

► NEWS BRIEF

GCC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FORUM BEGINS IN SALALAH

Salalah - The GCC Sustainable Development Forum kicked off under the theme 'One GCC Developmental Track' on Wednesday in Salalah.

Organised by *Al Roya* newspaper, the two-day forum seeks to ally efforts for a unified future vision and development indicators among the GCC states.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, who felicitated contributors to the conference.



Royal Academy of Management launches leadership programme



Asyad Drydock posts first-ever profit on record performance

Ghailani wins World Cup

Freediver Omar al Ghailani wins 3 gold, 2 silver to clinch AIDA Freediving World Cup 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

For the second year in a row, Omani freediver Omar Abdullah al Ghailani, from the wilayat of Sur in South Sharqiyah, has won the AIDA Freediving World Cup 2022 held in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, from August 2 to 9.

Ghailani claimed gold for his overall performance, plus two more in Constant Weight Bi fins, and Constant Weight categories. Additionally, he clinched two sil-



(Supplied photo)

vers in the Free Immersion and Constant Weight without Fins categories.

Ghailani did Oman proud last year as well by winning the AIDA Freediving World Cup, claiming four gold medals, including overall winner, and a bronze.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ghailani informed that the competition saw participation of 23 divers from several countries, including the US, Italy, Brazil, Ukraine, Canada, Austria, Turkey, Poland, France, China, Japan, Kuwait, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

According to Ghailani, the physical challenges he faced were compounded by difficult weather and sea conditions, including high waves. "These factors affect performance."

Reaching the finals required immense concentration and determination, Ghailani said, adding that he prepared for the championship by training daily.

Elaborating on the sport and the techniques involved, Ghailani said it is performed without the use of any breathing apparatus.

He is keen to continue representing the sultanate at world meets and raising the Omani flag in different countries. "I hope to continue training and take part in international camps to gain more experience."

He urged Omani youth to practise swimming and diving, as these activities build confidence and enhance personality.

HM RECEIVES MESSAGE FROM SOMALI PRESIDENT



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of Somalia, dealing with bilateral relations between Oman and Somalia. The message was received on behalf of His Majesty the Sultan by Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, when he welcomed Abdul Rahman Abdul Shakour, Special Envoy of the Somali President for Humanitarian Affairs and Drought, on Wednesday (ONA)

Myrrh garden planned in Dhofar to protect species from extinction

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority, represented by the Office of Conservation of Environment (OCE) in the Governorate of Dhofar, has initiated a project to collect primary data on the habitat and distribution of myrrh trees.

The resin of myrrh trees has been used throughout history as a perfume, incense and medicine.

Like frankincense, myrrh is a resin - dried tree sap - produced

by trees of the genus *Commiphora*, while frankincense comes from the trees of *Boswellia*.

Threatened by extinction in semi-desert environment - the rain shadow areas in the Dhofar mountains - myrrh trees have been facing the critical issue of survival due to overgrazing, climate change, over-collection and insect attacks, stated Environment Authority.

The project aims to provide an initial database of the location of the current spread of myrrh



Botanists of EA and OCE collect data on myrrh trees in Dhofar

trees, determine the flowering season and to collect seeds to supply the authority's nurseries. This will help expand the cultivation area of this rare and threatened species in its natural environment.'

Khalid bin Ahmed Hardan, head of Studies Department in OCE Dhofar, said, "The Environment Authority plans to protect the fragile ecosystem by establishing a garden for myrrh trees, through which a number of mother trees will be conserved

and a nursery dedicated to the production of seeds and seedlings of myrrh established.'

He added that the information and data that the project will provide would contribute to increasing knowledge about the species, build national capacities to preserve it, and study the possibility of benefiting from it, economically or through tourism in the future.

The two main varieties of myrrh are herabol and bisabol. Herabol myrrh is obtained from C

myrrha, which grows in Ethiopia, Arabia and Somalia, while bisabol myrrh is obtained from *C. erythraea*, which is an Arabian species of similar appearance. Myrrh trees are found on parched rocky hills and grow up to 3m tall.

Myrrh was highly esteemed by ancient civilisations. In the Middle East and Mediterranean regions, it was an ingredient of costly incenses, perfumes and cosmetics, and was used in medicines for local application and embalming.



Summer
of Joy

GET A FREE
RAFFLE COUPON

Spend OMR 50
and Win upto
24 Golden Ball
in 24 KT

(Valid till 11th Sep. 2022)



www.joyalukkas.com

Joyalukkas
World's favourite jeweller

Ruwi Main Shop, Opp. Ruwi Old Police Station, Muscat. Tel: 2470 3417 • Muscat City Centre. Tel : 2455 8034
Sohar Souk, Al Hambar Street, Sohar. Tel : 2684 0162 • Ground Floor, Gold Souk, Oman Avenues Mall, Baushar. Tel : 2459 1851

Leadership development programme launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Royal Academy of Management launched 'National Programme for Developing Leaders and Future Foresight' at an event held on Wednesday. The programme aims to prepare national leaders to face the rapid changes and develop leadership skills in the middle administration roles in the state's administrative apparatus.

The Royal Academy of Management - established via Royal Decree 2/2022 on January 11, 2022 - has the honorary patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The event also saw the launch of the first 'Certified Leadership Trainer Training' programme with participation of 26 qualified Omani trainers from the public and private sectors.

The programme aims to form a community of Omani trainers who will transfer knowledge and skills, and administrative and leadership experiences in line with the academy's vision to localise global knowledge and expertise in the area of leadership.

Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati, president of the academy, informed that the Certified Leadership Trainer Training programme is part of the first package of initiatives that the academy will launch gradually with the aim of



The programme will last ten months and is based on blended education, through which middle-management professionals in the public sector will benefit

DR ALI BIN QASSIM AL LAWATI



(Supplied photos)

developing and empowering Omani professionals.

"The programme will last ten months and is based on blended education, through which middle-management professionals in the public sector will benefit," Lawati said.

He informed that the programme is being delivered in

partnership with Eller Executive Education of University of Arizona, a top ranked provider of custom leadership development and executive education programmes. "This ensures the transfer of latest skills and experiences in the field of leadership training to national cadres."

Karthik Kannan, dean of Col-

lege of Management, University of Arizona, said that the university is proud to partner with the Royal Academy of Management to design and implement the Certified Leadership Trainer Training programme within the National Programme for Developing Leaders and Future Foresight.

GEN NU'AMANI RECEIVES LIBYAN AMBASSADOR



H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office, reviewed the march of relations between Oman and Libya, when he received H E Sania Abu al Qasim Ghoma, Ambassador of Libya to Oman, on Wednesday. H E Gen Nu'amani and the Libyan Ambassador spoke on the cooperation between the two countries, matters of mutual interest and ways of cementing ties (ONA)

Cloudy weather forecast north of Arabian Sea

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Meteorology has stated that satellite images show the presence of cumulus clouds north of the Arabian Sea and the possibility of clouds forming over the Hajar Mountains and the desert areas of Dhofar Governorate.

In a statement, Oman Meteorology said, 'The department has been monitoring a tropical turbulence near the western coast of India. There is possibility of it developing into a tropical depression in the next two days.'

It added that there is also a possibility of scattered rains over the Hajar Mountains and Dhofar governorate.



Sur Oasis Incubator welcomes first batch of entrepreneurs and innovators

Sur - Sur Oasis Incubator in Sur Industrial City recently welcomed its first batch of startups and innovators representing the food and beverage industry, software and information technology, and training and consultancy fields.

Managed and operated by Industrial Innovation Academy and

supported and financed by Oman LNG, Sur Oasis Incubator offers training programmes, business accelerators and workspaces to support and empower entrepreneurs and innovators in South Sharqiyah governorate.

Officials of Industrial Innovation Academy, of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates



(Supplied photo)

- Madaayn, introduced the incubated companies to the advantages, facilities and services that will be offered by the academy during the yearlong incubation period.

The officials also highlighted the projects undertaken by Sur Industrial City and its plan to connect the incubated companies

with the factories and projects operating in the industrial city.

During the event to welcome the first batch, a training workshop was conducted on social media management strategy with the aim of developing the skills of the incubated companies to effectively manage their social media platforms. The companies

were also briefed on the role played by incubation in accelerating the growth of startups.

The Industrial Innovation Academy is currently working on five key programmes, one of which is Innovation Programme, which aims to develop and support innovative services and products.

Announcement No. 4 / 2022

Based on Royal Decree No. 30/2016 regarding the Law on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, and Ministerial Decision No. 198/2021 Issuing the Regulation on the Audit of Accountants, Auditors, Accounting and Auditing offices and Companies, and Precious metals and Gemstones Institutions and Companies, on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing.

The Ministry urges all accounting and auditing offices and companies, institutions and companies of precious metals and Gemstones to expedite the appointment of an officer responsible for reporting suspicious transactions in their institutions and to provide the Ministry with the requirements below via e-mail address (aml@tejarah.gov.om) within a maximum period of one week from the date of publishing the announcement:

- A copy of the officer's ID of the.
- The officer's phone number and e-mail.
- A copy of the academic qualifications and training certificates.

DR. ATUL BHASKAR
 Consultant
 Pediatric Orthopedics
 Available from Sunday to Tuesday
 (from 14/08/2022 to 16/08/2022)

Comprehensive Pediatric Orthopedic Care

Clinical Expertise
 Congenital Deformity: Clubfoot & Hip dislocation • Limping
 Bow-legs and Knock Knees • Fractures and Infections in Children
 Fragile Bone Disease • Short Stature in Children

☎ +968 2476 0100 📞 +968 7157 2000 / 71962435

POMEGRANATE HARVEST BEGINS IN NAKHL



Pomegranate harvest season has started in a number of villages in Wadi Mistal - including Wwas, Hadash and Al Qura - in the wilayat of Nakhl, South Batinah governorate. Four varieties of mountain pomegranates are grown in these villages, known locally as Al Moqdmmani, Al Malassi, Al Gharib and Al Hamid (ONA)



Documentation of wild trees continues in Dakhliyah

Nizwa - The Environment Authority, represented by the Environment Department of Dakhliyah Governorate, has started the second phase of a project to inventory and document perennial wild trees in the wilayats of Nizwa, Jabal Akhdar and Manah.

The project aims to identify the perennial tree species in the governorate and their geographical distribution. Data related to the circumference of trunk, height and general condition of the trees are fed into a geographic information system for future reference.

The project also aims to educate all segments of society and visitors on the importance of preserving perennial wild trees.

The third phase will include installation of number plates on some trees in order to enhance knowledge and awareness of the importance of these trees, EA stated.

The project began in April this year and will gradually cover all the governorates.



In January 2020, Environment Authority in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman, launched an initiative to plant 10mn wild tree saplings in the next ten years. Some of the indigenous tree species included in the initiative are ghaf, al samar and sidr for which nurseries are

being set up.

Under the initiative, the departments of EA in all governorates distribute seedlings of Omani wild trees among organisations and individuals in order to increase the area of vegetation cover and combat desertification.

Oman Air ready for takeoff ahead of World Cup

Muscat - Oman Air, the national carrier, has started receiving bookings for Doha, Qatar, to facilitate travel for football fans to this year's FIFA World Cup.

The airline will operate 48 Match Day Shuttle flights between Muscat and Doha from November 21 to December 3.

Return Match Day Shuttle flights can be booked on the Oman Air website with prices starting from RO49 for Economy Class and RO155 for Business Class. Fares include fees, taxes, airport charges and hand baggage allowance, a press release

stated.

'Passengers are advised to arrive in Doha at least four hours before the start of a match due to the high frequency of flights each day. In addition, all passengers must register for a Hayya card (fan ID) prior to their flight, as this is required for travel on all Match Day Shuttle flights and for entry into Qatar.'

Throughout the tournament, football fans can book their Match Day Shuttle flights, which

provide a smooth and comfortable 24-hour experience between Muscat and Doha. 'The service is intended to seamlessly connect fans to Qatar so that they can attend their respective matches.

A no-check-in baggage policy also allows passengers to plan an easy-in, easy-out travel itinerary.'

Football fans to the region can also visit Muscat to experience Omani hospitality through a variety of stopover packages available from Oman Air Holidays, the airline stated. 'Whether stopping for a few hours, overnight or several days, Oman has something to appeal to every traveller itinerary.'

The airline offers wide-body service, including Boeing 787 Dreamliner, between Muscat and Doha. Passengers on shuttle flights can enjoy Oman Air's award-winning products and services, both in the air and on the ground, and its signature Omani hospitality accessible to guests on every flight.



Shell Oman opens third service station on Batinah Expressway

Muscat - Shell Oman Marketing Company (SOM) announced the opening of its third service station on Batinah Expressway in Saham on Wednesday, bringing its total network size to 205 sites across Oman.

The third integrated service station on Batinah Expressway in Saham is part of an earlier agreement signed with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to build four integrated service stations on the Batinah Expressway.

The other two being Twin Hoor service station in Suwaiq, and Liwa Expressway Service in Liwa. 'The last one in Suwaiq is scheduled to open within a few weeks,' stated the company.

In addition, another service station, Rusayl Industrial, has opened in Wilayat Seeb to serve motorists arriving from the Muscat Expressway and Mawaleh.

'Service stations serve motorists' needs beyond simply refueling their vehicles - we believe in the importance of providing our customers with a full integrated journey through an evolving range of quality fuels, a welcoming and comfortable break, and a retail experience that offers them convenience, quality, and choices of energy solutions and non-fuel retailing," said Khalid al Awaisi, Mobility General Manager at Shell Oman.



In the first phase of the Batinah Expressway fuel stations, the company plans to provide its range of fuel products, while in the second it will include a large commercial building that will house convenience store - Shell

Select, Shell Café and several other outlets and prayer spaces for both men and women.

"Prioritising customer convenience, the stations will also have a dedicated lane for trucks and will also offer a wide range of Shell car care services. Through an inclusive list of amenities, SOM seeks to establish these service stations as a one-stop hub to provide motorists on the expressway with everything they need to make their life's journeys better," Awaisi said.





75th

YEAR Of INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

SPECIAL OFFER

from

11TH - 15TH AUGUST ONLY

75%

OFF ON

MAKING CHARGES*

75%

OFF ON

DIAMOND JEWELLERY*



*Offer available only for select items in Gold & Diamond

WWW.KALYANJEWELLERS.NET | FOLLOW US ON: @KALYANJEWELLERSMIDDLEEAST

T&C Apply

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,652.42
Sensex	58,817.29
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
Indian	205.30
Pakistan	582.81
Bangladesh	246.81
Philippines	143.86
Sri Lanka	936.14

*Rates as on August 10
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS
Iraq launches Mosul reconstruction
Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi on Wednesday inaugurated the reconstruction of Mosul international airport, still in disrepair five years after the battle that expelled the Islamic State group from the city. Entire sectors of the northern metropolis have remained in ruins since the July 2017 recapture of Mosul by Iraqi forces backed by a US-led multinational coalition.
The airport, which was heavily damaged in the battle, has been disused since the jihadists seized Mosul and adjacent areas in 2014.
Kadhemi, in an official ceremony at the airport on the southern outskirts of Mosul, laid the foundation stone for its renovation.

Asyad Drydock posts first-ever profit on record performance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Asyad Drydock – an Asyad Group subsidiary formerly known as Oman Drydock Company – reported its first-ever annual net profit since the start of operations in 2011, boosted by higher revenues and record business performance last year.
'Despite the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Asyad Drydock has had a bullish end to the year 2021, recording a net profit of ROO.31mn for the first time since it started operations,' Asyad Group said in a statement on Wednesday.
Duqm-based Oman Drydock Company, which operates one of the largest ship repair yard in the Middle East, was on track to become profitable, achieving new milestones year-on-year. In 2021, Oman Drydock Company's revenue exceeded the previous year's with year-on-year Ebitda reaching US\$20.8mn, up from US\$3.2mn in 2020, Asyad said.



'Asyad Drydock achieved record performance throughout the last year. The drydock is on an upward trajectory, witnessing unprecedented success in 2021, not only in terms of financial performance, but also in terms of customer satisfaction, partnerships and operations,' Asyad noted.
Asyad said that its survey indicated that customer satisfaction at drydock rose to 95 per cent in the first half of 2022 compared with 85 per cent in 2021.
Moreover, Asyad Drydock

broke the record on monthly collections with US\$12.3mn collected in December 2021 alone.
During 2021, Asyad Drydock awarded 36 long-term contracts and high value purchases valued over RO8.2mn. The company secured a contract from Maersk Line for eight ships with a total order value of approximately US\$20mn.
In terms of operations, the company has also set a new record in accommodating 23 ships simultaneously.
The drydock welcomed a total of 162 vessels in 2021. The

number of repaired vessels increased by 21 per cent in the first half of 2021 when compared to the same period in the previous year.
Asyad Drydock is located at the Port of Duqm and is strategically positioned along the global shipping routes, benefiting customers by reducing deviation time. With a 2,800-meter quay, a water depth of 9-10 meters, 14 sets of jib cranes and two graving docks, the drydock can handle vessels up to 600,000 DWT (deadweight tonnage) efficiently.

Raysut Cement appoints Khalid al Rawas as new CEO

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Raysut Cement Company, a leading cement producer in Oman and the Middle East, on Wednesday announced the appointment of Khalid Ramis Mohammed al Rawas as the new chief executive officer of the company.
'Raysut Cement would like to inform the Capital Market Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange and its valued shareholders that the board of directors resolved in its meeting on Wednesday to approve the appointment of Khalid Ramis Mohammed al Rawas as the CEO for Raysut Cement Group,' the company said in a disclosure to submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange.
Raysut Cement said Rawas has rich experience of 29 years in recognised local and international banks. He holds international certificates in his field. He joined the company in March

2019.
Rawas' appointment comes after the company's board of directors accepted the resignation of Ghose Jotirmoy Pratul Krishna from the position of Raysut Cement Group CEO on Tuesday.
Ghose resigned on Tuesday after the spread of news on social media regarding his legal troubles in India.
However, Raysut Cement, in a disclosure submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Tuesday, assured its shareholders that the news circulating on social media regarding Ghose has nothing to do with Raysut Cement Company or its subsidiaries and sister companies in any connection.
Raysut Cement noted that the issue does not affect the financial position of the company or its financial statements as this case [in India] was before the joining of Ghose in the company in December 2017.

India to remove cap on airfares from August 31

New Delhi, India – India's Ministry of Civil Aviation has decided to withdraw the fare cap on air tickets imposed during the initial days of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.
The cap on fares will be removed from August 31, 2022. "After review of the current status of scheduled domestic operations viz-a-viz passenger demand for air travel, it has been decided to remove the fare bands notified from time to time regarding the airfares with effect from August 31," the ministry tweeted on Wednesday while attaching an order copy.
The cap on airfares was imposed in India on May 21, 2020. Delhi-Mumbai flight ticket was then priced between Rs3,500 and Rs10,000. The flight dura-

tion was divided into seven categories: 0-30 minutes, 30-60 minutes, 60-90 minutes, 90-120 minutes, 120-150 minutes, 150-180 minutes, and 180-210 minutes.
"The decision to remove airfare caps has been taken after careful analysis of daily demand and prices of air turbine fuel," Union Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia tweeted. "Stabilisation has set in and we are certain that the sector is poised for growth in domestic traffic in the near future."
India's domestic aviation operations have been seeing a rise with all Covid protocols in place. On Tuesday, 632,187 passengers flew in domestic flights, the ministry said.
ANI

Asyad signs strategic partnership for decarbonisation

Muscat – Asyad Group, Oman's integrated logistics group, has signed a strategic decarbonisation partnership with 44.01, a local environmental start-up to further advance shared CO₂ removal ambitions.
This initiative comes in line with the Asyad Group's sustainability commitments to ensure decarbonisation, waste management, and biodiversity across its operations as part of the Environmental Stewardship pillar.
The partnership echoes the national efforts to reduce emissions by 7 per cent by 2030 under the Paris Climate Agreement. Thus, both parties will work together on opportunities to remove carbon emissions in the logistics sector and contribute to the development of a sustainable logistics industry in Oman.



Implementing emerging carbon removal technologies, Asyad Group will work with 44.01 to capture the CO₂ emissions and convert them into rock permanently through the process of mineralisation across. This collaboration indicates the extended efforts for further de-

carbonisation in the logistics sector.
The partnership also envisages using biofuels from 44.01's sister company, Wakud, to help decarbonise Asyad's existing logistics assets.
Following on its business growth strategy centered around

private sector partnership and engagement, the group's collaboration with 44.01 will offer Asyad access to innovative solutions and open new opportunities for 44.01, enhancing its competitiveness and introducing its services to the global market.
In a press statement, Essam Nasser al Sheibani, group VP – sustainability at Asyad Group, said, "Asyad firmly believes in the creation of a growth model that is increasingly oriented towards group sustainability and focusing on promoting clean energy whilst monitoring all greenhouse gas emissions and reducing waste and pollution through environmental management systems."
"Our partnership with 44.01 goes hand in hand with the rapid progress that the logistics sector is witnessing and our role in po-

sitioning the sultanate to be at the forefront of new sustainable technologies globally", Sheibani said.
"As key highlights on our environmental agenda, we aim to tap opportunities in the areas of the energy transition, that represent the future, combined with CO₂ capturing and storage, the green and blue hydrogen value chain, renewables, and decarbonised sustainable mobility products," he added.
Both Asyad Group and 44.01 intend to identify opportunities for potential point source capture of carbon-dioxide in connection with Asyad's logistics fleet and undertake studies in relation to local carbon removal projects. This includes exploring potential operational sites where carbon removal activities can be showcased.

Biden signs major chips investment bill to compete against China

Washington, US – President Joe Biden signed into law Tuesday a multibillion dollar bill boosting domestic semiconductor and other high-tech manufacturing sectors that US leaders fear risk being dominated by rival China.
The Chips and Science Act includes around US\$52bn to promote production of microchips, the tiny but powerful and relatively hard-to-make components at the heart of almost every modern piece of machinery.
Tens of billions of dollars more are allocated for scientific research and development.
The White House says the government commitment to bolstering high-tech industries is already drawing in large-scale private investors, with some US\$50bn in new semiconductor investment alone. The lion's share of that is a plan announced by US firm Micron to put US\$40bn into domestic expansion by 2030.
Biden said at a White House speech that the cash injection from the Chips Act will help "win the economic competition in the 21st century."
Entrepreneurs are "the rea-



US President Joe Biden signs the Chips and Science Act of 2022 on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC on Tuesday (AFP)

son why I'm so optimistic about the future of our country," he said, and "the Chips and Science Act supercharges our efforts to make semiconductors here in America."
One of the Democrat's key themes since taking office has been the need to revamp US leadership in cutting-edge innovation and rebuild the home-grown industrial base in the face of China's mammoth

state-backed investments.
Semiconductors are of particular concern because they are vital to everything from washing machines to sophisticated weapons and nearly all are made abroad.
Although the semiconductor was invented in the United States, the country only produces around 10 per cent of global supply, according to the White House, with some 75 per

cent of US supplies coming from east Asia.
"Today's signing of the bipartisan Chips Act is a historic investment in America's future. It will boost microchip production at home, strengthen our supply chains, increase domestic research and development, and bolster our national security," said US Chamber of Commerce vice president Neil Bradley.
Biden is also counting on the

Chips Act to generate enthusiasm among voters, as his Democratic party tries to defend a thin congressional majority from a Republican takeover in this November's midterm elections.
He told Americans that studies show the expansion of factories will create around a million construction jobs over the next six years -- and these will be "union jobs" that pay "the prevailing wage."
Shortly, Biden is also expected to be signing an enormous domestic investment bill – backed only by Democrats – aimed at fighting climate change and reducing health care costs.
Reflecting on the string of successes in Congress and the sudden momentum for his long stalled agenda, Biden predicted that "people will look back at this week and all we passed, and all we moved on, that we met the moment at this inflection point in history."
"We bet on ourselves, believed in ourselves and recaptured the story, the spirit and the soul of this nation," he said.
AFP

Read Muscat Daily Stay Informed

MUSCAT DAILY
Water, energy projects to see \$1.25bn investments
President Sultana al-Tamimi to arrive today

R024 1 YEAR (Actual price: R052)
R015 6 MONTHS

SUBSCRIBE NOW
Toll free no: 80076000
E-mail: customercare@apexmedia.co.om
Call Shamshad: 99104345

an apex media
www.apexmedia.co.om

US inflation eases slightly to 8.5% in July as fuel prices dip

Washington, US – US inflation eased slightly in July, according to official data Wednesday, potentially taking pressure off the Federal Reserve to hike interest rates sharply while bringing a much-needed boost to President Joe Biden just months before crucial midterm elections.

With energy costs dropping in recent weeks, the consumer price index dipped to an annual rate of 8.5 per cent last month, the Labor Department reported, lower than markets were projecting.

Fueled by aggressive consumer spending of pandemic savings, global supply chain snarls, domestic worker shortages and Russia's war on Ukraine, inflation soared 9.1 per cent on-year in June, the highest in 40 years.

But the CPI was unchanged compared to June, a dramatic decline from the big increase in the prior month and defying expectations of a modest rise.

And when volatile food and energy prices are excluded from the calculation, the so-called core CPI rate rose just 0.3 per cent – the smallest in four months, according to the report.

Soaring prices have continued to climb in the United States, squeezing family budgets and, by extension, Biden's popularity.



A file photo shows people shop at a store in Rosemead, California (AFP)

But the White House cheered the report.

"Our economy had zero per cent inflation in July. ZERO PERCENT," White House economic spokeswoman Emilie Simons tweeted.

"No doubt there is more work to do, but we are on the right track," she added.

Biden's opponents accuse the president of precipitating inflation with a gigantic US\$1.9tn coronavirus relief package, enacted in March last year shortly after assuming office.

And Republicans renewed their criticism of Biden's economic policy, warning that Sun-

day's passage in the Senate of his massive climate and health care bill titled the "Inflation Reduction Act," would do the opposite of its stated purpose.

Devil in the details

But the devil is in the details. Economists caution against taking too much solace from a single good report, and they worry that the inflation slowdown linked to the drop in gasoline prices could be outweighed by rising rent and real estate prices.

The question now facing Washington is whether it will be possible to bring inflation down without plunging the world's

largest economy into recession, after two quarters of economic contraction in the first half of the year.

In a bid to tamp down inflation, the Fed has already hiked the interest rate four times to a range of 2.25 to 2.5 per cent, including two consecutive 75-basis-point increases.

Fed officials have made it clear that a third jumbo rate increase remains on the table at next month's policy meeting.

"One month's data is too volatile to call a peak in inflation," said Joseph Gagnon of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"If August data are the same, it takes 75 basis points off the table for September," Gagnon, a former Fed economist, said on Twitter.

Fears that Wednesday's reading would come in above forecasts and make the big Fed move all the more likely weighed on equities in Asia and Europe, with most markets in the regions falling into the red before the report.

But European exchanges jumped after the data were released, and Wall Street soared after trading opened, with the benchmark Dow gaining nearly 500 points.

The US economy continues to add jobs and in July the unemployment rate fell to the pre-pandemic level of 3.5 per cent.

But there are still nearly two jobs open for every available worker, and labor costs have risen sharply, which pushes wages up and contributes to inflation.

Rubeela Farooqi of High-Frequency Economics cautioned that despite the slower pace of inflation, "prices remain uncomfortably high."

"Coupled with strength in job growth and wages, the data support the case for another aggressive rate hike in September," she said in an analysis.

AFP

China inflation pushes higher

Beijing, China – China's consumer inflation rose in July to a two-year high, official data showed Wednesday, with a surge in pork prices pushing up the cost of food.

Compared with other countries, consumer costs in the world's second-biggest economy have not skyrocketed, largely spared the impact of a global surge in food prices after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

China's consumer price index (CPI), a key gauge of retail inflation, grew less than expected at 2.7 per cent from a year ago in July, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data showed.

CPI rose slightly on-year "due to an increase in prices of pork, fresh vegetables and other food, as well as seasonal factors", NBS senior statistician Dong Lijuan said in a statement.

Food prices were up 6.3 per cent on-year, with pork spiking 20.2 per cent in July, she added.

Prices of the staple meat rose in part because of the reluctance of some farmers to sell – ostensibly to maximise profits – and a pick-up in consumer demand, according to the NBS.

While fuel prices were also higher than the same period last year, their growth rates have declined, Dong said.

"The headline rate has been lifted by fuel inflation and, more recently, a rebound in food inflation," said Julian Evans-

Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics in a recent report.

He added that a weak labour market "may further sap price pressures", and that he expects inflation to fall later this year.

The producer price index (PPI) – measuring the cost of goods at the factory gate – rose

China's consumer price index, a key gauge of retail inflation, grew less than expected at 2.7 per cent from a year ago in July, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data showed

4.2 per cent in July, down from 6.1 per cent in June, official data showed Wednesday.

This was lower than the expectation in a Bloomberg poll of analysts.

The NBS said this was influenced by a drop in international commodity prices such as crude oil and non-ferrous metals.

"Unlike elsewhere, stimulus has targeted investment rather than household spending,"

AFP

Elon Musk sells nearly \$7bn worth of Tesla shares

Washington, US – Elon Musk has sold nearly US\$7bn worth of Tesla shares, according to legal filings, amid a high-stakes legal battle with Twitter over a US\$44bn buyout deal.

The Tesla boss sold some 7.9mn shares between August 5 and 9, according to filings published on the Securities and Exchange Commission's website on Tuesday.

"In the (hopefully unlikely) event that Twitter forces this deal to close and some equity partners don't come through, it is important to avoid an emergency sale of Tesla stock," Musk, the world's richest man, wrote on Twitter late Tuesday.

Twitter is locked in a legal battle with the mercurial Tesla boss over his effort to walk away from the April agreement to buy the company, and a judge has ordered that a trial will begin in October.

Musk has filed a countersuit, accusing Twitter of fraud and alleging the social media platform misled him about key aspects of its business before he agreed to a US\$44bn buyout.

The move comes after Musk sold around US\$8.5bn worth of shares in the electric carmaker in April as he was preparing to finance the Twitter deal. He tweeted at the time: "No further TSLA sales planned after today."

Tesla rose 3.4 per cent to US\$879 before the start of regular trading Wednesday, while Twitter jumped 4.3 per cent to US\$44.69, Bloomberg reported.

Musk has now sold about US\$32bn worth of Tesla shares since November.

"He is cashing up for Twitter," Charu Chanana, a strategist at Saxo Capital Markets told Bloomberg News.

Chanana said she believed Musk may be attempting to take advantage of a Tesla share price rebound of about 35 per cent



Elon Musk

since late May.

"The bear market rally has started to falter, and further repricing of Fed expectations could mean more pain for equities ahead, especially in tech."

Analysts say Musk may continue selling Tesla stock.

"Musk said at the Tesla shareholder meeting that any weakness in the share price was a buying opportunity, and then 24 hours later started selling stock himself," Jim Dixon, a senior equity sales trader at Mirabaud Securities, told Bloomberg News.

Dixon added that it was "very unlikely" that Musk was finished selling Tesla stock.

Tesla share prices have been tied to the fate of Musk's Twitter deal in recent weeks, first slumping over concerns that pursuing the deal could distract him and lead to unnecessary financial risk, and then rebounding when he said he wanted to abandon the takeover.

Musk's deal to buy Twitter included a provision that if it fell apart, the party breaking the agreement would pay a termination fee of US\$1bn under certain circumstances.

At a net worth of US\$250bn, Musk tops the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, although he has lost US\$20.1bn since the start of the year, mainly due to the decline in Tesla's stock price.

AFP

Global stocks jump on easing US inflation

London, UK – Global stock markets bounced on Wednesday as better-than-expected US inflation data raised hopes that the US Federal Reserve will tone down its aggressive interest rate policy.

With energy costs dropping in recent weeks, the US consumer price index eased to an annual rate of 8.5 per cent in July from a 40-year high of 9.1 per cent the previous month, the Labor Department reported.

Signs that inflation could be coming off the boil in the world's biggest economy could persuade the US Fed to tighten monetary conditions much more gradually than first anticipated.

Investors had been worried that too steep an increase in borrowing costs could choke off economic recovery.

Wall Street opened sharply higher while the dollar took a tumble.

European stock markets were up in afternoon trading after falling earlier in the day.

"The slowdown in US inflation was anticipated, but was sharper than economists had



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) at the opening bell on August 5, 2022 at Wall Street in New York City (AFP)

expected," said Asteres analyst Sylvain Bersinger. "Softer US inflation will brake the interest rate hikes."

Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare agreed.

"The key takeaway from the report is that it supports the peak inflation view, which in

turn supports the market's hope that the Fed will temper its aggressive rate-hike approach in coming months," he wrote.

The data on Wednesday came at a sensitive time for world markets, which have been buffeted by the war in Ukraine, supply chain snarls and rising

China-US tensions over Taiwan.

While the latest earnings season has been less painful than feared, there are increasing signs that the economic slowdown is beginning to impact companies, with some major firms – including Apple and Amazon – providing downbeat

outlooks.

Chip-maker Micron became the latest, saying revenue would likely come in at the low end of its forecasts in the fourth quarter owing to weak demand.

A day before, rival Nvidia unveiled disappointing results.

On the oil markets, crude prices remain stuck around six-month lows, even after news that supplies from Russia to three European countries through Ukraine had been halted as sanctions prohibited the processing of the transit payment.

Crude oil prices have essentially wiped out all the gains seen since Russia's invasion of its neighbour in February as expectations of a recession hit demand forecasts. But Edward Moya, analyst at OANDA trading group, said the market would not likely weaken further.

"Whatever crude demand destruction that occurs from a weakening global economy won't be able to drag down oil prices much lower given how low the supply outlook remains," he said.

AFP

India's RBI releases norms for digital lending

Mumbai, India – The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday released the first set of norms to regulate digital lending to crack down on the growing number of online frauds and unlawful activities.

As per the new norms, all loan disbursements and repayments have to be executed only between the bank accounts of the borrower and the regulated entity without any pass-through or pool account of the lending service provider (LSP) or any third party.

The Indian central bank's regulatory framework is focused on the digital lending ecosystem of RBI's Regulated Entities (REs) and the Lending Service Providers (LSPs) engaged by them to extend vari-



ous permissible credit facilitation services.

As regards entities authorised to carry out lending as per other statutory/regulatory provisions but not regulated by RBI the respective regulator/controlling

authority may consider formulating or enacting appropriate rules/regulations on digital lending based on the recommendations of WGDL.

For the entities lending outside the purview of any statu-

tory/regulatory provisions, the WGDL has suggested specific legislative and institutional interventions for consideration by the central government to curb the illegitimate lending activity being carried out by such entities.

The Reserve Bank of India is statutorily mandated to operate the credit system of the country to its advantage. In this endeavour, the bank has encouraged innovation in the financial system, products and credit delivery methods while ensuring their orderly growth, preserving financing stability and ensuring protection of depositors' and customers' interest.

Recently, innovative methods of designing and delivery of

credit products and their servicing through digital lending route have acquired prominence. However, certain concerns have also emerged which, if not mitigated, may erode the confidence of members of public in the digital lending ecosystem.

The concerns primarily relate to unbridled engagement of third parties, mis-selling, breach of data privacy, unfair business conduct, charging of exorbitant interest rates, and unethical recovery practices. Against this background, RBI had constituted a working group on 'digital lending including lending through online platforms and mobile apps' (WGDL) on January 13, 2021.

ANI

Sur Training Camp and Ranking Race puts sailors through their paces



Ahmed al Qasmi

Thirty young sailors arrived at the Oman Sail Sur Sailing School on Sunday to take part in a 14-day training camp as they prepare for a busy season of regattas, including the Arab Sailing Championships in October.

Each day the sailors will be put through their paces with two sessions on the water to develop technique and boat handling skills, along with fitness and ed-



ucation in health and nutrition, said a press statement from Oman Sail.

A Ranking Race will take place at the end of the camp to determine final positions for the re-

gatta squads, bringing together sailors from all four of Oman Sail's Sailing Schools. Sailors

from Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, RS:X and iQFOiL windsurfing will be in attendance, and

Optimist sailors will be able to learn from an expert Optimist coach and professional sailor in

the second week.

Ahmed Nasser al Qasmi, Training Camp Project Manager, said, "We have a busy season ahead, culminating in the Arab Sailing Championships at the Barceló Mussanah Resort from October 11-15, so we are working towards that date by preparing the sailors in the best way we can".

Over the next two weeks, he said, "they will train together, learn from each other and the coaches and gain an understanding of how to become better sailors and stronger athletes".

"The camp will be an exciting experience for the squads, and we look forward to seeing who rises to the challenge during the Ranking Race," he added.

Approximately 50 sailors will take part in the Ranking Race, each competing for a place in the final Arab Sailing Championship team which will take on sailors from 14 countries across the region.

Huawei calls on Arabic developers to compete with global peers in Apps UP

Under the theme 'Together we Innovate', Huawei, a Global Tech Giant, recently inaugurated the 2022 edition of the Huawei Global App Innovation Contest (Apps UP).

This year's edition features a new category, 'Best Arabic App', encouraging regional developers to create app solutions that address the region's needs and enrich Arabic content.

The 2022 Huawei Global App Innovation Contest is a global event held by Huawei to strengthen the skills of regional app developers and drive collaboration to build a connected app ecosystem.

Apps UP 2022 competition includes five regions: Europe, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Middle East and Africa, and China. The top three outstanding apps in the Arabic language or apps that support the dialectal selection will take home the Best Arabic App award.

With this year's theme, #TogetherWeInnovate, Huawei has



set aside more than US\$1mn as prize money for the global contest, in addition to exciting incentives, including vouchers from AppGallery Connect.

US\$230,000 has been dedicated to developers in the Middle East and Africa, with individual prizes amounting from US\$5,000 to US\$15,000. Participants also get the opportunity to engage and learn from industry experts and have their apps evaluated by a judging panel of experts in several sectors.

AppGallery is one of the three top application marketplaces,

and developers on the platform can reach 730mn global Huawei device users. They also join a growing community of 5.4mn registered Huawei developers worldwide.

The categories include the Best App, Best Game, Best Social Impact App, All-Scenario Coverage Award, Tech Women's Award and the Best Huawei Mobile Services (HMS) Innovation Award. The HMS Innovation Award encourages developers to create apps that integrate new HMS capabilities and services. In parallel, the Student Innovation

Award recognises outstanding student developers that showcase innovative creations.

Ammar Tobba, VP, Public Affairs and Communications, Huawei Middle East Region, Director of Arabic Media Centre, and a judging panel member said, "The Apps UP competition is in line with Huawei's efforts to empower developers from the Arab world and to inspire new ideas. Through the Best Arabic App category, we aim to encourage talents within the regional app development communities to create locally-relevant digital solutions that can have a global impact."

The Best Arabic App category reflects Huawei's contribution and value to the local digital ecosystem and recognises the significance of the Arabic language in the digital age.

The Apps UP contest also aligns with regional and national agendas that centre on nurturing local talents and developing national capabilities.

Excellent response to Bank Muscat kiosk at Salalah Eat

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been greatly encouraged by the excellent turnout at its stall at the ongoing Salalah Eat festival.

Designed to create a memorable experience with a number of events and performances, the inaugural Salalah Eat Festival got off to a great start at the Hawana Resort in Salalah on August 4 with the participation of well over 50 MSMEs, the bank said.

The festival will conclude on August 13.

With a number of fun activities including a Fan Zone Photo Booth, raffle draws, a Kids' Arena, face painting and a Game Booth, the Bank Muscat stall was one of the most visited stalls at the festival.

The bank also took the opportunity to showcase its Limited Edition Visa Prepaid Card to visitors, who could easily apply for up to 3 of these cards through their Mobile or Internet banking.

Visitors to the stall were par-



ticularly excited by the fact that the bank is raffling away an iPad every day, with as many as 10 iPads to be given over the course of the full festival.

All that visitors have to do to participate in the daily raffle draw is to apply for a Prepaid card through their mBanking app and show the proof of application at the bank's stall.

They will then receive a raffle ticket, which automatically entitles them to a chance in the draw. With the festival drawing to a close soon, visitors have been reminded to take advan-

tage of the ongoing promotion, and participate in the daily raffle draw at the earliest.

The official banking partner, Bank Muscat is facilitating the participation of a number of its Najahi Business Banking customers at the festival.

Over the past many years, Bank Muscat successfully supported a number of initiatives such as the Tour of Salalah, the Tour of Oman, Muscat Festival and the Salalah Festival, all of which have drawn thousands of visitors from across the world to the sultanate.

GHM launches a season of fun in the sun across The Chedi

With its internationally-acclaimed portfolio of renowned hotels and resorts, General Hotel Management Ltd (GHM) is well-poised to offer bon viveurs with the best sun-soaked getaways at The Chedi Hotels & Resorts.

The group has distilled the essence of Summer for discerning guests who are looking to luxuriate in style at The Chedi Al Bait, UAE, The Chedi Muscat, Oman, The Chedi Andermatt, Switzerland and The Chedi Hotel & Residences Lustica Bay, Montenegro.

The Chedi Muscat: Serenity for the senses

The ultimate escape extends at The Chedi Muscat, with daily breakfast and a three-course dinner at The Restaurant for two, 20 per cent off spa treatments and a complimentary yoga class to facilitate a healthy body and soul through robust rejuvenation practices. The summer escape offer at The Chedi Muscat is available until 30 September 2022.

The hotel also offers a Day Pass for those in search of an impressive daycation. At RO25 net



for adults and RO12.5 for children between the ages of six and 12, soak in the free of spirit with the best of The Chedi Muscat's hotel facilities and amenities which includes three jaw-dropping pools along the 370m private beach.

Enjoy a dip in the adults-only infinity Chedi Pool, 103m Long Pool and elegant family-friendly Serai Pool before relishing on a plethora of dining options rang-

ing from Arabic, Asian, Indian and Mediterranean cuisine.

The Chedi Al Bait, Sharjah, UAE

Make the most of the warmer months with The Chedi Al Bait's Summer Escape offer, an exclusive stay experience that comes with indulgent dining and restorative pampering with a minimum stay of two consecu-

tive nights. The stay comes inclusive with daily breakfast and a three-course dinner for two at The Restaurant, afternoon tea at The Café and 20 per cent off pampering treatments at The Spa per stay until 30 September 2022.

Available now through the end of September, the Hotel Credit offer lets guests rollick in style while embarking on a tradi-

tional Emirate cultural journey. Upon booking a stay at The Chedi Grand Room for AED1,200 per night, guests will receive the full amount in hotel credit for use across the hotel's outlets and restore their sense of balance and calm at The Spa. The offer comes with daily breakfast at The Restaurant, complimentary Wi-Fi access in rooms and most public areas.

The Chedi Andermatt, Switzerland

Golf, hike and mountain cruise with adventures at The Chedi Andermatt, matched by stunning accommodation and world-class amenities for unforgettable Alpine experiences.

Take things slow and Tee Off in Style. Available until October 22 with a minimum three-night stay in The Chedi Andermatt's rooms and suites, the offer comes with green fees for 18-holes at the Andermatt Swiss Alps Golf Course, a four-course dinner at The Restaurant, morning indulgence at The Chedi Grand Breakfast Buffet as well as access to The Spa & Health Club.

Guests with little ones who book a stay in one of the Family Suites for a minimum of two nights can embark on a High Altitude Safari where explorations of mountain lakes, colourful wildflowers and fascinating rock formations will be led by an expert local guide. The stay is valid until October 31 and comes with a picnic lunch, one Chedi Backpack, a Guided Herbal Hike Experience and an exclusive Pasta Family Dinner in the suite.

The Chedi Hotel and Residences, Lustica Bay, Montenegro

Summer calls for a soothing stay along the exquisite Adriatic Coast at The Chedi Hotel and Residences, Lustica Bay in Montenegro.

From now until September 2022, guests who book a stay via the official website in one of the property's five room types - Superior, Deluxe, Grand Superior, Grand Deluxe and Grand Poolside - for a minimum of three consecutive nights will enjoy the Summer Offer that unlocks a 25 per cent discount on the best available rates.

"Summer heralds the season to indulge in the joy of travel and a respite from the daily grind. To welcome the return of sun-soaked vacations, we have dreamed up a collection of sizzling escapes for the elevated bon vivant," said Clement Koh, executive vice president of sales and marketing of GHM. "Rooted in our ethos of curating unrivalled lifestyle experiences, guests in each of our properties will bask in A Style to Remember within their personal oasis."



Badr Al Samaa-Ruwi and Al Khoud re-accredited by JCI

Badr Al Samaa Hospitals, Ruwi and Al Khoud has retained the prestigious Joint Commission International, USA (JCI) Accreditation, the group office said in a press statement.

JCI, the gold standard of quality in healthcare, is the reflection of the group's unmatched commitment towards ensuring high standards in quality of care and patient safety.

Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals became the only healthcare group in the world to get six accreditations in six months. Recently Badr Al Samaa Hospitals, Barka, Sohar, Salalah and Nizwa were accredited by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards International (ACHSI).

Badr Al Samaa Hospitals, Ruwi and Al Khoud have been accredited third time in a row; both facilities were first accredited in 2016. Both hospitals performed exceptionally well during the survey and did 100 per cent compliance to the established standards of JCI. Survey was

conducted based one more than one thousand one hundred and eighty measurable elements.

JCI is the largest and one of the highest quality international healthcare accreditation bodies of the world. It focuses on continuous improvement in patient safety and quality of healthcare by education, advisory, accreditation and certification services. This accreditation will be valid for three years.

Both hospitals were assessed on the recently revised JCI standards, 7th Edition, which is more comprehensive and stringent.

On this occasion the managing directors of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals, Abdul Lathief and Dr P A Mohammed in a joint statement said, "We are overwhelmed by the outstanding performance of our two hospitals in JCI surveys.

"The accreditation process helps us to further improve our commitment towards ensuring high standards of quality and patient care. Our doctors, para-

medics and allied services staff diligently follow the laid policies and protocols to ensure every healthcare function meets the standards. This accreditation has only increased the standards of care, our pricing is still the same and affordable."

Jacob Oommen, COO and Head of the Quality Project said that it is an exceptional achievement for the group to bag six international accreditations in six months.

This achievement was only possible because of the culture of quality and patient safety imbibed in their system and the commitment of their staff for ensuring highest standards of patient care.

Sam Varghese branch manager of Badr Al Samaa, Ruwi along with their Medical Director Dr Benny Panakkal and quality manager Dr Suhail C K led the Ruwi team and Jasimul Haque, branch manager of Badr Al Samaa, Al Khoud along with their Medical Director Dr Subramanya

Uppunda and quality manager Dr Manikandan led the Al Khoud team. Lincy Kurian, Group Quality Coordinator and Shijo M Philip, Group Infection Control Officer supported both teams in the survey.

JCI survey is very meticulous and stringent in their evaluation of quality and patient safety parameters set under 13 chapters, these chapters are divided in two categories line Patient Centered Standards and Health Care Organization Management Standards.

Surveyors of JCI comprises of Ann Watkins, Krishnan Sankaranarayan, Michael K Wood and Hasan Kus.

In both culmination events held at Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Ruwi and Al Khoud, they appreciated the hospitality, cooperation and professionalism of everyone involved. They mentioned, in some areas and departments Badr Al Samaa's quality standards exceeded the ones laid by JCI, USA.

US rapper to perform at Rage on the Red Sea event

American rapper Russ Vitale, commonly known as Russ, announced to perform live in Jeddah at the World Heavyweight Championship fight between Anthony Joshua and Oleksandr Usyk on August 20.

Taking to the stage at the King Abdullah Sports City Arena later this month, this performance follows Russ' first visit to Saudi Arabia in 2019 where he delighted his large and loyal fanbase in the Kingdom for the first time.

The twenty-nine-year-old rapper, singer songwriter, and author walks his own path, at his own pace, inspired by other famous American rappers alongside the classical rock he absorbed as a youngster.

Unique in proving to the world he didn't need a major label to surpass over 10bn streams on Spotify/Apple Music, get on Forbes' '30 under 30', sellout arenas around the globe, and become one of the most popular and engaged rappers right now.

During the 2010s, Russ emerged from the Atlanta-area underground with dozens of independent singles and albums, all of which were made freely available to download.



His mainstream breakthrough came in 2017 with the platinum certified Top Ten album, 'There's Really a Wolf' before cracking the Top Five of the Billboard 200 with 2018's Zoo and 2020's Shake the Snow Globe, before releasing the companion albums Chomp and Chomp 2.

Since 2010, Russ has grown a loyal fanbase across the world and his notable popularity in Saudi Arabia is highlighted in this being his xx visit to the Kingdom to perform.

Most recently, Russ, a multi-platinum recording artist, has collaborated with Ed Sheeran for his new single 'Are you Entertained'.

Switching between singing and rapping, the single and visual celebrates Russ and Sheeran's success and being at the height

of their musical careers.

Music concerts in Saudi Arabia are powered by MDLBEAST through the company's arm which aims to amplify the regional music scene through concerts, events and experiences, MDLBEAST PRESENTS.

Both the fight and concert will take place indoors at King Abdullah Sports City Arena, part of Jeddah's stunning King Abdullah Sports City which has previously hosted various international sports and entertainment events including football, WWE, and boxing.

The World Championship fight is one of the biggest Heavyweight rematches in the history of the sport, with unified Heavyweight World Champion Oleksandr Usyk facing off with Anthony Joshua on 20th August in the coastal city of Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Tickets are available from SAR375 and ticket fans can get their tickets via www.halayalla.com/sa-en/tickets/rage-on-the-red-sea. For visa entry information, fans should go to <https://visa.visit-saudi.com/> for information on how to apply.



Malabar Gold & Diamonds wins two IGJA awards in India

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 285 outlets across 10 countries, has won awards in two categories - Highest Employment on the Company Rolls and Global Retailer of the Year award at the 48th India Gem & Jewellery Awards (IGJA) 2021 organised by Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) in India.

IGJA awards are known as one of the most prestigious awards in the gems and jewellery industry in the country.

GJEPC has been organising this prestigious Annual Awards for the gems and jewellery industry since 1973 to honour the ex-

emplary achievements of leading exporters and for their outstanding export performance besides felicitating the top importers and banks that are financing the trade, amongst others.

Ernst & Young LLP, one of the world's leading multinational professional services providers, is the Knowledge Partner for IGJA Asher O, Managing Director - India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds and K P Abdul Salam, Vice Chairman, Malabar Group received the awards at the awards night held at Grand Hyatt, Mumbai.

"It's a great honour to win the prestigious awards at the 48th IGJA 2021. The awards recognise our robust global presence

and our commitment to building an efficient workforce to serve our customers with a world-class shopping experience," said M P Ahammed, chairman, Malabar Group.

A diversified conglomerate with operations in ten countries, Malabar Group currently has over 14,000 employees. The group offers a healthy work environment and its employees the opportunity to become investors.

It promotes diversity, equality, growth, entrepreneurial spirit, and work flexibility among its employees. Malabar Group has more than 285 showrooms across ten countries and epitomizes the vision of Make In India, Market To The World.

Outstanding benefits on Nissan Sunny: SBA

Confirming its commitment of extending customers an unmatched buying experience, Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), is offering a wide range of deals for the patrons of Nissan Sunny. The car continues to be a popular choice amongst customers in the segment because of its outstanding design, intelligent technology and remarkable performance.

As part of the special scheme Nissan Sunny customers can enjoy special EMI, free periodic vehicle service package, free in-



surance and free registration. Customers can also avail additional benefits on purchase of second Nissan in the family.

The offer, which is available

on Nissan Sunny model purchased for personal use, will go on till August 19. Vehicles purchased with commercial registration will not be eligible for the

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

A spokesperson for SBA said, "Nissan Sunny stands out for its wide range of innovation, reliability and versatility. It is the perfect car for customers looking for a sophisticated driving experience."

Customers of Nissan Sunny can avail low EMI rate as part of the offer. Starting EMI for Nissan Sunny 1.5L is RO60 and for Nissan Sunny SV 1.6L is RO76.

Qatar Museums expands world's ambitious public art programmes

As part of Qatar Creates - the year-round national cultural movement that curates, promotes, and celebrates the diversity of cultural activities in Qatar - Qatar Museums (QM) on Tuesday announced a programme of new and commissioned public artworks by celebrated Qatari, regional and international artists that will be presented throughout Doha and the nation.

From the Qatari desert to the bustling Souq Waqif, in the coming weeks, the nation's public spaces will be transformed into a vast outdoor art museum experience featuring more than 100 public artworks, which will be on view for locals and the 1.5mn visitors who are expected to travel

to Doha for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

"The addition of 40 new, major works of public art this fall is a significant milestone for Qatar's public art programme," said Her Excellency Sheikha al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums.

"Public art is one of our most prominent demonstrations of cultural exchange, where we present works from artists of all nationalities and backgrounds," Qatar Museums Chairperson pointed out, adding that "from the arrivals at the best airport in the world - Hamad International Airport - to every neighbourhood in our nation, public art is there to make your experience unique".



The Miraculous Journey by Damien Hirst installed at Sidra Medical Centre

"These works vary in size and form, and they encompass a wide range of subject matter, but all further our mission to make art more accessible, engage our publics, celebrate our heritage,

and embrace the cultures of others. More importantly, artists from every corner of the world - representing all continents - have been invited to express their artistic creativity with our very

own diverse population. Our longstanding commitment to public art is visible across Qatar, and we hope these works will be welcomed by locals and enhance the experiences had by the mil-

lions of visitors we expect to welcome to Doha this year."

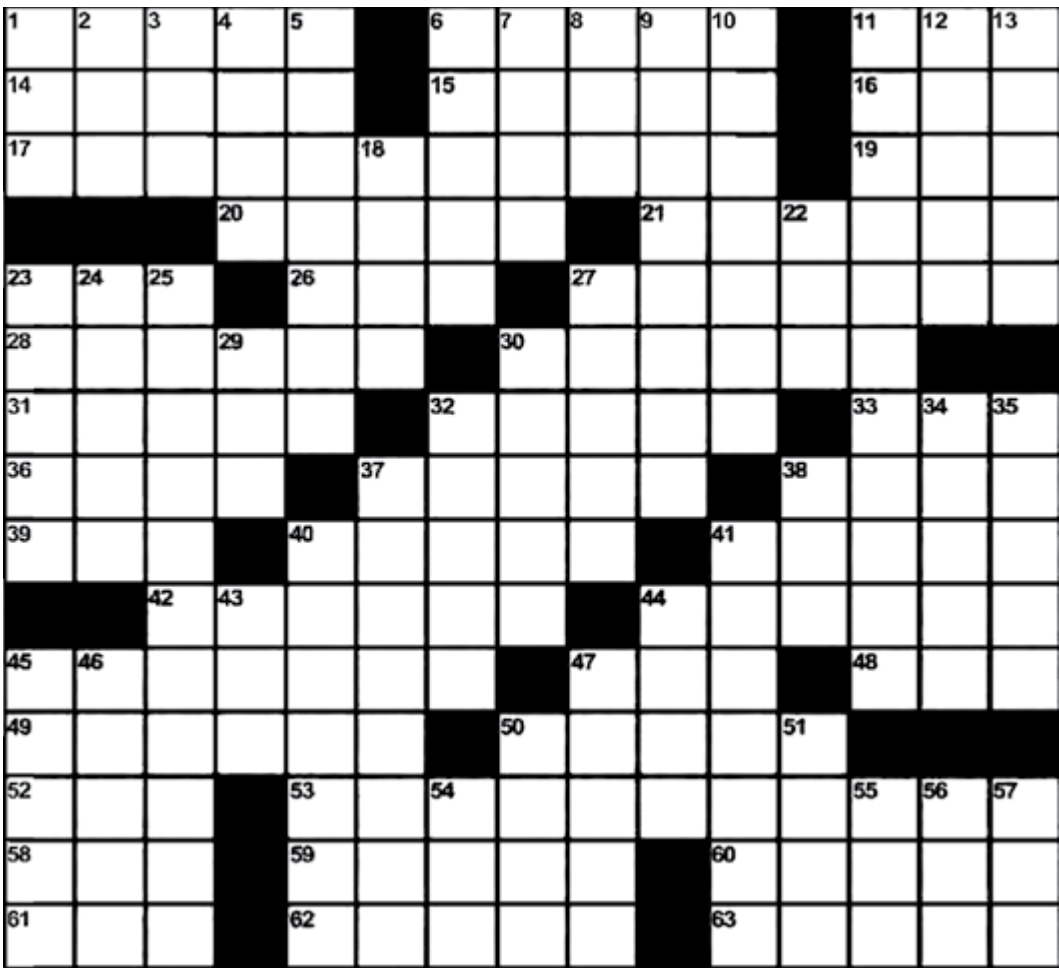
Qatar Museums is working with various entities across the city on Qatar's public art programme including the Hamad International Airport, the Supreme Committee of Delivery and Legacy, and the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) to install artworks in a variety of both highly trafficked and unexpected public spaces designed to surprise and delight passersby including parks, shopping areas, educational and athletic facilities, Hamad International Airport and Q-Rail stations, as well as stadiums that will host the World Cup matches.

Making art a part of everyday life, Qatar became one of the first countries in the Gulf to create a

comprehensive contemporary public art programme. To date, the programme has grown to encompass approximately 70 works by more than 60 artists from Qatar, across the MENA region, and around the world.

Current highlights include Richard Serra's 7 at MIA Park and East/West-West/East in Zekreet, Tom Claassen's Falcon (2021) at Hamad International Airport, A Blessing in Disguise by Ghada Al Khater at the Fire Station, Bruce Nauman's Untitled (Trench, Shafts, Pit, Tunnel and Chamber) at M7, Flag of Glory by Ahmed Al Bahrani at the National Museum of Qatar, The Miraculous Journey by Damien Hirst at Sidra Medical Centre and many others.

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Pub order
 - 6) Certain relative
 - 11) Conditional word
 - 14) Severe
 - 15) Country bordering Tibet
 - 16) Ending for "mod" or "nod"
 - 17) Roughhouse
 - 19) Auction offering
 - 20) Late comic Williams
 - 21) Mocha resident
 - 23) "What, me worry?" magazine
 - 26) Kind of gas (Abbr.)
 - 27) Celebratory events
 - 28) Chipped away at
 - 30) Tattoo place
 - 31) Jeans fabric
 - 32) "Rawhide" role for Clint
 - 33) "This tape will self-destruct ... " org.
 - 36) Marker fillers
 - 37) Items in a rack
 - 38) "... the Rainbow"
 - 39) Consumed
 - 40) Shocked?
 - 41) Summary of beliefs
 - 42) Emitted long, loud

- cries
 - 44) Mother-of-pearl sources
 - 45) Word before "lies the rub"
 - 4 7) Costa del _
 - 48) Calendar abbr.
 - 49) Reduce the strength of
 - 50) Blast from the past
 - 52) Anvil's site
 - 53) Jumping arachnid
 - 58) Adam's mate
 - 59) Blue book filler
 - 60) Sister of Urania
 - 61) Beatty of "Deliverance"
 - 62) Rods' partners
 - 63) Back-to-health program
- DOWN**
- 1) "Stop talking!"
 - 2) Confucian "way"
 - 3) "Bobby Hockey"
 - 4) "Back in the _" (Beatles jam)
 - 5) Formula to be proven
 - 6) Strip of gear, as a ship
 - 7) Gas light
 - 8) "Brain" of a PC
 - 9) Nau ti cal ropes
 - 10) Advanced in years
 - 11) Some workers over

- 51) Dublin's isle
- 54) Mad cow disease, for short
- 55) "Zip-A-Dee-Doo-_"
- 56) Airport stat.
- 57) Knock off, as a bank

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You take care of your finances and your possessions, so why not treat your health like a valuable investment too?

It's important to floss, exercise, eat right, and get plenty of sleep. It's only when it's missing that you realize how important good health is, so make sure that you do everything in your power to keep your mind, body, and soul in top shape.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You could be practically hypnotized today.

Someone close to you has all the right moves and is dead set on getting your full attention. You have no problem being an appreciative audience, but make sure you speak up if their antics start to get out of hand.

The line between appreciative and captive audience can be very thin!



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

A recent achievement at work is an huge mood lifter, and your good mood should carry over into your home and romantic life as well.

That sense of accomplishment works wonders for you and your attitude. Just don't forget to give a round of thanks to everyone who supported and helped you recently.

While your efforts might have put you over the top, you definitely needed a little help from your friends!



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is the monetary unit of Laos?

A. Dong
B. Riel
C. Kip
D. Baht

02. Which of these men have not walked on the moon?

A. Neil Armstrong
B. Alan Shepard
C. Michael Collins
D. Buzz Aldrin

03. Which song, in the best known translation, contains the words "Oh the shark has pretty teeth dear, And he shows them pearly white, Just a jack-knife has Macheath dear, And he keeps it out of sight"?

A. It's All Over Now
B. They Swam Right Over the Dam
C. Chanson d'Amour
D. Mack the Knife

Answers: 1. C 2. C 3. D



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your energy has highlighted love and romance.

It feels like it's all for you, so go for it! Whether a relationship needs a little zing or you're still on the lookout for the right mate, expect a little treat to come soon. Couples that have been feeling somewhat detached should experience a new surge of heat, while singles can make real connections in the unlikelyst of places.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You might have felt emotionally zeroed out recently, but you're just about ready to poke your head out and notice what a vibrant and rich world it really is.

That change in attitude could feel like it needs a new look to accompany it, so indulge in remaking yourself from the inside out. There's just no better accompaniment to a makeover of the soul than a great new haircut and maybe a new outfit too!



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Step back from any unrealistic expectations and just seek shelter where you know your feelings are safe. You need the space to ensure that that upcoming, life-changing decision is really what you want. It's hard to choose, especially because it looks so good on paper, and all your loyal supporters are cheering furiously for your advancement. Still, you need to make sure that this choice is right for you in the long run.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's the perfect time to have a cozy night at home and a long, involving conversation with someone close that ranges from harmless gossip to your future.

The important thing is that you have company who appreciates conversational turns from the profound to the sweetly trivial. You might even find a solution to a long-standing conundrum that's puzzled you for a long while.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Improving your financial position shouldn't be hard for you right now, because if anyone can play that game and win, it's you.

Climbing up the ladder comes especially easy to you since your charm is set to dazzle and you're able to anticipate other people's thoughts before they voice them. Put on your best smile and prepare to up the ante. Before you know it, you'll be a high roller beyond your wildest dreams.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Big workplace rewards are in store for you, so try not to fret about what might go wrong. You could get so tied up in knots that you can't move at a time when action is absolutely crucial to your success. Push yourself to step out of your comfort zone. Take off in some new direction and show off your skills, including a few that most people don't even know you have. You shine in anything that requires a way with words.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're quite good at taking care of others, but it's about time that you put yourself first! Make a point of doing that it today.

Otherwise, it would be too easy to assume the position of martyr and secretly resent other people for not meeting your needs. If you recognize your own requirements and try to meet them, you should defuse any resentment and actually be prepared to give more to those you care about most.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're feeling somewhat vulnerable, and you might want to protect yourself from things or people you perceive as dangerous.

This is an important instinct, but you need to remember not to shut things down completely. There are plenty of people out there who care about you, and cutting yourself off from them shouldn't be part of the plan. In fact, someone out there is almost certainly working overtime on your behalf.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You have a deep capacity for intimacy, but you need to make sure that you're not sacrificing too much of yourself today.

You're a talented diplomat, so it might go against your nature, but it's important to conserve your resources. Talk openly about some tough issue that's lingering between you and a friend or lover and you might just heal an important emotional rift.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

I	G	I	T
U	E	A	F
C	R	S	S
I	N	S	O

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

Russian strikes near nuclear plant kill 13

The overnight strikes in the Dnipropetrovsk region in central Ukraine also injured 11 people

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine on Wednesday accused Russia of rocket strikes that killed 13 civilians in areas near a Russian-held power plant, where renewed fighting has raised fears of a nuclear disaster.

The overnight strikes in the Dnipropetrovsk region in central Ukraine also injured 11 people, with five reported to be in a serious condition.

"It was a terrible night," regional governor Valentin Reznichenko wrote on Telegram, urging residents to shelter when they hear air raid sirens.

"I am asking and begging you... Don't let the Russians kill you," he wrote, adding that Russia had fired a total of 80 rockets at the area.

Most of the casualties were in the town of Marganets, just across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's biggest.

Regional council head Mykola Lukashuk said the strikes had hit a local power line, leaving thousands of people without electricity.

Ukraine and Russia have accused each other of recent



Ukrainian deminers inspect a crater following a Russian rocket strike near a clinical medical laboratory in Kharkiv on Tuesday (AFP)

shelling around the plant itself.

Ukraine says Russia has stationed hundreds of troops and stored ammunition at the plant.

The tensions have brought back memories of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster in

then Soviet Ukraine, which killed hundreds of people and spread radioactive contamination over much of Europe.

The plant was captured by Russian troops on March 4 after a battle with Ukrainian forces.

Beachgoers fleeing

The strikes came a day after major blasts at the Saki airfield, a key military base on the Russian-annexed Crimea peninsula.

Dramatic amateur footage on social media appeared to show panicked holidaymakers

fleeing a Crimean beach with young children, as ballooning clouds of grey smoke rose over the horizon. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and has used the region as a staging ground for its attacks, but it has rarely been a target for Ukrainian

Ukraine and Russia have accused each other of recent shelling around the plant. Ukraine says Russia has stationed hundreds of troops and stored ammunition at the plant, which was captured by Russian troops on March 4 after a battle with Ukrainian forces

forces.

Moscow insisted that the explosions were caused by detonating ammunition rather than Ukrainian fire.

Ukraine's army, which for months pleaded for long-range artillery from Western allies, has been hitting targets deeper in Russian-held territory since some started arriving in recent weeks.

Kyiv has also taken credit for several acts of sabotage inside

Russian-held territory.

New buyer for Ukraine grain?

The war has severely hampered grain supply from Ukraine, leading to an international food crisis as it is one of the world's biggest producers.

But some ships have been able to leave Ukrainian ports in recent days after a deal with Russia brokered by the United Nations and Turkey.

The first grain shipment to leave on the Sierra Leone-flagged vessel Razoni departed the Ukrainian port of Odessa on August 1 and had been expected to dock in the Lebanese port of Tripoli at the weekend.

But the Ukrainian embassy said a new buyer for the shipment was being sought after the original Lebanese buyer cancelled the order.

A five-month delay after Russia's invasion 'prompted the buyer and the shipping agent to reach agreement on the cancellation of the order', the Ukraine embassy said on Tuesday. It is currently anchored off the Turkish port of Mersin.

AFP

New campus femicide sparks outrage in Egypt

Cairo, Egypt - Egypt detained a male student on Wednesday on suspicion of murdering a female student who allegedly rejected his advances, after the second such campus femicide in two months, prosecutors said.

The suspect, from Zagazig, 60km north of Cairo, stands accused of killing his victim, identified only by her first name Salma, by 'repeatedly stabbing her with a knife', a prosecution statement said.

Murder carries the death penalty in Egypt and the country sentenced more people to death last year than any other, according to human rights group Amnesty International. It was third highest in the number of executions carried out.

The latest killing revived memories of the June murder of student Nayera Ashraf,

stabbed to death in front of her university in Mansoura, 150km north of Cairo.

After convicting and sentencing to death her killer, Mohamed Adel, the court called for changes to the law to allow executions to be broadcast live as a deterrent to others.

Capital punishment in Egypt is rarely carried out in public or broadcast. In a rare exception, state television broadcast the execution of three men in 1998 who had murdered a woman and her two children in their Cairo home.

Routine violence

There was widespread outrage on social media over the latest killing but some users suggested the victim was at fault for befriending a male student.

"Salma was murdered simply for being born a woman in

a misogynous society," one user said.

"So long as there are sympathisers out there who make excuses for the perpetrators of these crimes, they will continue," said another in response to a user who criticised the victim. Conservative interpretations of Islam in Egypt have contributed to severely limiting women's rights.

Women report being targeted by routine violence with little legal redress.

Nearly eight million Egyptian women were victims of violence committed by their partners or relatives, or by strangers in public spaces, according to a United Nations survey conducted in 2015.

High-profile femicides have triggered widespread anger in Egypt in recent months.

AFP

Philippines cancels Russia helicopter deal

Manila, Philippines - The Philippines has scrapped an order for 16 Russian military helicopters, an official confirmed on Wednesday, following reports former president Rodrigo Duterte decided to cancel it due to US sanctions on Moscow.

Manila - a longtime Washington ally - agreed in November to pay 12.7bn pesos (US\$228mn) for the Mi-17 helicopters, as it seeks to modernise its military hardware.

The United States and its allies imposed wide-ranging sanctions on Moscow in the wake of its assault on Ukraine in February.

They are aimed at cutting off Russia from the global financial system and choking off funds available to Moscow to finance the war.

The Philippine defence department was 'formalising the termination' of the contract, spokesman Arsenio Andolong said on Wednesday.

Without mentioning US sanctions on Moscow, Andolong told



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr (left) and incoming military chief Lieutenant General Bartolome Bacarro applaud during a change of command ceremony at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City on Monday (AFP)

AFP 'changes in priorities necessitated by global political developments resulted in the cancellation of the project by the previous administration'.

Delfin Lorenzana, who served as defence secretary under Duterte, said in March that the Philippines had paid a deposit for the transport helicopters before war erupted in Ukraine and the

deal was 'on track'.

But last week Lorenzana, who now heads a different government agency, told local media that Duterte himself decided to cancel the deal in the waning days of his administration over the sanctions threat.

"I don't know if we can still get back the money since we were the ones who terminated

the contract," Delfin Lorenzana told reporters.

Russian embassy officials in Manila could not be reached for comment on Wednesday.

Philippine ambassador to Washington Jose Romualdez recently told AFP the decision to cancel was triggered by 'the Ukrainian war'.

AFP

Ailing beluga put down in last-ditch French rescue bid

Ouistreham, France - An ailing beluga whale that strayed into France's Seine river was put down by vets on Wednesday during a last-ditch rescue attempt to keep the animal alive, local officials said.

The fate of the whale captured the hearts of people across the world since it was first spotted in the highly unusual habitat of the river that flows through Paris, far from its usual Arctic waters.

Rescuers had worked overnight to lift the male out of the Seine by crane for transfer to a saltwater pen, in a delicate, final effort to save the life of the ailing mammal, which was no longer eating. It was then driven at a painstakingly slow speed north to the Normandy port of Ouistreham, where vets hoped to release the animal into a habourside pen and then possibly into the wild.

But the experts unanimously decided after examining the beluga on arrival in Ouistreham that there was no other option than to put the male down, the local au-



Rescuers pull up a net as they try to rescue a beluga whale stranded in the River Seine on Tuesday (AFP)

thority of the Calvados region said.

"Despite the technical and logistical efforts, the condition of the cetacean unfortunately deteriorated during the trip," it said.

"Examinations showed that the beluga was in a state of great weakness and its respiratory activity failing. The decision was

therefore taken collectively, with the veterinarians, to euthanise it," it added.

'Tragic outcome'

After nearly six hours of work by dozens of divers and rescuers, the 800kg cetacean had been lifted from the river by a net and crane at around 4am (0200

GMT) and placed on a barge under the immediate care of a dozen veterinarians.

The 24 divers involved in the operation and the rescuers handling the ropes had to try several times to lure the animal into the nets to be lifted out of the water.

The beluga was then given a health check and driven to

Ouistreham.

"During the journey the vets noted a worsening of his health and in particular the breathing," said Florence Ollivet-Courtois, a

The animal was not getting enough air and suffering visibly. We therefore decided that it made no sense to set it free

FLORENCE COURTOIS

vet for the local emergency services, in a video posted on social media.

"The animal was not getting enough air and suffering visibly. We therefore decided that it made no sense to set it free and proceeded to euthanasia."

"The transfer was risky, but essential to give an otherwise doomed animal a chance," the Sea Shepherd NGO, which has been assisting in the rescue, said

on Twitter.

"Following the deterioration of his condition, the vets took the decision to euthanise him. We are devastated by this tragic outcome that we knew was very likely," it said.

The four-metre whale was discovered more than a week ago heading towards Paris and was stranded about 130km inland from the English Channel at Saint-Pierre-la-Garenne in Normandy. Since Friday, the animal's movement inland had been blocked by a lock some 70km northwest of Paris, and its health deteriorated after it refused to eat.

Killer whale also died

This is the second drama involving a big marine mammal in an unexpected area to grip France in the last months.

A sick killer whale - a member of the dolphin family also known as an orca - was spotted in the Seine in May but died after attempts failed to guide the animal back to the sea.

AFP

Boat sinks off Greece; around 50 missing

Athens, Greece - An air and sea rescue operation was underway on Wednesday after around 50 people went missing when a migrant boat sank in the Aegean Sea, the Greek coastguard said.

The vessel foundered at dawn off the islands of Karpathos and Rhodes after setting sail on Tuesday from Antalya, southern Turkey, heading for Italy.

"According to the statements of 29 rescued people, there were 80 people on the boat, so up to 50 people are missing," a coastguard press office official told AFP.

The rescue effort, ordered by merchant shipping minister Yannis Plakiotakis, according to a coastguard statement, included four vessels already sailing in the southern Aegean, two coastguard patrol boats and a Greek air force helicopter.

AFP

China vows zero tolerance for separatist activities in Taiwan

Beijing, China - China on Wednesday vowed zero tolerance for 'separatist activities' in Taiwan and reaffirmed that it would take the self-ruled island by force if necessary.

The warning from Beijing, which considers Taiwan its territory, came after days of unprecedented Chinese military drills around the island sparked by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip.

Pelosi last week became the highest-ranking US official to visit Taiwan in decades despite stark threats from China, which tries to keep Taipei isolated on the world stage.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office on Wednesday issued a white paper laying out how it intends to claim the island through a range of economic incentives and military pressure.

"We are ready to create vast space for peaceful reunification, but we will leave no room for separatist activities in any form," said the white paper.

China will 'not renounce the use of force, and we reserve the option of taking all necessary measures'.

It added, however: "We will only be forced to take drastic measures to respond to the provocation of separatist elements or external forces should they ever cross our red lines."

China last issued a white paper on Taiwan in 2000.

Since the late 1990s, the island has transformed from an autocracy into a vibrant democ-



Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) fighter jet taking part in a military drill in an undisclosed location on Tuesday (AFP)

racy, and a distinct Taiwanese identity has emerged.

wanese separatism, which also includes those who advocate for

shadow of the biggest military exercises China has conducted around the island, including training for a blockade.

The drills have raised fears that China's Communist leadership could be preparing for an invasion. The exercises were initially expected to conclude on Sunday, but have continued this week with no confirmation of when they will end.

China's People's Liberation Army on Wednesday released details of the exercises it conducted a day earlier around Taiwan. The PLA's Eastern Theater command said the Tuesday drills focused on establishing air dominance, releasing video and photos of jet fighters taking off and

conducting manoeuvres - including in-flight refuelling from a tanker.

Taiwan has accused China of using the Pelosi visit as an excuse to rehearse for an invasion.

It has conducted its own military drills to prepare for an attack on the island, and on Wednesday released footage of its air, land and sea forces responding to the Chinese exercises.

The Taiwanese drills prompted another Chinese warning on Tuesday. Any conspiracy to 'resist reunification through arms', said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin, 'will end in failure like a mantis trying to stop a chariot'.

AFP



Japan's PM Fumio Kishida speaks during a press conference at his official residence in Tokyo on Wednesday (AFP)

Japan PM reshuffles cabinet after slump in approval ratings

Tokyo, Japan - Japan's prime minister reshuffled his cabinet Wednesday after a slump in approval ratings, replacing the brother of assassinated ex-leader Shinzo Abe as defence minister.

Fumio Kishida led his ruling party to victory in an upper house election last month, days after Abe was shot dead by a man resentful of the Unification Church.

Since then, as the public scrutinises the church's ties with Japanese politicians and Kishida's handling of the economy, approval ratings for the government have tumbled.

They fell 13 percentage points in three weeks to 46 per cent, according to a poll published on Monday by public broadcaster NHK, while another survey by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* daily showed a drop of eight points from July to 57 per cent.

Political veteran Yasukazu Hamada was named defence minister - a key role given Kishida's pledge to ramp up the defence budget to counter growing threats from China and North Korea.

Hamada, who previously served as defence minister from 2008-9, replaced Abe's brother Nobuo Kishi, whose ailing health has prompted concern.

Kishi also recently vowed to 'thoroughly review' his links to the Unification Church, after acknowledging that church members had served as campaign volunteers.

Since Abe's death a month ago, Japanese media has revealed that many ruling lawmakers - especially those in

Abe's faction - received similar assistance from Unification Church members, something the group says followers only do as private citizens.

The organisation founded in Korea in 1954, whose followers are colloquially known as 'Moonies', has confirmed that the mother of the man suspected of killing Abe was a member.

She reportedly declared bankruptcy after making donations of around 100mn yen (US\$1mn at the time) to the church.

I have told all my ministers to review their ties with Unification Church, to clear suspicion from the public

FUMIO KISHIDA

On Wednesday, Kishida said he had told all his ministers to review their ties with the organisation, 'so as to clear suspicion from the public'.

"I appointed only those who accepted my strict instructions that each one of them check their relationship with the group and strictly review it based on their responsibility as a politician," he told reporters.

Earlier, the top government spokesman announced the new cabinet including Katsunobu Kato, who served as health minister under Abe and returns to head the ministry.

AFP

Briggs, author of classic 'The Snowman', dies aged 88

London, UK - British cartoonist and illustrator Raymond Briggs, whose creation *The Snowman* became a Christmas staple for generations of children, has died aged 88, his publisher Penguin Random House said on Wednesday. The 1978 picture book about a young, ginger-haired boy who builds a snowman that magically comes to life has sold more than 5.5mn copies globally and was transformed into an animated film in 1982.



This file photo shows Raymond Briggs at a photocall in London's Hyde Park on May 29, 2008 (AFP)

First shown on British TV, with an introduction by David Bowie in some later versions, the film and its memorable musical score has become synonymous with Christmas ever since, being shown every year.

"Raymond's books are picture masterpieces that address some of the fundamental questions of what it is to be human, speaking to both adults and children," said Francesca Dow, managing director of Penguin Random House

Children's.

Reflecting his own curmudgeonly nature, Brigg's first major success came in 1973 with *Father Christmas*, in which Santa Claus is an irascible old man who hates the cold and snow, and finds delivering presents a chore.

In 1977's *Fungus the Bogeyman*, the eponymous hero of the slimy underworld scares vicars, wakes human babies and makes things go bump in the night.

AFP

Rainwater unsafe to drink across globe

Stockholm, Sweden - Rainwater everywhere on the planet is unsafe to drink due to levels of toxic chemicals known as PFAS that exceed the latest guidelines, according to a new study by Stockholm University scientists.

Commonly known as 'forever chemicals' because they disintegrate extremely slowly, PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) were initially found in packaging, shampoo or makeup but have spread to our entire environment, including water and air. "There is nowhere on Earth where the rain would be safe to drink, according to the measurements that we have taken," Ian Cousins, a professor at the university and the lead author of the study published in *Environmental Science and Technology*, told AFP.

A compilation of the data since 2010 that his team studied showed that 'even in Antarctica or the Tibetan plateau, the levels in the rainwater are above the drinking water guidelines that the US EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) proposed', he said.

Normally considered pristine,

the two regions still have PFAS levels '14 times higher' than the US drinking water guidelines.

The EPA recently lowered its PFAS guidelines significantly after discovering that the chemicals may affect the immune response in children to vaccines, Cousins noted.

Once ingested, PFAS accumulate in the body.

According to some studies, exposure can also lead to problems with fertility, developmental delays in children, increased risks of obesity or certain cancers (prostate, kidney and testicular), an increase in cholesterol levels.

Cousins said PFAS were now 'so persistent' and ubiquitous that they will never disappear from the planet.

"We have made the planet inhospitable to human life by irreversibly contaminating it now so that nothing is clean anymore. And to the point that it's not clean enough to be safe," he said.

"We have crossed a planetary boundary," he said, referring to a central paradigm for evaluating Earth's capacity to absorb the impact of human activity.

AFP

FBI raid on Trump's home ignites political firestorm

Washington, US - Top Republican leaders flung their support behind former US president Donald Trump on Tuesday after an extraordinary FBI raid on his palatial Florida residence sparked a political firestorm in an already bitterly divided country.

The FBI move marked a stunning escalation of legal probes into the 45th president and comes as he is weighing another White House run.

Several former advisors to the 76-year-old Trump urged him to immediately confirm that he would be a presidential candidate in 2024. "Nothing like this has ever happened to a President of the United States before," Trump said of the FBI operation at his Mar-a-Lago resort in West Palm Beach.

He denounced the FBI raid as a 'weaponisation of the Justice System' by 'Radical Left Democrats who desperately don't want me to run for President in 2024'.

At the White House, Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said President Joe Biden did not have any advance notice about the raid and respected the independence of the Justice Department.

Asked about the potential for civil unrest in reaction to Trump's



Supporters of Donald Trump gather near his residence at Mar-A-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, on Tuesday (AFP)

legal problems, Jean-Pierre said 'there's no place for political violence in this country'.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which is led by Christopher Wray, a Trump appointee, declined to provide a reason for the raid. But US media outlets said agents were conducting a court-authorised search related to the potential mishandling of classified documents that had been sent to Mar-a-Lago after Trump left the White House in January 2021. Trump has also faced intense legal scrutiny for his efforts to overturn the results

of the 2020 election and over the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by his supporters.

Since leaving office, Trump has remained the country's most divisive figure, continuing to sow falsehoods that he actually won the 2020 vote. A day after the raid on Mar-a-Lago, US Representative Scott Perry - a Trump ally - said that FBI agents had confiscated his cell phone, but did not specify why it was taken.

"This morning, while traveling with my family, three FBI agents visited me and seized my cell phone," Perry told FOX News,

condemning 'these kinds of banana republic tactics'.

Allies rally round

Leading Republicans rallied around the former president, who was not present at Mar-a-Lago when the raid took place.

Trump's former vice president Mike Pence, a potential 2024 rival, expressed 'deep concern' and said the raid smacked of 'partisanship' by the Justice Department. Kevin McCarthy, who is seeking to become speaker of the House of Representatives if Republicans win November's

midterm elections, accused the Justice Department of 'weaponised politicisation'.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally, said 'launching an investigation of a former president this close to an election is beyond problematic'.

Representative Elise Stefanik, the third-ranking House Republican, called it a 'dark day in American history'.

"If the FBI can raid a US President, imagine what they can do to you," Stefanik tweeted, to which Democratic Representative Ted Lieu replied: "Why can't the FBI investigate a US President? We're not Russia, where the law doesn't apply to the head of state and his cronies."

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House, told NBC that 'no person is above the law'.

In his statement, Trump did not give any indication about why the FBI raided his home but said: "They even broke into my safe!"

Andrew McCabe, a former FBI deputy director, told CNN that agents may have been looking for 'something specific' related to the probe into the handling of classified information.

AFP

Heat, drought rekindle huge wildfire in southwest France

Bordeaux, France - A fire that destroyed thousands of hectares of tinder-dry forest in southwest France has flared again amid a fierce drought and the summer's latest wave of extreme heat, officials said on Wednesday.

An additional 6,000 hectares of pine forest have burned in the so-called Landiras blaze since Tuesday afternoon, forcing the evacuation of around 6,000 people, Gironde regional officials said in a statement.

'The fire is extremely violent and has spread to the Landes department' further south, home of the Landes de Gascogne regional park, the prefecture said, and further evacuations are likely.

'It's a major fire... much more intense and fast-moving' than at the height of the Landiras blaze that ignited in July, Marc Vermeulen of the regional fire-fighting authority told journalists.

No one has been injured in the coastal area that draws huge summer tourism crowds but 16 houses were destroyed or damaged near the village of Belin-Beliet. The fire was spreading toward the A63 motorway, a major artery linking Bordeaux to Spain, with thick smoke forcing the road's closure between Bordeaux and Bayonne.

The Landiras fire was the largest of several that have raged this year in southwest France, which has been buffeted by record drought and a series of heat waves.

Arsonists set some of the fires and officials initially suspected a criminal origin for the Landiras



Firefighters use water cannon to control a forest fire near Saint-Magne, southwestern France on Wednesday (AFP)

The weather is very unfavourable because of the heat, the dry air, the record drought and the fact that there is lot of peat in the ground

MARTIN GUESPEREAU

blaze. Police later released a suspect for lack of evidence.

Around 500 firefighters are on the scene, supported by water-dropping planes.

The Gironde prefect, Martin Guespereau, said on Wednesday 'the risks are very high' that adverse weather conditions will allow the fire to spread further.

"The weather is very unfavourable because of the heat, the dry air, the record drought and the fact that there is a lot of peat in the ground... the fire didn't go out in July, it went underground," he told journalists.

The Landiras fire and a second large blaze near Arcachon burned a combined 21,000 hectares and forced more than 36,000 people to evacuate before they were brought under

control - but not fully extinguished. Wildfires have also ignited in the dry hills of the southeast and even in the normally lush areas of Brittany along the English Channel.

On Wednesday, officials in western France said a forest fire near Angers and Le Mans has burned 1,200 hectares since Monday as nearly 400 firefighters struggle to contain it.

AFP



Demonstrators prepare to leave the anti-government protest camp site near the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo on Wednesday (AFP)

Sri Lanka protest camp clears out after crackdown

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Protesters in Sri Lanka who brought down the previous government announced they were dismantling their main demonstration site near the president's office on Wednesday in the wake of a crackdown against their leaders.

The group led by university students and leftist parties said they were clearing out their tents along the Galle Face seafront promenade in the capital.

A spokesman said they had also withdrawn four court challenges against a police order for them to vacate the area that claimed their tents were a hindrance to nearby hotels.

Activists were seen taking down their tents and removing other structures they had put up supporting their struggle against the administration.

The demonstrations began on April 9 as a protest against

shortages of essentials such as fuel, food and medicines in Sri Lanka's worst ever economic crisis.

They peaked when tens of thousands poured into Colombo and overran Gotabaya Rajapaksa's presidential palace on July 9, forcing him to flee and eventually resign.

Days after Rajapaksa fled to Singapore and announced his resignation, troops evicted protesters occupying the palace as well as the home and office of the prime minister.

Security forces were accused of using excessive force to evict the demonstrators, with more than 80 people suffering injuries that required hospitalisation.

Since then, dozens of activists have been arrested on charges of damaging state property.

AFP

ONE YEAR UNDER TALIBAN - PART II

Misery and disease conquer Afghanistan

Musa Qala, Afghanistan - The heaving wards of a ramshackle clinic in southern Afghanistan are just one sign of the catastrophic humanitarian crisis that has gripped the war-ravaged country since the Taliban returned to power a year ago.

Last month, the Musa Qala District Hospital in Helmand province was forced to shut its doors to all except those suffering from suspected cholera.

The infirmary was soon jammed with listless patients, intravenous drips needled into their wrists as they recuperated on rusting gurneys.

Though the clinic lacks facilities to test for cholera, about 550 patients presented themselves within days, showing symptoms of a disease caused by a lack of basic sanitation needs: clean drinking water and an adequate sewerage system.

"It's very difficult," hospital chief Ehsanullah Rodi, run ragged on just five hours of sleep a night since the influx began, told AFP.

"We didn't see this from last year, or another year."

The United Nations says Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis is the world's worst.

Hungry children

Poverty in the country - felt most keenly in Afghanistan's south - has been driven to desperate new levels, exacerbated by drought and inflation since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Since the Emirate (Taliban) came into power, we can't even find cooking oil," said one woman, perched on a hospital cot next to her malnourished six-month-old grandson in



Breshna sits on a hospital bed with her four-month-old twins Subhania and Subhan in the malnutrition ward at the Boost Hospital (AFP)

Lashkar Gah, Helmand's provincial capital.

"Poor people are squashed under their feet," the 35-year-old said.

Her grandchild is being treated for the fifth time at Boost Hospital, a sun-baked maze of paint-peeled buildings run jointly by the health ministry and Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

Many of the beds on the malnutrition ward host two tiny, frail patients - some suckling gamely on syringes of milk, while others heave onerous breaths as they fight to regain their strength.

"We can't even find dry bread," said Breshna, the mother of another patient, who guesses her age at between 15 and 20.

"We haven't had anything to

eat in three or four days."

Assistant nursing supervisor Homeira Nowrozi, fighting to be heard above wailing infants, said staff 'have not any rest'.

"We have a lot of patients that come in critical," she said, because parents could not afford to travel sooner.

"We don't know how many mortalities... we have in the districts, because they didn't come to hospital."

A moral tangle

Afghanistan's plight began well before August 15, 2021 when the Taliban captured Kabul on the heels of a hasty withdrawal of US-led troops and the collapse of the government they propped up.

But the Taliban's takeover pushed the country - home to 38mn people - over the



A medical staff and others are seen outside a cholera ward at the Musa Qala District Hospital in Musa Qala, Helmand, last month (AFP)

precipice.

The United States froze US\$7bn in central bank assets, the formal banking sector collapsed, and foreign aid representing 45 per cent of GDP stopped overnight.

Over the past year, would-be donors have grappled with the conundrum of funnelling fresh funding to the ailing nation, which the Taliban rebranded the 'Islamic Emirate' in line with their austere theocratic beliefs.

"How do you provide assistance in a country where you don't recognise the government?" asked Roxanna Shapour of the Afghanistan Analysts Network.

Importing humanitarian aid to address crises such as the June earthquake - which killed more than 1,000 people and left tens of thousands more home-

less - is relatively simple, she said, as it is 'non-political, it's life-saving assistance'.

Cash is also airlifted to fund food aid and healthcare, but development aid for long-term projects that could transform the economy is more complex.

"If you go in and say, 'I'm going to pay all teacher salaries', that's great. But then what will the Taliban do with the money they save from not having to pay teacher salaries?" asked Shapour.

A souring mood

In Musa Qala - a dusty farming outpost with a shipping container bazaar staffed by child shopkeepers - the deprivation is visible.

The local economy seems to barely subsist on motorcycle repairs, the sale of pallid poultry

carcasses, and canisters of energy drinks kept tepid in grimy chest freezers.

The town witnessed some of the bloodiest chapters of the 2001-2021 war, and is connected to Lashkar Gah by a makeshift track up a desiccated riverbed lined with jagged rocks.

The road begins again further south at Sangin, a place where mud-walled compounds have been so badly ravaged by gunfire and artillery that they are crumbling back into the earth.

In a cruel irony, desperation and the demand for humanitarian services have only deepened with the arrival of peace.

"Now we can visit the hospital whether it's night or day," said Maimana, whose eight-year-old daughter Asia was being treated at Musa Qala.

"Before, there used to be

fighting and mines - the roads were blocked."

Helmand public health director Sayed Ahmad told AFP that the flood of new patients means there is 'less space' and that 'there are fewer staff, so there are difficulties'.

Nevertheless, Ahmad - a soft-spoken doctor whose office is lined with medical tomes - insists 'the overall situation is better' than under the previous government, when corruption was rife.

He blames economic sanctions against the Taliban for some of their woes, saying 'the needs and demands of people have increased'.

But analysts say the Islamists are far from blameless.

"The Taliban's repressive social policies have made it more difficult to reach a deal on getting those frozen assets unlocked," said International Crisis Group's Graeme Smith.

"This is really just about the emotions of policymakers - and shutting millions of girls out of secondary schools really soured the mood."

Unable to rule

The Taliban flag now flies openly across Helmand province, staked on bullet-ridden buildings.

But after coveting control for two decades, they are ruling the nation at its most ruined.

One man in Lashkar Gah - who asked not to be named - offered his own scathing remark on the Taliban's ability to rule.

"The clothes of the government are too big for them," he said.

AFP

FATAL FENTANYL

FOREVER 16

Misguided by social media, America's teens are falling prey to deadly fentanyl seven times more than what it was a decade ago

M

akayla Cox, a high school student in the US state of Virginia, thought she was taking medication that her friend had procured to treat pain and anxiety. Instead, the pill she took two weeks after her sixteenth birthday was fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 times more potent than heroin. It killed her almost instantly.

After watching a movie - a prequel to 'Harry Potter' - with her mother Shannon one evening in January, Makayla appeared fine as she headed to her bedroom with her husky dog that often slept on her bed. But when Shannon entered Makayla's room the next morning, she found her partially sitting up, perched against the headboard, orange fluid coming out of her nose and mouth.

"She was stiff. I shook her, I screamed her name, I called 911," Shannon told AFP. "My neighbours came over and did CPR, but it was too late. After that, I just don't remember much."

America's opioid crisis has reached catastrophic proportions, with over 80,000 people dying of opioid overdoses last year, most of them due to illicit synthetics such as fentanyl - more than seven times the number a decade ago.

"This is the most dangerous epidemic that we've seen," said Ray Donovan, chief of operations at the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). "Fentanyl is not like any other illicit narcotic, it's that deadly instantaneously."

And deaths are rising especially quickly among young people, who obtain counterfeit prescription drugs through social media. Unknown to them, the pills come either laced with or made of fentanyl.

In 2019, 493 American adolescents died of drug overdose, in 2021 that figure was 1,146.

Dealers seek teens via apps
Drug dealers reach adolescents on apps such as Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram and



Gymnastic medals are displayed behind the bed of Makayla Cox at her home in Virginia Beach, Virginia



This is the most dangerous epidemic that we've seen. Fentanyl is not like any other illicit narcotic, it's that deadly instantaneously

RAY DONOVAN
Chief of operations,
US Drug Enforcement Agency

others, often using emojis as code.
Oxycodone - an opioid - may be advertised as a half-peeled banana, Xanax - a

benzodiazepine used to treat anxiety - as a chocolate bar, and Adderall - an amphetamine that acts as a stimulant - as a train.

Wilson Compton, deputy director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, said the number of Americans doing drugs has largely stayed the same in recent years, but what changed is how deadly they've become.

One cup of heroin is equivalent to one teaspoon of fentanyl, and less than one gram can mean the difference between life and death.

"It takes very small quantities to be a poison that can stop somebody breathing," Compton told AFP in an interview.

Most of the illicit fentanyl in the United States is manufactured by Mexican drug cartels in clandestine labs from chemicals shipped over from China. As fentanyl is much more potent, it takes much less of it to fill a pill, resulting in more supply and more profit to the cartels.

One kilogramme of pure fentanyl can be purchased for up to US\$12,000, pressed into half a million of pills that will sell for up to US\$30 each, raking in millions of dollars, Donovan said. And it's also much easier to smuggle in pill form.

Last year, the DEA seized 15,000 pounds (nearly seven tonne) of fentanyl - enough to kill every American. Four out of 10 seized pills contain lethal quantities of fentanyl.

One pill can kill

At the agency's headquarters, a collection of photographs titled 'Faces of Fentanyl' hangs in the hallway. It features dozens of portraits of people who recently lost their lives to fentanyl. One of them reads "Makayla. Forever 16."

An honour-roll student and a cheerleader, Makayla liked to paint, cuddle with her two huskies - Maize and Malenkai, and planned to go to university to study

law, said her mother Shannon Doyle, 41, who works as a paralegal in a loan service firm.

Makayla had battled anxiety after her parents' divorce, but things got worse during the pandemic. Last summer she started a job at a water park, where she met a friend who introduced her to counterfeit prescription drugs. The blue pills found in Makayla's bed turned out to be 100 per cent fentanyl.

"It used to be, that when you were addicted to drugs, you had five, 10, 15 years to try and get over your addiction and get the help and change your life," Shannon said at her house in Virginia Beach, a town on the Atlantic coast some 400km south of the US capital. "You don't have that chance anymore."

Last year, the DEA launched a campaign called 'One pill can kill' to raise awareness of the dangers of fentanyl, and there are efforts across America to make naloxone, a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose, more easily available, including in schools.

Makayla's ashes are in her bedroom and Shannon still peeks into the room every morning and evening, like she did when her daughter was alive. She started a foundation in Makayla's name to help prevent similar tragedies - a way, she says, helps her cope with her grief.

Makayla's best friend Kaydence Blanchard, 16, is spending the summer without her, trying to make good on the dreams the girls had - to get a driver's licence and drive to the beach.

But for Makayla "the future will never happen," Blanchard said. "She will never complete any of the plans that we had together."

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Looking for an investor for ceramics business which is located in Musannah.
Contact-92942702

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

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact:97239696/95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur
Kumar@gccaoman.com

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

SITUATION VACANT

BAHWAN METAL & GLASS ENGINEERING LLC

Required Sales Representative with minimum 2 years of work experience in sales. The candidate should have 1 year working experience in Oman. Having a driving license and a car is a must.

Please send your CV to mazzan@bahwanmge.com
Tel: +96896666685

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

www.orbit-oman.com

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



WASHBOARD ABS

FACTS ABOUT SIX PACKS

There's more to fitness than just developing flat abs – fitness revolves around generating core strength and all-round mobility. Focus inwards and the effort will be visible outward, too, say experts

The world of core training has been making multiple waves every year as scores of young and not-so-young fitness enthusiasts sign up for fitness programmes and gym memberships with the sole aim of attaining the magical washboard abs in a short time. The truth, however lies deeper within, as core strength is said to be more important than beating the bulge.

The real value of core training is not a chiseled six-pack. Moving forward there needs to be more emphasis on core exercises, not purely to work your core, but to build full-body functionality. Here are six interesting facts about what matters most in your ambitious strides for developing the much sought after six packs:

Diet dikat

You can take up a stringent routine of crunches, mountain climbers and leg raises, but if you're not keen on shedding the fat that camouflages your muscle, your intended six-pack will never show. That's why, they say, it all begins in the kitchen. Your diet needs to be first chalked out to complement your workout – remember, protein and fibre needs to overtake carbs and fizz. With that set, you can carve your abs even at home. But, carving out lower abs to get a full six-pack calls for real dedication.

Crunch craze

Bryce Hastings, Physiotherapist and *Les Mills* head of Research, in a recent article, says, "We probably only crunch once a day, and that's to get out of bed. The rest of the time we need our core to support our midsection when we're performing full-body dynamic, loaded activities." Hastings explains that building this type of core strength comes from integrated core training. "This means using the core musculature while loading the upper and lower body, doing exercises like planks, hovers, and squat patterns."

There is still a place for isolated core work like crunches, says Hastings. However, training the core while loading the arms and legs produces the type of contraction we need most often.

Hovers and planks

"The traditional plank holds its place as the top core training exercise," says Kinesiologist, Dr Jinger Gottschall. "You recruit the three-dimensional core muscles from shoulder to hip from the back to the front and both sides."

For Dr Gillian Hatfield, an Assistant Professor in Kinesiology and lecturer in biomechanics and athletic injuries, hovers are particularly effective because they support multiple training modalities – and this is why their popularity is primed to thrive.

"Hovers are great exercises because they engage the upper body (particularly the muscles around the shoulders), the lower body (particularly the muscles around the hips), and the abdominal and low back muscles in between," she says. "And on top of building strength, these exercises also build endurance, which is important because our core muscles need to work constantly during our daily activities."

Cross patterning

Hatfield anticipates an increased focus on 'cross patterning' in the years to come, which means animal moves like the Bear Crawl and Dead Bug could become even more prevalent. Cross patterning involves coordinated movement of the opposite arm and leg, and is a very functional type of core training that reflects the cross-patterned movements we do in everyday life.

"Think about walking and running," she explains. "Your arms and legs are working in opposition: as your right leg moves forward, so does your left arm." Hatfield, however, predicts that as core training evolves to include more of these whole-body movements, it will be increasingly embraced by athletes looking to enhance performance.

Reactive core training

"There's no point training your core to get better at core exercises," says Hastings. "The real value of core training is the better strength in the abs, glutes and back muscles, which makes you better at lifting, running and doing anything that requires power. Increasingly people are realising this."

More people are recognising the benefits that functional and power training has on the core – it's termed 'reactive core training'. Want to embrace reactive core training and give yourself an intense core challenge? Hastings says kicking and punching can provide a surprisingly good core workout or, if you really want to smash your abs, do forward jumps the length of a basketball court.

Washboard wake-up call

We're waking up to the fact that washboard abs aren't everything. Hastings believes the fitness industry is still too focused on aesthetic change, and for core training, this manifests as people investing excess time and effort into getting a six-pack.

"We all have a six-pack, most of us have just got stuff covering it up!" He adds, "If you want to trim your waistline, you're way better off doing something to shed body fat. But, really, it would be better to see a trend where people forget about creating washboard abs and just try to get as strong and healthy as we can."



Salalah all set for Arab Seniors Tennis

More than 300 players confirm participation for the September 4 to 9 event



(From L) Salman al Balushi, Ahmed al Saeedi and Salim al Balushi at the press conference at the OOC headquarters in Muscat on Tuesday

Muscat - Oman is all set to host the Arab Seniors Tennis Championship, from September 4 to 9.

The tenth edition of the championship, to be held at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Al Saada, Salalah, will feature more than 300 players, including women.

The 'Tennis Festival' featuring players from the age of 30 to 75 years will be held under the auspices of the Arab Seniors Sports Federation and jointly organised by Al Nasr Club, Salalah, and the Oman Tennis Association (OTA). The championship is supported by the Directorate General of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY) and Oman Olympic Committee (OOC).

On Tuesday, Ahmed al Saeedi, the chairman of the local organising committee, provided the de-

The field is going to be strong as we have players from the age of 30 eligible to take part in the championship. We expect a contingent of 20-25 players from Oman

AHMED AL SAEEDI

tails of the championship at a press conference held at the OOC headquarters in Muscat.

Saeedi said that "it was a matter of great pride for Oman to host the tenth edition of the championship and hoped that the championship will go a long way in showcasing the country's potential to host big tournaments."

Saeedi said, "There would be five disciplines in different age-group categories with gold medals at stake in men's (singles

and doubles), women's (singles and doubles) and mixed doubles.

"The field is going to be strong as we have players from the age of 30 eligible to take part in the championship. We expect a contingent of 20-25 players from Oman to participate in various age-group categories."

Saeedi, who is also the vice-chairman of the Arab Seniors Sports Federation, was confident that the weather conditions in Salalah will be a major attraction

for the competitors. Among the players expected to take part are former national champions and experienced veterans, who continue to pursue their interest in the game of tennis.

"Salalah during the Khareef season provides a perfect backdrop for seniors, who would like to also explore the natural beauty of the Dhofar Governorate," said Saeedi.

With more than 300 players already registered, Saeedi is hopeful that more would confirm their participation before the last date of entry on August 16.

Salman al Balushi, the vice-chairman of the local organising committee, said: "We are delighted to host the championship for the second time, with Muscat hosting the seventh edition in January, 2020."

Plans are also afoot to hold exhibition games between former stars of the region that would include matches featuring Kuwait's Mohammed Abdul-Ridha Ghereeb and Oman's Fatima al Nabhani.

Balushi said the age categories for men will be for 30-39 years, 40-49 years, 50-59 years, 60-64 years and above 65 years while for women it would be between 30-44 years, 44-54 years and above 55 years.

Balushi said that arrangements are being made to organise local tours for the participants and ensure smooth success of the championship.

Also present at the press conference was Salim al Habsi, managing director of Zawaya, an Omani events and marketing company.

Oman to host Asia Cup 2022 Qualifiers

Muscat, Oman: Oman will host the Asia Cup 2022 Qualifiers from August 20 to 24 at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat.

UAE, Kuwait, Hong Kong and Singapore will compete for a single berth at the Asia Cup which features test playing nations India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

Pankaj Khimji, Chairman of Oman Cricket and Vice President of the ACC was delighted by this decision of the ACC with co-ordination with Sri Lanka Cricket.

"We are indeed grateful on

being chosen as hosts to stage the Qualifiers of the Asia Cup 2022. We assure Oman to be at the top of its hospitality and its facilities for all the teams in the Qualifiers. We also offer sincere thanks to ACC and SLC to select Oman as the venue for the Qualifiers of ACC's marquee event," said Khimji,

UAE and Kuwait booked their berth after competing in the ACC Western Region 2020 - hosted by Oman while Singapore and Hong Kong came through ACC Eastern Region 2020 - hosted by Thailand.

Kiwi pacer Boult takes 'significantly reduced' role

Wellington, New Zealand - Trent Boult will have a "significantly reduced" role with the Black Caps after the star fast bowler asked to be released from his central contract, New Zealand Cricket said on Wednesday.

The 33-year-old wants to spend more time with his family and make himself available to play in the domestic leagues.

Boult has taken 317 wickets for New Zealand in 78 Test matches, 62 wickets in Twenty20 cricket and is top of the one-day international bowling rankings.

"This has been a really tough decision for me and I'd like to thank NZC for their support in getting to this point," said Boult, currently on New Zealand's tour of the West Indies.

"Playing cricket for my country was a childhood dream and I'm so proud of everything I've been able to achieve with the Black Caps over the past 12



Trent Boult

years.

"Ultimately, this decision is about my wife Gert and our three young boys."

Boult said that he understood the move would reduce his chances of playing international cricket.

"I still have a big desire to represent my country," he said.

"However, I respect the fact that not having a national contract will affect my chances of selection."

AFP

HITACHI

FRESHER FOOD, HEALTHIER LIFE.

INVERTER x Dual Fan Cooling

10 YEARS HITACHI COMPRESSOR WARRANTY

GENETCO CARNIVAL

NOW BIGGER & BETTER!!

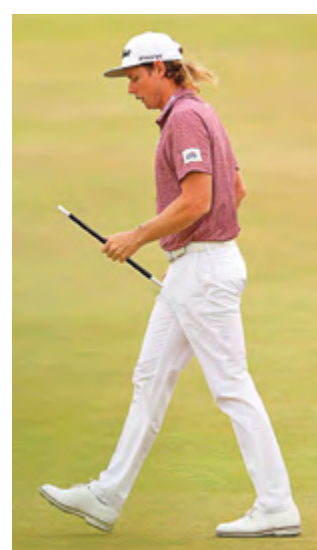
29th June to 27th August 2022

Genetco

MUSCAT 97693496, 96742452
SALALAH 79011363

Available at Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

www.genetco.net
@GenetcoOman
Genetco Oman



Cameron Smith

Smith stays silent on report he's heading for LIV Golf

Washington, United States - British Open winner Cameron Smith of Australia stayed silent Tuesday on reports he will jump from the US PGA Tour to the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series.

World number two Smith spoke on other topics in Memphis at the St. Jude Championship, the opening FedEx Cup playoff event that tees off Thursday at TPC Southwind.

But asked about reports that fellow Aussie Cameron Percy had said both Smith and Australian Marc Leishman were making the move, Smith kept his focus on the playoff chase.

"My goal here is to win the FedExCup playoffs. That's all I'm here for," Smith said.

AFP

LIV Golf trio denied chance to play in PGA playoffs

San Francisco, United States - A federal judge on Tuesday denied a request by three LIV Golf Series players for a temporary restraining order allowing them to play in this week's US PGA Tour FedEx Cup playoffs.

US District Court Judge Beth Labson Freeman made the ruling after a hearing at San Jose on the lawsuit filed in the Northern District of California.

Australian Matt Jones and Americans Talor Gooch and Hudson Swafford had sought the chance to compete in the FedEx Cup playoff opener, the St. Jude's Championship, that begins Thursday in Memphis.

All three were among those suspended by the PGA Tour after they teed off in their first event of the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series in June. The ruling upheld that ban.

"We're disappointed that Talor Gooch, Hudson Swafford and Matt Jones won't be allowed to play golf," LIV Golf said in a statement. "No one gains by banning golfers from playing."

Gooch was ranked 20th in FedEx Cup points with Jones 65th and Swafford 67th.

The top 125 players in season points qualified for Memphis with 70 players advancing to next week's BMW Championship and the top 30 reaching the season-ending Tour Championship in Atlanta.

Had they been able to play



Talor Gooch of the US, along with compatriot Hudson Swafford and Australian Matt Jones were denied the chance to play in the PGA playoffs

We're disappointed that Gooch, Swafford and Jones won't be allowed to play golf

LIV GOLF

and reached the Tour Championship, the trio would have earned berths in next year's Masters and US and British Opens.

But LIV Golf players could not show irreparable harm since they will be allowed to play LIV Golf events when they resume next month in Boston.

While LIV Golf players claim they are independent contractors, the PGA Tour argued they were members and the tour can punish members who violate rules, such as playing in LIV events.

"With today's news, our players, fans and partners can now focus on what really matters over the next three weeks, the best players in the world competing in the FedEx Cup playoffs," PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said in a memo obtained by The Golf Channel.

LIV Golf has lured away such top stars as Dustin Johnson and Henrik Stenson with guaranteed money and record purses of \$25 million at events.

AFP

A TWO-HORSE RACE?

Real Madrid eye successful defence of the Spanish title but strengthened Barcelona could pose a tough challenge

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid are hoping a summer of stability sets them up for a successful defence of the Spanish title as the season kicks off in La Liga this weekend, despite some eye-catching moves in the transfer market from Barcelona.

Madrid target another trophy-laden campaign under Carlo Ancelotti following their league and Champions League double last season.

There have been no dramatic changes at the Santiago Bernabeu, and no hint of a superstar signing to reinforce the attack after Kylian Mbappe turned them down in favour of a new contract at Paris Saint-Germain.

Yet there have been no significant departures either, with the influence of Gareth Bale, Isco and Marcelo having dramatically declined before they were all released.

That means Karim Benzema and Luka Modric, who turns 37 in September, will remain hugely influential.

Ancelotti can also expect the



Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema (L) and Barcelona's new signing Robert Lewandowski

influence of the likes of Vinicius - whose goal won May's Champions League final against Liverpool

- Rodrygo and Eduardo Camavinga to increase this season. And two significant signings



have arrived. France midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni, 22, has joined from

Monaco for a fee of up to 100 million euros (\$102m), while Germany centre-back Antonio

Rudiger, 29, joins on a free from Chelsea.

Barca battle to register signings

Real were champions by 13 points from Barcelona, and it would have been more had the Catalans not improved enormously in the second half of last season.

Xavi Hernandez has already made a big impact as coach at the Camp Nou and a raft of new recruits headed by Robert Lewandowski could help them bridge the gap to their bitter rivals.

Leeds United winger Raphinha and AC Milan midfielder Franck Kessie have also joined, while the defence should be greatly improved by the signings of Jules Kounde and Andreas Christensen.

The problem is that, by the start of this week, Barca had still not been able to register their new recruits because they had not raised enough money to comply with spending restrictions imposed on the club by La

Liga.

That is despite Barcelona's board selling off assets, including 25 percent of Barca Studios, which manages the club's digital business and audiovisual productions, to Socios.com for 100 million euros.

The club have also been pressuring midfielder Frenkie de Jong to leave in order to dispose of his salary.

There may be concerns about the long-term consequences of these deals for a club with reported debts of 1.3 billion euros, but if they can register the new recruits then they could also be a real force to be reckoned with.

"We have generated a lot of hopeful anticipation. We have lots of hope too," admitted Xavi. "Our objective this year is to win titles and play good football."

If Barcelona cannot close the gap to Real then it appears unlikely anyone else can, with Atletico Madrid not looking significantly stronger than last year, when they finished third.

AFP



FIFA president Gianni Infantino (R) and CAF chief Patrice Motsepe attends the African football body's 44th general assembly (AFP)

CAF launches new Super League to boost clubs

Nairobi, Kenya - The Confederation of African Football (CAF) on Wednesday launched a new lucrative \$100 million Super League aimed at injecting financial muscle to the cash-strapped clubs on the continent.

Twenty-four clubs, yet to be decided, will take part in the first edition, which has the backing of world governing body FIFA and will be played between August 2023 and May 2024.

CAF president Patrice Motsepe, who announced the new competition, did not say if it would replace CAF's existing Champions League and the second-tier Confederation Cup.

"The African Super League is a very important initiative. One of the major problems in Africa is finance," said Motsepe at the launch held in the northern Tanzania town of Arusha.

"The Africa Super League is

one of the most exciting developments in the history of African football and the objective in terms of what we are trying to achieve is very clear, to make sure African club football is world class.

"Our intention is to use the \$100 million as prize money and to do that every year in the African Super League, so that the club which wins gets \$11.5 million," he added.

Hamdi Meddeb, the chairman of four-time Champions League winners Esperance Tunis, claimed before the launch that sides would be better not to play in the current top-tier competition due to costs.

"Africa is a huge continent and sometimes we have to charter flights at a cost of more than \$100,000 each," Meddeb said.

"When we won the Champions League (in 2018 and 2019),

more than half the prize money was spent on bonuses and allowances for the squad and the technical staff. Those are contractual obligations."

Motsepe said CAF will use some of the 50 million dollars from the Super League to make football attractive and ensure the best players remain in Africa and improve the quality of the sport on the continent.

AFP



Naomi Osaka

Osaka retires in Toronto opening match

Toronto, Canada - Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka retired from her opening match on Tuesday at the WTA Toronto Masters with lower back pain, raising injury concerns with the US Open looming.

Estonia's Kaia Kanepi advanced when Osaka retired trailing 7-6 (7/4), 3-0. Kanepi, a runner-up last week in Washington, needed 71 minutes on court as she broke three times before the Japanese star called it quits.

Defeat drove Osaka to tears. "I felt my back from the start of the match and despite trying to push through it, I just wasn't able to today," Osaka said.

AFP

Kyrgios lifts mental game for seventh straight win

Montreal, Canada - Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios let an early lead slip but regrouped on Tuesday for a 6-4, 6-4 first-round victory over Sebastian Baez at the ATP Montreal Masters.

World number 37 Kyrgios, a title winner last week in Washington, next faces world number one Daniil Medvedev, who won last week's Los Cabos crown.

"It will be a great test and a lot of fun," Kyrgios said. "He's a hell of a player. He's unorthodox - an animal. I want to see where my game's at so I'll be giving it my best shot."

The day was a disaster for Britain's Andy Murray as the treble Grand Slam winner was cut off in the first round, a 6-1, 6-3 victim of Taylor Fritz.

The American presented nothing but frustration to Murray, who lost with just seven winners and 19 unforced errors while Fritz fired 30 winners in 87 minutes.

"It's an honour to be on court with Andy," Fritz said. "He has been dominating since before I came onto the tour."

Medvedev's chances of retaining the top ranking over the next



Nick Kyrgios hits a return against Sebastian Baez on Tuesday (AFP)

month are on the line when he plays Kyrgios.

The 27-year-old Australian secured his seventh straight match victory since losing to Novak Djokovic in last month's Wimbledon final.

Kyrgios said he is on point physically but had to work to maintain mental strength in the match played 48 hours after lift-

ing the trophy in the US capital.

"Physically I feel fine, mentally I'm tired," he said. "I've not had much sleep in the last few days."

"I've put Washington behind me already. I've not played great in Montreal in the past, so I'm just trying to create some good memories for myself."

Kyrgios held a comfortable 5-1 margin in the opening set before

Argentine Baez fought back to 4-5 before dropping the set. The Aussie managed to stop the rot and left nothing to chance in the second set.

Kyrgios has won 13 of his last 14 singles matches and stands 28-7 this breakthrough season.

Earlier, fellow Aussie Alex De Minaur finished off a match delayed from Monday by rain, winning four of the only five points remaining to add to the misery of Canadian Denis Shapovalov 7-5, 7-6 (7/4).

Shapovalov stands 1-9 since upsetting Rafael Nadal at Rome last May as his slump deepens.

French showman Gael Monfils defeated Spain's Pedro Martinez 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 6-2.

Matteo Berrettini's comeback from the Covid-19 positive test which forced him to quit Wimbledon stalled out, with the Italian losing 6-3, 6-2 to Paolo Carreno Busta in the opening round.

Berrettini played a clay final last month against Casper Ruud in Gstaad, but was unable to make a decent start to his pre-US Open cement season.

AFP



Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water



HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

pH 9.1 to 9.5



Toll-free
800 71 222 or
9275 5522

C.R. No.: 1365452



Free home delivery & timely service



oman OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

Oasis Water Co. SAOC,
PO Box 87, Rusayl 124,
Sultanate of Oman,
www.omanoasis.com

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

Winner of
His Majesty's Cup Award
in 2012 & 2013
for Best Five Factories

C.R. No.: 1365452

World Cup to start one day early

Hosts Qatar will take on Ecuador in the opening match of World Cup 2022 on November 20

Doha, Qatar - The World Cup's start will be brought forward by a day to allow hosts Qatar to play the opening game, sources told AFP on Wednesday, just over three months before the competition gets underway.

Qatar will now play Ecuador on November 20, 24 hours earlier than planned, in a move that FIFA's ruling council was expected to confirm soon, according to sources with knowledge of the matter.

The change will see the tournament, which was switched to November-December to avoid the Gulf country's searing summer heat, keep to its tradition of the hosts playing the opening match.

Senegal and the Netherlands had been scheduled to play the first game on November 21, followed by England against Iran and then the official inauguration match, Qatar's World Cup debut, that evening.

"There were discussions and agreement between the two respective teams and there was a request from CONMEBOL - the South American confederation," one World Cup source told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity as no official decision has been announced.

"We wanted to follow the tra-



The Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup countdown clock in Doha on Wednesday says the tournament is just 103 days away (AFP)

We have to focus on those customers who are most affected and I guess in this case we will be looking at our Ecuadorian customers who are travelling from overseas

JAIME BYROM

dition that either the reigning champions or the host country be involved in the opening match," the source added.

FIFA and the Qatari organising committee declined to comment on the change to the mega event that ends on December 18.

But another tournament

source said action would be taken to help fans with tickets for the November 21 game.

"Any disruption will be dealt with so the impact is minimal," the source told AFP.

Under the change, Netherlands v Senegal in Group A would be moved from 1:00pm (1000

GMT) on November 21 to a 7:00pm start. "It is a better slot for both teams for television and other areas," said the World Cup source. England's Group B match against Iran is not changed.

100-day countdown
Companies with major deals

linked to the World Cup expressed confidence that the unusual schedule change could be handled smoothly.

"It is something we will deal with," said Jaime Byrom, chairman of Match Hospitality, which has a deal with FIFA to organise hospitality packages for World Cup matches and has locked in 450,000 tickets for the tournament.

"It is really not - compared to the other challenges that we could have faced or have faced in the past - a particularly large problem," Byrom told AFP.

"We have to focus on those customers who are most affected and I guess in this case we will be looking at our Ecuadorian customers who are travelling from overseas, and making sure that they are on time for the match."

The opening match is scheduled to be held at the 60,000-capacity Al Bayt stadium, one of seven new venues purpose-built for the tournament since Qatar was controversially awarded the World Cup in 2010.

The wealthy Gulf state is preparing a spectacular opening ceremony in the stadium, whose structure was inspired by traditional Arab tents.

Moving forward the opening match will also mean changing the 100-day countdown that had been scheduled to start on Saturday, with special events across the tiny nation of 2.8 million people.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said the tiny, gas-rich state will host the "best ever" World Cup.

AFP



PAPER RECYCLING PROGRAMME

Attention all corporate offices!

DO YOU HAVE ANY PAPER TO RECYCLE?

Our team will collect it from your office

BIGGER, BETTER, BRANDED
RECYCLING BOXES ALSO AVAILABLE



MUSCAT DAILY

For details contact us at recycle@apexmedia.co.om or call us on toll free no: **80076000**

Alexis Sanchez gets raucous reception at Marseille

Marseille, France - Chile forward Alexis Sanchez arrived in Marseille on Tuesday with local fans welcoming the former Arsenal and Inter Milan star at a local airport.

Sanchez was released by Inter on Monday after two seasons in Serie A with the club keen to move the 33-year-old's seven million euros a year salary off their pay-roll.

Marseille finished second in Ligue 1 last season and former Barcelona and Manchester United man Sanchez, who has experience of the Champions League, is likely to sign a one-year deal Wednesday.

Fans at the airport lit flares, played drums and rolled out a huge Chilean flag.

Marseille president Pablo Longoria said on Sunday that he was interested in bringing Sanchez to Ligue 1, saying to Prime Video that he was "the sort of profile we want".

Marseille said the forward, with 143 caps for Chile, had signed a deal at the Velodrome after passing a medical. A club official told AFP he had agreed a one-year contract.



Alexis Sanchez (R) with Marseille president Pablo Longoria

The arrival of Sanchez, 33, is a major boost for Marseille ahead of their return to the Champions League.

They qualified for this season's group stage after finishing as runners-up in Ligue 1 but then saw coach Jorge Sampaoli - who used to coach Chile - depart with ex-Croatia defender Igor Tudor replacing him.

Marseille will be Sanchez's sixth club in Europe after Udinese, Barcelona, Arsenal, Manchester United and Inter.

He spent three years at Inter, helping them win the Serie A title in 2021.

However, Sanchez started just nine games at San Siro last season.

AFP



Dusan Tadic

Ajax star Tadic gets robbed in Amsterdam

The Hague, Netherlands - Top Ajax attacking midfielder Dusan Tadic was wounded when robbers ambushed him outside his Amsterdam home, Dutch news reports said on Wednesday.

The apparently targeted attack on the star Serbian player in late July was the latest in a spate of robberies on Dutch celebrities, national broadcaster NOS said.

Two men wearing motorbike helmets accosted Tadic as he stepped out of his car outside his home in the Dutch capital's south two weeks ago, the daily tabloid De Telegraaf said.

"It seems they wanted to rob him of his valuable wrist-watch," the paper said.

AFP

Werner says Flick encouraged him to return

Berlin, Germany - Newly re-signed Leipzig striker Timo Werner said Germany manager Hansi Flick encouraged him to return to RB Leipzig ahead of the Qatar World Cup in November.

In his first press conference since re-joining with the German Cup winners, Werner said on Wednesday afternoon he discussed the idea with Flick while still at Chelsea.

The former Bayern Munich



Timo Werner (R) trains with his new team-mates at RB Leipzig

manager saying he needed players "who are in rhythm" in Qatar a reference to Werner's lack of game time at Chelsea.

"He (Flick) told me I should do what feels comfortable. He thought the idea of return to Leipzig was very good."

Werner cited a desire to play in Qatar as a major reason for his return to the Bundesliga, saying he "did not have enough playing time" at Stamford Bridge.

AFP