightening monetary policies.

European and Asian equities mostly suffered Monday following heavy losses Friday on Wall Street.

London’s FTSE 100 index fell 0.4 per cent, while EURO STOXX 50 was down by 0.3 per cent.

In Asia, Hong Kong’s Hang Seng Index plunged 3.0 per cent and China’s Shanghai Composite index lost 1.7 per cent. Japan’s



Nikkei was closed for a holiday on Monday.

Last week closed out with news that the United States created a net 263,000 jobs in September.

While that was down from August it was more than expected, highlighting the tough job Fed officials face in their battle against decades-high inflation.

With the spotlight on a US consumer price index reading

later in the week, policymakers continue to take a hawkish tone, warning they will not ease up on their rate hikes even if that means causing a recession.

Elsewhere on Monday, the Moscow stock exchange plunged nearly 12 per cent following multiple strikes on Ukrainian cities and a weekend explosion that partially destroyed the bridge connecting Crimea to Russia.

In foreign exchange and amid

a strong dollar, the pound won little support from Britain ramping up efforts to calm markets after a heavily criticised budget.

In what was seen as co-ordinated action, the government brought forward key economic forecasts and the Bank of England boosted liquidity.

“With the pound remaining weak and (UK) government borrowing costs inching up again towards worrying levels, the UK government and the Bank of England have launched a two-pronged attempt to calm markets,” noted Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

Oil prices meanwhile fell after the biggest weekly gain since March that followed a decision by OPEC and allied producers led by Russia to slash crude output by two million barrels per day.

The drop Monday came also on demand concerns caused by China’s Covid flare-ups and more weak data out of Beijing owing to lockdowns.

AFP

Google looks to raise its smartphone game with latest Pixel 7

Brooklyn, US – Google is looking to up its smartphone game with the Pixel 7, the latest entrant in a competitive corner of personal electronics where it has traditionally been a bit player.

The device was unveiled last week in Brooklyn, where representatives from the Mountain View, California giant highlighted top-flight features that can silence background noise on the phone.

First introduced in 2016, the Pixel was a late-comer to the portable phone trend, arriving nearly a decade after Apple’s iPhone and seven years after Samsung’s Galaxy model, the two products that dominate today’s market.

In 2020, global deliveries of the Google phone were just 2.7mn, next to more than

200mn for both the Apple and Samsung options.

Those paltry sales figures are partly due to the Google phone’s limited availability, with the Pixel 5 sold in less than 10 countries as the tech giant has focused its smartphone investment on software rather than its own hardware.

While Google’s phones are comparable in terms of quality to the top sellers, the product “has often lacked backing from Google” in terms of marketing, said Runar Bjørhovde, a research analyst at market research firm Canalis.

Google has instead focused on boosting its Android operating system, which was launched in 2008 and included more than 80 per cent of the smartphones sold in the first half of 2022, ac-



Brian Rakowski, Google vice president of product management, speaks at the launch of Google Pixel 7 and Pixel 7 Pro phones in New York (AFP)

ording to Canalis.

Maurice Klaehne of Counterpoint Research said that “Google certainly has the capability and resources to become a major

smartphone player, but that is not Pixel’s strategy,” noting that growing Android remains Google’s main objective.

But “Selling more Pixel de-

vices might mean taking away share from other Android players, and this would go against Pixel’s goal,” he said.

Bjørhovde noted that, with the latest version of the phone, Google has pivoted somewhat, releasing a product that is compatible with wearables, earbuds and other devices produced by the company.

Wonders of AI

The prior phone version, the Pixel 6, was the first to employ Tensor processing developed by Google to enable more sophisticated artificial intelligence and machine learning.

The Pixel 7 has a second-generation Tensor, the G2, which can make blurry photos more clear, excise distracting extras from photos and remove the

background noise on telephone calls.

The upgraded system also can translate language in real-time, including idioms, and transmit more nuanced photos of different skin tones.

At a launch event, Google vice president Rick Osterloh said the new product “represents years of development across Google, and a long-term investment in the Pixel portfolio.”

The company has seen an uptick in sales, reaching 6.2mn Pixels in the 12 months ending June 30, 2022, up 129 per cent from the prior 12-month stretch, according to figures from Canalis.

This includes a doubling in market share in the United States, where Pixel now only accounts for two per cent of smart-

phone sales.

Priced at US\$599 in the United States, the Pixel 7 is being positioned as relatively affordable. The latest versions of the iPhone and Samsung Galaxy are both around US\$800.

Google has been bolstering its Pixel marketing, partnering with the NBA professional basketball league.

The company also plans to distribute Pixel 7 in 17 countries, compared to 13 markets for the prior version.

“Google has the potential to become a long-term player in the smartphone market,” said Bjørhovde. “However, it will be dependent upon global scale and breaking into new markets to achieve this and create a profitable business that can last.”

AFP

UTAS-Nizwa’s BSD to launch 3rd edition of PRIME Project



The UTAS-Nizwa’s Business Studies Department is on its course to commence the third edition of the Professional Innovative Marketing Executive (PRIME) Project this month, a press release said. The PRIME Project - a brainchild of Turkiya al Busaidi, HoS-Marketing; and the call of Nahid al Shukaili, HoD-BSD - has been given shape to provide relevant and high-impact learning interventions for addressing the professional development needs of BSD students in line with the Oman Vision 2040. Through the leadership of the university’s then dean Dr Ahmed al Shari, the project was formally launched on October 21 last year. As community engagement is one of the marching orders of the university’s current dean Dr Hafeedh Said al Rahbi as well, he extended his full support to the project and motivated the organising team to continue the programme. The first two editions of the project were organised through an eight-week boot camp for the marketing specialisation students in Diploma 2, Advanced Diploma and Bachelor’s degree. Golden Tulip Hotel-Nizwa generously supported the first edition of the programme. Lulu Hypermarket-Nizwa came in during the second edition of the project and accepted the call of being the project’s partner industry. Now in its third year, the PRIME Project organising team intends to extend its invitation to other Business Studies Department’s across all the UTAS branches.

Huge literary recognition comes for two ISG students



Seethalekshmi Kishore and Meethi Sharma from Indian School Al Ghubra have been recognised and honoured for their excellent literary works, by the Gujarat Sahitya Academy together with Motivational Strips, in a recently held award function of the India Independence Day Global Literary Honours 2022. Seethalekshmi and Meethi were chosen from among 22 budding authors from across the globe, for their exemplary contribution to literature and writing. The award which was commissioned in 2020, has been making headlines owing both to its exhaustive evaluation process as well as its nominations from more than 173 countries. Honouring the budding authors, Shiju Pallithazheth, the founder and president of Motivational Strips, opined that the dawn of a glorious future in the literary arena is within reach with the arrival of young authors as these. Dr Vishnu Pandya, the chairman of the Gujarat Sahitya Academy and a Padma Shri winner himself, said that the young achievers had to successfully pass the stringent evaluation process by committee members before being declared winners.

Ooredoo offers 20% off on Shahry plans through eShop

For the next three months, Ooredoo customers can enjoy a 20 per cent discount on Shahry postpaid plans through the Ooredoo eShop. From the ‘Endless 10’ plan for only RO8, all the way up to the ‘Omanuna 100’ plan for RO80, the discounted subscription fees are valid for four months, the company said. Ooredoo’s Shahry plans offer the most competitive data, voice and SMS prices in convenient fixed monthly plans to suit all requirements and budgets. With no contract, Shahry plans come with generous local and GCC Internet and world roaming data, and a free subscription to STARZPLAY on certain Omanuna plans. The discount applies to new activations only and customers must sign up to the new plan through the Ooredoo eShop, available at <http://shop.ooredoo.om>



Oman Avenues Mall launches marketing extravaganza as prelude to FIFA world cup

Oman Avenues Mall announced the launch of ‘Football Unites’ promotional campaign as a prelude to the upcoming world cup to be held in the region for the first time in history. The mall would be launching various promotional campaigns starting from October 6 and running until December 31, aimed at curating a world of happiness and excitement for families, shoppers, and mall visitors to immerse themselves in, a press release said. The campaign which is intended not only at celebrating the season but also at showcasing the rich history of the world cup in an informative display at the new welcome court of the mall. A slew of promotions across categories are included in the promotion to incentivise the visitors apart from the several gaming led events that shall be held at the mall. The promotion under the title of ‘Spend & Win’ entitles customers who make a combined purchase of RO15 from the outlets at the mall to take part in multiple raffle draws that will pick up 24 winners of the Al Saada Mall Gift Cards worth RO100 each during the promotion period spanning 12 weeks. Apart from this, customers with a single purchase of RO15 can also participate in the mega draw to be held on December 31 to win the sporty Jeep Wrangler Gladiator.

The season really is an expression of unlimited verve and borders on our theme ‘Football Unites’; in which friends, families and communities are drawn closer

GOGI GEORGE

“The football season is a time of great fun and excitement and the world cup coming to the region for the first time is a major boost. The season really is an expression of unlimited verve and borders on our theme ‘Football Unites’; in which friends, families and communities are drawn closer,” said Gogi George, General Manager, Development & Leasing, Lulu Group International. “We want to spread seasonal cheer and create a reason to celebrate every day. Oman Avenues Mall has led the transformation landscape in Oman and has been able to appeal to the larger populace of Oman and we will continue

in our quest in the future too.” In addition to the ‘Spend and Win’ campaign, there are a plethora of activities at the Oman Avenues Mall lined up this season. Another first for the mall would be the human foosball competition in which visitors can take part and win attractive prizes. Human foosball is the same as regular foosball, but humans take the place of the plastic players instead. The game aims to get the ball into each team’s goal while players are being restricted by the handheld rod. For the skilled, there would be several gaming activities at the 2nd level of the mall, with a chance to win exciting prizes for the participants. The mall has also announced that, the cinema operator at the mall - Cinepolis shall be broadcasting FIFA World Cup 2022 live at the cinemas with ticketed sales commencing soon. There are competitions in the mall wherein five winners would get two tickets each to view the day’s match live at the cinemas. This is part of the initiative of the mall to further the digital engagement and competition platforms. The mechanisms to participate in these activities would be announced soon. To reach out to the ever-growing online population, the mall’s social media pages will feature a stream of social content from fans who use the hashtag

#FOOTBALLUNITES on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Visitors who tag this have a chance to win an exclusive Xbox gaming set. Derick Michael, General Manager, Oman Avenues Mall said, “We are sure that the response to this promotion and line-up of events at the Mall would delight many. We are geared towards providing a fulfilling and enriching experiential mall experience to all our visitors.” Oman Avenues Mall stands true to its marketing tag, ‘Celebrate everyday’ with its mega sized entertainment and leisure offerings and multitude of food and beverage offerings. The mall is home to more than 240 brands across 108,000 square meters of lease space. The mall has been a harbinger of change with its ever-evolving product offerings and retail offerings that have caught the imagination of its customers’ and is now acknowledged as a dynamic retail-led mixed-use destination. A division of the renowned LuLu Group International, based at Abu Dhabi, Oman Avenues Mall is one of the largest and sought-after destinations in the Sultanate of Oman. Located in the heart of the city with a host of unparalleled amenities and services, Oman Avenues Mall will provide a refreshing experience to the discerning customer.

Samsung, MHD-ITICS announce their partnership in Oman

The Infrastructure, Technology, Industrial and Consumer Solutions cluster of Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC (MHD-ITICS) and Samsung Gulf Electronics held a channel partner meet at the InterContinental Muscat hotel on October 6, to formally announce their association. Attended by a very large number of dealers from all over Oman, the event saw Samsung and MHD-ITICS jointly presenting their plans to further raise their leadership position in the residential air conditioning and home appliances market. As the official Samsung distributor in Oman, MHD-ITICS, with their proven track record of a strong country-wide distribution network, in-depth knowledge of the consumer market, unparalleled customer service, and exceptional logistics capabilities, will work with their dealer and channel sales partners to ensure widespread distribution of Samsung air conditioners and home appliances all over the country. Samsung took this opportunity to present to the audience the range of futuristic products with efficient, energy saving and ease-of-use features built into



each of them, that would be introduced into the market in the coming months. Those who attended the vent from the MHD-ITICS sides are its chief investment officer Mohammed Abdallah al Kharusi,

CEO Jayaprakash Menon, Director Mohsin Talal Bahrani and consumer division’s deputy director Gokul Praveen. The Samsung Gulf team was represented by its head of marketing Ashley Kocherry, Oman country manager Vinu Chandy and product

trainer Hussain Mohammed. Speaking at the event, MHD’s Jayaprakash Menon said, “Our strategic partnership with Samsung is a significant milestone for us in our mission to enhance the

value we deliver to our customers. MHD-ITICS is driven by an inherent sense of responsibility and an unwavering commitment to deliver best-in-class product solutions for our customers.

“Our company’s core value of customer service, driven by innovative products, and contemporary technology is what lead Samsung to partner with us. This also reaffirms the belief Samsung has in the vast growth potential of Oman,” he added. Speaking on behalf of Samsung Gulf, Ashley Kocherry said, “We consider Oman as one of the key strategic markets. We have partnered with MHD-ITICS due to their sales and service strengths, as well as their fantastic distribution infrastructure. Our commitment towards maintaining a strong presence in the region is evident in our partnership with MHD-ITICS.” Carrying forward the legacy of the MHD Group’s reputation and trust earned over the previous six decades of business in Oman, MHD-ITICS is strongly aligned with the diversification goals underlined in Oman Vision 2040, the group said.

Anil Kapoor to inaugurate Malabar Gold’s showroom

With an impressive network of over 285 outlets spread across ten countries, Malabar Gold & Diamonds - world’s sixth largest jewellery retailer - is all set for the grand relaunch of its renovated and restyled showroom in Oman Avenues Mall, Baushar. The showroom will be inaugurated by popular Indian film actor Anil Kapoor on Friday at 6.30pm.



The revamped showroom will showcase a wide variety of jewellery collections across Malabar Gold & Diamonds’ various sub brands such as Mine, Era, Viraaz, Ethnix and Precia. Comprising of traditional jewellery, modern jewellery, daily wear jewellery and much more, the design in Gold, Diamond and Precious gems have been curated from over 20 countries. “It gives us great joy to present the renovated showroom at Oman Avenues Mall to our customers. We have made every effort to turn the showroom into a place for an exceptional shopping experience for our customers in Oman, who have accepted Malabar Gold & Diamonds with open arms,” said Najeeb K, Regional Head, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Oman.

Omantel’s programme to boost employee’s wellbeing

Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in Oman, has initiated a programme that aims to provide necessary support and guidance to employees who face pressures and challenges, whether in the workplace or at a personal level. ‘Mashora’ has been designed with focus on the emotional wellbeing of the employees, Omantel said in a press release. ‘Through the programme, employees are encouraged to share the difficulties they encounter, whether at work or at a personal level, with company counselors who will provide them with the necessary assistance and guidance’, it added.

“The ‘Mashora’ programme was launched taking into consideration the urgent need to deal with pressures that employees face in recent times, not only at work but also in their personal life. Such pressures may affect the employees’ performance as well as their mental wellbeing,” said Dr Muhanned Dawood al Asfoor, senior proficient of HR at Omantel. “Mashora programme is considered to correspond with other programs and initiatives for employees all of which aim to create an ideal work environment. The program focuses on the human side of the employees and ensures complete confidentiality, and we consider it essential to provide support to our employees and stand by them, not only in matters related to work, but also in matters outside the scope of the company,” he added. The need for such programmes became greater after the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying psychological, health, social and other pressures.

Pakistan school organises seminar on drug abuse



Pakistan School Muscat with active participation of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) hosted a seminar on the drug abuse on October 5, to create an awareness among the youth about the

adverse effects of drugs on one’s health. The programme started with the recitation of the Holy Quran. The occasion was graced by Ameer Hamza, the chairman of Board of Directors, along with the Pakistan Embassy’s community welfare attaché Ateeq ur Rehman, senior principal Nasir Nawaz, HR Salim Alkhatri, the ROP officers Saeed Salim al Makhrazi, Aqeel Rashid al Bahri, Moosa Juma al Balushi, Salim Khalfan and the ROP official photographer Waleed Abdul Kareem. The ROP officers addressed the students and highlighted the adverse effects of drug abuse. They also answered the relevant questions put by the students about drug abuse during the question answer session. The students also visited the ROP’s awareness campaign bus and took keen interest in the displays and presentations.



Oman Sailing Festival in Sohar encourages people to sail while giving back to environment

The first leg of the Oman Sailing Festival wrapped up in Sohar this weekend with more than 268 visitors taking part in free Try Sailing, Try Windsurfing and Try Kitesurfing sessions under the supervision of professional instructors from Oman Sail. Held at the Silver Jubilee Garden from Thursday to Saturday, 50 volunteers also joined Oman Sail representatives in removing litter from the beach and from the sea, so as to help preserve the natural environment for future generations and native marine life. There was also an SME activation featuring 13 local businesses and craftspeople showcasing local products ranging from food, clothing and household items to souvenirs and traditional art.

Oman Sailing Festival project manager Musab al Balushi said, “This was a great start to the Oman Sailing Festival 2022. We were very impressed with how many people took the opportunity to learn how to sail, windsurf and kitesurf.” Oman has a long and storied maritime heritage, and these sessions help to introduce the next generation to the sport, allowing them to take on a new challenge or discover a new hobby. “The Oman Sailing Festival will travel the length and breadth of the country to share the potential of sailing, windsurfing and kitesurfing, and have a positive impact on the local environment by raising awareness of the need to care for the beaches and native wildlife our beautiful country is blessed with,” he added.



The next stop of the festival would be Mussanah from October 12 to October 14 as part of the Arab Sailing Championships taking place simultaneously at the Barceló Mussanah Resort with sessions in the RS Venture adaptable dinghy on offer. From there, the festival would move to Al Mouj Muscat on October 17 to celebrate Omani Women’s Day, and Sur al Hadeed in Seeb from October 20 to October 22. The Oman Sailing Festival is proudly supported by the Barceló Resort Mussanah, Oman Air, National University of Science and (International Maritime

College), National Mineral Water Company (Tanuf), and environmental partner the Environment Society of Oman. Operating under Oman Tourism Development Company, Oman Sail is tasked with rekindling the country’s maritime eminence, promote the sultanate around the world through sailing, contribute to the sustainable prosperity of the nation and provide long-term learning opportunities for the youth. Since 2008, Oman Sail has built a solid foundation around sailing, tourism, commerce, health and environment, all underpinned with competency-based development for its workforce.

Committed to offering both men and women equal opportunities to learn, Oman Sail’s programmes focus on nurturing young talent to develop the sailing champions of tomorrow, increasing revenue in the tourism, activity and experiential learning markets and gaining prominent international exposure for the country. The company has a strong track record in delivering a portfolio of events across the sultanate to showcase Oman’s natural beauty, tourism potential, the people’s hospitality, and the infrastructure readiness for business opportunities.

ahli Islamic opens a new branch in wilayat Sur

ahli Islamic has announced the opening of its third branch in Ash Sharqiyah Governorate with a new state-of-the-art facility in Wilayat Sur. This brings the total number of its branches to 19 in the country and demonstrates its exponential growth in a short span of time. Sur has been selected as a prime destination for ahli Islamic for being one of the oldest cities of Oman with a historic role in maritime trade. ‘Sur’s location will help augment the bank’s growing customer base with an advanced infrastructure, catering to informed customers who seek sharia’a compliant banking products,’ the bank said. Commenting on the new branch and the bank’s steady growth in the recent years, Yousuf al Rawahi, DGM and head of ahli Islamic, said, “This is a turning point in our strategic



growth trajectory. We have adopted a calculated expansion process to connect with our customers from different regions of the country, and from different walks of life. The new branch marks our third foray in the Sharqiyah Governorate, and reflects our commitment to enhancing

our presence in places of economic significance. “As a pivotal destination, with several developmental landmarks in the contemporary scenario, Sur is, indeed, an important wilayat in the region, with vast potential for business growth. Our branch will meet both im-

mediate and long-term banking needs of old and potential customers in the district, assuring them of convenient and flexible financial solutions.” ahli Islamic’s 19th branch opening, on the heels of its recently launched branch in Nizwa, is a clear indication of its dynamic

customer base, the bank said. It has leveraged the strengthening economic recovery across the GCC countries and positive changes in the Islamic banking horizon, locally and globally, to carve its niche as one of the most preferred banks in the country. Pointing out the bank’s commitment to fulfill its customers’ Islamic finance requirements and enhance their everyday banking journeys, Rawahi added, “Customers are the key stakeholder in our business. Our every new move is determined by customers’ changing needs and demands. We value every feedback and balance it with our marketing metrics to pave the way forward. This has led to a win-win situation, and the coming days will further boost our growth, as we continue to expand and connect with customers in every part of the country.”

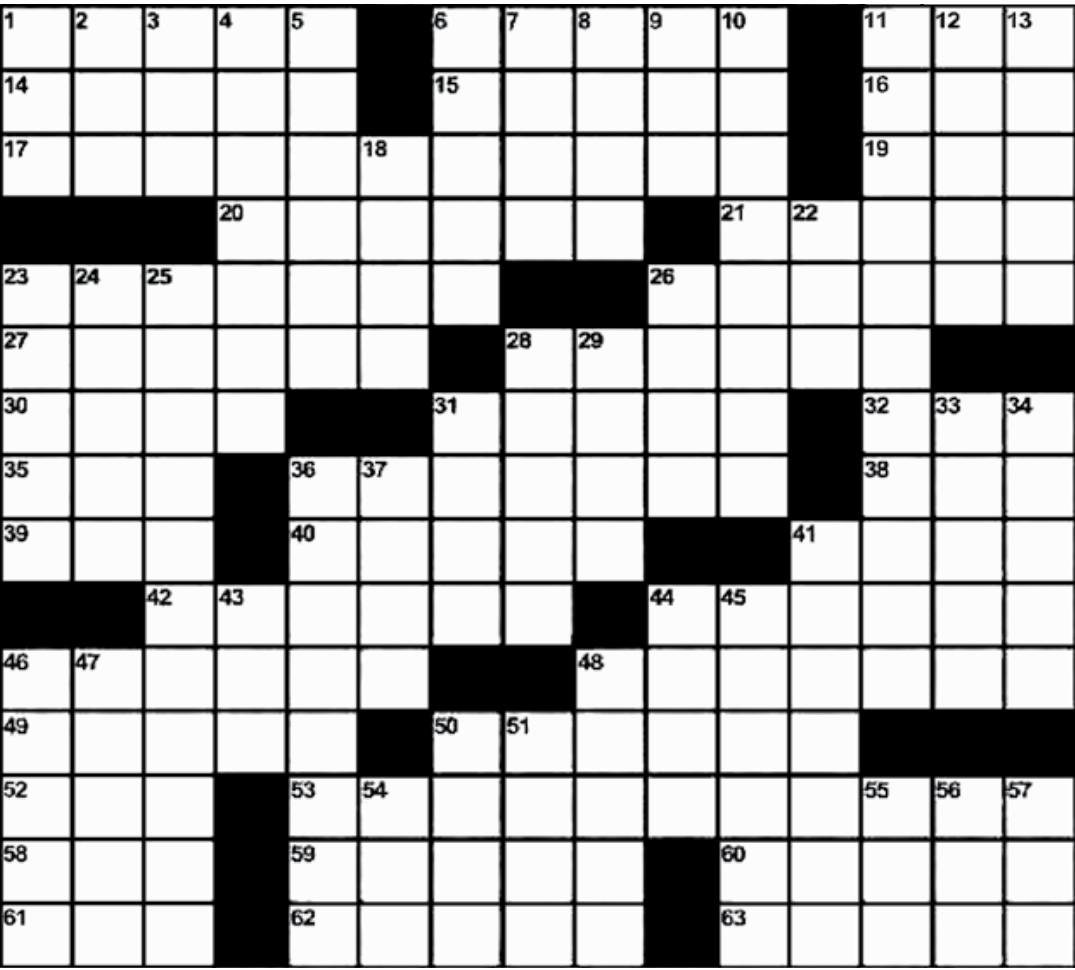
Oman Shell gold sponsor in science fest



As part of their aim to promote STEM education among the youth, Oman Shell is participating in the ongoing Oman Science Festival as a gold sponsor. The festival, to run until October 15, returns after a two-year pandemic-induced hiatus. It represents a forum for science and scholars, gathering 70 scientific corners with 452 activities covering different STEM-related fields. Like the festival, Oman Shell is committed to fostering creative

thinking and creating a positive trend towards science, technology, innovation and scientific research among the youth, and by using such platforms in collaboration with key stakeholders, they have been able to accomplish the same. The festival features the ‘Oman Shell Future City’, which will help students gain an understanding of what a sustainable, smart city could look like in the future, said a press release.

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Flat-topped hills
 - 6) Lavished affection (on)
 - 11) "El_" (Heston film)
 - 14) Type of coffee or whiskey
 - 15) 1960s boxer Griffith
 - 16) Type of poem
 - 17) Strolls in the wilderness
 - 19) Mai_ (cocktail variety)
 - 20) Making no sounds
 - 21) Trails
 - 23) Appallingly
 - 26) Additionally
 - 27) Stretches of shallow water
 - 28) Himalayan kingdom
 - 30) "Herzog" author Bel-low
 - 31) Excuse for the police
 - 32) Cranberry locale
 - 35) "That's_ folks!"
 - 36) Chopper to the ER
 - 38) Belt piercer
 - 39) Archery wood
 - 40) Tsar's edict
 - 41) Earthenware crock
- 42) Cafeteria customers
 - 44) Syrup sources
 - 46) Arts and_
 - 48) People who revel in cruelty
 - 49) Coffee, the milky way
 - 50) Spring or winter, e.g.
 - 52) Ordinal nwnber ending, sometimes
 - 53) Nightmares for landlords
 - 58) "Fee_ foe furn"
 - 59) "Dynasty" actress Linda
 - 60) Western "necktie"
 - 61) High, rocky hill
 - 62) Satisfy, as a debt
 - 63) Attack from a concealed place

DOWN

 - 1) 1160th of an hr.
 - 2) Stat for pitchers
 - 3) Create a lap
 - 4) "Just like always ..."
 - 5) Piercing, as a sound
 - 6) Decimal system de-viser
 - 7) Arab League member
 - 8) Arcade failure
 - 9) Yellowstone beast
 - 10) Tyrannical
 - 11) Nurse's office supply
 - 12) 43rd U.S. state
 - 13) Thomas Jefferson, religiously
 - 18) Angled annexes
 - 22) Litigator's org.
 - 23) Test, as ore
 - 24) Moby Dick, for one
 - 25) Cold and sideways rain, e.g.
 - 26) "Oompah" instrument
 - 28) "God __ America"
 - 29) Bee's home
 - 31) Jewish month
 - 33) Apprentice night-stalker
 - 34) Bottle material
 - 36) One who can hardly be made out
 - 37) _ out a living
 - 41) Feature of an editorial
 - 43) Back, on board
 - 44) Rigging support
 - 45) Embellishes
 - 46) Chin crease
 - 47) 3:1, e.g.
- 48) Verbally disrespect-ful

50) Fastener for pajamas

51) Europe's tallest active volcano

54) The day before

55) Showy garden-pond fish

56) Sixth sense

57) Visualize
- NOTE PAD**
-

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

After a lot of socializing, you're finally getting the chance to spend some quality time on your own. You may think you still want to be out and about enjoying the wild life today, but once you get a little taste of solitude, you'll happily settle right in. This inward phase will afford you the luxury of time.

Feel free to ignore the rest of the world (as much as you can) and just spend your day with introspection and relaxation.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You've been moving forward on a new goal for quite a while and should start seeing real progress today. Even if you feel like you're not far enough along, backing out of this situation is not an option. You're in the thick of it, and you might as well keep on going. Things will start looking more promising soon. Right now you can try to get more comfortable with your surroundings if you understand the processes going on. Ask a few questions and get informed.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

A lot of people have been listening to your ideas lately, and some of them have been listening a little too closely. If you've been detecting a copycat in your midst, today is the day to do something about it. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but it can also be a huge source of annoyance. Instead of focusing too much of your energy on putting someone in their place, focus on the fact that they admired you so much in the first place.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You should have no doubts whatsoever about your abilities today! There is no room in your busy schedule for uncertainty, plus there's absolutely no reason for it. Not only will you be able to spot any potential problems or conflicts right away, but you will also lead the way in trying to fix them. It's time to step out of the shadows and into the limelight. Someone you admire is waiting for you to strut your stuff and put your own unique spin on things.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

If you never stop to smell the roses, you'll never know how sweet life can truly be. There is no need to rush around today, despite what anyone else may say. You're in a period of fullness right now in which a lot of what you've been working for has finally been integrated into your life. But you won't realize this unless you slow down and coast for a while. There's no need to put out every fire that ignites. Sometimes the chaos of life can be enriching.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

There's one simple way to make the next few weeks of your life easier: let go of all the things you can't control. Yes, this is easier said than done, but once you start to make the effort, you'll immediately get a taste of the freedom it brings. Sometimes, guilt can keep you from moving away from old setbacks, bad relationships, and other unpleasant drama. If you're feeling guilty, ask yourself why. There's no way to go back in time. The only option is to keep going forward.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You will be given a great opportunity to polish up your public image today, that is, if you're ready to get out in the middle of the action. Can you take the heat? Because if you're flexible and up for anything, you can shine in the spotlight. Use your sense of adventure to keep yourself open to new experiences when they come your way. There's a high level of energy buzzing around you, and it will help bolster your courage and keep you relaxed

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

There is quite a mystery going on between two people you know, and it will hold extra fascination for you today. They could be either professional or social acquaintances, so keep your eyes and ears open wherever you go. If you can connect the dots and do a little educated guessing, you just may solve the mystery. Have fun with this, and don't be afraid to use a healthy dose of bravado. If you play your cards right, you can bluff this one to victory.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

There are going to be so many opportunities popping up today that unless you take advantage of at least one of them, you will regret it later. What you do on this day will dictate what happens for you tomorrow, so set up your future by being as proactive as possible. Putting ideas to work is more important than completing anything right now. It's even more important than making progress. Focus on starting new things and getting help from as many other people as possible.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

This back-and-forth between you and another person shows no sign of slowing down. It's becoming part of the relationship dynamic. Today, if you need a break from this showdown, take it. Step back and let them take over. Let them call the shots as they see them. Chances are good without you there to balance their energy and ideas, they won't have very much fun. Being in the background will get your point across far more effectively than confrontation.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

All the hardest parts are over and the fun times are about to begin. Just like the feeling you get when you're coasting down a hill on your bicycle, you'll feel free and unencumbered by the forces of life today. You're riding a wave of energy that you didn't necessarily create, but it's taking you to a very good destination. Get ready for some entertaining challenges that could transform the social world you currently live in.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If there are some new ideas floating around today that make you feel uncomfortable, then those are the ideas you need to pay attention to most. It's time to stretch your boundaries right now and step into a new experience, or at least make a new beginning toward a familiar goal. There is a new energy in your step, a new outlook on the same old circumstances. This is a great day to give something one more try. This time the outcome will be more like what you want it to be.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. In which country is the city of Kandahar?

- A. Iran
- B. Turkey
- C. Afghanistan
- D. India

02. What is the main material out of which a pool cue is usually made?

- A. Bone
- B. Ivory
- C. Gutta-percha
- D. Wood

03.Which of these is an award-winning film about a literary critic, author and Oxford professor, the celebrated author to whom he was married, and their last years together as her dementia takes her?

- A. Iris (2001)
- B. The Notebook (2004)
- C. A Song For Martin (2001)
- D. Away From Her (2007)

Answers: 1.C 2.D 3.A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

V	K	A	B
S	O	R	S
V	E	R	O
Y	I	T	O

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

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

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

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

Malaysia PM calls snap elections

PM Ismail Sabri Yaakob dissolved the parliament in a bid to restore political stability

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Malaysia's prime minister dissolved parliament on Monday to clear the way for snap elections in a bid to restore political stability as the country emerges from the ravages of COVID-19 and a multi-billion dollar corruption scandal.

Elections could be held within weeks following Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob's announcement.

Polls were not due until September next year but Ismail faced intense pressure from within his United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party to dissolve parliament and secure a strong mandate in early elections.

It held a slim majority in the just-dissolved parliament.

"Yesterday I met the king ... and I sought his permission to dissolve the parliament. And the king agreed to my request to dissolve parliament today," Ismail said in a televised address to the nation following his audience with Sultan Abdullah.

"I hope the people will use their votes wisely to vote for stability, economic growth and harmony in the country," he said, referring to the mainly Muslim but multi-racial Southeast Asian nation.



A man watches television on display at a shop as Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob announces the dissolution of parliament as he addresses the nation during a live telecast, in Bentong, Malaysia's Pahang state, on Monday (AFP)

No date has been given for the election, but under the constitution polls must be held within 60 days following the dissolution of parliament.

The dissolution came days after the government unveiled a populist budget that included a few billion dollars worth of cash handouts and a cut in personal

income taxes.

Political turmoil

Malaysia has been in political turmoil since the last national elections in 2018 when a reformist pact steered by ex-leader Mahathir Mohamad overwhelmingly defeated an alliance led by UMNO, the main

party that ruled the country for more than 60 years.

Then incumbent Najib Razak, who was embroiled in a scandal where billions of dollars were alleged to have been looted from the 1MDB sovereign wealth fund, was ousted as the prime minister.

He was later convicted of cor-

ruption following a lengthy trial and started serving a 12-year jail term in August for the initial batch of charges. He faces more charges that could put him in jail longer.

Hopes for stability after Najib's ouster faded quickly, however, as Mahathir's government collapsed after 22 months

due to bitter infighting.

He was succeeded by his former right-hand man Muhyiddin Yassin, but growing public anger over his handling of the pandemic forced him to resign less than two years after he took office, and Ismail was named Malaysia's new leader.

Ismail's rule has been relatively peaceful after he signed a truce with the country's opposition to allow the government to focus on recovery after the worst of the pandemic.

Analysts said the elections will hopefully give the next government a stronger mandate to shepherd the country over a five-year term.

"The significance of this polls is that this is the first general elections since COVID-19, so it's very much an election to select a government to steer Malaysia back to political stability," James Chin, a professor of Asian studies at the University of Tasmania, told AFP.

"People are looking for political stability. People are just sick and tired of the three governments Malaysia had since 2018. "And people realise that for the government or for the country to move forward, you need political stability."

AFP

76 killed in boat accident in Nigeria

Lagos, Nigeria - Almost everyone on board a boat died when it capsized in a flood-swollen river in Nigeria's Anambra state, President Muhammadu Buhari said on Sunday.

An estimated 85 people were taking the overloaded boat on Friday when flooding of the Niger River caused it to tip over.

"The boat reportedly carrying 85 persons capsized following rising floods in Ogbaru area of the state, with emergency services confirming a death toll of 76," Buhari's office quoted him as saying.

He directed the emergency services to provide relief to the victims. "I pray for the repose of the souls of the deceased and for everyone's safety, as well as the well-being of the family members of the victims of this tragic accident," he added.

Earlier on Sunday, the emergency services said rising water level was hampering rescue efforts. "The water level is very high and too risky for a smooth search and rescue operation," Thickman Tanimu, the southeast coordinator of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) told AFP.

He said the flooding was the worst the country has seen in years, with the water level around one-tenth higher than a decade ago. NEMA requested the Nigerian Air Force provide helicopters for the rescue operation.

Anambra state governor Charles Soludo urged residents of flood-ravaged areas to relocate, while adding that the government would provide relief to those affected by the disaster.

"This development is still a shock to the government and good people of Anambra State. I sympathise with the families of people involved," Soludo said in a statement.

Boat accidents occur regularly in Nigeria because of overloading, speeding, poor maintenance and disregarding navigation rules. Since the start of the rainy season, many regions of the West African nation of more than 200mn people have been devastated by floods.

More than 300 people have been killed and at least 100,000 made homeless, according to the emergency services.

AFP

N Korea: Tests were 'tactical nuclear' drills, overseen by Kim

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea's recent missile tests involved 'tactical nuclear' drills to simulate hitting South Korea, and were overseen by leader Kim Jong Un in response to US-led joint military exercises in the region, state media said on Monday.

Kim made acquiring tactical nukes - smaller, lighter weapons designed for battlefield use - a top priority at a key party congress in January 2021, and this year vowed to develop North Korea's nuclear forces at the fastest possible speed.

The country revised its nuclear laws last month to allow pre-emptive strikes, with Kim declaring North Korea an 'irreversible' nuclear power - effectively ending the possibility of negotiations over its arsenal.

Since then, Seoul, Tokyo and Washington have ramped up combined military exercises, in-



This undated photo released from KCNA on Monday shows North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un monitoring a North Korean missile launch at an undisclosed location (AFP)

cluding deploying a nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier to the area twice, infuriating Pyongyang, which sees such drills as rehearsals for invasion.

In response, North Korea 'decided to organise military drills under the simulation of an actual

war' that gamed out hitting South Korea's ports, airports and military command facilities, the Korean Central News Agency said.

North Korean army units involved in 'the operation of tactical nukes staged military drills

from September 25 to October 9 in order to check and assess the war deterrent and nuclear counterattack capability', the report said.

Kim 'guided the military drills on the spot', KCNA said, with images released by state media

showing him clad in a white shirt, cheerfully giving instructions to uniformed soldiers.

Kim, who was also shown watching missiles soaring into the sky trailing columns of fire, dismissed the idea of restarting talks, saying North Korea 'felt no necessity to do so,' the KCNA reported.

The report also said that North Korea's October 4 missile launch, which flew over Japan and prompted rare evacuation warnings, involved a 'new-type ground-to-ground intermediate-range ballistic missile'. That test - for which state media images showed Kim observing the missile flight data - aimed to 'send more powerful and clear warning to the enemies'.

China's foreign ministry spokesperson acknowledged KCNA's reports, and echoed North Korea's mention of the US-led joint drills in the region.

"We noted the relevant reports. We also noted the recent (US-Japan-South Korea) drills in the seas around DPRK," Mao Ning told a regular briefing on Monday, using the acronym for North Korea's official name.

Dangerous dynamic

North Korea's claim its missile launches are a 'response' to US-South Korea drills is part of a 'familiar spiral dynamic' on the Korean peninsula, said US-based security analyst Ankit Panda.

"I worry that this is the start of a dangerous dynamic on the Korean Peninsula, where we have two states in a bitter rivalry and each faces strong incentives to fire first in a serious crisis," he said.

"We also have no real measures of negotiated restraint or hotlines to manage crises," he told AFP.

AFP

German cybersecurity chief faces dismissal over alleged Russia ties

Berlin, Germany - Germany's cybersecurity chief is facing the sack over alleged ties with Russian intelligence services, government sources told AFP on Monday, amid heightened vigilance over potential sabotage activities by Moscow.

Arne Schoenbohm, head of the Federal Cyber Security Authority (BSI), was accused in a recent investigation by broadcaster ZDF of contacts with Russia through an association he co-founded in 2012.

The interior ministry said it was 'taking the facts that have been reported seriously and investigating them comprehensively' and was 'examining all options on how to deal with the situation'.

The Handelsblatt daily reported that there was 'great annoyance' within the government over the allegations.

A planned joint appearance by Schoenbohm and Interior Minister Nancy Faeser to present a report on German cybersecurity in 2022 has been cancelled as the



File photo of Arne Schoenbohm, head of BSI

ministry seeks to clarify the allegations.

Faeser on Monday said her ministry was 'examining all necessary steps that may be required' with regard to Schoenbohm.

Germany was 'vulnerable' to cyberattacks, 'especially due to the threat posed by Russia's war, and we must do everything we can to master this threat', she said.

The association at the centre of the allegations, known as the Cyber Security Council Germany, advises businesses, government agencies and policymakers on

cyber security issues.

According to the popular satire programme on ZDF that broke the story, Schoenbohm still maintains contact with the organisation.

The latter denied the allegations, saying in a statement on its website on Monday that the charges were 'absurd'.

Sebastian Fiedler, a politician with Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), said the accusations 'must be investigated very thoroughly' and had already caused 'a great deal of damage to trust in the BSI'.

Increased vigilance

Germany has in recent years repeatedly accused Russia of cyber espionage attempts.

The most high-profile incident blamed on Russian hackers to date was a cyberattack in 2015 that paralysed the computer network of the lower house of parliament, the Bundestag, forcing the entire institution offline for days while it was fixed.

AFP

Algeria, France seek to deepen ties

Algiers, Algeria - The French and Algerian prime ministers on Sunday declared a wish to 'deepen' their countries' ties as Paris seeks to repair relations with the former colony and major gas exporter.

Prime Minister Aïmene Benabderrahmane personally welcomed French Premier Elisabeth Borne's delegation before a top-level meeting mainly addressing economic cooperation.

French and Algerian ministers present signed around a dozen texts including 'declarations of intent' on employment, industrial cooperation and tourism.

"This is a step to build even deeper cooperation between France and Algeria," Borne told reporters afterwards.

Borne's two-day trip to the North African country comes just six weeks after President Emmanuel Macron concluded his own three-day visit as part of a rapprochement drive.

Ties between the North African country and its former colonial ruler had deteriorated after Macron last year questioned Algeria's existence as a



French PM Elisabeth Borne and Algerian PM Aymen Benabderrahmane deliver a joint statement in Algiers on Sunday (AFP)

nation before the French occupation, and accused the government of fomenting 'hatred towards France'. But the contentious subject of the two countries' history, particularly during the war, were not set to feature prominently on Borne's agenda.

Borne and her cohort are the latest in a string of top European officials to visit Algeria, Africa's top natural gas exporter, as officials search out alternatives to Russian energy supplies since the start of the war in Ukraine.

Ahead of her trip, Borne's office said deliveries of natural gas to France were 'not on the table'.

Instead, the visit would focus on 'education, culture, the ecological transition and the economy', she told news website Tout Sur l'Algerie (TSA).

She is set to meet with the president on Monday.

'Positive direction'

Borne said the three pillars of the 'strengthened' partnership with Algeria were the economy -

pointing to the desire to 'develop trade, innovation and create jobs' - mobility and visas, with a focus on greater educational and cultural cooperation for youth.

During Macron's visit this summer, Algerian entrepreneurs had quizzed him on the difficulties of getting visas to France after their numbers fell significantly in autumn 2021.

On Sunday, Macron and his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune spoke on the phone and confirmed their 'satisfaction with the positive direction' of ties, Algiers said.

Earlier in the day, Borne had laid a wreath at a monument to martyrs of Algeria's eight-year war for independence, and visited a cemetery for French nationals who lived in Algeria during France's 132-year rule, which ended in 1962.

The two countries have agreed to create a joint commission of historians to examine the colonial period, including the war. Borne on Sunday said both sides were still working on the make-up of the commission.

AFP

Putin vows more 'severe' attacks on Ukraine

The Ukrainian military said Russian forces had fired more than 80 missiles on cities across the country

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russian forces launched a barrage of fatal bombardments across Ukraine early on Monday and President Vladimir Putin vowed even more 'severe' retaliation against Kyiv.

The biggest wave of strikes across Ukraine in months killed at least 11 people nationwide, and was apparent retaliation for an explosion this weekend that damaged a key bridge linking Russia to the Moscow-annexed Crimean peninsula.

The Ukrainian military said Russian forces had fired more than 80 missiles on cities across the country and that Russia had also used Iranian drones launched from neighbouring Be-



Investigators examine a crater and a damaged bus, following a missile strike in Dnipro on Monday, amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

larus. "Let there be no doubt," Putin said in televised comments addressed to his security council, 'if attempts at terrorist attacks continue, the response from Russia will be severe'.

Putin's predecessor, Dmitry Medvedev, warned on social media that the strikes - which disrupted water and electricity services across Ukraine - were only 'the first episode'.

"We were sleeping when we

heard the first explosion. We woke up, went to check and then the second explosion came," Ksenia Ryazantseva, a 39-year-old language teacher, told AFP.

"We saw the smoke, then the cars, and then we realised we didn't have a window anymore," she added.

"There's no military target or anything like that here. They're just killing civilians."

'Demonstration of weakness'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the Russian strikes had aimed to take down Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Regional officials across the country confirmed widespread disruptions to services.

Russia's defence ministry meanwhile confirmed it had targeted Ukrainian energy, military command and communications

facilities, claiming the strikes had been a success and 'achieved their aims'.

Ukraine's foreign minister said the attacks had not been 'provoked' and the onslaught was Moscow's response to a series of embarrassing military losses in eastern Ukraine.

"Putin is desperate because of battlefield defeats and uses missile terror to try to change the pace of war in his favour," minis-

ter Dmytro Kuleba wrote on social media.

UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said the Russian missile strikes on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and other cities were 'unacceptable'. "This is a demonstration of weakness by Putin, not strength," he tweeted, adding that he had contacted Kuleba.

Zelensky said on social media meanwhile that he had spoken with the leaders of France and Germany and urged them to 'increase pressure' on Russia.

Dozens injured

In Kyiv, the national police service said that at least 11 people had been killed and at least another 64 wounded.

Ukrainian officials said the central Shevchenko district of the city was hit and that a university, museums and the philharmonic building had been damaged.

An AFP journalist in Kyiv saw a projectile land near a playground and smoke rising from a large crater at the impact site.

Several trees and benches nearby were charred by the blast and a number of ambulances were at the scene.

"If there is no urgent need, it's

better not to go to the city today," Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko said.

In the western city of Lviv, mayor Andriy Sadovyi said there were disruptions to electricity and hot water services after bombardments that targeted critical infrastructure, including energy facilities. AFP photographers there said plumes of black smoke could be seen rising above the town's skyline.

Moldova, a pro-democracy former Soviet republic, said several Russian cruise missiles targeting Ukraine had crossed its airspace, and it had summoned Moscow's envoy to demand an explanation. "Our thoughts are with the victims of the brutal strikes," Moldovan Foreign Minister Nicu Popescu said on Twitter.

Moldova, which is a candidate to join the European Union, has a small breakaway region, Transnistria, which is armed and supported by Russia.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, a close ally of Putin's, meanwhile claimed on Monday that Ukraine was preparing an attack on his country's territory.

AFP



Firefighters try to prune a falling tree following the passage of Hurricane Julia in Bluefields, on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua on Sunday (AFP)

Hurricane Julia slams Nicaragua, menaces Central America

Bluefields, Nicaragua - Hurricane Julia raked across Nicaragua on Sunday, lashing the country with winds and heavy rain and bringing potentially life-threatening flash flooding and mudslides to much of Central America and southern Mexico.

Maximum sustained winds were estimated at 85 miles (140km) per hour when the storm made landfall near the Laguna de Perlas area at 0715 GMT, the country's weather agency said.

By midday, the fifth Atlantic hurricane of the season had weakened to a tropical storm with top sustained winds of nearly 60 miles per hour as it churned westward across Nicaragua, unleashing a dangerous storm surge along the coast, damaging homes in the country's interior and leaving some towns incommunicado.

"It's still raining, water has surrounded us, we have been without power and water since early morning, several houses are without roofs and many trees are down on the road," Julio Hernandez, a resident of Rio Blanco, in central Nicaragua, told AFP.

The country was on high alert, with civil defense brigades helping to clear fallen trees from roads and watch for flooding in coastal towns and mountain villages. No fatalities have been reported.

But the US National Hurricane Center warned that Julia, whose centre passed over the Central American isthmus into the eastern Pacific ocean Sunday night, was still packing a punch, not just for Nicaragua but for neighbouring countries.

"Heavy rainfall with a risk of life-threatening flash floods and

mudslides to continue across Central America and southern Mexico through Tuesday," the NHC said.

Power outages

Maintaining its tropical storm strength, Julia is forecast to produce five to 10 inches (12.7 to 25.4cm) of rain in Nicaragua and El Salvador, with isolated pockets receiving as much as 15 inches.

Hours earlier in Bluefields, Nicaragua, one of the main coastal towns buffeted by the storm, fishermen had been busy safeguarding their boats as people rushed to buy groceries and withdraw money from ATMs.

It's still raining, water has surrounded us, we have been without power and water since early morning

JULIO HERNANDEZ

Hurricane-force winds and heavy rains began to be felt around midnight, according to AFP photographers in the city, while reports detailed detached roofs, fallen trees and power outages.

Before reaching Nicaragua, Julia passed over a trio of Colombian islands, an environment ministry official told AFP, causing rain and lightning in the country's north.

Julia was a Category 1 hurricane, on the low side of the five-tier Saffir-Simpson wind scale, when it roared ashore in Nicaragua.

AFP

Year after Iraq vote, UN urges dialogue

Baghdad, Iraq - A year after Iraq's last general election, the UN mission there urged political factions to end the deadlock paralysing the oil-rich country, warning that 'Iraq is running out of time'.

"The protracted crisis is breeding further instability ... it threatens people's livelihoods," the UN Mission said, urging 'dialogue without preconditions' toward a stable government in the war-scarred nation.

Iraqis last voted on October 10, 2021 in an election triggered by an earlier wave of mass protests against endemic corruption, rampant unemployment and decaying infrastructure.

One year on, the country has yet to form a new government, leaving caretaker Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi in charge but unable to have parliament pass a new state budget.

The UN said that the vote a year ago 'was a hard-earned election, brought about by public pressure from nationwide protests in which several hundreds of young Iraqis lost their lives and thousands were injured'.

"Regretfully, this reaffirmation



People walk and shop at the Shorja market in the centre of Iraq's capital Baghdad on Friday (AFP)

of democracy was followed by divisive politics, generating bitter public disillusion," it added in a statement. Rival Shiite Muslim factions in parliament have been vying for influence and the right to select a new prime minister and government in a standoff that has seen both sides set up protest camps and at times sparked deadly street clashes.

"All actors must engage in dialogue without preconditions," the UN mission said.

"Through compromise, they must collectively agree on key outcomes... to service the needs of the Iraqi people and establish a fully empowered and effective government. The time to act is now."

The political impasse pits the powerful cleric Moqtada Sadr, who has demanded snap elections, against the Iran-backed Coordination Framework, which has been pushing to appoint a new head of government before

any new polls are held.

Tensions last boiled over on August 29 when more than 30 Sadr supporters were killed in clashes with Iran-backed factions and the army in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, the capital's government and diplomatic district. Iraq has raked in huge revenues from energy exports this year, and the central bank is holding a colossal US\$87bn in foreign exchange reserves.

AFP

UK slaps sanctions on Iranian 'morality police'

London, UK - The UK on Monday said it had slapped sanctions on Iran's 'morality police' after the death in custody of a woman arrested for not wearing a headscarf.

The death of Mahsa Amini, 22, sparked a wave of protests in the Islamic republic that prompted a lethal crackdown by the authorities.

Iran's response to the demonstrations has sparked revulsion in the West and among rights and opposition groups.

London said its new restrictions covered 'the morality police in its entirety', including its chief Mohammad Rostami Cheshmeh Gachi.

AFP

Venezuela landslide: 25 dead, more than 50 missing

Las Tejerías, Venezuela - A landslide in Venezuela has left at least 25 people dead and more than 50 missing after a river overflowed, officials said on Sunday, in the latest deadly disaster caused by heavy rains to hit the country.

Houses and businesses were destroyed in the Saturday night deluge, which left the town of Las Tejerías covered with mud and debris, including felled trees, household items and mangled cars. "We are seeing very significant damage here, human losses," Vice President Delcy Rodríguez told local media at the scene.

Interior Minister Remigio Ceballos said at least 25 people had died in the disaster as he gave an updated toll on government television VTV late on Sunday.

"Unfortunately so far we have 25 people who were recovered dead," he said. "We also have 52 missing," he said, adding that search efforts were continuing.

Dozens of people have died in recent months in the crisis-hit



Residents search for their missing relatives in the rubble of a house destroyed by a landslide during heavy rains in Las Tejerías, Aragua state, Venezuela, on Sunday (AFP)

South American nation as a result of historically high levels of rain. "The village is lost. Las Tejerías is lost," 55-year-old resident Carmen Melendez, who has lived her whole life in the town 50km from the capital, Caracas, told AFP.

Around a thousand people had joined the rescue efforts, Interior and Justice Minister Remigio Ceballos told AFP, as he

worked at the site.

Residents dug through the remains of battered homes looking for loved ones, while search teams arrived with dogs hoping to find survivors trapped in the rubble.

A butcher shop that had closed due to the pandemic and which was due to reopen on Monday was buried in muddy sediment that caked the refriger-

ators and everything else inside.

"We were waiting for the meat to be shipped in - to start after two years closed," said Ramon Arvelo, one of the workers who was helping remove mud. "I never thought that something of this magnitude could happen; it's a really big deal," said Loryis Verenzuela, 50, as she looked out at the devastation through tears.

Record rain

"We had a huge landslide as a result of the changing climate," Ceballos said, referring to the effects of Hurricane Julia, which passed just north of Venezuela the night before.

"There was a record rainfall," he added as he surveyed the disaster site - as much rain in one day as is usually seen in a month.

"These strong rains saturated the ground," he said.

Images taken by rescue team drones showed huge amounts of earth piled up in the streets as residents had tried to shovel out the metres of mud that flowed into their houses.

Las Tejerías resident Jose Santiago spent 40 minutes clinging to an antenna while the huge flood dragged several houses along in the mud, including his own.

"The river caught me and I couldn't find anything to do besides climb a roof and grab onto an antenna," the 65-year-old recounted. "I was reborn!"

AFP

INDIA

Former UP CM Mulayam Singh Yadav is no more

Gurugram, India - Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, who remained synonymous with the politics of the state during his five-decade-long career, passed away due to age-related ailments, at a Gurugram Hospital on Monday. He was 82.

The veteran politician had been undergoing treatment at the Medanta Hospital due to prolonged illness. His condition was critical for the past few weeks and he was on life-saving drugs. Mulayam Singh's son Akhilesh Yadav confirmed his death on Twitter. "Mere adarniya pitaji aur sabke netaji nahi rahe (My honourable father and everyone's Netaji is no more)," he tweeted from the party's official handle.

Leaders from across the country have expressed their grief. Recollecting his relationship with Mulayam Singh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted several photographs in



Mulayam Singh's final rites will be performed on Tuesday at his ancestral village which will be attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh (ANI)

which the two leaders could be seen together. "Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav Ji was a remarkable personality. He was widely admired as a humble and grounded leader who was sensitive to people's problems. He served people diligently and devoted his life towards popularis-

The achievements of Mulayam Singh Yadav, who came from an ordinary environment were extraordinary. He was respected by people of all parties

DROUPADI MURMU

ing the ideals of Loknayak JP (Jayaprakash Narayan) and Dr Lohia (Ram Manohar Lohia)," PM Modi said.

President Droupadi Murmu said his death is an 'irreparable loss' to the country.

"The achievements of Mulayam Singh Yadav ji, who came from an ordinary environment, were extraordinary. 'Dharti

Putra' Mulayam ji was a down-to-earth veteran leader. He was respected by people of all parties. My deepest condolences to his family members and supporters!" the Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted.

Expressing grief, Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi

tics to become the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh thrice. He was so well-versed in the politics of the state that he was fondly called 'Netaji'.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced a three-day state mourning and said the veteran leader's last rites would be conducted with full state honours.

After stepping into politics at the age of 28 as an MLA in 1967, he was elected nine more times to the UP assembly.

He also remained Lok Sabha MP seven times and served in the Union Government as the Minister of Defence. He founded the Samajwadi Party on October 4, 1992, and soon turned it into a regional party. His son Akhilesh Yadav took over the reins of the party later and is now its president.

Mulayam Singh almost became the Prime Minister of India, in 1996, when the United Front was poised to form the government and his name was

floated to lead the alliance.

In 1975, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's government imposed the Emergency, Mulayam Singh was among the politicians who were arrested and was imprisoned for 19 months.

Among several political leaders from across the country who expressed grief over Mulayam Singh's death were Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and former PM Manmohan Singh, who said Mulayam Singh was a leader of high esteem respected by everyone. "May god give all of you strength to bear this loss with courage and fortitude," read Manmohan Singh's letter.

Former Bihar Chief Minister and RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav remembered Mulayam Singh as a stalwart of the socialist movement. "I am saddened by the news. His contribution was incomparable in the politics of the country," Lalu said in a tweet.

ANI

After sunset, tiger on the prowl at university campus

New Delhi, India - An Indian university has postponed its annual tech festival and urged students to stay indoors after dark because of a tiger on the prowl around campus, an official and local reports said on Monday.

The endangered big cat has already killed two stray cows, and about 50 forest department officials have been working around the clock to capture and move it back to an adjoining forest area where it came from.

"We have also set up 10 camera traps to track its movement, as well as a cage, and are waiting. But the tiger hasn't come out," local forest officer Alok Pathak told AFP.

Pathak said the animal was one of 12 tigers living in forests around Bhopal, capital of the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

The striped marauder has been on the move around the sprawling campus, which includes 'about 400 acres of forest land with lots of water, good cover, and stray cattle as food, since last Monday', Pathak added. The forest department has said the campus is safe during daytime for

classes but urged everyone 'to not venture out alone - on cycle or foot - after sunset'.

The uninvited creature has forced the university to postpone its annual technology festival - which was to start on Saturday with an attendance of around 10,000 students from all over India.

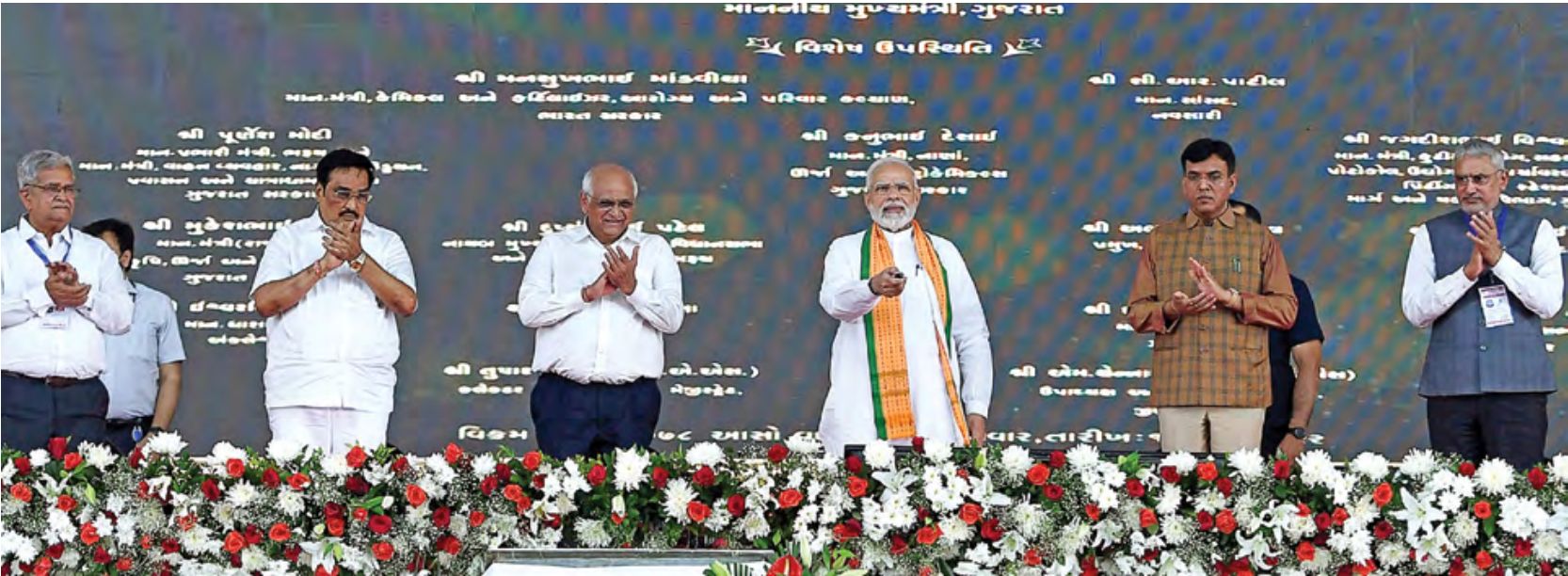
"Can you imagine! A tech fest being rescheduled because of a tiger?" one student told *The Times of India*. "But we understand this is the only way out. We cannot take chances with a tiger loose on the campus."

The newspaper's report added that classes had been moved online for two days last week before the forest department ruled that daytime classes were safe.

Indian authorities, in a major operation involving 200 people, on Saturday shot dead another tiger that had killed at least nine people in the eastern state of Bihar.

Conservationists blame the rapid expansion of human settlements around forests and key wildlife corridors for an increase in human-animal conflict in parts of India.

AFP



Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays the foundation stone and dedicates to the Nation of Multiple Projects worth over Rs 8000 crore, at Amod, in Bharuch on Monday (ANI)

Gujarat: PM Modi lays foundation stone for airport

Bharuch, India - Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday highlighted the development of Gujarat's Bharuch as he laid the foundation stone of a new airport in the region and said there would be a new momentum to growth due to the 'double engine' government in the state.

"After doing so much business, and business from the country and abroad, now when the airport is being founded, the development is about to get a new momentum and a new flight. And when there is a double-engine government of Narendra-Bhupendra, then the

airport work will also be completed faster," said PM Modi. He expressed happiness over the construction of the airport and said, "I am happy to announce that now along with industrial development, Bharuch will also be home to an international airport. This airport will play an important role in increasing exports from Gujarat."

He stressed that Bharuch won't need to depend on airports in other areas as it will have one of its own. "Bharuch won't need to depend on Baroda or Surat airport. Now Bharuch will have its own airport. So,

Now along with industrial development, Bharuch will also be home to an international airport, which will increase exports

NARENDRA MODI

today, the foundation stone is being laid to build a new airport at Ankleshwar," he said.

PM Modi also noted that his

home state has now gotten its first drug park. "Today Gujarat has got the first bulk drug park, and that too in my Bharuch. Several plants related to the chemical sector have also been inaugurated today," he said.

Recalling the late SP Supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav in his speech, PM Modi highlighted his relationship with Yadav.

"Mulayam Singh Yadav ji's demise is a huge loss for the nation. I had a special relationship with him. When BJP declared me as PM candidate in 2014, I spoke to all opposition leaders.

He gave me his blessings in the way of his advice which has stayed with me even today," he added.

PM Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of projects worth over Rs 8,000 crore in Amod town of Bharuch district. In another step towards making India 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) in the pharmaceutical sector, PM Modi laid the foundation stone of a bulk drug park at Jambusar. In 2021-22, bulk drugs accounted for over 60 per cent of total pharmaceutical imports.

ANI

Students protest in Pakistan after bus attack

Mingora, Pakistan - A driver was shot dead and a student critically wounded in an attack on a school bus in Pakistan on Monday, police said, leading up to 2,000 girls and boys to walk out of classes in protest.

The Swat Valley, where the attack took place, was once overrun by the Pakistani Taliban, who notoriously shot Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai on a school bus in the same city ten years ago.

The area has seen a resurgence of militancy since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan last year with a spike in attacks - mainly targeting security forces - in recent weeks.

"The attacker fled the scene and a search operation has been launched," police official Ali Badshah told AFP, adding that the wounded boy was aged between 10 and 11.

Locals in Mingora, the city



Students and teachers of private schools take part in a protest against recent attack in Mingora on Monday (AFP)

where the attack took place, fear it was carried out by the Pakistani Taliban but the militants have denied responsibility for Monday's shooting.

The group, who share a common ideology with the Afghan Taliban but are an independent outfit, controlled Swat between 2007 and 2009.

Students from private schools across Swat Valley staged a protest on Monday calling for peace.

"People are angry and they

are protesting. Students from all the private schools came out to protest," Ahmad Shah, principal of a private school told AFP, adding that schools would remain closed on Tuesday.

Monday's attack comes a day after the 10th anniversary of the shooting of Yousafzai by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) when she was a schoolgirl. Yousafzai survived the assassination attempt and went on to become a global education advocate, winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Pakistan government and TTP have been in a series of on-off ceasefires over the past year, with both sides accusing each other of violations.

In a separate incident in a town neighbouring Mingora on Monday, two girls and a boy were wounded in cross-firing, which police said was the result of a 'personal vendetta'.

AFP

UAE president to visit Putin in Moscow today

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The United Arab Emirates' president will Tuesday visit his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, state media reported, one of the few leaders to make the trip to Moscow since the Ukraine war started.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan 'will discuss with President Putin the friendly relations between the UAE and Russia along with a number of regional and international issues and developments of common interest', the UAE's state news agency WAM said on Monday.

The visit comes days after the Saudi-led OPEC oil cartel and its allies including Russia, known as OPEC+, decided to cut oil output in a bid to raise prices, despite appeals from the United States to increase pro-

duction. Gulf countries typically enjoy positive relations with Moscow and have shied away from criticising Russia's invasion of Ukraine, instead calling for a diplomatic resolution of the conflict.

In March, just weeks into the invasion, Qatar's foreign minister headed to the Russian capital for talks on Iran's nuclear deal and Ukraine.

The United States has accused OPEC+ of playing into the hands of the Kremlin, which has an interest in bolstering oil prices to finance its war.

Abu Dhabi nevertheless seeks to maintain good international relations, and last month agreed to supply natural gas and diesel to Germany as part of an 'energy security' deal to replace Russian supplies.

AFP

Qatar media hits back at Europe’s World Cup ‘rights’ attacks

Doha, Qatar - Qatar’s tightly-controlled media on Monday stepped up an offensive against European criticism of the Gulf state’s human rights record ahead of the World Cup, on which it has spent billions of dollars.

Editorials and cartoons in recent days have lambasted “smear campaigns” about Qatar’s treatment of migrant workers, women and the LGBTQ community.

European newspapers and rights groups have put a spotlight on Qatar’s record in the runup to the tournament that starts November 20 and is expected to attract more than one million fans.

Some French cities have said they will not allow public screens to be put up to show matches in a rights protest.

Al Sharq newspaper prominently showed a cartoon with the World Cup surrounded by

We find that this miserable media creates a story every time a country from outside the old continent hosts the tournament

AL SHARQ NEWSPAPER

arrows symbolising the criticism that Qatar has faced.

An editorial in Al Raya newspaper said European newspapers “have been raging in their attack on the World Cup in

Qatar from the time it was announced in December 2010”.

“Do not repeat the mistakes of the past,” it warned, highlighting a 2015 Washington Post blog on the number of migrant work-

ers killed on World Cup projects that was corrected after a Qatar government protest.

“Let’s stop smear campaigns and cooperate for a World Cup that unites peoples,” it added.

Al Sharq ran an interview with Lakhdar Belloumi, a former Algerian international considered to be one of the best Arab football players of all time, who said “malicious campaigns will not discourage Qatar”.

An editorial in the paper on

Sunday hit out at the “lies, rumours and slander” written in Europe about Qatar’s World Cup preparations. It said there was a “systematic conspiracy” by media in many European countries over coverage of workers’ rights in Qatar, “while this media has forgotten the miserable conditions experienced by workers in Europe.”

“We find that this miserable media creates a story every time a country from outside the old

continent hosts the tournament,” said Al Sharq.

In a commentary for the English-language website Doha News, artist Ghada Al Khater wrote: “Forgive me for doubting such intentions of European countries, who have for the past decade stood and watched as migrants fleeing conflict, devastation and poverty ... drown to the bottom of the Mediterranean.”

AFP

Red Bull found guilty of breaching F1 cost cap

Paris, France - Two-time world champion Max Verstappen’s Red Bull Formula One team exceeded the budget cap for the 2021 season, the International Automobile Federation (FIA) said on Monday, adding that the offence was a “minor violation”.

Aston Martin was also found in breach of Formula 1 financial rules, the FIA announced, adding that any punishment would be decided at a later date.

“We note the findings by the FIA of ‘minor overspend breaches’... with surprise and disappointment,” tweeted Red Bull.

The cap came into effect last season and was set at 145 million dollars (currently 149.6 million euros). It is intended to limit spending to make the sport viable and also to close the competitive gap between big and small teams. Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull were particularly affected.

Even so, Verstappen ended the season by edging Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes to win a first world title.

The FIA said it was “currently determining the appropriate course of action to be taken”.

A “minor overspend breach”, the statement said, is less than five percent of a team’s total cap and can “result in financial penalties and/or minor sporting penalties.”

Red Bull insisted on Twitter that they had not broken the rules.

“We need to carefully review the FIA’s findings as our belief remains that the relevant costs are under the 2021 cost cap amount.”



Red Bull Racing’s Dutch driver Max Verstappen (R) and Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc go side by side at the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday (AFP)



Red Bull’s Max Verstappen (front C) celebrates after winning the F1 world championship on Sunday (AFP)

The FIA said its ‘Cost Cap Administration’ had finished a review of the financial

documentation submitted by each team for 2021 and “issued certificates of compliance to

We need to review the FIA’s findings as our belief remains that the relevant costs are under the 2021 cost cap amount

RED BULL

seven of the 10”.

The third exception was Williams, where there had been a problem with “a previous procedural breach” which the team had “remediated” in a “timely,

cooperative and transparent manner”.

The statement stressed that because the season under review was the first with a cost cap, the FIA had limited itself “to reviewing the submissions made by the competitors and that no full formal investigations were launched.”

The statement said that the first option for the Cost Cap Administration was to agree a settlement with the team involved.

If the two sides are unable to reach an agreement, or if the team is not in favour of seeking an agreement, it can refer the dispute to a panel of six to 12 judges elected by the FIA general assembly.



Khalil al Balushi

La-la-la: High-octane commentator born in Oman shakes up Qatar football scene

Doha, Qatar - When a goal is scored in the Qatar Stars League, Khalil al Balushi makes sure viewers feel the full force of the moment as he dials up the decibels to make their TV sets tremble.

“La-la-la-la-la!” he shouts after the ball hits the back of the net in one of Qatar’s World Cup stadiums.

Viewers of the Alkass sports channel might not see it, but sometimes the 42-year-old Al Balushi, one of Qatar’s top football commentators, dances a little jig in the press stand after a goal, pointing a celebratory finger towards the pitch.

Born in Oman and based in Qatar for 16 years, Al Balushi says all Arab football commentators - inspired by exuberant counterparts in Brazil and Argentina - “are a little bit noisy”.

In the Qatari heat, he tips back a bottle of water at half-time and a technician makes sure he has a constant flow of tissues to wipe his brow.

In a country where multi-million dollar imports such as Colombia’s James Rodriguez and French World Cup winner Steven Nzonzi played this year before just a few hundred people, Balushi brings much-needed life to Qatar’s subdued football culture.

“Everyone knows me as this person, Khalil, with very high noise,” he said. “I will be at the same level for the World Cup.”

Qatari football will be different after the final on December 18, Al Balushi and others say - not least because of the \$6.5 billion spent on building and refurbishing the tournament’s eight stadiums.

After shocking many in 2010 by securing this year’s World Cup finals, the tiny Gulf state won the Asian Cup in 2019.

Since the 1990s, members of the royal family started pumping some of Qatar’s natural gas riches into local clubs, which now vie for the best domestic players and foreign stars.

She’s training men: Bahrain hoopster breaks the mould

Manama, Bahrain - It’s an unusual sight in the conservative Gulf state of Bahrain: a young mother in an indoor basketball court is instructing the male players.

Fatima Reyadh has overcome prejudices to become the assistant coach of Al Najma basketball club in the capital Manama - and she doesn’t plan to stop there.

The 33-year-old, who is also a Taekwondo black belt, aims to become head coach of the basketball team one day and then bring home the national championship.

“When I began my career, there wasn’t the same level of acceptance as there is today,” she said during a training session with her seven-year-old daughter in tow.

“The presence of women in sport was seen as bizarre, especially in basketball, which was considered the preserve of men,” said Reyadh, sporting black leggings and a baggy grey T-shirt.

“There were concerns at first, but



Al Najma Club’s assistant coach Fatima Reyadh talks to players during a training session (AFP)

but through hard work and dedication I’ve shown that doubts about my ability to lead the squad were unfounded.”

Today, she thinks of herself like “just any other basketball

coach - I believe in myself”.

Several countries in the region have sought to soften a hardline image in recent years, promoting women more in the workforce, the arts and in sport.

But it is unusual for a woman to rise to the top, and in the conservative Arab monarchies of the Gulf, Reyadh’s position is astounding.

Reyadh inherited a passion for

the game from her mother, who coached a women’s basketball squad. She began by training a team of young girls, then young boys, before being recruited by Al Najma.

Choosing her was “a bold and at the same time quite frightening choice”, said the club’s technical director Raouf Habil.

“Communication was a bit difficult at first with the players, but in time it got a lot easier,” he said.

There were concerns at first, but through hard work and dedication I’ve shown that doubts about my ability to lead the squad were unfounded

FATIMA REYADH

Society in Bahrain is considered a lot more open than in other Gulf states.

Official figures show that women, who make up 32 percent of the economically active popu-

lation, held 54 percent of civil service posts between 2010 and 2019.

Of the government’s 24 ministers, four are women, although none holds a key portfolio.

Hussein Shaker, one of Al Najma’s players, is unwavering in his support for the team’s female coach.

“The talented Fatima Reyadh is an example of successful Bahraini women,” he said.

He said he hopes for “more examples” of women working with male teams in his country, stressing that “I’m all for women in sport”.

AFP

‘Finisher’ Wade key to Australia’s T20 chances, says Bevan

New Delhi, India - Australia have a “solid chance” of retaining the T20 World Cup with home advantage, said former white-ball specialist Michael Bevan, who believes “finisher” Matthew Wade can be a key player.

Bevan was renowned as a supreme “finisher” at the end of an innings and said wicketkeeper Matthew Wade was the ideal man for that role in this Australian side. A year ago, the left-handed Wade coolly smashed Pakistan fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi for three sixes in the 19th over to seal the memorable semi-final win.

“He has had some really good innings under pressure in that role,” said Bevan.

“Hopefully this will be the role that the Australian selectors see him in - there are really good signs about Matthew Wade and the Australian batting line-up with him in that position.”



Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo scores against Everton, for his 700th goal in club football, on Sunday (AFP)

Cristiano Ronaldo nets 700th club goal of his career as Manchester United edge Everton

Liverpool, United Kingdom - Cristiano Ronaldo scored the 700th club goal of his career after coming off the bench in Manchester United's 2-1 win at Everton on Sunday.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has been relegated to the bench for the majority of Erik ten Hag's time in charge at United, but he made his entrance on the half-hour mark to replace the injured Anthony Martial.

It took Ronaldo just 14 min-

He's one of the greatest players to have graced the game

FRANK LAMPARD

"Every player needs it (confidence), even when you are the best in the world," said Ten Hag after Ronaldo's first Premier

league goal of the season. "I worked with many goalscorers and they need the goals in every season to have that feeling, that confirmation of the intuition.

"Once they have some goals, they come in a flow and games go easier. That will happen with him as well."

The Red Devils were seeking a response to being thrashed 6-3 by Manchester City last weekend but got off to the worst possible start.

On his first Premier League start since arriving for £60 mil-

lion (\$67 million) from Real Madrid, Casemiro was culpable for the opening goal as he was robbed in possession by Amadou Onana and the ball eventually broke for Alex Iwobi to curl into the top corner from outside the box.

Everton came into the game with the best defensive record in the league, but were quickly undone as United levelled within 10 minutes.

Antony became the first United player to score in his first three Premier League games with a cool finish from Martial's pass.

Martial only lasted half an hour after pulling up with a hip injury in the warm-up.

His departure paved the way for Ronaldo to make his entrance and he took just 14 minutes to make his mark.

Casemiro made amends for his earlier error by winning possession in midfield and playing in his former Real Madrid teammate to fire low under Jordan Pickford.

"He's one of the greatest players to have graced the game," said Everton boss Frank Lampard. "You can do nothing but admire those numbers."

Ronaldo should have had a second just before the hour mark as he nodded wide from another teasing delivery from Casemiro.

Everton had been on a seven-game unbeaten run, but offered little in the search of an equaliser until a late aerial assault and were lucky to avoid conceding a third goal 10 minutes from time.

AFP



Napoli's Giovanni Simeone celebrates after scoring against Cremonese in their Italian Serie A match in Cremona on Sunday (AFP)

Napoli take sole command of Serie A thanks to super sub Simeone

Milan, Italy - Napoli are alone at the top of Serie A after Giovanni Simeone's latest super-sub showing led to a 4-1 win at Cremonese which moved his team two points clear on Sunday.

Unbeaten Napoli had been leading the league on goal difference heading into this weekend's matches, but they took advantage of Atalanta throwing away a two-goal lead in their 2-2 draw at Udinese with a club-record eighth straight win in all competitions.

Simeone struck Napoli's second of a tight match with 14 minutes remaining when he met Mario Rui's deep cross with a close-range header.

It was Simeone's fourth goal in nine matches since arriving from Verona in August - only one of which he has started - after a positive start to life in southern Italy in which he has developed an immediate connection with Napoli supporters.

The heavy defeat was harsh on spirited Cremonese who bounced back from going behind to a soft penalty scored in the 26th minute by Matteo Politano

by levelling through Cyril Dessers' first Serie A goal a minute after half-time.

But after Simeone broke their spirit, Hirving Lozano and Mathias Olivera put the icing on the cake in stoppage time, and Massimiliano Alvini's winless side remain second-bottom on three points following their sixth defeat in their first nine top-flight fixtures since 1996.

Union reclaim top spot in Bundesliga

A second-half header from defender Paul Jaeckel helped Union Berlin go two points clear at the top of the Bundesliga table with a hard-fought 1-0 win at 10-man Stuttgart on Sunday.

Jaeckel's 76th-minute goal was followed by a second yellow card for Serhou Guirassy just seven minutes later, leaving Stuttgart short-handed and Union in control. Union's rivals Freiburg, Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund all drew this weekend, giving the Berliners a chance to extend their lead.

AFP

Brighton's Mwepu forced to retire from football with heart condition

London, United Kingdom - Brighton midfielder Enock Mwepu has been forced to retire at the age of just 24 after he was diagnosed with a hereditary heart condition, the Premier League club announced on Monday.

The condition, which can worsen over time, would put him at an "extremely high risk of suffering a potentially fatal cardiac event if he were to continue playing competitive football", the club said.

Enock was unwell during a flight to join up with Zambia during the international break last month and after a period in hospital in Mali he returned to Brighton to undergo further cardiac examinations.

Mwepu, who scored three goals in 27 appearances for the club, said on Twitter he had "lived his dream by reaching the Premier League".

AFP

Barca cling on to beat Celta and top La Liga

Barcelona, Spain - Pedri's goal helped Barcelona earn an agonising 1-0 win over Celta Vigo to move back top of La Liga on Sunday.

After Real Madrid beat Getafe, Barcelona knew they had to beat the Galicians to head into next Sunday's Clasico as league leaders, but Celta did not make it easy for them.

With Barcelona clutching a narrow advantage, the visitors came close to an equaliser at Camp Nou and Marc-Andre ter Stegen earned a sixth consecutive domestic clean sheet with a brilliant save from Iago Aspas late on.

Goncalo Paciencia hit the post in stoppage time with the Catalans on the ropes, begging for the whistle.

"We had a great second half, with four, or five, or six clear chances, but if you don't score at Camp Nou then it's normal that you lose," Aspas told DAZN. "They ended up wasting time on throw-ins."

It was the kind of performance which does not bode well for Barcelona's crucial Champions



Barcelona's Pedri scores against Celta Vigo in their Spanish League match at Camp Nou on Sunday (AFP)

League clash with Inter Milan on Wednesday.

"Playing like we did in the second half it will be very hard (to beat Inter), but in the first half yes, we have to maintain that level," said Barca coach Xavi Hernandez.

Xavi started left-back Marcos Alonso in central defence, alongside Gerard Pique, partly due to injury problems, but otherwise

picked his strongest side available. Barcelona missed a slew of early chances, with Ferran Torres unable to reach a tempting cross and having another effort saved by Agustin Marchesin, while the goalkeeper also did well to claw out a rasping drive from Raphinha.

The pressure soon told and Pedri sent Barcelona ahead in the 17th minute, with Celta defender

Unai Nunez accidentally teeing up the Spanish midfielder when he tried to cut out Gavi's cross.

Elsewhere Brais Mendez continued his brilliant goalscoring form to earn Real Sociedad a 1-0 win over Villarreal and send the Basque side sixth in La Liga.

The winger now has five goals in six matches in Spain's top flight.

AFP

Blanc says hunger still there after returning to coaching at Lyon

Lyon, France - Laurent Blanc insisted he still has the "desire" to succeed as a coach at the highest level as he was unveiled by Lyon on Monday, returning to management in France more than six years after leaving Paris Saint-Germain.

Blanc, 56, was appointed by Lyon on Sunday on a deal to the end of next season following the sacking of Dutchman Peter Bosz.

Lyon, who won seven consecutive French titles between 2002 and 2008, have drifted into mediocrity under Bosz and finished eighth in Ligue 1 last season, failing to qualify for Europe for the second time in three campaigns.



Lyon's new coach Laurent Blanc leaves after addressing a press conference in Decines-Charpieu near Lyon on Monday (AFP)

Blanc now takes over a side who sit ninth in the table after just 10 matches, 12 points behind

leaders PSG having taken just a single point from their last five outings.

They are also a club in limbo off the field, with a planned takeover by American businessman John Textor still to be completed.

"I have that desire, and this sport, in my heart and soul, so I was open to all offers," said Blanc, who left PSG in 2016 having led them to three straight Ligue 1 titles.

Since his departure from the capital, his only coaching job has been in Qatar, where he spent just over a year in charge of Al Rayyan before leaving in February.

"As time goes by you get forgotten about but I don't think OL forgot about me so I was happy

to respond positively to their approach," added Blanc, who before working at PSG spent two years in charge of France, leading them to the quarter-finals of Euro 2012.

He also won the league as coach of Bordeaux in 2009, ending Lyon's period of dominance.

"I needed a breather in the first few years, which I have admitted," he said of his departure from PSG.

"That was when I had the most chances to return to football but I didn't take them out of choice.

"I am just happy to be back in the dugout and doing my job."

AFP

SILVERY SHINE

Oman return from Pan Arab Junior Championships with medals and experience

Muscat - Ahmed al Wahaibi, Ayman al Busaidi, and Al Munther al Hinai put up a strong performance as Oman won silver in the Under-18 category of the Pan Arab Junior Golf Championships at Golf Citrus, Hammamet, Tunisia, on Saturday.

Al Wahaibi was especially impressive with his strong finish that won him a bronze medal. Hosts Tunisia claimed gold in the category while Egypt took bronze.

The competition, returning after a three-year break, featured the strongest teams from the Pan Arab region. It was played over three days with five divisions.

Oman also fielded teams in U15 and U13 categories in the championships.

In the U13 level, Yusuf Al Rumhy (9) and Mohib Al Kathiri (12) represented the country. For both players it was their first experience of national team golf and they carried themselves very well, finishing a creditable 15th and 11th in the individual standings.

Oman's U15 team comprising Adam al Barwani, Faris al Busaidi, and Mahir Sampat carried plenty of promise. And they did not fail to deliver even though the trio will be a bit disappointed to



Ahmed al Wahaibi

have missed out on a bronze medal. They finished fourth with Adam also securing fourth place. Tunisia took the gold, Egypt won silver and the UAE settled for bronze. "This years' Pan Arab



Ahmed al Wahaibi (R) with team-mates Ayman al Busaidi, and Al Munther al Hinai

Championships provided an ideal opportunity to give some of our younger players their first taste of National Team golf," said Peter Bailey, National Team Manager for the Oman Golf As-

sociation.

"While representing your country for the first time at any age is undoubtedly daunting, events such as the GOJuniors Tour and the work that we have

been doing in preparation for this event are key in preparing our young golfers so that they are not overwhelmed and can both enjoy and benefit from the experience of events like this."



Arab Sailing event gets underway at Barcelo Mussanah

Muscat - Eleven nations from across the Middle East and North Africa are all set to fight for honours at Barcelo Mussanah Resort for the Arab Sailing Championship, which starts on Tuesday.

The five-day championship, back after a three-year hiatus, will feature 120 sailors competing in Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, RS:X and iQFOiL windsurfing and RS Venture para sailing.

A strong 23-member team will carry Oman's hopes and they will fight it out against sailors from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the UAE.

Hamed Al Yahmadi, the event project manager, said: "This is an incredibly exciting opportunity for our young sailors to test themselves against their peers from across the Arab world. The championship is held for the first time since Egypt 2019 and it is an honour to bring it to Oman and the Barcelo Mussanah Resort for the premier youth sailing competition in the region and we are delighted to welcome all the sailors and coaches to Oman.

"We are looking forward to seeing how our sailors perform



Hamed Al Yahmadi

on home waters ahead of a busy period for the teams. This is the start of a long journey that could lead to the Olympic Games in the future. We are also very pleased to include para sailing and para sailors from Oman, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as the sport makes progress towards inclusivity and demonstrating the opportunities in sailing for all."

The Arab Sailing Championship is proudly supported by the Barcelo Resort Mussanah, Oman Air, National University of Science and (International Maritime College), National Mineral Water Company (Tanuf), and environmental partner the Environment Society of Oman.

The Oman Sailing Festival will also be held in Mussanah, from Wednesday to Friday.



Dustin Johnson

Johnson scoops \$18 million prize as individual LIV Golf champion

Bangkok, Thailand - Two-time major winner Dustin Johnson has pocketed \$18 million after securing the inaugural LIV Golf individual championship, organisers of the breakaway tour announced on Monday.

The American has had five top-10 finishes in the opening six events of the Saudi-backed series including a dramatic win at the LIV Golf Invitational Boston.

Johnson, 38, finished 16th at the Bangkok tournament, which ended on Sunday, and now has an insurmountable lead in the individual standings with one regular season event remaining.

South Africa's Branden Grace is second in the individual standings, 42 points behind the former world number one.

"Locking up the individual competition is big," said Johnson.

"It's an honour to be LIV's first individual season champion."

LIV Golf CEO Greg Norman, a former world number one, said: "The first chapter of LIV Golf's history could not be written without Dustin Johnson's name.

"By any measure, DJ is among the elite players in the world. From the start, he's been a LIV Golf cornerstone."

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DR TAREK MEDHAT ABBAS ABD ELHADY
Consultant
Nephrologist
Muscat Urology and Nephrology Centre

HEMODIALYSIS - FACTS AND FUNCTIONS

What is hemodialysis?

Dialysis is a treatment for end-stage kidney disease. When the kidneys are no longer working effectively, waste products and fluid build-up in the blood. Dialysis takes over a portion of the function of the failing kidneys to remove the fluid and waste.

When to start dialysis?

You and your doctor will make the decision about when to start dialysis. Your kidney function (measured by blood and urine tests), symptoms, overall health, nutritional status, quality of life, personal preferences, and other factors impact the decision regarding the timing of initiation of dialysis. Most patients will have some symptoms at low level of kidney function estimated by serum creatinine and eGFR. Dialysis should begin well before kidney disease has advanced to the point where life-threatening complications can occur.

How to prepare patients for hemodialysis?

For patients with chronic kidney disease, preparations for hemodialysis should be made at least several months before it will be needed. These include vascular

access, dietary changes, clinical assessment and patient education. You will need to create 'vascular access' several weeks to months before hemodialysis begins. There are many types of vascular access including AV Fistula, AV synthetic graft and CV Catheter.

What is the apparatus used to conduct hemodialysis?

The apparatus used to conduct hemodialysis consists of dialyzer, dialysis solution (dialysate), tubing for transport of blood and dialysis solution and machine to power and mechanically monitor the procedure

Can you travel while being maintained on hemodialysis treatment?

Hemodialysis patients who wish to travel can make an appointment at a dialysis centre in the location where they will be traveling (called a transient centre). Many dialysis centers have a staff member (nurse or social worker) who can help arrange the appointment; planning should begin three to four weeks in advance to ensure that space is available. The dialysis center where you normally have dialysis treatments

will need to provide medical report with full information to the transient center.

What are the side effects of hemodialysis?

Most patients tolerate hemodialysis well. However, side effects of hemodialysis can occur. Low blood pressure is the most common complication and can be accompanied by lightheadedness, shortness of breath, abdominal cramps, muscle cramps, nausea, or vomiting. Some patients feel fatigued or 'washed out' for some period of time after a hemodialysis session. Treatments and preventive measures are available for the discomforts that can occur during dialysis.

How to monitor hemodialysis patients?

Hemodialysis patients require close monitoring to improve health, prevent complications, prolong survival and to ensure that the time and prescription of dialysis treatments are optimal. This includes regular clinical assessment, body weight monitoring, care of vascular access and some blood tests to measure adequacy of hemodialysis and to assess the patient.



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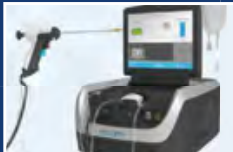
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MENTAL HEALTH Mind your own business

ON THE OCCASION OF 'WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY' (OCTOBER 10), IT'S TIME TO TAKE STOCK OF ONE'S OWN MENTAL WELLBEING AT THE WORKPLACE

Corporates today need to reimagine how they perceive mental health and its implications on their employees. Poor mental health has a personal, professional, and financial impact, and it does have a bearing on collective output. According to a recent article in *News18*, Deloitte's 2022 Mental Health Survey revealed that an astounding 80% of the workforce reported mental health issues over the past year. Poor mental health in the workplace is no longer just a fringe threat, but a danger that affects every employee in the Indian economy today. "Hits on productivity are certain to affect the bottom line as well, and corporations without adequate mental health support risk their own growth in the cur-

rent climate," says Aniruddha Sen, co-founder, Kenko Health. Poor mental health can often cause absenteeism and attrition, costing employers around US\$14bn annually. Hence, corporates need to give this issue priority. Companies can begin by establishing collaborations with teams of psychologists and psychiatrists so that they can assist employees. Another critical barrier to attack is the stigma of seeking help for mental health issues. "Employees often fear that companies finding out about such health conditions can affect their organisational growth. Stigmatising illnesses like anxiety, BPD, and depression will further encourage your team members to get the help they require," says Sen, adding "You may be surprised to find out that it is not just the expense that is the issue

but also the negative perception around seeking mental healthcare support." Finally, companies need to re-examine the conditions that trigger or introduce such issues in employees. Auditing working conditions and understanding

what one can do to reduce employee stress and increase performance is important. "Bring in consultants that can help identify trigger points and structures that may be worsening the lives of your employees," opines Sen. Consider the following:

SMALL GOALS

Setting small goals and accomplishing them would give a sense of upliftment and happiness. The goals can be as simple as getting up early and taking an early morning walk, meditating for 30 minutes every day to reclaim your balance and stability, journaling before you hit the bed to instil a sense of gratitude before sleeping every night.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Meeting work deadlines, thinking about finances related to your work are of course things that may occupy your head constantly - yet do not take out the wrath on your loved ones. Establishing this balance may be a little tough and you would need to work on it continuously. In short, focus equally on your work and family, friends, and hobbies.

EXERCISE DAILY

This is not just important for your physical fitness but exercising releases serotonin - a happy hormone that keeps your mood lifted throughout the day. You do not have to necessarily toil for hours at the gym, a 30-minute walk in your nearby garden shall also do the trick. Select a suitable time of day and take up light exercises which you can do regularly.

STAY CONNECTED

Be it your friends, family, or workplace colleagues - it's important to develop relationships where you both can nurture each other - sharing what you feel with each other and supporting each other helps create safe spaces which are comforting and help build a healthy mental health state. Developing bonds of friendship work in your favour.



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CERVICAL SPONDYLOSIS

Do you spend long hours working on a computer? Do you enjoy settling in a sofa with a playstation or other devices? Is your laptop a friend or a hidden enemy of your fitness?

Adopting wrong postures while working/studying/playing, using devices and computers, is one of the leading causes of cervical spondylosis that is characterised by immense pain and discomfort in the neck. Early detection and corrective measures are, hence, key in alleviating your disorder and ensuring that it doesn't return.

Cervical spondylosis is a general term for age-related wear and tear affecting the spinal disks in your neck. As the disks dehydrate and shrink, signs of osteoarthritis develop, including bony projections along the edges of bones (bone spurs). However, by adopting wrong postures one can invite this problem earlier in life.

SYMPTOMS

Most people experience no symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they typically include pain and stiffness in the neck.

Sometimes, cervical spondylosis results in a narrowing of the spinal canal within the bones of the spine (the vertebrae). The spinal canal is the space inside the vertebrae that the spinal cord and the nerve roots pass through to reach the rest of the body. If the spinal cord or nerve roots become pinched, you might experience tingling, numbness and weakness in the arms, hands, legs or feet, lack of coordination and difficulty walking, as well as loss of bladder or bowel control.

CAUSES

As people age, the structures that make up the backbone and neck gradually develop wear and tear. These changes can include:

Dehydrated disks

Disks act like cushions between the vertebrae of the spine. By the age of 40, most people's spinal disks begin drying out and shrinking. As the disks become smaller, there is more bone-on-bone contact between the vertebrae.

Herniated disks

Cracks also appear on the exterior of the spinal disks. The soft interior of a disk can squeeze through these cracks. Sometimes, it presses on the spinal cord and nerve roots.

Bone spurs

As the disks break down, the body may produce extra amounts of bone in a misguided effort to strengthen the spine. These bone spurs can sometimes pinch the spinal cord and nerve roots.

Pain in the neck?

Cervical spondylosis refers to wear and tear affecting the spinal disks in your neck. It can be treated with specific neck exercises, traction, medication as well as alternate therapies



Stiff ligaments

Ligaments are cords of tissue that connect bone to bone. Spinal ligaments can stiffen with age, making the neck less flexible.

DIAGNOSIS

Imaging tests can provide detailed information to guide diagnosis and treatment. These include neck X-ray which can show changes in the spine, such as bone spurs, that indicate cervical spondylosis. Neck X-ray can also rule out rare and more serious causes for neck pain and stiffness, such as tumors, cancer, infections or fractures.

Using radio waves and a strong magnetic field, MRI can produce detailed images that can help pinpoint areas where nerves might be pinched.

In CT scans, a dye is injected into the spinal canal to provide more-detailed imaging. This test makes it easier to see the details of the spinal cord, spinal canal and nerve roots.

THERAPY

A physical therapist can teach you exercises to help stretch and strengthen the muscles in your neck and shoulders. This can be one of the best treatments for the pain and stiffness. Some people with cervical spondylosis benefit from the use of traction, which can help provide more space within the spine if nerve roots are being pinched.

HOME REMEDIES

- Regular exercise. Maintaining activity will help speed recovery, even if you have to temporarily modify some of your exercises because of neck pain. People who walk daily are less likely to experience neck and low back pain.
- Pain relievers like Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others), naproxen sodium (Aleve) or acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) are often enough to control the pain associated with cervical spondylosis.
- Applying heat or ice to your neck can ease sore neck muscles.
- A soft neck brace allows your neck muscles to rest. However, a neck brace should be worn for only short periods of time because it can eventually weaken neck muscles and cause neck stiffness.

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Chiropractic adjustments can help relieve neck pain and stiffness. The chiropractor may manipulate your spine or perform massage to relieve symptoms. The treatment is typically done after X-rays of the cervical spine have been completed.

Both, massage therapy and acupuncture, are being studied to treat neck pain. Some early results suggest that both may be helpful.

Prostate health - risks and remedies



DR MOUMEN MOHAMAD TANATRAH
Urologist
Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Nizwa

Why is prostate important?

The prostate is a walnut-sized gland in males located just below the bladder and in front of the rectum and surroundings the upper part of the urethra. It is responsible for producing seminal fluid that nourishes and transports sperm.

How do I know if I have prostate problems?

The most common symptoms of prostate health problems include a weak or slow urinary stream, frequent urination, straining to urinate, and nighttime urgency to urinate. Depending on the type of prostate condition, you may experience other symptoms. You should immediately contact your doctor if you have one or more of the following: a weak urine stream, blood in your urine, fever, chills or body aches, pain in the area between your scrotum and anus, pain while urinating or after ejaculation, inability to delay urination, or urine that has an unusual smell or colour.

What are some common prostate problems?

Three of the most common conditions that affect the prostate are prostatitis, benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), and prostate cancer. Prostatitis is an inflammation of the prostate gland. BPH occurs when

the prostate gland enlarges. Prostate cancer can start anywhere in the prostate gland and is the most common type of cancer in men.

What are the risk factors for prostate problems?

Age, family history, and obesity are some of the most common causes of BPH and prostate cancer. Other causes include physical inactivity, diet, and alteration in insulin levels.

How do I reduce my risks of prostate cancer and BPH?

You should see your healthcare provider regularly and notify the provider if you have any problems. Lose weight if you are obese. Exercise 30 minutes a day, five times a week. Maintain a healthy diet low in unhealthy fats and increase vegetable and fruit intake.

How are prostate problems treated?

Prostatitis can be caused by an infection or be non-infective. For infective prostatitis, antibiotics will be needed. For nonbacterial prostatitis, acetaminophen or ibuprofen may help ease the pain, and in some cases, antibiotics may also be recommended. Treatment for BPH includes lifestyle changes, medicine, and surgery. Some lifestyle changes include limiting liquids close to

sleep, avoiding drinks with caffeine or alcohol, and avoiding certain medicines that can affect your bladder, such as cold and allergy medicines.

Medications that may help reduce the size of your prostate include finasteride and dutasteride. Other medications such as tamsulosin, doxazosin, and alfuzosin help the prostate and bladder muscles relax, improving symptoms. If symptoms get worse despite making lifestyle adjustments and use of medication, surgery may be necessary to help shrink the prostate.

How can I prevent prostate problems?

Any male can develop prostate problems. There is really no way to prevent this. Prostatitis is more common in younger males, while BPH and prostate cancer more commonly affect men aged 50 years and older. If you have any risk factors, such as a family history, or obese, you should talk to a healthcare provider as soon as you can.

Recognising symptoms early may help you receive treatment earlier, reducing long-term complications. Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals across all its centres have specialised screening packages and facilities in all its centres across Oman including Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Nizwa where Dr Moumen Mohamad Tanatrah is working as a Urologist.

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