



Royal decrees on Civil Status, Foreigners Residence laws issued

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued two Royal Decrees on Sunday reading as follows:
Royal Decree No. 59/2021 amending some provisions of the Civil Status Law.
Article 1 introduces the amendments attached (to this decree) to the aforesaid Civil Status Law.
Article 2 cancels all that contradicts the attached amendments or contravenes their provisions.
Article 3 says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its

date of publishing.
Royal Decree No. 60/2021 amending some provisions of Foreigners Residence Law.
Article 1 introduces the amendments attached (to this decree) to the aforesaid Foreigners Residence Law.
Article 2 cancels all that contradicts the attached amendments or contravenes their provisions.
Article 3 says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.
ONA

MoE launches 8 initiatives to revitalise SME sector

Riyada roped in to help SMEs recover from COVID-19 impact

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Economy has introduced eight new initiatives to help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to recover from the massive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that crippled global economy since its outbreak.
According to a press statement issued on Sunday, the ministry proposed to take sectoral measures in partnership with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada) 'to stimulate its (SMEs) growth to achieve the objectives of the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-25)' - the first operational plan under the Oman 2040 Vision.
Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cast its shadow on vital business sectors.



The sultanate's current Five-Year Plan aims to increase the private sector's contribution in sectors with high local added value, and to support SMEs by strengthening their links with large enterprises

- THE INITIATIVES**
- E-Commerce Programme
 - Winter Nights Festival
 - Creative Industries Incubator
 - Manufacturing Incubator
 - Agricultural SMEs
 - Mazoon Dairy Company Subsidiaries
 - Entrepreneurship Education Platform
 - Support to SMEs affected by the pandemic



private sector's support towards innovation, knowledge economy, applications of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), Artificial Intelligence (AI), niche markets venture capital, and providing decent and productive job opportunities for Omani youths.
This initiative is directed at making the plan more flexible, looking at challenges posed by the current situation.
Halima bint Rashid al Zariya, chairperson of Riyada said, "The Ministry of Economy's initiative to support the small and medium enterprises sector comes as a continuation and translation of the efforts made to enhance the growth of the national economy.
"It is also part of the economic stimulus plans that the government has embarked on to support and enhance the sustainability of SMEs that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic."
She pointed out that the ministry would adopt and support eight basic initiatives targeting the SME sector's growth. These initiatives will encourage the marketing and promotion of the products and services by SMEs and their businesses.
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Oman producing brake components for top cars

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Some of the world's biggest automotive companies, like BMW, Toyota, Hyundai, Ford, Chrysler and others, are using brake components made in Oman.
Dunes Oman, a part of Brakes India Private Limited, at Salalah Free Zone with a capacity of 36,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA) is an export oriented unit producing safety critical parts for the automotive industry for the European and American markets.
Said bin Mohammed al Shehri, deputy director general, Dunes Oman, said in a statement to ONA that the company has two Disamatic high pressure moulding lines to produce ductile iron castings.
"The company plans to increase its production in the future in parallel with the increase in demand of its products," he said.
Shehri said that all leading car manufacturers have chosen Dunes Oman to manufacture brake components for their cars distributed around the world, including BMW, Volvo, Toyota, Chrysler, Ford, Land Rover, Audi, Volkswagen, Hyundai, Kia and Renault.
Dunes Oman has also contracted with German-based ZF



We have obtained a number of quality certificates including International Standard for Automotive Quality Management

SAID AL SHEHRI

Group to distribute the company's products in a number of European markets. The group works in the field of manufacturing auto parts and is headquartered in Friedrichshafen, southwest Germany.
Shehri said the fact that many international companies are working with Dunes Oman is a source of pride for the Omani industry and reflects the high confidence and quality it has

reached.
"The company has obtained a number of international quality certificates, most notably the International Standard for Automotive Quality Management, which is one of the most prestigious certifications that confirm the companies' commitment to achieving high levels of quality in its automobile products."
He pointed out that the company is fully committed to the environment. He added that the factory, which is built on an area of 121,000sqm, does not produce any substance hazardous to the environment, and the pollution rate is below the level specified by the Environment Authority.
Speaking on the raw material used, Shehri said the production depends on two main elements: silica rich sand, which the company imports from outside due to its unavailability locally, and scrap iron also imported from Europe and other parts of Asia.
"The scrap that is imported is subject to a number of conditions and specifications related to quality especially with regard to being free of impurities."
He confirmed that the company pays great attention to the employment of Omanis, and Omanisation is currently at 20 per cent.

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Business environment optimum for Oman, Saudi

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US Open: All eyes on Djokovic and Osaka

YOUR SAY

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LEST WE LOWER
OUR GUARD

As Oman is getting back to normal, how can we make sure we do not go back to square one in terms of COVID-19 infections?

Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

We all want to get our lives back; we all want to enjoy ourselves again. One day the pandemic will be over. Let's get vaccines and continue to follow the advice on preventing the spread of the virus, including physical distancing, wearing masks, regular hand washing and keeping indoor areas well ventilated.

**Shakil Narmawala**
Architect

We all need to understand that although the cases have reduced the pandemic is not over yet. Hence we should not drop our guard. We should strictly adhere to social distancing norms as before to avoid going back to square one. Secondly, the endeavour should be to get the maximum number of citizens and residents vaccinated.

**Yusuf Khan**
Private sector employee

Stay home with family and only go out if needed for urgent items. Religiously follow the strict COVID-19 protocol set by the Supreme Committee. As individuals if everyone stays safe and follows rules, community and society will be safe.

**Salaah Abdullah al Musallami**
Auditor

Now that almost every business is open, it is upon every one of us to follow the safety measures strictly including wearing masks, maintaining social distancing and following proper hygiene practices. Most importantly, vaccination should be everyone's priority.

**Nabila Jamal**
Private sector employee

It is up to us to decide if we want to keep the numbers down and vaccination will definitely reduce the spread of the virus. We still need to follow safety measures to protect others even if we are vaccinated.

**Jayatee Choudhury**
Student

At present, the greatest requirement is to continue following all preventive measures - wearing masks, washing hands, spreading awareness, etc. People need to be constantly reminded of their safety and that of others as well.

**Mohan Anandan**
Banking sector employee

While it is a great relief that the skies of Oman have been reopened and lockdown restrictions have been withdrawn, one must not lower the guard against the virus, which is forming into multiple variants. It is upon every individual to follow the 'COVID-19 norms' strictly, including wearing masks, maintain social distancing and washing hands frequently and taking the vaccine.

**Jay Prakash**
Private sector employee

The efficacy and success in flattening the COVID-19 curve since last month is amazing. Still citizens and residents have to play a big role in following all protocols including social distancing, avoiding gatherings, using masks, hand sanitising, and avoiding outings and late night parties.

**Rupal Panchal**
Homemaker

The pandemic will end when we choose to. Immunisation and testing will help reduce the spread of the virus but not eliminate it. We need to follow safety measures to protect the society while getting back to pre-COVID-19 times. It depends upon us whether we break the virus or surrender to it.

? NEXT ON
YOUR SAY

How comfortable and prepared are you to send your children back to school for the new academic year?

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

Reimagining a more resilient
UN system with Taiwan in it**Jaushieh Joseph Wu**
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Republic of China (Taiwan)

After more than 200 million infections and over 4 million deaths and counting, the COVID-19 pandemic has raged across the globe. This has created a profoundly devastating socio-economic impact on our interconnected world, with virtually no countries spared. The pandemic has disrupted global trade, exacerbated poverty, impeded education, and compromised gender equality, with middle to low income nations bearing the brunt of the burden.

As many countries brace for another spike of the virus, prompted by the highly contagious Delta variant, the world looks up to the United Nations (UN) to ramp up comprehensive efforts to resolve the crisis, ensure better recovery, and rebuild sustainably. This is a daunting task that requires all hands on deck. It is time for the global body to welcome Taiwan, a valuable and worthy partner that stands ready to lend a helping hand.

Over the past few months, Taiwan, like many other countries, has been dealing with a surge of COVID-19 cases after almost a year of success in containing the virus. Yet, it got a handle on the situation and emerged even

more ready to work with allies and partners to tackle the challenges posed by the pandemic. Taiwan's effective response to the pandemic, its rapid capacity expansion to meet global supply chain demand, and its substantive assistance toward partner countries around the world all speak to the fact that there is no lack of compelling reasons for Taiwan to play a constructive role in the UN system.

Taiwanese passport holders are denied access to UN premises, both for tours and meetings, while Taiwanese



journalists cannot obtain accreditation to cover UN events.

Barring members of Taiwan's civil society from the UN defeats the ideal of multilateralism, contravenes the UN's founding principles of promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and hampers the



UN's overall efforts.

For six decades, Taiwan has been providing assistance to partner countries around the world. Since the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda, it has focused on helping partners achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and, more recently, engage in antipandemic response and postpandemic recovery. Meanwhile, at home, Taiwan has fulfilled its SDGs in gender equality, clean water and sanitation,

and good health and well-being, among others. Our innovative, community-based solutions are harnessing public-private partnerships for the benefit of society as a whole.

The World Happiness Report 2021, released by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, ranked Taiwan the happiest in East Asia, and 24th in the world. The ranking indicates how the people of a country feel about the social support they receive, and re-

flects in large part a country's implementation of the SDGs. Taiwan is willing to pass on its experience and work with global partners to build a better and more resilient future for all.

At a time when the world is sounding the clarion call for climate actions and to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, Taiwan is actively charting a roadmap toward the goal, and has drafted dedicated legislation to facilitate this process.

Climate change knows no borders, and concerted efforts are a must if we want a sustainable future. Taiwan knows this, and is working on the best ways to turn the challenges of carbon reduction into new opportunities.

In his oath of office in June this year, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed our shared vulnerability and interconnectedness. He said that the UN, and the states and people it serves, can only benefit from bringing others to the table.

Denying partners that have the ability to contribute is a moral and material loss to the world as we seek to recover better together.

Taiwan is a force for good. Now is the time to bring Taiwan to the table and let Taiwan help.

348 new
COVID-19
cases, 8 deaths
in three daysOur Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Sunday reported 348 new cases of COVID-19 and eight deaths during the past three days. This brings the total number of positive cases to 302,132 in the sultanate.

'The total number of COVID-19-related deaths reached 4,057 while 493 patients have recovered, bringing the total number to 291,532,' the MoH said, adding that 13 people were hospitalised over the past 24 hours. The total number of hospitalised patients now stands at 138 including 60 in intensive care units.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	42	29
Doha	40	30
Kuwait City	39	31
Manama	42	30
Riyadh	43	27

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.28am
Sunrise	5.48am
Duhr	12.07pm
Asr	3.35pm
Maghrib	6.26pm
Isha	7.56pm

'Business environment optimum for Oman, Saudi investment cooperation'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Economists and businesspersons in the sultanate have expressed hope that the visit of the Saudi delegation headed by Eng Khalid bin Abdulaziz al Falih, Minister of Investment, Saudi Arabia, will have a significant impact on increasing investments in Oman, particularly in light of the fact that this visit will witness the launch of the Omani-Saudi Investment Forum.

During a panel discussion entitled 'Economic and Investment Integration between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman', Omani businesspersons showed their optimism about the prospects of cooperation in the field of trade and commerce in a way that enhances economic integration between the two countries.

Dr Nouf bin Abdulaziz al Ghamdi, member of the Saudi-Omani Business Council and



H E Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman, Oman Investment Authority, meets with Eng Khalid bin Abdulaziz al Falih, Saudi Minister of Investment, during the latter's visit to Muscat on Sunday (ONA)

CEO of Chief Outsiders Consulting Group, which specialises in providing economic consultancy and conducting strategic studies, explained that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries increased by six per cent during the current year.

She indicated that the pace of

such increase is expected to rise with the inauguration of the direct land road between the sultanate and Saudi Arabia, which is expected to shorten the distance between the two countries by about 800km.

Dr Muhammad al Ruzaqi, another businessman, said that he

is looking forward to raising the volume of trade exchange, creating opportunities commensurate with the GDP of the two countries and expanding the partnership between the small and medium enterprises in a way that raises global competitiveness.

During the session, it was em-

phasised that there is a need to restructure the investment partnerships between the two countries to focus on the entrepreneurship sector and innovation opportunities.

Khalfan al Touqi, an entrepreneur, spoke about the prospects of cooperation between Oman and Saudi Arabia in exporting oil through the Port of Duqm and its storage in Ras Madrakah.

Walid al Zadjali spoke about the facilities that can be provided by the Saudi authorities to Omani companies in general and small and medium enterprises in particular. He referred to the calls issued by Saudi Arabia to international companies asking them to establish regional centres in the kingdom in an attempt to transfer and localise knowledge and to create a competitive environment.

Dr Talal al Awlaki commended the treatment received by Omani companies in Saudi Arabia as Aramco treats the

Omani companies dealing with it the same way it treats Saudi companies.

With regard to the investment-related legislations, Dr Muhanad al Asfour underlined the importance of aligning the legislations with the requirements of the next stage. He expressed his hope that Omani companies get some kind of incentives and to review the legislations that affect such dealings.

Anne al Kindi indicated that there is a need for providing facilities and incentives to business owners operating in both countries. She stressed that attention should be paid to investment partnerships in the ICT sector in light of the great strides made by the Saudi Arabia in this sector.

Khamis al Kiyumi said that the Saudi economy possesses many solid assets and that it is his aspiration to see Omani and Saudi companies enter into partnerships to strengthen the economies of both the countries.

Dhofar Municipality allocates 84 sites for SMEs

Salalah - In coordination with the Ministry of Labour and the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Dhofar Municipality unveiled 84 rental sites for projects such as cafes, mobile carts and other activities like children's games and bicycle rental.

The initiative aims to organise these projects within the government's endeavour to support SMEs owners and create job opportunities for citizens, as well as boosting the economic activities in the governorate.

A committee from the municipality and other departments concerned will evaluate the offers on specific sites that provide added value in terms of service, quality and innovation.

Oman continues to be on UK Red list

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman continues to be on the United Kingdom's Red list, disappointing many travellers who were expecting the sultanate to be shifted to Amber list. The UK ambassador to Oman has, however, said that the embassy is working with the Omani authorities on the issue.

Only British or Irish National, or those having residence rights in the UK are allowed in if they are travelling from the countries on the Red list. Passengers, however, have to take a pre-departure COVID-19 test, book a quarantine hotel package, including two COVID-19 tests and complete a passenger locator form. While anyone from the Amber list countries can travel to



H E Hamish Cowell

the UK provided he/she takes a pre-departure COVID-19 test, book and pay for COVID-19 tests - to be taken after arrival in England and complete a passenger locator form.

H E Hamish Cowell, ambassador of the UK to Oman, in an open letter to people of Oman said that he knows many in Oman, whether British nationals, Omani students preparing to

study in the UK, or others, "will have been disappointed to see that travel restrictions to the UK remain in place following the latest review".

He added that he "understands that disappointment". The Joint Biosecurity Center (JBC) assessment process is highly detailed, and covers a range of issues including genomic sequencing capability, COVID-19 transmission risk and variant transmission risk, he added.

"I wanted to assure you that the embassy is working exceptionally closely with the Omani authorities and in particular the Ministry of Health to make progress on this issue." Under the guidance of the Supreme Committee, he said Oman has made good progress in bringing the latest wave under control.

Silver dollar originally gifted to Sultan Said auctioned for \$7.8mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A 1804 silver dollar coin that was gifted in 1835 to Sultan Said bin Sultan, the Sultan of Muscat and Oman, by the then US president Andrew Jackson has been sold for US\$7.86mn at Stack's Bowers Galleries auction on August 17 in the US, making it the second-most valuable US silver dollar ever sold.

The 1804 silver dollar coins, known as 'King of American Coins', were specifically minted in 1834 at the request of president Andrew Jackson to be given by the US State Department as diplomatic gifts fit for a king.



The most valuable US dollar is the 1794 Flowing Hair dollar, which sold for more than US\$10mn at a Stack's Bowers Galleries auction in 2013, the auction house said.

The 1804 coin, graded Proof-68 by PCGS, a professional coin grading service company, was

offered from the collection of D Brent Pogue. Pogue, who died in 2019 at age 54, acquired the coin in 1999 for a then world-record price of US\$4.14mn, according to Stack's Bowers Galleries.

'This 1804 Class I Original dollar is the single finest example of this famous issue,

known as the 'King of American Coins'.

The provenance of this specimen began when it was delivered in 1835 as a diplomatic gift to the Sultan of Muscat, and it has since resided in only four private numismatic collections, those of Charles A Watters, Virgil M Brand, the Childs family, and the Pogue family.

Following its mysterious appearance in a London auction in 1917, this specimen had sold at auction only once, in Stack's Bowers Galleries' 1999 sale, when the Pogue family acquired it for the then world-record price of US\$4.14mn,' the gallery stated in a press release.

Civic services upgraded in Dalkout

Dalkout - The Dhofar Municipality, represented by the Department of Projects and Maintenance, has implemented many service projects in the wilayat of Dalkout within the ambitious plan to beautify the wilayat and rehabilitate its central business area and neighbouring villages, especially after the damage caused by the heavy rains and floods witnessed in 2020.

Ali bin Ahmed Za'abnout, head of the Engineering Affairs Department in Dalkout, said that an action plan has been drawn to implement several projects that meet the needs of the people in the wilayat and add an aesthetic element to the municipal facilities.

He said that the most important project in the plan is to complete the paving of all the main streets in the wilayat's central area, the parking lots of shops and government offices and the administrative centre. Work is also going on to expand wadis and drainage systems, in addition to rehabilitating a number of internal streets and re-paving with asphalt.

Za'abnout said that the municipality has already completed the corniche street, paving the beach walkway with interlocks and installing lights, in addition to placing iron and cement barriers on the sides of the roads to prevent vehicles entering pastoral areas.

MoE's eight new initiatives to revitalise SME sector

Continued from Page 01

The eight initiatives to be taken in partnership with Riyada are:

E-Commerce programme

The programme envisages SMEs' access to local and international digital platforms, which can help them market their products and services globally. The initiative, which targets SMEs, shop owners and online platforms, is expected to cover about 100 SMEs and promote e-commerce. A contract will be inked with a well-known IT company to implement the initiative under Riyada's supervision.

Winter Nights Festival

This interactive annual event - to be organised during special occasions and holidays - aims to promote SMEs' products and services in night markets through several cultural and recreational programmes.

Efforts are afoot to locally market SMEs services and products, promoting their success stories, recognising Omani talents, encouraging entrepreneurship, in addition to increasing the entertainment quotient in the community.

Creative industries incubator

The idea is to establish an incubator for creative industries, with

focus on areas that have high competitive advantages. It is expected that about 25 SMEs will benefit from this initiative, which targets creating a group of emerging companies with high technical and administrative capabilities in the creative field.

Manufacturing incubator

This incubator for the manufacturing sector - one of the pillars of Oman's economic diversification - targets to empower SMEs and manufacturers through innovative ideas. The initiative also seeks to create a group of emerging companies with high technical and administrative manufacturing capabilities, providing them with technical support, advisory and marketing services. The initiative will be implemented through Sohar University under Riyada's supervision.

Agricultural SMEs

Under this initiative, emerging SMEs in the fields of agricultural production will be established in cooperation with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Haya Water). Aimed at supporting and developing SMEs in the agricultural wealth sector (oils and aromatic plants), the initiative will find sites for SMEs near water treatment plants in various wilayats for easy access to water.

Mazoon Company subsidiaries

The initiative aims to provide business opportunities linked to Mazoon Dairy Company such as manufacturing packaging materials, dairy boxes, ice-cream vehicles, processing and packaging plant for fertilisers, manufacturing and sale of fertilisers, raising and selling livestock, making biodegradable spoons, and package labelling.

Entrepreneurship education platform

Targeting entrepreneurs and craftsmen, this initiative focuses on creating a specialised digital training platform to develop their practical and theoretical skills. The digital platform will provide a roadmap to SMEs to undertake modern, innovative and practical steps, besides providing skill development and business administration trainings through global best practices. As much as 80 per cent of the training will focus on practical skills while the rest will cover theoretical aspects.

Support to SMEs hit by the pandemic

This initiative includes a series of quick advisory sessions for SMEs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative, which targets entrepreneurs in different governorates, is expected to benefit 100 SMEs through advice and legal counselling.



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Tender No.	No E- Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/21/029 Re-Tender	(33/2021/MM/HQ-27) (Re-Call-I)	Supply and Laying of Asphalt for Muscat Governorate (Re-Tender) (E- Tender)	Rial 100	26/09/2021	10/10/2021	Excellent

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Profits of Oman's listed companies rise 22% in Q2

Our Correspondent
Muscat

After witnessing a faster-than-expected recovery in corporate earnings during the first quarter of this year, listed firms on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded more than 22 per cent growth in profits in the second quarter backed by healthy growth in banking and telecom sectors.

Total net profits for listed companies in Oman grew by 22.3 per cent year-on-year to US\$520mn (approximately RO200.1mn) in the second quarter of 2021 as compared with US\$425.1mn (approximately RO164.1mn) in the second quarter of 2020, according to the GCC Corporate Earnings report released by Kuwait-based Kamco Investment on Sunday.

Key sectors like banks and telecom mainly contributed to the overall year-on-year growth in net profits at the MSX-listed firms, the report said.

The second quarter earnings of the banking sector, the biggest sector in the MSX by market capitalisation, improved 38.4 per cent to reach US\$216.2mn (approximately RO83.5mn) compared to US\$156.2mn (approximately RO60.3mn) in the second quarter of 2020.

Oman's telecom sector, Kamco Investment said, followed with the second largest total net profits of US\$145.4mn (approximately RO56.1mn) during the second quarter of 2021, up from US\$31mn (approx-



(Muscat Daily)

Total net profits of listed companies in Oman increased to RO200.1mn for the second quarter of 2021 as compared with RO164.1mn in the second quarter of 2020

mately RO11.9mn) in the same period of 2020.

Bank Muscat posted the biggest increase in absolute profits within the banking sector with net profit of RO47.5mn for the second quarter as compared to RO36.3mn reported during the same period of 2020. Profits for HSBC Bank Oman witnessed the biggest percentage increase among the banks recording 354 per cent rise in earnings which reached RO5.77mn in the second quarter as compared to RO1.27mn during the same

period of last year.

Kamco Investment noted that Oman Arab Bank and Bank Nizwa were the only two banks among the eight banks on the MSX to post a decline in second quarter net profits.

It said the profit growth for the telecom sector came on the back of higher profits reported by Omantel that reached RO52.6mn in the second quarter of 2021. Comparatively, Ooredoo Oman reported a 13 per cent decline in second quarter profits that reached RO3.4mn.

GCC corporate earnings

The resumption of economic activity in the GCC to almost full scale was reflected in corporate profits booked during the second quarter.

Aggregate profits of the listed firms in the GCC countries breached pre-COVID levels to reach US\$45bn during the second quarter of 2021 compared to US\$14.2bn during the same period of 2020. The sequential growth in net profit was also healthy at 17.6 per cent as a majority of the sectors posted growth as compared to last year.

In terms of sector performance, the GCC energy sector once again led the year-on-year rise in earnings posting US\$24.5bn or 267.4 per cent jump in earnings up from US\$6.7bn in the second quarter of 2020.

Profits for the banking sector almost doubled year-on-year to US\$8.2bn during the second quarter of this year. Companies in the materials sector posted profits to the tune of US\$4.3bn as compared to a net loss of US\$0.78bn during the second quarter of 2020.

On the other hand, sectors that were resilient during the pandemic witnessed year-on-year declines in profits. Telecom was the one of the four sectors that posted an year-on-year decline with profits reaching US\$1.64bn during the second quarter, a decline of 11.6 per cent on year-on-year basis.



Sohar Port to launch fuel bunkering services in Sept

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar Port and Freezone and Hormuz Marine have signed a bunkering agreement to launch the bunkering services at Sohar Port by mid September 2021.

The agreement comes in response to the growing need for offshore refueling, allowing vessels to bunker efficiently and speed up global shipping times at the port, Sohar Port and Freezone said in a press statement.

It said the flexible service from Hormuz Marine will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide and operate an 8,000MT tanker capable of delivering several grades of marine fuel to ships in the port each day.

By signing this agreement, Sohar Port is able to meet the demands of a time-sensitive indus-

try in order to improve the efficiency of the port.

Batti al Shibli, harbor master at Sohar Port and Freezone, said, "We are delighted to welcome Hormuz Marine to the Port of Sohar. Their expertise in providing an essential service will be vital to our future growth as we look to attract more vessels taking marine services and increase the cargo traffic visiting Sohar."

He said, "Bunker quality is essential to maintaining efficiency and enabling vessels to meet regulations and tight timeframes. The new service is an incredibly valuable addition to the port's one-stop-shop marine services available to all visiting ships."

Sulaiman al Hadhrami, CEO of Hormuz Marine, said, "Our experience in managing a crucial element of the marine supply

chain will allow the Port of Sohar to increase its level of service for vessels of all sizes. We're able to deliver services at competitive rates to manage the fuel requirements of ships as they unload or pass through Sohar without the need to remain in port."

"Sohar Port is one of Oman's most important industrial gateways and this service will enhance its reputation as an attractive port of call and add to the sultanate's position as a world renowned shipping location," he added.

Hormuz Marine is based in Muscat and specialises in assisting shipping companies across the globe via full physical supplies in Sohar, Duqm, and Salalah and bunker trading solutions in several other key regional ports, including Muscat, Khasab, Suwaiq, Shinas and Sur.

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Dubai, Abu Dhabi bourses extend trading hours

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The UAE bourses - Dubai Financial Market (DFM) and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) - have announced the extension of their trading hours from four hours to five hours, effective from October 3, 2021.

The decision to extend trading hours is aimed at bringing the DFM and ADX in line with the operating hours of many exchanges globally, according to Emirates News Agency (WAM).

Hassan al Serkal, CEO of DFM said, "The new initiative will further strengthen the leading position of DFM as a main gateway for investments and attract wider and more diversified categories of investors."

"The trading hours' extension will provide investors with more flexibility and larger time span to accomplish their investment activities on the market."

The Abu Dhabi Securities Ex-

change has reduced its trading commissions by 50 per cent and will extend its trading hours by one hour, with the market opening at 10am and closing at 3pm.

The reduction in trading fee, from 0.05 per cent to 0.025 per cent, will take effect from September 1. This reduction is ADX's second commission cut in 2021 and the third in three years.

Mohamed Ali al Hammadi, chairman of ADX said, "We are very pleased to have been able to answer the call by our investors, issuers, and intermediaries for lower trading commissions and longer trading hours, reflecting increased demand to trade Abu Dhabi's publicly listed companies."

"The ADX offers unique, high-growth investment opportunities within a strongly-regulated, tax-free and stable business environment and the extension of our opening will serve to attract increased international investment," Hammadi added.

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MSX inches up; volumes rise

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) marginally rose 0.09 per cent to close at 3,965.94 points on Sunday.

While turnover declined 1.78 per cent to RO2.84mn, volumes rose 7.74 per cent to 18.47mn shares.

Financial index rose 0.05 per cent, Industrial index climbed 0.53 per cent and Services index rose 0.485 per cent.

The MSX Shariah index closed down by 0.37 per cent at 593.53 points.

Market breadth remained positive as 22 companies closed up, while nine companies closed down. The rest 18 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

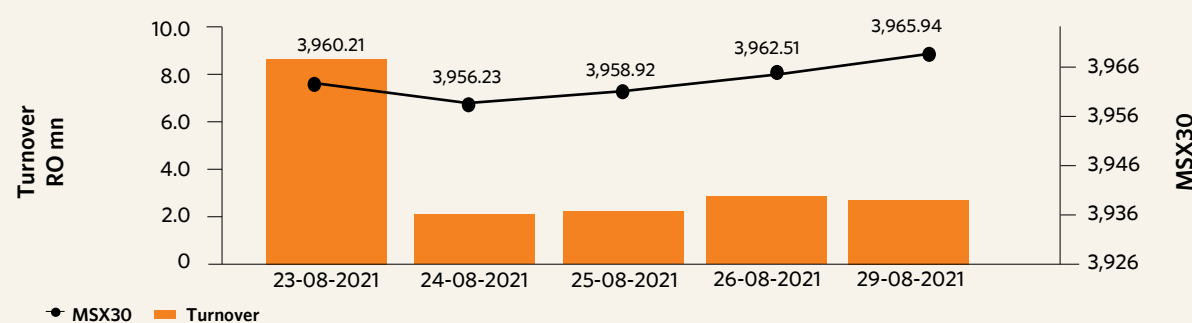
Top gainers were National Aluminium Products Company (8.26 per cent), Oman & Emirates Investment Holding (7.25 per cent), Raysut Cement (3.44 per cent) and Construction Materials Industries & Contracting Co (3.23 per cent).

Top losers were Al Kamel Power



(-8.18 per cent), Al Madina Investment (-4.76 per cent), Voltamp Energy (-4.44 per cent) and Oman Fisheries (-3.75 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Saudi Arabia's total merchandise exports jump 92% in June

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's overall merchandise exports jumped by 91.8 per cent in June 2021 compared to the same month of 2020 when international trade was impacted by COVID-related lockdowns and travel bans in many countries.

The value of exports amounted to SAR84.7bn in June 2021, up from SAR44.2bn in June 2020. This increase originated mainly from oil exports, which rose by SAR33.7bn or 123.2 per cent in the same period. The share of oil exports in total exports increased from 62 per cent in June 2020 to 72.1 per cent in June 2021.

Non-oil exports increased by 40.5 per cent year-on-year in June 2021, rising to SAR23.6bn from SAR16.8bn in June 2020. Non-oil exports in June increased by 7.2 per cent or SAR1.6bn compared to the previous month (May 2021).

According to the International Trade June 2021 report, Saudi Arabia's merchandise imports marginally decreased by 0.2 per cent to SAR46bn in June 2021 compared to SAR46.1bn in June 2020.

The ratio of non-oil exports to



imports increased to 51.3 per cent in June 2021 from 36.4 per cent in June 2020.

According to the report, China is Saudi Arabia's main trading partner for merchandise trade. In June 2021, exports to China amounted to SAR15.9bn (18.8 per cent of total exports), making China the main destination for exports of Saudi Arabia.

Japan and the US followed next with SAR8.3bn (9.8 per cent of total exports) and SAR6.6bn (7.8 per cent of total exports), respectively. India, South Korea, UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, Taiwan, and Singapore were the other countries that ranked in the top ten destina-

tions for Saudi exports.

Imports from China amounted to SAR8.3bn (18.1 per cent of total imports) in June 2021, making China the main origin for imports of Saudi Arabia. The UAE and the US followed next with imports of SAR4.5bn (9.9 per cent of total imports) and SAR4.4bn (9.6 per cent of total imports), respectively.

India, Germany, Japan, Italy, France, UK and Egypt were the other countries that ranked in the top ten countries for imports. Imports of Saudi Arabia from those ten countries amounted to SAR28.8bn, accounting for 62.7 per cent of total imports.

SPA

Apple agrees to loosen App Store payment policy as pressure grows

San Francisco, US - Apple has agreed to loosen payment restrictions on its App Store, a major change announced in a settlement with small developers as the US technology giant faces growing scrutiny and legal challenges over its tightly controlled online marketplace.

The change will allow small developers to inform their customers of alternative payment options beyond the official App Store.

In a class-action lawsuit, the developers had accused Apple of monopolistic distribution practices by operating the sole gateway to get apps or other content onto iPhones and other devices powered by iOS software.

The proposed settlement is



pending court approval.

'The agreement clarifies that developers can share purchase options with users outside of their iOS app; expands the price points developers can offer for subscriptions, in-app purchases, and paid apps; and establishes a new fund to assist qualifying US developers,' the company said in

a statement.

The iPhone maker is also awaiting judgement in a separate App Store case filed by Epic Games.

The proposed changes come as Apple faces mounting pressure from lawmakers and regulators over its business practices, such as charging up to 30 per cent commissions on purchases through the official App Store.

Earlier this month, US senators introduced legislation that would make it illegal for App Store operators such as Apple and Google to require use of their own payment systems for transactions.

Apple has claimed that its App Store policies stem

from concerns over data security and privacy.

In May, Apple chief executive Tim Cook told the court that if iOS introduced a more open system and allowed third-party apps onto its store without reviewing them it would become a 'big mess'.

The iOS mobile operating system is the second-most widely used in the world, behind Android. Last year, iOS-powered mobile devices spent US\$643bn on apps, according to Apple.

As part of the settlement, Apple has said it will also offer developers who made less than US\$1mn per year between 2015 and 2021 access to a new US\$100mn fund.

AFF

Facebook could launch digital wallet this year

Washington, US - Facebook is ready to launch a digital wallet that would let users store cryptocurrencies, a senior company executive said in an interview.

David Marcus, head of Facebook's crypto unit, told The Information news site that company leaders 'feel pretty committed' to launch the digital wallet called Novi this year.

Marcus said he would have preferred to release Novi alongside Diem, a digital currency tied to the dollar that the company is



also developing, but Diem's timing was uncertain.

"In theory, Novi could launch before Diem, but it would mean

launching without Diem and that's not necessarily something that we want to do," Marcus told The Information.

"It all depends on how long it's going to take for Diem to actually go live and that's not something I'm personally looking after."

In 2019 Facebook said it plans to introduce a cryptocurrency that at the time was called Libra. The project however faced regulatory resistance over concerns about security and reliability.

In December 2020 the Libra changed its name to Diem and moved its operations from Switzerland to the US.

AFF

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Alizz Islamic expands ‘IFIN’ financing services

Alizz Islamic Bank has extended the ‘IFIN’ services for instant financing to Mustafa Sultan Electronics. Alizz Islamic Bank and IFIN had previously partnered to launch the ‘IFIN’ services in all the Danube Home branches in Oman.

This expansion comes as a result of the peak of the interest of customers to avail this hassle free and instant financing service to them.

Mustafa Sultan Electronics offers customers a variety of consumer electronics, medical and industrial equipment, consumer and industrial lighting, communications equipment, information technology, office equipment, defense equipment, restaurants, money exchange, insurance, real estate, entertainment, air conditioning, logistics and other products.

The ‘IFIN’ service is a unique instant finance service in Oman and was launched by Alizz Islamic Bank earlier this year, enabling it to become possible for customers to obtain financing for goods within ten minutes only.

This service allows customers to instantly take home their desired goods such as furniture, luxuries, accessories, health and household appliances from the store having them financed for up to 120 months without the need of visiting any bank branch.

The process of availing of finance has been simplified into a simple 10-minute process at the store’s checkout counter, where the customer will go through an online verification process and sign the finance contract follow-



ing an immediate approval. IFIN is based on the Islamic concept of Goods Murabaha, where the bank purchases the

goods desired by the customer from the authorised dealer and sells the same to the customer at an agreed price that is paid in instalments.

It offers complete transparency as the customer knows the bank’s profit margin and instalment plan at the time of signing the contract.

This arrangement allows for immediate possession and ownership of the goods by the customer who never pays more than the agreed amount.

Customers with a monthly income of RO350 and residents with a monthly income of RO800 are eligible for the financing service with a maximum limit of RO15,000. In addition to this facility, 100 per cent financing of the value of the goods is also available. This facility is also available for working individuals and self-employed people.

Alizz Islamic Bank and IFIN partnered with Danube Home to launch this unique instant finance product in the sultanate, as IFIN is the first company to provide this Sharia’a-compliant FinTech solution in the world.

Commenting on the expansion of this financing service, Mohammed al Ghassani, assistant general manager, chief consumer banking officer at Alizz Islamic Bank said, “Alizz Islamic Bank takes pride in making the lives of its customers easy and flexible through the financing products and services it provides.

“The bank has been focusing heavily on enhancing its product portfolio to cater to the requirement of customers. Alizz Islamic Bank is also committed to achieving its goal of becoming the leading provider of Islamic financial banking services in the sultanate by providing the best services and innovative banking solutions.

“The main strategic focus of the bank is to provide exceptional and high-quality customer experience through continuous improvement of its services by employing the latest digital technologies.”

Alizz Islamic Bank seeks to enter partnership with various institutions in the sultanate to facilitate financing for its customers to include other types of financing such as car financing, retail stores and other products that customers need approvals and quick procedures to implement.

Khedmah develops branch network bringing services closer to customers

Committed to expand the reach of its services, Oman Investment & Finance Co (Khedmah), has recently opened three new branches in the wilayats of Ibri Alaraqi, Liwa and Buraimi. Furthermore, the company has launched a new self-service kiosk in Al Muzn mall in the wilayat of Seeb. With the addition of the new branches and the kiosk, Khedmah network now boasts 68 branches and 54 kiosks across the sultanate along with electronic channels such as the popular Khedmah phone app and the website that allow clients to leverage the company’s innovative services.

The new branches were designed as per the best practices in the industry and equipped with latest technologies known in the market. This resonates with the integrated services the company provides to its clients in order to meet their expectations and fulfil their needs. Through these branches, kiosks and other platforms, beneficiaries can pay electricity, water, telecommuni-



cations bills, and the Public Authority for Social Insurance dues, in addition to recharging their phone, prepaid electricity and entertainment subscription.

Mohammed bin Obaid al Guthi, regional manager of Khedmah Branches in Majan region, said, “We are delighted to announce the opening of the new branches and the launch of the self-service kiosk. This milestone comes in line with our strategy for this year which focuses on

easily accessible services. The company will continue its sterling efforts to give more to the people of Oman,” he added.

Additionally, the new branches have qualified workforce trained to fulfill customers’ needs with the highest service standards. Over the past period, Khedmah’s branches and digital channels saw a strategic development in terms of expansion and new innovative services.

These achievements came as a result of extensive studies conducted by the company on the locations of branches, market developments, and the level of customer satisfaction with the services delivered. This allowed OIFC to acquire insights and determine what is desired by consumers, and thus provide tailor-made services to them that meet their aspirations.

OIFC is one of the leading Investment and services company and specialises in billing, collection & debt factoring for electricity, water and telecom services in the Sultanate of Oman.

renovating and relocating a number of Khedmah branches to more strategic and accessible locations. Furthermore, we are focused on launching many self-service kiosks in highly populated areas to keep pace with market developments, competition factors and modern development.”

“At OIFC, we constantly strive to target various segments of society around the sultanate and provide them with high end and

NBO continues to add value to its customers

National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) award-winning mobile app continues to make everyday transactions easier and more convenient. Building on one of its most popular features, customers can make instant local transfers of up to RO500 for just 200bz, 24 hours 7 days a week with all local banks that support the service.

It’s one of a number of enhancements the bank has added to its remittance services, which include introducing transfer receipts for instant sharing, and tap-and-share account information for quicker transactions.

Tariq Atiq, chief retail and digital banking officer at NBO said, “Our app is the core of our digital transformation and we’re always seeking more ways to make it even more customer centric. Given the pandemic we know people have relied on it more than ever to carry out their daily transactions, and with our transfer fee, it is not only more affordable, but enhances their overall experience.”

Keen to adopt the latest tech-



nologies and stay ahead of the curve, NBO’s digital channels enable customers to manage their money in a way that is tailored to their specific and changing needs.

Its easy-to-use mobile app is available around the clock, facilitating a range of everyday tasks to be completed, including opening accounts, paying utility and credit card bills, locating branches and ATMs, applying for products such as the Easy Payment Plan (EPP), and making local and international money transfers.

For more information on NBO’s range of products and services, log onto the app (www.nbo.om/mb), or visit www.nbo.om.

Indian School Sur hosts webinar on entrepreneurship

To commemorate the 75th year of India’s independence, Indian School Sur, in association with the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, under the theme ‘Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav’ India @ 75 successfully conducted a webinar on entrepreneurship on August 22.

The programme was titled ‘Stride’ and was organised by the Indian School Board aimed at igniting the spark of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship innate in children and transforms them into competent, enterprising and confident visionaries. The programme was hosted by Indian School Sur.

The chief guest was Ahmed Tabook, commercial director, Free Zones – Salalah. Tabook mentioned that the students in the modern education system are fortunate to have an education system that prepares them to be entrepreneurs. He reflected that entrepreneurship is not just about starting companies but about business scalability and positively influencing people’s lives.

The event was presided over by Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman. Dr Manickam remarked that schools have rapidly adopted modernisa-

tion by integrating science, technology and arts. “The recent teaching migration from the classroom to the living room had revolutionised the idea of what schools and teachers can do for society. Despite the pandemic setbacks, the most prominent unicorn startups in the world had experienced a boom in their business,” he said.

The guest of honour Ashwini Sawrikar, finance director, BoD and director in-charge of Indian School Sur, reiterated that the ethos of ‘Stride’ is stepping up for challenges and displaying the tenacity to continue, turning dreams into reality.

Dr Vinod Shastri, head of Academics, Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Bennett University, spoke about the necessity of building the right entrepreneurial mindset in making startups naturally happen.

Srinivas Rao, convener, School Management Committee Indian School Sur, expressed his gratitude to the Board of Directors for facilitating an excellent venture like ‘Stride’. The programme moderator was Dr Mariam Noronha, assistant professor and coordinator, Startup and Innovation Cell, Ness Wadia College of Commerce, Pune, India.



Zubair Corporation organises human resources forum

The Zubair Corporation recently organised a human resources forum aimed at exchanging innovative ideas focused on enhancing human capital, as well as introducing future projects and programmes in support of the corporation’s human resources. The forum was attended by all the heads of human resources of the Zubair Group companies, alongside several members of the corporation’s senior management.

The forum also witnessed the launch of the ‘Himma’ programme, which seeks to empower Omani competencies within The Zubair Corporation and its subsidiaries. This programme is considered as one of the main pillars of the corporation’s strategy in managing and developing human resources in all group companies.

Commenting on the forum, Hilal Omar al Siyabi, head of Corporate Services at The Zubair Corporation, said, “The organisation of this forum stems from the recommendations approved by the Omani talent empowerment team within the corporation. It is also aimed at enhancing cooperation between the human resources departments within the various group companies to implement a unified strategy.

“The forum was an opportunity to learn about the current situation across different sectors in the group, discuss development opportunities and encourage collaboration. The cooperation and sharing of ideas will contribute towards jointly facing the existing challenges and enrich a system of joint work among all parties involved.”

The forum highlighted the training and qualification programmes for the management of human resources working in the group and the establishment of a system of programmes that meet the needs of the national competencies.

This also included means to develop national competencies to qualify them to take up future leadership positions and processes for an optimal investment of the corporation’s human capital, in order to achieve the institution’s vision and strategy for the next stage.

The forum concluded with a discussion session that included questions and suggestions from

the participants. This was intended to enrich cooperation between the human resources departments of the different Zubair Group companies, as well as the mechanism for implementing the recommendations issued by the Omani talent empowerment team in different work environments.

The Human Resources Department of The Zubair Corporation is constantly working on designing and launching specialised initiatives and programmes aimed at developing human capital in the group companies. The Zubair Corporation is one of the leading economic conglomerates of the region. Established in 1967, the corporation, within years flourished as one of the largest commercial corpora-

tions and is active in various sectors such as Oil & Gas, Automobiles, Tourism, Heavy Industries, Information & Communication Technology amongst others.

The corporation adds in-country value through employing thousands of employees in its subsidiaries. The Zubair Corporation is also proud of its sustainable social and cultural undertakings, such as the Bait al Zubair Foundation, which is concerned with culture and heritage, and the Zubair Small Enterprises Centre, which is concerned with entrepreneurs and helps them establish and develop their activities. Within its strategic vision, the corporation seeks to support comprehensive development within the sultanate in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Sohar International's vaccination drive extended to welfare associations

With innovation being a key driver of Sohar International's success, the bank has also implemented unique ways to help the community especially in times of crisis. Demonstrating strong corporate values and ethics, Sohar International has not only been at the forefront of employee welfare but has gone the extra mile to extend support to others in the community.

Complementing the extensive efforts of the government and having completed the vaccination drive for employees and their families, Sohar International extended this vaccination drive to include local welfare associations such as the Association for the Disabled in Sohar and Oman Cancer Association, as well as other strategic partners like those in the press and media.

"The pandemic affected the lives of countless people, but with the prudent initiatives taken by the government and the aggressive vaccination drive, we see a significant decline in the COVID-19 cases in the country. As a socially responsible financial institution, it becomes our duty to ensure that we comple-



ment the government's efforts in this direction by extending the vaccines to others in the community," said Ahmed al Musalmi, chief executive officer, Sohar International.

"Supporting associations dedicated to the welfare of the people helps us to meaningfully contribute to the nation's broad

objectives of ensuring health and better living for all. In addition, we cannot undermine the efforts of those who are on the field and have been dedicated to making sure that business carries on as usual. We have therefore also extended our vaccine drive to cover key strategic partners and honor them for their efforts.

"Through well-planned and thoughtfully designed initiatives like these, we have been able to establish a closer bond with the overall society we operate in."

He added, "Sohar International will continue to remain committed to putting the wellbeing of its employees first, while simultaneously supporting the

untiring efforts of the Oman government in its drive to safeguard its people and stop the spread of the virus. We believe that a healthy workforce is the key to the progress of a nation."

The completion of the vaccination drive extended to the local welfare associations marks yet another milestone in Sohar Inter-

national's CSR initiatives while attesting to the unflinching commitment the bank has demonstrated in caring for the people of the nation reflecting its 'Human' personality.

In recognition of these significant efforts by the bank, Sohar International was recently bestowed with 'Managing Health at Work' award at the World HRD Congress - Oman Best Employer Brand Awards 2021 - a global body based out of India that has been recognising and highlighting exemplary branding, human resources, and leadership regionally.

In addition, the organisers also honoured the bank with 'Best Employer Brand Award' for its continuous focus on the holistic wellbeing of its employees and overall work environment.

A premium bank that is revered for going the extra mile for its customers, Sohar International has also taken the lead in terms of community welfare by actively supporting national and socially impactful issues.

With the vaccination drive in full swing, Sohar International will continue to do its part to keep the momentum going.

Epsilon appoints leader for expansion

Epsilon, a global leader in outcome-based marketing, announced the appointment of Saira Mehdi as the sales director for the Middle East & Africa (MEA) region.

Saira will own the mandate for top line revenue growth, drive new business opportunities for Epsilon's products and solutions and grow the company's client base in the region. She will also play a significant role in positioning Epsilon as a premier martech and adtech player in MEA.

Saira comes with 14 years of work experience in the IT industry across North America and MEA. Having worked with organisations like Oracle and Rackspace, Saira is keen to build on this experience and deliver value.

Speaking on her appointment, Saira stated, "I am excited to join Epsilon and will collaborate with the leadership's vision for growth in this region. With consumer expectations rising and the market at the cusp of marketing maturity, businesses need to evaluate their customer engagement strategies and I see Epsilon PeopleCloud filling that gap."

Saudi Arabian Grand Prix: 100 days to go for action

In just 100 days Formula 1 will roar into Jeddah as Saudi Arabia will host its first-ever Grand Prix. In the countdown to the inaugural race weekend, circuit designer Carsten Tilke has revealed the spectacular course will be the fastest street track in Formula 1 history.

Motor sport fans around the world are eagerly anticipating the moment Formula 1 takes to the Jeddah Corniche Circuit for the first time when the Red Sea port city hosts the Formula 1 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix 2021 on December 3-5.

For over 30 years, the business founded by former racer Hermann Tilke has been the pre-eminent circuit design company for some of the greatest tracks in Formula 1. His son Carsten Tilke is managing director of the firm with the responsibility of the huge construction project on the Jeddah coastline.

In just under 12 months, Tilke has been working in record time to create the 27 turn, 6.17km circuit that will be the second longest of the 2021 F1 calendar, after Spa-Francorchamps.

The company has joined forces with Formula 1, the sport's governing body the FIA, and local promoters the Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation, to design a track that will thrill both drivers and spectators alike. Without the usual confines of a downtown city centre, what will make the Jeddah Street Circuit unique is that the site's location has been built from the ground-up, meaning the track has been

designed with a free hand.

As a result, long straights and high-speed corners will ensure the Jeddah Corniche Circuit will have the highest average speed of any street track in Formula 1 history, estimated to be 252km/h.

"The circuit in Jeddah will be extraordinary," says Carsten Tilke, managing director of Tilke GmbH. "It will be a different kind of street track. What we are doing together with Saudi Arabia is amazing, it's something the world has never seen before."

In just 100 days, the new circuit on Jeddah's idyllic waterfront will wow spectators in both the grandstands and thanks to its stunning floodlights, television viewers around the world.

About the preparations for the first-ever Formula 1 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix 2021, Carsten Tilke said, "It has been incredibly busy. Never before have we undertaken a project like this in such a short timeframe. We started last December, and we need to be finished in 100 days and this has included both the planning and construction phases.

"Even though Jeddah will be a street circuit, everything has been built from scratch, including much of the track itself and the buildings, pit garage, royal 'overlook' tower and grandstands. The location for the 6.1km circuit is the beautiful corniche, just north of the city centre of Jeddah.

"It's a stunning landscape with the Red Sea on one side and a lagoon on the other, but we've had

to put in place all the foundations for the buildings, the drainage for the whole area and the track itself. It's been a huge undertaking and a challenging project, but everything is progressing very well, and I have every confidence everything will be ready on time."

Talking about both Formula 1 and the Saudi Arabian organisers' help in creating this new street circuit in Jeddah, he said. "The story of why this circuit has been fast-tracked into construction is because the Qiddiya venue near Riyadh that was originally slated to host a Grand Prix is a huge undertaking that will take many years to create. The intention was to accelerate Saudi Arabia's presence on the F1 schedule so Formula 1 made a number of visits to Jeddah to look at sites to create something that would take less time to build.

"We have only been able to achieve what we have done in the timescale because of the amazing work from the local people in Jeddah which includes the promoter and the whole management team at the Ministry of Sports. A project like this can only work if everyone is united. It's a big undertaking and it requires a lot of organisation to ensure the construction runs smoothly.

"We have the experience of creating a lot of tracks, but this is the first Formula 1 circuit in Saudi Arabia. We have had a good relationship with everyone, both locally and with Formula 1 and the FIA."

CELEBRITIES JOIN GUIDO MIGLIOZZI FOR PRO-AM



Ahead of the Omega Masters golf tournament this week, the annual Pro-Am event was played on August 29 in Crans-Montana, with some special celebrities out on the course. The team was comprised of Omega's own golfing talent, Guido Migliozi, along with invited guests including the actors Tom Felton and Luke Wilson, as well as former football player and manager Paul Ince

Farnek secures security contracts worth over AED10mn in H1 2021

Leading UAE-based smart and green facilities management (FM) company Farnek has underscored its security credentials with new contract wins totalling AED10.6mn during the first half of 2021 in sectors including oil & gas, real estate, tourism and hospitality, construction, and education.

The company has been contracted to mobilise 211 guards to locations across the UAE to provide a full spectrum of security services. New contracts, which vary from one to three years, include Shanghai Electric Group, Al Wahda Investment, two Millennium Hotel locations, The Royal Grammar School Guildford, China Machinery Engineering Corporation and the Al Bateen Community, amongst others.

Farnek will use the Internet of Things (IoT), Cloud, Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) based technologies as part of the company's security operations.

Markus Oberlin, CEO, Farnek, said, "These latest contract wins recognise our security expertise and our understanding of the needs and demands of clients across a variety of sectors. We have adopted a range of new



technologies to ensure we remain at the forefront of the industry, which aligns us perfectly with our clients who demand a high level of technical ability when it comes to security services." Farnek has invested more than one million dollars into research and development in tech-driven initiatives, including its award-winning multifunctional smartwatch technology.

Unique to Farnek, the Android watch is programmed, coded and developed in-house and provides attendance and incident reporting, call facilities, geo-fencing, photo and video functions and health monitoring. All watches are connected to the company's recently launched 24/7 command and control room, located in Farnek Village,



the company's new staff accommodation centre in Jebel Ali.

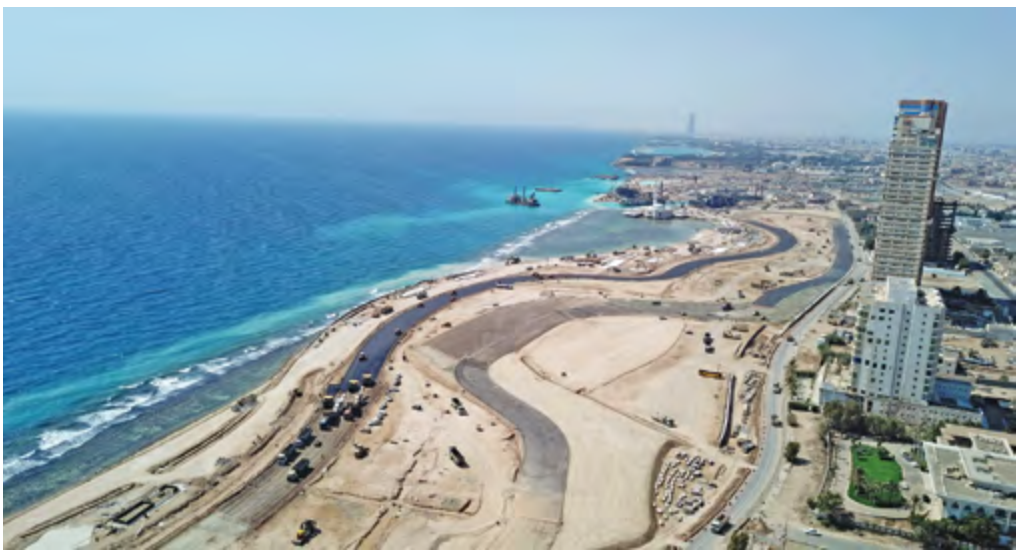
The control centre uses 5G and is Wi-Fi 6 enabled, meaning Farnek can take advantage of increased bandwidth, ultra-low latency and enhanced security to connect assets from multiple sites so that they can be centrally monitored, managed and guards can be provided with real-time updates.

Further underscoring Farnek's growth aspirations in the security sector is the appointment of Ahmed Salah as head of Security. The Egyptian national brings a wealth of experience to the role, having worked in the Abu Dhabi security industry for over 15 years, before which he was part of the Egyptian Military Judicial Department.

"Ahmed has a deep understanding of security operations in Abu Dhabi and the rest of the UAE, which will be invaluable in our next phase of growth. He has worked extensively in the diplomatic, government, education and retail sectors which are key areas of development and crucial for our ongoing expansion," added Oberlin. Salah will have an instrumental role in training, business development, risk management and will work closely with Farnek's ICT division to ensure the seamless implementation of the latest security innovation and technology.

"I've been particularly impressed by the growth of Farnek's security operations in the last 12 months. Not only has the company increased the size of its security division by almost 2,000 people, but it has also witnessed a significant increase in new contracts. This provides the perfect platform to develop the business further, an opportunity I relish," said Salah.

"We are ideally positioned to utilise the technology and innovation at our disposal and secure our position as market leaders in the security field," he added.



30 loyalists killed in strikes on Yemen's airbase

Strikes were carried out on Al-Anad airbase, some 60km north of the second city Aden in the south

Dubai, UAE - Strikes on Yemen's largest airbase on Sunday killed at least 30 pro-government troops and wounded scores more, said medical and loyalist sources who blamed Iran-backed Huthi rebels for the attack.

The strikes were carried out on Al-Anad airbase, some 60km north of Yemen's second city Aden in the south of the conflict-riven country.

The airbase served as the headquarters for US troops overseeing a long-running drone war against Al Qaeda until March 2014 when it was overrun by the Huthi rebels.

"More than 30 have been killed and at least 56 were injured" in the strikes on the airbase in the government-held southern province of Lahij, armed forces spokesman Mohammed al Naqib said.

Video footage from the scene showed dozens of people gathered in front of Lahij hospital, where one ambulance after another was pulling up to drop off casualties.

An official from the hospital said it was all hands on deck.

"We have called on the entire staff, surgeons and nurses, to come in," Mohsen Murshid said. "We also know that there are still bodies under the rubble."



People gather as ambulances transport victims of strikes from the Al-Anad air base to the Ibn Khaldun hospital in the province of Lahij, on Sunday (AFP)

Airbase attacked in 2019

Yemen's internationally recognised government - backed by a Saudi-led military coalition - and the Huthis have been locked in war since 2014, when the insurgents seized the capital Sanaa.

In 2019, the Huthis said they

launched a drone strike on Al-Anad during a military parade, with medics and government sources saying that at least six loyalists were killed - including a high-ranking intelligence official.

Eleven people were wounded in that attack, including Yemen's deputy chief of staff Major Gen-

eral Saleh al Zandani who later died of his injuries.

Al-Anad was recaptured by government forces in August 2015 as they recovered territory from the rebels across the south with support from the Saudi-led coalition.

Sunday's incident is one of the

deadliest since December 2020, when blasts targeting cabinet members rocked Aden airport.

At the time, at least 26 people, including three members of the International Committee of the Red Cross and a journalist, were killed and scores wounded in the explosions as ministers

We have called on the entire staff, surgeons and nurses, to come in. We also know that there are still bodies under the rubble

MOHSEN MURSHID

disembarked from an aircraft in the southern city.

Yemen's grinding conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions, resulting in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Some 80 per cent of Yemen's 19mn strong population are dependent on some form of aid for survival.

While the UN is pushing for an end to the war, the Huthis have demanded the re-opening of Sanaa airport, closed under a Saudi blockade since 2016, before any ceasefire or negotiations. The incoming UN special envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, will officially assume his duties on September 5.

AFP



A Palestinian woman inspects the damage at her house following Israeli bombing in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip, on Sunday (AFP)

Israeli air force strikes Gaza after fire balloons, border clashes

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - The Israeli air force attacked two sites in Gaza on Sunday, the army said, after Gazans clashed with forces on the border and launched incendiary balloons into southern Israel.

The latest escalation came as Israel and Egypt continued to relax restrictions on commerce and travel imposed on the Gaza Strip, largely cut off by both countries since the Islamist movement Hamas seized the Palestinian enclave in 2007.

Israeli 'fighter jets struck a Hamas military compound used for manufacturing weapons and training as well as an entrance to a terror tunnel adjacent to Jabalia', the Israeli army said.

'The strikes were in response to Hamas launching incendiary balloons into Israeli territory and the violent riots that took place yesterday,' it said in a statement.

The army said both incidents were 'examples of how Hamas continues to employ terror tactics and target civilians'.

There were no reports from the Gaza Strip of any casualties caused by the Israeli strikes.

Speaking in Washington, where he had met with US President Joe Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said he held Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas responsible for any unrest from the Palestinian enclave.

"As I have already said, our actions in Gaza will serve our in-

terests," he told reporters before boarding a plane back to Israel.

"As far as I'm concerned, the address (of those responsible) has been and remains Hamas."

Rafah crossing fully reopens

On Saturday evening, two wildfires broke out in the Eshkol region near the Palestinian enclave, Israeli firefighters said.

Protests erupted later in the day, with the Israeli army firing tear gas and stun grenades as Palestinians burned tyres on the border between Gaza and Israel.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said 11 Palestinians had been hurt in the clashes, three of them by live fire. Hours earlier, Gazans laid to rest Omar Hassan Abu al Nile (12), who died of his wounds a week after being shot by Israeli forces during border clashes.

In 2018, Gazans began a protest movement demanding an end to Israel's blockade and the right for Palestinians to return to lands they fled or were expelled from when the Jewish state was founded in 1948.

The often-violent weekly demonstrations backed by Hamas sputtered as Israel killed some 350 Palestinians in the territory over more than a year.

Hamas and Israel then fought a devastating 11-day conflict in May, which ended with an informal truce.

AFP

Macron visits IS former stronghold Mosul in Iraq

Mosul, Iraq - French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday visited the Islamic State group's former Iraqi stronghold Mosul, a day after vowing to keep troops in the country.

In a speech at the devastated city's Church of Our Lady of the Hour, which the UN's cultural agency UNESCO is working to restore, Macron urged Iraq's religious communities to 'work together' to rebuild the country.

"We will bring back a (French) consulate and schools," he pledged, while criticising the pace of reconstruction in Mosul, where IS fought its last urban battle, as 'too slow'.

The mainly Sunni Muslim city was recaptured from IS in 2017 after three years.

Macron made the commitment for France to stay put in Iraq during a regional summit in Baghdad largely devoted to the fight against terrorism and the impact of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan as the US withdraws.



French President Emmanuel Macron (in shirt) tours the Our Lady of the Hour Church, in Iraq's second city of Mosul on Sunday (AFP)

"No matter what choices the Americans make, we will maintain our presence in Iraq to fight against terrorism," he told a news conference on Saturday.

His visit to Mosul, a melting pot of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious communities, symbolised France's support for Christians in the Middle East.

France, which finances French-speaking Christian

schools in the region, aims to highlight the plight of Christians in the Middle East, as well as other minorities.

"This message is civilisational but also geopolitical. There will be no balance in Iraq if there is no respect for these communities," the French President said ahead of his visit.

Macron also made a stop at the site of Mosul's Al-Nuri

mosque, where IS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi had declared the establishment of a 'caliphate' in 2014.

IS blew up the famed 12th century mosque in June 2017 as Iraqi forces closed in on the extremists in Mosul's Old City.

UNESCO is now organising a vast project to rebuild it almost identically, with its famed leaning minaret.

The mosque and church are part of three reconstruction projects led by UNESCO and funded by the United Arab Emirates to the tune of US\$50mn.

The initiative, called 'Reviving the Spirit of Mosul', the largest in the organisation's history, includes plans to rebuild Ottoman-style heritage houses as part of a European-funded project.

The French President on Friday visited the Shiite Muslim shrine of Imam Musa al Kadhimi in northern Baghdad district of Kadimiya, accompanied by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi.

It was the first such visit for a French President.

Macron will also meet young Iraqis, including entrepreneurs and students, at the University of Mosul.

Talks with Barzani

Later on Sunday he was to visit Erbil, capital of the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

After meeting French special forces at Camp Grenier, he will hold talks with Kurdish President Nechirvan Barzani, as well as his predecessor, Massud Barzani.

'I look forward to discuss bilateral ties, Iraqi elections and other pressing issues with President Macron. I remain grateful for France's continued support to the Kurdistan Region and Iraq,' the Iraqi Kurdish president tweeted.

Macron will also meet the family of a Peshmerga fighter killed by IS, to pay tribute to the Kurdish contribution to the fight against the extremists.

AFP

Tigray rebels accuse AU of bias in mediation efforts

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Rebel forces from Ethiopia's war-torn region of Tigray on Sunday accused the African Union (AU) of bias, days after the bloc appointed former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo as a mediator in the months-long conflict.

The spokesman for the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Getachew Reda, accused the AU of 'partiality' towards the Ethiopian government and said it would be 'naive to expect this mission to work'.

Northern Ethiopia has been wracked by violence since November, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray to topple the TPLF, the regional ruling party, saying the move came in response to attacks on army camps.

The 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner promised a swift victory, but the war has instead dragged on for months, triggering a humanitarian crisis in Tigray, while the rebels have pushed into the



Civilians displaced by fighting in northern Ethiopia off load food and supplies from a truck, provided by the local population, at a temporary shelter in the Addis Fana School, in the city of Dessie (AFP)

neighbouring Afar and Amhara regions.

Abiy rejected early appeals from high-level envoys from the AU for talks with Tigrayan leaders, sticking to his line that the

conflict is a limited 'law and order' operation.

On Thursday, the bloc announced Obasanjo's appointment as a high representative for the Horn of Africa, saying it was

part of a 'drive to promote peace, security, stability & political dialogue'.

But on Sunday, TPLF spokesman Getachew dismissed the initiative, saying: 'We are

hard pressed to know... how people would reasonably expect a constructive role from an institution that has given partiality a very bad name'.

'Solving a crisis at the very least requires acknowledging the existence, let alone the magnitude of the problem,' he wrote on Twitter.

The war has proved to be a sensitive subject for the AU, which is headquartered in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

Although Washington has been openly critical of Abiy's handling of the war, African members of the UN Security Council have backed Ethiopia in opposing formal discussion of the situation in Tigray at the world body.

According to the members, whose stance is backed by Russia and China, the conflict is Ethiopia's internal affair and any international efforts should go through African leaders or via the AU.

AFP

TALIBAN TAKEOVER

Rocket blast in Kabul after US warns of more attacks

Kabul, Afghanistan - A suspected rocket blast in Kabul on Sunday hours after US President Joe Biden warned of another terror attack added to frayed nerves in the capital as a massive airlift of tens of thousands of Afghans entered its last days.

About 114,000 people have fled the country via a US-led evacuation since the Taliban swept back into power two weeks ago, and the operation is winding down despite Western powers saying thousands may be left behind.

What had already been a chaotic and desperate operation turned bloody on Thursday when a suicide bomber from the local chapter of the Islamic State group targeted US troops stopping huge crowds of people from entering the airport.

More than 100 people died in the attack, including 13 US service personnel, slowing down the airlift ahead of Biden's deadline for evacuations to end by Tuesday.

The Pentagon said on Saturday that retaliation drone strikes had killed two 'high-level' IS militants in eastern Afghanistan, but Biden warned of more attacks from the group.

"The situation on the ground continues to be extremely dangerous, and the threat of terrorist attacks on the airport remains high," Biden said.

"Our commanders informed me that an attack is highly likely in the next 24-36 hours."

The US Embassy in Kabul later released a warning of credible threats at specific areas of the airport, including access gates.



Protestors hold a demonstration challenging the evacuation process from Kabul, in front of the White House in Washington, DC on Saturday (AFP)

Late on Sunday afternoon, a loud blast was heard coming from the north of the city which a security official in the toppled government said was a rocket hitting a house. Further details were not immediately available.

In recent years, the Islamic State's Afghanistan-Pakistan chapter has been responsible for some of the deadliest attacks in those countries.

They have massacred civilians at mosques, public squares, schools, and even hospitals.

Unthinkable co-operation

The IS attack has forced the US military and the Taliban into a form of cooperation to ensure security at the airport that was

unthinkable a fortnight ago.

On Saturday, Taliban fighters escorted a steady stream of Afghans from buses to the main passenger terminal, handing them over to US forces for evacuation.

The troops were seen throughout the civilian side of the airport grounds and annexe buildings, while US Marines peered at them from the passenger terminal roof.

After a 20-year war, the foes were within open sight of each other, separated by just 30m.

Also in view of the US troops were the Taliban's 'Badri' special forces in American Humvees gifted to the now-vanquished Afghan army.

Taliban spokesman Bilal

Karimi tweeted that the group's fighters had already moved into parts of the military side of the airport, but the Pentagon stressed that US forces retained control over the gates and the airlift.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said US troops had started withdrawing - without saying how many were left.

Western allies that helped with the airlift have mostly already ended their flights, with some voicing despair at not being able to fly out everyone at risk.

The UN said it was bracing for a 'worst-case scenario' of up to half a million more refugees from Afghanistan by the end of 2021.

At the airport, gone are the

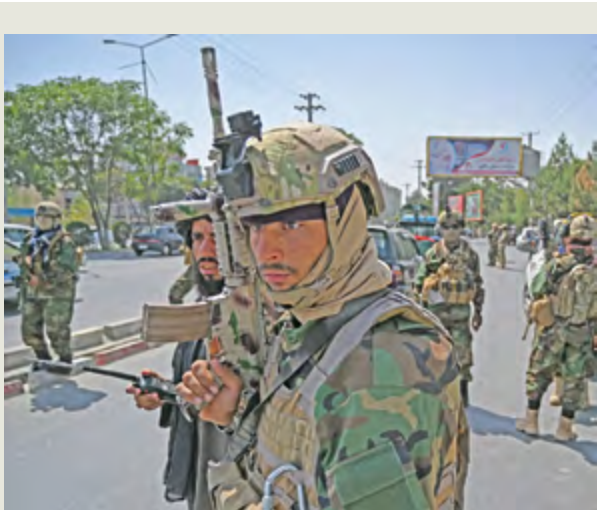
crowds of thousands mobbing the perimeter, hoping to be let through and allowed onto a plane.

The Taliban have now sealed off roads leading to the facility and are only letting sanctioned buses pass.

An AFP photographer saw a journalist friend on Saturday among those brought by bus for evacuation - he had worked for the US-led coalition force's media department and was considered at risk of Taliban retribution. They embraced briefly before parting ways.

"Good luck," they told each other - one staying behind, and the other on his way to a new life.

AFP



Taliban Fateh fighters, a 'special forces' unit, stand guard along a street following attacks near Kabul airport on Sunday (AFP)

Erdogan non-committal on Kabul airport operations

Istanbul, Turkey - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan poured cold water on Sunday over a plan in which Turkey operates Kabul airport and the Taliban provides security, adding Ankara would be in a tough position if another attack occurs.

Turkey had long planned to help secure and run the Afghan capital's airport, but appeared to drop the idea when it started on Wednesday to withdraw its approximately 500 non-combat troops from Afghanistan.

Erdogan on Friday said Turkey had held its first talks with the Taliban in Kabul, adding that Ankara was still assessing the group's offer for Turkey to run the airport's logistics.

"What does the Taliban say with regard to the airport issue? They say 'give us the security but you operate it'," Erdogan said in comments published by the official Anadolu news agency and other media outlets.

"How come we hand you over the security?" Erdogan added.

"Let's say you took over the security but how would we explain to the world if another bloodbath takes place there? It's not an easy job."

More than 100 people died in the suicide attack on Thursday outside Kabul airport, including 13 US service personnel, slowing down the airlift ahead of US President Joe Biden's deadline for evacuations to end by Tuesday.

Fresh terror attack warnings have rattled evacuation efforts overseen by US forces and Biden has warned another attack on the frantic airlift was 'highly likely'.

Turkey has completed its evacuation operation while moving its embassy from the airport back to its original compound, Erdogan said.

"We are planning right now to maintain our diplomatic presence," he said but added plans were constantly being updated depending on the security situation.

"We keep ready all our necessary alternative plans. Our priority is the safety of our personnel."

AFP

Macron calls for Kabul 'safe zone'

Paris, France - France and Britain will on Monday urge the United Nations to work for the creation of a 'safe zone' in the Afghan capital Kabul to protect humanitarian operations, French President Emmanuel Macron said.

"This is very important. This would provide a framework for the United Nations to act in an emergency," Macron said in comments published in the weekly *Journal du Dimanche*.

Above all such a safe zone would allow the international community 'to maintain pressure on the Taliban', who are now in power in Afghanistan, the French leader added.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council - France, Britain, the US, Russia and China - will meet on Monday to discuss the Afghanistan situation.

Paris and London will take the opportunity to present a draft resolution which 'aims to define, under UN control, a safe zone in Kabul, that will allow humanitarian operations to continue', Macron said.

His comments come as international efforts to airlift foreign nationals and vulnerable Afghans out of the country comes to an end. France ended its evacuation efforts on Friday and the UK followed suit on Saturday.

US troops have been scrambling in dangerous and chaotic conditions to complete a massive evacuation opera-



French President Emmanuel Macron (AFP)

Such a safe zone would allow the international community to maintain pressure on the Taliban

EMMANUEL MACRON

tion from the Kabul airport by an August 31 deadline.

Macron announced on Saturday that discussions had been 'started with the Taliban' to 'protect and repatriate' Afghan nationals at risk beyond August 31.

Speaking to reports in Iraq, where he was attending a meeting of key regional leaders, Macron added that with help from Qatar, which maintains good relations with the Taliban, there was a possibility

of further airlift operations.

He added that France had evacuated 2,834 people from Afghanistan since August 17.

In the article published by the French Sunday newspaper, Macron said he envisaged targeted evacuations in future 'which would not be carried out at the military airport in Kabul' but perhaps via civil airports in the Afghan capital or from neighbouring countries.

Macron also took aim at the kind of talk going on some quarters in France which 'stir fears' about the arrival of Afghan refugees in France.

"My role is not to stir up fears among our compatriots, it is to provide solutions to resolve them," he added, assuring that he aims to manage migratory pressures with 'humanity, firmness, with a ability to protect our borders as necessary'.

AFP

Final UK plane carrying military personnel leaves Afghan capital

London, UK - The UK on Saturday flew out the last of its military from Afghanistan, concluding its pullout while leaving hundreds of Afghans eligible for resettlement behind.

The Defence Ministry tweeted that the 'final flight carrying UK Armed Forces personnel has left Kabul', posting photos of drawn and tired-looking soldiers entering a plane.

In a tribute to the troops, the ministry wrote, "To all those who served so bravely under enormous pressure and horrendous conditions to safely evacuate the most vulnerable of civilians: Thank you."

Earlier Saturday, the UK sent out a final plane carrying only civilian evacuees as it wound up its operation to airlift civilians, diplomats and troops ahead of the August 31 deadline agreed with the Taliban for US troop withdrawal.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson thanked those behind the rescue operation, saying they had helped over 15,000 people in less than two weeks.

"I want to thank everyone involved and the thousands of those who served over the last two decades. You can be proud of what you have achieved," Johnson said on social media.

Defence Minister Ben Wallace said UK troops had 'helped thousands to get to a better future and safety'.

'Heartbreaking'

The head of the UK armed



Members of the British armed forces disembark from a Royal Air Force Voyager as they return from assisting with the evacuation at the Kabul airport, at RAF Brize Norton in west of London on Sunday (AFP)

forces, General Sir Nick Carter earlier Saturday told the BBC the evacuation operation had 'gone as well as it could do' but admitted it was 'heartbreaking' that 'we haven't been able to bring everybody out'.

The armed forces chief estimated the number of eligible Afghans who had not been evacuated as 'in the high hundreds'.

He stressed that Britain would welcome them if they managed to leave after the deadline, through third countries or other ways.

Defence Secretary Wallace earlier estimated that up to 1,100 Afghans eligible for relocation under the UK's scheme 'didn't make it'.

Several British nationals waiting outside the airport were

among those killed in a bomb attack on Thursday, claimed by the regional Islamic State chapter.

The BBC reported on Saturday that a taxi driver from London, Mohammad Niazi, was killed while his wife and two of their children were missing.

Foreign Minister Dominic Raab said on Friday that two British nationals and the child of another British citizen were killed. It was not clear whether this figure included Niazi.

The last few days will be 'a very demanding operation' for the US, Carter said.

"I think our American allies who will effectively be the rear-guard as this happens, are going to be very challenged," he said, adding that the threat from Islamic State 'has not gone away'.

Controversial animal rescue

One of the last to leave Kabul was the British head of an animal charity, who flew out on a privately chartered plane along with some 200 cats and dogs from a Kabul shelter, completing a controversial mission that has angered many. Paul or 'Pen' Farthing, founder of Nowzad, mounted a high-profile campaign to evacuate the animals.

But Farthing's insistence on taking out the animals was widely criticised as hundreds of Afghans eligible to travel to the UK remained behind.

These included Farthing's staff who were unable to reach the front of the line at the airport. The charity said it would 'do its utmost to help them'.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Japan detects more Moderna vaccine contamination

Tokyo, Japan - Two Japanese regions suspended use of some Moderna COVID-19 shots on Sunday after more cases of contamination were spotted, the local governments said.

The move came a day after the Japanese Health Ministry said it was investigating the death of two men who received doses from other tainted Moderna batches - though the cause of death is unknown.

Okinawa prefecture, in southern Japan, said it had suspended use of Moderna shots at a major vaccination centre in the city of Naha, while Gunma prefecture, north of Tokyo, also said it had paused use of contaminated lots.

"We are suspending the use of Moderna COVID-19 vaccines as foreign substances were spotted" in some of them, authorities in Okinawa said in a statement.

In Gunma an official told AFP, "We continue use of Moderna lots that are not affected by the incident."

The contamination in Okinawa and Gunma follows the suspension of 1.63mn doses across Japan on Thursday after the deaths of two men aged 30 and 38 in August following their second Moderna doses.

Those doses were drawn



People gather to receive coronavirus vaccines at a mass vaccination centre in Toyoake City, Aichi prefecture in Japan (AFP)



Japan has suspended the use of 1.63mn doses of Moderna vaccine after spotting contamination in Okinawa and Gunma prefectures (AFP)

The vials have been sent to a qualified lab for analysis and the initial findings will be available early next week

MODERNA AND TAKEDA

from one of the three batches suspended by the government on Thursday.

Japan's Health Ministry said however that it was investigating the cause of death and it is unknown if there is a causal link with the vaccine.

"At this time, we do not have any evidence that these deaths are caused by the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, and it is important to conduct a formal investigation to determine whether there is any connection," Moderna and its Japanese

Kosovo opts for curfew and delayed school start

Pristina, Kosovo - Kosovo will delay the start of the school year by two weeks and introduce a night-time curfew, the government said on Sunday, as coronavirus infections soar.

The government said the curfew will take effect on Monday from 10pm until 5am while the school year will begin in mid-September instead of September 1.

Daily cases of COVID-19 have risen from several hundred at the start of Au-

gust to some 2,000 a day currently.

Kosovo, a 1.8mn-strong country, has registered around 140,000 infections since the start of the pandemic and 2,500 deaths.

A quarter of the population has been vaccinated.

Health Minister Arben Vitia said the number of children infected had risen, 'particularly those aged 10 to 19 who are seen as spreaders of the virus'.

AFP

distributor Takeda said in a joint statement on Saturday.

The nature of the particles found in the vials, which were manufactured by a Moderna contractor in Europe, is also not known yet. "The vials have been sent to a qualified lab for analysis and the initial findings will be available early next week," Moderna and Takeda said.

The contractor, Spanish pharmaceutical firm ROVI, said in a statement on Thursday that it was investigating the cause of contamination and the doses

were only distributed in Japan.

It added that the issue may have originated on one of its manufacturing lines.

Around 44 per cent of Japan's population has been fully vaccinated, as the country battles a record surge of coronavirus cases driven by the more contagious Delta variant.

More than 15,800 people have died from COVID-19 in Japan, and large parts of the country are under strict virus restrictions.

AFP

UAE to resume issuing visas for tourists fully vaccinated against COVID-19

Dubai, UAE - The United Arab Emirates announced it will resume issuing visas to all tourists fully vaccinated against COVID from today, a month before Dubai hosts the delayed Expo 2020 trade fair.

The move comes amid a drop in coronavirus infections in the oil-rich Gulf country, after it reported less than 1,000 cases per day last week for the first time in months.

The UAE's decision to reopen its doors to tourists from all countries was taken in order 'to achieve sustainable recovery and economic growth', the official WAM news agency reported on Saturday.

Those eligible would have to be fully inoculated with one of the COVID-19 vaccines approved by the World Health Organization, which include



This file photo shows travellers at the Dubai International Airport (AFP)

AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Pfizer/BioNTech, Sinopharm and Sinovac.

'The decision applies to citizens of all countries, including those arriving from previously banned countries,' WAM said. 'Passengers arriving on

tourist visas must take a mandatory PCR test at the airport,' it added.

The UAE is made up of seven emirates including the capital Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

While life in the country has largely returned to normal amid

the COVID pandemic, it continues to enforce strict rules on wearing masks and social distancing.

Dubai was last year counting on the six-month Dubai Expo 2020 - delayed a year by the health crisis and now set to open in October - to attract millions of visitors and boost the economy.

Heavily reliant on tourism, the emirate was one of the first destinations to open its doors to travellers, accepting tourists in July last year, just a few months after the pandemic took hold.

Abu Dhabi, meanwhile, has been more cautious, opening up to some visitors only in December.

The UAE as so far recorded more than 715,000 cases of COVID-19 infection, including 2,036 deaths.

AFP

Australia's Melbourne extends sixth coronavirus lockdown

Melbourne, Australia - A lockdown of Australia's second-biggest city Melbourne will be extended, authorities announced on Sunday as they struggle to quash a stubborn coronavirus Delta variant outbreak.

Almost 7mn people in Melbourne and surrounding Victoria state were scheduled to exit a four-week lockdown on Thursday, but state premier Dan Andrews said it would no longer be possible with case numbers rising by 92 overnight.

It is the city's sixth lockdown of the pandemic, and includes a curfew, the closure of playgrounds and strict limits on exercise.

"We still have too many cases in the community for too long for us to be able to open up



People queue up outside a vaccination centre, in Melbourne (AFP)

and give back... those freedoms that we cherish and those freedoms that we desperately want back," Andrews said.

Andrews did not reveal how long stay-at-home orders would remain in place, saying officials would 'look at all the different options'.

Meanwhile neighbouring New South Wales state, which

includes Australia's most populous city of Sydney, posted 1,218 new cases on Sunday - pushing the country's overall daily caseload to a fresh all-time high.

Almost 19,000 cases have been detected in the state of about 8mn people since the Delta variant outbreak began in mid-June.

AFP

Evacuations, fear as Hurricane Ida grows to Category 4 storm

New Orleans, US - Hurricane Ida was upgraded to a Category 4 storm as it stayed on course to hit New Orleans with maximum sustained winds reaching 225km per hour, the US National Hurricane Center said on Sunday.

Ida was due to make landfall on Sunday, 16 years to the day Hurricane Katrina devastated the southern US city, flooding 80 per cent of New Orleans, and leaving behind 1,800 casualties and billions of dollars in damage.

'Dangerous Category 4 Hurricane Ida strengthens some more,' the NHC said in its latest advisory.

'Life-threatening storm surge, potentially catastrophic wind damage, and flooding rainfall will impact portions of the northern Gulf Coast beginning later this morning.'

Shops were boarded up and evacuations were underway on Saturday in New Orleans, with officials warning residents to leave immediately or hunker down to ride out the storm.

Images on social media and US news channels showed

scores of people gathered at the airport waiting to board flights and cars driving bumper-to-bumper on clogged roads leading out of the city.

"Everybody is scared because it's the anniversary of Katrina and people didn't take it seriously at the time," said Austin Suriano, who was helping board up the windows of his father's watch repair shop.

Category 4 is the second-highest on the Saffir-Simpson scale, with winds of up to 156 miles per hour.

President Joe Biden warned on Saturday that 'Ida is turning into a very, very dangerous storm' when it had strengthened to a Category 2 hurricane.

'Time is not on our side'

Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards said Ida would be one of the most powerful storms to hit the state since the 1850s.

In New Orleans, Mayor LaToya Cantrell warned residents to take Ida with utmost seriousness.



People stand in line at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport in New Orleans, Louisiana on Saturday as they evacuate the area due to Hurricane Ida working its way towards the Louisiana coastline (AFP)

"Time is not on our side," she said. "It's rapidly growing, it's intensifying."

Southern Louisiana was bracing for massive damage and flooding as the fast-intensifying storm roared northward after

pummeling western Cuba.

"Extended power loss is almost certain," New Orleans homeland security director Collin Arnold told reporters on Saturday. "I'm imploring you to take this storm seriously."

Biden said hundreds of emergency personnel had been sent to the region, along with food, water and electric generators.

Shelters were being prepared around the region but Louisiana

is one of the states hit hardest by COVID-19, and the President urged anyone heading to such facilities to wear a mask and take precautions.

The National Weather Service forecast a 'life-threatening storm surge' - as high as 12 feet near New Orleans and 16 feet around the mouth of the Mississippi River - when the hurricane makes landfall.

It warned of 'catastrophic wind damage' and said Ida could spawn tornadoes.

Louisiana has declared a state of emergency in preparation for the storm. The declaration, approved by Biden, will expedite federal storm assistance to the southern state.

The hurricane made landfall late Friday in western Cuba as a Category 1 storm, packing winds near 80 miles per hour but causing mostly minor damage.

Scientists have warned of a rise in cyclone activity as the ocean surface warms due to climate change, posing an increasing threat to the world's coastal communities.

'Very painful'

The dire warnings about Ida inevitably sparked memories of Katrina, Governor Edwards said in a briefing.

"It's very painful to think about another powerful storm like Hurricane Ida, making landfall on that anniversary," he said.

One big difference, he said, was the huge investment since then in an extensive storm protection system of levees, gates and pumps.

Still, Eric Suriano from the watch repair shop said he remembers Katrina vividly, "It was the nightmare of my life."

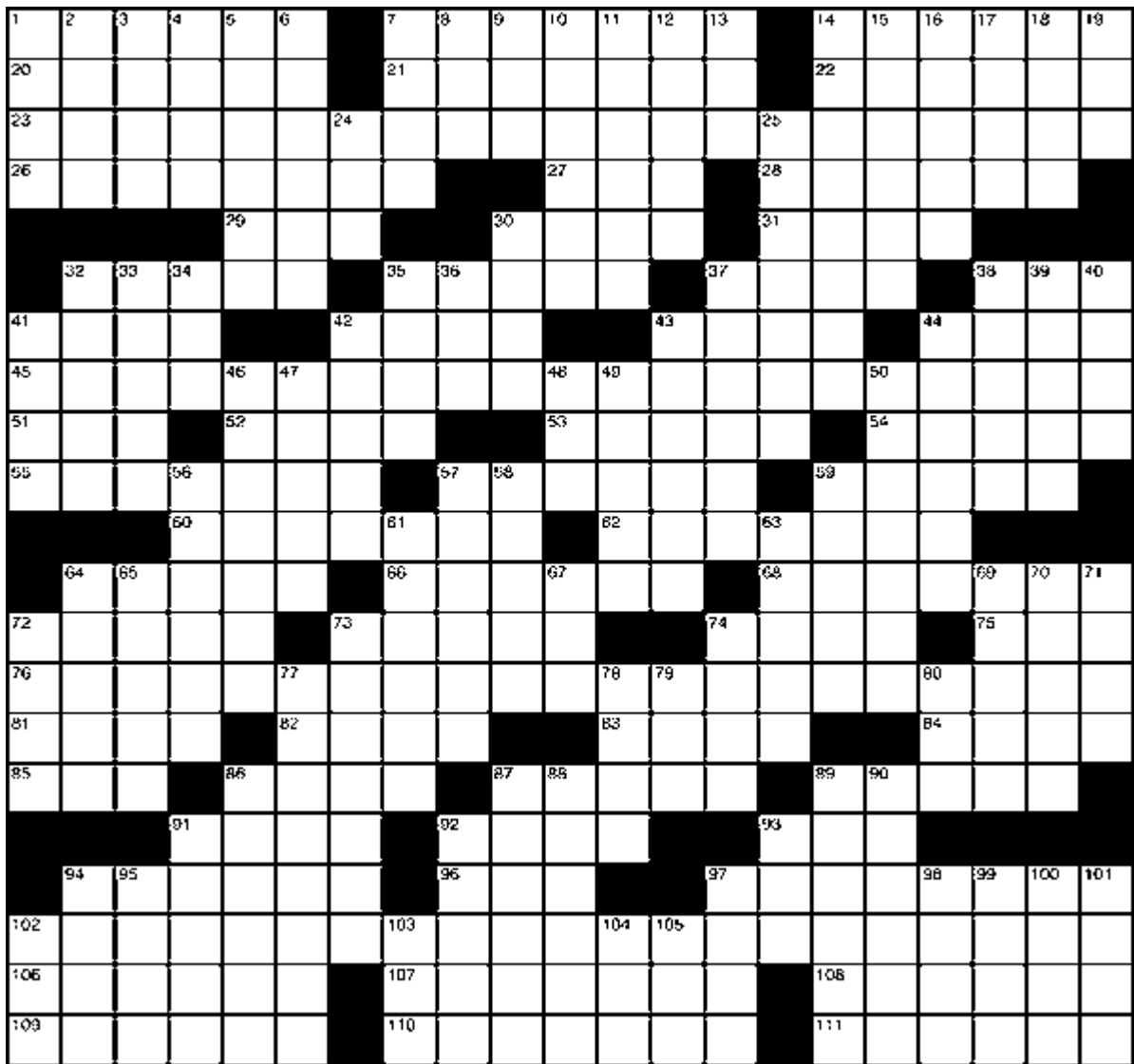
Meanwhile, a Category 1 hurricane named Nora made landfall on Mexico's Pacific coast, the NHC said.

Nora's centre 'remains near the coast of Mexico after making landfall in the northwest Jalisco' province, it added.

Last week, a rare tropical storm struck the US northeastern seaboard, knocking out power, uprooting trees and bringing record rainfall.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**

1 Llama’s cousin
7 Ocean spume
14 Din
20 Eng. comic/actor Steve
21 Protected from gunfire
22 French star
23 Start of a New Year’s Eve soliloquy
26 The Captain and ____
27 ____ volente: God willing: L.
28 Actor Ed and family
29 Rorem or Sparks
30 Code word for Z
31 Max or Buddy
32 Fontainebleau woods: Fr.
35 Izaak Walton’s basket
37 Clark Kent’s girl
38 Boater or porkpie
41 Word for a certain Ranger
42 Narrow cut
43 James Jones’s middle name
44 With 82 Across, Utah’s state flower
45 More of soliloquy
51 Infamous Amin
52 Rainbow-like: prefix
53 Fed the pot
54 Embassy spies
55 Person from
- Barcelona
57 Morrissey’s band
59 Turn outward, as feet
60 Asian transport
62 Recorded again
64 Star’s brief role
66 Bother persistently
68 Noxious atmospheres
72 “The Bells of St. ____”
73 Kitchen gadget
74 Where Rene goes barefoot?
75 Lord Byron’s child
76 More of soliloquy
81 Ship hazard
82 Flowers of the valley
83 Word of woe
84 “The Fighter” lead, Christian
85 Dancer Charisse
86 St. Louis eleven
87 Gentleman’s gentleman
89 Bone juncture
91 Pere’s wife
92 Karate symbol
93 Hallow’s end
94 A Greg Louganis dive
96 Indefinite article: It., fem.
97 Tax man
102 End of soliloquy
106 Visigoth king
107 Buttercup relative
108 Mary Martin’s
- Broadway hit:
1966
109 Poe’s “Raven” lady
110 Toper
111 Valve rod

DOWN

1 “... ____ has only nine lives”: Twain
2 Vein or ore
3 Smut, tersely
4 Not fer
5 Incisor’s neighbor
6 Bobbysoxer’s sock
7 Yegg’s target
8 Work unit
9 “ ____ Blue?”: musical query
10 Melted cheese dish
11 “1984” author
12 Vowel sequence
13 1550, to Fabius
14 “ ____ in the Sunset”
15 Makes up
16 One on the way up
17 Bleaching vat
18 Site of the first Olympics
19 “ ____ lords a-leaping”
24 Of ancient vintage
25 Toiled mightily
30 Sixth Greek letter
32 Actress and exercise guru, Jane
- 33 Bit of gossip, French style
34 Gun the motor
35 Garbed
36 Edge
37 Most feeble
38 Icelandic volcano
39 “Gang aft ____”: Burns
40 Hellman’s attic clutter?
41 Nonclerical
42 Smooth-scaled lizard
43 Swimming actress Williams
44 Berates
46 Most greasy
47 Stern ancient Greek lawgiver
48 Chiang ____ -shek
49 ____ nous
50 Call a president to account
56 Part of GAR
57 Fortified Spanish wine
58 Electromagnetic wave amplifier
59 Agnew
61 Bobbins
63 Pile up
64 Mudville nonhero
65 Described a halfcircle
67 1989 play about Capote
69 Noted naval historian
70 Mature one
- 71 Identical
72 Chagall or Connelly
73 Monster of Greek myth
74 Early precollege exam
77 Lawyer Darrow
78 Milk shake flavor
79 Seine sight
80 Cio-Cio San’s sash
86 French director Jean
87 Legal locales
88 Siren signals
89 Ignatius of Loyola’s order
90 NY silverware city
91 Extremely small: prefix
92 Actor Victor, of “The Strangler”
93 Marquand’s “H.M. Pulham, ____”
94 Big blow
95 Flaherty’s “Man of ____”
97 Dill seed
98 Old English bard
99 Beat it
100 Ye ____ Shoppe
101 Peasant of India
102 Sal of song, for one
103 Belfry occupant?
104 Jazz genre
105 Yoko ____

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You love cutting to the chase, even when you’re just chatting, so you need to keep folks from playing games today -- even if they’re flirty games. You’ve always been able to spot a liar -- or someone who’s holding something back. They’re pretty much the same thing in your book, and they make you suspicious. If your intuition tells you you’re in the company of either, make your excuses early.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You don’t mind working overtime, but you’re certainly no workaholic. You just do whatever it takes to get the job done well, but when it’s time to play, you dive right into the good times. For quite a while, you’ve been thinking about taking some time off. You may have come close to taking off without leave. It’s now officially time to stop thinking and start talking.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You’ve never afraid to dig into hard work, but you’ve been doing more than your share lately, and you’re badly in need of a break. Let yourself go! You tend toward the excessive, extravagant and lavish when it comes to recreation, so break a few rules and take care of your own business first. All your recent self-discipline may be good for your soul, but it’s crimping your love life.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
You don’t usually have that much of a temper. It takes a lot to rile you, and by the time you actually get around to being mad, you’ve usually realised that it isn’t worth the energy. You’ve trained yourself to have enormous self-control -- usually. Every now and then, though, like right now, the dam breaks, and some fool ends up dealing with the blunt end of your anger.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
For you, there’s nothing quite as dangerous as boredom. It can cause you to behave in quite erratic ways, despite your rational and objective nature. Rather than let that happen this time, why not take some of your saved leave or ask your mate to take a break with you? If you don’t, you may end up getting so frustrated that one tiny mishap sets off an explosion.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
There’s only one cure for any problem today: Direct action. Unfortunately, you’ve almost certainly been feeling stuck lately. Let that urge for activity lead you in a new, more social direction. You’ve earned it and so have your people -- and besides, don’t you want fresh opinions on those major changes you’re thinking about? Pass out a sign-up list for your next big party.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Keeping secrets isn’t exactly one of your strengths -- in fact, you may have a serious problem there! You much prefer talking about anything that crosses your mind as soon as it happens by. At the moment, though, one particular secret has gripped your brain and doesn’t want to let go. If you feel the need to share it with a close friend, go right ahead. Choose the right one.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Anyone who tries to fast-talk (or sweet-talk) you by using surface blather or meaningless chatter had better be prepared, because it just doesn’t work this time. You’re ordinarily perfectly happy with pleasant small talk, because you generally get along well with everyone. Your current mood, however, isn’t especially conducive to lighthearted chit-chat. You don’t want to argue,

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Whether you realise it or not, you’ve decided that your current situation just isn’t working. It’s not in your nature to sit there and take it, and you’ve got little patience with anyone who does. Make some changes, and move quickly on them -- so quickly that those closest to you may wonder exactly who you are and what you’ve done with the person they knew.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You have a real gift for entertaining at home, and you love it like little else. plus, you’re a natural born nurturer and caregiver, so when you’ve got the people you love under your roof, that’s as close to heaven as it gets in this life. It’s time to treat yourself, your family and your friends to something big and homey. Get everyone together for an impromptu party at your place.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Making it through today’s weirdness may seem tough, but if anyone is up for the challenge -- or any challenge, really -- it’s you. The good news: Once you’ve done your duty and you’re heading home, you should find a wonderful surprise waiting for you, courtesy of your mate or best friend. Their senses are just as keen as your own, and they’ve figured out just what you need.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You’ve just broken out of a metaphorical cell of some kind. It sure wasn’t easy, but now that you’ve decided to stay out here in the sunshine, you don’t take kindly to anyone who tries to drive you back. Those trying to provoke guilt are special targets of your wrath, so let them have it. Better still, confront their manipulators and straighten them out.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. In which year was MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) introduced?

a. 1987
b. 1983
c. 1973
d. 1977

2. What does the term PLC stand for?

a. Programmable Lift Computer
b. Program List Control
c. Programmable Logic Controller
d. Piezo Lamp Connector

3. ‘DB’ computer abbreviation usually means ?

a. Database
b. Double Byte
c. Data Block
d. Driver Boot

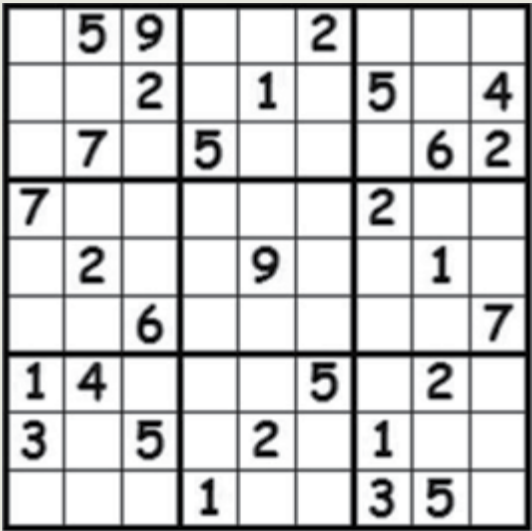
Answers: 1.b 2.c 3.a

KIDS COLOURING



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



BOGGLER



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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



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



WONDERLAND EURASIA



AMUSEMENT

P A R K E D



The decrepit Ankara theme park, which closed less than a year after it opened, tells a sad tale of Turkey's turmoil



The decaying dinosaur toys outside the abandoned theme park tell the tale of grand ambition, waste, and troubles facing the long-ruling party of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The problems started early for 'Wonderland Eurasia', meant to be Europe's largest amusement venue and billed by Erdogan as 'a symbol of pride' at its opening in Ankara in March 2019. However, just two days after the inauguration, a rollercoaster broke down, forcing people to scramble down to safety.

Public restrooms were a mess, some rides stood unfinished, and areas remained off-limits despite a reported US\$801mn spent on building Turkey's version of Disneyland. The park closed less than a year after it opened when the operator struggled to pay staff wages and electricity bills since there were not enough customers.

For Erdogan's critics, the park is one of the biggest symbols of waste by mayors from his ruling AK Party, in power for two decades and facing a general election no later than 2023.

Such was the level of anger, some of Turkey's biggest cities - including Ankara and Istanbul - voted for mayors from opposition parties in 2019.

"Ankara's urgent need was not a Disneyland. It was transport," said Tezcan Karakus Candan, who heads the Chamber



The abandoned Wonderland Eurasia park is a symbol of wasteful expenditure (AFP)

of Architects' Ankara branch, pointing out that the capital already has an amusement park. "This was a project of extravagance."

Adolescent whim

The city is now suing the operator in an attempt to win back control and try to do something constructive with the land. An Ankara court will rule on the request on September 13.

The park itself stands eerily quiet, its broken toys and ride parts collecting dust and rotting at a waste site a few kilometres away. Yet its problems appear never-ending, with the city reporting at least 21 attempts to steal its cables in the last three

months alone.

Ankara's popular current mayor, Mansur Yavas, seen as a possible presidential challenger to Erdogan, claims the park cost \$801mn. Former mayor, Melih Gokcek, however, puts the price tag at \$500mn. But Gokcek is also blamed for many other hated Ankara projects he oversaw between 1994 and 2017, when he was ousted by Erdogan.

The park was a bizarre idea even before construction started, planned for a city not known for tourism. Gokcek claimed it would bring in 10 million people a year.

Ankara welcomed 4.9 million domestic and international visitors in 2019 before

the coronavirus pandemic hit. In stark contrast, Istanbul, famous for its Ottoman mosques, Byzantine-era buildings and sunsets on the Bosphorus, hosted nearly 15 million tourists in 2019.

Gugen Arif Sargin, a professor in the architecture department at Ankara's Middle East Technical University, called the idea of trying to make the city attractive to tourists an 'adolescent whim'.

Ataturk's legacy

The deep dislike of Gokcek and his tenure as mayor, despite five electoral victories, led to the opposition easily winning his office in March 2019.

"Melih Gokcek is a symbol of how AKP local administrations betray cities, how they ran a process of plunder and a network of relations," said Candan.

"We shouldn't look at Gokcek alone."

The Chamber of Architects tried to use the courts to stop construction, arguing it unlawfully transformed a natural protected area into a place of business. The ex-mayor, however, countered with a legal complaint against Candan and four other heads of professional chambers in which he accused them of slander, she told AFP.

For many, Gokcek's gravest crime was not the waste of a failed vanity project, but his destruction of the land it stood on - the Ataturk Forest Farm.

Gokcek's fiercest critics view his amusement park as an attempt by Erdogan's Islamic-rooted party to erase the secular legacy of modern Turkey's revered founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

Ataturk envisioned the farming area in 1925 as the place where the capital's residents would meet their future agricultural needs. The area where Wonderland Eurasia stands, had a zoo open to the public.

Sargin said the priority was to turn the park and its equipment into public property again. But Candan wants the area to fulfil Ataturk's legacy, calling for radical action.

"Give the toys away to regions that may need them, seek compensation from Melih Gokcek for the money spent, use that money to reforest the area," Candan said.

AFP

US OPEN: ALL EYES ON DJOKOVIC AND OSAKA



Novak Djokovic (AFP)



Naomi Osaka (AFP)

- Serbian world No 1 chases calendar-year Grand Slam
- Japanese star hopes to defend her women's title

New York, US - Top-ranked Novak Djokovic will try to complete the first calendar-year men's singles Grand Slam in 52 years and become the all-time men's leader in Slam titles by capturing the US Open.

Not since Rod Laver in 1969 has the feat been achieved and the chance at tennis history has fueled Djokovic's fire to finish the 2021 sweep. "I know how big of an opportunity is in front of me," the Serbian star said.

"I'm very motivated to play my best tennis. I'm hugely inspired and motivated by that, no doubt."

Five past champions won't be in the field when the showdown begins on Monday on the hard courts at Flushing Meadows, with Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Stan Wawrinka, Juan Martin del Potro and 2020 winner Dominic Thiem absent due to injuries.

That leaves the main obstacles in Djokovic's path to a 21st career Slam crown as a set of

rising 20-something talents trying to build their trophy hauls - Russia's second-ranked Daniil Medvedev, Greece's third-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas and fourth-ranked Olympic champion Alexander Zverev of Germany.

In the women's section, defending champion Naomi Osaka seeks her third US Open title in four tries with top-ranked Wimbledon winner Ashleigh Barty leading a host of rivals.

What's uncertain is whether New York will see Osaka rediscover the dominant form that saw her win the past two Grand Slam events she played to the finish. The 23-year-old Japanese star lit the flame in the Olympic cauldron at the Tokyo Games, but has played only two matches since Japan ahead of the Open.

"I know I haven't played that many matches. I know that I haven't even gotten to a quarterfinal," Osaka said.

"Actually I feel pretty happy

with how I'm playing... I feel pretty confident with where I am right now. Of course I'm not declaring that I'll do amazing here. I'm the one-match-at-a-time like person. Hopefully it will work out in the end."

Amazing run

The roots of Djokovic's amazing 2021 run were in last year's US Open, where he was defaulted out of the tournament in the fourth round against Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta when he struck a ball and it accidentally hit a line official in the throat.

The 34-year-old has not dropped a Grand Slam match this year, beating Medvedev in the Australian Open final, Tsitsipas in the French Open final and Italy's Matteo Berrettini in the Wimbledon final.

"It's really fortunate for me and incredible that it's all coming together in the same year," Djokovic said. "That's something that I didn't expect but I always dream of achieving the biggest things in sport."

The men's Slam has been done only by Australian Laver in 1962 and 1969 and American Don Budge in 1938.

"What he achieved this year is something amazing," Nadal said. "I definitely believe that he

us open		
PAST TEN WINNERS		
Year	Men	Women
2020	Dominic Thiem	Naomi Osaka
2019	Rafael Nadal	Bianca Andreescu
2018	Novak Djokovic	Naomi Osaka
2017	Rafael Nadal	Sloane Stephens
2016	Stan Wawrinka	Angelique Kerber
2015	Novak Djokovic	Flavia Pennetta
2014	Marin Cilic	Serena Williams
2013	Rafael Nadal	Serena Williams
2012	Andy Murray	Serena Williams
2011	Novak Djokovic	Samantha Stosur

can do it, without a doubt."

After opening against a qualifier, Djokovic could face sixth seed Berrettini in a quarterfinal, Zverev in a semifinal and Medvedev or Tsitsipas in the final.

Djokovic briefly has held all four Slam titles at once, winning his fourth in a row at the 2016 French Open to complete a career Grand Slam.

In his career, Djokovic has won nine Australian Opens, six Wimbledon crowns, two French Opens and the 2011, 2015 and 2018 US Opens.

He has spent a record span at world No 1, more than 335

weeks, and comes into the US Open not having played since losing the Olympic bronze medal match to Carreno Busta.

The 'Big Three' of Federer, Nadal and Djokovic have won 60 of the past 72 majors since Federer took his first at Wimbledon in 2003, but six of the 12 won by others have come at the US Open.

Mental health

Osaka pulled out of the French Open after being fined for not talking to reporters after her first match, saying it hurt her mental health. She then skipped Wimbledon but spoke with the

media after matches in her US Open tuneup at Cincinnati.

"I felt like it was something I needed to do for myself," Osaka said. "I'm proud of what I did and I think it was something that needed to be done."

Osaka captured last year's US Open title by defeating Victoria Azarenka in the final, becoming the first woman since 1994 to rally from a set down to win the US Open final.

At this year's Australian Open, Osaka saved match points against Spain's Garbine Muguruza in the fourth round and beat 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams in the semifinals before defeating Jen Brady in the final.

Osaka, ranked third, has won her first four Grand Slam finals, trailing only Roger Federer's run of seven and six by Monica Seles for the best Slam final start in the Open Era (since 1968).

She will open this year in New York against Czech Marie Bouzkova. Osaka could meet Coco Gauff in the fourth round, Ukraine's fifth-seeded Elina Svitolina in the quarterfinals and Belarus second seed Aryna Sabalenka in the semifinals.

Barty, in her 83rd consecutive week atop the world rankings, has rolled to wins at Wimbledon

and Cincinnati, putting her on best form entering the Flushing Meadows fortnight.

The 25-year-old Australian's 2021 titles also include Miami, Melbourne and Stuttgart and boosted her career total to 13.

"I feel comfortable and ready," Barty said. "I feel good, I feel ready. Certainly been a big year and we've still got a bit to go yet."

Serena, who hasn't played a competitive hardcourt match since losing to Osaka in February, will not play in New York due to a torn right hamstring suffered in a first-round match at Wimbledon.

An impressive collection of 20-something rivals among the world's top-ten will take aim at the trophy.

The group includes Czech Barbora Krejickova, the French Open champion; second-ranked Wimbledon semifinalist Sabalenka; Wimbledon runner-up Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic; Sofia Kenin, the 2020 Australian Open winner; Canada's Bianca Andreescu, the 2019 US Open winner who skipped last year's event; 2020 French Open champion Iga Swiatek of Poland and Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Svitolina.

AFP

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TENNIS ROUND-UP



Ilya Ivashka of Belarus reacts after defeating Mikael Ymer of Sweden in the final of the Winston-Salem Open at Wake Forest Tennis Complex in North Carolina, US, on Saturday (AFP)

Ivashka lifts title

WINSTON SALEM OPEN

Los Angeles, US - Ilya Ivashka became the first Belarusian since 2003 to win an ATP title, steamrolling Sweden's Mikael Ymer 6-0, 6-2 on Saturday in the final of the Winston-Salem Open. The 27-year-old Ivashka dropped just two points on his serve in the lopsided match, needing just 55 minutes to win the shortest final of the season and claim his first ATP title.

"It was a dream week. An amazing tournament," said world No 63 Ivashka. "I was waiting for this for so long."

The last Belarusian to win an ATP title was Max Mirnyi in

2003 in Rotterdam. Ivashka blasted four aces and was a perfect 18 of 18 on first-serve points in the final men's tune-up for the US Open that starts on Monday in New York.

He clinched it on his second championship point when the Swede sailed a forehand into the net at the Wake Forest University tennis facility in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The previous shortest final of the season was Stefanos Tsitsipas' 6-3, 6-3 win over Cameron Norrie in Lyon in May which lasted 69 minutes.

"This week I had everything," Ivashka said. "In the second

round, I was booking my flights to New York. I was two points away from losing and now I am standing here. It is incredible how things can change in one match."

He lost just one set in Winston-Salem to become the eighth first-time winner on the ATP Tour this season.

Ymer, the first Swedish finalist in more than a decade, looked out of sorts on Saturday.

The wheels came off his game less than 24 hours after delivering a comeback victory over highly-rated 18-year-old Carlos Alcaraz in the semis.

Ymer, 22, who was also competing in his first ATP final, made

37 unforced errors and had three double faults. "I am disappointed," said Ymer, who joked with the local crowd on Friday night about celebrating his semi-final win by experiencing Wake Forest's robust party scene.

CHICAGO OPEN
Svitolina clinches 16th career crown

Top-seeded Elina Svitolina of Ukraine defeated ninth-seeded Alize Cornet of France 7-5, 6-4 to win the inaugural Chicago Women's Open on Saturday.

Svitolina converted all six break points while notching her first victory of the year and 16th of

her career. The match took two hours and two minutes.

France's Cornet struggled with a groin injury during the match. The 31-year-old took a medical timeout after losing the first set and came back out with her thigh strapped.

Olympic bronze medallist Svitolina, who was also suffering with illness, will hope this week to improve on her 2019 US Open performance, when she reached the semi-finals. She will face Canadian qualifier Rebecca Marino, ranked 145th, in the first round on Monday.

AFP

Quartararo wins British MotoGP

BRITISH MOTOGP

Silverstone, UK - Fabio Quartararo closed in on his first MotoGP world championship by romping to his fifth victory of the season at the British Grand Prix to stretch his lead in the championship standings to 65 points.

The Frenchman on a Yamaha showed no ill effects from a fall in practice on Friday that left him struggling to walk as he took the lead on lap five and eased away from the chasing pack to win by 2.6 seconds from Alex Rins of Suzuki with Aleix Espargaro securing Aprilia's first MotoGP podium in third.

"During the race I was feeling really comfortable," said Quartararo. "I overtake step by step and it was nice. Then my pace was really strong, I didn't expect to pull away. I was enjoying it at a good pace but not going 100 per cent."

Quartararo started in third and briefly slipped to fourth after a sluggish start, but then quickly moved through the field to hit the front. The 22-year-old now enjoys a commanding lead as the

chasing pack in the world championship struggled.

Ninth place was enough to edge Suzuki's reigning world champion Joan Mir into second in the standings with Johann Zarco of Ducati Pramac moving into third by finishing 11th.

Francesco Bagnaia of the Ducati factory team dropped to fourth in the world championship after finishing 14th.

"It's a long way to go," insisted Quartararo. "I'm not thinking about it at all right now and that is how you increase your lead."

"Right now I'm over the moon and feel so good on the bike."

There was a much tighter battle behind Quartararo for a place on the podium as Rins and Espargaro came under late pressure from Jack Miller of Ducati.

The Australian passed Espargaro on the final lap, but the Spaniard recovered to regain his position and was in tears on his bike at the end after ending Aprilia's wait for a podium in the modern-era of MotoGP and his first since 2014.

AFP



Yamaha French rider Fabio Quartararo celebrates after winning the MotoGP race of the British Grand Prix at Silverstone circuit on Sunday

Cockroft grabs third successive 100m gold

Tokyo, Japan - Great Britain's Hannah Cockroft set a new world record to win her third consecutive T34 100m crown and claim a stunning sixth Paralympic title on day five at the Tokyo Paralympics.

Cockroft, 29, bettered her own record with a time of 16.39 seconds to overhaul teammate Kare Adenegan, who took silver ahead of Australia's Robyn Lambird.

Great Britain won seven gold with the wheelchair rugby team claiming a historic victory in their final, beating the United States 54-49 for their first Paralympic medal of any colour in the sport. Japan beat Australia 60-52 to take the bronze.

Wheelchair racer Cockroft, a 12-time world champion, increased her impressive collection of Paralympic titles in style, following her treble in the 100m, 400m and 800m events at Rio 2016.

The Paralympics Great Britain co-captain, who will also contest the 800m in Tokyo, had improved her world records in the 100m, 200m, 400m and



Hannah Cockroft reacts after winning the women's 100m-T34 final at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games on Sunday

800m earlier this year.

The day began with American Kendall Gretsch snatching triathlon gold right on the line in a dramatic finish after Australia's Lauren Parker had led almost the entire race at Odaiba Marine Park Sunday.

There were 20 finals at the

athletics stadium on Sunday and the first gold there went to world record holder Oksana Zubkovska of Ukraine in the T12 long jump with a leap of 5.54m as records began to tumble.

And there was a stunning conclusion to the F40 men's shot put final when Iraq's defending

Paralympic champion Garrah Tnaish broke the world record with 11.15m on his final attempt to leapfrog the RPC's Denis Gnezdilov into gold medal position. But the Russian still had one attempt remaining and he astonishingly bettered Tnaish's mark by just one centimetre at

11.16m to snatch back the gold.

Wheelchair racing legend Tatyana McFadden claimed a silver in the women's T54 800m final - the 19th Paralympic medal of her career.

In the swimming pool, Japan's Naohide Yamaguchi set a new world record of 1min, 3.77sec in the men's 100m breaststroke SB14.

Elsewhere, Afghanistan's athletes - Zakia Khudadadi and Hossain Rasouli - were in tears when they finally arrived at the Tokyo Paralympics, officials said.

"The meeting at the athletes' village was extremely emotional. There were lots of tears from everyone in the room," said IPC spokesperson Craig Spence.

Khudadadi will compete in the women's -49kg K44 taekwondo on Thursday.

Sprinter Rasouli will take part in the men's T47 long jump on Tuesday having arrived too late for his favoured T47 100m.

AFP

Every day, all day!

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Lewandowski slams hat-trick to pass 300 goals for Bayern

GERMAN LEAGUE

Berlin, Germany - Robert Lewandowski scored a hat-trick as Bayern Munich thumped Hertha Berlin 5-0 on Saturday, with the Poland striker passing the milestone of 300 goals for the defending Bundesliga champions.

Bayern took an early lead through Thomas Mueller before Lewandowski struck either side of a Jamal Musiala goal.

Having scored a record 41 Bundesliga goals last season, Lewandowski has already netted five times in three league matches this term.

Lewandowski could have finished with four, having stepped over the ball to allow Mueller to score the early opener.

"Sometimes the first goal is the most important, it was right to leave the ball for Thomas - I knew he was there," said Lewandowski, who has scored three goals or more in 15 Bundesliga games in his career.

"We had the game under control and everything planned came off.

"I'm always hungry, I feel really good and I am always looking to reach the next level, always ready to improve."

Mueller said Lewandowski is playing at 'another level'.

Lewandowski doubled the lead after Mueller's opener by heading into the net at the second attempt having first hit the cross bar as Bayern outclassed Hertha.

He has scored in 16 consecutive games for Bayern in



Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski celebrates after scoring against Hertha Berlin in Munich, southern Germany, on Saturday (AFP)

all competitions, one more than club late legend Gerd Mueller, who scored in 15 consecutive games in 1969/70.

Hertha's fortunes did not improve when their goalkeeper Alexander Schwolow landed on Berlin captain Dedryck Boyata after clearing a corner and the

pair banged heads.

Bayern's third came just after the break when Mueller won possession and Musiala, 18, beat two defenders to fire inside the far post.

Musiala made way for Leroy Sane who answered recent whistles from Bayern fans by serving

up Lewandowski's second.

Sane exchanged passes with Mueller, then sliced through the defence on the left and gave Lewandowski a simple tap in for his 300th goal in all competitions for Bayern. He completed his hat-trick when Joshua Kimmich's corner was flicked on to the back

post by Tanguy Nianzou for Lewandowski to head home.

The rout lifted Bayern into second in the table, level on seven points but behind early leaders Bayer Leverkusen, who swept Augsburg aside 4-1 thanks to two early own goals, on goal difference.

OTHER RESULTS

Saturday: Arminia Bielefeld 1 Eintracht Frankfurt 1, Cologne 2 Bochum 1.

Sunday: Union Berlin 2 Borussia Moenchengladbach 1, Wolfsburg 1 RB Leipzig 0. AFP

Gerrard-less Rangers strike first blood against Celtic

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP

Glasgow, UK - Rangers survived the absence of manager Steven Gerrard and several players due to a coronavirus outbreak to beat Celtic 1-0 at Ibrox in the first Old Firm derby of the season on Sunday. Swedish defender Filip Helander scored the only goal of a tight contest to condemn Celtic boss Ange Postecoglou to defeat in the Australian's first taste of the Glasgow derby.

Celtic were left to rue a huge missed opportunity by



Filip Helander (L) of Rangers

Odsonne Edouard in the first-half and Rangers took control after the break and got their deserved goal when Helander powered home Borna Barisic's corner 24 minutes from time. A difficult week for Rangers ended on a high despite the absence of their manager, both first-choice goalkeepers Allan McGregor and Jon McLaughlin and captain James Tavernier.

OTHER RESULTS

Aberdeen 1 Ross County 1, St Mirren 0 St Johnstone 0. AFP

Diop's brace ends Monaco's sorry run

FRENCH LEAGUE

Troyes, France - Sofiane Diop scored both goals as Monaco bounced back from Champions League elimination to win 2-1 at Troyes on Sunday for a first Ligue 1 victory of the season as Lionel Messi prepared to make his Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) debut late on Sunday.

Four days after travelling back from Ukraine after being knocked out by Shakhtar Donetsk in the final round of Champions League qualifying, Monaco visited Troyes. Both teams started the day with just one point from three league matches.

Monaco took the lead in the 40th minute as 21-year-old Aurelien Tchouameni, called up to the France squad for the first time on Wednesday, created an opening and found Wissam Ben Yedder who in turn set up Diop, alone in front of the empty goal.

Troyes levelled when Monaco right back Ruben Aguilar put the ball in his own goal in the 52nd minute.



Monaco's Sofiane Diop (second from left) celebrates with teammates after scoring against hosts Troyes at Stade de l'Aube on Sunday (AFP)

Diop restored the Monaco lead after being set up by Youssouf Fofana in the 58th minute. Monaco's anxiety began to show towards the end as they surrendered control of the game and allowed Troyes to stage a furious late assault, but the visitors survived. Monaco jumped to 13th and Troyes took their place at the bottom.

Marseille prevail

Earlier on Saturday, Marseille

bounced back from the violent mayhem of their last French League encounter to defeat Saint-Etienne 3-1.

On loan from Arsenal, Matteo Guendouzi, in the 23rd minute, and former Flamengo player Gerson, on 51 minutes, scored their first goals for Marseille.

Turkish star Cengiz Under, another summer recruit on loan from Roma, added a third in the 68th minute. Timothee Kolodziejczak had earlier given

Saint-Etienne hope with a 32nd minute equaliser from a corner.

Last weekend, Marseille's game at Nice was abandoned after a pitch invasion involving home fans incensed that Dimitri Payet had a thrown a bottle lobbed at him back into the crowd. After scuffles involving players, staff and spectators, Marseille refused to continue the game, claiming their safety could not be guaranteed.

Justin Kluivert scored his first Nice goal and set up another in a 4-0 thrashing of Bordeaux. The match at the Allianz Riviera was played behind closed doors after last week's horror show with Marseille. "It was a good birthday present even if the week was very difficult," Nice coach Christophe Galtier told Prime Video.

OTHER RESULTS

Sunday: Angers 2 Rennes 0, Clermont 2 Metz 2, Lens 2 Lorient 2, Strasbourg 3 Brest 1, Lille 2 Montpellier 1. AFP



Empoli players celebrate after defeating hosts Juventus at Allianz Stadium in Turin, Italy, on Saturday

Juve slump to shock defeat

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Milan, Italy - Juventus were stunned by promoted Empoli in their first match of the post-Cristiano Ronaldo era, a 1-0 home defeat in Serie A leaving the 'Old Lady' looking toothless while Ciro Immobile hit a hat-trick for Lazio in a 6-1 thrashing of Spezia. The Turin giants would have been confident of their chances against their Tuscan opponents but Leonardo Mancuso's first ever goal in Italy's top flight mid-way through the first half

condemned Juve to an defeat which enraged supporters at the Allianz Stadium.

The players were whistled off the field by indignant home fans, whose team sit 13th in Serie A with one point from their opening two matches.

In Rome, Lazio already looked like a trademark Maurizio Sarri team as Immobile lashed home his treble in a flamboyant performance. Felipe Anderson, El-seid Hysaj and Luis Alberto - who also created three of the

goals - added three more stylish strikes after the break as Lazio put on a show of passing football that puts their goal tally to nine in two games, with Immobile scoring four of them.

Atalanta looked bereft of ideas in their goalless draw with Bologna in Bergamo.

Fiorentina got off the mark for the season with a 2-1 home over Torino thanks to goals from Nicolas Gonzalez and Dusan Vlahovic.

AFP



Elaine Thompson-Herah



Armand Duplantis

Thompson-Herah and Duplantis shine in Paris

DIAMOND LEAGUE

Paris, France - Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah stormed to victory in the women's 100m at the Paris Diamond League on Saturday although the 33-year-old world record remains frustratingly out of reach. The Jamaican star clocked a meet record of 10.72sec to see off compatriot and Tokyo bronze medallist Shericka Jackson in 10.97sec.

Thompson-Herah, 29, who won three golds in Tokyo with triumphs in the 100m, 200m and

4x100m relay, has been threatening Florence Griffith-Joyner's world record of 10.49sec set back in 1988.

Last weekend in Eugene, she ran the second fastest time in history of 10.54sec and then timed 10.64sec in Lausanne on Thursday behind fellow Jamaican Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce's 10.60sec, the third fastest ever mark. "The world record is a short-term goal, it's quite close but if I end the season without taking it, it doesn't matter," said Thompson-Herah.

"I am a double Olympic champion (in the 100m), I'm delighted with my performance. I have never been this fast. I'm very happy with what I've accomplished in 2021."

Fraser-Pryce, the silver medallist in Tokyo, pulled out of the Paris meet citing fatigue.

Another Olympic champion Armand Duplantis was also a winner on Saturday, taking victory in the pole vault with a clearance of 6.01m.

Duplantis saw off Filipino John Ernest Obiena (5.91m) and

Olympic silver medallist Chris Nilsen (5.81m) before attempting to break his own world record of 6.18m set in February 2020.

The 21-year-old failed three times to clear 6.19m but his victory was still welcome having been beaten into fourth place in Lausanne.

He has now had six clearances of six metres or more this summer.

American sprinter Fred Kerley, who was the 100m silver medal winner at the Olympics, edged out compatriot Kenny

Bednarek to take the men's 200m.

Both Kerley and Bednarek timed 19.79sec.

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American sprinter Fred Kerley, who was the 100m silver medal winner at the Olympics, edged out compatriot Kenny

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Verstappen declared winner of rain-ruined Belgian GP



Max Verstappen celebrates with his trophy in Spa on Sunday

**FORMULA ONE
BELGIAN GRAND PRIX**
Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - Red Bull's Max Verstappen emerged as the winner of the rain-ruined Belgian Grand Prix with only a handful of laps completed behind a safety car at a drenched and dangerous Spa-Francorchamps circuit. Pole-sitter Verstappen was awarded half points, which moved him to within three points of Lewis Hamilton in the

drivers' championship. Williams' George Russell took second with Hamilton's Mercedes in third in the shortest race in Formula One history - all 14kms of it. Organisers finally gave the go-ahead for a rolling start behind a safety car at 18h30 local time, three and a half hours after the scheduled 15h00 start. But after two laps with the spray flying the race was stopped with conditions deemed too dicey at the track

It's a win but not really in the right way. Credit to the fans to stay here all day
MAX VERSTAPPEN

The signs were ominous from the start of the afternoon when Verstappen's Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez aquaplaned on his way to the original start at Les Combes. In the end Saturday's qualifying proved pivotal as Verstappen acknowledged. "Now, in hindsight, it was important to get the pole position - but it was a shame not to do proper laps," said the Belgian born Dutch driver.

Verstappen said, "The visibility was very low. If we had started at 15:00 (local time), we would have had a better chance. It's a win but not really in the right way. Credit to the fans to stay here all day. In the cold and rain. They are the bigger winners today." Seven-time world champion Hamilton said, "I feel so sorry for the fans today, obviously it's no one's fault but the fans have been great today." AFP

QUICK RUN

Former IOC chief Rogge dead at 79

Jacques Rogge, who spent 12 years as president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), has died at the age of 79, the organisation announced on Sunday. "It is with great sadness that the International Olympic Committee announces the passing of former IOC President Count Jacques Rogge. He was 79 years old," said an IOC statement. Rogge was the eighth president of the IOC, from 2001 to 2013, after which he was succeeded by Thomas Bach. He played rugby at international level, winning 16 caps for Belgium and became a world champion sailor. It was on the water that he took part in three Olympics in 1968, 1972 and 1976. Rogge was married to Anne and he leaves behind a son, a daughter and two grandchildren.

England's Buttler to miss fourth Test

England wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler will miss the fourth Test against India at the Oval because of the expected birth of his second child, but Chris Woakes has been passed fit to rejoin the squad, team management announced on Sunday. Jonny Bairstow will take over the gloves for the fourth Test, starting on Thursday. **Squad:** Rory Burns, Haseeb Hameed, Dawid Malan, Joe Root (capt), Dan Lawrence, Jonny Bairstow (wk), Moeen Ali, Sam Curran, Craig Overton, Ollie Robinson, James Anderson, Ollie Pope, Sam Billings, Mark Wood, Chris Woakes. Agencies

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP



Tottenham Hotspur's striker Son Heung-min (R) runs past Watford's Adam Masina during their EPL match at in London, UK, on Sunday (AFP)

Son stars as Spurs go top; United win

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
London, UK - Son Heung-min sent Tottenham to the top of the English Premier League (EPL) as the South Korean's free-kick clinched a 1-0 win against Watford, while Mason Greenwood's late strike fired Manchester United to a record-breaking 1-0 victory at Wolves on Sunday. Nuno Espirito Santo's side have made a flawless start to the new domestic season and they sit two points clear of second

placed West Ham after a third successive victory. Son settled a hard-fought clash at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium when his free-kick caught Watford keeper Daniel Bachmann out of position in the first half. Three consecutive 1-0 wins, including one against Premier League champions Manchester City, as well as progress in the Europa Conference League, suggest Tottenham could enjoy a better season than expected.

Nuno is the first Tottenham manager since Arthur Rowe in 1949 to win his first three league games in charge. At Molineux, Manchester United set an English top-flight record for unbeaten away league games in their first match since agreeing a blockbuster deal to sign Cristiano Ronaldo from Juventus. United have now gone 28 successive away league games without loss, passing the mark they shared with Arsenal. United climbed to third place,

while Wolves are pointless. Also on Sunday, Patrick Bamford rescued a 1-1 draw for Leeds at Burnley. Earlier on Saturday night, Chelsea frustrated Liverpool for 45 minutes with a man down in a 1-1 draw at Anfield on Saturday. Kai Havertz's header put the visitors in front before Reece James was sent-off in first-half stoppage time for handball on his own goal line and Mohamed Salah converted the resulting penalty. AFP

Depay strikes again as Barca edge Getafe

SPANISH LEAGUE
Madrid, Spain - Barcelona dug deep for a narrow 2-1 win over Getafe in the Spanish top flight on Sunday with Dutch striker Memphis Depay providing the winner. Getting used to life without superstar Lionel Messi, Barcelona have seven points from three games along with Real Madrid, Sevilla, Valencia and Mallorca. Champions Atletico Madrid, however, can go top on nine points later on Sunday if they beat Villarreal at home. Barcelona got off to a quick start as Roberto prodded home a Jordi Alba cross in just the second minute at Camp Nou. But Getafe did not buckle and Sandro Ramirez fired home a neat snap shot after a quick one-two on 18 minutes. Frenkie de Jong then provided the killer pass for the winner. Timing his run perfectly, Depay fired home a low drive from the left of the six-yard box

to put Barca back ahead on the half hour. On Saturday, Dani Carvajal's second-half goal gave Real Madrid a 1-0 win at Real Betis as Carlo Ancelotti's men rode their luck. Madrid now have seven points from their opening three games, while the reported potential signing of Kylian Mbappe could give them another boost before the end of the transfer window on Tuesday. Ancelotti, who returned to the club after the resignation of Zinedine Zidane, has seen some of his tougher decisions pay off so far, with Gareth Bale and Isco impressing after being brought back into the fold. Youssef En-Nesyri's header secured Sevilla a 1-1 draw at Elche. Elsewhere, 19-year-old Ander Barrenetxea gave Real Sociedad a 1-0 victory over Levante, while Athletic Bilbao won by the same scoreline at Celta Vigo. AFP



Barcelona's Memphis Depay (L) vies with Getafe's Stefan Mitrovic on Sunday

Jaiswal's 82 steers Mumbai to four-wicket victory

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

OMAN VS MUMBAI

50-OVER SERIES: FIRST GAME
He is just 19 and a future star. A left-handed batsman with an immense potential, Mumbai's Yashasvi Jaiswal displayed his talent in abundance at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on Sunday. Jaiswal, who has played for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL, showcased his vast repertoire of strokes during his knock of 82 in 79 balls to guide Mumbai to a four-wicket win against Oman in the first of the four-match 50-over series. Mumbai, coached by Amol Muzumdar, had lost the three-match T20 series to the hosts 1-2, but came back strongly in the opening 50-over game as they put in a vastly-improved allround display to dominate the match. The four-match series is

desired to serve Oman as a final tune-up ahead of the back-to-back ICC World Cricket League (WCL) 2 tri-series, at the same venue from September 13. Oman will take on Nepal and USA in the first tri-series and then play against PNG and Scotland in the second tri-series. PNG and Scotland also feature along with Oman and Bangladesh in the first round of the T20 World Cup, starting in Oman on October 17. On Sunday, having restricted Oman to a below-par score (196), Mumbai openers - Jaiswal and Aakarshit Gomeel raced to a 60-run stand in just nine overs. Following Gomeel's exit, there was no respite for Oman bowlers as Hardik Tamore joined Jaiswal and he hit an unbeaten 51 to steer the visitors to victory in 43.4 overs. Jaiswal was on course for a century but was dismissed after he had struck five hits to the ropes and five sixes.



Oman's Khalid Kail in action against Mumbai on Sunday

Shakeel Ahmad and Rafiullah took two wickets each for the hosts. Earlier, Oman was bowled out for 196 in 47.1 overs. The bedrock of Oman's innings was Khalid Kail, who struck 76 off 84 balls. Kail, who plays for Oman Stallions in the domestic league,

had recently received the best batsman trophy in the Premier Division for his exploits last season as a Al Turki NMC player. Kail continued his good form and hit four boundaries and one six and was ably supported by skipper Khawar Ali, who made 52. Mumbai skipper Shams

Mulani was the most successful bowler, claiming three for 45. Speaking after the defeat, Oman coach Duleep Mendis said that 'these games against quality opposition are very useful'. "We are learning a lot by playing these matches ahead of tougher challenges. For us to do well during the WCL and the T20 World Cup is the key. Defeats in these matches provide me, and my coaching team, a good idea on the areas where we need to improve upon," he said. Oman's next match of the series is on Tuesday before the teams play back-to-back games on Thursday and Friday.

BRIEF SCORES:
Oman 196 in 47.1 overs (Kail 76, Khawar 52; Mulani 3-45, Aman Khan 2-26, Shashank Attarde 2-27) lost to Mumbai 199-6 in 43.4 overs (Jaiswal 82, Tamore 51 n.o.; Ahmad 2-46, Rafiullah 2-33). @ashokmuscat



Mumbai's Yashasvi Jaiswal (L) receives the man-of-the-match trophy from Oman Cricket board member Paul Sheridan on Sunday