

MONDAY, MAY 23, 2022

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

BACK TO NORMAL

All COVID-19 precautionary measures in all places, activities lifted in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments arising from the COVID-19 pandemic has decided to lift all precautionary measures in all places and for all activities.

In a statement, the committee called on all to continue pre-

ventive health practices, and stay at home and not meet others in the event of a fever or any respiratory symptoms. It also urged community members to wear a mask in case of contact with a patient, and the elderly, those with immunodeficiency and chronic diseases in particular, to follow the preventive measures.

The Supreme Committee also called on citizens and residents to take the booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

It commended the constructive role of government, private and civil agencies in following preventive measures and their contribution to limiting the

spread of the pandemic.

The Civil Aviation Authority also issued a statement based on the decisions of the Supreme Committee. 'The authority hereby informs all passengers and aircraft operators in Oman that all precautionary measures and procedures of COVID-19 in civil aviation sector are lifted'.

The decision sparked a flurry of comments on social media. Dr Said al Muharrami tweeted, "We thank the Supreme Committee for its efforts in the last couple of years. The decision will lead to the return of normal life, the prosperity of commercial activity, improvement of the business environment, and the

growth of tourism. Entrepreneurs and investors will be encouraged to expand their businesses."

Faisal bin Omar al Marhoon thanked the authorities for the decision, adding, "We ask God to protect Oman, its people, and all those who live on its land, and to end this pandemic forever."

Another twitterati, Khalid bin Ghaleb al Shanfari said, "We might be at the end of the pandemic, but it has left deep scars and sorrow in its wake. We thank God and ask Him to count those who died from this disease among the martyrs and the righteous."

Iran agrees to revive mega underwater gas pipeline project to Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Iran's Minister of Petroleum Javad Owji, who is on an official visit to the sultanate, has agreed to revive a long-stalled project to lay an undersea pipeline to pump Iranian gas to Oman, according to a report published by the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

The proposed pipeline - one of the biggest regional energy projects - has been stalled for nearly two decades. The then energy ministers of Iran and Oman reached the initial agreement in 2004 according to which Iran would pump 30mn m³ of gas to Oman a day as of 2008, increasing to 70mn m³ a day by 2012.

Iran and Oman reached another agreement in 2013 according to which Iran was expected to pump 28mn m³ of gas a day to Oman for 15 years through the pipeline laid on the bed of Arabian Gulf.

The 2013 agreement was estimated to earn Iran more than US\$1bn annually, IRNA reported.

On Friday, Owji met H E Mohammed al Rumhi, Minis-



Sayyid Badr, Owji discuss opportunities in energy sector

H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received Javad Owji, Minister of Petroleum of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on Sunday. The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields, particularly in areas related to energy. The meeting was attended by several officials from both sides. "A fruitful meeting with Owji. We exchanged views and reviewed a number of promising opportunities in the energy sector," Sayyid Badr tweeted.

ter of Energy and Minerals, to discuss the two countries' cooperation in various spheres in the energy sector.

The agency reported that the Iranian petroleum minister and Omani officials have also agreed on development of a joint oil and gas field - Hengam.

Hengam is the only field shared by Iran and Oman which produces Iran's lightest grade of oil. The field has layers of both oil and gas.

Part of the oil layer has been developed earlier and Iran and Oman have now agreed upon the next phase of development.

MoL announces over 2,000 temporary jobs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL), on Sunday, announced that it will offer over 2,000 jobs on temporary contracts in the public sector under the 'Sahim' initiative.

MoL said 2,216 jobs will be provided under the scheme.

According to the ministry statement, the public and private sectors are partners in creating and generating job opportunities.

A total of 10,017 employment opportunities were offered to citizens during the first quarter of this year, of which 4,126 were in the government sector and 5,891 in the private sector. 'With this, 29 per cent of the total jobs targeted in 2022 has been achieved,' MoL stated.

'The statistics show the ministry's keenness on employment, qualification and training associated with employment, as well as the localisation of jobs, which is the priority of the government.'

MoL is aiming to generate 35,000 job opportunities in 2022.

SHADES OF GREEN TO FIGHT STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH



Celebrating the launch of the Oman chapter of Middle East Psychological Association on Saturday, as well as observing Mental Health Awareness Month, Royal Opera House Muscat was lit up in green. Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Omantel and GUtech are also participating in raising awareness on mental health. Green symbolises the continual awareness of mental health to help fight the stigma that is often associated with it (Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)



Mercury to hit 50°C in parts of Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In an extreme weather warning forecast, the Directorate General of Meteorology said that mercury is set to hit 50°C in some parts of Oman over the next two days.

In a statement, the Met Department said, 'There are expectations of a rise in temperatures in the coastal areas of the Sea of Oman and the coasts of the Arabian Sea.'

Maximum temperatures may range between higher forties to lower fifties (°C), while the minimum will range between mid-thirties and mid-forties (°C), starting from Sunday until Tuesday, Met stated in its forecast.

Since Sunday morning, the heat was palpable with noontime temperatures soaring to 46°C in Amerat, and Sohar, 45°C in Bausher, Wadi al Maawil and 44°C in Al Awabi.

The Met cautioned commuters to be careful when driving as horizontal visibility could be poor due to dust and fog formation.

For Monday, it forecast clear skies over most of the governorates with chances of late night to early morning low level clouds or fog patches over parts of South Sharqiyah, Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates and along the coastal area of Sea of Oman.

Omani donates body after death to support organ donation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A conservationist, who has distributed tens of thousands of seedlings and saplings of wild plants to make Oman green, has announced that he will donate his body after death to the Ministry of Health to support organ donation efforts in the sultanate.

Struggling with cancer hasn't shaken the indomitable spirit of Said Hamoud al Habsi, a farmer from the wilayat of Mudhaibi, North Sharqiyah. He has earned a nickname for always smiling.



Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Habsi said, "I decided to donate my body after death to the Anatomy Department of the Ministry of Health. This will help students and doctors in the field of anatomy. My donation is also

Unfortunately, many people do not know the importance of organ donation. We need a lot of awareness campaigns to spread the culture of organ donation

SAID HAMOUD AL HABSI

aimed to inform people of the importance of organ donation and support the organ donation project of the sultanate."

He claimed to be the first Omani to donate a kidney in the sultanate in 1991. "I donated a

kidney to my brother. Now that I have cancer, I can't donate organs," Habsi clarified.

"Unfortunately, many people do not know the importance of organ donation. We need a lot of awareness to spread the culture

of organ donation among community members."

Habsi has made it his life's mission to contribute tirelessly to making Oman green by providing seedlings and saplings of wild plants, which he grows in his own nursery.

"I started distributing wild plant saplings a few years ago. I have created a small nursery and till now have given away more than 750,000 seedlings of wild species to government and private institutions."

Recognising Habsi's efforts, the Environment Authority hon-

oured him recently.

"Last year, I gave the authority over 45,000 wild tree saplings. I will try to distribute around 47,000 saplings in 2022."

Addressing Omanis who travel abroad for organ transplantation, he said, "The Ministry of Health has qualified Omani specialists working in organ transplantation for free."

He is also spreading awareness on organ donation by giving lectures to school students across the sultanate.

"I hope the local media supports this project to save lives."



Known for its unique tourist attractions, including wadis, deserts, beaches and mountains, Oman's natural assets are popular in the GCC; it is the jewel of the region. Among the sultanate's numerous attractions are Jabal Shams, the sultanate's tallest mountain and a popular camping destination. Other popular tourist activities include sand skiing in the desert, mountaineering and camel racing. But does Oman have enough entertainment facilities? This is what *Muscat Daily* readers had to say:

very beautiful and the people are friendly. Please don't make it like Dubai, or anything else. But I do think Oman should have train facilities.

kriss_togo

My only experience of Oman is limited to that of a tourist, and my belief is Oman is great... it is NOT Dubai!

rayeezmohamed

Oman needs trains throughout the country, metro in the cities and more public buses to travel around the country and the cities.

meyrielleveloso

Muscat is not a pedestrian friendly city... very difficult to walk around.

gillhobbins

Oman needs to keep itself the way it is. This is why it is so unique. Maybe renting bikes to tourists, especially in Muttrah, might be a good idea. And yes, more public toilets.

nassou.ksr

More public toilets - clean toilets.

iamlastymom

Improve street food facilities, offering different kinds of cuisine. It should be an authorised establishment, like the one at Ittin Park in Salalah. We need one in Muscat, Nizwa and other places. People enjoy food while enjoying the outdoors.

saloom_al_abri

Oman is beautiful and is definitely the address of beauty. Please leave it as it is - unique. We do not need another Dubai in Oman or to be compared with any other country.

hildafernandes15

Oman is beautiful. My only heartbreak is how stray dogs are treated in Oman.

jagjit8576

Water parks and one huge amusement park with everything.

'DON'T CHANGE THAT WHICH DOESN'T NEED CHANGE'

VIA WHATSAPP

Bobbi Nicholas
Teacher

Oman needs many more small, boutique hotels. Many tourists do not want big, resort style hotels. They want more unique, rustic experiences.

Jane Jaffer
Author and founder of Dar al Atta'a's Let's Read Campaign

Unfortunately, Oman does not have anywhere near enough entertainment facilities for tourists or even the local population. We need many more indoor sports facilities, fun activities for children such as KidZania and The

Green Planet, water parks and places of interest. We also need free entertainment like water fountain displays, parks, and low-cost accommodation and clean bathrooms at all places of interest. The local people should benefit from tourists, not just the big international hotels. We should also be catering for special interest group tourists like divers and mountaineers.

Asgar Ali Mirza

No, but there is a lot of scope, considering Oman is such a beautiful country with a lot of land. As for what can be added to make the sultanate more tourist-friendly, it needs a big indoor international-standard amusement and water park keeping in mind the theme and culture of Oman. Such a concept will make it

unique from any other amusement park in the world.

Taher Hatim
Chartered accountant

Oman has scope to improve its tourism attractions by having more entertainment facilities, including adventure and water parks.

Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

Yes, the sultanate has extensive entertainment facilities for those interested in nature, history and culture. I believe citizens, the youth in particular, can be more actively engaged in tourism activities by interacting with visitors and helping them understand the local culture.

NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Is there enough awareness on the need to donate organs in Oman? What prevents people from donating their organs?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

SEND US ON OUR NEW WHATSAPP NO 91953774

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (13 / 2022)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Description	Document Fee	Last date for inquires submission	Last date for obtaining Tender Docs.	Last date for Submission
30/2022/MM/PA-7	Insurance of Muscat Municipality Properties	25/- OMR	12/06/2022	27/06/2022	30/06/2022

- Specialized Companies with a valid registration certificate from Tender Board can obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Starting from the date of this announcement until the end of deadline mentioned above.
- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically through link mentioned above.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond which is equivalent to (1%) of the total value of the tender to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality and valid for (90) days starting from the deadline for submission.
- Tender not accompanied by a tender bond will be rejected.
- Clarifications and support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please contact us through e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
 - For technical support of e-tendering system, please send an email to (etenderhd@mtc.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).
 - For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+96824402200/24402330).

Website: www.mm.gov.om

OVER 2,000 VISIT LAND OF FRANKINCENSE SITES IN APRIL



The number of visitors to the Land of Frankincense sites in the Governorate of Dhofar was 2,132 in April, according to data released by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. Al Baleed Archaeological Park and the Frankincense Land Museum received 1,127 visitors, Samahram Archaeological Site received 567 and Wubar Archaeological Site received 438 visitors. Al Baleed Archaeological Park, Samahram, the Shasir area and Wadi Dokka are registered on the World Heritage List under the name Land of Frankincense sites. The Office of His Majesty the Sultan's Advisor for Cultural Affairs is developing several archaeological sites and providing these with utilities to serve the goals of cultural and archaeological tourism in the governorate.

43 expats arrested, 15 fishing vessels seized

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Forty-three expats were arrested and 15 fishing vessels seized for violating the Marine Fishing Law in Dhofar governorate. The fisheries control team of Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries

and Water Resources in Dhofar seized 15 artisanal fishing vessels in the sea off the niyabat of Hasik in the wilayat of Sadah. Forty-three expats were arrested for engaging in fishing activities without the required licence, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources stated.

Iran Air, Karun Airlines to operate direct flights to Oman

Muscat - The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has approved direct flights of Iran Air and Karun Airlines to Oman.

A statement issued by CAA said, 'The authority has issued its initial approval for

Iran Air and Karun Airlines to operate direct flights between the airports of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the airports of the Sultanate of Oman.'

The two airlines will start operations soon, CAA added.

Italian President confers award on Jamal Moosawi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of National Museum of Oman, has been awarded the Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy by Sergio Mattarella, President of Italy.

The award was presented during a ceremony held at the residence of H E Federica Favi, Ambassador of Italy in Oman, on Sunday.

H E Federica praised the role of Moosawi in contributing to strengthening bilateral relations in the cultural sphere between Oman and Italy since 2011.

There was significant cultural cooperation during the founding of the National Museum project, especially in the fields of preservation, conservation, development of museum narratives, and hosting of an exhibition titled 'Vi-



(Supplied photo)

sionists: Forty Years of Italian Archaeological Research in the Sultanate of Oman' in 2019.

The exhibition was dedicated to the excavators and authors of archaeological studies conducted in Oman.

The National Museum participated in a lecture accompanying an exhibition on perfumes at Turin Archeology Museum in 2020, and hosted 'Incensum' in cooperation with the Italian Perfume Foundation in 2021, which included loaned artefacts from Italy and an Omani archaeological collection. The exhibition in the Land of Frankincense gallery was open to the public for a period of three months.

Both exhibitions dealt with civilisational, historical and religious dimensions and the role that Oman played across the ages in cultural and commercial exchange through frankincense.



(Supplied photo)

Student company creates device to rescue fishermen

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A student company from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Sohar has created a device which can help in rescuing fishermen trapped on the high seas.

Called Etienne, the device can be installed on fishing boats, which sends a distress signal in case of an emergency to the concerned authorities who can then actively engage in rescuing the fishermen.

Aiman bin Abdullah al Hosani, one of the students of the company, told ONA that the device gets activated in the event of the boat encountering specific problems.

"These problems were identified through a questionnaire distributed among fishermen for a survey, the results of which indicated two problems were common. These are boat capsize and sinking due to leakage," Hosani said.

Certified by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), the device incorporates advanced satellite communication technologies allowing communication from anywhere on Earth. It also includes sensors for water

leakage.

MoCIIP has also granted the company an intellectual property certificate for Etienne.

"Apart from an automated response in case of the two emergency situations specified, the device also has an emergency button to send a

The device has an emergency button to send a distress message followed by the location of the boat to the authorities

AIMAN AL HOSANI

distress message followed by the location of the boat to the competent authorities if need arises," Hosani said.

He informed that the company started manufacturing and installation of the device in June of 2021. "It is designed for small marine fishing boats and pleasure boats to ensure safety and security in the sea."

The device went through several stages of testing and trials before the final product was manufactured.

MoE to set up 9 new schools in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE), on Sunday, unveiled details of a plan to set up nine new schools in Dhofar governorate.

The decision came in implementation of Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to establish 76 more government schools across the sultanate.

Yaqoub bin Saif al Shehimi, director general of Directorate General of Education in Dhofar, informed that seven schools will be set up in the wilayat of Salalah, and one each in the wilayats of Mirbat and Al Mazayouna.

According to Shehimi, the schools will accommodate about 9,540 students of the



(Supplied photo)

governorate of different grades. The schools will add around 320 classrooms, and have administrative offices for teachers, computer rooms and laboratories. The schools will also have playgrounds and facilities for sports, providing avenues for children to excel in extracurricular activities.

In March 2022, MoE unveiled details of its plan to set up 76 new schools in different parts of Oman. The new schools will reduce student density in classrooms and the number of evening classes.

Of the 76 schools, 19 will be

set up in Muscat, 17 in North Batinah, 11 in South Batinah, five in Dakhliyah, nine each in South Sharqiyah and Dhofar, two each in Musandam and Buraimi, and one each in North Sharqiyah and Dhahirah.

The new schools will accommodate about 80,000 male and

female students, and will be built in consideration of the current number of students in each governorate and the number of evening schools in these, as well as the expected increase in the number of students at the end of the tenth Five-Year Plan in each governorate,' MoE stated.

Oman to propose global strategy for infection control at world health meet

Geneva, Switzerland - The 75th session of the World Health Assembly (WHA75) kicked off on Sunday in Geneva, Switzerland, gathering delegates of World Health Organization's member states.

The sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Health, is participating in-person in the event - running till May 28 - with a delegation headed by H E Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health.

Focusing on the theme of 'Health for Peace, Peace for



H E Ahmed al Sa'eedi

Health', current and future priorities for public health issues of global importance will be discussed.

The session is an opportunity

to gather support for the Third Global Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance, which is planned from November 24-25 in Oman. The conference will be held in cooperation with WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the UN Environment Programme, and the Gulf Health Council, in addition to policy makers, international experts, and representatives from the private sector, civil society and research institutions.

The session is an opportunity



(Supplied photo)

Wild seed collection, plantation fights desertification in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of the national initiative to plant 10mn wild tree seedlings in ten years that started in January 2020, Environment Authority (EA) is continuing to collect wild seeds in Dhofar.

An official of EA said that the Directorate General of Environment in Dhofar is putting great efforts to collect wild seeds.

"The campaign aims to increase stocks in seed banks for plantation in the authority's nurseries, in addition to using these in the second phase of the campaign to plant seeds at the beginning of the khareef season in the governorate.

"We aim to cultivate lands that have been subjected to desertification. We have chosen this time of the year as soon it will be rainy season in Dhofar,

which will help us grow wild species in a better way," the EA official said.

In June 2021, EA launched a drive to plant 1mn seeds which it had collected in Dhofar, including sidr, samr and al ghaf seeds.

The authority, in cooperation with volunteer teams, launched the first phase of the project in a few wilayats of Dhofar, including Dalkout, Rakhioot, Salalah and Taqa.

Oman participates in World Heart Summit

Geneva, Switzerland - The World Heart Summit of the World Heart Federation, which saw congregation of the global cardiovascular community, concluded on Sunday in Geneva.

The sultanate's delegation to the summit was headed by H E Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, along with participation of policymakers, diplomats, researchers and health advocates.

Speaking at the summit, H E Dr Sa'eedi said that cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death globally as well as the Middle East. He added that it is extremely important to concentrate on prevention as most cardiovascular diseases are 'luckily



preventable'.

"This can be done by addressing behavioural risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet and obesity, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol. Daily consumption of fruits and veg-

etables could potentially prevent two-thirds of heart diseases."

He pointed out that Oman started its national non-communicable diseases (NCD) screening programme for all citizens aged 40 years and older in 2007,

which has been instrumental in the early detection of NCDs in the country.

The two-day World Heart Summit took place ahead of the 75th session of the World Health Assembly.

SEND YOUR
COMMENTS TO

**muscatdaily@
apexmedia.co.om**

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	39	25
Doha	38	27
Kuwait City	42	25
Manama	37	26
Muscat	38	29
Riyadh	44	25

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	3.57am
Sunrise	5.22am
Duhr	12.09pm
Asr	3.30pm
Maghrib	6.50pm
Isha	8.10pm

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,140.43
Sensex	54,326.39
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	202.20
Pakistani Rs	520.85
Bangladesh taka	227.48
Philippines peso	135.75
Sri Lankan Rs	923.21
*Rates as on MAY 22 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Russian economy grew 3.5% in first quarter

Russia's state statistics agency said it expected economic growth to stand at 3.5 per cent in the first quarter of this year.

The figures released by Rosstat were the first estimate of Russian economic growth since President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine in late February and the West slapped several rounds of unprecedented sanctions on the country.

The growth is expected to be driven by passenger transport and the extraction of mineral resources, according to Rosstat.

By comparison, Russia's economy expanded by five per cent in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Economists believe that the worst economic impact of the sanctions is still to come and expect Russia, which has relied heavily on imports of manufacturing equipment and consumer goods, to plunge into a deep recession.

In late April, the Bank of Russia estimated that the country's annual economic output would fall between eight and 10 per cent this year and by up to three per cent next year.

The central bank said it expected the economy to grow between 2.5 and 3.5 per cent in 2024.

"The external environment for the Russian economy remains challenging and significantly limits economic activity," the central bank said at the time.

Oman increases oil output by 9.2% as exports jump



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's daily average production of oil continued to remain above one million barrels per day (bpd) mark during the first four months of 2022, up by more than nine per cent in comparison to the daily average output recorded in the same period of last year.

Oil production during January – April period of this year increased to 1.04mn bpd compared with 952,800 bpd in the corresponding period of 2021, the data released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed.

The sultanate's total oil production in the first four months of 2022 grew by 9.2 per cent to 124.8mn barrels compared to 114.3mn barrels in the same period of 2021.

Of the total production, crude output jumped by 12.8 per cent year-on-year to 98.9mn barrels during January – April period from 87.6mn barrels in the same period of last year, while conden-

sates output decreased 2.9 per cent to 25.9mn barrels during these four months.

India, Japan sharply increase imports

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

The average price at which Oman sold its crude during the first four months of 2022 surged by 57.1 per cent to US\$82.2 per barrel against US\$52.4 per barrel recorded for the same period of 2021

The sultanate's total oil exports for the full year 2021 had inched up 0.7 per cent to 288.9mn barrels from 287mn barrels in 2020.

Exports to China, the biggest buyer of Oman's crude, accounted for around 78 per cent

of the sultanate's total oil exports during the first four months of this year, lower than its shares in the previous months.

In absolute terms, however, Oman's oil exports to China rose 6.8 per cent to 84.7mn barrels during January – April period of this year compared to 79.3mn barrels in the same period of the previous year.

4mn barrels during January – April period this year against just 501,000 barrels in the same period a year ago.

Oil prices remain up

The average price at which Oman sold its crude during the first four months of 2022 surged by 57.1 per cent to US\$82.2 per barrel against US\$52.4 per barrel recorded for the same period of 2021.

The highest monthly average price of Oman crude this year was recorded in April at US\$92 per barrel, while the average price for March stood at US\$83.6 per barrel, the NCSI data showed.

With global oil prices continuing to rise amid Russia – Ukraine conflict, Oman crude prices recently rose to their highest level in more than eight years. Continuing its upward trend, Oman crude price on Friday rose 2.6 per cent to close at US\$108.51 per barrel (for June delivery) at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange.



APSR to organise green hydrogen forum on Tuesday

Muscat – The Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), in cooperation with the Sustainable Energy Research Center (SERC) at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), will hold a forum on Tuesday on the prospects of green hydrogen in Oman.

The event aims to promote constructive cooperation between institutions concerned with the clean and renewable energy sector.

The forum will include several working papers and seminars that cover a spectrum of topics, including the prospects of green hydrogen in Oman and the experiences of regional projects in the field of hydrogen energy, among other topics.

The forum will highlights the advantages of green hydrogen and ways of benefiting from it in areas of sustainable development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

ONA

Saudi billionaire prince to sell 17% of firm to sovereign fund

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – A Saudi billionaire detained in a 2017 anti-graft crackdown is to sell a 16.87 per cent stake of his company to a sovereign wealth fund run by the kingdom's crown prince, a statement said Sunday.

The sale by Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal of 625mn shares of the Riyadh-headquartered Kingdom Holding Company is worth roughly US\$1.5bn, according to a regulatory filing published by the Saudi stock exchange, or Tadawul.

The company owns the famed George V hotel in Paris and has a majority stake in The Savoy in London, according to a breakdown of its portfolio on its website.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is chair of the sovereign wealth fund, known as the Public Investment Fund, which is at the heart of Saudi Arabia's efforts to end its reliance on oil.

More recently, Al-Waleed has sparred with Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk over his bid to buy Twitter.

When Musk unveiled his bid in April, Al-Waleed was among the investors who spoke out against it, saying it did not reflect Twitter's "intrinsic value... given its growth prospects".

AFP



Al-Waleed bin Talal

Bank Muscat organises Annual Leadership Forum

Muscat – Bank Muscat organised its Annual Leadership Forum for 2022 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, in the presence of Sheikh Waleed K al Hashar, chief executive officer. The event was attended by members of the executive management as well as officials and branch managers from both Bank Muscat as well as Meethaq Islamic Banking.

The organisation of the annual forum comes as part of the bank's strategy to enhance strategic alignment with managers and frontline employees, and also discuss various business strategies and plans aimed at developing Bank Muscat's operations and services, in addition to exchanging knowledge about upcoming trends and challenges and how to address them.

The Annual Leadership Forum also plays an important role in introducing employees to the bank's future strategy, goals and how to achieve them, as part of its customer-centric vision 'To serve you better, every day'.

Coinciding with the Leadership Forum this year, Bank Muscat also announced the launch of its 40th anniversary logo and the celebrations of its great successes and achievements, which have contributed to strengthen-



Sheikh Waleed al Hashar

ing the bank's leadership within the sultanate's banking sector. These include providing the best banking services and facilities to customers as well as contributing to the growth and development of various economic and social sectors, and a strong public-private partnership to serve the community. The bank released a special logo for the occasion, which presents a futuristic and modern view of Bank Muscat.

Addressing the forum, Hashar stressed that Bank Muscat's strategies and plans primarily focus on serving customers and



providing them the best banking services and facilities possible in Oman. He explained how the bank's customer-centric vision 'To serve you better, every day' plays a key role in achieving these goals, and also helps keep pace with the numerous developments in the financial sector.

Hashar expressed his thanks and appreciation to all customers including individuals, corporates, institutions and business owners for their strong confidence and trust in Bank Muscat's numerous services and facilities.

Bank Muscat CEO also com-

mended employees for their dedication and commitment in taking the bank to ever greater heights.

He reminded all employees that sustainable development required each and every bank employee to constantly make efforts to better serve customers in such a manner that bank continues to lead, progress and excel.

He stressed on the need to implement all the bank's plans and strategies in a new and innovative manner that inspires customer service and at the same time, achieves all of the bank's

goals.

Hashar also expressed his sincere delight and great pride in celebrating the 40th anniversary of the bank. Bank Muscat has played, and continues to play an ever-growing and important role in sustainable development and in pioneering corporate social responsibility in Oman.

He called on all employees to work with team spirit and continue their efforts to benefit society as a whole. He concluded by drawing attention to the bank's glorious history, steady leadership and excellent corporate culture that features a pioneering

mentality.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahmed Faqir al Balushi, chief banking officer at Bank Muscat, pointed out the important role that the bank plays in the sultanate's economic and social development, and the initiatives implemented by the bank recently to enhance financial inclusion across the country.

Balushi expressed his great delight and pride on the occasion of the bank's celebration of 40 years of excellence and leadership in the banking sector.

He stressed on the importance of implementation of the

bank's customer-centric vision as well as its plan and strategy to contribute to digital transformation.

Balushi expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to customers for their strong confidence in the bank's services and products.

He added that the Leadership Forum provides an opportunity to thank and appreciate the bank's employees for their hard work and sincere efforts to contribute to the bank's success.

He encouraged everyone to continue on this approach and provide the best services possible to customers.

The Leadership Forum also witnessed an interesting session by a leading trainer and business executive who shared some thought-provoking ideas on the current competitive landscape of banking and future predictions, top digital trends, and the way forward.

A number of presentations, interactive activities and competitions were also presented during the event and shed light on recent achievements by the bank. Also, a short play was staged by bank employees to highlight the 40th anniversary and its pioneering role in serving the community in Oman.

Bitter harvest for India's wheat farmers after export ban

Khanna, India - When New Delhi banned wheat exports as prices soared over Russia's invasion of Ukraine it provoked consternation abroad and drove the cereal even higher.

Now Indian farmers and traders are fuming they have been denied a windfall as domestic prices have plummeted.

India is the world's second-biggest wheat producer, but the government - itself the country's biggest buyer of the crop - said it chose to protect food security for its mammoth population despite inflation concerns.

The move - along with dwindling global supplies from Russia and Ukraine, both among the world's top five wheat exporters - sent prices to all-time highs on commodity exchanges in Chicago and Europe.

But at Asia's largest grain market in Khanna, in India's breadbasket state of Punjab, values went the other way.

Every year, thousands of farmers from the wheat-growing region sell their produce at the facility, which is dominated by a dozen giant storage sheds, each the size of a football pitch.

From 2,300 rupees (about US\$30) per 100 kilograms of wheat before the export ban, prices slumped to 2,015 rupees - the government-set minimum



Workers carry sacks of wheat to load on a freight train at Chawa Pail railway station in Khanna, Punjab state, on May 19 (AFP)

price at which it buys grain for its vast public distribution system.

India's hundreds of millions of small farmers eke out a borderline existence, subject to the vagaries of the weather, and some in Punjab were already reeling from production losses due to a severe heatwave.

The price fall represents the difference between a bumper payout and heartache, they say.

Farmer Navtej Singh saved half his 60-tonne wheat harvest to sell during the lean season, when prices normally rise, and is aghast at the government's decision. Now he is scrambling to sell

his remaining stock.

"This ban has come as a shock," he told AFP. "The price has dropped to the lowest and doesn't even cover our expenses. I can't even wait for a day."

The authorities had not consulted anyone and had acted "selfishly", he said.

"We were already hit with production losses this year, and the ban order has made our life difficult."

'Feed the world'

Before the war in Ukraine and the heatwave, India's wheat production of 109mn tonnes in 2021

and 7mn tonnes of exports had both been expected to rise this year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month even offered to help plug the global wheat deficit and "feed the world".

But extreme weather conditions are becoming more frequent in a phenomenon experts say is driven by climate change. After producers in Punjab were hit by a heatwave, the national harvest came in at four million tonnes less than expected.

Now federal and state authorities are cutting procurement for the public distribution system, which provides free and

highly subsidised grains to nearly 800mn people, as food security schemes set up during the coronavirus pandemic are cut back.

Even so, retail wheat flour prices are at a 12-year high, and Manish Pajni, head of the Punjab government's grain procurement department in Khanna, has backed the ban, saying wholesale rates could have gone as high as 3,000 rupees without it.

But trader Raj Sood said the government should have adopted a wait and watch policy before abruptly halting exports and causing market turmoil.

"The market was already under stress from the harvest crisis and, without a thought, the government came up with the ban," he said.

"No doubt the major losses will be incurred by big exporters like Cargill, ITC and Glencore, but small traders and farmers will also be impacted."

And many businessmen in Khanna say the measure will only have a temporary effect as the rules of supply and demand are unavoidable.

Flour mill owner Divender Verma usually obtains his raw materials from government stocks but said they were running at their minimum.

AFP

Russia says about half of Gazprom clients opened ruble accounts

Moscow, Russia - Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said that about half of the 54 companies that have natural gas contracts with energy giant Gazprom opened accounts in rubles.

President Vladimir Putin has said that from April Russia will only accept payment for deliveries in its national currency, with buyers required to set up ruble accounts or have their taps turned off.

The announcement came in response to a litany of international sanctions that hit Moscow after it sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, including the freezing of its foreign currency assets held abroad.

"Today, I think, there are around 54 companies that have contracts with Gazprom Export," Novak said at a conference in Moscow, his remarks carried by the RIA Novosti news agency.

"About half them have already opened special accounts - in foreign currency and in rubles - with our authorised bank" to pay for gas, he added.

He said that once April's figures are finalised there will be a list of "those who paid in rubles and those who refused to pay".



Alexander Novak

The European Commission said this week that anything going beyond paying for gas contracts in the stipulated currency violated sanctions against Russia.

Last month, Gazprom said it was halting supplies to Poland and Bulgaria over refusal to pay in rubles. Finnish state-owned firm Gasum said Saturday that Russia has halted gas to the Nordic country over its refusal to pay Gazprom in rubles.

Italian energy giant Eni said Tuesday it was opening accounts in euros and in rubles to fulfil payments due imminently for the supply of Russian gas, insisting that the move was in compliance with international sanctions.

AFP

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tenders:

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	18/2022	Supply of Uniform for OETC	06/06/2022	05/07/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	204.750
2	19/2022	Provide Litigation and Legal Advisory Services	30/05/2022	07/06/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, have Commercial registry, and a License for Advocacy and Legal Consultancy issued by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs.	157.500
3	20/2022	Inspection, Calibration, Testing and Renewal of Certificates of Measuring / Testing Equipment's for Five Years	06/06/2022	05/07/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate	157.500
4	21/2022	Supply and installation of Air Cells and Gaskets for Power Transformers and HV Cable box oil Conservator Tanks.	06/06/2022	05/07/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	52.500
5	23/2022	Supply & Installation of new HVAC packages & ST Standalone A/C with two years AMC at several Grid Stations at Muscat Governorate.	06/06/2022	05/07/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	157.500

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering
Buying the Tender:	By using E-Tendering System.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer / On-line Payment)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 92217856-99105413-91777378-93515198
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx



Oman Electricity Transmission Company S.A.O.C.
P.O. Box 1389, Al Khoudh, PC 132, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 2428 3000 | Fax: +968 2230 9046
www.omangrid.com



إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العامة لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية :

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	للم الوثيقة شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة (أرغ)
١	٢٠٢٢/١٨	توريد الزي الرسمي للشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء	٢٠٢٢/٠٦/٠٦	٢٠٢٢/٠٧/٠٥	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال والمسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول .	٢٠٤.٧٥٠
٢	٢٠٢٢/١٩	تقديم خدمات التقاضي وخدمات الاستشارية القانونية	٢٠٢٢/٠٥/٣٠	٢٠٢٢/٠٦/٠٧	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول وترخيص مزاولة المهام والاستشارات القانونية صادر من وزارة العدل	١٥٧.٥٠٠
٣	٢٠٢٢/٢٠	فحص واختبار وتجديد شهادات معدات القياس لمدة خمس سنوات	٢٠٢٢/٠٦/٠٦	٢٠٢٢/٠٧/٠٥	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال والمسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول .	١٥٧.٥٠٠
٤	٢٠٢٢/٢١	توريد وتركيب خلايا هوائية تخزين الزيت الاحتياطي لخوالات الطاقة وخزان الزيت الاحتياطي لوصلات الكابلات ذات الجهد العالي (مع كامل ملحقاتها)	٢٠٢٢/٠٦/٠٦	٢٠٢٢/٠٧/٠٥	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال والمسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول .	٥٢.٥٠٠
٥	٢٠٢٢/٢٣	توريد وتركيب وحدات التكييف مع عقد صيانة لمدة سنتين في عدة محطات بمحافظة مسقط	٢٠٢٢/٠٦/٠٦	٢٠٢٢/٠٧/٠٥	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال والمسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول .	١٥٧.٥٠٠

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة بعد تقديم الطلب عن طريق نظام المنافس الإلكتروني
طريقة الشراء	من خلال استخدام نظام المنافس الإلكتروني
الرسم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العروض	يتم تسليم النسخة الأصلية فقط من الضمان البنكي للعطاء في الصندوق . أما العرض فيتم تسليمه من خلال نظام المنافس الإلكتروني
الشروط و الضمانات	معد جديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف. أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . إرفاق تأميناً في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (1٪) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعنوناً بإسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء . كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه . الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع الضمان البنكي للعطاء فقط في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الموالج رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣٠ تفاصيل التواصل: ٩٣٥١٥١٩٨-٩١٧٧٧٣٧٨-٩٩١٠٥٤١٣٠٩٢٢١٧٨٥٦
البريد الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الإلكتروني	www.omangrid.com https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx



الشركة العامة لنقل الكهرباء ش. م. ع. م
ص. ب : ١٣٨٩ | الخوض الرمز البريدي : ١٣٢ | سلطنة عمان
الهاتف : +٩٦٨ ٢٤٢٨ ٣٠٠٠ / الفاكس : +٩٦٨ ٢٢٣٠ ٩٠٤١
الموقع الإلكتروني : www.omangrid.com



Alizz Islamic Bank launches 'Ruwad Alizz'

Alizz Islamic Bank launched 'Ruwad Alizz' programme, in collaboration with Harvard Manage Mentor - the on-line learning platform and a subsidiary of Harvard University - one of the most prestigious universities in the world.

With this programme, Alizz Islamic Bank endeavours in a mission to develop Leadership to suit the 'Future of Work' by steering a holistic and an accelerated development journey to its potential future leaders.

Further, the bank believes that there is immense opportunity in collaborative learning and exchanging ideas in the new age of digital and automated business environment.

Upholding this vision of the CEO, the programme pursues to make the learner experience more enriching by including delegates with potential from different industries in Oman which would also be conducive in nurturing alliances.

Moreover, the future business ecosystems will also need communities of interconnected individuals, organisations and industries that work in tandem in



a complex environment, where members play roles of leaders, innovators, and most importantly, entrepreneurs who will be able to develop commercial allies across industries, a press release said.

The event was attended by Sulaiman bin Hamad al Harthy, CEO, members of senior man-

agement along with the internal and external delegates who were selected to join the pilot Batch.

The event was also graced by the line managers of the external delegates, representatives from the Performance Factory - the training partner for Ruwad Alizz, and Shatha al Maskiry, a guest

speaker

Mohammed al Balushi, chief Human Resources officer at Alizz Islamic Bank, stated that the initiative was suggested by the CEO, which was later consented by the board of directors.

Balushi added that the programme aims to certify 60 delegates every year, across two

batches. He further elaborated that the programme is not restricted to lecture-based classes, it is rather a blended programme that consists of different methods of learning. It includes self-study using learning materials of Harvard Manage Mentor through their on-line learning platform fol-

lowed by class-room assimilation to discuss bi-weekly topics covered in the e-learning modules.

The classroom assimilation sessions will be conducted by the Oman wing of the Performance Factory, a leading consultancy firm renowned for their work in Management Consulting

& Organisation Development. The delegates will also be subject to several assignments and assessments to measure effectiveness in learning, and there will be mentors appointed from the senior management of Alizz Islamic Bank for each delegate to support them along this leadership development journey.

Spiritual leader Sadhguru champions climate action

Global visionary, Indian yoga guru and spiritualist Sadhguru Jagadish Vasudev addressed the importance of sustainability, protecting the environment and safeguarding soil conservation during a special Future Talks session at Dubai's Museum of the Future.

Named one of India's 50 most influential people, Sadhguru is the latest global icon to present a crucial discussion at the Museum of the Future - an intellectual platform where the world's brightest minds collaborate to deliver novel ideas and concepts that will shape our shared future.

As part of his 'Journey to Save Soil' he set out from London to Delhi, visiting many hotspots around the world and spreading his message along the way. Sadhguru visited the Museum of the Future to deliver a special address under the title 'Working Together for a Conscious Planet', which saw the environmental activist engage with people from around the world, inspiring them to take decisive action on climate change, with a particular focus on soil degradation.

"What we are facing now is soil extinction," he said. "Why is soil becoming extinct? We must understand if you add organic content to sand, sand will turn into soil. If you remove all organic content from soil, soil will become sand.

"In most countries, more than 50 percent of the top soil has gone over the past 100 years. The nutrient levels have dropped significantly. The level of mi-



cronutrients that you got in your food in the early 20th Century, compared to what you are getting now, has dropped 90 percent," he said.

Giving an example of the drastic reduction of micronutrients in soil across the planet today, Sandhguru starkly pointed out that to get the same nutrients as an orange as you would in the 1920s, a person would have to eat eight oranges today.

"This is what we have done," he said. "In the in the last 1,000 years, we have removed 85 percent of photosynthesis from the planet. This is what we are trying to reverse with 'Save Soil'.

"There must be a maximum amount of photosynthesis on the planet because it takes in carbon (dioxide), it keeps the land rich and feeds all the other organism - helping the planet stay alive."

Sustainability is a key theme at the Museum of the Future as it has been built to LEED Platinum sustainability standards.

Home to a dedicated solar farm that supplies approximately 37% of its power, the museum introduces worldwide challenges and aims at shedding light on the impact of climate change on all of humanity.

An ideal platform for Sadhguru to highlight the planet's degrading ecological situation and the importance of protecting our world's most vital natural resources, the Museum of the Future creates room for many aspects including environmental awareness, scientific knowledge and discussions around humanity's responsibility towards both nature and themselves.

Spanning 30,000 kilometres and 27 countries, Sadhguru has embarked on a transatlantic 75-day journey as a solo motorcyclist to address the soil crisis by bringing together people from around the world to champion soil health and urge global leaders to implement national policies to save what is considered as one of Earth's depleting resources.

Madayn organises training programme

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates 'Madayn' organised a training programme on 'Data Analysis and Reporting Techniques' as part of its ongoing plan to develop the skills of human cadres in the various industrial cities.

The programme aimed at enhancing awareness on statistical concepts, and methods of data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting, a press release said.

Madayn organises a series of training programmes throughout the year with the objective of focusing on trending topics and developing the capabilities of human cadres in the industrial cities. Moreover, Madayn aims through these pro-



grammes to complement the efforts made by the sultanate to support training and Omanisation to meet the needs of the industrial sector.

Madayn also makes significant efforts to strengthen partnership with the educational and training related bodies to benefit from their expertise in

the field of human resource development, improve production processes, simplify work procedures, and conduct industry-related research and studies.

SAP highlights Oman's digital transformation

Amid the rapid pace of digitalisation across Oman's government and private sectors, global technology company SAP SE (NYSE: SAP) is showcasing its customisable solutions for digital transformation at COMEX, the sultanate's largest technology, communications, innovation and digital transformation show from 23 - 25 May at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

Waheed al Hamaid, SAP executive director of Business Development in Oman, said SAP's participation at COMEX is focused on enabling entities to align with Oman's Vision 2040, which includes developing information and communications technology.



Waheed Al Hamaid

Al Hamaid explains that having identified current market priorities through public sector research, SAP is highlighting its solutions for the intelligent enterprise, supply chain management,

human experience management and intelligent spend management during COMEX, a press release said.

"A recent SAP-commissioned survey of IT decision-makers in Oman and other GCC countries showed that areas of priority for digital investment in 2022 and beyond include human capital management, enterprise resource planning (ERP), core business solutions and procurement," he said.

Hamaid pointed out that there are several factors that make this year's COMEX event in Oman particularly important. "First, the pace of digital transformation across Oman and the whole GCC has accelerated as a result

of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to our survey results. Second, we were delighted to see that Oman's current focus on digital transformation was recognised by the Arab ICT Ministers Councils, which selected the sultanate as the Arab Digital Capital for this year. COMEX 2022 is, therefore, an ideal venue for sharing knowledge and ensuring that all entities in Oman can find solutions that meet them where they are, and accelerate their journey to becoming an Intelligent Enterprise."

SAP defines an 'intelligent enterprise' as one that consistently applies advanced technologies and best practices within agile, integrated business processes.

Female volleyball tournament on May 27

Oman's Female expatriates volleyball tournament will be held on May 27 at Muscat Collage in Bousher.

Organised by Khalil al Balushi and Khalid Balushi - the driving force behind this tournament - it is one that brings the expatriate community together year after year.

During the tournament, 16 female volleyball teams will be competing, including Fox Hard, Blazers, Heat, Happy

Team, Muscat Strikers, No Name, Slashers, Volley Diggers, Titan, Elite Fighter, PSO, Force One Team, Phil Oman, Foodtrip Warriors, and Wadi Team.

This volleyball tournament is backed by Oriental - perfumery and cosmetics distributor in the Sultanate of Oman and Al Hayat Hospital.

Trophies and medals are sponsored by Hussain dad Balushi.



Vodafone makes debut at 31st edition of Comex

Vodafone will be making its entry into the 31st edition of the Comex Technology show at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) & Virtual Support Platforms this week.

Vodafone will be a sponsor as well as a participant in this event, which has been highly acclaimed as the Sultanate of Oman's Official Technology, Communications, Innovation and Digital Transformation Show. The 31st Annual Hybrid event will see major players across key sectors and industries coming together to bring about a new perspective on technology and showcase innovative advancements in various fields as well as be the single point of contact for chief ICT decision-makers in the region.

Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone said, "As a brand, Vodafone's objective was not only centred around our entrance as the third telecommunications operator but to showcase how we set ourselves apart by our radically different digital propositions.

We also aim to be a key driver of differentiation with a series of 'firsts' that only Vodafone can bring to the market, such as our first virtual store, eStores and being among the first to launch



with 5G services and bring new experiences to our target segment. We pride ourselves as a digital-first company that leverages the latest digital technology and agile working culture to deliver sustainable and profitable growth, alongside an unmatched digital customer experience during their entire lifecycle. Our onboarding process emphasises on

simplicity, transparency and personalisation via our 'My Vodafone App' which ensures that the customer is always in control."

"Our participation at Comex 2022 will help shape our commitments and reinforce the ambitions we have set to achieve, especially under our brand slogan, 'Together We Can', which highlights the collaboration of

human elements and technology to bring about a better future for society and sustainable solutions for challenges in the long run. At the event, we will be showcasing our state-of-the-art and unique products and services by creating a holistic digital experience for our customers within our booth at the event's premises," Zidi added.



Oman Shell helps raise road safety awareness

In line with their commitment to excellence in health, safety and environment systems and practices in the sultanate, Oman Shell took part in the Global HSE Conference and Exhibition, held last week at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

As part of this event, Shell showcased several Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) related initiatives in road safety, worker welfare and environment sustainability. In addition, the conference programme featured five of Oman Shell's talents who spoke and participated in panel discussions covering initiatives and topics like road safety, achieving net zero and Women in HSSE.

Speaking about Shell's participation at the Global HSE Conference and Exhibition 2022, Walid Hadi, Oman Shell's VP and country chairman, said, "Safety is at the forefront of everything we do in our operations, our offices and our daily lives. Over the years, Oman Shell have been fortunate to lead and work with the industry partners in Oman in various safety initiatives. We look forward to taking an even more active role to ensure that we deliver on our commitments safely, while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our colleagues and partners."



Dubai to host first PM exhibition

Dubai will this month host the Middle East's first dedicated exhibition and summit devoted to the digital technology driven precision medicine (PM) field with over 70 international experts, thought leaders and medical pioneers from Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the USA.

The newly launched Precision Medicine Exhibition & Summit, held under the patronage of Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak al Nahyan, Cabinet Member and Minister of State for Tolerance of UAE & President of UAE Genetic Diseases Association, will run at the Conrad Hotel from May 24 to 25. As healthcare professionals gather to learn the latest PM

techniques and innovations, aspiring health tech startups will be pitching for funding to a panel of investors at the co-located Emerge GHI breakthrough event, a press release said.

The new event launches come as global data and insights firm Netscribes projects the Middle East and Africa precision medicine market to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 9.96% to a revenue worth of US\$2.51bn by 2023.

"We are pleased to organise this unique exhibition and summit underlining the need and importance of precision medicine in the UAE," said Dr Maryam Matar, founder and chairperson, UAE Genetic Diseases Association.

tion.

"The integration of precision medicine into general healthcare settings gives patients with genetic disorders a lot of optimism. Personalised medicine is certainly transforming the healthcare ecosystem for the better, driven by digitalisation and a rapidly rising corpus of knowledge that is redefining how we perceive the very nature of the origins and development of fatal diseases. Precision medicine will help us better understand the role of genetics, provide tailor-made health management solution for each individual and reduce the burden of not only genetic disorders but other rare diseases in long-run."

Mazda offers convenient summer service options

Towell Auto Centre, the authorised dealers of Mazda in Oman have introduced a pick and drop service for its cherished customers in collaboration with Zajil.

Bringing convenience and comfort to your doorstep, it is a perfect opportunity to get your car serviced in this heat without leaving the comforts of your home. This will also benefit women customers who do not need to depend on their relatives to drop their car now. Now one also does not need another driver to pick or drop you while giving your car for service, a press release said.

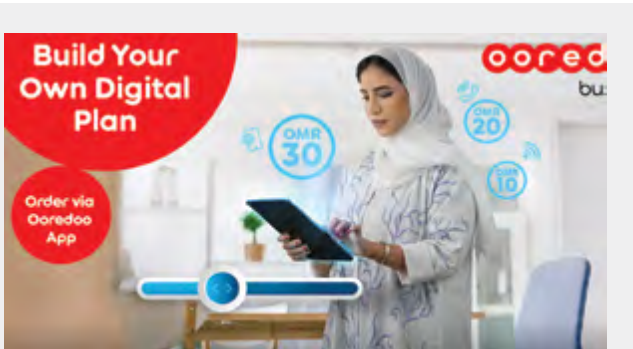
All you have to do is book a service appointment online in advance and get your Mazda picked up from anywhere in Muscat region for a service to the nearest TAC Service Centre. It cannot get any simpler than this. Mazda has a history of

keeping its customers satisfied with consistent and convenient services. The Mazda pick and drop car service is another one of those exemplary services.

With a little bit of advance service booking online, you can avail this facility. You will get a call from the driver to ascertain your location and confirm your booking for the day. Next, you will meet the driver at your doorstep.

They will come and inspect your car before picking it up. You will need to pay them in advance for the service.

Also, you need not worry about the safety of your Mazda. You can trust Zajil, the Omani start-up company, with whom Mazda has collaborated with, to fully insure your car against any mishap or damage. So not only do you get convenience but also safety, reliability, and peace of mind.



Ooredoo's Shahry business digital plans offers customisation

Businesses come in all shapes and sizes and so do Ooredoo's customisable plans.

With Shahry Business Digital, customers have the option to select from three ready-to-pick plans or create their own with whatever data, calling minutes and roaming type they need.

What's more, there's no commitment which means total freedom and convenience. Whether start-up or large enterprise, it's the perfect way to get great connectivity, while keeping it simple, flexible and affordable, a press release said. With a choice for every budget, the standalone plans start from just RO10 per month, all the way up to RO30 a month. For those that want to build their own plan, they can select the data quota and voice minutes required, and even data roaming with Passport World or GCC. The plans are accessible via the Ooredoo app.

OQ showcases prowess in health, safety and environmental sustainability

OQ recently participated in the 8th edition of the Global Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Conference & Exhibition 2022, that took place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from May 16 - 19.

Held under the auspices of H E Eng Saeed Bin Hamoud al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and IT, the four-day event continued its tradition of creating a sustainable platform for the industry to discuss and debate on various challenges faced by the industry while exploring new landscapes within energy transition. The conference opened under the theme of HSE Excellence - Leadership, Sustainability and Technology as the core components.

Showcasing its HSE prowess over the years, OQ featured persons from the senior management as keynote speakers on the topics of Health and Wellbeing,



diversification in Upstream operations along with carbon footprint reduction, GHG estimation and climate change impact. Officials also participated in panel

discussions, while showcasing HSE achievements at the OQ booth, a press release said.

H E Mawali was briefed about the efforts exerted by OQ Group

in the fields of Health, Safety and Environment as well as current practices in sustainable growth across OQ locations and operations. He was informed about the

procedures and requirements adopted by the group regarding health, safety and the environment and the extent to which they are maintained by OQ in all

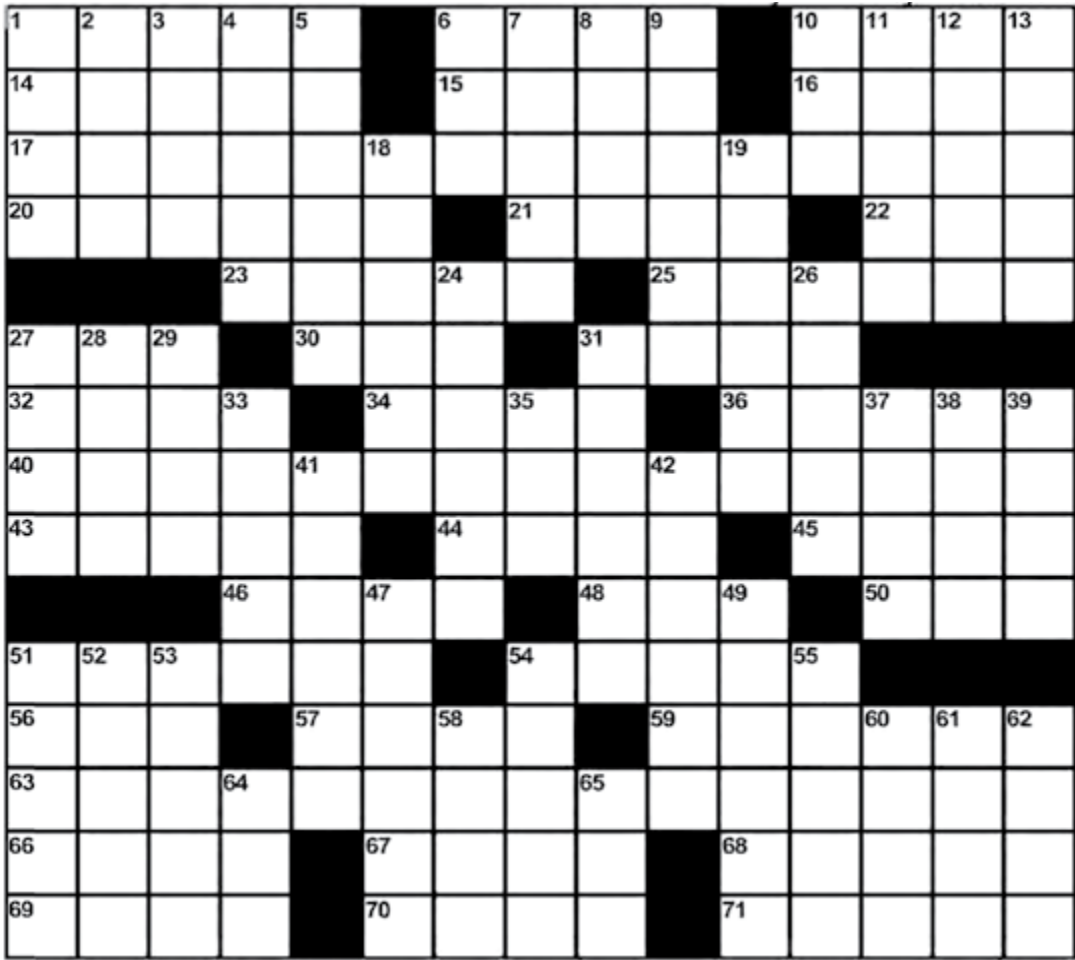
its operations and facilities in accordance with local and international policies and frameworks. He was also introduced to the achievements made by the

group in maintaining said standards.

Leading an HSE culture change, OQ has created a long-term strategy for a foundational change in every process. The very foundation on which energy is imagined is challenged for the better through development of green energy such as renewables, biofuels, CCUS, amongst others. Under the Leadership pillar, OQ has transformed work culture by promoting the Safety Leadership Programme (Downstream) that empowers individuals to stop work when and if required.

Another critical initiative is the Leadership Accountability programme that covers various segments such as the OPAL Road Safety Forum, Camp Standards Program, Fitness to Work amongst others while also adapting industry best practices for a safer working environment.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Disorderly, fussy outbursts
6) Part of an escalator
10) Attempt, in slang
14) Heep created by Dickens
15) Blanched
16) More than a gofer
17) Set the date, in a way
20) Jacket part
21) Break stone
22) Wrinkle maker
23) Providing details of current events
25) Vodka cocktail
27) Bleat
30) Part of two sts.
31) Pin one's hopes (on)
32) Arm bone
34) Go upward
36) Donor's offering
40) Fall short
43) Get ready to drive
44) Certain breads
45) Goes quickly
46) Pertness
48) Do something
50) It can cause quite a bang

DOWN

1) After-dinner roll?
2) Kind of thermometer
3) Desperate, as straits
4) Like some old buckets
5) Pushed
6) Treatment type
7) Far from chic
8) Brio
9) Mammal's coat
10) "Gabriel" lead-in
11) Kind of wave
12) "What goes around, comes around," e.g.
13) Stereotypical artist's hat
18) New Jersey city
19) Final words (var.)
24) Many Colorado tourists
26) Gold and frankincense complement
27) Sacrifice between the lines
28) Ubiquitous lotion ingredient
29) Poker chip, sometimes
31) Prepare, as leftovers
33) Charm
35) Muddy home
37) Dressage display
3 8) Gulf off the coast of Yemen
39) Cardinal's residence
41) Cochise, famously
42) Have nothing to do with
47) It may be near a slide
49) Shredded
51) Willingly avoids meals
52) Allowed by the courts

51) Rip off
54) Community standards
56) Prepare to pull the trigger
57) Frau's partner
59) Constructs, as a building
63) Makes a soccer faux pas
66) South American monkey
67) Where Marco Polo explored
68) Bring together
69) Restrain
70) Put an edge on
71) Guided a gondola

53) Be theatrical
54) "Sesame Street" resident
55) Music-score sign
58) Foolhardy and hasty
60) Make like a snake
61) England's national art gallery
62) Coaster in the cold
64) Backboard attachment
65) Common grain unit

NOTE PAD

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You know quite well that some things extend across borders. You need some kind of foreign exchange so you can broaden your perspective and move past the everyday. Whether it's a deep conversation with a traveler, a foreign art experience, or even just eating a new cuisine, now is the time to live out all the richness and variety of this world. An odd side effect of expanding your mind in this way is that your heart is likely to grow as well. You might discover more similarities than differences.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Here you go again! Just when you thought you were through with all that made-up silliness involving love and romance and other Hollywood brainwashing, new inspiration practically lands at your feet. Whether you're meeting someone new or just noticing something incredibly cute about the one you're with, expect to drive others crazy with your new emphasis on the sweeter side of life.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

If you're not expanding your horizons today, that means you're still sleeping. If anything, you're taking them to their limits! If it's new, you want to know about it. If it's different, you're dying to experience it. You're all about exploration and innovation right now -- not to mention having as much fun as possible. You're so charming that people can't help but smile as they watch you and your slightly crazed search for adventure.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You might not be able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, but you're okay with that. Though you have to settle for using the elevators or stairs, small steps are exactly what the situation calls for right now, so go for it! In the end, the methods used don't matter as much as getting the right result. Even if you were faster than a speeding bullet, you wouldn't end up getting where you need to be any sooner.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You need to expand your expectations in a very big way. Why should you go on limiting yourself with made-up rules that have very little to do with present-day reality? Give yourself more freedom. You should find that once you loosen up those requirements of yours, you start having a lot more fun as well. Get started on this as soon as possible and your people will start commenting on how much happier you seem.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

It's true. You can get it if you really want to, but you must try and try until you succeed at last. Backing off, no matter what things look like, isn't the right move at this time. Instead, keep up your efforts or even increase them. You might not see the payoff right away, but you know that patience and faith pay off for you. You just need to persevere and know that things will turn around soon.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

The day's weird interpersonal energy could lead you and your friends to some serious miscommunications. Watch out for arguments that would better be avoided. Instead of getting into the contradiction game that is so unnecessary and time-consuming, make sure that you're as clear as can be. If you sense any ambiguity, make sure to follow up immediately. If you're not sure they understood you, ask. You'll save yourself a whole lot of trouble.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It's not too late to change your mind, especially if you've noticed a few too many discrepancies between your theories and reality lately. Don't be too hard on yourself, however. Evolving your thinking and adjusting to the facts on the ground involve trying many different ideas and making lots of mistakes. How could you learn otherwise? Go ahead and keep trying. You'll find the right balance very soon.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Luck has nothing to do with it. That's what you tell people anyway, though you know that sometimes like today you get all the breaks! The Universe is all but writing you a guarantee that things will go your way all day today, so if you've been waiting to take a chance, now is definitely the time to do it. Go ahead and explore as much as you can. When fate opens the door for you, it's best to step through quickly.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

ou may not want to hear it, but this situation that's bothering you so much might just be none of your business. You do always have great advice, and you might feel that you know exactly the right thing to say in this instance. However, the parties involved are extremely resistant to outside influences, so for everyone's sake, take a step back and stay there for as long as it takes. If someone asks for help or advice, offer it freely.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Are you feeling a little crazed lately, like you're running your very own festival of angst and worry? If that's the case, and you'd really like a change of scenery, you're in luck. You've got a major burst of good energy coming your way over the next few days. Make sure that you at least get out of the house today no matter what. You can't win if you don't play!

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You are committed to doing the right thing, but you might not know if you have the spiritual strength to see it through right now. You do, of course, but you might need to take a leap of faith. Having courage doesn't mean being unafraid, but it does mean acknowledging the fear and doing what needs to be done anyway simply because you know it has to be done. Take a deep breath and jump into the breach.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Who was the last to hold the presidential insignia for Poland before democratic election handed it to Lech Wałęsa?
A. Ryszard Kaczorowski
B. Ignacy Mościcki
C. Józef Piłsudski
D. Aleksander Kwaśniewski

02. Public attendance was particularly sparse, virtually non-existent, at the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics and Paralympics. What was the reason?
A. The weather was too cold and wet
B. Extremely high ticket prices
C. Lack of interest
D. The COVID-19 pandemic at the time

03. The "Ballad of Chevy Chase" is an old English folk song about what event?
A. The beheading of Anne Boleyn
B. The Battle of Otterburn
C. The invention of golf
D. The defeat of the Spanish Armada

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.B

KIDS COLOURING

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

BOGGLER

S	R	U	S
E	R	E	B
N	O	V	I
R	E	I	Y

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

WORD: A O B T R W O

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Bangladesh floods recede but millions still marooned

Sunamganj, Bangladesh - North-east Bangladesh's worst floods in nearly 20 years began receding on Sunday, but rescue workers were struggling to help millions marooned by extreme weather across the region that has killed around 60 people.

Floods are a regular menace to millions of people in low-lying Bangladesh and neighbouring northeast India, but many experts say that climate change is increasing the frequency, ferocity and unpredictability.

In the past week after heavy rains in India, floodwater breached a major embankment in Bangladesh's Sylhet region, affecting around two million people, swamping dozens of villages and killing at least 10.

Arifuzzman Bhuiyan, head of the state-run Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre, told AFP that the floods had hit some 70 per cent of Sylhet district and about 60 per cent of neighbouring Sunamganj.

"It is one of the worst floods in the region," he told AFP.

But he said the situation would improve further in the next few days after heavy rains stopped. Police said that a scuffle broke out in the rural town of Companyganj on Saturday as authorities stepped up relief operations for the roughly two million people hit.

"There were more flood-affected people than the estimated relief packs. At one point everyone started to snatch relief goods when police dispersed the crowd," local police chief Sukanto Chakrobarti told AFP. Mozibur Rahman, head of Sylhet district, said that the embankment washed away along



Villagers make their way on a raft past homes in a flooded area after heavy rains in Nagaon district, Assam state, India on Saturday (AFP)

In the past week after heavy rains in India, floodwater breached a major embankment in Bangladesh's Sylhet region, affecting around two million people and killing at least 10

the Bangladesh-India border was yet to be repaired.

"It is impossible to fix the embankment unless waterflow from India plunges. The inundation scenario in Sylhet city has improved. But outer towns are still underwater," Rahman said.

"We are trying to send relief and have opened hundreds of

shelters for the flood-hit people."

Mofizul Islam, a resident of Sylhet city where floodwaters were slowly subsiding, said that he fell off his motorbike after he hit a pothole hidden under the water on Sunday. "It is very risky for the people who are going out today," Islam told AFP.

50 dead in India

Over the border in India, around 50 people have been killed in days of flooding, landslides and thunderstorms, according to local disaster management authorities. In the north-eastern state of Assam, authorities said on Sunday that the death toll from the floods had reached 18.

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), almost 3,250 villages were partially or fully submerged.

ASDMA officials said the situation had improved slightly but that it remained critical in some districts. According to their esti-

mate, more than 92,000 people were in relief camps.

The state and national rescue forces, helped by the army, were working to rescue people from villages and distribute food, clean drinking water and other essentials, as well as to clear roads.

West of Assam, at least 33 people were killed in Bihar state in thunderstorms on Thursday.

Bihar, in common with other parts of northern India and Pakistan, has been suffering an intense heatwave, with temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius.

AFP



US President Joe Biden meets with members of the US military and their families at the bowling alley at Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek on Sunday (AFP)

Guard against monkeypox spread: Biden

Seoul, South Korea - Monkeypox has caught the attention of US President Joe Biden, who said on Sunday that people should be on guard against the disease which has the potential for 'consequential' impact if it were to spread further.

Several cases of monkeypox have been detected in North America and Europe since early May, sparking concern the disease, endemic in parts of Africa, is spreading.

The US leader, on his maiden trip to Asia as president, said in Seoul that health officials have not fully briefed him about 'the level of exposure' in the United States. "But it is something that everybody should be concerned about," Biden told reporters before boarding Air Force One to fly to Tokyo.

"It is a concern in that if it were to spread it would be consequential," he added. "We're working on it hard to figure out what we do and what vaccine if any might be available for it."

There have been thousands of human infections in parts of Central and Western Africa in recent years but it is rare in Europe and North America.

Most people recover within several weeks and monkeypox has only been fatal in rare cases.

The World Health Organization said that as of Saturday there were 92 confirmed cases of the disease in countries where monkeypox is not endemic.

The virus is transmitted to humans from animals, with symptoms very similar to smallpox but less severe clinically.

AFP

Britain witnesses daily infections of monkeypox

London, UK - Britain is seeing daily infections of the rare monkeypox virus that are unconnected to any travel to West Africa, where the disease is endemic, a health official said on Sunday.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said new figures would be released on Monday, after it registered 20 cases on Friday. Asked if community transmission was now the norm in Britain, UKHSA chief medical adviser Susan Hopkins said 'absolutely'.

"We are finding cases that have no identified contact with an individual from West Africa, which is what we've seen previously in this country," she told BBC television.

"We are detecting more cases on a daily basis."

Hopkins declined to confirm reports that one individual was in intensive care, but

said the outbreak was concentrated in urban areas, among gay or bisexual men.

"The risk of the general population remains extremely low at the moment, and I think people need to be alert to it," she said, adding that for most adults, symptoms would be 'relatively mild'.

The first UK case was announced on May 7, in a patient who had recently travelled to Nigeria. The disease is also spreading in Europe and North America. Monkeypox can be transmitted through contact with skin lesions and droplets of a contaminated person, as well as shared items such as bedding and towels.

Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, chills, exhaustion and a chickenpox-like rash on the hands and face.

AFP

UN praises 'potential' of Syria prisoner amnesty

Damascus, Syria - UN special envoy Geir Pedersen on Sunday welcomed a general amnesty aimed at freeing thousands of Syrians convicted on terrorism charges.

President Bashar al-Assad has decreed several amnesties during the country's devastating 11-year war, but the latest in April was the most comprehensive related to terrorism charges since the conflict began, rights activists said.

Pedersen, speaking to reporters in Damascus after a meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad, said he had been briefed 'in quite some detail' on the latest measure.



United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen talks to reporters in the Syrian capital Damascus, on Sunday (AFP)

"I am very much looking forward to being kept informed on the progress on the implementation for that amnesty," Pedersen said before talks on a new con-

stitution for Syria are to resume in Geneva.

"That amnesty has potential, and we are looking forward to see how it develops," Pedersen

said. The April decree granted a general amnesty to detainees convicted of terrorism charges except cases that led to the death of a person.

Syria's Justice Ministry has said hundreds of inmates had been released, and a military official, Ahmad Touzan, told local media this week that the amnesty would cover thousands, including those who are wanted but not detained.

Touzan refused to disclose the number of inmates freed, saying 'numbers are changing by the hour'.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor, which relies on a large network

of sources inside Syria, says around 1,142 inmates have so far been released across the country under the amnesty, with hundreds more expected.

In the next few days Syria's warring parties are to hold the latest round of constitutional talks in Switzerland, under a process that began in 2019.

It is hoped the talks can pave the way towards a broader political process.

Pedersen said he is 'hopeful that this will be a positive meeting that can help bring us forward so that we can start to see... some confidence building measures,' Pedersen said.

AFP

Rich Lebanese buy 'island passports' as economic crisis bites

Beirut, Lebanon - Fearing visa hassles could cost him his job in Dubai while an economic collapse had dashed any homecoming options, Lebanese executive Jad splurged around US\$135,000 on a new citizenship for himself and his wife.

Within a month of making the payment last year, the 43-year-old businessman received a small package in his mailbox.

Inside were two navy blue passports from the Caribbean island nation of Saint Kitts and Nevis - his ticket to visa-free access to more than 150 countries, including in Europe.

This was a major upgrade from the Lebanese passport, which is ranked among the worst in the world and has become nearly impossible to renew because the cash-strapped state is running out of stocks.



Jose Charo, head of the Beirut office of the Swiss-based company Passport Legacy, at his office in the Lebanese capital (AFP)

"Three years ago, I would not have imagined I would buy a passport," said Jad, who had previously grappled with lengthy visa procedures for business trips. "But now because of the situation in Lebanon - and be-

cause we can afford it - we finally did it," he said, asking for his full name to be withheld for privacy reasons. A Saint Kitts passport ranks 25th in the world while Lebanon languishes at 103rd on the Henley passport index for

freedom of travel. With a population of under 55,000, it started selling citizenships a year after gaining independence in 1983.

Citizenship by investment schemes have become a booming business internationally, attracting the well-to-do from volatile countries like Iraq, Yemen and Syria. Some EU member states, including Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta, have also operated 'golden passport' schemes, but they have run into opposition from the European Commission over the back door they offer to EU citizenship.

Wealthy Lebanese, mostly living in Gulf or African nations, are now among those hunting for passports that offer easier travel and a safety net from the economic crisis at home. Common-wealth Caribbean nations are particularly attractive because of

their long-standing schemes offering citizenship within months in exchange for a lump sum.

'Nice country'

Applicants are not even required to visit. When Jad first went to Paris as a Kittitian, officers at passport control told him: "You come from a nice country."

"But actually I have never been there," he said. Jad's Lebanese friends in the Gulf were also shopping for 'island passports' or investing in real estate in Greece and Portugal to obtain residency as part of so-called 'golden visa' schemes, he said. "This is not just a trend. It's a solution."

A single passport usually costs around US\$150,000, a sum funnelled into a sustainable growth fund for the country, which only installed traffic lights in its capital Basseterre in 2018.

Other Caribbean islands including Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada and Saint Lucia also sell passports.

Few people can afford such a purchase in Lebanon, a country in an economic crisis that has seen the currency nosedive, banks freeze deposits and most of the population fall into poverty. Yet demand for foreign citizenship has spurred a boom in passport consultancy, with firms advertising on social media, billboards and even inside Beirut's airport. Among them is Global Pass, converted in 2020 from a real estate company after Lebanese started complaining of higher visa rejection rates.

"Our business has grown by at least 40 per cent from 2020 to 2021," said founder Ziad Karkaji.

Even international firms are

raking in a profit.

Jose Charo, who heads the Beirut office of Swiss-based Passport Legacy, said Lebanese now account for one-quarter of the company's clientele.

His number has grown five-fold due to the economic crisis that was made worse by a devastating explosion at Beirut's port in 2020, Charo said.

Having Grenadian citizenship makes applying for a US investor visa easier for businesspeople, he said, while those looking to retire or settle abroad can invest around a quarter of a million dollars in Greece or Portugal to secure permanent residency. "The industry will keep on growing, unfortunately for this country but fortunately for us," Charo said.

"They are buying their freedom," he added.

AFP

PM-elect vows to repair Australia's reputation

Incoming PM Albanese signalled an era of fairer, greener and less pugilistic politics for Australia

Sydney, Australia - Incoming prime minister Anthony Albanese vowed to end Australia's reputation as a climate laggard and reset relations with the rest of the world on Sunday, as he raced to form a government in time for a key Tokyo summit.

Fresh from an electoral victory that ended a decade of conservative rule, Albanese signalled an era of fairer, greener and less pugilistic politics for Australia.

"I want to change the country," the 59-year-old centre-left leader said. "I want to change the way that politics operates in this country."

It is still unclear whether Albanese's Labour Party will win enough parliamentary seats to form an outright majority, or whether he will have to turn to independents or smaller parties for support.

But 'Albo' and key ministers are expected to be sworn in on Monday to be able to attend a summit with Japanese, Indian and US leaders - the so-called Quad.

Albanese said the summit was 'an absolute priority' for Australia and an opportunity 'to send a message to the world'.

He said partners overseas can expect wholesale changes 'particularly with regard to climate



Leader of the Australian Labour Party Anthony Albanese (centre) meets with Labour candidate for Reid, Sally Sitou (right) and supporters after winning the general election at Marrickville Library and Pavilion in Sydney on Sunday (AFP)

change and our engagement with the world on those issues'.

In recent years, images of smouldering eucalypt forests, smog-enveloped cities and blanched-out coral reefs have made Australia a poster child for climate-fuelled destruction.

Under conservative leadership, the country - already one of the world's largest gas and coal exporters - has also become syn-

onymous with playing the spoiler at international climate talks.

Albanese has vowed to adopt more ambitious emissions reduction targets and make the sun-kissed continent-nation a renewable energy superpower.

After the summit and bilateral meetings with US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on

Tuesday, Albanese said he would return to Australia on Wednesday. "Then we'll get down to business," he said.

Foreign leaders have already started to welcome Albanese's election, most notably Australia's Pacific Island neighbours, whose very existence is threatened by rising sea levels.

"Of your many promises to support the Pacific, none is

more welcome than your plan to put the climate first -- our people's shared future depends on it," said Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama.

Others will be watching closely to see if Albanese's premiership brings a less hawkish tone on China, and whether ministerial meetings with Beijing resume after more than two years in hiatus.

Political earthquake

Official results showed Labour expected to win 75 seats - almost within reach of the 76 required for a majority in the 151-seat lower house. A handful of other races are still too close to call. But it is already clear that the vote was a political earthquake in Australia.

For many Australians, the election was a referendum on polarising outgoing prime minister Scott Morrison.

His tumultuous tenure saw the country smashed by bushfires, droughts, floods and a pandemic, all of which shattered usually happy-go-lucky Australia's sense of security and their faith in government.

Morrison drew revulsion for playing down the role of climate change in Australia's ever-worsening disasters and insisting 'I don't hold a hose, mate' when asked to justify holidaying overseas during the bushfire crisis.

"Being in Hawaii when half the country is burning to the ground was probably not a wise decision," said Dean Bergin, a 32-year-old investment fund manager. "Anyone with half a brain can see that. It's the opposite of leadership."

Voters responded at the ballot box with a sharp rebuke of his

Liberal-National coalition - ousting top ministers from parliament and virtually expelling the party from major cities.

"I am very, very happy," said Kathy Hopkins, a 60-year-old disability support worker in Sydney's beachside suburb of Clovelly, part of what was considered an ultra-safe conservative seat. Local voters backed Allegra Spender, one of several independent women candidates, the so-called 'teals' - who ran on pro-environment, anti-corruption and pro-gender equality tickets.

"This is a moment to end the climate wars," Spender told jubilant supporters on nearby Bondi Beach, promising to push for more integrity in politics and an inclusive economy.

"These are the values that the community has spoken for."

For Morrison's conservative allies, the defeat is already spurring a battle for the soul of the party. A leadership contest is informally under way, with moderates blaming the loss on a drift to the right.

Speaking at his Pentecostal church on Sunday, Morrison tearfully told the congregation his time in the top job had 'been a very difficult walk'.

AFP

Afghan women TV anchors cover faces on air

Kabul, Afghanistan - Women presenters on Afghanistan's leading news channels went on air on Sunday with their faces covered, a day after defying a Taliban order to conceal their appearance on television.

Since seizing power last year, the Taliban have imposed a slew of restrictions on civil society, many focused on reining in the rights of women and girls to comply with the group's austere brand of Islam.

Earlier this month, Afghanistan's supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada issued a diktat for women to cover up fully in public, including their faces, ideally with the traditional burqa. The feared Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice ordered women TV presenters to follow suit from Saturday.

But the presenters defied the order and went on air with their faces visible, only to fall in line with the directive on Sunday.

Wearing full hijabs and face-covering veils that left only their eyes in view, women presenters and reporters aired morning news bulletins across leading channels like TOLONews, Ariana



A female presenter for Tolo News, Sonia Niazi, covers her face in a live broadcast at Tolo TV station in Kabul on Sunday (AFP)

Television, Shamshad TV and 1TV. "We resisted and were against wearing a mask," Sonia Niazi, a presenter with TOLONews, told AFP.

"But TOLONews was pressured and told that any female presenter who appeared on screen without covering her face must be given some other job or simply removed," she said.

"TOLONews was compelled and we were forced to wear it."

Women presenters were previously only required to wear a headscarf.

TOLONews director Khpol-

wak Sapai said the channel was 'forced' to make its staff follow the order.

"We were told 'You are forced to do it. You must do it. There is no other way,'" Sapai told AFP.

"I was called on the telephone yesterday and was told in strict words to do it. So, it is not by choice but by force that we are doing it."

'Not against women presenters'

On Sunday, male journalists and employees of TOLONews wore face masks in the channel's of-

fices in Kabul in solidarity with women presenters, an AFP correspondent reported.

Other women employees of the channel continued to work with their faces visible.

Ministry spokesman Mohammad Akif Sadeq Mohajir said authorities appreciated that media channels had observed the dress code. "We are happy with the media channels that they implemented this responsibility in a good manner," he told AFP.

Mohajir also said that the authorities were not against women presenters working in the channels. "We have no intention of removing them from the public scene or sidelining them or stripping them of their right to work," he said.

Akhundzada's decree orders authorities to fire women government employees if they fail to follow the dress code.

Men working in government also risk suspension if their wives or daughters fail to comply.

Authorities have also said that media managers and guardians of defiant women presenters would be liable for penalties if the diktat was not observed.

AFP

Shanghai partly resumes public transport in patchy reopening

Shanghai, China - Shanghai partially restarted public transport Sunday and set out new classifications for COVID-19 risk areas, signaling a gradual reopening after nearly two months sealed off from the outside world.

China's largest city has been almost entirely locked down since April, when it became the epicentre of the country's worst coronavirus outbreak since the early days of the pandemic.

Unlike other major economies, Beijing has dug in its heels on a strict zero-COVID approach that relies on stamping out clusters as they emerge, though this has become increasingly difficult with the infectious Omicron variant.

But as new infections have slowed, Shanghai has cautiously eased restrictions, with some factories resuming operations and residents in lower-risk areas allowed to venture outdoors.

Four of the city's 20 subway lines restarted on Sunday along with some road transport, with officials announcing last week that it would provide a 'basic net-



People are seen on a street during a COVID-19 lockdown in the Jing'an district, in Shanghai on Saturday (AFP)

work covering all central urban areas'. Those who take public transport will have to show a negative COVID test within 48 hours of their journey and have a 'normal temperature', they added on Saturday.

Shanghai will also classify areas as high, medium or low-risk after May 31, city health official Zhao Dandan told a press briefing on Sunday.

Districts with 10 or more reported COVID cases - or at least two community infections - will be considered 'high-risk' while areas with no positive cases for

14 days will be deemed 'low-risk', Zhao said.

Medium or high-risk areas face lockdowns of two weeks.

The new system appears to set the stage for a degree of movement comparable to other cities, a shift from tough current measures in which even residents of lower risk areas have faced tight restrictions.

But despite broader attempts to ease those restrictions, the city's central Jing'an district was back under lockdown on Sunday, according to an official notice.

AFP

Biden arrives in Japan with no response on outreach to North Korea

Tokyo, Japan - President Joe Biden arrived on Sunday in Japan for the second leg of an Asia trip underlining US commitment to the region but overshadowed by concern that North Korea will test a nuclear weapon after ignoring Washington's attempt at outreach.

Biden, making his first trip to Asia as president, flew from South Korea into Yokota Air Base outside Tokyo, where he will meet with Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and emperor on Monday, as well as unveiling a US-led multilateral trade initiative.

On Tuesday, he reinforces the theme of American leadership in the Asia-Pacific by joining the leaders of Australia, India and Japan for a summit of the Quad group.

The trip, which comes as rival China is experiencing significant

economic disruption due to COVID outbreaks, has been touted by Washington as a display of US determination to maintain its commercial and military edge across the region.

But hanging over every step of Biden's tour is fear that unpredictable North Korea will test a nuclear-capable missile or a bomb.

Speculation that this might even happen while Biden was just across the border in Seoul did not materialise. However, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told reporters that the threat remains.

Echoing Biden's earlier statement that the United States is 'prepared for anything North Korea does', Sullivan said the dictatorship has a choice.

"If North Korea acts, we'll be prepared to respond. If North Korea doesn't act, North Korea



Japan's FM Yoshimasa Hayashi (centre) and US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel (centre-left) greet US President Joe Biden (second from right) at Yokota Air Base in Fussa, Tokyo prefecture on Sunday (AFP)

has the opportunity, as we've said repeatedly, to come to the table."

Pyeongyang has so far declined to answer US appeals for dia-

logue, officials say, even ignoring offers of help to combat a sudden mass outbreak of COVID-19, according to Biden.

And while in Seoul, Biden con-

firmed he was prepared to meet with Kim Jong Un if the leader-for-life is 'sincere', but Sullivan said that remains far off.

"We're not even at step one

yet," he said.

Symbolising the apparent one-way conversation, Biden said the only message he has right now for Kim would consist of a single word: "Hello. Period," he said.

Military exercises

Biden spent two days with South Korea's new President Yoon Suk-yeol, with beefing up the military defence against North Korea high on the agenda.

They issued a statement on Saturday saying that 'considering the evolving threat' from Pyongyang, they were looking at expanding the 'scope and scale' of joint US-South Korean military exercises.

Joint exercises had been scaled back due to COVID and for Biden and Yoon's predecessors, Donald Trump and Moon Jae-in, to embark on a round of

high-profile but ultimately unsuccessful diplomacy with North Korea.

In contrast to the dovish Moon, Yoon said he and Biden discussed possible 'joint drills to prepare for a nuclear attack' and called for more US assets to be deployed to the region.

Any build-up of forces or expansion of joint military exercises would likely enrage Pyongyang, which views the drills as rehearsals for an invasion.

North Korea has conducted a blitz of sanctions-busting weapons tests this year, including firing an intercontinental ballistic missile at full range for the first time since 2017, with satellite imagery indicating a nuclear test is looming.

But its weapons testing schedule may also be affected by a raging COVID-19 outbreak.

AFP

Ukraine war, pandemic push colour WHO meet



French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a virtual speech during the opening day of 75th World Health Assembly of the WHO in Geneva on Sunday (AFP)

Geneva, Switzerland - The 'devastating' Ukraine war loomed large on Sunday as the World Health Organization opened its main annual assembly, threatening to overshadow efforts on other health crises and a reform push aimed at preventing future pandemics.

"The consequences of this war are devastating, to health, to populations, to health facilities and to health personnel," French President Emmanuel Macron told the UN health agency's 75th World Health Assembly.

In a video address, he called on all member states to support a resolution to be presented by Ukraine and discussed by the assembly on Tuesday, which harshly condemns Russia's invasion, especially its more than 200 attacks on healthcare, including hospitals and ambulances, in Ukraine. "Health must never be a target," Swiss Health Minister Alain Berset told the assembly at an opening ceremony featuring interventions from five presidents and a number of government ministers.

The resolution will also voice

alarm at the 'health emergency in Ukraine', and highlight the dire impacts beyond its borders, including how disrupted grain exports are deepening a global food security crisis.

But while Russia has been shunned and pushed out of other international bodies over its invasion, no such sanctions are foreseen at the World Health Assembly.

The World Health Assembly due to run through Saturday, marks the first time the WHO is convening its 194 member states for their first largely in-person gathering since COVID-19 surfaced in late 2019

"There's not a call to kick them out," a Western diplomat told AFP, acknowledging the sanctions permitted under WHO rules are 'very weak'.

The assembly, due to run through Saturday, marks the first time the WHO is convening its 194 member states for their first largely in-person gathering since COVID-19 surfaced in late 2019.

Second term for Tedros

The Ukraine conflict is far from the only health emergency up for discussion this week, with decisions expected on a range of important issues, including on reforms towards strengthening pandemic preparedness.

"This meeting is a historic opportunity to strengthen universal architecture for security and

health," Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader Corona told the assembly.

Among the decisions expected at the assembly is the reappointment of WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to a second five-year term.

His first term was turbulent, as he helped steer the global response to the pandemic and

grappled with other crises, including a sexual abuse scandal involving WHO staff in the Democratic Republic of Congo. But while the former Ethiopian health minister has faced criticism, he has received broad backing and is running unopposed, guaranteeing him a second term.

Several leaders speaking on Sunday hailed Tedros, with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta saying he showed 'exemplary leadership and commitment during one of the most challenging periods' the organisation has gone through.

There will be no shortage of challenges going forward, with the COVID-19 pandemic still raging and demands for dramatic reforms of the entire global health system to help avert similar threats going forward.

And new health menaces already loom, including hepatitis of mysterious origin that has made children in many countries ill, and swelling numbers of monkeypox cases far from Central and West Africa where the disease is normally concentrated.

AFP



Ukrainian servicemen assist their comrades not far from the frontline in Ukrainian region of Donbas, on Saturday (AFP)

Russian forces bent on securing Donbas region

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russian forces pursued their bombardment of frontline Ukrainian cities on Sunday, seeking to gain military momentum as Kyiv's diplomatic counter-offensive targeted the world's business and political elite gathering in Davos.

Shelling and missile strikes hit Kharkiv in the north, and Mykolaiv and Zaporizhzhia in the south, while eight civilians were killed on the eastern front in the Donbas, Ukrainian officials said.

Three months after launching their invasion, Moscow's forces are focused on securing and expanding their gains in the Donbas region and on Ukraine's southern coast. Ukraine's parliament voted on Sunday to extend martial law for a further three months through to August 23.

Kyiv, meanwhile, is rallying international support and receiving Western weapons supplies, even if EU powers are struggling to

agree on expanding sanctions to Russia's huge energy exports.

Poland's President Andrzej Duda was to address the Ukrainian parliament and meet President Volodymyr Zelensky later on Sunday, a day ahead of the Ukrainian leader's Davos video-conference.

"He will in particular pay homage to those who, in defending Ukraine, are fighting to defend Europe," Duda's adviser Jakub Kurmoch told the news agency PAP. The World Economic Forum brings together the world's business and political elite in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos, and this year's gathering will put Ukraine's crisis centre stage.

Davos snubs Moscow

Zelensky is due to hold a video-conference with delegates on Monday evening to mark the opening of Ukraine House Davos, a forum for Kyiv and its interna-

tional backers.

In March, Davos organisers cut ties with Russian firms and officials, and announced that anyone under international sanctions would not be welcome at the event. Western nations have rallied behind Ukraine's defence of its territories, led by the United States - which just approved a US\$40bn war chest for Kyiv - and neighbours such as Poland.

But some European countries that are dependent on Russian oil supplies, including Hungary, are resisting calls for an embargo on crude - and major EU economic powers like Germany remain huge gas importers.

The European Union is also reticent on Kyiv's ambitions to join the bloc. France's President Emmanuel Macron has suggested creating a 'European political community' as a kind of antechamber to full membership.

AFP

Hamas to confront 'flag march' in Jerusalem

Gaza City - Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh warned on Sunday against a planned march by Jewish nationalists through Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, saying that the Palestinian Islamist group would use 'all possibilities' to confront it.

The controversial so-called 'flag march' is due to take place

next week to mark Jerusalem Day, which commemorates the unification of the city after Israel annexed east Jerusalem in 1967.

The route, provisionally approved by Israeli authorities, allows marchers to enter the Old City through the Damascus Gate, heavily used by Palestinians, en route to the Western

Wall. Israeli authorities have not approved a route that would see the march entering the flash-point Al-Aqsa compound.

At a speech, the Hamas leader alleged there had been 'calls to storm the Al-Aqsa mosque and hold a march of flags'.

AFP

Fresh floods hit South Africa



Local residents move to safety following heavy rains and winds in Umdloti north of Durban, on Sunday (AFP)

Durban, South Africa - Heavy rains lashed South Africa, forcing around 500 people to flee their homes on the east coast, officials said on Sunday, only a month after the worst floods in living memory killed more than 400.

No fatalities were immediately recorded but there was severe damage to some buildings, mainly in Durban, capital of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province.

"We are yet to receive a full comprehensive report on the impact of these latest heavy rains, but as reports come in a worrying picture is however emerging," KZN premier Sihle Zikalala

said during a press conference.

Torrential rain in late April killed 435 people in floods and landslides. Meanwhile, survivors were left without drinking water for nearly two weeks.

The repairs continue after the storms caused damage worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

The latest floods hit infrastructure, roads, bridges and damaged buildings.

"Some areas are inaccessible and have become islands at this stage," Zikalala said.

The South African Weather Service put the alert level at the highest. Officials called on resi-

dents to stay at home.

Authorities opened 82 reception centres while police, firefighters and rescue workers were ready to respond rapidly to emergencies.

The army has also been called in for reinforcement.

Officials already evacuated elderly people in several villages.

Around 3.9mn people live in Durban, and the Indian Ocean city hosts one of Africa's main ports.

The rains are expected to continue until Monday, according to forecasts.

AFP

Queen Elizabeth II's pet passions to take centre stage in Jubilee parade on June 5

Coventry, UK - Corgi dogs, horses and swans are all being put through their paces in a historic warehouse in Coventry ahead of their starring roles in a parade to mark Queen Elizabeth II's 70-year reign.

One of the procession's tableaux, entitled 'The Queen's Favourites', has been commissioned from Imagineer, an outdoor events company based in the English West Midlands city.

Director Jane Hytch said the royal commission came as a 'total surprise', but that the job was a 'huge honour'.

The parade, touching on more personal aspects of the 96-year-old queen's life, will wind through central London to Buckingham Palace on June 5.

"When we were given the queen's favourites... we thought about what does she love outside of all her duties?" said artistic director Kathi Leahy.

Dogs and horses were the obvious choices.

In particular, Leahy focused on the queen's most famous canine companions, the short-legged, big-eared corgis.

A pack of 20 corgi puppets, mounted on wheels, will be stars of the show. The lead puppet is named Susan, after the



Jane Hytch, CE of Imagineer, hugs a life-sized model of a corgi dog in the company's workshop in Coventry, central England on Friday (AFP)

When we were given the queen's favourites... we thought about what does she love outside of all her duties

KATHI LEAHY

first corgi given to Princess Elizabeth by her parents for her 18th birthday.

Each one has its own expression. One, with full brown eyebrows, has been nicknamed Groucho Marx.

Lady Godiva

To make the puppets as lifelike as possible, each of the young handlers was asked during rehearsals at 'Corgi training camp' to 'really look at their dogs and think about the character'.

"Are they mischievous? Are they young? Are they old?" explained Leahy.

The parade also has a special place for horses, another of the queen's great passions.

It will bring to life 10 of her most beloved companions: from Peggy, the Shetland pony given to her by father King George V when she was four, to Burmese, the mare she rode several times during annual 'Trooping of The

Colour' ceremonies to mark her birthday. Some of the horses are depicted with gears, in a tribute to Coventry's rich industrial past.

It was on the site of Imagineer's workshop that the first British motor car was built, at the end of the 19th century.

To celebrate the city's heritage, a giant Lady Godiva puppet, created for the 2012 London Olympics, will also take part in the parade. It pays tribute to the 11th century figure who, according to legend, rode naked through the city on horseback to persuade her husband the Earl of Mercia to lower taxes.

The procession, bringing together 140 cast members, will also evoke the annual counting of swans on the Thames. By ancient tradition, all swans in England belong to the crown.

It will also use boats dear to Prince Philip, in a tribute to the queen's husband, a former naval commander who died in April 2021 at the age of 99.

Hytch noted that with a global television audience watching the pageant, 'there'll be a lot of adrenaline, a lot of excitement' for the Imagineer crew. "We've rehearsed and rehearsed, so I think we will do a great job."

AFP

CHAMPION STUFF

Manchester City win Premier League title after epic comeback from two goals down to beat Villa

London, United - Manchester City won the Premier League for the fourth time in five seasons after a pulsating title race reached a dramatic conclusion as the champions staged an incredible comeback from two goals down to beat Aston Villa 3-2 on Sunday.

Pep Guardiola's side were teetering on the brink of blowing the title after falling 2-0 behind midway through the second half at the Etihad Stadium.

But Ilkay Gundogan sparked an astonishing City revival as the German midfielder reduced the deficit before Rodri grabbed the equaliser.

Gundogan turned in City's third goal in the space of five minutes in the 81st minute, triggering wild celebrations and rendering second placed Liverpool's 3-1 victory against Wolves irrelevant.

City finished with 93 points, one ahead of Liverpool as they ended their rivals hopes of winning an unprecedented quadruple.

On a breathtaking final day, Burnley were relegated as Leeds beat the drop, while Tottenham qualified for the Champions League at the expense of their north London rivals Arsenal.

It was City who hogged the spotlight on a day their fans, who spilled onto the pitch in delight, will never forget.

Guardiola's men can rightly be called a dynasty after joining Manchester United as the only clubs in the Premier League era to have won four titles in five seasons, with Alex Ferguson's teams doing it on three separate occasions.



Manchester City's German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan scores his team's third goal during the EPL match against Aston Villa at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England (AFP)

The eighth league title in City's history is Guardiola's ninth major trophy since arriving at the club in 2016.

Once again, City saved the best until last as they edged Liverpool out on the final day of the season for the second time after beating them to the finish line in 2019.

It was 10 years since Sergio Aguero's famous last-second goal against QPR sealed City's first title since 1968 and this jaw-

dropping success was almost as unlikely.

Guardiola had called on City's fans to be "loud, loud, loud" in their bid to retain the crown, but they were stunned into silence in the 37th minute.

Lucas Digne whipped in a cross from the left and Matty Cash got in front of Joao Cancelo to score with a bullet header.

Former Liverpool star Philippe Coutinho doubled Villa's lead with a cool finish in the 69th

minute. The shell-shocked Guardiola slumped into his seat, but City would not surrender and Ilkay Gundogan headed them back into contention in the 76th minute.

Rodri's low strike from the edge of the area two minutes later set up a nerve-jangling finale.

And in the 81st minute, Kevin de Bruyne's low cross reached Gundogan at the far post and the substitute tapped home to send

City into ecstasy.

Having already won the FA Cup and League Cup, Liverpool can still enjoy a memorable season of their own if they beat Real Madrid in the Champions League final in Paris on Saturday.

Spurs back in Champions League

Liverpool trailed City by 14 points in January, but Klopp's side pushed them to the wire, showing the fortitude that earned

them the nickname "mentality monsters" from their manager.

Liverpool were rocked after just three minutes when Pedro Neto produced a close-range finish from Raul Jimenez's cross.

Sadio Mane equalised with a clinical strike from just inside the area after sprinting onto Thiago Alcantara's pass in the 24th minute.

Mohamed Salah poked Liverpool ahead with six minutes left but by then news of City's ex-

traordinary recovery had reached Anfield, which was in subdued mood by the time Andrew Robertson scored in stoppage-time.

Tottenham's 5-0 rout of relegated Norwich secured fourth place at Carrow Road.

Just a few weeks ago, Antonio Conte had insisted it would take a "miracle" for Tottenham to finish in the top four, but the Italian has masterminded a superb run that ends his club's two-year absence from the Champions League.

Dejan Kulusevski's 16th minute tap-in from Rodrigo Bentancur's pass put Tottenham ahead before Harry Kane struck with a diving header in the 32nd minute.

Kulusevski curled a sublime shot into the far corner in the 64th minute and Golden Boot winner Son Heung-min scored in the 70th and 75th minutes.

Tottenham's victory left north London rivals Arsenal in fifth place despite their 5-1 win against Everton.

Burnley's six-season stay in the top tier ended with a 2-1 home defeat against Newcastle, with Leeds staying up after a 2-1 win at Brentford.

Leeds started the day below Burnley on goal difference, but the Clarets were beaten by Callum Wilson's brace, while Jesse Marsch's team escaped thanks to Raphinha's penalty and Jack Harrison's last-gasp strike.

Manchester United lost 1-0 at Crystal Palace, but qualified for the Europa League thanks to West Ham's 3-1 defeat at Brighton.

AFP



Juventus' Giorgio Chiellini clears the ball under pressure from Fiorentina's Krzysztof Piatek during their Serie A match on Saturday

Fiorentina beat Juve to reach Conference League

Milan, Italy - Fiorentina will return to European football for the first time in five years after beating Juventus 2-0 to qualify for next season's Conference League.

Alfred Duncan's finish on the stroke of half-time and Nicolas Gonzalez's late penalty gave Vincenzo Italiano's side the win they needed to guarantee continental competition.

Fiorentina ensured seventh

spot, three points ahead of Atalanta who lost 1-0 at home to Empoli and miss out on Europe for the first time since Gian Piero Gasperini took over as coach in 2016.

Giorgio Chiellini made his final appearance in a Juve shirt in a typically feisty match between big rivals and he left the field with a bleeding head after a clash with Fiorentina forward Krzysztof Piatek.

AFP

Superstar Mbappe in position of power at PSG

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe's decision to stay at Paris Saint-Germain confirms the Qatar-backed club's position of power within European football but also means the superstar striker is likely to wield huge influence as they rebuild for another assault on the Champions League.

The 23-year-old had for so long seemed certain to sign for Real Madrid before being persuaded to commit to a new three-year deal at PSG, the club he joined in 2017 from Monaco.

His new salary is set to be even more eye-watering than before and accompanied by an astronomical signing-on fee: there were reports that Real's own offer included a signing-on fee of 150 million euros (\$154m).

Yet PSG will also be determined to do everything they can to provide Mbappe with a team good enough to deliver finally the trophy he wants the most, and that the Qataris have chased without success since arriving in

Paris in 2011.

This season's defeat in the last 16 to Real Madrid following a collapse in the second leg was just the latest humiliation for PSG in the Champions League, a series that most notably includes the 6-1 defeat to Barcelona in 2017.

Five years ago they reacted to that stinging loss by signing Neymar from Barcelona as well as a teenage Mbappe.

Now they have exacted revenge on Madrid by denying them Mbappe.

"I always said that Paris was my home. I hope I can carry on doing what I love most -- playing football and winning trophies," the player said after the announcement of his new deal and before scoring a hat-trick in PSG's 5-0 win over Metz on Saturday in their last game of the season.

Hours after that came the news that sporting director Leonardo -- heavily criticised by supporters -- had been fired.

Reports in France on Sunday



Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe poses with a jersey after announcing his stay at the club until 2025 (AFP)

suggested PSG may now look to replace Leonardo with Luis Campos, the Portuguese recruitment guru who helped build title-win-

ning teams at Lille and Monaco and knows Mbappe well.

Coach Mauricio Pochettino is also expected to leave despite

delivering the club's French record-equalling 10th league title.

"I only found out a few minutes before the official announcement," admitted the Argentine on Saturday when asked about Mbappe's new deal.

Pochettino has struggled to stamp his mark at PSG, although it is not clear who they might look to as a successor - the possibility of Zinedine Zidane appears unlikely.

Then there is the team itself. "It is a big step forward, but there is still a lot of work to be done," admitted captain Marquinhos following Mbappe's decision to stay.

PSG's recruitment of Lionel Messi has not worked out as hoped, the former Barcelona man managing just 11 goals in his first season in France. Messi won his seventh Ballon d'Or last year but will be 35 next month, while Neymar continues to struggle with his form and fitness.

AFP

World Cup police brace for hundreds of thousands of fans in Doha

Doha, Qatar - Controlling hundreds of thousands of football fans in Qatar's capital will be the biggest security challenge of World Cup 2022, FIFA told police chiefs from competing nations on Sunday.

Unlike previous World Cups, where only two teams and their supporters would generally converge on one city at any given time, all the games will take place in and around Doha.

The most geographically compact World Cup therefore represents the tournament's biggest "challenge", FIFA security direc-

tor Helmut Spahn told a security conference for the tournament in Doha.

Qatar has predicted that 1.4 million people will visit during the 28 day tournament, that starts November 21, with "approximately 350,000" attendees in Doha "at the same time", Spahn noted, speaking on the sidelines of the conference. "You have to manage that," he said. "But we can create history and I am pretty sure that we will manage it."

Major General Abdulaziz Al-Ansari, head of Qatar's World Cup security operation, also ac-



A picturesque view of the 974 Stadium, a World Cup venue, in the Qatari capital Doha (AFP)

knowledgeed that the numbers were the main concern.

"But we are very much confident that we have reviewed this over and over again," Ansari said.

The Gulf state's police are preparing an intricate system of road closures and extra public transport to move rival groups of football fans around.

The gas-rich nation has spent billions of dollars on seven new stadiums and refurbishing an eighth for the World Cup.

The longest distance between

any of the two stadiums is about 70 kilometres (45 miles).

Ansari said police delegations from competing nations would inspect the World Cup stadiums

and review transport in Doha over the next two days.

Spahn claimed the threat from "terrorism" had eased since Germany 2006, South Africa 2010, Brazil 2014 and Russia 2018.

In the past "we had terrorist attack threats prior to a World Cup, we had strikes of private security and police, we had problems sometimes with infrastructure at stadiums not being ready. This is not the case here," Spahn said.

The threat "is low and under control here in Qatar."

AFP



'Thank you, Mumbai'

Golden boy Virat Kohli and his side Royal Challengers Bangalore get a shot at first IPL title

New Delhi, India -Faltering superstar Virat Kohli and his IPL side Royal Challengers Bangalore have a shot at winning their first title after a late blitz and a bit of luck secured them a playoff spot.

Bangalore, led by Faf du Plessis after Kohli stepped down, sneaked in as the fourth side to make the final four after Delhi Capitals went down to wooden-spooners Mumbai Indians on Saturday.

With eight wins in 14 league matches, Bangalore entered the play-offs for the third time in a row in the Indian Premier League, and will play Lucknow Super Giants in the eliminator on Wednesday.

Kohli, who bounced back from three golden ducks this season with a match-winning 73 in his team's last league game, tweeted "Kolkata" - venue of the eliminator - after Mumbai's victory.

"It was unbelievable, the emotions in the changing room were unbelievable," Kohli said after he and the rest of the team watched the Mumbai-Delhi game on TV.

"Thank you, Mumbai, will remember this for a long time," he said. Du Plessis said, "The last game we played we felt almost like we played our best game of cricket of this campaign so far and that's how you want to enter those knockout stages."

"We needed someone to do



Royal Challengers Bangalore players watch the match between Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians at the team hotel

us a favour in Mumbai so we're really thankful for that but obviously, now the work starts again."

It has been a topsy-turvy 15th edition of the IPL, held in India for the first time in its entirety since the pandemic but in just two cities - Mumbai and Pune - and with limited spectators.

Five-time winners Mumbai - led by Kohli's replacement as India captain Rohit Sharma - had

a shocker, ending bottom of the table with 10 losses.

Also keeping up the rear were defending champions Chennai, led by M.S. Dhoni, who finished ninth in a season of surprises.

Two new franchises - Gujarat and Lucknow - finished first and third.

'Overcooked'

Winning the IPL would be a welcome success for Kohli, 33, after

a torrid year that saw him replaced as Indian captain and fail to score a century in more than 100 matches in all formats.

For all his exploits for India, he has never won the IPL title since joining Bangalore before the inaugural contest in 2008, including as captain between 2013 and 2021.

Before Sunday's last league game - a dead rubber between Hyderabad and Punjab - Kohli

was a lowly 25th in the batting table, with fewer than half the 629 runs of top-placed Jos Buttler. Commentators said that the usually prolific batsman looked "overcooked" and needed a break, but Kohli thanked his fans for the backing he got this IPL season.

"It has been wonderful that I have got so much support in this edition," Kohli said after his team's win over Gujarat Titans in their last league match. "I am forever grateful to all the love that I have never seen before."

Full crowds

Crowds will return to full capacity for the four play-offs in Kolkata and Ahmedabad after Pune and Mumbai were only allowed to fill 50 percent of seats in the league stage.

Top-placed Gujarat, one of the two new franchises alongside Lucknow in the expanded 10-team IPL, will meet second-placed Rajasthan Royals in the first qualifier on Tuesday.

The winner will directly reach the final - set for May 29 - while the loser will clash with either Bangalore or Lucknow in qualifier two on Friday.

The first two play-offs will be played at Kolkata's Eden Gardens and the next two including the final at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

AFP



Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting (L) with captain Rishabh Pant

Ponting backs Pant despite Delhi's exit

New Delhi, India - Coach Ricky Ponting said Rishabh Pant remained his choice as Delhi Capitals skipper, despite blunders from the wicket-keeper-batsman that cost the team a place in the Indian Premier League playoffs.

Pant dropped a catch and failed to review a caught-behind chance off Mumbai Indians batsman Tim David, who went on smash a match-winning 11-ball 34 on Saturday.

Mumbai, the five-time winners who ended bottom of the 10-team table, chased down their victory target of 160 to allow Royal Challengers Bangalore sneak in to the final four of the Twenty20 tournament.

"Absolutely no doubt in my mind that Rishabh, even the last season, was the right choice for the captaincy," Ponting told reporters after his team's five-wicket defeat.

"He is still a very young man. He is still learning about the captaincy side of things. He has certainly got my full

backing and looking forward to getting back working with him next year."

The left-handed Pant made 39 in Delhi's 159-7 but dropped an easy catch off South African teenager Dewald Brevis who made a crucial 37 off 33 balls in Mumbai's successful chase.

The 24-year-old then failed to call for a review when David appeared to have edged his first ball with technology suggesting the batsman had nicked it to Pant.

"It's always hard to put your finger on single aspect of the game," Posing said. "You can rewind the clock to the start of the game as well when our top-order batting was so poor."

"Obviously Tim David was out first ball, but there are so many aspects that we will be disappointed (with), but the important thing is that the players need to learn from games like this."

AFP

SRH V PBKS

Livingstone fireworks help Punjab beat Hyderabad



BRIEF SCORES:

Sunrisers Hyderabad 157 for 8 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 43 (32) 5x4, 2x6; Romario Shepherd 26 (15) 2x4, 2x6; Harpreet Brar 3 for 26) lost to Punjab Kings 160 for 5 in 15.1 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 38 (32) 2x4, 2x6, Liam Livingstone 49 (22) 2x4, 5x6; Fazalhaq Farooqi 2 for 32) by 5 wickets



TODAY'S MATCH: QUALIFIER 1 (6PM)



GUJARAT TITANS



RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Eid Offer

30 REFILL COUPONS

50% OFF

12 REFILL COUPONS

- Hot & Cold Dispenser
- 2 Full Bottles
- White Tap Dispenser/ Tap Dispenser/ Manual Water Pump/ Cradle with Tap
- 2 Full Bottles

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

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

Offer valid from 1st April to 30th June 2022

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

Toll-free 800 71 222 or 9275 5522

Oman Sail nominated for Middle East Sports Industry Awards



Muscat - Oman Sail has been announced as a nominee for the prestigious Middle East Sports Industry Awards 2022 (SPIA), joining a host of renowned sports events and organisers from across the region.

Shortlisted for both 'Best Sports Event Organiser of the Year' and 'Best Sports Event of the Year' for the Youth Sailing World Championships 2021, Oman Sail showcased hosting

capability post-pandemic by delivering on a series of continental and world sailing championships, including the 50th edition of the Youth Sailing Worlds, making the Sultanate the first country in the region to host this prestigious event.

In 2021, Oman Sail delivered nine major projects in sailing, attracting more than 2,500 international competitors to experience the world class

facilities and conditions in the country.

Utilising its many years of international event management experience, Oman positioned itself as a COVID safe destination for major global sailing events, ensuring championship events could proceed following the withdrawal of original host venues.

These events contributed more than OMR 2.8 million to

the national economy.

Dr Khamis Al Jabri, Oman Sail CEO, said: "2021 was an incredibly successful year for Oman Sail as we managed to come back strongly to host a significant number of international events in the Sultanate, while a considerable part of the world was still experiencing COVID 19 related challenges.

"We welcomed nations from around the world to Oman

through our event hosting and ensured all athletes, support teams and race officials were best placed to deliver their optimum performance and delivery on and off the water.

Our 96% Omanised workforce delivered a world class portfolio of events and firmly established the Sultanate of Oman as a renowned destination for world class sports events," he added.



Garbine Muguruza

Ex-champion Muguruza knocked out

Paris, France - Former French Open champion Garbine Muguruza was knocked out in the first round on Sunday, losing 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 to Estonia's Kaia Kanepi, the oldest woman in the tournament.

World number 46 Kanepi, who turns 37 next month, made the last eight at the French Open in 2008 and 2012.

She goes on to face Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia for a place in the last 32.

Two-time runner-up Dominic Thiem, whose ranking has slipped to 194 after a lengthy battle with a wrist injury, was another early casualty, losing 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 to 87th-ranked Hugo Dellien of Bolivia.

Thiem, the 2020 US Open champion, has yet to win a match in six attempts since his return in March.

AFF

'Maybe it was good to lose'

Paris, France - Tunisia's Ons Jabeur suffered a shock French Open first round exit on Sunday but admitted: "Maybe it was good to lose".

The sixth-seeded Tunisian crashed out to Poland's 56th-ranked Magda Linette 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5.

The 27-year-old was seen as a potential champion in Paris, despite never having previously got past the fourth round.

Jabeur came into the event with a season-leading 17 wins on clay in 2022 and with the prestigious Madrid title under her belt and a runners-up spot in Rome against world number one Iga Swiatek in Rome.

However, she was undone Sunday by 47 unforced errors in the two hour 28-minute match.

"Obviously I was expecting better but we say maybe something happens bad because there is something good happening in the future," said Jabeur.

"Hopefully the grass season, hopefully Wimbledon, I don't know, but it's definitely a great time to reflect and to see what's going to happen next."

"So maybe it was a good thing to lose today. I would rather say this and be really tough with myself than waste all the good energy that I got from



Tunisia's Ons Jabeur plays a backhand return to Poland's Magda Linette during their first-round match at French Open on Sunday (AFP)

Madrid and Rome."

Jabeur said she was not happy to see that she was starting proceedings on Court Philippe Chatrier on the opening day of the tournament, the first French Open with full crowds

since 2019 after a pandemic-affected two years.

"Well, honestly, I wasn't happy to play on a Sunday at 11," she added.

"I've got quite a peculiar relationship with this court, I like it

and I don't like it at the same time."

Linette had lost to Jabeur in the third round in 2021 having stunned an injury-hit top seed Ashleigh Barty in her previous match.

"I just tried to stay focused after the first set and tried to make her uncomfortable. I was happy to fight for every single point," said Linette who needed treatment on a leg injury after dropping the first set.

"I shifted my attention to play faster and my racquet speed was faster than in the first set.

"I wanted to put her in the situation where she couldn't move me around as much," she added.

AFF

Canon

CAPTURE EPIC

WITH CANON'S REVOLUTIONARY RF LENSES

Canon AUTHORISED PARTNER

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

51st year of excellence

For Enquiries 95713529

www.genetco.net @GenetcoOman

Rahul to lead India as Kohli, Sharma rested for South Africa Twenty20 series at home

New Delhi, India - KL Rahul will lead India in the absence of top stars Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma next month in five Twenty20 internationals against South Africa at home.

Several senior players including all-format captain Sharma will only return for the one-off Test in Birmingham beginning July 1 as India and England attempt to complete their unfinished five-match series, which India lead 2-1.

Squad selectors issued a maiden call-up for pace sensation Umran Malik and left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh for the

18-member Twenty20 squad against South Africa.

Both Malik and Singh have impressed during the ongoing Indian Premier League.

Right-hand batsman Cheteshwar Pujara also received a callback for the 17-member Test squad on the back of his superb performance for Sussex in England's County Championship, while wicket-keeper Dinesh Karthik earned a place in the 18-member Twenty20 team.

All-format seamer Jasprit Bumrah has also been rested

for the Twenty20 series, which begins June 9 in Delhi, but earned a spot in the Test squad.

India under Sharma will be playing at full strength in the crucial Test match against England, which had been scheduled for last September at Old Trafford but was postponed following Covid-19 cases in the Indian camp.

TEST SQUAD: Rohit Sharma (capt), KL Rahul (vice-capt), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Hanuma Vihari, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant (wk), KS Bharat

(wk), R Jadeja, R Ashwin, Shardul Thakur, Mohd Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Prasidh Krishna

TWENTY20 SQUAD: KL Rahul (capt), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Ishan Kishan, Deepak Hooda, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (vice-capt, wk), Dinesh Karthik (wk), Hardik Pandya, Venkatesh Iyer, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Harshal Patel, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh, Umran Malik

AFF

Verstappen wins Spanish GP, takes championship lead

Montmeló, Spain - Max Verstappen reaped the reward of Charles Leclerc's misfortune to rack up his third straight win this season in Sunday's Spanish Grand Prix and move top of the Formula One drivers' standings.

Sergio Perez took second for a Red Bull 1-2 at the Montmelo circuit behind the world champion where in 2016 Verstappen had opened his F1 account as a teenager.

Leclerc was sitting comfortably in the lead from pole until lap 23 when a sudden loss of power proved fatal to his Ferrari.

The man from Monaco arrived in Catalonia 19 points in front in the title race, but left it six points behind Verstappen ahead



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium

of his home race next weekend.

Verstappen had to overcome being blown off the circuit and

into the gravel by a gust of wind early on and some technical niggles.

"Difficult beginning but a good end! I tried to stay focussed, which is not always easy," he said.

Mercedes showed improved form after a bumpy start to the season with George Russell claiming third.

Lewis Hamilton in the other Mercedes threaded his way through the field after being forced into the pits shortly after the start with a puncture to take fifth.

AFF

into the gravel by a gust of wind early on and some technical niggles.

"Difficult beginning but a good end! I tried to stay focussed, which is not always easy," he said.

Mercedes showed improved form after a bumpy start to the season with George Russell claiming third.

Lewis Hamilton in the other Mercedes threaded his way through the field after being forced into the pits shortly after the start with a puncture to take fifth.

AFF

ALL FEMALE CREW

FAIR FLIGHT



Saudi Arabia's first all-female crew successfully complete short domestic flight

The first flight from Saudi Arabia with an all-female crew took off this weekend, completing a short domestic journey and passing a milestone for women's empowerment, officials said.

The flight was operated by Flyadeal, the budget subsidiary of flag carrier Saudia, according to reports.

"For the first time in Saudi aviation history," the airline wrote on Twitter on Friday, "flyadeal operated the first flight with an all-female crew, the majority of which are Saudis, by the newest A320 aircraft. Flight 117, flew from #Riyadh to #Jeddah."

Most of the seven-member crew hail from Saudi Arabia, according to spokesman Emad Iskandarani, including the first officer, Yara Jan, 23, who is also reportedly the youngest

Saudi female pilot.

Having graduated from flight school in Florida back in 2019, Jan is relatively new to flyadeal as she joined just a year ago. Nonetheless, she could not feel any more proud about having taken part in such a historic moment in the aviation for Saudi women as she celebrated.

"As a Saudi woman trying to lead my country with a proud step it was a moment of pride and joy. Although being a Saudi woman pilot is new, it is not impossible for our generation, especially with the backing that we are receiving from our beloved country and our respected leaders, who have supported me a lot to become the youngest female pilot in a Saudi airline. I will always be pleased to have the chance to make a positive change," she said.

The country's civil aviation authority, which confirmed the an-



Although being a Saudi woman pilot is new, it is not impossible for our generation, especially with backing from our beloved country and respected leaders

YARA JAN

nouncement, has been working towards expanding roles for women in the sector for years.

In 2019, Yasmeen al Maimani, then 29, became the first female first officer to fly a mainstream commercial plane in the kingdom. The Saudi woman piloted Nesma Airlines flight ATR 72-600 from Hail to Al Qassim on June 9.

"I thought it was going to be hard, being a female pilot based in Hail but it hasn't been," she said at the time. "I feel so comfortable with everyone else here, and the way they treat me. It's like they are all my brothers, it's a good feeling," Maimani said.

According to reports, figures showed female participation in the kingdom's workforce rose to 33 per cent at the end of 2020, from 19 per cent in 2016, according to data from the General Authority for Statistics. Saudi Arabia aims to generate

356bn riyals (US\$95bn) of investment into its aviation sector by 2030.

Its National Aviation Sector Strategy is working to increase connections from Saudi Arabia to 250 destinations, reaching 330 million passengers.

The kingdom also plans to launch another airline to complement its existing national carriers, including Saudia, and to build a major international airport in Riyadh, in addition to eight more regional airports.

Flight F3 117 is just one of the significant differences that Flyadeal carries as opposed to other Saudi airlines, as the budget carrier has over 55 female employees working in all departments, both onboard and on the ground, including air operations, ground operations, human resources, marketing, finance, information technology, etc.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian-MBA(Construction Management, M.Tech (Structural Engineering), B.Tech(Civil) having 21 years 3 Mega Airport Terminal Building, Five Star Hotel Construction Experienced Project Manager available.
Contact:79213105.
Email:engrsanjeewa@yahoo.com

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

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



FOR RENT

Available 2100 sq meter best in class Warehouse cum office Space, fully furnished ready to use, Located at Prime area of Ghala in the heart of the city having easy access to airport & express Way.

Contact: Girish Sewani - 93893596

Send your request for Birthday/Anniversary wishes to
wish@apexmedia.co.om
with your resident card copy
(It's free of cost)

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories: **Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)**
Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346

AUDIT, VAT, TAXATION

Accounting, Auditing, Vat Services, Taxation
Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit Chartered Accountants
Contact: 92469602/93949235
Offices at Muscat, Salalah, Sohar & Sur
Email: kumar@gccaoman.com



REVIVAL

MOROCCO BECKONS

MOROCCO
‘BREATHING AGAIN’
AS TOURISTS BACK
AFTER COVID
SHUTDOWN



Moroccan snake-charmer Youssef watched as long-absent tourists again thronged Marrakesh's famous Jamaa El-Fna square, ending a long pause forced by the COVID-19 pandemic. "We're breathing again," he said. The ancient southern city, famous for its views of graceful red buildings set against palm trees and snow-capped mountains, has long drawn visitors including celebrities from Madonna to Yves Saint Laurent. But it was particularly hard hit by a

two-year collapse in tourism that saw arrivals to the North African kingdom plummet to just a third last year from 2019. For Youssef, taking a break from playing his oboe-like 'ghaita' pipe before the seemingly mesmerised serpent, "it's such a pleasure to be back here after these slow, painful months". Tourism - which accounts for some seven per cent of Morocco's economy and creates hundreds of thousands of formal and informal jobs - was battered by Morocco's tight restrictions during the



pandemic. Today, Marrakesh residents see signs of hope again as tourists have returned to the UNESCO-listed old city's narrow alleys. Cafe terraces are full and foreigners browse shops and market stalls for traditional clothing, furniture and souvenirs. "We're not back to pre-pandemic levels but the situation has been improving over the past month," said salesman Abdellah Bouazri, after serving an Argentinian customer in a Boca Juniors football top. Bouazri, 35, said the coronavirus had forced him to temporarily abandon his shop and find alternative work as a security guard. The father of two was one of many in the beleaguered industry forced to find an alternative income - including many informal workers without contracts or social security. But he said he was optimistic about the future: "It has been hard, but today I'm delighted to be going back to my real job."

Recovery incomplete Morocco this week reopened land borders with the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, two years after they were shut due to Covid and a major diplomatic row. That was the latest step in a slow recovery for the tourism sector, backed by the government which has launched a two billion dirham (190mn euro) support fund, on top of 95mn euros it released to prop up hotels. "The recovery might be underway, but it's incomplete," said the FNIH national hotels federation's chief Lahcen Zelmato. According to the tourism ministry, Morocco last year earned some 3.2bn euros in tourism revenue -- less than half the figure for the year before the pandemic. But revenue in the first quarter was up by 80 per cent on last year, according to official figures, and the finance ministry predicts a 'more favourable outlook for 2022'. That was reflected in the steady flow of tourists outside the Medersa Ben Youssef, a 16th-century Koranic school in Marrakesh. "This place is magical - I'm impressed by all the detail," said Nick, a 29-year-old Londoner visiting for the first time. "Since Covid I've been missing exploring new cultures." Nearby, other visitors queued up to the Yves Saint Laurent museum, one of the city's top tourist spots. "The museum was a must," said Coco, a Chinese student living in Germany. "We consider ourselves very lucky to be able to travel again, and we're really charmed."

AFP

TOP ATTRACTIONS

DJEMAA EL FNA

Djemaa el Fna is the highlight of any visit to Marrakech and one of the top tourist attractions in Morocco. By day, this square at the heart of the medina is largely filled with snake charmers and people with monkeys. In the afternoon and evening, the square becomes more crowded, with story-tellers, magicians, and peddlers of traditional medicines. As dark descends Djemaa El-Fna fills with dozens of food-stalls, and the crowds are at their height.



AIT BENHADDOU

Ait Benhaddou is one of Ouarzazate's fortified cities along the former caravan route between the Sahara and Marrakech. Inside the high mud walls are six kasbahs and a small number of homes. Most of the town's inhabitants now live in a more modern village at the other side of the river although a few families still live within the city walls. Ait Benhaddou has been featured in several movies.



ERG CHEBBI

The Erg Chebbi dunes are located in the Sahara Desert. The awe-inspiring dunes are as high as 150m tall, and one certainly feels small in their shadows. Erg Chebbi special feature is its beautiful unique orange coloured sand. Excursions to the dunes normally start from the village of Merzouga which is located on the edge of the erg. Camel trekking is the most popular option although it isn't the most comfortable way of traveling.



TODRA GORGE

Todra Gorge is situated on the remote east side of the High Atlas Mountains. Both, the Todra and neighbouring Dades Rivers, have carved out cliff-sided canyons through the mountains. The final 600m of the Todra Gorge are the most spectacular as the canyon narrows to a flat stony track as little as 10m wide in places with sheer and smooth rock walls up to 160m high on each side.



VOLUBILIS

In antiquity, Volubilis was an important Roman town situated near the westernmost border of Roman conquests in present day Morocco. It was the administrative center of the province Mauretania Tingitana. The fertile lands of the province produced many commodities such as grain and olive oil, which were exported to Rome, contributing to the province's wealth and prosperity.

