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Global HSE conference, exhibition kicks off

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The eighth edition of the Global Health, Safety and Environment Conference and Exhibition kicked off on Monday under the patronage of H E Said bin Hamood bin Said al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

The conference will witness the participation of 100+ expert speakers in the field and welcome more than 1,500 participants from 25 countries.

Hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Petroleum Development Oman, Saudi Aramco, OQ and OPAL, under the theme 'HSE Excellence - Leadership, Sustainability and Technology,' the conference is taking place at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre till May 19.

This edition of the conference aims to continue creating a sustainable and premium platform

'HSE Excellence - Leadership, Sustainability and Technology' is taking place at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre till May 19

to discuss the challenges faced by the industry and community, and conclude with solutions for protecting the lives of people and the environment.

The event will shed light on three pillars - leadership commitment, use of technology and mainstream focus on sustainable goals that organisations can persist in the current competitive and challenging market while having to meet legal requirements and communities' expectations.

The conference will address the importance of HSE for human capital development and its impact on economic and social development aligned with Oman's industrial modernisation and production efficiency.

The conference will include

five high-level keynote address sessions, seven panel discussions, 17 technical sessions and seven workshops that will address several important topics, including Process Safety Management, International HSE Management Standards, Pandemic Risk and Response Management for Major Industries, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change, and successful practical experiences in the areas of HSE.

Besides the conference, an accompanying exhibition will be held with the participation of more than 50 companies - local, regional and international - to showcase the latest technological advancements and expertise related to HSE, including devices, equipment and modern system applications.

International Museum Day: Free entry in museums today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To mark International Museum Day, observed on or around May 18 every year, museums in Oman will open their doors to visitors for free on Wednesday.

According to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), visitors are welcome to visit the Natural History Museum, Omani-French Museum, Fatah al Khair Centre and the Museum of the Land of Frankincense in Salalah.

'Oman participates in the celebrations of International Museum Day. On this occasion, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism announces the opening of its museums free of charge to visitors,'



MHT stated.

The Sultan's Armed Forces Museum in Muscat will also celebrate the day, allowing free entry to visitors from 8am to 5pm on Wednesday.

The museum has an extensive collection of exhibits related to Oman's military history, with displays of weapons (guns and cannon), service uniforms, military vehicle livery, military band instruments, medals, an aircraft ejection seat and more.

Al Bustan trains managers in leadership skills



Muscat - Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, organised a one-day DISC assessment training programme for its managers on Tuesday.

DISC is a personal assessment tool to help improve teamwork, communication and productivity in the workplace. The model describes four basic styles: D, I, S and C, which stand for Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Conscientiousness.

According to Vanessa Fernandez, partner for MENA, Everything DiSC by Wiley, this was the first time a DISC assessment programme was conducted in Oman. "The programme is used by 70 per cent of Fortune 500 companies, and very common in Dubai and

Saudi Arabia."

Vanessa informed that she works with companies on workplace management and leadership skills programmes. "The purpose of this training is to provide participants with techniques to improve self awareness and awareness of others in order to be more effective in the workplace and contribute to a positive workplace culture.

"As a result of this training, the managers learn how to be better managers, how to motivate their teams, how to direct and delegate and develop talent. Participants build key social and emotional skills, and improve workplace satisfaction, results and relationships through DISC assessment training."

Marta Martin, general manager of the hotel, said, "As a company and as a brand, the most important thing for us are our ladies and gentlemen. Our value is our team. This is one of the initiatives that will help our team become stronger and it will make them think about things differently and take the hotel to the next level."

Safa al Balushi, trainer at Al Bustan Palace and one of the managers who attended the programme, said, "The training will help me have a healthy relationship and communication with my team and colleagues, while developing my leadership style and skills."

Everything DiSC by Wiley is based in London and has partners around the world.

(Photo and text by Syed Fasiuddin)

44 countries to attend faculty exchange meet in Oman

Muscat - The Business Studies Department of University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Shinas, will organise the first International Faculty Exchange Meet (IFEM 2022) on June 13 to 16.

IFEM 2022 is a virtual exchange of academics and administrators from many countries sharing best practices in areas related to faculty, curriculum, instruction, laboratory, research, student services, alumni, community engagement and linkages.

The meet is expected to have participants from 44 countries with 60 confirmed resource persons/panelists, 45 moderators/facilitators, and around 300 participants of which 175 are confirmed participants from outside Oman.

IFEM 2022 aims to establish partnerships with educators for future collaboration in faculty development, research, pedagogical approaches, and other areas for improvement.

First commercial harvest of shrimp starts in Qurun

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) announced on Tuesday the first commercial harvest of the Shrimp Aquaculture Project at Qurun, Jalan Bani Bu Hassan, South Sharqiyah governorate.

Production capacity of the project is estimated to reach 400 tonnes monthly - 31-40gm at 45 per cent, 41-50gm at 50 per cent and 51-60 gm at 5 per cent.

The farm is growing Pacific White Shrimp, (*Litopenaeus vannamei*), using specific pathogen free brood stocks imported from the United States. The entire production operation is carried in a highly bio-secure and hygienic environment without the use of drugs, antibiotics or any chemicals of public health concern, stated a press release.

The shrimps, on attaining market size, are harvested mechanically, chilled to maintain the highest freshness and delivered to a pre-processing plant within 30 minutes.

'On arrival at the pre-processing plant, shrimps are washed in chilled potable water, sorted and size graded mechanically. Graded chilled shrimps are packed with flake ice for delivery to distributors and/or processing factories as per the order,' FDO stated.

Construction work of the project started in November 2018 and the project was commissioned in November 2021.

The project is built along the coast of Arabian sea, at Qurun, on an area of 500 hectares at a cost of RO20mn. Production capacity of the project is 4,600 tonnes per annum and the full production capacity is expected to be reached by the 2023. Shrimp harvests in 2022 is expected to be 2,100 tonnes.

This is the first investment of FDO, a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority.

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مطارات عُمان
Oman Airports

FLOATING TENDERS

Oman Airports Company announces the following tenders:

Tender REF.NO	TENDER TITLE	DOC'S FEE OMR	Last date for DOC'S DISTRIBUTION	TENDER SUBMISSION DATE
PC-220401	Repair of Water Pumps at Old Muscat International Airport	25	26 th May 2022	15 th Jun 2022
ITC-220407	Replacement of Asphalt with Concrete Slabs at Muscat International Airport	100	26 th May 2022	15 th Jun 2022
ITC-220409	Supply of Spare Parts for Overhauling of Compressors at Older Plants at Muscat International Airport	100	26 th May 2022	15 th Jun 2022
PC-220408	Maintenance of ILS/OMLS, Transmitters and MSHs at Muscat International Airport	25	26 th May 2022	15 th Jun 2022

Tenders Collection: Specialized companies may obtain Tender Documents/ Specifications from Procurement Department upon receipt of complete payment of tender fees by credit card and receive scanned copy of deposit Receipt along with a copy of Company Commercial Registration Certificate to Email: (financetenders@omanairports.com) provided with company name, tender number & contact person as a mandatory.

OAMC Bank Account Details:
Account Name: Oman Airports Management Co. S.A.O.C.
Account No: 0423010849180012
Name of Bank: BANK MUSCAT
Branch: Corporate Branch, CBD Area, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
SWIFT Code: BMUSOMRX

Required Bond: All participating Companies must provide a bank guarantee, issued by locally registered bank, for the sum of not less than 1% of the Tender value, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, valid for 90 days from the date of submission of the Tenders.

Submission: All Bids shall be submitted as per the instructions mentioned in the Tender documents and late bids will not be entertained.

All Technical Queries shall be sent to:
oamctenders@omanairports.com

The committee is not bound to accept the lowest tender
Any payment received after last date of documents distribution will not be refunded

Headquarter Address:
Muscat International Airport
South Forecourt Building, First Floor
Oman Airports Management S.A.O.C
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Note: All Correspondence / Clarification / Enquiries send an e-mail:
oamctenders@omanairports.com

WORLD HYPERTENSION DAY

'Silent killer' ails a third of Oman's population

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health has revealed that 33 per cent of the population older than 18 years in Oman suffers from high blood pressure. It made the statement on World Hypertension Day observed on May 17 to raise awareness on the 'silent killer'.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Dr Suleiman Zahir al Shuraiqi, senior specialist at National Diabetes and Endocrine Centre, said, "High blood pressure is a silent killer; its symptoms may not be evident for many years. In a majority of cases, it is diagnosed by chance through periodic examinations, or when the patient visits a hospital due to an emergency caused by complications of the condition."

Dr Shuraiqi added that global



economic changes are impacting people's lifestyles, leading to tension and psychological pressures. "Adding to the mix is an increased intake of processed foods, lack of balanced diet and neglect of physical activity."

muscles. In a majority of cases (90-95 per cent), the cause is unknown, while in others lifestyle and behaviour are a major causative factor."

Dr Shuraiqi noted that about 5-10 per cent of high blood pres-

sure only. Therefore, the cases that are diagnosed are few."

The lifestyle factors that cause the condition include excess intake of salt, obesity, consumption of alcoholic beverages and the lack of regular physical activity.

The treatment of high blood pressure requires commitment of the patient to avoid complications. "A person with high blood pressure who neglects treatment is susceptible to enlargement of heart muscles, which leads to heart failure," he cautioned.

Urging all to engage in some form of physical activity for 30 minutes daily, Dr Shuraiqi also recommended avoiding smoking, alcohol, anxiety and stress. "With this, we can give our heart a better chance and ourselves a healthier life."

High blood pressure is a silent killer; its symptoms may not be evident for many years. In a majority of cases, it is diagnosed by chance

DR SULEIMAN ZAHIR AL SHURAIQI

He informed that a field study in Oman showed that one third of the adult population has high blood pressure, with most unaware of the fact.

"A person with the condition has high blood pressure even when resting and relaxing, and this leads to stress on the heart

sure cases may be due to simple factors that are treatable.

He described headaches as the most common symptom of high blood pressure. Some patients suffer from dizziness, palpitation, fatigue, nosebleeds or blurred vision. "These symptoms are evident in very high blood



Iranian delegation on visit to boost trade ties

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A high-level Iranian delegation visiting the sultanate met senior ministry and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) officials on Tuesday.

Meetings held sought to boost bilateral trade and political relations between the two neighbours.

Redha bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, received Alireza Peyman-Pak, Deputy Minister for Industry, Mining and Trade of Iran, at the chamber's headquarters.

"The meetings aimed to strengthen relations and trade

exchange between the two countries. We also want to discuss building new partnerships that accelerate trade and investment exchange," Saleh said.

He added that the volume of trade between Oman and Iran at the end of June 2020 was US\$306.43mn. Of this, Omani exports were worth US\$175.2mn.

"The Iranian side is looking forward to increasing trade exchange between the two friendly countries, in addition to developing relations that will help the establishment of joint projects," Peyman-Pak said.

He added that Iran is working to solve the challenges faced by Omani businessmen in Iran.

Peyman-Pak was also received by H E Saeed bin Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and H E Dr Saleh Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Additionally, H E Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in Foreign Ministry, received Ali Reza Enayati, Assistant Foreign Minister of Iran.

The two sides reviewed joint relations and ways of enhancing these in several fields to serve the mutual interests of the two countries.

Phase 1 of Salalah's Al Hafa Waterfront Development set for Q3 2022 completion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Governorate of Dhofar will soon see the completion of Al Hafa Waterfront Development, a tourism and leisure landmark in Salalah.

Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, head of Dhofar Municipality, visited the project site on Tuesday to review progress of work and discuss the timetable for Phase 1, which is scheduled for completion in the third quarter of 2022.

"The first phase of the project includes the opening of a promenade and waterfront restau-



rants - several international brands - and limited operations of a traditional market," he in-

formed. Ghassani added that some restaurants were handed over

outlets in May; the remaining will be delivered in the next few months.

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التجارة والصناعة وترويج الاستثمار
Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion

Tender 19-20/ 2022 Announcement for

The Internal Tenders Committee at Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion announces the following tender:

Tender No	Tender Title	Company rate	Tender document price in OMR (Non- refundable)	Tender Document collection Deadline	Offers Submission Deadline
19/2022	Rental car four by four for Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion	Specialized	25/___ OMR	Sunday 22/5/2022	Tuesday 31/5/2022 Before 10:00 am
20/2022	Proper new addatinal car parkings for Ministry of Commerce , Industry and Investment Promotion	Specialized	25/___ OMR	Tuesday 24/5/2022	Wednesday 8/6/2022 Before 10:00 am

Terms and conditions documents can be obtained through the ESNAD service via <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> in which they will be available until the date mentioned in the table above, provided that the document's price is paid through the website's payment gateway.

All companies shall submit their offers with a temporary insurance in the form of Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank in the Sultanate of Oman values not less than (1%) of the offer, Addressed to H.E Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee at Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and valid for (90) days from the date of offer submission. Any offer that does not meet the required temporary insurance shall not be considered. A copy of the Bank Guarantee or Certified Check must be attached with the offer submitted by the company on the website (ESNAD service) and the original Bank Guarantee or Certified Check must be kept until it is requested by MOCIIP. Offers shall be submitted through the **ESNAD service on the above-mentioned website** before 10 o'clock on the morning of the day mentioned for offers submission. Offers submitted after this date will not be considered, regardless of the reasons of the delay.

The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other submitted offer.

Note: Priority shall be given to companies and institutions whose bid has the highest Omanisation Rate .

Correspondences:

- Tender inquiries: All correspondence pertaining to TENDER Inquiries shall be online through E-Tendering System (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System inquiries : All correspondences pertaining to the technical support of E-Tendering System shall be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number .
 - Tel. : +968 24402200
 - E-mail : etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

www.tejarah.gov.om | [Tejarah_om](https://twitter.com/Tejarah_om) | 80 00 00 70

MOH TRAINS VOLUNTEERS ON AEDES AEGYPTI CONTROL



The Directorate General of Health Services of Muscat, Ministry of Health (MoH), carried out a hands-on training for volunteers in *Aedes Aegypti* - a mosquito that spreads dengue fever - control on Tuesday. An extensive campaign will be launched soon in the governorate. The two-day training is being conducted at the Wali's offices in Seeb and Bausher, attended by the central team of the Directorate General in Muscat

EA cracks whip on illegal charcoal production in South Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority (EA), in cooperation with Royal Oman Police, has nabbed expatriates who were found burning wild trees for the purpose of producing charcoal in South Batinah.

In a statement, EA said, "The Department of Environment in South Batinah Governorate, in cooperation with

ROP, has arrested expat workers who were burning large wild trees at a farm to produce charcoal to be sold in the local market."

The crackdown was part of efforts exerted by the Department of Environment to curb cutting down and burning of wild trees for charcoal production. "This is prohibited by the law due to its affect on ecological balance and for leading to desertification," EA stated.

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	37	25
Doha	38	28
Kuwait City	39	27
Manama	33	26
Muscat	39	28
Riyadh	40	24

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.00am
Sunrise	5.24am
Duhr	12.08pm
Asr	3.31pm
Maghrib	6.48pm
Isha	8.07pm

MARKET WATCH

MSX30

4,163.26

Sensex

54,318.47

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs

201.63

Pakistani Rs

510.84

Bangladesh taka

227.49

Philippines peso

136.23

Sri Lankan Rs

948.36

*Rates as on MAY 18

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Qatar emir visits Spain as EU eyes gas alternatives

Qatar's emir began a state visit to Spain on Tuesday as Europe seeks to diversify its natural gas supply sources to reduce its energy dependence on Russia.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani was welcomed by King Felipe VI at Madrid's royal palace at the start of his two-day visit. The emir, who is accompanied by Qatar's foreign and energy ministers, is scheduled to hold talks with Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Wednesday. Spain and Qatar are expected to sign a dozen economic and commercial contracts during his visit, mainly regarding energy, according to a Spanish government source.

Islamic banking assets hit R06bn mark

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Islamic banking is continuing to grow rapidly in Oman driven by growing awareness about Shari'a-compliant products, strong retail demand and supportive regulations.

Total assets of the sultanate's Islamic banks and windows grew by 10.7 per cent year-on-year to hit R06bn mark in the first quarter of 2022, according to the Central Bank of Oman's data released on Sunday.

In terms of market share, Oman's Islamic banking assets now make up 15.4 per cent of total banking sector assets as of the end of March 2022, the central bank data showed.

Islamic banking assets in Oman recorded a strong 30 per cent average annual growth between 2013 and 2021, compared with around 5 per cent average annual growth for conventional banking assets, according to Moody's.

'Islamic banking continues to grow rapidly in Oman. Growth in Islamic banking assets accelerated in 2021, fuelled by eco-



nomie growth and higher oil prices. Islamic banking assets grew by 14 per cent in 2021 versus 6 per cent in 2020, well above conventional banking assets growth rates (7 per cent in 2021 and 1 per cent in 2020),' Moody's said in a report.

The slowdown in 2020 growth was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with a sharp decline in oil prices that year.

'Growth in the Islamic segment is now being driven, not only by capital injections from shareholders as was originally

the case, but also by inflows of customer deposits,' Moody's said.

The CBO data showed that Oman's Islamic banking entities provided financing worth R04.9bn as of the end of March 2022, recording a growth of 9.6 per cent over that a year ago.

Total deposits held with Islamic banks and windows increased by 11.7 per cent to R04.5bn at the end of March this year compared to a year ago.

Islamic banking segment in Oman consists of two fully-

fledged Islamic banks - Bank Nizwa and Alizz Islamic Bank - and five Islamic banking windows at conventional banks, all established during 2012 and 2013.

'Conventional banks leverage their existing franchise, expertise and infrastructure to run their Islamic windows, and this is driving the rapid growth of the Islamic banking sector,' Moody's noted.

'Regulation in the country is supportive. A pipeline of new Islamic finance regulations will likely broaden the market in the

coming years,' the ratings agency added.

Moody's further said that the consolidation has started in Oman's Islamic banking sector and this could potentially boost the profitability of the segment by creating synergies, affording the combined entities greater pricing power and better deposit-gathering capability.

In its sector comment, Fitch Ratings recently had said that the Islamic banking in Oman is likely to sustain its positive trajectory in the short-to-medium term despite a number of struc-

tural challenges.

Echoing views similar to Moody's, Fitch Ratings said, 'Growth will be driven by growing awareness, strong retail demand for Islamic products, supportive regulations, and a strong push from the Islamic windows of conventional banks. An improving operating environment, expected positive real GDP growth, higher oil prices, the easing of coronavirus restrictions, and the rise in interest or profit rates will also support growth in both Islamic and conventional banking.'

GCC banks' strong capitalisation supports resilience to cyber risks

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Banks in the GCC countries are managing their exposure to cyber risk effectively, including through investment in digital security, S&P Global Ratings said in a report on Tuesday.

GCC banks, the report noted, have reported only a handful of minor cyberattacks over the past decade. Yet management of cyber risk has taken on greater importance as the region's banks moved activities to online platforms during the pandemic.

That shift has been conducted with minimal disruption, thanks to years of investment in infrastructure and systems. At the same time the GCC banks' strong profitability, capitalisation, and liquidity provide a financial buffer against potential incidents, said S&P.

S&P said its view of manageable cyber risk for GCC banks is supported by data from cyber security specialist Guidewire.

Guidewire estimates that the



region's top 19 banks (for which data was available) would suffer an average 7.5 per cent fall in net income and a 0.6 per cent decline in equity, based on figures from the end of 2021, under a high-severity cyber incident; at the same time, the banks' average operational risk capital charge was 3.6 per cent of total equity.

'We believe the (Guidewire) data suggests that GCC banks appear to have sufficient operational risk capital to cover losses

related to cyber risk,' S&P said.

Cyber risk is a mounting threat to the operations and credit profiles of financial institutions, and never more so than since the pandemic accelerated the shift to online banking.

There have been no major interruptions to the operations of banks in GCC countries, however.

S&P believes GCC banks' exposure to cyber risk is manageable, assuming they continue to invest in cyber security and

proactively manage risk, taking into consideration the evolving nature of threats.

'We note that GCC banks have reported only a handful of digital breaches and cyberattacks over the past decade. While some might have gone unreported, it is likely these were minor incidents given the absence of significant losses in financial reports and the banks' relatively low operational risk capital charges,' the ratings agency added.

Guidewire's findings suggest that the cyber risk profile of GCC banks is comparable to developed markets, rather than emerging market banks.

'It is notable that emerging markets are significantly more prone than the GCC to indirect business interruption issues, which stem from problems at third-party service providers. That could be explained by GCC countries' significant investment in infrastructure, which appears to have reduced indirect business interruption risks,' S&P said.

Asyad supports 5 e-commerce firms through incubator programme

Muscat - Asyad Group - Oman's global integrated logistics service provider - on Tuesday signed agreements with five SMEs forming the second batch joining Tomooh Incubator Program, which aims at building a vibrant e-commerce community supported by a thriving logistics sector.

Managed by Asyad Express, Tomooh Incubator Program has been designed to be a powerful platform for e-commerce entrepreneurs, SMEs and startups, enabling them to access Asyad's integrated logistics solutions. The incubator has become a vital component sitting at the heart of Asyad Group's sustainability agenda and sector development plans.

Tomooh will support the five SMEs to improve their service quality, unlock business networking prospects and widen their regional customer base, Asyad Group said in a press release.

The five signatory companies, managed by Omani entrepreneurs, stand to gain much from



these strategic agreements, being the second batch of SMEs in this niche incubator programme.

These companies are the online market platform businesses, Onur Fashion, HiCloset, Zaad Oman, Techno Store, and Fatma & Amal Services.

Tomooh is expected to help these startups develop their trading capabilities and become part of Oman's growing e-commerce business community to transform the sultanate into a destination of choice for major e-commerce companies in the region.

In addition to large office spaces and enhanced packages for admin services, the five companies will tap into the multiple

benefits that the Tomooh Incubator Program has to offer. These include special rates provided by Asyad Express' marketing and cloud service provider partners and discounts over normal delivery rates.

Oman Post & Asyad Express CEO, Nasser al Sharji said, "Since the day we launched Tomooh as a niche incubator programme, we have pursued our goal to create the right infrastructure and opportunities for SMEs and startups, allowing them to maximise their quality of service and ramp up their revenues to grow and expand their customer base. We also focused on developing their competitiveness in e-commerce through last-mile solutions."

India's LIC slumps in market debut after record IPO

Mumbai, India - Indian state-owned insurance giant LIC slumped on its market debut Tuesday following the country's biggest-ever initial public offering (IPO), closing nearly eight per cent below the IPO price.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government raised US\$2.7bn by selling 3.5 per cent of Life Insurance Corporation of India as his administration seeks to sell off state assets to bolster tattered public finances.

But it was forced to cut back the offer from a planned five per cent after markets turned volatile following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's COVID-19 lockdowns.

The offer price of 949 rupees (US\$12.22) had valued LIC at US\$77bn, but the stock traded under pressure all day, closing 7.75 per cent lower at 875.45 rupees a share.

The muted debut could test market appetite as Modi seeks to privatise more shares in nation-

alised companies to plug an estimated 16.6tn rupee (US\$214bn) fiscal deficit.

Market analyst Arun Kejriwal said the slump on LIC's first day of trading was a "learning" experience, adding that the government will have to do more to convince investors if it wants to sell more of its stake.

But the IPO saw enthusiastic participation from small investors - including many first-timers - and was oversubscribed nearly three times.

"I knew it won't be a great listing but it doesn't matter to me," said 30-year-old Ayush, a recent market entrant, who was unbowed by the decrease in share price.

Global equities have been tumultuous for most of 2022. Foreign investors have withdrawn a net US\$22bn from Indian markets so far this year, stock exchange data showed, as US monetary policy tightening further roiled sentiment.



LIC chairman Mangalam Ramasubramanian Kumar (centre) poses with the bronze statue of a bull at the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in Mumbai on Tuesday (AFP)

Synonymous with life insurance

India was heavily regulated for decades after independence, and

the state still retains an outsized role in the economy.

Hundreds of companies are owned by national or lower-level

governments, operating in fields ranging from mining and resources to electricity and construction.

'Enormous' potential

In a country where only three per cent of the 1.4bn population has life insurance, analyst Kejriwal said LIC's potential remains "enormous".

"It has actually bounced back in the last two-three years. And COVID has seen a turnaround in the fortunes of LIC," he told AFP, pointing to its digitisation efforts.

Going public will also force more transparency on the insurance behemoth.

"The IPO is going to galvanise LIC into being much more effective than it was," Kejriwal added.

LIC is also India's largest asset manager, with 39.55tn rupees under management as of September 30, including significant stakes in Indian blue chips such as Reliance and Infosys.

LIC's real estate assets include vast offices at prime urban Indian locations, including a 15-storey office in Chennai that was once the country's tallest building.

AFP

Elcon Musk says no Twitter deal without clarity on spam accounts

New York, US – Billionaire Elon Musk said Tuesday that his purchase of Twitter would not go ahead unless he was given assurances on the bots that he says plague the platform, further complicating his acrimonious bid for the social media giant.

The chief of SpaceX as well as Tesla, Musk is currently listed by Forbes as the world's wealthiest person, with a fortune of about US\$230bn, much of it in Tesla stock.

Musk surprised many investors in April with news that he wanted to purchase Twitter. But his US\$44bn bid for Twitter is now "temporarily on hold," pending questions over the social media company's estimates of the number of fake accounts, or "bots."

"Yesterday, Twitter's CEO



publicly refused to show proof of <5%," tweeted Musk, who has almost 94mn followers on the social network.

"This deal cannot move forward until he does."

Twitter chief executive Parag Agrawal has said the platform suspends more than a half-million seemingly bogus accounts

daily, usually before they are even seen, and locks millions more weekly that fail checks to make sure they are controlled by humans and not by software.

Internal measures show that fewer than five per cent of accounts active on any given day at Twitter are spam, but that analysis can't be replicated ex-

ternally due to the need to keep user data private, Agrawal contended.

need to prove Twitter users are real people.

"This is fundamental to the fi-

Musk has described his motivation as stemming from a desire to ensure freedom of speech on the platform and to boost monetisation of a website that is massively influential but has struggled to attain profitable growth

Musk, who has said bots plague Twitter and that he would make getting rid of them a priority if he owned the platform, responded to that tweet by Agrawal with a poo emoji.

"So how do advertisers know what they're getting for their money?" Musk tweeted in a subsequent response about the

nancial health of Twitter."

The process used to estimate how many accounts are bots has been shared with Musk, Agrawal insisted.

"It appears the spam/bot issue is cascading and clearly making the Twitter deal a confusing one," Wedbush analyst Dan Ives said in a note to in-

vestors.

"The bot issue at the end of the day was known by the New York City cab driver and feels more to us like the 'dog ate the homework' excuse to bail on the Twitter deal or talk down a lower price."

Musk has described his motivation as stemming from a desire to ensure freedom of speech on the platform and to boost monetization of a website that is massively influential but has struggled to attain profitable growth.

He has also said he favored lifting the ban on Donald Trump, who was kicked off the platform in January 2021 shortly after the former US president's efforts to overturn his election defeat led to the January 6 assault on the US Capitol.

AFP

Vodafone calls up surging annual profit

London, UK – British telecoms giant Vodafone on Tuesday logged surging annual net profit on rising sales and sliding tax, one day after revealing that an Emirati firm has become its biggest investor.

Profit after tax jumped to almost 2.1bn euros (US\$2.2bn) in the financial year to March, Vodafone said in a results statement.

That compared with a profit of 112mn euros in its previous annual report, when its performance was severely disrupted by fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Revenues swelled four percent to 45.6bn euros this time around on strong growth in Africa and Europe.

"We delivered a good financial performance in the year with growth in revenues, profits and cash flows," said chief executive Nick Read.

AFP

Biden announces new plan to ease housing shortage, lower costs

Washington, US – Faced with a shortage of homes that has driven up prices and rents, US President Joe Biden's White House on Monday unveiled a plan to improve housing supply and affordability.

Consumer prices are rising at their fastest pace since the early 1980s – nearly a third of which is due to housing costs – and Biden has said tackling US inflation is his key priority.

The new plan aims to provide access to credit for homebuilders and buyers, especially low-income families, and assistance to renters, while easing supply constraints for building materials and construction workers.

It also will take steps to discourage the recent trend of investors snapping up many of the available homes, while encouraging state and local authorities to ease zoning restrictions to allow more density, especially multifamily buildings.

"This is the most comprehensive all of government effort to close the housing supply shortfall in history," the White House said



US President Joe Biden

in a statement, noting that fewer new homes were built in the decade following the 2008 recession than in any decade since the 1960s.

The problem has been exacerbated since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic as record low mortgage rates and massive government stimulus created a surge in home-buying, while supplies of lumber and other materials were disrupted by the pandemic.

The Case-Schiller Home Price

Index showed home prices surged nearly 20 per cent in the 12 months ended in February.

And the rapid recovery also created a shortage of workers at all levels.

"Rising housing costs have burdened families of all incomes, with a particular impact on low- and moderate-income families, and people and communities of color," the White House said.

The Housing Supply Action Plan aims to "help close America's housing supply shortfall in five years."

The announcement won praise from the private sector.

"We agree with the White House that the key to resolving our nation's housing affordability challenges is to build more homes," said Jerry Konter, chairman of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)

He praised the efforts on "the long-term headwinds, like supply chain bottlenecks and chronic construction labour shortages" that are holding back housing production.

AFP

US urges India to reverse ban on wheat exports

New York, US – The United States hopes India will reverse its ban on wheat exports, Washington's top diplomat to the United Nations said Monday, warning the move would worsen global shortages of the commodity.

"We're encouraging countries not to restrict exports because we think any restrictions on exports will exacerbate the food shortages," Linda Thomas-Greenfield said during a ministerial gathering on food security ahead of a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The UN meeting – to be chaired by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken – will include Vellamvelly Muraleedharan, India's minister of state for external affairs.

India holds a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

"We hope that (India) can, as they hear the concerns being raised by other countries, that they would reconsider that position," Thomas-Greenfield said.

India, the world's second-largest producer of wheat, on Saturday announced it would ban exports without special authorisation from the government in the face of falling production caused primarily by an extreme heatwave.

New Delhi – which had previ-



ously pledged to supply wheat to countries once dependent on exports from Ukraine – said it wanted to ensure "food security" for India's 1.4bn people.

Blinken is on Wednesday set to hold another UN meeting also related to food security.

That session aims to "bring countries together to look at what countries might be able to help fill the gap" in wheat supplies caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine – two major exporters of the commodity, said Thomas-Greenfield. The talks would also identify "countries who need the support from countries who can fill the gap," she added.

The United States could be included in these countries, she

said, adding that discussions were already underway with American farmers on the topic.

Wheat prices hit a record high in the European market Monday in the wake of India's decision.

Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of wheat were stranded at a major port in India on Tuesday after New Delhi's surprise ban on exports over inflation and food security worries.

India, the world's second-largest grower of wheat, last week ordered that traders could not enter into new export deals without government approval.

The snap announcement has led to chaos at the port in Kandla, in Gujarat, where about 4,000 trucks are stuck in queues out-

side, according to the port operator.

Four ships partially loaded with about 80,000 tonnes of wheat are also docked at the facility.

Port officials said trucks that arrived before May 13, when the government announced the export ban, would be allowed to unload the grain onto ships waiting to take it to countries including Egypt and South Korea under prior agreements.

"However, those wheat-laden trucks that arrived at the port after May 13 will have to return with the commodity," said Om Prakash Dadlani, spokesman for Operator Deendayal Port Trust.

AFP

UK unemployment dips but wages decline

London, UK – Britain's unemployment rate has fallen further to a near five-decade low, official data showed Tuesday, but the value of wages continues to erode as inflation soars.

The unemployment rate eased to 3.7 per cent in the three months to the end of March, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That was the lowest level in more than 47 years and compared with a rate of 3.8 per cent in the quarter to the end of February.

The ONS added that wages continued to sink in real terms as Britain, like other countries, faces runaway inflation.

"There continued to be a mixed picture for the labour market," said Darren Morgan, ONS director of economic statistics.

Total employment remained below its pre-pandemic level, with job vacancies at a record-high of almost 1.3mn at the end of April.

"Indeed, with the latest fall in unemployment to its lowest rate



A file photo shows pedestrians on their way to work cross the London Bridge in central London (AFP)

since 1974, there were actually fewer unemployed people than job vacancies for the first time since records began," Morgan said.

While companies struggle to

fill posts after the pandemic caused people to change careers, Morgan noted that since the outbreak of COVID, about half a million more people in the UK "have completely disen-

gaged from the labour market".

For those in work, regular earnings excluding bonuses were "falling sharply in real terms", he added.

AFP



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH
Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects

Tender No.	Project Category	Location	Fees R.O	Grade In Tender Board Registration
Re-tender 5/2022	Services	Book Printing Bayyan Almoshkel	25/- OMR	Excellent & First Grade

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 23/05/2022.

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 09:00am 30/05/2022

A Tender Bond equivalent to 1% of the tender sum issued from a registered bank, in the prescribed form, in Sultanate of Oman and valid for 90 days should enclosed with the tender.

Any tender without the bond will be reject and the tender committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender received.

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Attractive offer on Renault Megane to end on May 19

As part of its exclusive promotion, Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, has announced an attractive offer on Renault Megane, the vibrant and elegant saloon. The Renault Ramadan promotion will go on till May 19.

Blending striking good looks and stunning performance, Renault Megane, the chic saloon, has been impressing auto aficionados.

Admired for its driving performance, Renault Megane is known for its driving comfort, technology and safety features, a press release said.

As part of the Renault Oman special scheme, customers who buy Renault Megane can enjoy free registration, free insurance (on selected model), three years/100,000km manufacture warranty, free periodic vehicle service package, AAA/road assistance card and reference programme among others. Social media users who participate in the Ramadan promotional campaign will also be eligible for attractive prizes.

The unique Ramadan offer boasts of a host of advantages for customers purchasing Re-



nault Megane. All customers purchasing Renault Megane from Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC will be eligible to participate in the Ramadan campaign scheme.

Vehicles purchased with commercial registration will not be eligible for the scheme. Vehi-

cles bought for taxi, driving school, ministries, fleet, and rent-a-car usage will not be eligible for this scheme.

A spokesperson for Renault Oman said, "The charismatic Renault Megane is a real head-turner.

With its sedan body, dynamic

lines and generous proportions, it has a style of its own, which is both lively and elegant. Renault Megane, which is available in 2ltr engine configuration along with 1.6ltr variant, is a popular car and much-loved car in Oman.

This is a perfect time to own this car."

All customers purchasing Renault Megane PH2 during this scheme period will be eligible for free first year vehicle registration and free first year vehicle insurance (Oman & UAE only), besides a Free Periodic Maintenance Service Package for 5 Years/100,000km.

Ahlibank signals robust growth in Q1 of 2022

Ahlibank exhibited robust performance in the first quarter of 2022. The achievement comes as a result of its endeavor of being customer centric through strategic branch network expansion and product diversification plans and implementation.

Ahlibank's total assets recorded a 12.2% growth, reaching RO3,166.6mn as of the end of March 2022. Customer deposits increased by 11.9%, reaching RO2,180.1mn, compared with the same period in 2021. Loans, advances and financing grew by 7.1%, reaching RO2,435.9mn. The Bank's operating income rose by 13.7%, achieving RO22.3mn on as of the end of March 2022, and its operating expenses increased by 19.6%. Profits during the period, grew by 18.4% to reach RO7.52mn, a press release said.

Highlighting the performance and the bank's roadmap for the coming months, Said Abdullah al Hatmi, CEO of Ahlibank, said, "The first three months of 2022 have been significant for ahlibank growth in terms of assets and deposits, as it continues its prudent growth strategy focusing on high quality assets and well managed liquidity. We have experi-



Abdullah al Hatmi

enced a considerable increase in consumer engagements and usage of services offered on our online platforms since launching our digital channels and platforms, owing to favourable developments triggered by the steady global economic recovery and the essential shift and adoption of digitalisation. Our investment in digital technologies has helped deepen our market differentiation and has built and reinforced customer relationships across our business."

Ahlibank's persistent efforts to speed up the pace of banking transactions for corporate customers saw the enhancement of its e-channels, ahliNET which includes ahliB2B for business-to-business platform, and ahliRDC service for remote deposit capture.

NBO's insurance plans ensure peace of mind for customers

Ensuring peace of mind for now and the future, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) range of insurance plans ensure that its customers, their families, and their most valuable belongings, are protected no matter the circumstance.

Easy to set up and with no need for any medical tests or extensive questionnaires, customers can have their family, assets, and health completely covered in a few steps, along with convenient payment options and unique benefits. Designed to help its customers enjoy the life they've dreamed of, NBO's insurance plans provide them with the security to focus on what matters, a press release said.

Tariq Atiq, general manager - Chief Retail and Digital Banking officer - said, "NBO has a proven track record for ensuring timely processing of claims and providing all the protection required for



everything our customers care about. Being covered for unseen events is essential. Insurance makes sure the continuation of customers lifestyle and his financial burden reduces, whether one is hit by one or multiple perils. With our hassle-free plans, we continue to find ways to provide smarter benefits that bring greater value to our customers."

NBO offers insurance plans through its partners, catering to

all ages, genders, individuals and businesses. The Takaful Elite Life Plan offers life cover upto RO250,000 without any medical examination and also provides free annual family multi-trip travel cover and gadget takaful. The Himayati plans for Life, Home, Motor and Health, offer comprehensive protection, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, starting at just RO5 per month.



Lulu customer wins Dodge Charger in Pringles promo

Lulu Hypermarket Oman revealed the lucky winner of a promotion recently organised by Pringles and Khimji Ramdas' Kellogg's division.

The promotion, which was held from January 20 to March 31, gave customers a chance to win a brand new Dodge Charger on purchase of any Pringles can from stores across Oman. Lulu customer Bader Salim Said al

Shamakhi was the lucky winner through a raffle draw held on April 15, a press release said.

To participate in the raffle draw, customers had to just buy a can of Pringles, scan the QR code and enter the details along with the receipt.

Shabeer K A, regional director - Lulu Hypermarkets, Oman, said, "We are extremely happy that shopping at Lulu proved

lucky for our customer to win this amazing prize. We participate in many promotions from several top brands for all seasons and occasions, in addition to our own promotions which are exceptional and ultimately focused on customer happiness and satisfaction when shopping with us. We appreciate the co-operation and long term association with Khimji Ramdas' Kellogg's

division.

A representative of KR Kellogg's Division, stated "We thank Lulu for their continuous support and making this event a great success.

We are happy to acknowledge the huge response received from customers all over Oman. We are sure this promotion was a special one for all Pringles lovers across Oman."

Qatar Airways sponsor Sabco Sports' Kooora Wabas project

Qatar Airways were confirmed as the title sponsor for Sabco Sports' new Kooora Wabas project. It includes a series of football-related community activations that will take place across the major cities in Oman throughout 2022.

The project will officially launch on May 18, with the first event taking place in June and the full calendar for the year will be released on the Kooora Wabas (KWB) social media platforms, a press release said.

Qatar Airways group chief executive, Akbar al Baker, said, "The Kooora Wabas Project will act as a large-scale tool that will use the influence of the beautiful game to inspire the Omani youth and unite people of all backgrounds. The Sultanate of Oman is a stunning country with a rich culture and a destination always

popular with our passengers. It is an honour for us to play a role in strengthening the core values we share."

Baker added, "This is an initiative that we at Qatar Airways can identify with, making this partnership a natural fit. Over the year, we trust that the programme will offer the local community a variety of options such as football camps, team building clinics and educational support to engage with this great sport. We look forward to promoting football and all its benefits across Oman."

Sayyid Khalid al Busaidi, chairman at Sabco Sports, said, "We have worked with Qatar Airways for a number of years now, their team are experts in the delivery of football projects, so we believe that they are the perfect partner for the Kooora Wabas project."



SBA's offer on Nissan cars continue till May 19

Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA's) special Ramadan offer which has received a great response from customers will continue till May 19. The exclusive Ramadan promotion announced to mark the Holy Month of Ramadan includes a wide range of benefits for Nissan patrons.

As part of the special scheme, SBA is offering free periodic vehicle service package, free insurance, assured gift voucher, free registration and many more. Vehicles purchased with commercial registration will not be eligible for the scheme. Vehicles

bought for taxi, driving school, ministries, fleet and rent-a-car usage will not be eligible for this scheme.

A senior official of SBA said, "We are delighted with response we have received from customers in Oman. We would like to highlight that this is the best time to buy Nissan cars. Every Ramadan we try to offer the best possible value proposition for the benefit of our esteemed customers. We always make genuine efforts to offer world-class facilities and services to its valued customers."

Customers can avail starting

EMI rate as part of the offer. Starting EMI for Nissan Sunny 1.5L is OMR 59, Nissan Sunny 1.6L is RO69, Nissan Kicks is RO77, Nissan X-Trail is RO118, Nissan Altima is RO120, Nissan Maxima is RO166, Nissan X-Terra is RO133, Nissan Pathfinder is RO171, Nissan Patrol Y61 Super Safari is RO207, Nissan Patrol Y62 is RO230, Nissan Navara is RO103 and Nissan Urvan is RO102. These starting EMIs are calculated on the price of the base model with 20% down payment, 2.75 % rate of interest for 10 years loan tenure through Bank Muscat.

ROHM announces Melhem Zein concert

The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has announced an upcoming concert with the famous Arab singer Melhem Zein, known throughout the Arabic speaking world for a voice which resounds with an epic 'mountainous' quality, earning him popular attention from around the world.

"Enjoy a concert dedicated to Zein's repertoire, paying homage to the greatness of Arabic music heritage. During his 24-year career, Melhem Zein has explored the music of the artists Wadih El Safi, Mohammed Abdel Wahab and Nazem al Ghazali among others. Blending their style and inspired by a golden era of music, Zein has developed a unique sound and a huge and loyal fan base," a press release said.

The performance is scheduled to take place on May 19



Melhem Zein

or 20 at 7.30pm. All visits to the opera house are conducted under the guidelines of the Supreme Committee responsible for measures to tackle the development of COVID-19. Social distancing is maintained throughout the building and the wearing of facemasks is mandatory.

Hezbollah loses ground in Lebanon polls

No bloc will control the 128-seat assembly, which could usher in a tense period of political jostling

Beirut, Lebanon - Shiite group Hezbollah and its allies lost their majority in Lebanon's parliament, official results showed on Tuesday, while independents achieved a surprise breakthrough.

Full results announced by the interior ministry two days after the election revealed that no bloc will control the 128-seat assembly, a deadlock observers fear could usher in a tense period of political jostling.

The polls, the first since Lebanon was ravaged by its worst ever economic crisis and a cataclysmic explosion at Beirut port in 2020, were seen as a prerequisite for a crucial IMF bailout.

The Iranian-backed Hezbollah and its main allies had the support of around 70 lawmakers in the outgoing parliament but will now fall just short of the 65 seats needed to retain a majority.

Their strongest opponents in parliament will be led by the Christian Lebanese Forces party of former warlord Samir Geagea, that raked in several new seats on the back of a virulent anti-Hezbollah campaign.

New reformist faces who entered the legislative race on the values of a 2019 anti-establishment uprising made a stronger showing that many had pre-



Views of the 'Revolution fist' installation, a symbol of Lebanon's October 2019 uprising, at the Martyrs' Square in the capital Beirut, before and after it was burnt down on Tuesday (AFP)

Hezbollah and the Iranian axis took a blow, but will this pave way for change in Lebanon? I have doubts

SAMI NADER

dicted. At least 13 independents who backed the 2019 protest movement won seats. Twelve of them will sit in parliament for the first time.

Together with independents

and other non-aligned MPs who have sometimes supported the now-defunct protest movement's demands, they could find themselves in a kingmaking position.

Breakthrough

Analyst Ziad Majed said that the economic context could play in favour of reformists who will for the first time be pushing from within parliament, not just as outsiders.

"This will create political and popular pressure for reformists and forces of change to cooperate," he said.

One of the most notable victories notched up by independents was the election in southern Lebanon of Elias Jradeh and Firas Hamdan for seats that Hezbollah and its allies had not lost in three decades.

Another major satisfaction for those described in Lebanon as the 'thawra' (revolution, in Arabic) candidates, was the defeat of several reviled MPs loyal to the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad.

In what was interpreted by independents as a gesture of spite by Hezbollah, a group of youths on scooters descended on Mar-

tyrs Square overnight and

burned down the 'revolution fist'.

The temporary monument had become a visual symbol of the secular protests that swept Lebanon in October 2019 and had raised hopes of democratic change.

The movement lost momentum as Lebanon's ruling cartel of sectarian political barons bided their time and one of the sharpest economic downturns of our time muffled the popular discontent.

The parliamentary elections were a first major test for those in the protest camp who chose to

enter the political fray.

Hezbollah and its ally Amal retained all 27 parliament seats reserved for Shiite lawmakers but other allies lost ground.

The Free Patriotic Movement of Lebanese President Michel Aoun, which has had an alliance with the Shiite bloc since 2006, lost a few seats.

Crisis ahead?

The main issue that polarises parliament is Hezbollah's right to keep an arsenal that is often described as equivalent to or better than the state's.

Some see it as a historical

right and the best defence for the small Mediterranean country while others consider Hezbollah's weapons to be the root of all of Lebanon's ills.

Sami Nader, an analyst with the Levant Institute for Strategic Affairs, said that Hezbollah had suffered symbolic losses but was sceptical the polls could yield radical changes.

"Hezbollah and the Iranian axis took a blow but will this pave way for change in Lebanon? I have doubts," he told AFP.

The formation of a government, the election of parliament's speaker and the presidential election could all be very contentious and lead to protracted political crises.

Speaker Nabih Berri has held his job since 1992.

President Michel Aoun, the world's third oldest head of state, had long planned for his son-in-law Gebran Bassil to take over but the Lebanese Forces' surge in the polls could disrupt that scenario. Lebanon shares power among its religious communities, and politics is often treated as a family business. By convention, the president is a Maronite Christian, the premier a Sunni Muslim, and the parliamentary speaker a Shiite.

AFP



Palestinian mourners carry the body of Walid al-Sharif at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound, on Tuesday (AFP)

Dozens hurt in police clash at funeral in Jerusalem

Jerusalem - More than 70 Palestinians were wounded in overnight clashes with Israeli forces at a Jerusalem funeral, Palestinian medics said on Tuesday, in unrest that police said included 'violent riots' which threatened officers' lives.

The unrest unfolded as Palestinians were burying Walid al-Sharif, 23, who died on Saturday of wounds suffered during clashes last month at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said the injuries occurred 'during clashes with occupation forces', with Israeli police firing rubber bullets and stun grenades, in and around Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem's Old City.

Sharif's body was carried by mourners across the Al-Aqsa compound and brought through the Old City's Herod Gate, before burial at a nearby cemetery.

Police said 'violent disturbances occurred both during and after the funeral, including in the cemetery itself'. Six officers were injured.

Israeli 'forces acted resolutely against hundreds of lawbreakers and violent rioters who... took violent actions against the forces endanger-

ing their lives', a police statement said. Palestinians were 'hurling stones, bottles, bricks and other heavy objects, as well as firing fireworks at the forces', it added.

The Palestinian Prisoner's Club advocacy group said more than 50 people were arrested. Police put the arrest figure at 15.

The clashes erupted days after a police raid on the funeral procession of veteran Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot dead during an Israeli army raid in the West Bank.

Palestinians and the TV network said Israeli troops killed her, while Israel said Palestinian gunfire may have been to blame.

Anger over her death was compounded on Friday when baton-wielding Israeli police in annexed east Jerusalem beat pallbearers carrying Abu Akleh's coffin which was covered by a Palestinian flag.

Israeli police have said they will investigate the raid carried out by officers on the funeral procession as Abu Akleh's body emerged from St. Joseph's, a Catholic hospital in east Jerusalem.

The chaotic incident has been strongly condemned around the world.

AFP

Conjoined twin from Yemen dies after operation

Riyadh, KSA - One of two conjoined twins from war-torn Yemen has died after a 'complicated' 15-hour operation to separate them, Saudi state media reported on Monday.

The 19-month-old baby boys, Yussef and Yassin, were 'conjoined in several organs', and some 24 doctors were involved in the operation, the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said.

On Monday morning the SPA hailed the procedure as a success, but a follow-up report on Monday night revealed one of the twins had died 'as a result of a severe drop in blood circulation and heart failure, despite the full medical care provided for him'.

Doctors 'faced great difficulties and challenges during the



The Yemeni mother of conjoined twins checking on them following their separation in the capital Riyadh on Sunday (AFP)

separation process, which made the deceased's condition critical after the operation', the report said, adding that the surviving twin was in a stable condition.

It did not specify which twin lived and which died.

Yemen has been wracked by a brutal seven-year conflict pitting the Saudi-backed government against Iran-backed Houthi rebels, whose seizure of the capital Sanaa in 2014 prompted a Saudi-led military

coalition to intervene.

More than 150,000 people have died in the violence and the country's health system has been devastated, in what the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Saudi Arabia's state-run King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) regularly touts its humanitarian assistance to Yemen as evidence of Riyadh's commitment to alleviating the suffering there.

The centre's doctors carried out the 'four-phase surgery' separating Yussef and Yassin, describing it as 'among the most complicated' they had performed, the SPA said on Monday. Last July Saudi doctors separated a Yemeni baby from

her parasitic twin, saying at the time it was their 50th successful operation on conjoined twins.

In December a separate set of Yemeni twins were separated by doctors in Jordan's capital Amman before being flown back to Sanaa, according to the UN children's agency.

Last week Saudi King Salman ordered that yet another set of Yemeni conjoined twins, girls named Mawaddah and Rahmah, be transferred to Riyadh 'to conduct medical examinations and check on the possibility' of separation, the SPA reported.

The king 'attaches big importance to the Saudi programme for the Siamese twins', the SPA report said.

AFP

Libya capital rocked as rival PM vies for power

Tripoli, Libya - Libya's capital was rocked early Tuesday by gunfights between backers of two rival administrations, threatening another escalation in the war-torn North African country.

Supporters of a government endorsed by Libya's parliament and by an eastern-based military strongman had tried to move into the western city of Tripoli by force.

That sparked pre-dawn clashes with armed groups supporting interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah.

Hours later they pulled out, citing the 'security and safety of citizens', as the United Nations, European Union and United States appealed for calm.

There were no immediate reports of casualties from the fighting, but AFP correspondents saw burned-out cars and military convoys on a major thoroughfare later on Tuesday morning.

Dbeibah was appointed under a troubled UN-led peace process early last year to lead a transition to elections set for December, but the vote was indefinitely postponed.

In February this year, the eastern-based parliament appointed rival premier and former interior ministry Fathi Bashagha to take his place, arguing that Dbeibah's



A view of vehicles destroyed during fighting between forces loyal to the Tripoli-based PM Abdulhamid Dbeibah and rival forces of the Tobruk-based government, in Libya's capital Tripoli on Tuesday (AFP)

mandate had ended.

Dbeibah has refused to hand over power except to an elected administration.

Both men are from the western city of Misrata and are backed by different armed groups in the capital.

Bashagha's press service had announced overnight 'the arrival of the prime minister of the Libyan government, Mr Fathi Bashagha, accompanied by several ministers, in the capital Tripoli to begin his work there'.

But his arrival sparked a battle that raised fears of a return to the chaos that followed a 2011 revolt that toppled dictator Moamer

Kadhafi - and to the all-out conflict that gripped the capital when pro-Haftar forces attacked in 2019-20.

Several hours later, Bashagha's camp announced that he and his ministers had 'left Tripoli to preserve the security and safety of citizens'.

Dbeibah's defence ministry said it would respond 'with an iron fist' to anyone 'attacking security and the safety of citizens'.

Bashagha support 'tanked'

Local media later broadcast footage of Dbeibah meeting members of the public in the

streets of the capital.

The education ministry announced that schools would be closed for the time being.

Libya expert Emadeddin Badi said Bashagha's move had been 'a failed attempt at a fait accompli'. Badi said Bashagha had 'lost a large proportion of his constituency in his hometown of Misrata, tarnished his anti-crime brand and now tanked his popular support'.

"It'll be difficult to pick up the pieces after this," he tweeted.

The UN's top in-country official, Stephanie Williams, in a tweet urged all sides to maintain calm, including avoiding 'inflam-

matory rhetoric'.

Bashagha, in video footage broadcast by Libyan television stations, said he would deliver a 'unity speech to the Libyan people' on Tuesday evening.

His interior minister Issam Abu Zariba pledged that their administration would assume its duties 'peacefully' and 'in compliance with the law'.

He called on 'all security forces and concerned parties to cooperate' in ensuring a smooth transition. Pro-Bashagha armed groups had already deployed in March on the edges of the capital, raising fears that a fragile ceasefire in place since October 2020 would collapse.

The creation of two governments echoes Libya's troubled period of rival administrations between 2014 and 2021, when the nation was ripped apart by civil war.

The revolt that toppled Kadhafi plunged the vast but sparsely populated country into violence as armed groups vied for control and a string of interim governments came and went.

Many have been integrated into the state, partly to access a share in the country's vast oil wealth, and rights groups have accused all sides of abuses.

AFP

THE JOURNEY THAT CREATED HISTORY

When we started 85 years ago, little did we know that we were slowly and steadily contributing in creating the history of economic development in Oman. We look back with pride to see progress, growth, and prosperity for which we worked relentlessly to

1937



Sultan Said bin Taimur grants a 75-year concession to the Iraq Petroleum Company, which sets up a subsidiary – Petroleum Development (Oman and Dhofar) Ltd. – to carry out operations.

1951



Dhofar is relinquished from the concession; thereafter, the Company adopts the name Petroleum Development (Oman).

1956



First exploration well is drilled in Fahud, it is dry.

1980



The Company is registered by Royal Decree as a limited liability Company under the name Petroleum Development Oman and its ammonite logo is introduced.

1978



On behalf of the Government, the Company constructs a gas pipeline from the Yibal field to the coast, fuelling a power and desalination plant at Al Ghubrah.

1975 - 1976



Central Oman oilfields are brought on-stream, raising oil production to an average of 341,000 barrels per day.

1981



The Marmul field, which proved to be commercially viable upon reappraisal, is brought on-stream, realising the oil production potential of South Oman.

1984



An agreement is signed with the Government to carry out an exploration programme to find new natural gas reserves.

1987



Average daily oil production increases to 561,000 barrels.

2012



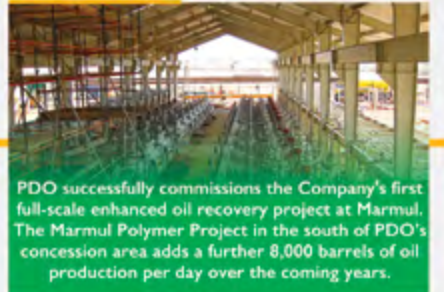
The Amal West steam plant is commissioned and scored a first in PDO history with its application of steam Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) on a commercial scale.

2011



The Qarn Alam project produced its first steam, with oil production going on-stream.

2010



PDO successfully commissions the Company's first full-scale enhanced oil recovery project at Marmul. The Marmul Polymer Project in the south of PDO's concession area adds a further 8,000 barrels of oil production per day over the coming years.

2013



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said makes a historic visit to PDO headquarters at Mina Al Fahal.

2014



The Harweel 2AB project became fully operational, injecting up to 1.7 million cubic metres of miscible gas a day to extract oil.

2015



PDO and GlassPoint Solar announce plans to build Miraah, one of the world's largest solar thermal plants.

#YearOfThe85th

@PDO_OM

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PDOChannel

PetroleumDevelopmentOman-PDO

PetroleumDevelopmentOman

achieve. As we look ahead, we see a future full of possibilities and opportunities. And so, we pledge to create a future that inspires, encourages, and excites.



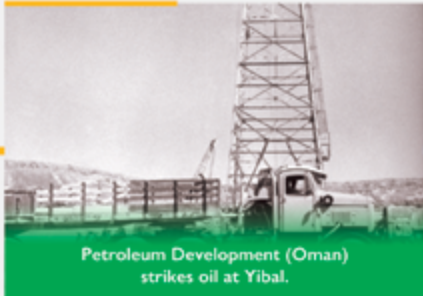
الذكرى الخامسة والثمانون
لتأسيس الشركة
85TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
COMPANY'S FOUNDATION

1957



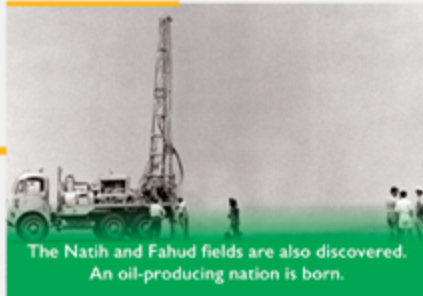
Dhofar-Cities Service, which acquired the Dhofar concession, discovers the Marmul oilfield.

1962



Petroleum Development (Oman) strikes oil at Yibal.

1963 - 1964



The Natih and Fahud fields are also discovered. An oil-producing nation is born.

1966



A power plant is constructed at Fahud, a pipeline to the coast is laid and an industrial complex at Saih Al Mahlah (later renamed as Mina al Fahal) is built.

1974



The Government acquires a 60% stake in the Company.

1972



Oil production reaches 281,778 barrels per day.

1969



Dhofar is regained as part of the Company's concession.

1967



The first export cargo of Omani oil – 543,800 barrels – is loaded onto a tanker.

1991



Major gas discoveries are made at Saih Rawl and Barik in central Oman.

1995



Oil production reaches 803,000 barrels per day.

1998



The Company launches its Local Community Contractor initiative to support the development of companies within the concession area, thereby promoting economic growth.

1999



The Central Processing Plant commissioned at Saih Rawl and the gas pipeline from Saih Rawl contribute to the Oman Liquefied Natural Gas plant at Qalhat.

2009



PDO officially inaugurates the Kauthar Gas Plant, which can process up to 20 million cubic metres of gas per day destined for the Omani market.

2004



New 40-year concession and shareholder agreements are signed.

2002



The Company embarks on a long-term strategy to grow oil production on the basis of enhanced oil recovery projects.

2000



PDO becomes the first exploration and production Company in the Middle East to achieve the ISO 14001 environmental management certification.

2019



Rabab-Harweel Integrated Project (RHIP) is commissioned.

2020



The start of commercial operations at PDO's landmark 100-megawatt Amin Photovoltaic Power Plant.

2021



The start-up of the Yibal Khuff Project (YKP), the most technically complex in PDO history.

2022



PDO celebrates the 85th anniversary of its foundation and the 55th anniversary of the first export of Omani oil.



شركة تنمية نفط عُمان
Petroleum Development Oman

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Shanghai says 'zero-COVID' achieved but millions of people still in lockdown

Shanghai, China - Shanghai on Tuesday declared it had achieved 'zero-COVID' across all its districts, sparking derision on social media as millions in China's biggest city remained under lockdown.

Confronted with its worst outbreak since the beginning of the pandemic, China - the last major economy still closed off to the world - put the city of 25mn under heavy restrictions in early April. The government's insistence on squashing the Omicron-variant-driven outbreak prompted rare protests and angry scuffles with authorities as Shanghai residents reject the prolonged confinement and food shortages.

"All 16 districts of Shanghai have already achieved zero-COVID at the community level," Shanghai health commission official Zhao Dandan told reporters on Tuesday. That means none of the over 1,000 new infections recorded on Tuesday was detected outside of quarantined areas, city authorities said. China's strategy to achieve



Workers wearing protective gear prepare to unload boxes from a truck (not in picture) on a street during a COVID-19 lockdown in the Jing'an district in Shanghai on Monday (AFP)

zero COVID cases includes strict border closures, lengthy quarantines, mass testing and rapid, targeted lockdowns.

Vice mayor Chen Tong said on Sunday that the city would gradually reopen businesses starting this week, without giving specifics.

But millions in Shanghai were

still unable to leave their residential compounds on Tuesday.

More than 3.8mn people were officially still under the strictest forms of lockdown in the city, according to official figures. Social media erupted in disbelief at the gap between official statements and the reality of life under an enduring lockdown.

"Since society has reached COVID-zero, why are people in Songjiang district still only allowed to go out once every two days?" a blogger on the Twitter-like Weibo asked.

"Is this a parallel universe Shanghai?" asked another.

In some areas of the city, restrictions have even been qui-

etly tightened in recent days. Live video broadcast on Tuesday by Chinese media showed crowds gathering at Shanghai's Hongqiao Railway Station as train services leaving the city resumed.

Meanwhile, multiple airlines resumed domestic flights out of Shanghai this week after nearly all routes out of the city were suspended during the outbreak.

People are only allowed to leave Shanghai after receiving permission and taking multiple COVID tests.

Economic slowdown

China has shown no sign of giving up its protracted struggle to maintain zero COVID cases, despite the mounting economic costs of miserable retail, house and car sales and climbing unemployment. The country kept cases low for much of the pandemic through its strict strategy, but the surge in Omicron cases in recent months has raised questions about zero-COVID's sustainability.

Chinese health officials on

Monday said they had detected the country's first case of the highly transmissible Omicron subvariant BA.2.12.1 - already widespread in countries including the US - in a traveller arriving from Kenya. Beijing is mass testing residents almost every day after a surge in cases - counted in the dozens each day but still enough to prompt tight restrictions on movement.

Millions of people in the capital have been ordered to work from home and transport services have been suspended with people fearing a repeat of Shanghai's lockdown chaos.

Tightened COVID rules on Beijing's university campuses also provoked a rare show of defiance from angry students over the weekend, with hundreds gathering outside one Peking University dormitory to protest new movement restrictions.

The recent lockdowns dragged retail sales and factory output in the country down in April to their lowest level since March 2020.

AFP

Japan to trial group tours from 4 countries

Tokyo, Japan - Japan will trial small group tours with travellers from the US, Australia, Thailand and Singapore from this month, the government said on Tuesday, as it experiments with easing strict COVID border rules.

The country's borders have been closed to almost all arrivals since the spring of 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Authorities only recently began allowing some students and business visitors to enter.

There are no plans to lift border restrictions fully, as other countries have done, with the trial involving only tourists from the four countries who join package tours with predetermined itineraries, according to the Japan Tourism Agency.

"Japanese travel companies will organise the tours and local guides will accompany them," an agency official told AFP.

AFP

Spain, Morocco reopen land borders after 2-year closure

Fnideq, Morocco - Morocco and Spain have reopened the land borders between the north African country and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, two years after they were shut due to COVID restrictions and a major diplomatic row.

The enclaves on the Mediterranean coast in northern Morocco have the European Union's only land borders with Africa.

The gates opened shortly after 11 pm local time (2200 GMT) on Monday night, letting dozens of cars and queues of pedestrians pass in both directions. At the Fnideq border post, smiles lit up the faces of the travellers crossing to see their families on the Moroccan side.

"I was stuck for two years in Ceuta, I'm very happy to be back home," said Nourredine.

"I am happy that Morocco and Spain have restored their relations, it allows us to see our families," said one man in his



People arrive in Fnideq on Tuesday, after crossing in from the Spanish enclave of Ceuta (AFP)

sixties. The reopening of the borders of the two enclaves initially remains limited to residents of Europe's open-borders Schengen area and their family.

It will be expanded to cross-border workers after May 31.

The local economies on both sides of the borders depend on the crossing of people and goods. The Ceuta and Melilla crossings were closed during the first wave of the coronavirus

pandemic in March 2020.

The borders became the focus of a major dispute last year, when Madrid allowed the leader of a Western Saharan independence movement to be treated for COVID-19 in a Spanish hospital.

Ten thousand migrants surged across the Moroccan border into Ceuta as local border forces looked the other way.

AFP

North Korean military ramps up response

Seoul, South Korea - North Korean military medics ramped up the distribution of medicines to fight a growing coronavirus outbreak, state media said on Tuesday, with the number of reported cases of 'fever' nearing 1.5mn.

Leader Kim Jong Un has ordered nationwide lockdowns to try and slow the spread of the disease through the unvaccinated population, and deployed the military after what he has called a botched response to the outbreak. Hundreds of personnel in camouflage uniforms from the Korean People's Army medical units were seen rallying in the capital Pyongyang in photos released by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The military 'urgently deployed its powerful forces to all pharmacies in Pyongyang City and began to supply medicines under the 24-hour service system', KCNA said.

One KCNA photo showed soldiers walking next to a long line of green trucks.

Kim had strongly criticised



Military medical field of the Korean People's Army and the Ministry of Defense rally in Pyongyang on Monday (AFP)

healthcare officials for their failure to keep pharmacies open.

North Korea's leader has put himself front and centre of the country's Covid response since its first case was announced last week, saying the outbreak is causing 'great upheaval'.

Authorities had reported more than 1.48mn cases of 'fever' as of Monday evening. KCNA said, with the death toll at 56. "At least 663,910 are under medical treatment," the agency said. Authorities have

stepped up media awareness campaigns and pharmaceutical factories have increased the production of medicines, KCNA reported.

No response to South Korea

"Most North Koreans are chronically malnourished and unvaccinated, there are barely any medicines left in the country, and the health infrastructure is incapable to deal with this pandemic," Lina Yoon, senior Korea

researcher at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

She urged the international community to offer medicines, vaccines and infrastructure to North Korea.

Pyongyang has so far not responded to an offer of help from Seoul, according to South Korea's unification ministry.

South Korea's new president Yoon Suk-yeol said on Monday that he would 'not hold back' on aid - if Pyongyang accepts.

AFP

Waiting for the water train in scorching India's desert state

Jodhpur, India - Afroz misses school every day to spend hours waiting with a handcart full of containers for a special train bringing precious water to people suffering a heatwave in India's desert state of Rajasthan.

Temperatures often exceed 45 degrees Celsius here, but this year the heat came early in what many experts say is more proof of climate change making life unbearable for India's 1.4bn people.

"It's always been very hot here and we have always struggled for water," Afroz, 13, told AFP as he waited in Pali district for the second time that day for the special train.

"But I don't remember filling up containers in April." For more than three weeks now, the 40-wagon train - carrying some 2mn litres - has been the only source of water for thousands of people in the district.

Untreated

Every day, dozens of people -

mostly women and children - jostle with blue plastic jerry cans and metal pots to fill from hoses gushing water out of the army-green train into an underground tank.

Water has been dispatched by train to Pali before, but according to local railway officials, the shortage this year was already critical in April so they started early.

The wagons - filled in Jodhpur, around 65km away - are first emptied into cement storage tanks, from which the water is sent to a treatment plant for filtering and distribution.

But for Afroz's family and many others like them, life is easier if they fill directly from the storage tanks, despite the water being untreated.

That their children skip school at times to ensure there is water in the house is what hits the families the most.

"I can't ask the breadwinner of the family to help me. Otherwise, we'll be struggling for both



This photo shows a woman carrying a pitcher filled with water supplied by a special train in Pali last week (AFP)

food and water," Afroz's mother Noor Jahan said as she filled up an aluminium pot.

"It is affecting my child's education, but what do I do? I cannot carry all these containers on my own," she told AFP.

Cracked feet

Hundreds of millions of people in South Asia have been sweltering in an early summer heatwave in recent weeks, with India seeing its warmest March on record.

In India and Pakistan, 'more intense heat waves of longer durations and occurring at a higher frequency are projected', the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said in a recent landmark report.

The 'cascading impacts' of heatwaves on agricultural output, water, energy supplies and other sectors are already apparent, World Meteorological Organization chief Petteri Taalas said this month. On Friday, India banned wheat exports - needed to help fill a supply gap due to the Ukraine war - in part due to the heat wilting crops.

Together, high humidity and heat can create 'wet-bulb temperatures' so vicious that sweating no longer cools people down, potentially killing a healthy adult within hours.

"I have already made three trips from my house in the last one hour. And I'm the only one who can do it," said Laxmi, another woman collecting water, pointing to cracks on her feet.

"We have no direct water to our homes and it is so hot. What are we supposed to do if something happens to us while we walk up and down to fetch water?"

'Extreme depletion'

In 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched an ambitious Jal Jeevan (Water Life) Mission, promising a functional tap connection to all households in rural India by 2024.

But less than 50 per cent of the population has access to safely managed drinking water, according to UNICEF, with two-thirds of India's 718 districts affected by 'extreme water depletion'. A little further from Pali, 68-year-old Shivaram walked on the cracked bottom of a dried-out pond in Bandai village, his bright-pink turban protecting his head from the scorching sun.

The pond - which was the main source of water for both residents and their animals - has been dry for almost two years because of low rainfall.

The shells of dead turtles litter the cracked mud. "Farmers have been severely impacted," Shivaram said. "Some of our animals have died too."

AFP

Taliban shut down Afghan rights body

Kabul, Afghanistan - Taliban authorities on Tuesday said they have dissolved Afghanistan's independent human rights commission as it was 'not considered necessary'. Since the hardline Islamists seized power last August they have closed several bodies that protected the freedoms of Afghans, including the electoral commission and the ministry for women's affairs.

"We have some other organisations to carry out activities related to human rights, organisations that are linked to the judiciary," deputy government spokesman Inamullah Samangani told AFP, without elaborating.

The work of the rights commission, which included documenting civilian casualties of Afghanistan's two-decade war, was halted when the Taliban ousted a US-backed government last year and the body's top officials fled the country.

The National Security Council and a reconciliation council that promoted peace were also shut down at the weekend as the government announced its first annual budget.

AFP

US easing visa restrictions for Cuba

The US is also easing restrictions on sending family remittances between the two countries

Washington, US - The United States said on Monday it is easing restrictions imposed during former president Donald Trump's administration on travel to Cuba and on the sending of family remittances between the United States and the communist island.

"The Cuban people are confronting an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and our policy will continue to focus on empowering the Cuban people to help them create a future free from repression and economic suffering," the State Department said.

The loosening of the embargo on Cuba will see increased visa processing, including at the Havana consulate, but with most visas still handled at the US embassy in Guyana.

The statement said it will 'facilitate educational connections' between the two countries, as well as support for professional research including 'support for expanded internet access and re-



This file photo shows people queuing at the US embassy in Havana, as the consulate resumed issuing some immigrant visa services which have been suspended since 2017 on May 3 (AFP)

mittance process companies'.

To boost the flow of remittances, the US government will lift the current limit of US\$1,000 per quarter for each sender, and also allow non-family remittances to 'support independent Cuban entrepreneurs'.

It said it would increase the number of flights permitted between the US and the Caribbean island, and serving cities other than the capital Havana. It will

also allow certain group visits, which are currently forbidden.

Cuba's foreign minister, Bruno Rodriguez, tweeted that the move was 'a small step in the right direction', but emphasised that it does 'not modify the embargo' in place since 1962.

"Neither the objectives nor the main instruments of the United States' policy against Cuba, which is a failure, are changing," he wrote.

US Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a member of President Joe Biden's Democratic Party, denounced the lifting of some restrictions, saying that the Cuban regime 'continues its ruthless persecution of countless Cubans from all walks of life' following unprecedented street protests last year.

The easing of travel 'risks

sending the wrong message to the wrong people, at the wrong time and for all the wrong reasons', he said in a statement. "Those who still believe that increasing travel will breed democracy in Cuba are simply in a state of denial. For decades, the world has been traveling to Cuba and nothing has changed."

Republican Senator Marco Rubio, who is of Cuban heritage, also slammed the announce-

ment, saying on Twitter that the Cuban regime 'threatened Biden with mass migration and have sympathisers inside the administration'.

He said 'the result is today we see the first steps back to the failed Obama policy on Cuba', referring to former president Barack Obama's thaw in relations with Havana, including a visit there in 2016.

AFP

Scores of Ukrainian soldiers surrender at Azovstal: Russia

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russia said on Tuesday that 265 Ukrainian soldiers had surrendered after staging a last stand at the besieged Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol, prompting Kyiv to call for a prisoner exchange.

Moscow claimed control of the strategic port city of Mariupol last month after a weeks-long siege, but hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers remained holed up in underground tunnels beneath the huge Azovstal industrial zone.

"Over the past 24 hours, 265 militants laid down their arms and surrendered, including 51 heavily wounded," the Russian defence ministry said. It added that those needing medical help were taken to a hospital in a part of the eastern Donetsk region controlled by pro-Kremlin rebels.

The ministry published images showing wounded soldiers being carried on stretchers, some being searched and others being boarded onto buses.

Elsewhere, lawmakers in Finland - which shares a 1,300km border with Russia - voted overwhelmingly in favour of joining the NATO military alliance.

It paves the way for a joint ap-



Ukrainian service members being searched by pro-Russian military personnel in Mariupol on Tuesday (AFP)

plication with Sweden to be submitted in the coming days, amid fears they could be next after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has killed thousands and sent millions fleeing.

ICC deployment

Ukraine earlier said 264 fighters from Azovstal were evacuated to Russia-controlled territory, including 53 wounded.

On Tuesday, the defence ministry expressed hope of an 'ex-

change procedure... to repatriate these Ukrainian heroes as quickly as possible'. For those still in Azovstal, it said it was doing 'everything necessary for their rescue', although it said a military intervention was not possible.

The fate of the soldiers remains unclear and is likely to cause concern in Ukraine, which has accused Moscow of war crimes during the conflict.

The International Criminal Court said on Tuesday it was de-

ploying its largest-ever field team to Ukraine, comprising 42 investigators, forensic experts and support staff. In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not answer questions about whether the Azovstal soldiers would be treated as war criminals or prisoners of war.

President Vladimir Putin 'guaranteed that they would be treated according to the relevant international laws', he said.

AFP

Man attacked US church over 'hatred of Taiwan and its people'

Los Angeles, US - A man who padlocked a church and opened fire on its Taiwanese-American congregation, killing one person and injuring five others, was motivated by hatred of the island and its people, US investigators said on Monday.

David Chou jammed the doors shut using chains and superglue as dozens of parishioners enjoyed a post-service banquet at the church in Laguna Woods, near Los Angeles. The 68-year-old, an American citizen, also hid bags containing Molotov cocktails and spare ammunition around the building, before opening fire with two handguns, in what investigators say was a 'methodical' attempt to cause carnage.

"We know that he formulated a strategy that he wanted to employ," Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes said.

"It was very well thought out from how he had prepared, both being there, securing the location, placing things about the inside of the room to perpetuate additional victims if he had the opportunity," he added.

Chou, who worked as a security guard in Las Vegas, launched



Flowers and a card are seen outside the office of Dr John Cheng in Aliso Viejo, California, on Tuesday (AFP)

We know that he formulated a strategy that he wanted to employ. It was very well thought out from how he had prepared, securing the location

DON BARNES

the attack out of 'politically motivated hate... (and) was upset about political tensions between China and Taiwan'.

Barnes said Chou 'is a US citizen who immigrated from China'.

An official at Taiwan's trade office in Los Angeles told AFP that he was born on the island in 1953.

Taiwan has been ruled independently since the end of a civil war in 1949. It has its own democratically elected government and a powerful military.

Authoritarian China claims the island as its own, insisting it is a renegade province that will one day be brought to heel.

Taiwan's president offered her 'sincere condolences' to the victims' families.

AFP

Middle East sandstorms snarl traffic, close schools, trigger health issues

Riyadh, KSA - Sandstorms across the Middle East have delayed flights, closed schools and hospitalised thousands - a phenomenon experts say could worsen as climate change warps regional weather patterns.

Saudi Arabia on Tuesday became the latest country blanketed with dust that slowed traffic and made iconic towers in the capital difficult to see from more than a few hundred metres away.

Electronic signs along Riyadh's highways warned drivers to reduce their speed because of the lower visibility, even as life largely went on as usual in the kingdom.

The national meteorology centre predicted that 'surface

dusty winds' originating in the east and bringing a thick grey haze would continue west towards the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Other countries have been grappling with the problem for longer: Neighbouring Iraq has experienced eight sandstorms since mid-April, fuelled by soil degradation, intense droughts and low rainfall linked to climate change.

The country's latest sandstorm on Monday enveloped the capital Baghdad in an orange glow, sent at least 4,000 people to hospital with breathing problems and led to the closure of airports, schools and public offices across the country.

Iran announced that it, too,



A view of King Abdullah Financial District in Riyadh during a heavy dust storm on Tuesday (AFP)

was closing government offices and schools Tuesday, citing 'unhealthy weather' conditions and sandstorms.

Average airborne concentration of the finest and most hazardous particles (PM2.5) was at 163mg per cubic metre on Tuesday in Tehran, according to a government website.

That is more than six times the World Health Organization's recommended maximum of 25mg per cubic metre.

In Kuwait, meanwhile, air traffic at the main airport was suspended for an hour and a half due to a dust storm Monday, and marine traffic in all three ports remained suspended as of Tuesday afternoon.

Kuwait's ministry of education said classes were suspended on Tuesday but would resume the following day.

The Middle East has always been battered by dust and sandstorms, but they have become more frequent and intense in recent years. The trend is associated with overgrazing and deforestation, overuse of river water and more dams.

Unseasonable masses of dry, cold air help explain the recent proliferation of sandstorms in eastern Syria and Iraq and 'their transmission to the Arabian Peninsula', Hassan Abdallah from the WASM meteorological centre in Jordan told AFP.

AFP

GROWING GULF IN GOLF

Greg Norman confident about the success of Saudi-backed breakaway tour LIV Golf Invitational Series

St Albans, United Kingdom - Golf is in turmoil as it braces for the launch of a new Saudi-backed breakaway tour but figurehead Greg Norman is confident it will be a success despite a host of unresolved issues.

The LIV Golf Invitational Series plans eight events this year but no player names have yet been announced.

There is also uncertainty over broadcast deals and whether ranking points will be on offer.

Questions over the source of the funding persist - with Norman grilled over concerns about Saudi backing for the new tour when he faced the press in Britain last week.

The battle lines have been drawn, with the US PGA Tour refusing to release members for next month's opening event in England, which clashes with the PGA's Canadian Open.

The DP World Tour, formerly known as the European Tour, has been more opaque, saying it is "evaluating each request on a case-by-case basis".

Former world number one Norman, chief executive of LIV Golf Investments, accused the US PGA Tour of "perpetuating its illegal monopoly on what should be a free and open market".

Six-time major winner Phil Mickelson and former world

number one Lee Westwood have asked for permission to play in the inaugural LIV event at the Centurion Club in St Albans, outside London, and Sergio Garcia's name is also understood to be in the frame.

But others have rejected the new golf circuit, including world number two Jon Rahm and four-time major champion Rory McIlroy, as players gather in Tulsa, Oklahoma for the PGA Championship.

Two-time British Open champion Norman, 67, appears unper-

the start.

"If none of the top 20 wanted to come in, we're still going to go ahead," he said.

"There's still value in there. Imagine if that 15-year-old kid TK (Thai golfer Ratchanon "TK" Chantananuwat)... came in and won if he's playing here, if he won the first event.

"He's the next superstar. We're giving that opportunity to that kid or an amateur to come in here to have that opportunity."

Norman said he had spoken to "50 to 60 players" and they were

compete as individuals and in teams. Norman last week announced the tour had been given an extra \$2 billion in funding to expand the schedule.

But there are a series of unknowns even as the spectator stands go up at Centurion Club, including how will golf fans be able to watch the tournament?

Chief commercial officer Sean Bratches, former managing director of commercial operations at F1, said LIV was aiming for "broad distribution" online and was in discussions with more traditional broadcasting partners.

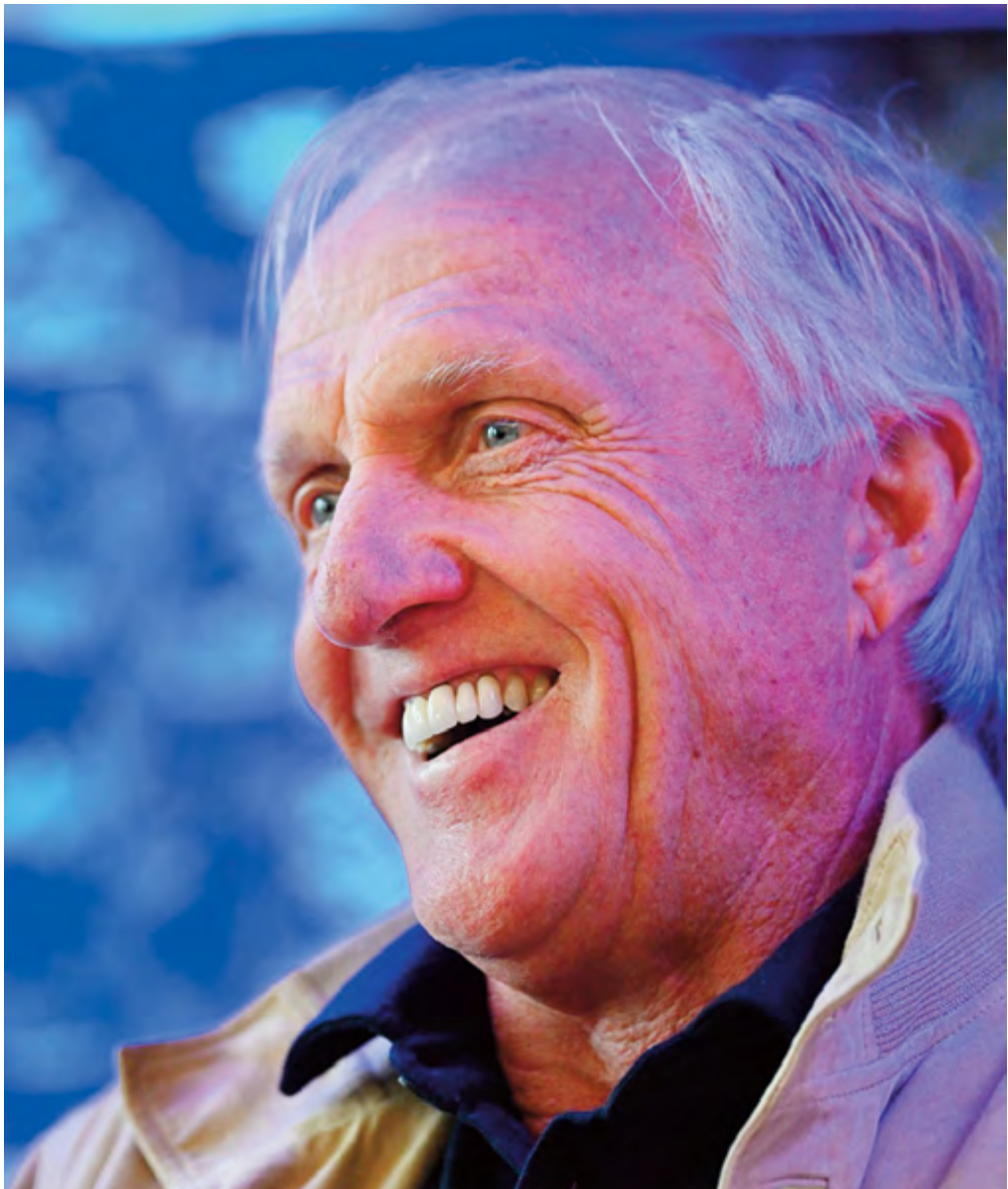
"We don't have any deals signed because we're right out of the gate," he said. "When we sign a deal we'll announce it."

There is also the thorny question of ranking points -- will top-level golfers be happy to play in events with no points on offer?

Again there is no clear-cut answer, even though chief operating officer Atul Khosla said tour chiefs had held talks with world ranking officials.

"I don't know that we will get it for the first event because of the nature of how long it takes for the application to go through and the process one needs to undertake," he said. "But we are hopeful that we can get them for this year onwards."

AFP



Former world number one Greg Norman, the chief executive of LIV Golf Investments (AFP)

Imagine if that 15-year-old kid TK (Thai golfer Ratchanon "TK" Chantananuwat)... came in and won if he's playing here, if he won the first event. He's the next superstar.

GREG NORMAN

turbed by the lack of guaranteed star names just a few weeks away from the start of the 54-hole tournament, which takes place from June 9 to 11.

Superstars

The Australian believes, in the long term, the top players will be attracted to the new tour, but he does not think it needs the biggest stars to be a success from

Two-time athletics world champion Hejnova retires

Prague, Czech - Two-time 400 metres hurdles world champion Zuzana Hejnova said Tuesday she was hanging up her spikes as she is pregnant.

The 35-year-old Czech won gold at the 2013 and 2015 world championships and bronze at the London Olympics in 2012.

"I'm going to have a baby with my boyfriend. It would be hard to conceal so I have to spill the beans," Hejnova said in a statement. "I've had a great career (but) now I'm looking forward to my new role," added Hejnova, who has been sidelined with injuries since September 2020.



Zuzana Hejnova

I'm going to have a baby with my boyfriend. It would be hard to conceal so I have to spill the beans.

ZUZANA HEJNOVA

Hejnova won the European Athlete of the Year Award in 2013 after clocking her personal best of 52.83 seconds at the world championships in Moscow.

AFP

Our fast bowlers have the potential, says coach Aavishkar Salvi

Muscat - The contributions of Aavishkar Salvi, the fast bowling coach of Oman, have been a central component of the team's recent success. In September 2019, head coach Duleep Mendis asked Salvi to conduct a 10-day camp for the fast bowlers. The former India pacer obliged and has since become an indispensable part of Oman Cricket's set-up.

Speaking of his initial impressions upon arrival Salvi said, "The first two days after I came here were a Friday and Saturday and Premier Division matches were going on at the time so I made it a point to watch them. As soon as I saw those games, I realised that there is a lot of talent and potential over here. There are some who have established themselves in the national team and there are some who can come into the squad by sharpening their skills. It was just about building discipline within them and enhancing a few attributes that are needed to be successful at the international level."

Salvi is known to pay careful attention to detail and prepare his bowlers accordingly. He said, "If we are planning a tour we prepare for the conditions. If we go to the UAE during winter, we know that there will be fair assistance for fast bowlers so we prepare accordingly. Similarly, if we go during summer, we will have to use a lot more slower balls which will give the bowlers a



I'm grateful to coach Duleep because he gives us a free hand in practising what we want to do

AAVISHKAR SALVI

chance to pick up wickets.

"Then we simulate those conditions during our practice sessions. I'm grateful to our coach Duleep because he gives us a free hand in terms of practising what we want to do. Our fast bowlers have the potential. As a bowling coach for me, it is just about channelling those energies into achieving the team

goal," he said.

Speaking of devising plans for Bilal Khan, Kaleemullah, and Fayyaz Butt to adopt, he stated: "We always want them (fast bowlers) to bowl to a particular plan. Accordingly, in the nets, I'll give them a new ball and I'll mark up a surface area where they have to consistently bowl. If they manage to do that, there is a chance that they will get wickets. By bowling in that area, the others within the team and the support staff will also know what the bowler is going to do. When the boys go out and execute these plans in the match, it becomes more of a routine for the bowlers and for the fielders around."

Oman's next set of fixtures in the ICC Men's CWC League 2 takes them to the USA for a double round-robin tri-series against Nepal and the hosts. Looking ahead to it, Salvi said, "After the last successful UAE tour the boys had a break. Now they are coming back into cricket mode and have been training regularly. The mindset remains the same for this tour.

"The bowlers need to be disciplined and because it is a 50-over game with each one getting 10 overs, even if one spell doesn't go well, they still have a chance to make a comeback later. We tell the boys that one bad ball doesn't make you a bad bowler. We are looking at the tour in a positive way," said Salvi.



Tom Harrison

England cricket chief executive to step down as part of shake-up

London, United Kingdom - Tom Harrison is to step down as chief executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board in June - part of a major overhaul following a slump in Test results.

Since the turn of the year, managing director of men's cricket Ashley Giles, head coach Chris Silverwood and Test captain Joe Root have all been replaced, with the ECB chairmanship also vacant.

Clare Connor, currently managing director of England women's cricket, will take over on an interim basis, the ECB announced on Tuesday.

Root resigned last month following England's 1-0 defeat in the West Indies, which left them with a miserable record of just one win in 17 Tests, and has been replaced by all-rounder Ben Stokes.

Former New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum was last week appointed as coach.

AFP

SA name uncapped batsman, recall Nortje for India series

Johannesburg, South Africa - Uncapped batsman Tristan Stubbs was on Tuesday named in a 16-man South African squad for a series of five Twenty20 internationals in India next month.

The 21-year-old starred in a domestic T20 competition in February when he hit 23 sixes for the Gqeberha-based Warriors in scoring 293 runs in seven innings at a strike rate of 183.12.

The hard-hitting right-handed

batsman joined the Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League as a replacement for Tymal Mills recently but failed to score on his debut against Chennai Super Kings last Thursday.

Fast bowler Anrich Nortje is set to make his first international appearance since the T20 World Cup last November.

Nortje was sidelined by a hip injury but has returned to action in recent weeks with the Delhi

Capitals team in the IPL. Other IPL players returning to the South African team are Quinton de Kock, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Rassie van der Dussen and Marco Jansen.

None of the IPL players were available for South Africa's Test series against Bangladesh last month.

Selection convener Victor Mpsitang said, "This is the Pro-

teas like we have not seen them in a long time.

"The injection of the IPL players means that we will have a team that is ready to fire on all cylinders immediately and has vast experience of the conditions that we will be playing in."

South African squad: Temba Bavuma (capt), Quinton de Kock (wkt), Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David

Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Wayne Parnell, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen.

FIXTURES:

June 9,	Delhi
June 12,	Cuttack
June 14,	Visakhapatnam
June 17,	Rajkot
June 19,	Bengaluru

AFP



Tristan Stubbs



Newcastle United blow up sorry Arsenal’s Champions League dream

Bruno Guimaraes celebrates after scoring Newcastle United’s second goal against Arsenal in their English Premier League match at St James’ Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, north east England on Monday (AFP)

Newcastle, United Kingdom - Mikel Arteta castigated his Arsenal side for throwing away a season’s work in a limp 2-0 defeat at Newcastle that looks set to see the Gunners miss out on Champions League football for a sixth successive season.

Tottenham remain two points above their north London rivals in fourth place in the Premier League.

Spurs now realistically only need a draw away to already-relegated Norwich on Sunday to se-

cure a top-four finish thanks to their superior goal difference.

Arsenal’s defeat also guaranteed third-place Chelsea’s place in the Champions League next season.

Ben White’s own goal and Bruno Guimaraes’ late strike was the difference between the sides.

But the manner of the Newcastle performance was even more impressive as Eddie Howe’s men sent a message they could be challenging for a top-four finish themselves next season.

Newcastle were 10 times better than us and the performance was nowhere near what we need to play in the Champions League. We weren’t at the races.

MIKEL ARTETA



cope tonight with the game we had to play here.”

Arteta’s men were in the driving seat with three games to go as they lead Spurs by four points.

But Tottenham’s 3-0 derby

win on Thursday cranked up the pressure on the young Gunners who failed to respond.

“Newcastle were 10 times better than us and the performance was nowhere near what we need to play in the Champions League,” added Arteta. “We weren’t at the races.”

‘Massive club’

Only Manchester City and Liverpool have won more Premier League points than the Magpies in 2022 since they began to

splash to wealth of the Saudi sovereign wealth fund in the transfer market.

More big money signings are expected to arrive at St. James’ Park in the coming months, but Arsenal’s budget in the transfer market could be severely dented by again missing out on the riches of the Champions League.

“It was a brilliant all-round performance. It was front foot, we never let up and that’s the most pleasing thing,” said Howe.

“We have to improve and

work incredibly hard to improve everything about the team over the summer. It’s a massive club, we have big ambitions, but I have to focus on how we do it rather than talk.”

Newcastle’s upturn under Howe had been lacking a scalp against one of the Premier League’s traditional top six.

But they got that and more as Arsenal were lucky to escape without a more comprehensive defeat.

AFP

Former European giants Rangers, Frankfurt roll back the years for Europa League final

Madrid, Spain - Ten years after financial oblivion plunged them into Scotland’s bottom tier, Rangers are on the brink of lifting their first European trophy in half a century as they meet Eintracht Frankfurt in the final of the Europa League on Wednesday.

Administration, liquidation and relegation all blighted a broken club in 2012 but if the Rangers recovery was complete when they won the Scottish Premiership again last season, a final in Seville now offers them a shot at European glory too.

“We’re one game away from making history,” Rangers midfielder Aaron Ramsey said on Monday as the squad departed for Spain, the final leg of a journey that began eight months ago in defeat and disappointment.



Rangers midfielder Aaron Ramsey

With the chance to play in the Champions League on the back of winning the Scottish title, Rangers instead lost to Malmo in

the third qualifying round, a result that set up a play-off to reach the Europa League with Alashkert from Armenia.

There were more prestigious opponents to come as Rangers, under Giovanni van Bronckhorst from November after Steven Gerrard left for Aston Villa, defeated Borussia Dortmund, Red Star Belgrade, Braga and Leipzig in the knock-out rounds to reach their first European final in 14 years.

A victory would earn the club its first cup on the continent since Rangers beat Dynamo Moscow 3-2 in Barcelona to lift the Cup Winners’ Cup in 1972.

“This is a chance for them to be in the history books of this club and really get an historic win,” said Van Bronckhorst.

“Then the stories they will tell in years to come will be the same stories that the players from 1972 tell to my players.

“I’ve said it before you have to dream of something to really achieve it. You can work hard and really give everything to achieve your goal and that is beautiful.”

Frankfurt will start the match as favourites after already knocking out Real Betis, Barcelona and West Ham.

It will be Frankfurt’s first European final since beating Borussia Muenchengladbach to win the UEFA Cup in 1980 while the club retains happy memories of games against Rangers, after thrashing the Glasgow side 12-4 on aggregate in the semi-finals of the European Cup 20 years before.

AFP



Mohamed Salah

Salah, Van Dijk to play in Champions League final, says Jurgen Klopp

London, United Kingdom - Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is sure Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk will be fit to face Real Madrid in the Champions League final despite going off in Saturday’s FA Cup final win over Chelsea.

Asked if either could play at Tuesday’s visit to Southampton, Klopp said: “No. They are both OK, so the target for both would be they could be involved again at the weekend.

“It’s very positive, no doubt about the final and we’re realistic about the Wolves game (on Sunday), but for Tuesday, (we’d) rather not.”

Klopp’s men were given fresh hope they could pip Manchester City to the title when Pep Guardiola’s team dropped two points in a 2-2 draw at West Ham on Sunday.

Defending champions City, with one game remaining, are four points clear at the top of the table with a significantly better goal difference than their rivals, who have two games left.

Liverpool beat Chelsea on penalties in the FA Cup final to complete the second leg of a potential quadruple.

Brazilian midfielder Fabinho, who missed the cup final with a muscle injury, is not yet ready to return, but Scotland defender Andy Robertson should be available after suffering cramp on Saturday.

“What I can promise and definitely say is we will line up a team only for one reason - to try to win the game at Southampton,” said Klopp.

AFP

Chiellini says goodbye to fans as Lazio make Europa League



Giorgio Chiellini waves to Juventus fans after his last home match (AFP)

Turin, Italy - Giorgio Chiellini bid farewell to Juventus fans on Monday in his last home match for the Turin giants, a disappointing 2-2 draw which earned Lazio a place in the Europa League after Sergej Milinkovic-Savic levelled with the last kick of the game.

Fans chanted “there’s only one captain” as a giant choreography depicting his shirt number ‘3’ was displayed in the stands ahead of the match and they then gave Chiellini a huge round of applause after he was substituted in the 18th minute.

The 37-year-old had played

the full 120 minutes of Juve’s Italian Cup final defeat to arch rivals Inter Milan on Wednesday, after which he announced that he would be leaving Juve after 18 years at a club where he has won nine league titles and a clutch of other trophies.

“It’s been an emotional day,” said Chiellini to DAZN, adding that he believes he can “still play at a high level of football”.

Following the announcement of his departure from Juve he said he would think about whether to hang up his boots after having already decided to retire from international football.

“I don’t know right now,” he said. “I need to think about things. It’s a decision that can’t be made in a day.”

When he left the field he handed his captain’s armband to another player on the way out -- Paulo Dybala.

Argentina international Dybala, who has been at Juve since 2015, will leave at the end of the season after the club decided not to renew his contract after a verbal agreement with the 28-year-old struck in the autumn was publicly rejected by the club earlier this year.

AFP



IPL 2022



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Hyderabad beat Mumbai to keep playoff hopes alive



BRIEF SCORES:

Sunrisers Hyderabad 193 for 6 in 20 overs (Priyam Garg 42 (26) 4x4, 2x6, Rahul Tripathi 76 (44) 9x4, 3x6; Ramandeep Singh 3 for 20) beat Mumbai Indians 190 for 7 in 20 overs (Rohit Sharma 48 (36) 2x4, 4x6, Tim David 46 (18) 3x4, 4x6; Umran Malik 3 for 23) by 3 runs

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Mitchell Marsh

Delhi's Marsh ticks the right boxes as an evolved No 3

Mumbai, India - The match is about to start. Sarfaraz Khan has marked the guard, Mayank Agarwal has set the field, and then David Warner realises it is Liam Livingstone bowling the first over. So Warner decides he will take first strike. It is a wide off-break, Warner goes after it, the ball turns and jumps, and he is out first ball.

But it took Mitchell Marsh, the next batsman in, just four balls to assess the conditions and the situation, and then launch a counter-attack on Kagiso Rabada, which included successive sixes down the ground. However, equally impressive was how he retreated after that attack because first Sarfaraz got on a roll and then the Punjab Kings spinners bowled well.

"Get as many as I get in the powerplay before it starts turning," Marsh, who top-scored with 63, told Star Sports when asked what his reading of the conditions was. "I think in the last 18 months or so I have had that mentality in the powerplay. It was a really good partnership with Sarfaraz. He played some amazing shots. Would have been nice to get out of the powerplay one down and then we probably could have kept going. But our innings was sort of stop-start, stop-start with the wickets."

Marsh ticked three boxes in the powerplay itself. He read the conditions perfectly, was selfless in starting a counterattack, but then took on the responsibility of batting through.

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MONOTONOUS MEALS

BREAKFAST stereotypes

It's 7am. Out from the shower, before you grab your school uniform or office attire, do you sit down for a round of the same breakfast everyday? Cereal, fruit, eggs, toast, porridge, etc...and you seem to feel quite comfortable doing so. There sure is a meaning to why you prefer to settle down for the same meal ever single day. It could be convenience on convention but it does indicate your mindset, too. For many people, breakfast - often called the most important meal of the day - is also the day's least-exciting meal. Breakfast choices frequently reflect utilitarian needs. A recent article on www.CNN.com states that scientists have found that foods at breakfast are typically simple, quick and easy to prepare and eat, and valued for the calorie boost that revives the body and brain after a night's rest. And when people find a breakfast option they like, they generally stick with it, day after day.

When researchers recently evaluated the daily eating habits in thousands of US and French study subjects, they saw that people repeatedly ate the same thing for breakfast - and were happy to do so. By comparison, when those people sat down to lunch or dinner, they expected greater variety and wanted a more pleasurable experience from their meals.

Why were so many of those people satisfied with eating the same breakfast every morning? The scientists suggested that psychological, biological and cultural drivers shape our expectations for meals, and those factors - and our enthusiasm for eating - differ depending on the time of day.

Throughout the day and into the night, our bodies follow circadian rhythms. Nearly all forms of life adhere to these 24-hour cycles, which govern changes that are physical, mental and behavioural. For example, a typical sleep schedule in humans follows light-related circadian rhythms. Tens of thousands of neurons in the brain regulate this so-called biological clock so that we feel sleepy at nighttime and are more alert when the sun is up during the daytime.

Circadian rhythms also affect our eating schedules, and other researchers have previously investigated links between circadian rhythms and variations in the size and variety of meals that people eat throughout the day, a study published in the January 2022 issue of the journal *Appetite* said.

Practicality vs pleasure

Some studies identified two goals that govern meal choices - utilitarian (in which practicality is paramount) and hedonic (in which pleasure is more important).

The researchers then proposed that psychological factors could also map to circadian rhythms to further nudge people toward certain meal choices. Early in the day, when energy levels are higher, people are more prone to pursue utilitarian goals and make practical choices.

This makes it more likely that they'd be guided by practicality over pleasure when eating breakfast and would be more inclined to find one breakfast they liked and then eat the same thing over and over again. And this seems to suit most people who are focussed on what the day ahead holds for them rather than the meal itself. Conversely, the home bound with no major task on hand, prefer to bring in variety into breakfast to kill monotony.

Even though culture, biology and psychology make it seem natural to seek utilitarian goals for breakfast, we can pursue pleasure and seek variety if we set our mind to it, the researchers say. Indeed, analysis of study participants' food diaries showed that, on weekends, when people expected breakfast to be more pleasurable, they usually introduced more variety into the breakfast menu.

Why do you usually eat the same thing for breakfast – for pleasure or practicality?



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BUFFALO MEAT RECIPES

WILD WOK

If you are a beef buff, let your tastebuds deviate a little towards buffalo meat (available in most supermarkets in town) which provides hearty protein for a satisfying meal on any day

Buffalo Stir Fry with Noodles

Ingredients

- 2tsp minced garlic
- 1tbsp grated fresh ginger
- 2tbsp soy sauce, 1tbsp rice vinegar
- 1tbsp sesame oil, 1tbsp sesame seeds
- ½tsp Chinese 5 spice
- ¼tsp black pepper

For stir fry

- 400g buffalo steak - thinly sliced
- 1 cup snow peas - sliced in half
- ½ cup sliced carrots
- 2 cups chopped green onions
- ¼ cup beef broth

- 2tbsp soy sauce
- 1-2tbsp honey
- 1tbsp rice vinegar
- ½tbsp minced garlic
- 2tsp sesame oil
- 1tsp grated fresh ginger
- 1tsp cornstarch
- ½tsp red pepper flakes
- 2tbsp oil

Method

Combine marinade ingredients in bowl and add steak strips. Set aside 15 minutes. Heat 1tbsp oil in large wok over

medium heat. Remove excess marinade from steak and cook in a single layer, for 2-3 minutes, stirring to cook both sides. Remove steak to plate.

Heat remaining 1tbsp oil, then add peas, carrots, and green onion and cook, stirring often, 2-3 minutes. Whisk together broth, soy sauce, honey, rice vinegar, garlic, sesame oil, fresh ginger, cornstarch, and red pepper flakes. Add steak and sauce to skillet, stirring to combine. Sauce will thicken. Stir in cooked noodles (or pasta of choice), and serve warm.



Peppery Buffalo Steak

Ingredients

- 300g buffalo tenderloin steaks
- 1½tsp kosher salt
- 1tsp crushed black pepper
- 2tbsp butter
- 1tbsp olive oil

For thyme herb butter

- ¼ cup butter at room temperature
- 1 clove garlic - minced
- 1tsp fresh thyme

Method

Pat steaks dry (this helps the steaks to get a nice crust on them). Season both sides generously with salt and pepper. Heat a heavy skillet, over medium-high to high heat. Add butter and olive oil. Add steaks and sear for 2-3 minutes per side. Spoon butter over steaks as they cook.

Put steaks in the oven and bake until they reach the desired doneness temperature. This will take between 6-10 minutes depending on the thickness of the steaks and how hot you want them. Remove and cool before slicing. Serve topped with slices of herb butter.



Mexican Style Buffalo Stew

Ingredients

- 750g buffalo meat cubes
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2tsp salt
- ¼tsp freshly ground pepper
- 4tbsp oil
- ½ cup red vinegar
- 2tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 onion - minced
- 1 onion - cut into quarters
- 1tsp minced garlic
- 4 cloves garlic (whole)
- 2tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2tbsp tomato paste
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- 3 jalapenos - diced
- 2 bell peppers - chopped
- 3tbsp taco seasoning
- Juice of 1 lime
- Zest of 1 lime
- 3 cups beef broth
- 3bay leaves
- 1 bunch of fresh thyme
- 3 medium carrots - sliced
- 1 cup diced celery
- 200g baby potatoes - halved
- 200g baby Bella mushrooms - cut into halves
- Chopped fresh cilantro - for garnish

Method

Add meat chunks to a large bowl, and sprinkle with flour, salt, and black pepper. Toss to combine. Heat oil in an oven-safe large pot or wok and add 2tbsp oil. Once the oil is hot, add the meat cubes, in batches and stir fry for about 5 minutes per batch. Remove and transfer to a plate, cover with foil.

Reduce the heat to medium and add the vinegar to deglaze the pot. Use a wooden spoon to scrape well the bits that stuck to the bottom. Add 2tbsp butter and melt it. Add the diced onion and minced garlic, stir, and cook for 1 minute. Add Worcestershire sauce, tomato paste, diced tomatoes, jalapenos, bell peppers, taco seasoning, lime juice and zest, and stir to combine.

Add beef broth and stir. Add the meat pieces, quartered onion, whole garlic cloves, bay leaves, and a fresh bunch of thyme. Cover and cook on low heat until the meat is tender - about 1½ hours.

Preheat oven to 180° C. Discard the thyme and bay leaves from the pot, add the carrots, celery, mushrooms, and potatoes. Cover and cook in the preheated oven for about 1 hour.

Remove the stew from the oven, taste, and adjust for salt and pepper. If you prefer the stew to be thicker, add a slurry of cornstarch and water to thicken it. Stir it in and boil for 2 minutes.

Serve the stew warm, garnished with freshly chopped cilantro.

Crispy Buffalo Chilli

Ingredients

- 250g buffalo meat, 1tbsp sesame oil
- ½tsp caster sugar, 2tbsp soy sauce
- 1 egg, 1 cup cornflour
- 120ml vegetable oil
- 1 carrot - cut to thin sticks
- ½ red pepper - sliced thin
- 2tsp each - minced ginger, garlic
- 2 red chillies - sliced into thin circles
- 2tbsp tomato ketchup
- 5tbsp rice vinegar, 2tbsp honey
- 1tsp brown sugar, 1tbsp dark soy
- 1 spring onion - chopped
- ½tsp sesame seeds
- 1 cup cooked rice - to serve

Method

Cut the meat into thin long strips and place them in a bowl with sesame oil, caster sugar and 2tbsp of soy sauce. Mix and set aside to marinate. In a separate small bowl, mix tomato ketchup, honey, rice vinegar, dark soy sauce and brown sugar. Set aside for later.

Boil the rice and set aside. In a bowl, add cornflour, salt and pepper, to taste. Then, add the marinated meat and mix with your hands until all the strips are fully coated and no longer stuck together. Shake off any

excess cornflour and place the coated strips on a clean plate. Heat oil in a wok and fry the strips for 3 minutes. Transfer cooked beef on a paper towel-lined plate.

Heat 1tbsp of oil (taken from the pan) in a separate large frying pan or wok. Add carrots, pepper, ginger, garlic and chilli, and fry on high heat for 30 seconds. Add the sauce prepared earlier and bring to a boil. Then add the crispy meat and toss just enough to coat. Serve as a snack, with a sprinkle of sesame seeds and sliced spring onion on top.



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