

HM condoles death of Sheikh Khalifa

HM the Sultan and the accompanying delegation returned on Saturday after paying their condolences

Abu Dhabi, UAE - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq flew to Abu Dhabi on Saturday to extend his condolences to Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, the Al Nahyan family and the brotherly Emirati people on passing away of the late President of UAE Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan.

His Majesty the Sultan expressed his condolences and sympathy for the deceased, praying to God Almighty to bless him with His vast mercy and to rest the deceased's soul in peace in Paradise and to give Sheikh Mohamed, his family and the Emirati people patience and solace.

On his part, Sheikh Mohamed expressed his appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan and his accompanying delegation for their condolences and sympathy, praying to the Almighty to preserve His Majesty in good health and to spare him and the Omani people all evil and harm.

His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied by an official delegation comprising Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said, Special Envoy of His Majesty the Sultan, Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of



Central Bank of Oman, Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minis-

ter of Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'mani, Minister of Royal Office,

Sheikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of State Council, Sayyid Hamoud bin

Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr

Honourable Lady offers condolences

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The Honourable Lady extended her condolences and sympathy on the death of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan to the wife of the deceased, and the wife of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, President of UAE, the Al Nahyan family and the Emirati people, at Al Bateen Palace in Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

Hamad bin Said al Oufi, Head of Private Office, Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, Dr Abdullah bin Nassir al Harrasi, Minister of Information, and Dr Sayyid Ahmed bin Hilal al Busaidi, Ambassador of Oman to the UAE.

His Majesty the Sultan and the accompanying delegation returned to Oman on Saturday night after paying their condolences.

HM mourns death of Sheikh Khalifa

Earlier on Friday, His Majesty the Sultan mourned the passing away of Sheikh Khalifa.

A statement issued by the Diwan of Royal Court read as follows: 'With full faith in the Almighty Allah's divine destiny and judgment and with profound sorrow and grief, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has received the news of death of his brother, the forgiven, by the will

of Allah, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the UAE.

'The deceased was one of the Arab leaders who served their Arab and Islamic nations and led the UAE with determination and perseverance until it became a landmark in all fields.

'His Majesty the Sultan has issued Royal orders announcing a state of mourning. Flags will be flown at half mast in the public and private sectors, as well as embassies of Oman abroad, for three days starting from Friday, May 13 to Sunday, May 15.

'While sharing with the Emirati people their sorrow and grief over this immense loss, the leadership, government and people in Oman pray to the Almighty Allah to rest the deceased in peace in Paradise, along with the devout and the faithful, and to grant his family and the Emirati people fortitude to bear the loss.

'To the Almighty Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.' ONA



SHEIKH KHALIFA BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN
1948 - 2022

A reserved figure who led UAE's global rise

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan, who died on Friday, was a reserved figure who saw the United Arab Emirates skyrocket on the global scene - but rarely appeared in public himself.

Sheikh Khalifa, who died at the age of 73, succeeded his father, the late UAE founding president Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, as ruler of Abu Dhabi, the largest and wealthiest emirate of the seven-member UAE.

Sheikh Khalifa had rarely been seen in public since 2014, after undergoing surgery following a stroke, even as his country continued to gain recognition on the global scene.

Private figure

Sheikh Khalifa took over as the UAE's second president in November 2004, succeeding his father as the 16th ruler of the emirate of Abu Dhabi, an independent emirate until 1971.

Sheikh Khalifa, who had no formal higher education, was at the helm of the UAE as it began its global rise, with service-oriented Dubai emerging as a global tourism and trade hub and Abu Dhabi pumping oil as a key OPEC player.

He came to the rescue of Dubai when it was

hit by the global financial crisis in 2009, extending a multi-billion-dollar lifeline to the debt-laden emirate.

In a show of gratitude, Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum suddenly announced the world's tallest tower, the Burj Khalifa, would be named after the president. The tower was initially dubbed Burj Dubai.

The leader ushered in the UAE's first-ever elections in December 2006, when handpicked electoral colleges chose half of the 40 members of an advisory Federal National Council.

Sheikh Khalifa was born in the oasis of Al Ain, his father's home town, which did not have schools at the time.

In 1969, Sheikh Khalifa was named crown prince of Abu Dhabi at the age of 21. Two years later, he became Abu

Dhabi's prime minister.

As president, the sheikh was commander in chief of the UAE's armed forces and headed Abu Dhabi's Supreme Petroleum Council, which exerts wide powers in the energy sector.

He was married to Sheikh Shamsa bint Suhail al Mazrouei. The couple have eight children.

AFP



TRIBUTES POUR IN

Sheikh Khalifa was a true partner and friend of the United States. The US will honour his memory by continuing to strengthen relations with the UAE.

Joe Biden
President United States

Sheikh Khalifa did much to strengthen friendly relations and constructive cooperation. He would be remembered for the remarkable progress the UAE made during his rule.

Vladimir Putin
President, Russia

Your distinguished brother devoted his life to serving the people of the UAE and his relationship with its allies and friends. He will be long remembered by all who work for regional stability, understanding between nations and between faiths, and for the conservation cause.

Queen Elizabeth II
(In a condolence message to Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan)

My thoughts go out to his brother Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, to his whole family and to the Emirati people.

Emmanuel Macron
President, France

Deeply saddened over the news. Sheikh Khalifa was a great statesman and visionary leader under whom India-UAE relations prospered.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister, India

UAE's ailing President Sheikh Khalifa dies at 73



Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan (R) carrying the body of the late UAE's President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan during his funeral in Abu Dhabi on Friday (AFP)

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan died on Friday, aged 73, after a years-long battle with illness, triggering a period of mourning and a handover of power in the Gulf state.

Sheikh Khalifa, who was in office during a time of rocketing fortunes for UAE but rarely seen in public, was laid to rest in Abu Dhabi's Al Bateen Cemetery just hours after his death was announced.

Sheikh Khalifa's funeral prayers were conducted by his expected successor and half-brother Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, who has long been viewed as the country's de facto ruler.

"The people of the Emirates are united in grief as we mourn the loss of our leader and president, Khalifa bin Zayed," tweeted Sheikh Mohamed.

Flags flew at half-mast above the interior ministry in Abu Dhabi and other landmarks at the start of 40 days of official mourning, with work suspended in the public and private sectors

Mohamed bin Zayed elected UAE president



Abu Dhabi, UAE - The UAE's long-time de facto ruler Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan was elected as president on Saturday, official media said, a day after the death of former leader Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq sent a congratulatory message to Sheikh Mohammed on the occasion of his election as President of UAE.

until Tuesday. Emirati men in traditional dress attended sombre funeral prayers at Abu Dhabi's enormous, white-marble Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, where the imam's voice brimmed with emotion over the loudspeaker.

As tributes poured in from abroad, US President Joe Biden called Sheikh Khalifa "a true partner and friend of the United States".

Neighbouring Saudi Arabia suspended sports and entertainment events and Oman, Lebanon and Kuwait also ordered three days of mourning.

In a demonstration of the UAE's diverse allegiances, Russian President Vladimir Putin also paid tribute, as did Iran's foreign minister and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

AFP

Sayyid Bilarab inaugurates Sultan Qaboos corner at National Museum of Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said inaugurated an exhibition section dedicated to the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said at National Museum of Oman on Thursday.

The display puts the spotlight on various aspects of the personality of Sultan Qaboos and his role as an 'icon of peace', in addition to a collection of personal belongings and gifts presented by leaders of brotherly and friendly countries.

The corner highlights the life of Sultan Qaboos, his hobbies and interests, the beginning of his reign and the emergence of the Blessed Renaissance.



(Supplied photo)

The corner includes several sections - The Symbols of State; Dearest and Purest of Men (de-

picting his birth, upbringing, hobbies and interests); Oman's Renewed Renaissance; Supreme

Commander; Man of Wisdom and Peace; and State of Institutions and Law.

Among the most prominent Royal artefacts displayed in the Dearest and Purest of Men sec-

tion are an exercise book of the late Sultan from 1958/59 AD, a pocket watch presented by Royal

Among the exhibits are an exercise book of the late Sultan from 1958/59 and a pocket watch presented to him on the occasion of his marriage

Family members to him on the occasion of his marriage to H H Sayyida Kamla bint Tarik al Said (1976), his ceremonial uniform for the 40th National Day celebrations (2000), the International Peace Award presented by the former US president Jimmy Carter, and a miniature portrait of him presented by W P Mundy.

Flexitime at state units from today

Muscat - The Ministry of Labour has issued a decision to implement Flexible Duty System at the state's administrative units that apply the Civil Service Law and its executive regulation starting from Sunday.

Employees have to work seven hours within a time-frame from 7.30am to 4.30pm. Each unit decides the duty schedule of its departments and calculates its employees' seven-hour attendance from the time an employee signs in to the time he/she signs out.

The units that provide direct services to members of the public have to announce the time designated to the respective services, provided that the time set for the services is not less than seven hours a day.

ONA

PDO celebrates 85th foundation anniversary

Muscat - Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) celebrated the 85th anniversary of its foundation in 1937 during its annual PDO Day event held on Thursday.

The occasion is held every year to mark the anniversary of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said's historic visit to the company's Bait Mina al Fahal headquarters in 2013.

The event, which was held under the auspices of H E Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, highlighted the achievements and contributions of staff in both technical and non-technical fields.

The company also launched a set of commemorative stamps issued by Oman Post marking momentous years in its history, including its establishment in 1937 and the first export of oil 55 years ago in 1967.

Guests and employees viewed a photo exhibition marking PDO's past, present and future.

On the occasion, H E Aufi said, "As is evident through its very



(Supplied photo)

proud history, PDO has played a central role in the development of the sultanate over many decades. It was a pleasure to attend PDO Day which provided an excellent opportunity to reflect on these special milestones of the company and to recognise the talented Omani professionals who were at the forefront of many of these success stories."

Addressing the gathering,

Steve Phimister, managing director, said, "PDO has an illustrious history and I know we will build on those solid foundations as we enter a new era and capture the opportunities that come with the Energy Transition.

"There is much to celebrate in our history and there are also exciting times ahead, as we leverage technology and our own capabilities to evolve into a fully

integrated energy company. In full alignment with Oman Vision 2040, we will grow our core hydrocarbon business and develop new low-carbon value-chains, thereby sustaining our contribution to Oman for decades to come."

During the event, PDO revealed its 85th anniversary logo to celebrate its continuous development and evolution as it

embarks on its decarbonisation journey with greater emphasis on renewables, such as solar and wind.

As part of the festivities, winners of the Chairman's Award for Excellence and the Dr Abdullah al Lamki Award for Developing Talent (DALTA) were presented.

The Oil North Directorate, Gas Directorate and Project Delivery team won the Gold Technical Award for completing the Yibal Kuff mega project, the most technically complex in PDO history.

The project will provide a major revenue boost for the nation with daily production of 20,000 barrels of oil, 5.4mn m3 of gas and 230 tonnes of sulphur.

The Non-Technical Gold went to the Corporate Planning Directorate for developing and embedding the company's decarbonisation strategy, which lays out a roadmap for achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and halving these by 2030.

Functional maintenance and integrity manager Nasser al Toqi won the DALTA for his work mentoring young colleagues.

Municipal Council registrations from today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Interior has announced that registration process for the third term of Municipal Councils' membership will start on May 15 and end on June 2.

The ministry called upon citizens to submit their applications through the election website (elections.om) after filling up an online form.

The ministry had confirmed in a previous statement that, in the context of preparations for the elections of Municipal Council members for the third term, which were postponed due to the pandemic, whoever applied for membership of a Municipal Council in 2020 earlier must submit a fresh application.

The ministry also called on citizens who have not registered in the electoral register to apply for registration through elections.om

Oman to host international journalists meet

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat - Oman will host a meeting of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) from May 31 to June 3. This was announced at a press conference held at Oman Film and Theatre Society on Wednesday.

With this, the sultanate will be the first among GCC countries and second in the Arab world, after Tunisia, to host a meeting of the federation.

Close to 250 journalists and media personnel from 120 countries will attend the 31st meeting of IFJ presided over by Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs,



(Supplied photo)

and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

Elaborating on the event, Yousef bin Abdul Karim al Hoti, member of the Board of Directors of Oman Journalists Association (OJA) and head of the Freedom Committee and International Cooperation, said, "IFJ's decision to hold the General Conference in Oman is evidence

of international satisfaction with the Omani press. Before accepting an offer to host such events, IFJ prioritises a set of criteria that must be met by the host country. Freedom of expression is among these. The event is a platform to meet and exchange experiences with international media personnel."

An element at the meet will

be the addition of an award for best photojournalism.

The IFJ meet will be an exclusive global event in Oman held every three years.

Saif bin Saud al Mahrouqi, former editor-in-chief of a newspaper in Muscat, said, "Hosting an event of this stature shows the success of journalism and OJA in Oman."



جامعة التكنولوجيا والعلوم التطبيقية
University of Technology and Applied Sciences

Introducing local practices electronically

The Internal Tender Committee at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences announces the offering of the practices shown in the following table:

M	practice number	Subject	Companies that are eligible to participate	Document's Price	Last date for electronic purchasing	Last date bid submission
1	5/2022 CTP T/MR	A project to run student trip to the Republic of South Korea for students of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences	Companies and institutions specialized in this field and registered with the Tender Board	RO 25/-	22/05/2022 14:30 pm	29/05/2022 at 10:00 am
1	6/2022 CTP T/MR	A project to run student trip to the United Kingdom for students of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences	Companies and institutions specialized in this field and registered with the Tender Board	RO 25/-	22/05/2022 14:30 pm	29/05/2022 at 10:00 am

- Establishments specialized in the above-mentioned works can obtain electronic auction documents from Sunday 15/05/2022 starting from (07:30 am) through the link:

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>
- All bidding companies must attach with their bids electronic temporary tender bond in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, not less than (1%) of the bid value, addressed to the name of the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, and valid for a period of (90) days from the date of bid submission. Any bid that does not meet the required temporary tender bond shall not be considered before 10:00 am Tuesday (29/05/2022).
- Preference in awarding will be given to small and medium enterprises registered with the Authority for SME development and whose bid includes the biggest percentage of Omanisation and a biggest purchase percentage of national products.

The University shall not be bound to accept the highest or any other bid.

INVITATION TO TENDER



Sohar Aluminium LLC (SA), PO Box 80, PC- 327, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman
hereby invites qualified Suppliers/Contractors for the following tender:

Tender No.	: 2022-ENG-SOW-0013
Tender Title	: Mair Warehouse Turbine Roof Ventilators
Scope	: Contractor shall co survey, design, supply, installation and commissioning of Main Warehouse Turbine Roof Ventilators as per scope of work.

Kindly send your email and company profile to: tender@sohar-aluminium.com
For list of active tenders visit: <https://www.sohar-aluminium.com/en/content/tender-listing>

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	33	24
Doha	32	23
Kuwait City	37	27
Manama	33	24
Muscat	33	25
Riyadh	36	20

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.02am
Sunrise	5.25am
Duhr	12.08pm
Asr	3.31pm
Maghrib	6.46pm
Isha	8.05pm

FIFA World Cup trophy tours Muscat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Thousands of football enthusiasts turned up to see the FIFA World Cup Trophy at Royal Opera House Muscat on Friday evening. This is the first time ever that the 14-inch trophy was in Oman as part of its tour before the World Cup tournament kick-starts in Qatar in November.

Enthusiasts - from all walks of life, including sportsmen, businessmen, children and women - had exclusive photo opportunities with the iconic trophy, besides receiving key chains of the



(Anirban Ray/Muscat Daily)

This is the first time ever that the 14-inch trophy was in Oman as part of its tour before the World Cup tournament kick-starts in Qatar in November

cup as memento.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* at the event, college student Hamza al Musallami said, "I have been a football fan since childhood and

to come face-to-face with this trophy is overwhelming. It is the very same object that has been touched and kissed by giants like Diego Maradona, Ricardo Kaka and Pele. I am very happy and excited to see the World Cup Trophy and take photos with it."

According to Ali Khalfan al Abri, a private sector employee, the cup's visit to Oman reflects opportunities in tourism in the sultanate. "I hope the concerned authorities take advantage of this opportunity to promote Oman through this trophy. To be so close to this spectacular cup, which has a massive history of human

passion, is overpowering."

Earlier on Friday morning, a private plane arrived with the World Cup trophy carried by former Brazilian player Gilberto Silva. The delegation was received by H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, and Ali al Habsi, former Oman goalkeeper.

On the occasion, Sheikh Salam al Wahaibi, chairman of Oman Football Association, said, "It is a dream for the youth of Oman to see the World Cup trophy. It'll motivate them and renew their drive for the game."

OIA signs agreement with Tanzania for deep sea exploration, fishing

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Tanzania for deep-sea exploration and fishing on Thursday.

This is in line with OIA's efforts to expand in international markets, achieve diversity in targeted sectors, find opportunities to enter external markets to find new investment opportunities, and enhance its partnership with the countries it invests in, stated a press release.

Mohamed al Toqi, general manager of the East Africa department of OIA, and Mashimba Mdaki, Minister of Livestock and Fisheries, Tanzania, signed the MoU.

The MoU stipulates that AI



(Supplied photo)

Wusta Fisheries Industries Company - a subsidiary of OIA's Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) - will conduct a fish stock assessment in the Tanzanian maritime territory, in collaboration with Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI).

This assessment covers coastal areas from the edge of the continental shelf (approx-

mately 80m in depth) to the edge of Tanzania's 320km Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), including the Pemba Channel and areas to the east of Zanzibar.

"This MoU aims to strike partnership and cooperation between OIA and the Tanzanian Deep Sea Authority to acquire fishing permits for AI Wusta Fisheries Industries Company to

find pelagic fish and manage the Tanzanian tuna-fishing quota in the Indian Ocean," Toqi said.

"This MoU is an opportunity to explore a promising fish stock that the company's fishing vessel can target. Simultaneously, the company will be able to increase its production volume and market its products in Oman and the Middle East," he further clarified.

As per request from TAFIRI and the Deep Sea Fishing Authority in Zanzibar, AI Wusta Fisheries Industries Company worked on the provision to sail one of its fishing vessels in the Tanzanian territorial waters starting from June for 12 months with a 25-tonnes daily fishing capacity. This estimation was made based on the same capacity in Oman at the beginning of the pelagic fishing project.

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The first phase of AI Nakheel Integrated Tourism Complex in Barka will be launched on Sunday, according to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT).

The project, spread over 500,000sqm in three phases of development, is located in AI Rumais in the wilayat of Barka.

In a statement, MHT said that H E Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, will grace the launch ceremony of the first phase of the project on Sunday.

H E Mahrouqi said recently that over the next two years there will be a change in the level of services provided at various tourist sites. "Oman will open its largest entertainment project - AI Sharq - by mid-2024 in Barka.

Phase 1 of waterfront Nakheel ITC in Barka to be launched today



(Supplied photo)

The other new projects include AI Nakheel ITC in Barka and another in Quriyat."

The government aims to attract investments worth RO3bn by 2023 with a focus on developing public beaches in partnership with small and medium enterprises, H E Mahrouqi has stated.

In 2017, an agreement was signed by MHT and the Palm Beach Company for the AI Nakheel ITC development.

The project will include three hotels, hotel apartments, 1,436 residential units, a shopping mall, a traditional souq, an international school, restaurants, a water park, and other entertainment and service facilities

Notable features of the project are an 830m waterfront overlooking the Sea of Oman and the Crystal Lagoon and promenade covering an area of 51,000sqm at the heart of the development.



Dhofar International Development And Investment Holding Company (SAOG) AND ITS SUBSIDIARIES

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Unaudited Financial Results of Dhofar International Development & Investment Holding Company SAOG ("DIDIC") for the period ending 31 March 2022.

During the first three months of 2022, all the securities markets in the region, including Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) showed gains in their respective indices. MSX improved marginally by 75 points and closed at 4205 points as on March 31, 2022 which is a 1.8% increase over the three months period. Most other indices in the GCC region witnessed a far better improvement for the period ranging from 8% to 17%. During this three months' period, the Company's investments in equities recorded an increase of RO 1.175 million, on account of increase in prices of its key equity investments.

Group Consolidated Performance

During the three months period ending 31 March 2022, net profits were RO 3.48 million and the total comprehensive income attributable to our shareholders amounted to RO 2.71 million as compared to net profit of RO 2.61 million and total comprehensive profit of RO 1.44 million for the same period last year. The Group ended the first three months with total assets of RO 227.89 million, a marginal decrease of 1% while shareholders' equity of RO 123.06 million registered a considerable increase of 32% from the first three months of 2021 where total assets amounted to RO 230.07 million and shareholders' equity attributable to our shareholders was RO 93.52 million.

Performance of Key Associates

Bank Dhofar, our banking associate, reported net profit of RO 7.10 million for the three months period ended 31 March 2022 as compared to RO 8.99 million for the same period in 2021, representing a decline of 21%. This reduction in profits is mainly on account of incremental expected credit losses held by the management considering the post deferment economic scenario. The net interest income and income from Islamic financing activities increased to RO 28.92 million compared to RO 25.22 million during same period of 2021 registering an increase of 14.7%. However, non-funded income for the quarter was 40.6% lower compared to same period last year mainly due to reduction in investment income. Net loans and advances including Islamic financing witnessed a marginal drop of 1.5% and reached RO 3.26 billion as at 31 March 2022 as compared to RO 3.31 billion as at 31 March 2021. Similarly, customer deposits including Islamic deposits, decreased by 10.2% compared to comparative quarter of last year. Total shareholders' equity in the bank registered a decrease of 1%, reducing to RO 542.93 million from RO 548.14 million a year prior.

Dhofar Insurance, our insurance associate reported an impressive growth of 37% of gross premium written to RO 22.06 million from RO 16.05 million a year earlier for the three months period. Its net underwriting results showed an improvement of 8% from RO 2.61 million in the first three months of 2021 to RO 2.83 million a year later. It reported net profit of RO 1.35 million for the first three months period of 2022 as compared to RO 0.97 million a year earlier. The shareholders'

equity has increased by 3%, from RO 25.42 million as at 31 March 2021 to RO 26.25 million as at 31 March 2022.

Oman Investment & Finance Company, our billing and collection associate that has also ventured into money exchange and contracting operations through two specialized subsidiaries, has continued noteworthy improvements in its group operations in the first three months of 2022, with net profits increasing to RO 1.36 million from RO 1.06 million a year earlier. This is mainly on account of the increase in OIFC's share of profits in its associates, mainly for Bank Sohar by 27% and a considerable reduction in their other operating costs. The Shareholder's equity decreased by 5%, from RO 27.51 million as at 31 March 2021 to RO 26.23 million as at 31 March 2022.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the board of directors, I would like to extend our gratitude to the leadership of the CMA, CBO and MOCI for their continued support. I would also like to thank the management teams of DIDIC, our subsidiaries and associate companies for all their hard work and dedication.

Finally, we wish our country continued safety and stability under the wise leadership and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, may God protect him and prolong his life.

Khalid Bin Mustahail Ahmed Al Mashani
Chairman

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2022

	Group 2022 RO	Parent Company 2022 RO	Group 2021 RO	Parent Company 2021 RO
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	1,493,166	897,601	1,091,485	540,290
Receivables and prepayments	5,314,199	9,445,603	5,712,453	6,765,388
Inventories	22,868	-	22,497	-
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss				
- Investment in equities	44,637,057	29,814,849	38,869,800	26,556,499
- Investment in term deposits	1,830,000	1,830,000	10,680,000	10,680,000
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	9,887,158	-	9,813,082	-
Investment in subsidiaries	-	9,951,474	-	10,485,080
Investment in associates	159,163,434	159,163,434	158,208,859	158,208,859
Loan to subsidiary	-	4,950,000	-	4,950,000
Investment property	247,212	247,212	247,212	247,212
Property and equipment	5,293,623	566,948	5,420,470	620,458
Total assets	227,888,658	216,867,121	230,065,858	219,053,786
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	54,472,000	54,472,000	25,872,000	25,872,000
Legal reserve	9,360,367	9,360,367	8,624,000	8,624,000
General reserve	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404
Investment revaluation reserve	(2,559,308)	(2,559,308)	(5,897,935)	(5,897,935)
Retained earnings	54,719,230	54,719,230	57,848,770	57,848,770
Total equity due to shareholders of the Parent	123,062,694	123,062,694	93,517,239	93,517,239
LIABILITIES				
Other liabilities	3,740,544	3,564,067	10,353,775	10,196,086
Income tax payable	-	-	9,383	-
Loans and borrowings	101,085,420	90,240,420	101,381,268	90,536,268
Subordinated bonds	-	-	24,804,193	24,804,193
Total equity and liabilities	227,888,658	216,867,121	230,065,858	219,053,786
Net assets per share	0.301	0.301	0.361	0.361

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	Group 2022 RO	Parent Company 2022 RO	Group 2021 RO	Parent Company 2021 RO
INCOME				
Dividend income	1,288,721	1,223,967	1,365,961	1,205,969
Net revenue of a subsidiary	83,427	-	120,026	-
Unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	1,221,233	1,174,896	944,800	912,571
Interest income	98,682	153,856	196,942	242,604
Other income	19,345	20,746	26,316	27,451
Total income	2,711,408	2,573,465	2,654,045	2,386,595
EXPENSES				
Administrative and general expenses	(511,950)	(381,938)	(399,482)	(277,767)
Depreciation	(40,183)	(13,405)	(46,336)	(20,241)
Total expenses	(552,133)	(395,343)	(445,818)	(298,008)
Operating profit/(loss)	2,159,275	2,178,122	2,208,227	2,090,587
Finance costs	(1,666,638)	(1,493,476)	(2,520,993)	(2,335,272)
Amortization of deferred finance cost	(32,350)	(32,350)	(83,121)	(83,121)
Share of loss from subsidiaries	-	(192,009)	-	(68,081)
Share of profit from associates	3,018,755	3,018,755	3,002,753	3,002,753
Profit for the period before tax	3,479,042	3,479,042	2,606,866	2,606,866
Income tax	-	-	-	-
Profit for the period	3,479,042	3,479,042	2,606,866	2,606,866
Other comprehensive income / (loss)				
Items that will not be subsequently reclassified to profit or loss				
Changes in fair value of financial assets through other comprehensive income	(160,013)	-	(386,698)	-
Share of other comprehensive loss of subsidiaries	-	-	-	-
Share of other comprehensive loss of associates	(608,411)	(160,013)	-	(386,698)
Other comprehensive loss for the period	(768,424)	(768,424)	(1,167,139)	(780,441)
Total comprehensive profit for the period	2,710,618	2,710,618	1,439,727	1,439,727
Basic earnings per share	0.009	0.009	0.010	0.010

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Oman concludes successful trade mission to India

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) wrapped up a successful trade and investment mission to India on Friday.

Led by H E Qais al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion and accompanied by over 40 high-profile Omani organisations the delegation visited New Delhi and Mumbai to develop new business opportunities and strengthen investment and trade ties in manufacturing, healthcare, renewables and tourism sectors.

After an intensive series of trade and investment focused meetings with Indian ministers and leading industrialists earlier in the week, on Thursday H E Yousef held talks with senior officials at Invest in India and Niti Aayog, the Indian government's public policy think tank. He then went on to deliver opening remarks at the 10th India-Oman Joint Business Council meeting at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

Commenting on the important commercial relationship between Oman and India, H E Yousef remarked, "As Oman's economy moves forward under the wise guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and given the new opportunities already opened up by Oman Vision 2040 we are seeing a growing number of Indian SMEs and investors looking to leverage Oman's strategic location and



H E Qais al Yousef

world-class transport infrastructure to enter the GCC and African markets. This is borne out by the recent trade and investment figures, but we cannot take this ongoing interest for granted. We are fully committed to encouraging new and impactful collaborations in health, renewables, tourism and manufacturing, sectors where our nations have complementary capabilities."

Highlighting the growth potential for Oman-made goods in India, the minister noted, "The 172 per cent increase in our 2021 non-oil exports to India demonstrates the appetite for Omani

products with Indian consumers. From discussions held during this trip it is clear this is very much the tip of the iceberg in terms of demand, particularly given the growth of India's middle class.

The prize is substantial. On our return, my team and I will be engaging with Omani exporters to encourage them to seize the opportunities and capitalise on the wealth of possibilities presented by the Indian market given that by 2050 it will be the world's third-largest importer, following China and the United States."

Today, Indian businesses are

operating in multiple industries across every region of Oman with an estimated investment of US\$7.5bn. Trade and investment flows between India and Oman have remained on a positive trajectory despite the pandemic. This can be seen in the 94.8 per cent increase in the number of Indian businesses registering with MoCIIP's Invest Easy portal, up from 450 in 2019 to 877 in 2021.

While bilateral trade also witnessed robust growth increasing from US\$5.4bn in 2020-21 to US\$9.9bn in 2021-2022, an impressive annual growth of 82.6 per cent.

India considering preferential trade deal with Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

India's Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles, Piyush Goyal on Thursday said that India was considering entering into a preferential trade agreement (PTA) with Oman.

Delivering the keynote address at the 10th India-Oman Joint Business Council (JBC) Meeting in New Delhi on Thursday, Goyal said that India was already looking at a comprehensive trade agreement with the GCC nations, of which Oman is an important member.

As per the press statement issued by Indian government, Goyal said that the Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) that took place on Wednesday between India and Oman, that had been long overdue, was a very productive one. He expressed confidence that the discussions with business leaders on both sides would complement the discussions under the Joint Commission Meeting.

Observing that India and Oman have been connected for more than 5,000 years



Piyush Goyal

through friendship and brotherhood and very warm and strong people-to-people ties, the minister said that despite such close relations, the bilateral trade and investment in the two nations were yet to reach maximum potential.

Goyal expressed confidence that the Joint Business Council will supplement the efforts of governments of both countries to deepen engagement. He underscored that these agreements would only reach their true potential if businesses display that enthusiasm which will in turn help political leadership take bold decisions.

He urged businesses in both nations to look at new opportunities, especially in services, investment, food security, sustainability, renewable energy and startups.



Campbell Wilson

Air India appoints first foreign CEO

Mumbai, India – Air India has appointed its first foreign chief executive after a previous pick from overseas backed out because of local opposition, new owners Tata Sons said Thursday.

The new boss will be New Zealander Campbell Wilson, the former head of Singapore Airlines' low-cost subsidiary Scoot, Tata Sons said in a statement.

After buying back Air India from the government after 69 years of state ownership, Tata in February selected former Turkish Airlines boss Ilker Ayci to help turn around the loss-making airline.

But a Hindu-nationalist group with close ties to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party criticised the choice over Ayci's connections to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Ayci soon withdrew after "closely following the efforts to give another meaning to my appointment", Turkish media quoted him as saying.

"Air India is at the cusp of an exciting journey to become one of the best airlines in the world," the Tata statement quoted Wilson as saying.

"I am excited to join Air India and Tata colleagues in the mission of realising that ambition," the 50-year-old said.

AFP

INTERVIEW

SUNIL D'SOUZA, CEO OF TRAVEL POINT

'Travel and tourism showing signs of strong revival'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's largest travel and hospitality company Travel Point LLC represents all travel related solutions such as international product franchises, high quality leisure and hospitality products, pilgrimages, travel management partners etc. In an interview, Travel Point CEO Sunil D'Souza speaks about the company's exclusive services and brand strengths in the market. He also shared views on the post-pandemic recovery of Oman's travel industry and future of travel.

The pandemic has badly affected the travel industry during past two years. As COVID-19 concerns subsided this year, do you expect global travel will take off in 2022?

Things have started getting better and evidences show that more and more travellers are flying these days for business or pleasure. The number of flights at the airports have increased substantially, both legacy and budget carriers have started operating now.

Earlier international flights were operating under the bubble agreements where each country had limited seats per week. But after the COVID-19 restrictions were removed by many countries, they started allowing international flights to operate which is clearly having a positive impact on the travel industry.

Although the International Air Transport Association (IATA) recently said that it might be 2023 before we can reach 2019 levels, but if

the current trends continue, I believe we could reach 85-90 per cent of 2019 levels in 2022 itself.

In your view, how long it might take for Oman's travel and tourism industry before it reaches back to a pre-pandemic level again?

As things have started shifting to high grounds with more and more flights across the skies, the passenger numbers are steadily rising. In my opinion, to reach the 2019 levels it might take some time in 2024. However, the pent-up demand for travel is making airlines register high flight loads and these factors are also contributing towards higher air fares. Also, globally there is an increasing trend of people travelling to various destinations.

The tourism industry, which took a huge hit for the last two years, is on the strong revival mode. More and more people are travelling these days after closure of the airports and hotels across the world in 2020 and 2021. There is huge pent up demand for travel and its helping to jack-up load factors.

In Oman, we have lots of people who are travelling on business, visit to their countries, and holiday/leisure trips. All these combined would certainly grow many folds compared to the previous years, adding to higher flight figures per quarter. Omani airports are currently very busy in handling outbound and inbound passengers.

Travel Point recently launched Luxury Concierge service. What really inspired you to launch such a premium



service venture at this time? What does this service provide to the clients?

It is an exclusive service for those seeking exclusivity and luxury, however we do cater to all segments and quality is maintained as the highest standard. We realised we do have high net-worth individuals who are willing to pay more for their unique experiences which include private jets, luxury resorts and curated itineraries that are handpicked and highly experiential. We have a dedicated team that handles Luxury Concierge round the clock.

As part of our diversification approach, we wanted a niche that caters to this exclusive segment. And thankfully our teams done a great job in providing world-class services to our customers. Our repeat customers are

the evidence to that commitment of service excellence and the trust factor.

We have sourced our luxury products from trustworthy and reputable suppliers – resorts, hotels, private jet companies and ground handlers of high repute – which obviously culminates in great escapades and memorable experiences.

Sustainability is increasingly becoming an important component of corporate strategy. What can you tell about Travel Point's environmental and social commitments? Do you plan to implement sustainability in the work culture?

Besides financial results we focus on environmental, social, employee and customer results as key result areas. It is important for an organisation to

pursue various results as they are not just relating to the balance sheet. We need to look at how we impact our employees, society and environment where we live in and are responsible for.

Travel Point is a member of Oman Environmental Group, where we participate in environmental preservation projects. We practice sustainability at our offices by reducing the use of papers/plastic and focusing on energy conservation. We are also regularly participating in beach cleaning initiatives.

We recently signed up with KLM/AF and joined their hands towards producing sustainable air fuel project, as aviation industry wants to reduce their carbon footprint. Travel Point is also working on many carbon-offset programmes as part of the conservation initiatives.

Travel Point was again voted this year as Oman's Most Trusted Brand in travel category. What strengths of Travel Point do you think played in favour in repeating this success consistently?

Our people made it happen as they are the driving force in providing quality and dependable benchmark services. Our customers continued trusting our brand because of great service and unparalleled experiences. We continually work on our core processes and we do have teams that are carrying out Kaizen projects internally to improve specific processes, reduce wastage and improve degree of efficiency across various value-chains.

Quality for us is not a destination, it's a journey and we continually look at ways to improvise, innovate and better things. And that focus on quality makes us most sought-after travel company in Oman.

In what ways has Travel Point been innovating out of the COVID-19 crisis? What is the future of travel in your view?

Sometimes the adversity becomes mother of new innovation, which propels individuals and organisations to work on untried and untested ideas that provide a quantum shift. We do take calculated risks in our quest to craft better experiences for our customers and challenge our teams on the ground to come up with better solutions.

We work on various projects regularly to enhance our service delivery mechanism, problem solving capabilities and reduce cycle time in processing transactions.

The efforts help us drive better value for all stakeholders across the supply/value chain.

We also added new business verticals, at least two major ones, in the last 13 months that would contribute to increased revenue output. We started measuring every process and looked at how it can be bettered or fine-tuned.

Additionally, we conducted customer and supplier forums to find out their feedback on service, product and their experiences. This helped us redesign and revamp many products and services, attracting existing and new customers and markets.

MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSX posts weekly decline

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange posted a weekly drop after all the sectoral indices fell during last week. The MSX30 Index ended the week lower by 0.3 per cent. The Financial Index closed down marginally by 0.06 per cent, while Industrial and Services Indexes ended lower by 0.55 per cent and 1.09 per cent, respectively. The MSX Shariah Index also closed lower by 1.61 per cent.

The MSX last week signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Iraq Stock Exchange (ISX) on drafting procedures of joint cooperation between the two exchanges. The MoU targets exchanging information and promoting best practices related to publishing and declaring information. The MoU also aims to support the integrity and competence of the stock exchanges in both countries.

Local news

►Oman's state budget recorded a surplus of RO357mn at the end of the first quarter of 2022. The surplus will be utilized for accelerating economic recovery, enhancing development spending and reducing the risks of the public debt portfolio. In the first quarter of this year, public revenues amounted to RO3.025bn, up by 66.3 per cent as compared to the same quarter in 2021, according to the monthly bulletin of the Ministry of Finance. This is mainly as a result of an increase in the net oil revenue by 70.2 per cent to RO1.565bn compared to the same period in 2021.

►The Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) awarded Oman National Engineering and Investment Company (ONEIC) a contract for operation and



maintenance of electrical and mechanical equipment and civil maintenance of SQU Hospital. The value of the contract is RO2.87mn for the period of two years commencing on July 1, 2022.

►Oman telecom sector data for March revealed that the fixed-line subscribers are down 3.8 per cent while mobile subscribers are down 0.3 per cent year-on-year. Within mobile segment, prepaid subscribers are down 5 per cent while post-paid subscribers are higher by 24.8 per cent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2022. Active mobile broadband subscribers are up by 2.2 per cent.

►Oman unemployment rate stood at 2.3 per cent in March 2022 compared to 2.1 per cent in February 2022. Unemployment amongst female stood at 7.5 per cent while unemployment in males stood at 1.1 per cent in March 2022. Amongst the age group, 15-24 years age group recorded the highest unemployment at 12 per cent, followed by 5.3 per cent for the

age group 25-29 years and 1.7 per cent for the age group 30-34 years. In terms of unemployment by educational status, highest was 10 per cent for the people with higher diploma.

►Omani banks' credit fundamentals are recovering as pressures on the operating environment have eased and economic activity is gradually picking up amid higher oil prices, Fitch Ratings said last week. In a new report on Oman's banking sector, Fitch said that Omani banks have been fairly resilient to the pandemic shock which caused a 3.2 per cent GDP contraction in 2020. Omani banks' performance metrics recovered substantially in 2021 and this is expected to continue in 2022, supported by higher interest rates.

►The first industrial city in Musandam Governorate has begun welcoming investors eager to capitalise on its proximity to key regional markets. Mahas Industrial City — the

latest addition to the expanding chain of national industrial parks administered by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Mada'yn) — is coming up in the Wilayat of Khasab. An area of around 1.44mn sqm has been earmarked for the new facility, primarily for small and mid-scale manufacturing ventures.

According to Mubarak bin Salem al Ghailani, Acting Director General of the new industrial hub, a local contractor has been awarded a contract valued at around RO5mn for the development of basic infrastructure for the project.

GCC markets

Business conditions in Saudi Arabia's non-oil economy remained strong in April, but confidence worsened amidst concerns over inflation, the war in Ukraine and renewed COVID-19 restrictions in Asia, according to a new survey.

The headline seasonally adjusted S&P Global Saudi Arabia Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dipped to a three-month low at 55.7, compared to 56.8 in March. However, S&P said its latest study still indicates a 'strong improvement in non-oil private sector business conditions' in the kingdom, citing that the PMI reading is 'firmly above' the 50.0 neutral mark.

Purchasing activity and inventories in Saudi Arabia also rose at the sharpest rate since December 2017, as businesses looked to meet demand and expand inventories amid rising material costs, while job creation accelerated at its fastest pace since June 2021.

The UAE's non-oil private sector maintained robust growth in April supported by improving demand and a sharp rise in exports but cost pres-

ures were a matter of concern, a survey showed last week. The seasonally adjusted S&P Global UAE Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) slipped to 54.6 in April from 54.8 in March, a three-month low. The indicator however remained above the 50.0 mark that separates expansion from contraction.

There was a sharp rise in non-oil output at the start of the second quarter of the year as firms continued to benefit from increased new orders and project work. 'In fact, the expansion in activity was the fastest registered since December last year, with just under a quarter of respondents seeing output increase since March,' the report said.

Global oil prices rose about 4 per cent on Friday as US gasoline prices jumped to a record high, China looked ready to ease pandemic restrictions and investors worried supplies will tighten if the European Union bans Russian oil.

Recommendations

Globally, the markets witnessed a wild week as relief at signs of peaking inflation vied with fears that policy tightening by the US Federal Reserve could tilt the economy into recession. Big companies in the US market has dropped to 52-week low as extreme volatility continues.

Regionally, all the GCC markets ended the week lower due to higher inflation and high volatility. Locally, the stock market has seen decrease in trading volume as inflation hits most countries.

We advise investors to look closely to the full disclosures for the first quarter of 2022 and to take notes on the companies' guidance for the year.

Aramco overtakes Apple as world's top-valued firm



Aramco president and CEO Amin Nasser

San Francisco, US — Saudi Aramco dethroned Apple as the world's most valuable company as surging oil prices drove up shares and tech stocks slumped last week.

The Saudi Arabian national petroleum and natural gas company, billed as the largest oil producing company in the world, was valued at US\$2.42tn based on the price of its shares at close of market.

Apple, meanwhile, has seen its share price drop over the past month and was valued at US\$2.37tn when official trading ended on Wednesday.

The sinking share price came despite Apple reporting better-than-expected profits in the first three months of this year amid strong consumer demand.

But, Apple warned that the China COVID-19 lockdown and ongoing supply chain woes would dent June quarter results by US\$4bn to US\$8bn.

"Supply constraints caused by COVID-related disruptions and industry-wide silicon shortages are impacting our ability to meet customer demand for our products," Apple chief financial officer Luca Maestri said on a conference call with analysts. Oil giant Saudi Aramco recently reported a 124 per cent

net profit surge for last year, hours after Yemeni rebels attacked its facilities causing a "temporary" drop in production.

As the world economy started to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic, "Aramco's net income increased by 124 per cent to US\$110bn in 2021, compared to US\$49bn in 2020," the company said.

The kingdom, one of the world's top crude exporters, has been under pressure to raise output as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and subsequent sanctions against Moscow have roiled global energy markets.

Aramco president and CEO Amin Nasser cautioned that the company's outlook remained uncertain due in part to "geopolitical factors".

"We continue to make progress on increasing our crude oil production capacity, executing our gas expansion program and increasing our liquids to chemicals capacity," Nasser said.

On the results, for 2021, he acknowledged that "economic conditions have improved considerably".

A strong rebound last year saw demand for oil increase and prices recover from their 2020 lows.

AFP

Powell wins second term



US Fed chief Jerome Powell

Washington, US — The US Senate on Thursday confirmed Jerome Powell to a second term as head of the Federal Reserve, as the central bank ramps up its fight to crush soaring inflation.

The vote came amid inflation that has hit a 40-year high, fueled by the conflict in Ukraine and sanctions imposed on Russia, as well as COVID-19 restrictions in China that have raised concerns the global supply snarls may worsen.

The Fed chair has said his primary focus is on getting inflation under control, but acknowledged the effort could be painful.

US President Joe Biden, whose popularity has taken a hit from the soaring inflation and record gasoline prices, has repeatedly said that tackling the issue is primarily a job for the Fed.

"I am pleased to see the Senate take a step forward on my agenda to get inflation under control by confirming my nominees to the Fed," he said in a statement after the vote.

AFP



صناعة قرطاسية الكمبيوتر (ش.م.ع.ع.)

Computer Stationery Industry S.A.O.G.



HSN's Cup 2006

Board of Directors Report for the three months period ended 31st March 2022

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the un-audited results of Computer Stationery Industry SAOG and its subsidiary for the three months period ended 31st March 2022.

The Group's turnover during the first three months was Rial Omani 506k which was 149% higher than the turnover recorded during the same period last year. The Group's net loss for the period was Rial Omani 43k as against a net loss of Rial Omani 61k generated during the same period last year.

We are pleased to announce that the three machines for packaging have been commissioned and are in operation. The printing machine is expected to be in operation by 2nd half of 2022.

The worldwide paper market is chaotic due to the reasons like reemergence of corona pandemic in China, war between Russia and Ukraine, rising energy cost and shortage of shipping containers resulting in price rise in logistics. This has great impact on the increase in cost and difficulty in procuring of the raw material. This in turn is affecting the business, overall margins, and profitability.

We have started witnessing a gradual recovery from the pandemic; many countries have started lifting restrictions so that life gradually returns to its normalcy. On the other hand, the improvement in oil prices have contributed positively to the improvement in national and global economy, we count on this improvement to strengthen our domestic economic, which will reflect positively on the industry sector including the paper industry. We are carefully watching these improvement, we will strive in the company's board of directors to find appropriate opportunities to enhance the company's competitive position and develop business plans to achieve better results for shareholders during the coming period.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to express our highest gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman for His Majesty's wisdom and guidance which has ushered in peace, prosperity, and progress of our nation.

Ammar Maqbool Al Saleh
Chairman

Notes :-

- Previous year figures have been regrouped wherever necessary.
- Complete Accounts are available with Capital Market Authority. However the same will be sent by mail to any Share Holder who requests them, either in Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Request shall be forwarded to the following address:

P.O. Box: 13, Postal Code: 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail : info@csiops.com

UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 st MARCH 2022		
Particulars	As on 31-03-2022 Rials	As on 31-03-2021 Rials
ASSETS		
Property Plant & Equipment	1,163,022	1,102,755
Right of Use Assets	112,063	124,666
Deferred Taxn Assets	74,283	74,283
Investments	-	-
	1,349,368	1,301,704
Current Assets	1,301,043	1,113,141
Less : Current Liabilities		
Short term maturity of Long term Loan	--	--
Other current Liabilities	911,466	393,408
Net Current Assets	389,577	719,733
TOTAL ASSETS	1,738,945	2,021,437
LIABILITIES		
Share Holders' Funds:		
Share Capital	1,000,000	1,000,000
Reserves & Retained Earnings	738,945	1,021,437
Long Term Loan	--	--
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,738,945	2,021,437
UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDED 31st MARCH 2022		
Particulars	3 months ended 31-03-2022 Rials	3 months ended 31-03-2021 Rials
Sales	505,717	202,929
Gross Profit	82,954	45,102
Depreciation	(32,325)	(33,609)
Admin & General Expenses	(97,145)	(74,225)
Operating Profit / (Loss)	(46,516)	(62,732)
Finance Charges	(1,130)	(256)
Other Income	4,512	2,376
Balance	(43,134)	(60,612)
Prior year tax payment	--	--
Profit /(Loss) before taxation and minority interest	(43,134)	(60,612)
Provision for Taxation	--	--
NET PROFIT/(LOSS) AFTER TAX	(43,134)	(60,612)

FREE
CLASSIFIED
LISTING

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

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources
TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
486/2021/MA FWR/HQ-72 Recall	Transportation of goods per ton	25/-	Specialized	Thursday 12/5/2022	Thursday 2/6/2022
235/2022/MA FWR/HQ-27	Consultancy Services for Design Works and Construction Supervision for Development of Sheltered Fish Landing Centre at Asifah, Bammah and Fins in Muscat Governorate	150/-	First	Monday 30/5/2022	Monday 20/6/2022
236/2022/MA FWR/HQ-28	Configuration, Implementation and Commissioning of the new domain(MAFWR) for Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources	25/-	Specialized	Monday 30/5/2022	Monday 20/6/2022
237/2022/MA FWR/HQ-29	Maintenance Of Protection Wall At Saib Al-Hail, Wadi Bani Khalid in North Sharqia Governorate	25/-	second	Monday 30/5/2022	Monday 20/6/2022

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

DAC launches 'Jeep Road to Juventus'



Dhofar Automotive, the official distributor of Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler, Ram vehicles, Fiat, and Alfa Romeo in Oman, announced the launch of the 'Jeep Road to Juventus' competition, through which the fans of Jeep and Juventus team will have the opportunity to enjoy a unique experience and a memorable trip to Italy to meet their favourite team.

The competition provides an opportunity to enter a draw and win this jackpot, for those who buy one of the Jeep Gladiator, Wrangler, and Grand Cherokee models before the deadline on June 30, a press release said.

Commenting on the launch of this competition, Hatem al Najjar, General Manager of Dhofar Automotive, said, "The legendary four-wheel-drive brand Jeep has a historic connection with the world-renowned Juventus football team.

Many of our valued customers are fans of the team and are interested in following domestic and international football games too.

Thus, came the idea of launching the Jeep road to Juventus competition, offering winners an unforgettable trip to Italy to meet the players of their favourite team.

"The winner will also have a special tour of the stadiums, stands, and locker rooms and learn about the various events and activities of the team.

We, in turn, aim to share the interests of our clients and enable winners to meet their favorite team in an atmosphere of exceptional fun."

The Jeep Grand Cherokee has been able to take a prominent place on the list of the most favourite cars.

This exquisite model was designed based on a survey of Jeep customers around the world, thus meeting the desires and needs of these Jeep owners.

The Jeep Grand Cherokee was made to offer Jeep's legendary off-road 4WD capabilities, superior performance on paved roads, many technological perks, and more advanced safety features.

The Jeep Gladiator is considered one of the most capable off-road medium-sized trucks ever. It was inspired by the rich heritage of reliable powerful jeeps, with an unparalleled array of powerful advantages such as the distinctive design, and the ability to drive freely outdoors, along with smart functionality and versatility, making it the best SUV in its class.



Industry leaders explore long-term ME tourism trajectory

More than 23,000 visitors attended the 29th edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2022, as industry leaders gathered at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) to share insights into the future of international travel and tourism.

"In addition to doubling our visitor numbers year on year, ATM 2022 hosted 1,500 exhibitors and attendees from 150 countries," commented Danielle Curtis, exhibition director ME for Arabian Travel Market.

"These figures are especially impressive given that lockdowns are still taking place in China and other destinations. What's more, the development of the travel and tourism sector throughout the Middle East region shows no signs of abating, with GCC hotel construction contract awards set to rise by 16 percent this year."

The value of UAE and Saudi Arabian projects accounted for 90 per cent of all regional hospitality contracts awarded in 2021, according to research from BNC Network.

Moderated by Paul Clifford, group editor - Hospitality at ITP Media Group, the panel discussion featured insights from Christopher Lund, director - head of Hotels MENA at Colliers International, Mark Kirby, head of Hospitality at Emaar Hospitality Group, and Tim Cordon, area senior vice president - ME and Africa at Radisson Hotel Group.

Changan CS75 Plus presents attractive benefits



Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), part of Bahwan International Group, has announced an attractive offer on crossover Changan CS75 Plus which impresses with premium design, comfortable automotive interior, and highly intelligent configuration.

Customers buying CS75 Plus Crossover (2ltr Turbo Engine, 224 hp, 8 speed AT) are eligible for many benefits as part of the exclusive Ramadan promotion 'Driving Forward This Ramadan', a press release said.

The offer includes, free service (3 years/55,000km) PMS every 10K intervals, first year free insurance (Oman & UAE), first year free registration, free fuel card worth RO50, Ramadan gift as Apple Watch 7 Series 41mm, and manufacturer's warranty 6 years/250,000km.

The above offer is valid for all retail customers purchasing Changan CS75 Plus till May 20.

A spokesperson for AGAE said, "Changan CS75 Plus has been impressing car enthusiasts for its promising quality of innovation, aesthetics, functionality and stability. The model makes driving feel like winning with its stunning design, premium interior and intelligent features. The CS75 Plus is loaded with smart and innovative features that aim to elevate the confidence and sophistication in every drive. In CS75 Plus radar based safety features and automatic parking is one of the unique features in the luxury variant. This offer is guaranteed to make the buying experience special and affordable for customers."



Bhavalaya awards Best Online Stage Play

Bhavalaya Art & Culture Foundation, a prominent non-profit, global platform for the promotion of art and culture, recently held a get-together in the presence of Shakeel Hassan, Gulf Madhyamam & Media One resident editor.

On the occasion, the play 'Pathimoonnam Manikoor' was awarded the Best Popular Stage Play Award in the Bhavalayam 2021 Online Stage Play Contest which was earlier held in memory of Late Girija Baker. The play was selected unanimously through online voting and Salomi Chacko received the Bhavalaya Chairman's Special Award for her performance in the same play.

Dr J Retnakumar, founder and chairman of Bhavalaya, presided over the function and congratulated all the winners. "Bhavalaya is extremely happy to encourage such talents. We will continue to hold more such events in the future," he said.

Dr Benny Panakkal, renowned cardiologist, Chithra Narayanan, principal of Middle East Nursery School, and Lakshmi Kothaneth, journalist and daughter of late Girija Baker were also present during the occasion.

All the other winners of the Online Stage Play Contest were awarded previously during a ceremony held at the Omani Women's Association Hall in Qurum by H E Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to Oman, Dr Humaid Bin Saeed Bin Rashid al Ameri, president of the Omani Film and Theatre Society, Mariam al Zadjali, vice chairperson, Omani Women's Association Muscat, Lakshmi Kothaneth, and Dr Retnakumar.

NBO launches Tamayuz career development programme

National Bank of Oman (NBO) has officially launched 'Tamayuz', a core component of the bank's Development Centre. As a talent development initiative, NBO has selected 58 high-potential employees from across the bank, including branches network and Muzn Islamic Banking, to develop in line with customized plans which chart their ongoing progression and equips each individual with the skills required for professional growth.

Tamayuz will run its first batch until December 2023 in collaboration with elite business schools and training institutes, and features several milestones. Tamayuz will include workshops and courses alongside external coaching to help participants strengthen their areas of development, which will prepare participants for leadership roles in the future, a press release said.

Aliya al Balushi, head of Talent and Performance Management at NBO, said, "People are at the



heart of NBO's operations, and we have introduced a career development initiative where technical and leadership, development needs were all meticulously considered. Tamayuz is connected to all aspects of NBO."

Zoho announces new unified marketing platform for businesses in Oman

Zoho Corp, a leading global technology company, today announced Zoho Marketing Plus, a new unified software that combines a powerful mix of marketing capabilities to provide stakeholders across the entire marketing organisation with a single, shared view of critical information for improved collaboration and results.

The new software packs an innovative mix of marketing tools that helps marketing professionals better understand customers, make more informed decisions, and ultimately drive better results, growth, and revenue, a press



Hyther Nizam

release said.

"Consumers and digital marketing continue to evolve at warp-speed, and marketers are struggling to keep up. It's

becoming increasingly difficult to properly manage multiple campaigns, channels, customer profiles, data, and ROI," said Hyther Nizam, president, Middle East and Africa at Zoho.

"The complexity of data and personalisation at scale only raises pressure on marketers and CMOs to deliver effective campaigns and revenue.

By eliminating redundancies and confusion arising from multiple siloed solutions, Zoho Marketing Plus maximises productivity and teamwork, allowing marketers to stay nimble and collaborative amid evolving customer

needs.

When marketers aren't bogged down by operations, they can deliver creative campaigns that promote meaningful relationships between the brand and customers."

The new platform boasts advanced features including a centralised workplace, known as 'Brand Studio', AI-powered data analysis, integration with third-party solutions, a unified digital brand asset creation and repository, improved collaboration across campaigns as well as an accurate and real-time measurement for improved business intelligence and customer impact.

Inaugural World Utilities Congress ends in Abu Dhabi

Held under the patronage of Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, member of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council and chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Office, the inaugural edition of the World Utilities Congress saw a successful conclusion on the third and final day of the event.

The three-day exhibition and conference held in Abu Dhabi, hosted by TAQA and organised by DMG Events, gathered over 10,000 trade professionals and 120 exhibiting companies who sought to promote proactive measures to digitalise power and water systems, control emissions, and attract long-term capital investments.

The Congress brought together over 200 industry expert speakers, over 1000 conference delegates, and hosted more than 50 strategic and technical conference sessions, including a Nuclear Energy Leadership Forum, a press release said.

Over the course of three days, leaders and industry experts from the region, and around the world, tackled critical issues and explored solutions during the conference sessions, enabling the continued pursuit of a greener present and future. The sessions also shed light on the importance of em-



bedding future-focused digital transformation strategies as a response to evolving market and customer needs.

On day three, topics such as 'Efficient integration of renewable energy into power grids', 'Entering the golden age of utility reinvention - how is digitalisation redefining utility business models?', 'Integrated power and water strategies for smart cities development' and more were also discussed.

Jasim Husain Thabet, TAQA's Group CEO and managing director, and host company of the event, said, "The inaugural edition of the World Utilities Congress was a huge success, which speaks not only to the critical importance our sector plays in delivering a more sustainable future, but also to the unique position of Abu Dhabi to enable this change. In partnership with dmgevents, we hosted more than 10,000

visitors, two ministerial sessions and strategic and technical discussions that are helping shape the future of the utilities industry. I would like to thank our partners, sponsors and peers who, through collaboration and a deep-seated commitment to knowledge-sharing, made this inaugural event a success."

Christopher Hudson, president from DMG Events, the organisers of the World Utility Congress, said, "The success of

the first World Utilities Congress in Abu Dhabi has been incredible to see. In organising this event, we have helped our peers from around the world to learn from each other and to work together for a sustainable future.

The World Utilities Congress has been the perfect opportunity for the sector to showcase ideas, solutions and best practice in front of an audience that matters."



Bank Muscat launches limited edition prepaid card

In celebration of the countdown to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Bank Muscat has announced the launch of an exclusive limited edition Visa prepaid card in partnership with Visa.

Customers can apply via Mobile or Internet Banking for the Visa card, which has been designed as a collector's item and can be used for both, local and global payments, a press release said.

Abdullah Tamman al Mashaani, general manager - Products, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat Visa prepaid cards continue to lead local and regional benchmarks in providing a secure and convenient payment option for our customers.

The growth of Bank Muscat's Visa prepaid cards has been impressive over the years, and we continue our leadership in launching Visa payment products which fulfil the financial needs of our customers."

It is important to note that the Visa prepaid card features contactless payment technology and can be managed easily through the bank's mobile banking app or Internet banking. Customers can apply for a personalised

card with its unique design, load funds, and top it up instantly, besides reviewing transactions to manage their expenses. In addition, the cards can be used for secure online payments apart from PoS payments and ATM withdrawals.

Bank Muscat's contactless Visa prepaid cards are a popular option for customers to complete their low-value point-of-sale (POS) transactions at groceries and supermarkets with a simple tap of the POS terminal without the need to enter their personal identification number (PIN) for transactions up to RO40. Recently, Bank Muscat launched an option for customers to apply for Visa Prepaid Cards through Internet or Mobile banking.

The new process continues the bank's customer-centric strategy of launching new payment products and services that improve financial inclusion and offer new, convenient and highly secure e-payment options. The bank has stated that it will continue to launch new digital payment services and platforms to further enhance the ease of banking and customer convenience.

Harvard Business School Club hosts president of Oman Investment Authority

Abdulsalam al Murshidi, president of Oman Investment Authority, explained that in the world of business and economy, we must learn from great leaders who have achieved significant success. Leadership is the beating heart of all organisations and some have tended to define it as a set of personal qualities, while others have tended to define it as a mandate and official authority, while other studies state that

leadership is the behaviour, interaction and influence one has on others. This was touched upon during Murshidi's speech while hosting an open dialogue session at a gathering organised by Harvard Business School Club of the GCC, represented by its chair Sulaiman bin Hamad al Harthi.

Murshidi added, "We often meet and rave about the success of projects that we have worked on, whether in governmental or



Abdulsalam al Murshidi

semi-governmental institutions, but we rarely talk about the people behind those successes that are comparable if not superior to

the hidden soldiers behind the scenes of global success stories.

"We make a continuous effort to vigilantly study global experiences that give us ideas and inspire us in the same context via looking at the mechanism and vision through which the successful steps were implemented so that we can apply the same in our institutions, to attract, develop, train, and retain talented people to create leaders for the future.

Our investment strategy depends, above all, on the competence and experience of our employees, who are one of the most important factors for our success. Whoever has the qualities of a leader, has a passion for change."

The Harvard Business School Club for the GCC is lead by its Chairman, Mr Sulaiman Hamad Al Harthi, the CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank.



Grand 5x5 basketball concludes on May 13

The Grand Group 5x5 Basketball Tournament for the Filipino community concluded at the Al Amal Club hall on May 13. Dr Mohammad bin Humaid al Alawi, administration and finance manager at Jalaan Bani Bu Ali Hospital, was the chief guest.

The tournament, organised by the Grand Global Investment Company with the aim of motivating individuals and society as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility activity, had been on for the past five months.

The teams were divided into



Ali al Alawi, chief organiser

two divisions A and B - division A included six strong teams and division B included 10 teams. The first four teams qualified from each division.

Bentayga Extended Wheelbase on the cards

Bentley is bringing a new focus on wellness to its model range with the launch of the Bentayga Extended Wheelbase - a new grand touring SUV that builds on the strengths of the Bentayga to become a new luxury flagship, extending the latest product range to five models.

So much more than just a stretch, the Bentayga Extended Wheelbase is the result of a nine-figure investment by Bentley to create a new model that provides the best rear cabin experience since a Mulsanne, whilst retaining the Bentley hallmarks of effortless performance, exquisite handcraftsmanship, and endless personalisation, a press release said.

The success of the Bentayga defined and enabled the growth of the luxury SUV market. Since the first unveiling in 2015, the Bentayga has proved its credibility through genuine off-road capability, hybrid technology, record-breaking performance, and bespoke specifications.

The Extended Wheelbase will be responsible for up to 45% of all Bentayga sales when it goes on sale later this year.

The Bentayga will therefore remain Bentley's number one model, and the world's most successful and in-demand luxury SUV.

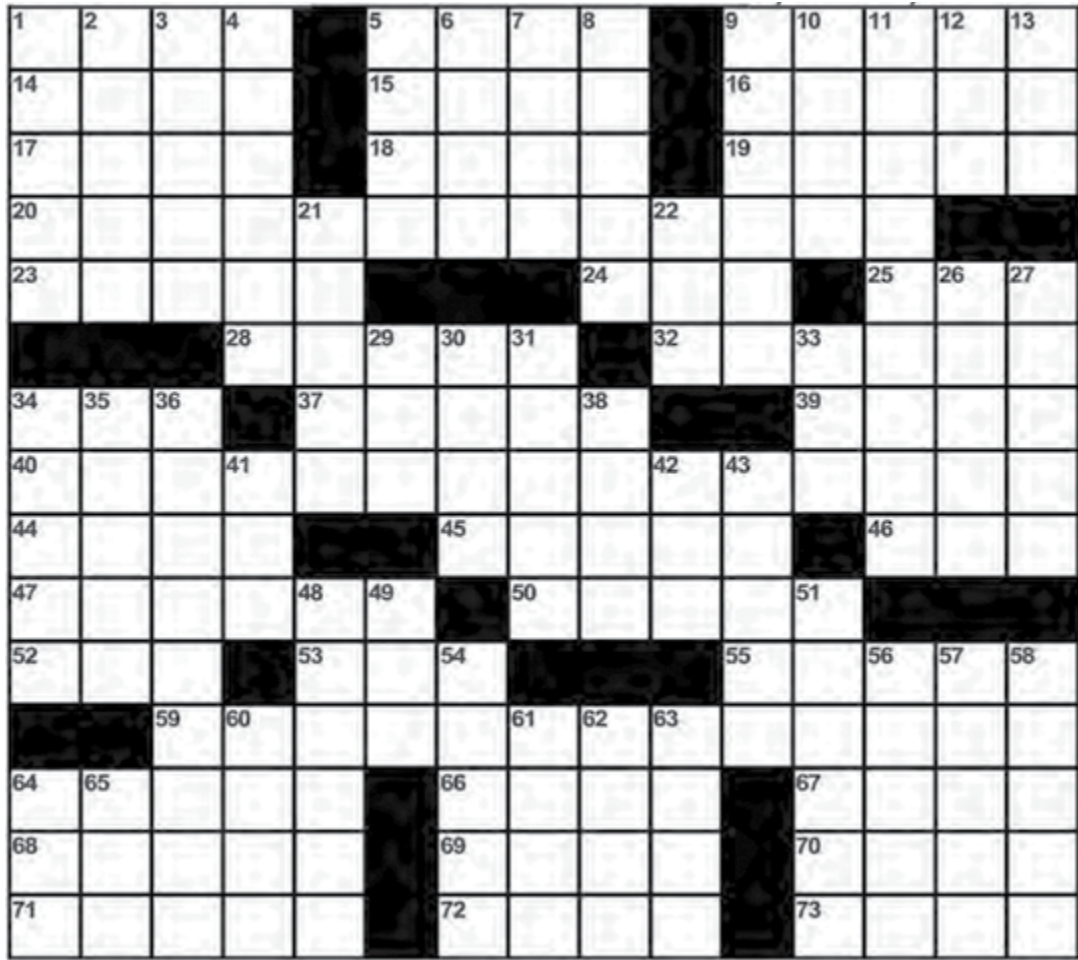
Adrian Hallmark, chairman



and chief executive of Bentley Motors, said, "The Bentayga Extended Wheelbase is our first car truly dedicated to the onboard wellness of its occupants.

Every Bentley gets you to your destination feeling more relaxed than when you started your journey, and yet with the Extended Wheelbase we've been able to go even further, thanks to the adoption of world-first wellness technology embedded within our unrivalled interior cabin design."

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) English dude
 - 5) Instrument with some heft
 - 9) Not a heavyweight
 - 14) Frau's partner
 - 15) Got dirty going home?
 - 16) Blotto often
 - 17) Jason's ship
 - 18) Title character with the
 - 19) Battery terminal
 - 20) Dilly-dalliers' activities rescheduling
 - 23) "Come in!"
 - 24) " ... and you know the rest"
 - 25) Spigot
 - 28) Perform incorrectly
 - 32) Force out of office
 - 34) Word with "photo" or "black"
 - 37) Extremely long films "home"
 - 39) Voice in the choir
 - 72) Cushiony forest growth
 - 40) The art of putting things off for tomorrow
 - 44) Member of the Jackson 5
 - 45) Glitterati member,
- briefly
 - 46) Bawl
 - 47) Acted badly
 - 50) Like illegally parked cars,often
 - 52) Don'ts partners
 - 53) "Much _ About Nothing"
 - 55) Come to mind
 - 59) Delays leading to
 - 64) Bloodhound's guide
 - 66) Material in a gym
 - 67) Mine entrance
 - 68) At a good clip, in poetry
 - 69) Pre-owned
 - 70) 5,280 feet
 - 71) Word with "film" or "home"
 - 72) Cushiony forest growth
 - 73) Fortune-teller, supposedly

DOWN

 - 1) Make sore by rubbing
 - 2) "Great white" bird
 - 3) Slanguage
 - 4) For the time being
 - 5) The last one was Nicholas II
 - 6) Arm bone
 - 7) Type of cherry
 - 8) "Love is blind," e.g.
- 9) Batting position
 - 10) Type of valuable vase
 - 11) Relating to the Pope
 - 12) Hallucinogenic drug
 - 13) Caustic drain opener
 - 21) Less humid
 - 22) "... be an honor"
 - 26) Mary of "The Maltese Falcon"
 - 27) Indiana's state flower
 - 29) Where to get a muddy face
 - 30) LP or CD, e.g.
 - 31) Santa's reindeer, collectively
 - 33) Butter unit
 - 34) Made a choice
 - 35) First-rate, slangily
 - 36) In a way
 - 38) Fodder holder on a farm
 - 41) Bunk
 - 42) Not yet unwrapped
 - 43) Crosswise, on deck
 - 48) Resurrection Day
 - 49) Banned bug killer
 - 51) Enters REM sleep
 - 54) Codeine source
 - 56) Low-budget film, often
 - 57) Attendance counter
 - 58) Banana oil, for one
- 60) Fairy-tale opener
 - 61) About
 - 62) Words of denial
 - 63) Concludes
 - 64) First name on "Cheers"
 - 65) Bean counter, for short

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You don't usually travel much unless it's for business, but at the moment you're all too happy to hop on a train, bus, or plane to go anywhere but your current location. Yes, you definitely need a change of scenery.

The good news is you know it, you can afford it, and you'll be on your way soon. Oh, and how about inviting a travel companion along to make it even more fun?

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You've been playing for days, and you've enjoyed every minute of it, but now it's time to settle down a bit. Not that that you'll mind, just this once. Your energy stores are low, and you're in the mood to chill out and regroup. Yes, you really are. Even perpetually impetuous people like you occasionally need to rest. It's okay.

There's no shame in taking a break.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

After the behavior you've been exhibiting recently, your dear ones have absolutely no idea what to expect from you, which is just the way you like it.

Today, just for a change, you could do a rapid about-face and suddenly become quite concerned with duties, responsibilities, and meticulous attention to details. That'll teach them to think they have you all figured out!

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Someone you've been close to for years has just done something wonderful for you, but you may not know about it for quite some time.

Since you're as perceptive as anyone could possibly be, however, you'll have an inkling, which gives you the perfect opportunity to leave a thoughtful gift on their doorstep or return the favor from behind the scenes.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Each of the issues you'll have to deal with today may not be clear at first, but some will be. Deal with the crystal clear stuff right away and get it out of the way. Save the rest of your day to tackle the other stuff. The gray areas will be fun to explore, so make sure you give yourself all the time you can to enjoy them! Pushing yourself to do too much too quickly will only end in problems. Go slowly and have fun!

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Those unforeseen obstacles are still on the menu. But if you can successfully navigate your way through today (which might be tricky, especially if a dear one's jealousy or resentfulness rears its ugly little head) and tomorrow (when you'll probably be working when you'd much rather be playing), you'll be golden. Just grin and bear it. Let the others be as cranky as they like. You don't have to encourage them.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You've never been tough to talk into traveling, and today won't be any different. It will be just right, in fact, because you're feeling more than a little bit like breaking out of a rut, and you know exactly how to do it. Sweden? Egypt? Who knows? Don't decide until you absolutely have to. Get as much information as you can, and then choose the place that's most tantalizing. Oh, and keep in mind that you may need some extra time to get where you're going.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

One of the newer people on the scene is going to be feeling extra sensitive today, so be aware that what you think is a silly joke could come off as insulting to them. And if they're doing something wrong, do your best not to be too critical about it. Let them figure things out on their own. It won't take long. The extra effort you put into being sensitive to their needs will be worth it when they relax, open up, and show you what a cool person they actually are.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

A little bit of worrying about money is a healthy thing, but there's no sense in obsessing about it. Better yet, it isn't necessary. You've been keeping a careful eye on things for some time now, and it's probably been paying off. Literally. Besides, everyone spends a little more than they should at some point. And isn't there a special someone you'll soon see who you'd like to spoil just a tad?

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Still putting your nose to the grindstone? Still forgetting about what you love best? Your partner, your friends, and socializing, for example? Well, it's time to stop that right now. Your loved ones will no doubt remind you of that tonight. Don't be too upset if they give you a good talking to. They have your own best interests at heart and maybe just a little selfishness on their part because they miss you.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

There could be some drama whirling around you today, but you'll probably enjoy all of it! Your flexibility is the key ingredient. It will enable you to see the humor in someone's rant to such an extent that you might have a hard time holding back a giggle fit. And it will be your flexibility that helps you find an instant solution to a problem that someone is freaking out about. You'll be quick on your feet and ready for anything.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

On the one hand, you're still willing to be patient. On the other, you're feeling a bit like a volcano on a bad day. Whether you explode or not is one thing, but it's definitely time to let them know exactly how much fire you can spout. That little-known secret about you is one that you might want to share now. You have one heck of a temper. It doesn't show up much, but when it does, stand back.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which extra element did Einstein include in his understanding of general relativity, which he had not previously included in the theory he published in 1905 of special relativity?
- A. Electromagnetism

B. Time

C. Mass-energy equivalence

D. Gravity
02. Anthony Wilding is the only New Zealander in what sport's Hall of Fame?
- A. Surfing

B. Golf

C. Tennis

D. Archery
03. Who was shot by Valery Solanas on 3 June 1968?
- A. Larry Hagman

B. John Lennon

C. Ronald Reagan

D. Andy Warhol

Answers: 1.D 2.C 3.D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

F	T	A	E
F	Y	E	S
E	A	N	S
I	S	B	D

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

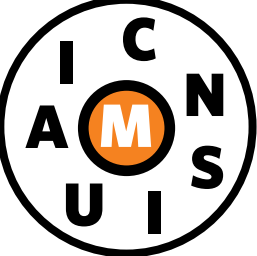
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Israeli air strike kills 5 people in central Syria: State media

Damascus, Syria - An Israeli air strike on central Syria killed five people including a civilian, Syrian state media said on Friday.

"The Israeli enemy carried out air strikes with a burst of missiles... targeting some points in the central region," the official news agency SANA said, quoting a military source.

"The aggression resulted in the death of five martyrs".

It cited the military source as adding that seven people were wounded including a child, and there were material losses.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said that 'four soldiers in the regime's 'air defence' crew, including an officer with the rank of lieutenant, were killed."

It added that seven soldiers were wounded.

'Israeli warplanes launched at least eight missiles on weapons depots and Iranian sites in the Masyaf area' in the central province of Hama, said the British-based Observatory, which relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria.

The latest strike follows one on April 27 which, according to the Observatory, killed 10 combatants, among them six Syrian soldiers, in the deadliest such raid since the start of 2022.

It said an ammunition depot and several positions linked to



Members of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) monitoring the Syrian side of the border with Israel, following an Israeli air strike on central Syria, on Saturday (AFP)

Iran's military presence in Syria were among the targets.

Government media in Syria confirmed four casualties in those strikes.

The Israeli army told AFP on Friday that they do not comment on reports in the foreign media.

While Israel rarely comments on individual strikes in Syria, it has acknowledged mounting hundreds since 2011, targeting

government positions as well as allied Iran-backed forces and Shi-ite group Hezbollah.

The Israeli military has defended them as necessary to prevent its arch-foe Iran from gaining a foothold on its doorstep.

In March, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said that an Israeli rocket strike had killed two Guards officers in Syria.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps is the ideological arm of the Iranian military and the elite Quds Force is the Guards' foreign operations arm, listed as a terrorist group by the US. Iran says it has deployed its forces in Syria at the invitation of Damascus and only as advisers.

The conflict in Syria started in 2011 with the brutal repression of peaceful protests and escalated

to pull in foreign powers and global militants.

It has killed nearly 500,000 people and displaced half of the country's population.

Russia's military intervention in the Syria conflict in 2015 is what turned the momentum in favour of President Bashar al-Assad, whose forces once only controlled a fifth of the country. AFP

Turkey opposes NATO membership for Finland, Sweden

Istanbul, Turkey - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said Turkey did not have a 'positive opinion' on Finland and Sweden joining NATO, throwing up a potential obstacle for the nations' membership bid.

The leader of NATO-member Turkey spoke ahead of expected confirmations from the Nordic nations on Sunday that they will apply to join the Western military alliance.

Erdogan accused both countries of harbouring 'terrorist organisations' in his unfavourable assessment of the membership bids.

"We do not have a positive opinion," Erdogan told journalists after Friday prayers in Istanbul.

"Scandinavian countries are like a guesthouse for terror organisations," he said.

Turkey has long accused Nordic countries, especially Sweden which has a strong Turkish immigrant community, of harbouring extremist Kurdish groups as well as supporters of Fethullah Gulen, a US-based preacher wanted over a failed 2016 coup.

Erdogan cited a 'mistake' made by Turkey's former rulers who okayed Greece's NATO membership in 1952.

"We, as Turkey, do not want to make a second mistake on this issue," he said.

Unanimous approval needed

Moscow's February 24 invasion of Ukraine has swung political and public opinion in Finland and Sweden in favour of membership as a deterrent against Russian aggression.

Both countries have long co-operated with NATO and are expected to be able to join the alliance quickly.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg has repeatedly said they would be welcomed 'with open arms'.

Turkey's response is the first dissenting voice against the two Nordic countries' NATO prospects.

Sweden's and Finland's foreign ministers responded on Friday by saying they were hoping to meet their Turkish counterpart in Berlin at an informal meeting of NATO foreign ministers on Saturday.

"We will then have the opportunity to discuss a potential



Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AFP)

Swedish NATO application," Sweden's foreign minister Ann Linde said in a statement to AFP, also noting the 'Turkish government had not delivered this type of message directly to us'.

Speaking at a Helsinki press conference, Finland's Pekka Haavisto also said he hoped to meet Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu during the weekend to 'continue our discussion'. Stockholm and Helsinki have cranked up their international contacts to seek support for their potential bids.

Once a country has decided to apply for NATO membership, the alliance's 30 members must agree unanimously to extend a formal invitation, followed by membership negotiations.

The final approval could then take place at a NATO summit in Madrid at the end of June. The 30 member states would then have to ratify the decision.

Turkey, which enjoys good relations with Kyiv and Moscow, has been keen to play a mediating role to end the conflict and has offered to host a leaders' summit.

Ankara has supplied Ukraine with combat drones but has shied away from slapping sanctions on Russia alongside Western allies.

Erdogan's comments may also raise tensions with France, whose President Emmanuel Macron has said NATO was undergoing 'brain death' partly due to Turkey's behaviour.

Macron has made clear he supports Finland's bid as does the United States.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Friday Washington was 'working to clarify Turkey's position', adding there was 'broad support' for the two countries' joining the alliance. AFP

27 killed in massive fire in Indian capital

New Delhi, India - At least 27 people died and dozens more were injured in a massive fire in a building in the Indian capital New Delhi on Friday, emergency services said.

The large fire broke out at a four-storey commercial building in west Delhi in the late afternoon, but its cause was not immediately clear. "Twenty-seven charred bodies were recovered from the building and almost two dozen injured are undergoing treatment," Satpal Bharadwaj, who was in charge of operations for the Delhi Fire Service at the scene, told AFP.

Bharadwaj said there were about 70 people in the building when the blaze erupted.

"There was no fire exit and



Onlookers gather outside a burned down commercial building a day after a fire broke out, in New Delhi on Saturday (AFP)

most of the people died due to asphyxiation," he said, adding that more would be known after autopsies could be conducted.

The official said 'almost two dozen' were injured and under-

going treatment, but earlier, deputy chief fire officer Sunil Choudhary told AFP that the number of injured stood at 'more than 25 people'.

Choudhary added that some

had jumped from the burning building. Broadcaster NDTV, meanwhile, reported that more than 40 people had sustained burns and were hospitalised.

While Bharadwaj said the cause was still not known, he did say the building was used for 'offices and storage for paper packing material'. NDTV quoted police official Sameer Sharma as saying the building housed the office of a security camera and router manufacturing company.

Several officials said they believed the death toll could rise.

More than 30 fire trucks were at the scene, along with ambulances. Amit Mahajan, whose cousin and nephew were missing after the fire, told AFP they had been at the building to 'train

workers'. "I have visited all the nearby hospitals but there is no trace of them. We are not sure about their safety or whereabouts," he said.

Fires are common in India due to poor building practices, overcrowding and a lack of adherence to safety regulations.

A police officer told AFP on condition of anonymity that one of the office owners has been detained for questioning.

The officer was unable to explain the reasons for his detention but said that more arrests could follow. The Indian capital of 20mn people is currently suffering through a heatwave, with temperatures of up to 46 Celsius recorded in some places. AFP

Palestinian wounded in police clash dies

Jerusalem - A Palestinian man died on Saturday of wounds suffered last month during clashes with Israeli police at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound, an Israeli hospital said.

Walid al-Sharif, 23, was taken to Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital with a 'head injury' on April 22 and he was 'pronounced dead this morning', the hospital said in a statement.

His family confirmed his death in an audio message shared with journalists. Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem is Islam's third-holiest site which is also the most holy site for Jews, who call it the Temple Mount. Palestinians have been angered by an uptick in Jewish visits to the compound, where by longstanding convention Jews may go but are not allowed to pray.

AFP

Myanmar monks celebrate Buddha's birthday at junta event

Mandalay, Myanmar - Thousands of monks celebrated the birth of Buddha at a junta-organised event in Mandalay on Saturday, highlighting a division in the clergy since last year's coup in Myanmar.

Since the coup that ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, more than 1,800 people have died in a brutal military crackdown on dissent, according to a monitoring group.

Some monks have joined street protests opposing the power grab, while other religious leaders have defended the military junta.

Ahead of Buddha's birthday, a group of Mandalay monks opposed to the coup urged other holy men not to participate in the junta-organised event.

"They are ogres, but they pretend to be human beings," the Sangha Mandalay monk group said in a Facebook post.

"They have bloody hands... It is time for our Buddhist monks to oppose this food donation event."

The last time the event was held in 2019, prior to pandemic



Monks line up to receive alms during a military junta-organised gathering to mark the Buddha's Birthday in Mandalay on Saturday (AFP)

disruptions, an estimated 30,000 monks attended.

Government officials and representatives from a military-linked political party hosted the religious ceremony near a former royal palace on Saturday - the day coinciding with a full moon.

Lined up in long rows of chairs, 10,264 monks in crimson and saffron robes listened to prayers, chanted and filed past officials and their family members to collect rice and cash donations.

Mandalay monk Ugga Nyana insisted participation in cere-

mony was not a political statement, and the clergymen came in the name of love.

"We are coming to this ceremony just to think of peace for people and our country," he told AFP.

"There is nothing in my mind about political party issues."

Moral authority

A monastic code prohibits some 300,000 of the clergy in Myanmar from voting or taking part in political demonstrations.

But monks in the Buddhist-majority country are seen as having supreme moral authority, and at times have rallied opposition

to military regimes that ruled Myanmar for 50 years before its decade of democracy.

The 2021 coup exposed factions in the monkhood, with hardline nationalist senior clerics supporting the military, which they believe is staving off what they say is a slow Islamic takeover - despite Muslims making up less than five per cent of the population.

Myanmar's military is accused of committing genocide against the mostly Muslim Rohingya minority in 2017. Since then, about 740,000 people have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh to escape the violence. Buddha's birthday is celebrated in other parts of Asia - including India, Sri Lanka, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia.

On Saturday, devotees in Yangon visited the famous Shwedagon Pagoda to mark the day as nuns in pink robes prayed.

Many poured water on a Maha-Bodhi tree at the pagoda and some released captive fish and birds to accrue good karma. AFP

COVID-19 outbreak causing ‘great upheaval’ in North Korea, says Kim

Seoul, South Korea - Leader Kim Jong Un says a COVID outbreak is causing ‘great upheaval’ in North Korea, which announced 21 new ‘fever’ deaths on Saturday.

Two days after confirming its first cases of COVID-19, the government said more than half a million people had been sickened nationwide.

Despite activating its ‘maximum emergency quarantine system’ to slow the spread of disease through its unvaccinated population, North Korea is now reporting tens of thousands of new cases daily.

On Friday, ‘over 174,440 persons had fever, at least 81,430 were fully recovered and 21 died in the country’, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

North Korea confirmed on Thursday that the highly contagious Omicron variant had been detected in the capital Pyongyang, with Kim ordering nationwide lockdowns.

It was the government’s first official admission of COVID cases and marked the failure of a two-year coronavirus blockade maintained at great economic cost since the start of the pandemic. From late April to May 13, more than 524,440 people have fallen sick with fever, KCNA said, with 27 deaths in total.

The report did not specify



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un taking part in Workers’ Party of Korea council to check the operational status of the maximum emergency measurement to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection in Pyongyang on Saturday (AFP)

whether the new cases and deaths had tested positive for COVID-19, but experts say the country will be struggling to test and diagnose on this scale.

North Korea has said only that one of the first six deaths it announced on Friday had tested positive for COVID-19.

“It’s not a stretch to consider these ‘fever’ cases to all be COVID-19, given the North’s lack of testing capacity,” said Cheong Seong-chang of the Sejong Institute. “The actual number of COVID cases could be higher than the fever figures due to

many asymptomatic cases,” he said, adding that the pace of infection was growing ‘very fast’.

‘Great upheaval’

Kim said on Saturday the ‘crisis’ was causing ‘great upheaval’, as he oversaw a second Politburo meeting in three days to discuss the situation, KCNA reported.

“The spread of malignant disease comes to be a great upheaval in our country since the founding of the DPRK,” he said, referring to North Korea by its official name. Kim is putting himself ‘front and centre’ of the

country’s COVID response, said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

“The language he’s used suggests the situation in North Korea is going to get worse before it gets better,” he told AFP.

“Engagers see this rhetoric preparing the way for international assistance, but Kim may be rallying a population on the verge of further sacrifice,” he added. The meeting of the nation’s top officials discussed medicine distribution and other ways of “minimising the losses in human lives”, KCNA said.

North Korea has a crumbling health system - one of the worst in the world - and no COVID vaccines, antiviral treatment drugs or mass testing capacity, experts say. But the country will ‘actively learn’ from China’s pandemic management strategy, Kim said, according to KCNA.

China, the world’s only major economy to still maintain a zero-COVID policy, is battling multiple Omicron outbreaks - with some major cities, including financial hub Shanghai, under stay-at-home orders.

North Korea has previously

turned down offers of COVID vaccines from China and the World Health Organization’s Covax scheme, but both Beijing and Seoul issued fresh offers of aid and vaccines this week.

Kim’s comments indicate North Korea ‘will try getting supplies from China’, said Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies.

It also looks likely Pyongyang ‘will adopt a Chinese-style antiviral response of regional lockdowns’, Yang added.

So far, Kim said on Saturday, North Korea’s outbreak was not ‘an uncontrollable spread among regions’ but transmission within areas that had been locked down, KCNA said. Despite its COVID outbreak, new satellite imagery indicates that North Korea has resumed construction at a long-dormant nuclear reactor.

“I can’t tell you when the reactor will be ready to go, but it is about 10x larger than the existing reactor at Yongbyon,” Jeffrey Lewis of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies wrote in a Twitter thread on Saturday.

It would produce 10 times more plutonium for nuclear weapons, he said, adding: “This would make good on Kim’s pledge to increase the number of nuclear weapons.”

AFP

NZ leader Ardern tests positive

Wellington, New Zealand - New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who has overseen her country’s world-leading response to the coronavirus pandemic, has tested positive for COVID-19, her office announced on Saturday.

Ardern’s symptoms are moderate and she will isolate at home for seven days, the government said in a statement.

She has already been in isolation since last Sunday, when her partner Clarke Gayford tested positive, and was due to resume her parliamentary duties on Monday.

New Zealand enforced one of the world’s most restrictive approaches to managing the initial COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, and its death toll of 892 remains among the lowest of developed nations.

However, it has experienced an Omicron surge since restrictions were loosened in March, with Ardern’s positive case among more than 50,000 recorded over the last week.

The statement said Ardern’s arrangements for her upcoming trade mission to the United States are unaffected.

Details of the trip are still to be confirmed, although she is scheduled to deliver the commencement address at Harvard University on May 26.

AFP



US President Joe Biden participates in the US-ASEAN Special Summit at the US State Department in Washington, DC, on Friday (AFP)

US for ‘a longterm commitment to Southeast Asia’

Washington, US - President Joe Biden on Friday promised a long-term commitment to Southeast Asia in the face of China’s growing clout as he met regional leaders for a first summit in Washington. Biden laid out US\$150mn in new initiatives and announced plans for the first full US ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in more than five years.

A region that ‘is free and open, stable and prosperous, and resilient and secure is what we’re all seeking,’ Biden told ASEAN leaders, a day after he kicked off the two-day summit with a White House dinner of poached chicken, ravioli and vanilla ice cream.

Vice President Kamala Harris, meeting ASEAN leaders for a working lunch, said the administration ‘recognises the vital strategic importance of your region’. “As an Indo-Pacific nation, the United States will be present and continue to be engaged in Southeast Asia for generations to come,” she said.

Biden said he would nominate Yohannes Abraham, the chief of staff of the National Security Council and a key aide during the presidential transition, as ambassador to ASEAN’s secretariat in Jakarta. The United States has not had a Senate-confirmed am-

bassador to ASEAN since Barack Obama’s presidency, with Donald Trump only nominating an envoy after losing the 2020 election.

Lacking trade policy

The Biden administration is hoping to demonstrate a sustained interest in Southeast Asia after months focused on repelling Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Biden took office saying that his top foreign policy priority would be the global competition with China, which has surpassed the United States as Southeast Asia’s top trading partner and has been increasingly assertive on territorial disputes in the region. Richard Fontaine, chief executive officer of the Center for a New American Security, said Biden’s summit pledges were bound to bring ‘uncomfortable comparisons’.

Chinese President Xi Jinping at his own virtual summit with ASEAN last year announced US\$1.5bn in COVID aid over three years, while the United States is preparing a US\$40bn package for embattled Ukraine.

“To complicate matters further, the United States lacks a trade policy in Asia, the region where it matters most,” Fontaine said.

AFP

Australia’s PM vows to ‘empathise’ more if re-elected

Sydney, Australia - Australia’s Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Saturday he will ‘empathise’ much more if he wins May 21 elections but was accused by the opposition of making a desperate political manoeuvre.

Morrison, whose conservative government lags in the opinion polls a week before the vote, admitted a day earlier that he had been a ‘bulldozer’ to get things done during the COVID-19 pandemic. “I know there are things that are going to have to change with the way I do things because we are moving into a different time,” he added.

On Saturday, Morrison renewed his promise of personal change.



Australian PM Scott Morrison (right) and leader of the opposition Anthony Albanese at the final leaders’ debate in Sydney last week (AFP)

The Australian leader said he would seek to ‘explain my motives and my concerns and empathise a lot more - but I tell you what, at the end of the day what matters is I get the job done’.

Morrison said he had to make unpopular decisions and act quickly during the pandemic, adding: “I am looking forward to changing the gears of our government.”

In a haze of disinfectant, China struggles with COVID

Shanghai, China - Leaving a fine mist of disinfectant in their wake, China’s hazmat-clad health workers are cleaning homes, roads, parcels and even people - but more than two years into the pandemic, experts say it is a futile measure against COVID-19.

China is tied to a zero-COVID strategy, wielding snap lockdowns, mass testing and lengthy quarantines as part of unrelenting efforts to quash virus outbreaks no matter the cost to the economy or freedoms of its people. Among its arsenal of virus controls is disinfectant spraying, which a top Shanghai official earlier this month lauded as a key part of a ‘grand assault’ on the virus.

Footage shows legions of ‘big whites’ - as health workers in hazmat suits are referred to in China - spraying apartments with a virus-killing haze after their inhabitants have been taken into state quarantine.

The sight has become one of the most visual expressions of China’s zero-COVID policy, which has taken on a political dimension as President Xi Jinping



A worker wearing personal protective equipment disinfects the entrance to a residential area on lockdown due to the recent COVID-19 outbreaks in Beijing last week (AFP)

has pegged the legitimacy of his leadership on protecting Chinese lives from COVID.

Personal possessions and home furnishings lie amid clouds of cleanser, the images show - while in other cases the targets are city streets, walls and parks.

But such labour-intensive campaigns are relatively pointless against a virus that spreads through droplets expelled in coughs and sneezes into the air, experts told AFP.

“Since infection through touching contaminated surfaces is not an important route of transmission, extensive and aggressive use of disinfectant is not necessary,” said Yanzhong Huang, senior fellow at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations.

Transmission through contaminated surfaces and objects is possible but comparatively rare.

The odds have not deterred

China’s disinfectant sprayers.

Shanghai alone has sterilised 13,000 areas as of May 2 under a policy targeting infected people’s homes, apartment blocks and ‘preventative’ disinfection of entire compounds, vice-mayor Liu Duo said.

The city has seethed for weeks under a shifting mosaic of lockdowns that have seen some of its 25mn residents scuffle with police and unleash a flood of fury and frustration on social media.

Beds, clothes, scooters

In one social media video verified by AFP, a hazmat-suited health worker brandishing a powerful hose sprays clouds of disinfectant on a resident’s bed, desk and clothes. Other clips show workers wandering through streets and housing compounds, casually spritzing walls, scooters - and even the ground while residents line up for tests.

One Shanghai resident told AFP his home was sterilised twice after they returned from quarantine, with his family being ordered to wait outside for an hour each time. Experts struggled to see the necessity of the measure for maintaining public health.

While the virus can transmit through surfaces, ‘it cannot survive long outside the human body, so it is unnecessary to sterilise outdoor surfaces’, Huang from the Council on Foreign Relations said.

“The widespread use of some chemical disinfectants, such as chlorine disinfectant, could have harmful impacts on human health (and) the environment.”

AFP

Fierce fighting in Ukraine's eastern region

Ukraine claims it is holding back a Russian assault in the Donbas region

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine on Saturday claimed it was holding back a Russian assault in the eastern Donbas region and vowed to extract its last remaining fighters from a besieged steel plant.

Ukraine's head of military intelligence predicted a turning point in the months ahead, and claimed that one of Europe's biggest conflicts since World War II could even be over by the end of the year.

Russia, which sent in troops to Ukraine on February 24, has increasingly turned its attention to eastern Ukraine since the end of March, after failing to take the capital Kyiv.

Western analysts believe President Vladimir Putin has his sights on annexing southern and eastern Ukraine in the months ahead but his troops have appeared to be encountering stiff resistance.

The governor of the eastern Lugansk region, Serhiy Gaidai, said Ukrainian forces had prevented Russian attempts to cross a river and encircle the city of Severodonetsk.



A rocket is launched from a truck-mounted multiple rocket launcher near Svyatohirsk, eastern Ukraine, on Saturday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

"There's heavy fighting on the border with Donetsk region," Gaidai said, reporting big Russian losses of equipment and personnel. "From interceptions (phone calls), we understand that a whole (Russian) battalion has refused to attack, because they see what's happening."

Aerial images showed dozens of destroyed armoured vehicles on the river bank and wrecked pontoon bridges.

'Counter-attack'
UK military intelligence also said

Russian forces had sustained heavy losses as they attempted the river crossing.

The highly risky manoeuvre reflected 'the pressure the Russian commanders are under to make progress in their operations in eastern Ukraine', it added.

Russian forces had 'failed to make any significant advances despite concentrating forces in this area', it said.

In Washington, a senior US defence official said most of the activity was now in the Donbas area. Kharkiv regional governor Oleh Synegubov meanwhile said in a video on Telegram that Ukrainian forces were counter-attacking in the direction of the northeastern city of Izium.

The Ukrainian General Staff said troops had managed to push Russian troops out of the Kharkiv,

a priority target for Moscow.

"The enemy's main efforts are focused on ensuring the withdrawal of its units from the city of Kharkiv," a spokesman said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday said his troops would fight to recapture all occupied territory, and those under siege.

That included those in the southern port city of Mariupol, where the last defenders are holed up in the vast Azovstal steelworks.

"Currently, very difficult negotiations are under way on the next stage of the evacuation mission - the rescue of the seriously wounded, medics. It is a large number of people," he said.

Women, children and the elderly who had taken refuge in the tunnels and bunkers in the Azovstal plant were evacuated at the end of April with the help of the United Nations and Red Cross.

The Ukrainian General Staff said in an update on Saturday that Russian forces continued 'to blockade our units near the Azovstal plant' and carried out 'massive artillery and air strikes'.

From inside, Sviatoslav Palamar, one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Azov regiment, told the online Kyiv Security Forum there were 600 wounded there and pleaded for help to evacuate them.

AFP

G7 says it will not recognise borders redrawn by Russia

Wangels, Germany - The Group of Seven industrialised nations said on Saturday they would never recognise the borders Russia is trying to shift by force in its war against Ukraine and pledged enduring support for Kyiv.

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 but Kyiv's forces managed to push Moscow's troops back from the capital. The conflict is now well into its third month.

"We will never recognise borders Russia has attempted to change by military aggression, and will uphold our engagement in the support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea, and all states," the G7 foreign ministers said in a statement after three days of talks in northern Germany.

The ministers were joined in the resort of Wangels by their counterparts from Ukraine and Moldova, as well as EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

In their joint statement, they vowed to expand sanctions to include sectors on which Russia is



Canadian FM Melanie Joly and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell shake hands during G7 FMs' meeting in Wangels, Germany, on Saturday (AFP)

We reaffirm our determination to further increase economic and political pressure on Russia, continuing to act in unity

G7 FOREIGN MINISTERS

dependent and keep supplying Ukraine with weapons to help it repel Russia's invasion.

"We reaffirm our determina-

tion to further increase economic and political pressure on Russia, continuing to act in unity," they said. When asked if allies want to see Russia pushed out of Crimea - annexed in 2014 - as well, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said it should be up to Ukraine to 'decide by themselves about their country'.

"It's their territory and we support every measure and every step they are taking to ensure that people in Ukraine... can live as everybody else in Europe again - in peace but also in security and

freedom in their own country," said Baerbock, whose country currently holds the presidency of the G7.

'Coordinated response'
Western countries have supplied Ukraine with artillery, anti-aircraft missiles and anti-tank weapons, among others.

Borrell had also on Friday pledged an extra half a billion euros in EU military aid to help Kyiv repel the Russian invasion, but Kyiv has been pushing allies for more support.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on Friday said he has asked the G7 to seize Russian assets and hand them over to Ukraine. Baerbock noted that Canada has already taken the lead in taking such a measure but she said Europe is bound by different legal imperatives that would have to be navigated.

"If we were to take this path... it would have to be done in such a way that it stands up to our law," said Baerbock.

AFP

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka begins 'unity' government sans opposition

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka on Saturday named the first ministers of a 'unity' government tasked with rescuing the country from its crippling economic crisis, but which has failed to secure opposition support.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, appointed on Thursday, has attempted to put together a cross-party coalition that can begin mending the island nation's decimated finances.

But opposition parties have called his premiership illegitimate and some lawmakers have demanded fresh elections.

Wickremesinghe has instead been forced to rely on the support of lawmakers allied to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, whose administration is blamed by many for leading Sri Lanka's economy to the brink of collapse.

Rajapaksa's office announced the appointment of four ministers on Saturday including Gamini Peiris, who returns to the foreign ministry just days after losing his job when the previous cabinet was dissolved.

Peiris and the other three appointees - for public administra-



Sri Lanka's new PM Ranil Wickremesinghe (centre) visits a Buddhist temple after his swearing in ceremony in Colombo on Thursday (AFP)

tion, urban development and energy - are all members of Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party.

The all-important finance ministry post remains vacant at a time when Sri Lanka is in negotiations for a much-needed International Monetary Fund bailout.

Earlier on Saturday, legislators from the SLPP held a closed-door meeting where they resolved to

support the new prime minister.

"We have misgivings about Wickremesinghe, but in the national interest to pull the country out of the economic mess, we decided to support the PM," one party lawmaker told AFP.

The main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) and four other parties have refused to support the government while Rajapaksa remains president.

AFP

Civilians flee fighting in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley

Kabul, Afghanistan - Scores of civilians have fled fighting in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley after an insurgent group launched an offensive against Taliban forces, residents said on Saturday.

The Panjshir Valley is famed for being a site of resistance by Afghans against Soviet forces in the 1980s and as a base for rebels opposed to Taliban rule during the Islamists' first stint in power in the late 1990s.

The National Resistance Front (NRF) were the last to hold out against the Taliban's takeover of the country last year by retreating to the valley.

Headed by the son of late anti-Taliban commander

Ahmad Shah Massoud, NRF forces last week announced an offensive against the Taliban - their first since the hardline Islamists seized power in August. Both sides claim to have killed dozens of each other's fighters in recent days.

"We could only pick up one or two items of clothing," Lutfullah Bari told AFP, saying he fled with dozens of families.

"Like us... (the families) are now living with their relatives in different areas of Kabul," he added.

Farid Ahmad, a father-of-10, said he left his district with several other people because of fighting.

AFP

Iraq exhumes Saddam-era victims from mass grave

Najaf, Iraq - Iraqi authorities have exhumed the remains of 15 people from a mass grave believed to hold dozens more likely killed under dictator Saddam Hussein, an official said on Saturday.

The mass grave was first discovered in April near the southern city of Najaf, during work to build a residential compound.

It is believed to date back to the 1990s, when Saddam unleashed a deadly campaign against members of the majority Shiite Muslim community in southern Iraq that left nearly 100,000 dead.

"There could be 100 victims in this grave. It is an estimation, the number could be higher due to the large size of the area," said Abdul Ilah al-Naeli, who heads a government foundation tasked



Forensic experts working for the Iraqi authorities in a mass grave near city of Najaf, on Saturday (AFP)

with finding mass graves and identifying the remains.

Calling the burial 'the scene of the crime', Naeli said the mass

grave dates back to the '1991 popular (Shiite) uprising' against Saddam. An AFP correspondent saw skulls and other human re-

mains near the construction site where cement buildings have been erected.

According to Iraqi authorities,

Saddam's regime forcibly disappeared more than one million people - including from the Kurdish minority - in the 1980s and 1990s, and many of their families are still trying to ascertain what happened to them.

Iraq pays tribute to the missing on May 16, which is known in the war-racked country as the National Day of Mass Graves.

Saddam was toppled in the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and executed in December 2006 after being convicted by an Iraqi court of crimes against humanity.

The oil-rich country has been hit by waves of conflict in subsequent decades, culminating in the fight against the Islamic State militant group, which ended in 2017.

AFP

Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi eyes top finish in Jordan Rally

The talented youngster is currently placed third in the Middle East Rally Championship standings

Muscat, Oman - Talented youngster Abdullah al Rawahi is aiming a podium finish at the Jordan International Rally, the fourth round of Middle East Rally Championship, to be held from May 19 to 21.

Al Rawahi, driving a Skoda Fabia R5, and his Jordanian co-driver Atta al Hamood are currently ranked third in MERC

best efforts to come back with a good result from Jordan. The 25-year Omani, sponsored by Ministry of Culture, Sports, Youth, Sohar International and Al Manar Financial Investments and Motel, was hoping that his thorough knowledge of the terrains and stages, the support of his Jordanian base and co-driver Atta Al Hamood,

The Jordan leg of Middle East Rally Championship consists of 12 stages alongside Jordan River and Dead Sea area, with six stages to be held on Friday and the rest scheduled for Saturday

standings after their early retirement due to technical problems in the Kuwait Rally in March. The Jordan leg consists of 12 stages alongside Jordan River and Dead Sea area, with six stages will be held on Friday and the rest scheduled for Saturday.

Al Rawahi, who is on 54 points, said he would put in his

who is a local, would help him put in an impressive performance. Meanwhile, the other Omani driver Zakaria al Amri will give the rally a miss. Al Amri had registered in the entry list in the beginning, but he suddenly withdrew due to lack of financing and support.



Abdullah al Rawahi said he was hoping that his thorough knowledge of the terrains and stages in Jordan would help him put in an impressive performance

Oman's Sufyan to play in T20 tournament in USA

Muscat — Oman's experienced cricketer Sufyan Mehmood is all set to showcase his potential at the forthcoming Unity Cup T20 tournament in Maryland, USA, from May 24-31.

The allrounder, who represented Oman in the past, has been performing consistently in the shorter formats of the game.

Organised by 22 Yards Cricket Club in the USA, this private tournament is into its second edition. A total prize money of US\$130,000 is on offer for the 16 participating teams.

Sufyan will be rubbing shoulders with international cricketers like Unmukt Chand, Mohammad Asif, Corey Anderson and Liam Plunkett to name a few.

Sufyan has been flying Oman's flag high in various T20 and T10 tournaments in the past, having featured in teams during tournaments in



Sufyan Mehmood

Nepal, Qatar, Singapore and USA.

He represents Renaissance CT in the domestic league and was among the top-three wicket-takers in the inaugural Oman D10 league held in March, 2022.

Ahead of his travel, Sufyan thanked Renaissance CT management and his employers for giving him an opportunity to compete with some of the best players in the world.

South Korea dethrone China in thriller to win Uber Cup

Bangkok, Thailand - South Korea stunned defending champions China to win badminton's prestigious Uber Cup on Saturday in an epic battle that went down to the wire in Bangkok.

The holders were aiming for a 16th title in the women's team championship but with the countries deadlocked at 2-2 it all boiled down to a singles match between China's 15th-ranked Wang Zhiyi and 46th-ranked Sim Yu-jin.

Sim, who turned 23 on Friday,

sprang an upset by beating Wang 28-26, 18-21, 21-8 in a thrilling 88 minutes - and with it South Korea's first Uber Cup crown in 12 years.

It was a hugely disappointing conclusion for China, who had jumped out to an early lead in the tie when Chen Yufei sealed a spectacular come-from-behind win against An Se-young in a marathon match full of drama.

Chen, the world number three and Tokyo Olympic gold medalist, went down 21-17 in the open-



South Korea's Kim Hye-jeong (L) and Kong Hee-yong (R) celebrate after beating China's Huang Dongping and Li Wenmei (AFP)

ing game to fourth-ranked An. An built a five-point lead early in the second game but Chen roared back to take that game 21-15 and sealed the decider 22-20 despite suffering an injury scare to her ankle. An, who is still only 20, had her own problem with cramp in her right hamstring and both players collapsed on the court in exhaustion after 91 minutes of gruelling action. Indonesia play India in Sunday's Thomas Cup. AFP

Swiatek demolishes Sabalenka to make Rome final



Iga Swiatek celebrates after defeating Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka (AFP)

Rome, Italy - Iga Swiatek cruised into the final of the Italian Open on Saturday after crushing Aryna Sabalenka in straight sets 6-2, 6-1 to put her one game from a fifth straight tournament win.

World number one Swiatek swatted Sabalenka aside in one hour, 16 minutes in Rome to claim her 27th win on the bounce, a tally last reached by Serena Williams in 2015.

Pole Swiatek is the reigning

champion in Rome and favourite for the French Open later this month.

Swiatek now awaits the winner of the other semi-final between Ons Jabeur and Daria Kasatkina.

Meanwhile, Stefanos Tsitsipas moved into the men's final on Saturday after beating Alexander Zverev 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in an entertaining last four battle in Rome. Ealier, Novak Djokovic took his

place in the semi-finals on Friday with a 7-5, 7-6 (7/1) win over Felix Auger-Aliassime which guaranteed that he would remain world number one for a 370th week. Top seed Djokovic is chasing a sixth title in Rome ahead of Roland Garros later this month, and needed more than two hours to win a match which featured some magnificent tennis from big-hitting Auger-Aliassime. AFP

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China withdraws as 2023 Asian Cup host due to coronavirus

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - China has withdrawn as the 2023 Asian Cup host due to the coronavirus, football officials said Saturday, with Beijing's strict zero-Covid strategy dealing another blow to the country's sporting ambitions.

Authorities in China are pursuing a strategy of stamping out the virus entirely, which includes rapid lockdowns and mass testing, and millions in Shanghai have faced onerous restrictions for more than a month.

But the measures - now rare globally, as most countries shift to living with Covid - have made hosting sporting events a major challenge.

The Olympic-sized Asian Games, due to be staged in September in Hangzhou, had already been postponed last week, and on Saturday the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said China would not host the Asian Cup.

Chinese football officials had informed the governing body that they would not be able to host the 24-team competition, which was to be staged in 10 cities in June and July next year.

No new host nation was named, with the AFC saying that next steps related to the tournament would be announced in due



The construction site of the Workers' Stadium, a planned venue of the 2023 Asian Cup, in Beijing on Saturday (AFP)

course.

"The AFC acknowledges the exceptional circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the relin-

quishment by (China) of its hosting rights," the governing body said in a statement.

Those involved in organising the tournament had made "this

very difficult but necessary decision in the collective interests of" the tournament, it added.

The Asian Cup is staged every four years. Qatar won the last

edition in 2019.

It would have been the second time that China had staged the Asian Cup. They hosted it in 2004, when they lost 3-1 to

Japan in the final.

The loss of major sporting events is a blow to the ruling Communist Party, which had burnished its global image with an array of dazzling spectacles such as Beijing's 2008 Summer and 2022 Winter Olympics

China has also staged tennis and golf tournaments featuring all the world's leading stars, and a showpiece annual Formula One grand prix.

Asian Games organisers have said new dates will be announced "in the near future" for the tournament, which typically attracts more than 10,000 athletes and were scheduled to take place from September 10 to 25.

Host city Hangzhou lies less than 200 kilometres (120 miles) from Covid-hit Shanghai.

China's biggest city has for weeks faced a shifting mosaic of lockdowns that have seen some

The loss of major sporting events is a blow to the ruling Communist Party, which had burnished its global image with an array of dazzling spectacles such as Beijing's 2008 Summer and 2022 Winter Olympics

But with the exception of this year's Winter Olympics - held in a virus-secure, closed-loop Beijing bubble in February - the world's most populous nation has cancelled or postponed almost all events since Covid emerged in Wuhan in late 2019.

Experts now believe that the costly and labour-intensive Winter Olympics bubble now appears to have been the exception rather than the rule.

of its 25 million residents scuffle with police and unleash a flood of fury and frustration on social media.

There was panic buying in Beijing last week after rumours spread that the capital could be placed under an onerous lockdown like that in Shanghai. Hundreds of areas across the capital are facing some form of restrictions as cases rise.

AFP



Patrick Cutrone (2L) scores for Empoli in their Serie A match against Salernitana

Missed penalty in Empoli draw slows Salernitana's survival bid

Rome, Italy - Salernitana missed the chance to claim almost guaranteed Serie A survival on Saturday after Diego Perotti had a late penalty saved in a 1-1 draw at Empoli which also sent down bottom team Venezia.

Perotti's spot-kick was pushed aside by man-of-the-match Guglielmo Vicario, who made a series of superb saves to stop Salernitana from gaining a win which would have moved them five points clear of the relegation zone ahead of their rivals matches this weekend.

Davide Nicola's team sit 17th and two points ahead of Cagliari who are just inside the drop zone and face title-chasing Inter Milan in Sunday's late match.

The draw is a not a dreadful result as Cagliari must beat reigning champions Inter to move out of trouble in place of Salernitana.

Before their current run of four wins and three draws Salernitana had been rooted at the bottom of Serie A the whole season.

And Federico Bonazzoli sent the 7,000 away fans wild in the

76th minute when he levelled Patrick Cutrone's first-half opener for the home side.

That goal also means that Genoa, who are three points back in 19th, cannot overtake Salernitana even if they win at Napoli as they have the worse of the head-to-head record which decides placings for teams locked on the same points.

Empoli goalkeeper Vicario pulled off some fine saves, including the penalty stop, though he was also somewhat at fault for Federico Bonazzoli's second-

half equalizer after Patrick Cutrone gave Empoli the lead.

The result sent last-placed Venezia straight back to Serie B regardless of its result at Roma later.

Spezia assured itself of Serie A soccer next season after it fought back to win at Udinese 3-2 and move seven points clear of the relegation zone.

Torino won at Hellas Verona 1-0 thanks to a first-half Josip Brekalo strike.

There's one round to play after this weekend.

Atletico and Sevilla battle for third in La Liga

Madrid, Spain - Sevilla will secure Champions League qualification with a point against Atletico Madrid on Sunday while the winner would be in pole position to finish third in La Liga.

A third consecutive draw at home to Mallorca on Wednesday saw Sevilla miss out on the chance to seal their place in the top four but they still need only a draw from their last two games to be sure.

Atletico Madrid's win away at Elche was enough to ensure Atleti will be playing in the Champions League next term, despite a turbulent season for last year's Spanish champions.

Sevilla sit five points ahead of Real Betis and hold the superior head-to-head over their city rivals, so it would take a remarkable turnaround for their positions to be reversed.

But two wins from their last 10 games leave Sevilla needing a boost, with reports suggesting Julen Lopetegui may not continue as coach next season, after a hugely disappointing few weeks.

The fans at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan whistled when they failed to break down Mallorca in midweek.

"The fans being angry with the coach when they doesn't win is logical," said Lopetegui.



Sevilla coach Julen Lopetegui

Atletico are unlikely to catch Barcelona, who are five points ahead in second

"I am obviously concerned that we have not won, but there are two games left and we have to fight for what we have fought for all season."

Sevilla have been Real

Madrid's closest challengers for the majority of the campaign but they fell away in the title race and lost to Betis in the Copa del Rey before going out to West Ham in the Europa League.

It means Lopetegui's team are ending the season with a whimper and defeat at the Wanda Metropolitano this weekend could create a nervy finish, if Betis beat struggling Granada at home.

Sevilla play at home to Athletic Bilbao on the last day while Betis are away at already-crowned champions Real

Madrid, who have been resting players ahead of the Champions League final against Liverpool on May 28.

Atletico Madrid are away at Real Sociedad to finish and third is worth securing for Diego Simeone's side, given positions towards the top of La Liga earn teams around seven million euros per place.

"It's been an inconsistent season," said Simeone on Wednesday night. "The goal of qualifying for the Champions League has been achieved, which is very important for the club."

Atletico are unlikely to catch Barcelona, who are five points ahead in second and play away at Getafe on Sunday before finishing at home to Villarreal.

After a disappointing April, in which Barca were knocked out of the Europa League by Eintracht Frankfurt and then lost at home to both Cadiz and Rayo Vallecano, Barca have picked up, with three consecutive wins against Mallorca, Betis and Celta Vigo.

Villarreal and Real Sociedad are both still in the hunt for Europa League qualification and play each other on Sunday at La Ceramica.

Mallorca are at home to Rayo while Cadiz host Real Madrid, who will likely rotate again.

AFP

Bayern Munich confirm Lewandowski wants to leave

Berlin, Germany - Robert Lewandowski banged in his 35th league goal on the final day of the Bundesliga season Saturday as Bayern Munich confirmed their top-scoring striker wants to leave, amid reports he could join Barcelona this summer.

Lewandowski scored for the Bundesliga champions in a 2-2 draw at Wolfsburg.

Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic insists Lewandowski will play for them next season, pointing out: "'Lewy' has a contract until June 2023."

But German media outlets claim the 33-year-old has refused to sign an extension and wants to join Barcelona for next season.

Salihamidzic confirmed that Lewandowski wants to leave.

"During conversations, he informed me that he did not want to accept our offer to extend the contract and would like to leave," he said. A Lewandowski header from a Thomas Mueller cross put Bayern 2-0 up after Josip Stanisic netted his first Bundesliga goal.

Erling Haaland signed off his final appearance for second-placed Borussia Dortmund in a 2-1 home win over Hertha Berlin.

AFP



Armand Duplantis speaks with Emmanouil Karalis after the men's pole vault was cancelled due to winds at Doha Diamond League on Friday

Duplantis wins indoors at Doha Diamond League

Doha, Qatar - Armand Duplantis took shelter from the storm on Saturday but could not get close to a new pole vault world record when the Doha Diamond League contest was moved indoors because of high winds.

The 22-year-old US-born Swedish vaulter cleared 6.02 metres to win the first Diamond League event of the season after the pole vault was postponed for a day and moved into the Aspire Dome because of the dangerous gusts.

Duplantis, who set two world records in two weeks in March, taking the new high to 6.20m, made three failed attempts at 6.12m.

He is still the first to clear six metres in Doha and finished far ahead of Americans K.C. Lightfoot and Chris Nilsen, Belgium's Ben Broeders and France's Valentin Lavillenie, who each vaulted 5.71m.

"It has been a crazy day or so, I am just glad we were able to jump indoors," said Duplantis, who started at 5.61m after the other nine competitors came in at 5.41m.

French vaulter Renaud Lavillenie, the 2012 Olympic champion with a personal best of 6.16m, and Poland's Piotr Lisek, who has cleared 6.0m, both failed with three attempts at 5.71m.

AFP



IPL 2022



KKR V SRH

Russell all-round show hands massive victory for Kolkata



BRIEF SCORES:
Kolkata Knight Riders 177 for 6 in 20 overs (Sam Billings 34 (29)3x4, 1x6, Andre Russell 49 (28)3x4, 4x6; Umran Malik 3 for 33) beat Sunrisers Hyderabad 123 for 8 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 43 (28) 4x4, 2x6, Aiden Markram 32 (25) 3x6; Andre Russell 3 for 22) by 54 runs

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Titans look to cement top-two spot against out-of-sorts Super Kings

Mumbai, India - Super Kings and their opponents on Sunday, Gujarat Titans, are on the two extreme ends of the points table. While Super Kings, the defending champions, are placed ninth, Titans, being on top, are the only team to get into the playoffs so far.

A victory at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday will assure Titans a top-two finish, while Super Kings might want to test their bench strength.

To be fair to them, Super Kings have had a few positives. Ruturaj Gaikwad and Devon Conway have enjoyed success at the top in recent times, and rookie pacers Mukesh Choudhary and Simarjeet Singh have been promising, especially in the powerplay. Maheesh Theekshana, in his debut season, has 12 wickets so far, the most by a finger-spinner this IPL. And Shivam Dube, despite blowing hot and cold, has made a difference with his power-hitting.

However, there are big questions. MS Dhoni, who took back the captaincy after Ravindra Jadeja stepped down, has said he will remain with the team in "some capacity" next season, but that may or may not be as a player. Dwayne Bravo, at 38, isn't getting any younger. Where does Ambati Rayudu, who tweeted on the eve of the match - before deleting it - that this would be his



Gujarat Titans are flying high and are the only team to make the play-offs so far.

Hardik Pandya's form - or the lack of it - has not had a major impact on the Titans with David Miller, Rahul Tewatia and Rashid Khan doing the finishing act.

has not had a major impact on the team with David Miller, Rahul Tewatia and Rashid Khan doing the finishing act. However, going into the crucial stage of the tournament, they would want Hardik to get into the groove. At least with the bat.

Lockie Ferguson missed the last match and Hardik said the move was "tactical, considering the ground dynamics". The New Zealand quick might come in place of Alzarri Joseph or Mohammed Shami, if Titans decide to rest him for a match or two.

ESPNCinfo

last IPL, stand? Not to forget, Super Kings will also have to find an able leader next season if Dhoni decides to step aside (again).

Testing the bench could be an option for Titans, too, after they bounced back against Lucknow Super Giants following two losses in a row. While they have a well-rounded bowling attack, Titans brought back Matthew Wade, who had failed at the top of the order earlier, to address their No. 3 issue and he lasted only seven balls in the previous match. Their captain Hardik Pandya's form - or the lack of it -

OBITUARY - SHIREEN ABU AKLEH

Braveheart
TRAILBLAZER

Al Jazeera's Shireen Abu Akleh was a brave and kind journalist with an infectious laugh who was devoted to telling stories about ordinary Palestinians



I chose journalism to be close to the people, Shireen Abu Akleh had said in one of her earlier videos. "It might not be easy to change the reality, but at least I could bring their voice to the world." The fearless Palestinian Al Jazeera journalist who was killed by Israeli forces on Wednesday, was a veteran television correspondent who became a household name across the Arab world for her bold, yet candid, coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for many years.

A native of Jerusalem and a citizen of the United States, Shireen, 51, is survived by her brother, Tony Abu Akleh, an obituary published in www.aljazeera.com stated.

Friends and colleagues described Shireen as a brave and kind reporter with an 'infectious laugh' who gave voice to the struggles of Palestinians over a career spanning nearly three decades.

"Our loss is so huge," said Nida Ibrahim, an Al Jazeera correspondent and colleague of Shireen in the occupied West Bank. "She was kind, dedicated and devoted. She knew the story through and through and she understood the nuances. She brought a wealth of information to her reporting."

Speaking through tears, Ibrahim described her as a unique human being who was very well known, but modest and committed to her profession. At the time of her death, Shireen had been learning Hebrew in order to understand Israeli media narratives better, and had just finished a diploma in digital media, Ibrahim said.

"She's not only someone who was a veteran, who's been here covering the story for years, but also someone who was eager to keep learning and keep reporting using new means."

She was kind, dedicated and devoted. She knew the story through and through and she understood the nuances. She brought a wealth of information to her reporting

NIDA IBRAHIM

An inspiration for all

Born in Jerusalem in 1971, Shireen, who was a Christian, initially studied architecture before switching to journalism at Yarmouk University in Jordan. After graduating, she returned to Palestine and worked for several media outlets, including Voice of Palestine Radio and the Amman Satellite Channel. She joined Al Jazeera Media Network a year after it was launched in 1996, as one of the Qatar-based Arabic-language network's first field correspondents and gained fame for her coverage of the second Palestinian Intifada in 2000.

As a television journalist, Shireen covered events big and small, from the Gaza wars of 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021 to the daring jailbreak of six Palestinians who escaped a maximum-security prison in northern Israel last September. She also covered regional news, including the war in Lebanon in 2006.

"Shireen was a trailblazer, an inspiration for us all," said Dalia Hatuqa, an Al Jazeera journalist who was a close friend of Shireen, "Her presence became synonymous with Al Jazeera."

During the height of the second Intifada, Hatuqa recalled Israeli soldiers going around the Palestine city of Ramallah and 'mimicking her, shouting from a bull-horn her famous closing lines: Shireen Abu Akleh, Al Jazeera, Ramallah'.

To her friends though, Shireen was far more than the face of Al Jazeera in Palestine.

"She had an infectious laugh. She loved to travel, see the world, shop, party," Hatuqa said. "She lost her mother and father when she was very young and saw so much cruelty in the world, especially in Palestine, but that never stopped her from appreciating and enjoying life."

She added, "Her voice was so beautiful, even when she was telling heart-breaking stories."

Tamer al Meshal, who was working with Shireen at the time of her killing, called her a 'model' for both, Palestinian and Arab journalists. "Till the very last second, she was professional and persevering in her work," he said.

"The last message Shireen Abu Akleh had sent to Al Jazeera was via email at 6:13am in which she wrote: 'Occupation forces storm Jenin and besiege a house in the Jabriyat neighbourhood. On the way there, I will bring you news as soon as the picture becomes clear.' We and the viewers did not know that this news she sent would (eventually) be the news of her martyrdom," he mourned.

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MOURNERS MARCH

Shireen Abu Akleh laid to rest

Thousands mourn at her Jerusalem funeral on Friday, while violence erupts on the sidelines, as people rally to bid farewell to the slain, popular Al Jazeera journalist



Outcry after Israel police beat mourners

The US and EU led an international outcry Saturday after Israeli police charged the funeral procession in Jerusalem of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and beat pallbearers who almost dropped her coffin.

Television footage showed the pallbearers struggling to stop Abu Akleh's casket from falling to the ground as baton-wielding police officers charged towards them, grabbing Palestinian flags from mourners.

The United States said it was 'deeply troubled' by the scenes, while the European Union said it was 'appalled by the unnecessary force'.

The Jerusalem Red Crescent said 33 people were injured, of whom six were hospitalised. Israeli authorities said six arrests were made after mourners had thrown rocks and glass bottles.

Israel and the Palestinians traded blame for the death of Abu Akleh on Wednesday who was shot in the head during the Israeli army raid on the Jenin refugee camp.

The Israeli army said an interim investigation could not determine who fired the fatal bullet, noting stray Palestinian gunfire or Israeli sniper fire aimed at militants were both possible causes.

In a rare, unanimous statement, the UN Security Council condemned the killing and called for 'an immediate, thorough, transparent, and impartial investigation,' according to diplomats.

Thousands of people packed Jerusalem's tense Old City on Friday for the burial of veteran Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh, after Israeli police stormed the start of the funeral procession.

Israel and the Palestinians have traded blame over the fatal shooting of the Palestinian-American on Wednesday during an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank. The interim findings of an Israeli army investigation could not determine who fired the bullet that killed Abu Akleh, the military said.

An army statement, however, noted a soldier could have fired the bullet that killed the 51-year-old journalist, in what Al Jazeera called a deliberate 'killing in cold blood'.

"The investigation shows two possibilities for the source of the shot that killed her," the army said. The first could have been "massive fire of Palestinian gunmen (at Israeli soldiers), as part of which hundreds of bullets were shot from a number of locations. The other option is that during the gunfight, one of the soldiers shot a few bullets from a jeep using a telescopic scope at a terrorist who was firing at his vehicle.

TV images showed Abu Akleh's coffin nearly falling to the ground as Israeli police grabbed Palestinian flags from the crowd around the procession outside Saint Joseph's hospital in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Israel forbids public displays of Palestinian flags and often storms individuals who hoist them at rallies or protests in the city.

A senior Palestinian figure, Hanan Ashrawi, tweeted that "savage #Israeli 'special forces' viciously attack the funeral procession bearing the coffin" of Abu Akleh as it left St Joseph's hospital.

"The inhumanity (of) Israel is on full display," said the former top Palestine Liberation Organization official.

Sister of all Palestinians

Thousands of mourners attended the funeral at a church in Jerusalem's Old City in the afternoon. Roads were closed along the route of the procession as Israel bolstered security to 'ensure the



Palestinian mourners carry the casket of slain Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh from a church toward the cemetery in Jerusalem

funeral takes place safely and without violence that could endanger participants or others', an Israeli police spokeswoman said.

In a sign of Abu Akleh's prominence, she was given what was described as a full state memorial on Thursday at Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's compound in Ramallah before being transferred to Jerusalem.

"Her voice entered every home, and her loss is a wound in our hearts," said mourner Hadil Hamdan.

The United States, European Union and United Nations have backed calls for a full investigation into Abu Akleh's killing.

Israel has publicly called for a joint probe and stressed the need for Palestinian authorities to hand over the fatal bullet for forensic examination, but the Palestinian Authority has rejected holding a joint probe with the Jewish state.

Grief over her killing spilled beyond Palestinian territories, with protests erupting in Turkey, Sudan and elsewhere.

She was the 'sister of all Palestinians',



'Deplorable and unacceptable'

"The crime of assassinating journalist Shireen Abu Akleh is a deplorable and unacceptable act, and we express our sympathy and condolences to her family."

SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD
AL BUSAIDI
Foreign Minister



her brother Antoun Abu Akleh told AFP.

West Bank violence

The European Union urged an 'independent' probe while the United States demanded the killing be 'transparently investigated', calls echoed by UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet.

PA official Hussein al Sheikh, a close Abbas confidante, said the Palestinian 'investigation would be completed independently'.

An initial autopsy and forensic examination were conducted in Nablus in the West Bank hours after her death.

Fresh violence erupted on Friday in the West Bank, during an Israeli raid on the Jenin refugee camp. The Palestinian health ministry said 13 Palestinians were wounded in the clashes, one of them seriously. An AFP photographer at the scene said Israeli forces had also surrounded the home of a suspect.

AFP

OJA condemns Shireen killing

The Oman Journalist Association has released a statement condemning the killing of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

"The Oman Journalist Association condemns in the strongest terms the killing of journalist Shireen, who was assassinated by the Israeli occupation forces' bullets, while performing her duty, and injured her colleague Ali al Samoudi," it said.

The association called on international organisations to take legal measures to ensure justice is achieved. 'This needs to be done based on the protection provided by international laws and norms, respecting the sanctity of journalistic freedom, providing them with safe working conditions to perform their duty, and supporting their right to freedom of expression and to convey the voice of truth,' the statement said.

It also extended its condolences to the family of Shireen and the media fraternity in Palestine.