

TRAGIC HOLIDAY

14 DEAD, 32 RESCUED IN A WEEK OF ROUGH WEATHER, SEARCH FOR THREE MISSING CONTINUES

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Eid al Adha holiday turned gloomy for families as 14 people lost their lives and 32 others were rescued in different governorates during the inclement weather experienced in the sultanate since July 7.

With a large number of people heading to Dhofar and different wadis across Oman in the rough weather, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) took an unprecedented decision to temporarily close down all tourist sites across the sultanate on Sunday.

'The decision was taken due several reports of accidents as well as indifference shown by people towards warnings and safety instructions,' CDAA stated.

Rescue teams of Royal Oman Police (ROP) and CDAA continue to search for three missing persons in Dhofar.

On Tuesday, the bodies of two people, part of an Asian family of eight that was washed away in the sea at Mughsail Beach in Dhofar, were found. On Sunday, the authority received a report of a family of eight falling into the sea after they crossed the safety fence at Mughsail Beach. Three of them were rescued immediately. 'Two of the missing persons were found dead. A search is underway for three more missing people.'

In Wadi Arbaen in Quriyat on Monday, two Asians were reported drowned. CDAA found the body of one on Monday. The second body was retrieved on Tuesday. Also on Monday, six children drowned in Wadi Andham in Mudhaibi in North Sharqiyah. Five of them were rescued, while one was found dead.



July 7

CDAA rescued seven people, including children, in different incidents after they were stranded due to rising level of rainwater.

'Rescue teams of CDAA in Dakhliyah governorate rescued four people, including children, trapped in a house in a village in Jabal Shams, due to rising rainwater,' the authority stated.

It added that it received a report about a missing person of Asian nationality in a village in Jabal Shams. The body was later found in a wadi in Al Hamra.

CDAA in South Sharqiyah rescued three people after their vehicle was trapped in Wadi Shaya in Sur. An Asian person was rescued from North Sharqiyah after his truck got stuck in Wadi al Sabakh in the wilayat of Ibra.

'Two children, aged nine and ten, were rescued by citizens in Wadi al Sahtan, Rustaq, but later died in hospital,' CDAA stated.

DROWNING DEATHS IN A WEEK

2 Wadi Ahen, Sohar
2 Wadi al Sahtan, Rustaq
2 Mughsail Beach, Dhofar
2 Wadi Arbaen, Quriyat

1 Al Sawadi Beach, S Batinah
1 Wadi Qafafa, Ibra
1 Jabal Shams, Dakhliyah
1 Wadi Andham, Mudhaibi



July 8

A CDAA team rescued a person who was stuck in a wadi in the Saih al Makarem area in the wilayat of Sohar in North Batinah governorate.



July 9

Rescue teams of CDAA in North Sharqiyah received a report about drowning of three children in Wadi Qafafa in the wilayat of Ibra. Two of them were rescued in good health, while the third was taken to a hospital. The third child later died.

Three people were also rescued in North Sharqiyah after their vehicle drifted away in Wadi al Washa in Wadi Bani Khalid.

Adhere to safety guidelines

Visitors to Dhofar for the khareef season, and other places including wadis, should adhere to safety guidelines, the CDAA urged.

It stressed the need to follow safety guidelines during the period of stay in Dhofar and not to swim in undesignated areas, including springs, pools and beaches. 'The height and intensity of waves increase significantly with the advent of the khareef season,' CDAA warned.

The authority asked parents to monitor children and not to allow swimming in wadis during heavy rains, while ROP urged people to avoid venturing into wadis.

July 10

It took a massive search operation, led by CDAA, to find the body of a person of Asian nationality who reportedly drowned in Wadi Darbat in the wilayat of Taqah in Dhofar.

The CDAA responded to a report of drowning of a 17-year-old Asian in Wadi Hoqain in Rustaq, who was rescued by citizens but was later pronounced dead at the hospital.

In another incident, three people of Asian origin were reported to have drowned in Al Sawadi Beach. Two were rescued and one found dead.

A CDAA rescue team also retrieved bodies of two citizens after their vehicle drifted away in Wadi Ahen in Sohar.

CDAA teams in South Sharqiyah managed to rescue two people after they were stuck in the Wadi al Souq area and another two from Wadi Sieh Sanada in the wilayat of Jalan Bani Bu Ali.

Two citizens were rescued in separate incidents after their vehicles were caught in a wadi in the wilayat of Jalan Bani bu Hasan.



PARAGLIDERS ENTHRAL MUTTRAH VISITORS

A large crowd gathered at Muttrah Corniche on Monday to enjoy 'Al Eyud' festivities organised by Muscat Municipality. The highlight of the evening was a paragliding show, with gliders descending on Muttrah and landing in the parking lot adjacent to the fish market. Classic cars and motorcycle shows, Omani folklore and water sports also enthralled the audience (Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

Omani banknotes win prestigious EMEA award

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's new banknotes have won the prestigious Regional Banknote and ID Document of the Year Awards, held in Tallinn, Estonia, recently.

The awards form part of the High Security Printing Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) annual conference. After a hiatus of more than two years, the event was held in Tallinn, with the awards presented at a special ceremony held at Seaplane Harbour during the conference dinner.

The Regional Banknote of the Year Awards recognise outstanding achievement in design, technical sophistication and security of a banknote or banknote series. The key judging criteria for the awards are that successful banknotes should combine visual artistry and high levels of technical and security sophistication, with considerable emphasis placed on reflecting the cultural heritage of the issuing country in the note, and the relevance of the overall design and symbolism to the issuing country.



In the three categories of the banknote awards this year - Best New Series, Best New Banknote and Best New Commemorative Banknote - Oman, Malawi and Poland received the awards, respectively.

Best New Banknote Series

The winner of the best new series was Central Bank of Oman for its banknotes launched to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Modern Omani Renaissance. 'The Central Bank is recognised as always having been at the forefront of adopting new banknote security features and the new series was no exception,' the award

committee stated.

The design contract for the new banknotes was awarded to Oberthur Fiduciaire, a French group specialising in printing secure documents and banknotes, while production was part commissioned to Giesecke+Devrient, a German company providing banknote and securities printing. Oberthur Fiduciaire provided the substrate for the three lower denominations and Giesecke+Devrient for the four higher ones. The first in the series, the RO50, was issued in mid 2020, and the remaining six denominations in early 2021.

The main overt feature on the four higher denominations (RO50, RO20, RO10 and RO5) is varifeye ColourChange Patch, comprising a foil patch with micro-mirror and colour changing technology over a window. They also feature 4mm RollingStar security threads and SICPA's SPARK Live, with a colour shift matching the thread.

The RO1, meanwhile, was the world's first banknote to feature Oberthur Fiduciaire's Pulsar thread, a combination of movement and colour shift.

HM to visit Germany today

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq will pay an official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany starting from Wednesday.

In a statement, Diwan of Royal Court said, 'Within the framework of advanced relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Republic of Germany and to boost areas of joint cooperation in a manner that serves aspirations of both countries, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq will pay an official visit to Germany, starting from July 13, 2022.'



Biden's first tour of ME as president begins today

Dakhliyah puts on dazzling Eid show



(Supplied photos)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

While most governorates organised special events to celebrate Eid al Adha, Dakhliyah's celebrations stood out where riders showcased equestrian skills. Held over three days ending on Tuesday, the event was held in the wilayat of Bahla.

Organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in cooperation with Equestrian Club Mirbat Bahla, the event included several other activities.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Nasser al Mafraji, supervisor of the event, said, "More than 35 horse riders displayed their skills from July 10 to 12."

The riders performed thrilling stunts in the horse show, known locally as al Ardha. "Such shows are the perfect setting to see Omani horse riders perform."

It is a great way to show the new generation our rich past which is steeped in tradition

NASSER AL MAFRAJI

Mafraji added that in addition to equestrian performances, craftsmen and productive families presented handicrafts and products. "People were also entertained with a motorcycle show, poem recitations and dance performances. More than 25,000 visitors attended the event."

He added that the dance performances, involving swords and poetry, were a big draw. "It is a great way to show the new gen-

eration our rich past which is steeped in tradition."

According to Mafraji, the main objective of the event was to encourage the next generation to learn about these traditional shows and promote domestic tourism in Bahla. "These are also a great way to enhance relations between members of the community."

Elaborating on Equestrian Club Mirbat Bahla's activities, Mafraji said, "We organised several events this year to raise awareness on our equestrian heritage among young people and to support productive families and attract tourists."

The club is planning to organise more events to support domestic tourism in Dakhliyah throughout the year. "We hope that many more people join us in the activities to attract tourists and stimulate Omani tourism," said Mafraji.



MUTTRAH COMES ALIVE WITH EID FESTIVITIES

Muscat Municipality organised an event in Muttrah Corniche called 'Muttrah's Eid is Different' on Monday, featuring paragliders, classic cars, motorcycle shows, Omani folklore, water sports and stalls selling handicraft items. "The event is aimed at bringing joy to citizens and residents and encourage domestic tourism," a municipality official said prior to the event (Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)





Tejas Udani Gupta (left) and Prasanth Shinde (right) with the dance crew (Supplied Photo)

Team Oman at World Hip Hop Dance Championship

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Nine dancers from Oman will represent the country at the World Hip Hop Dance Championship - Varsity Division - in Phoenix in the southwestern US state of Arizona from August 6 to 13.

Five girls and four boys from Oman will compete in one of the most celebrated and toughest dance competitions in the world, also called the 'Olympics of Dance.'

Over 4,000 of the world's best dancers are expected to participate in World Hip Hop Dance Championship 2022. Crews from

We are representing Oman in the Varsity or teenage category, and are very excited to be the only team from the Gulf to be at this prestigious event for a two-minute slot

TEJAS UDANI GUPTA

50-plus countries will compete for the world title and international bragging rights, while hip hop icons, artistes and celebrities will make appearances and perform.

The event is organised annually by Hip Hop International (HHI) headquartered in Los Angeles, US, which was founded in 2002.

Elaborating on the competition, Tejas Udani Gupta, director of the Oman franchisee of HHI, said, "We are representing Oman in the Varsity or teenage category, and are very excited to be the only team from the Gulf to be at this prestigious event for a two-minute slot."

But great challenges lay ahead, she added. "We will face some of

the best teams in the world. There will be two prelims, following which we can enter the semi-final and final.

The team of 15, including managers, coaches and dress designers, will leave for the US on August 1. The team has been practising for almost ten hours daily for a month now, staying together at the dance studio, sharing meals and training intensively.

"We cannot lose our coordination and focus and that is why we are rehearsing every single moment. Even during transit on our way to Phoenix, we plan to rehearse in the airport. Our time is limited and we will face the

strongest teams."

Tejas informed that the parents of the nine dancers are very supportive; they understand the importance of training and hence have extended their full cooperation.

"I have been in Oman for the last four decades and have seen hip hop become very popular. The time has come to put Oman on the hip hop map. This country has given me so much and I must do my best to give back," Tejas added.

Team Oman's performance at the competition will be choreographed by Prasanth Shinde, while Shiv Gupta and Nadeem al Balushi are directors of the group.

Dhofar harvests 1,290 tonnes of wheat in 2021/2022



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is exerting efforts to increase wheat production as the world grapples with a shortage of the grain due to the ongoing Ukraine-Russia crisis.

Dhofar recorded a wheat harvest of 1,290 tonnes in the 2021/2022 season, according to ministry data. Wheat was cultivated in 29 farms on an area of 1,309 feddans in Dhofar. The crop was harvested in 60 days. The ministry distributed 30 tonnes of wheat seeds among farmers to support them this season.

Wheat cultivation is increasing in Dhofar as a result of the efforts made by the ministry to encourage farmers to increase production to achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 with

respect to food security.

Oman Flour Mills Company issued a statement last week saying that it has received a letter from the government to support wheat prices starting from May 1, 2022.

The company explained that this is a result of the sharp rise in grain prices globally; the government is keen to not increase flour prices in the local market.

Ministry data shows that the total area of farmland under wheat cultivation in Oman was 2,449 acres, while the number of wheat farmers increased 5.5 per cent in the 2020-21 season.

In November 2021, the ministry signed an agreement with Oman Flour Mills Company to purchase wheat crop from Omani farmers following the 2022 harvest season. The agreement aims to enhance food security and support farmers.

Over 23,000 citizens employed in H1 2022

Muscat - More than 23,000 job seekers were employed in the public and private sectors in the first half of 2022. This represents 66 per cent of the total number of jobs to be provided in 2022.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Labour (MoL) said, 'In the first six months of 2022, 23,271 job seekers have

been employed in the public and private sectors.'

Of the total, 17,200 were given jobs directly through employment and replacement opportunities, and 6,016 through training and rehabilitation. MoL is aiming to provide 35,000 jobs through recruitment, replacement and training to citizens in 2022.

Taqah records 200mm rainfall in 8 days

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The current rough weather conditions are likely to continue over Oman with rains of varying intensity and wadis expected to overflow, Civil Aviation Authority has stated.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), Taqah recorded 200mm rainfall over eight days from July 5 to 12.

Data collected from the rain

monitoring stations of MAFWR from July 5 to 12 showed that Jaalan Bani Bu Ali received 173mm of rainfall, Jaalan Bani Bu Hasan 171mm, Rustaq 153mm, Salalah 142mm, Mirbat 127mm, Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi 120mm, Quriyat 101mm, Al Hamra 98mm, Sur 97mm, Sohar 92mm, lbri 91mm, Bahla 82mm, Mudhaibi 81mm, 77mm in Al Awabi and Al Qabel, 70mm in Khabourah, 67mm in Dima Wa al Tayeen and Mahdah, 60mm in Bidiyah, 59mm in Rakhyout, 54mm in

Samail, and 53mm in Saham.

According to the Directorate General of Meteorology, rough conditions are expected along the Arabian Sea coast with maximum wave height of 4m and moderate along the Sea of Oman coast and in Musandam with maximum wave height of 1.5m.

In its forecast for Wednesday, the Met Office stated, 'Clear to partly cloudy skies are expected over all the governorates with chances of isolated rains. There are chances of convective clouds

developing and isolated rain accompanied with thundershowers associated with downdraft winds and hail over the Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon, which may extend to the desert areas of Dhahirah and Al Wusta governorate.'

Meanwhile, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority has announced that its teams are ready at tourist sites to provide advice, guidance and protection from dangers in various governorates.

Long jumper Yarubi to participate in world athletics meet in USA



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The national athletics team will take part in the World Athletics Championships in Oregon, USA, from July 15. More than 1,900 athletes from 192 countries are participating.

A statement issued by ONA said, 'The national athletics team member Salim al Yarubi will participate in the long jump competition at the World Athletics Championships.'

The team includes head of delegation Mohammed al Balushi, coach Imad Serraj and Yarubi, who holds Oman's long jump record of 7.80m.

Oman lauds Saudi Arabia's efforts for hajj pilgrimage

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs has thanked and praised Saudi Arabia for its efforts, services and care offered to pilgrims of Hajj 1443 AH.

The ministry also thanked the Omani Hajj mission and all its delegates, crew and hajj companies for supporting pilgrims to perform hajj rituals.

On Monday, pilgrims completed the hajj rituals for this year after stoning the Jamarat.

Most pilgrims from Oman will return home in the next two days.

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NLGIC acquires RSA Middle East to build leading insurance group

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Further to the signing of a sale and purchase agreement and a share swap deal in April, and after obtaining relevant approvals from the regulators and shareholders, National Life & General Insurance Company (NLGIC) – a flagship insurance subsidiary of Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) – has completed the strategic transaction which has resulted in RSA Middle East becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of NLGIC, covering its operations in the GCC, including Oman, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain.

NLGIC has executed the transaction in two parts: (i) purchasing 50 per cent shareholding in RSA Middle East from Sun Alliance Insurance Overseas Ltd (SAIO), a fully owned entity of Royal Sun Alliance Insurance Limited; and (ii) exchanging the remaining shares of RSA Middle East, owned by reputable Saudi shareholders, with new issued NLGIC's shares, making the Saudi shareholders collectively the second largest shareholders



Khalid Muhammad AlZubair



Adnan Bogary

RSA Middle East has become a wholly owned subsidiary of NLGIC, covering its operations in the GCC, including Oman, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain

in NLGIC after Ominvest.

NLGIC is headquartered in Oman with branches in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait.

"On behalf of the boards of Ominvest and NLGIC, I would like to express the group's sincere gratitude to the reputable regulators in Oman, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain for their exceptional support and understanding of the important potential of this transaction

to the insurance landscape and market dynamics in the region," Khalid Muhammad AlZubair, chairman of Ominvest and NLGIC, said in a press statement.

He added, "As part of NLGIC's growth strategy, this transaction will not only help the company expand its customer reach in the region but will also bring together potential synergies between both companies in terms of resources and technologies to

provide a wider range of insurance products and services to both individual and corporate customers, thus creating a well-diversified insurance player in the region."

Adnan Bogary, chairman of RSA Middle East, said, "The successful completion of this transaction brings NLGIC and RSA Middle East closer to forming a robust partnership that will help us expand our portfolio and position ourselves as a leading multi-line insurer in the area, poised for future growth."

RSA Middle East is a leading provider of property and casualty insurance in the Middle East. It offers solutions for both commercial and retail clients, across a range of product lines, including motor, property, medical, SME as well as tailored solutions for large corporates. It has operated in the region for over 60 years.

RSA Middle has operations in Oman, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain. It operates as local publicly listed companies under Al Ahlia Insurance Company in Oman, and Al Alamiya for Cooperative Insurance Company in Saudi Arabia.



Oman's budget surplus increases to RO631mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Benefiting from higher oil revenues and strong economic growth this year, Oman recorded a further RO163mn increase in its budget surplus in May.

The sultanate's total budget surplus increased to RO631mn for the January–May period of 2022 against a deficit of RO890mn in the same period of 2021, data released by the Ministry of Finance showed.

The ministry said that the surplus will be utilised for strengthening economic recovery by increasing spending on priority development projects and reducing public debt.

Total public income rose by 49.9 per cent to RO5.325bn in the first five months of 2022 compared with RO3.551bn in the same period a year ago.

The rise in public income was

mainly due to higher oil price and production and increased current revenue during this year, the Ministry of Finance said in its monthly Fiscal Performance Bulletin.

As per the ministry's data, net oil revenues rose nearly 38 per cent to RO2.568bn in the first five months of 2022, while gas revenues jumped 140.8 per cent to RO1.356bn during the same period.

Oman crude was sold at an average price of US\$82 per barrel in the first five months this year compared to US\$47 in the same period of 2021. Daily average oil production was 8.6 per cent higher at 1.034mn barrels per day in 2022 against 952,000 in 2021.

Spending up 5.7%

The sultanate's total public spending reached RO4.694bn during the January–May period of this year, an increase of 5.7 per

cent over the same period in 2021.

Of the total public spending, current expenditure of the ministries and government units increased 11.8 per cent to RO3.685bn compared to the same period of 2021, the Ministry of Finance noted.

Development spending sharply increased by 67.3 per cent to RO343mn in the first five months of 2022 against the same period a year ago.

The Ministry of Finance noted that total contributions and other expenses during January – May period of 2022 came at RO516mn, a sharp increase of 85.6 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.

"Such increase is reflected by the increase in hydrocarbon products subsidy to RO219mn and basic food subsidy to RO11mn, in addition to other subsidies," the ministry added.

Indian rupee hits new record low as dollar surges

Mumbai, India – The Indian rupee hit a fresh record low against the US dollar on Tuesday as the American currency strengthened globally amid weakness in the global equities.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the partially convertible rupee hit a record low of 79.66 against the US dollar. The rupee closed at 79.60 (provisional) on Tuesday against its previous day's close at 79.45 against a dollar.

The American currency has strengthened against major global currencies.

The Euro fell to a low of 1.00005 against the US dollar, the lowest level since 2002.

The US dollar has strengthened against major global currencies amid a slump in the equities markets.

Widening trade deficit has put pressure on the value of the Indian currency. As per data released by the Ministry of

Commerce & Industry recently, India's trade deficit widened to US\$25.63bn in June. For the first quarter of the current financial year, the trade deficit has widened to US\$70.25bn.

The country's trade deficit has widened due to high imports. India's merchandise imports in April-June 2022-23 period stood at US\$187.02bn, an increase of 47.31 per cent over US\$126.96bn in April-June 2021-22.

In the first quarter of the current financial year, India's merchandise export rose to US\$116.77bn, recording an increase of 22.22 per cent over US\$95.54bn recorded in April - June 2021-22.

India's merchandise exports rose by 16.8 per cent to US\$37.9bn in June 2022, while imports soared by 51.02 per cent to US\$63.58bn leading to a trade deficit of US\$25.63bn during the month.

ANI

Biden seeks to persuade Saudi Arabia to pump more oil as prices soar

London, UK – Joe Biden will make his first visit as US president to Saudi Arabia on Friday, where he will seek to persuade Riyadh to pump more oil to bring down prices that are fuelling inflation to the highest levels in decades.

Prior to his election, Biden had vowed that Saudi should be a "pariah" state following the 2018 murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, in a recalibration of relations with the oil-producing country that is a kingpin of the OPEC oil cartel.

However, since then, key crude producer Russia had invaded Ukraine, propelling oil prices to levels last seen during the 2008 global financial crisis.

That pushed US inflation to the highest rate in more than four decades – and this could yet persuade Biden to set aside human rights concerns before key US midterm elections in November, experts say.

"It highlights his desperation



US President Joe Biden

ahead of the midterms to at least be seen to be trying to alleviate the tightness in the market and bring prices back down," OANDA analyst Craig Erlam told AFP. "Desperate times call for desperate measures."

OPEC deal expiring

Biden's chances could be boosted by the looming expiry of

a crucial deal among the wider so-called OPEC+ group to boost oil production.

OPEC+ comprises the 13-nation Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries led by Saudi Arabia and its 10 partners headed by Russia.

The group had previously slashed output in 2020, when demand was decimated by

Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns worldwide. But since last year, countries have been gradually reopening the taps as economies rebound.

Last month, OPEC+ stuck to a previously agreed output hike, shrugging off calls for bigger increases to tame elevated prices.

The deal will soon run its course once OPEC+ returns to pre-pandemic production after August.

"The expiration of the OPEC+ deal in September does create an opportunity and perhaps (Biden) would not be making such a move if he had not been assured that something is possible," said Erlam.

The grouping will hold its next production gathering in August.

Yet Biden's hopes for more oil could be dashed because elevated crude prices, despite recent losses, have energised state revenues and economies across the Middle East.

"It would be a massive sur-

prise if Saudi Arabia produced more oil," said independent analyst Stephen Innes.

Saudi Arabia's oil-driven economy expanded by 9.6 per cent in the first quarter, its strongest growth rate in a decade.

There is a "significant economic incentive to not increase production", said XTB analyst Walid Koudmani.

Riyadh is already pumping close to maximum capacity.

In May, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan stated that the kingdom had "done what it could" for the oil market.

The industry needed to increase refining capacity instead of simply pumping more barrels of crude, he argued.

Iran is another major bone of contention between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Riyadh is leading a fight against the Houthi rebels in Yemen, who are supported by Tehran.

AFP

Euro strikes parity with US dollar for first time in 20 years

London, UK – The euro struck parity with the dollar Tuesday for the first time in nearly 20 years as a cut in Russian gas supplies to Europe heightened fears of a recession in the euro-zone.

The European single currency on Tuesday hit exactly one dollar – its lowest level since December 2002 – before rising to US\$1.0023.

Oil prices meanwhile fell heavily on concerns of a wider recession as central banks hike interest rates to fight decades-high inflation.

European stock markets fell approaching the half-way mark and in the wake of overnight

losses in Asia and on Wall Street.

"The gas crisis has really spooked markets over the euro-zone economy," Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson told AFP.

Russian energy giant Gazprom on Monday began 10 days of maintenance on its Nord Stream 1 pipeline – with Germany and other European countries watching anxiously to see if the gas comes back on.

With relations between Russia and the West at their lowest in years because of the invasion of Ukraine, Gazprom may not reopen the valves, according to analysts.

"The next few weeks could



be challenging for Europe, with possibly maximum uncertainty stretching into August," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen

Innes.

"Investors increasingly believe that gas may not start to flow through Nord Stream 1

again following the scheduled maintenance on July 11-21, with further 'temporary' interruptions seen as likely."

Worries about a Covid flare-up in China – fuelling fears of more lockdowns – added to the downbeat mood, just as investors prepared for a week of economic data and corporate earnings that could have huge implications for markets.

A forecast-beating US jobs report last week suggested the world's top economy was coping with higher Federal Reserve rates, but it also gave the central bank more room to continue tightening – leading to concerns it could go too far and cause a

contraction.

The European single currency is also under pressure from the Federal Reserve hiking US interest rates more aggressively than the European Central Bank.

The dollar has jumped 14 per cent against the euro since the start of the year.

Central banks are increasing borrowing costs in a bid to tame inflation, which has been fuelled by soaring energy prices.

Oil and gas prices have rocketed this year after economies reopened from Covid lockdowns and following the invasion of Ukraine by major energy producer Russia.

AFP

France aims to roll out digital euro next year

Paris, France – France's central bank said Tuesday it will push ahead with the second phase of its experiment with a digital euro with the aim of rolling out the cryptocurrency next year. Last year, the Banque de France successfully completed the first stage of its experiment with a digital currency.

The goal was to introduce a digital euro "as a means of settlement in 2023", Banque de France chief Francois Villeroy de Galhau said.

AFP

FIFA+ adds Arabic language; documentary on Habsi, Mo

Free-to-view football streamer FIFA+ has announced the addition of Arabic as the latest language to its official platform, which the global football administration says would make the online streaming accessible to additional 300mn people in the Arab world.

The streamer offers access to thousands of free hours of original, live and archive football along with documentary content.

The launch of Arabic language coincides with two new original documentaries; *Mo: A Global Icon* and *Habsi*. The new accessibility comes ahead of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the first edition of the tournament to be held in the Middle East and Arab world.

The addition of Arabic follows Bahasa, Italian, Japanese and Korean as new localised editions of the platform, taking the total number to ten.

Arabic has been added as an official platform language on FIFA+, making the new digital destination for football fandom more accessible to over 300mn native speakers around the world, a press statement said.

To mark the launch, two new original documentaries have also gone live; *Mo: A Global Icon*, charting the impact that Liverpool star Mo Salah has had on the world, and *Habsi*, a behind-



the-scenes journey in to the career of goalkeeper Ali al Habsi, from Oman to the Premier

League, FA Cup glory and beyond. Arabic now takes the number

of localised editions for FIFA+ to ten, following the addition of Bahasa, Italian, Japanese and Ko-

rean last month to the founding languages of English, French, Spanish, German and Portuguese.

The news also follows the 2022 addition of Arabic as an official FIFA language, as directed by the FIFA Statutes.

Discussing the launch, FIFA+ Head of Content, James Marley, said: "The Arabic world is rich with football narratives, and we're not only excited to now be making FIFA+ more accessible to fans in the region, but to start bringing a global audience to many of its incredible stories."

"We're kicking off with *Mo: A Global Icon* and *Habsi*, but there is so much more to come, from grassroots to the professional game – particularly as we head towards the FIFA World Cup in Qatar."

Since launch, FIFA+ has continued to grow to wider audiences and develop new and exciting content streams.

Completely free, it is the new digital destination for football fandom, offering an extensive archive of all men's and women's FIFA World Cup matches, thousands of live fixtures every year, interactive games and predictors, and a slate of original documentaries, docuseries, talk shows and shorts, including *Croatia: Defining A Nation*, *Ronaldinho, HD Cutz*, *Dani Crazy Dream* and *Icons*.

Kalyan Jewellers announces the launch of 'Back Home' campaign

Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery brands, has announced the launch of its special seasonal offer with their - 'Back Home' campaign for its patrons.

As part of this promotion, Kalyan Jewellers has announced a one-of-its-kind offer for its patrons across Oman. Customers purchasing jewellery worth RO150 and above from Kalyan Jewellers stand a chance to win free flight tickets back home. On every RO150 spent, customers will be eligible to receive one free raffle coupon from Kalyan Jewellers.

The jewellery brand will be selecting 25 lucky winners at the end of this campaign. The 'Back Home' campaign offers can be availed by customers until August 21 this year at all Kalyan Jewellers' showrooms across Oman. The brand offers 100 per cent exchange value on old gold and has also tied up with several leading banks to assist their customers with easy monthly installment plans.

Talking about the announcement, executive director - Kalyan Jewellers -

Ramesh Kalyanaraman said, "As a customer-first brand, Kalyan Jewellers has been successful in carving a distinctive brand identity among customers in the region."

The newly announced 'Back Home' campaign is a testament to our commitment to provide maximum benefits to patrons on their jewellery purchases at Kalyan Jewellers. We are confident that patrons will continue to shower us with the love and support as we introduce more such exciting offers."

The jewellery retailed at Kalyan Jewellers goes through multiple purity tests and patrons also receive the Kalyan Jewellers 4-Level Assurance Certificate which guarantees purity, free lifetime maintenance of ornaments, detailed product information and transparent exchange and buy-back policies. The certification is part of the brand's commitment to offering the very best to its loyalists.

Headquartered in the southern Indian state of Kerala, Kalyan Jewellers has a huge presence in the Middle East.

OQ signs an agreement to sponsor the Innovation Platform initiative

OQ group signed an agreement with the 'Youth Vision' to sponsor the OQ Innovation Platform initiative as a part of OQ's efforts to promote Omani youth initiatives and innovation in scientific fields which aims to achieve sustainability.

The initiative aims to establish an innovative programme that contains educational materials for Omani youth which will enable national competencies to obtain the required skills, technical know-how and leadership which is required to be successful in the modern technology market.

On behalf of OQ, the agreement was signed by Mariam al



Shibaniyah, VP of HR, Technology & Work Culture at OQ and Mariyam al Aamriyah, the CEO of Youth Vision.

Commenting on the occasion, Mariyam al Shibaniyah said, "The OQ Innovation Platform falls under the Social Investment Programme and is based on support & growth within the fields of education, health and economic wellbeing."

She noted that innovation & inventions, is a sector that has

the attention of the Government of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - May Allah preserve & protect him - and OQ translates this interest with various authorities and companies to employ innovation in their work fields. Bearing this in mind, OQ intends to involve the Omani youth via Youth Vision within these projects to contribute towards enhancing the added value of these projects and expand the innovation to employ it in the needed

areas within the nation.

She also added that through this agreement, OQ seeks to sponsor programmes that contribute to the development of society and youth, believing in the importance of supporting these quality initiatives that contribute to further motivate Omani youth. She emphasised that this initiative would open wider horizons for Omanis by developing their capabilities.

Mariyam al Aamriyah expressed gratitude for OQ'S support for the OQ Youth Innovation Platform and how it is important to unleash the scientific energies of youth within the innovation arenas.

Kaldi launches passion fruit variety to welcome summer

With the onset of summer and the increase in temperatures, Kaldi Beverages has decided to launch their new line of refreshing beverage that contains passion fruit which contains many vitamins, minerals, fiber and essential nutrients that the body needs to grow and build an immunity.

Kaldi Beverages have always been refreshing and fresh. "The demand for cold fresh juices and drink has increased exponentially. Which is why we have decided to introduce the Passion Fruit collection to the hot and cold drinks menu," the group said.

The new collection is unique



and has option that would suit all the community. The collection includes:

- Passion Fruit Mojito: A refreshing drink that combines Passion Fruit, Lemons
- Sparkling Passion Fruit Americano: This Special Drink is a

blend of Passion Fruit, sparkling water and Roasted Coffee

►Mango Passion Cooler: A cold, fresh and Refreshing mixture of two Summer Fruits

"All our branches are waiting for you to try the new Passion Fruit Collection," Kaldi said.

Volkswagen Oman sponsors Tekkers Sports Centre's Padel League

Volkswagen Oman - represented by Premium Motors - has supported the Padel League organised by Tekkers Sports Centre, Oman's first private indoor sports facility set up in March this year.

The centre hosts two custom-made padel courts apart from futsal, basketball, volleyball, and tennis facilities.

As part of three-and-half-weeklong official automotive sponsor partnership, popular Volkswagen models Golf GTI and Golf R were kept on display at the venue.

Over 56 teams participated in the league, indicating that padel is a fast-growing sport in Oman and is ranked globally as a very popular spectator sport too. Organising Oman's first indoor padel league aims to increase public awareness about the sport and help its growth in the country.

Mohammed al Khalili, co-owner of Tekkers Sports Centre said, "We are honoured and thankful to Volkswagen Oman



for sponsoring the Padel League. The support will be a great help during the upcoming period to continue advancing the sport with future generations here in Oman.

"These events will broaden our discipline and character, on and off the field. This support and interest will help us further enhance the league and encourage participants and sports

lovers too," he added.

Christian Nehme, general manager of Premium Motors Oman, said, "We are absolutely thrilled about this partnership with Tekkers Sports Centre.

Our sponsorship is about helping to grow the sport of padel in Oman. We are proud to include padel in our portfolio of sponsorships. We are happy to establish partnerships with

Tekkers, who are committed to advancing indoor sports in innovative ways."

He added, "Our long-standing commitment to sports is one of the foundations of our spon-

sorship activities in international and local sports. Our backing for sports provides us with a perfect stage to present our brand's vitality to the audience who come to watch the sports."

Japan mourns former PM Shinzo Abe

Abe’s funeral was held at Tokyo’s Zojoji temple on Tuesday, with relatives and acquaintances in attendance

Tokyo, Japan - Mourners lined the streets of central Tokyo on Tuesday to bid farewell to assassinated former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, as his hearse was driven past political landmarks after a private funeral.

The country’s longest-serving prime minister was gunned down on Friday while campaigning, in a crime that rattled Japan and prompted an outpouring of international condemnation and grief.

His funeral was held at Tokyo’s Zojoji temple on Tuesday, with relatives and close acquaintances in attendance.

But elsewhere in the temple compound, thousands of well-wishers lined up in the humid heat to pay their respects before a photo of the late leader, who held office until 2020.

“I can’t get over my sadness,



People watch the hearse transporting the body of Shinzo Abe as it leaves Zojoji Temple in Tokyo on Tuesday (AFP)

so I came here to lay flowers,” consultant Tsukasa Yokawa, 41, told AFP, describing Abe as ‘a great prime minister who did a lot to elevate Japan’s presence’ globally. After the service, a hearse carrying Abe’s body departed for a final tour of some of the political landmarks he served

in: the parliament, the prime minister’s office and the headquarters of his ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Residents gathered along the route, while staff and officials, including ministers and senior LDP figures, stood somberly outside each venue. They pressed their

hands together and bowed their heads in respect as the car arrived. Abe’s widow Akie sat in the front of the hearse - carrying her husband’s mortuary tablet inscribed with his posthumous Buddhist name - and bowed back.

Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi,

Abe’s brother, called the murder ‘an act of terrorism’ on Tuesday.

“I’ve lost my brother. At the same time, Japan has lost an irreplaceable leader,” he tweeted. “My brother loved Japan and risked his life to be a politician and protect this nation.”

In a speech at the funeral, 81-

year-old Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso recalled drinking and playing golf with his close ally.

“You were supposed to read an eulogy for me. This is very painful,” he said, according to Japanese media.

Security flaws

Abe was campaigning in the western city of Nara when he was shot. The murder suspect, 41-year-old Tetsuya Yamagami, is in custody and has told police he targeted Abe because he believed the politician was linked to an organisation he resented.

Yamagami approached him from behind in broad daylight, in circumstances that have raised questions about security.

Satoshi Ninoyu, the chairman of the National Public Safety Commission, a cabinet position overseeing national police, pledged on Tuesday to hold a full review of any security failings.

Local police have already admitted flaws in their guarding programme for the high-profile politician.

Police searches of the suspect’s home have found pellets and other possible components for building a gun like the crude weapon used in the attack, Japanese media reported on Tuesday, citing unnamed investigative sources.

Yamagami spent three years in Japan’s navy

and reportedly told investigators that his mother’s large donations to a religious organisation had caused the family financial troubles.

The Unification Church, a global religious movement founded in Korea in the 1950s, said on Monday that Yamagami’s mother was a member, but did not comment on any donations she may have made.

Condolences pour in

Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said on Tuesday that more than 1,700 condolence messages had been received from 259 countries, territories and international bodies.

On Monday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken made a previously unscheduled stop in Tokyo to pay tribute to Abe, describing him as a ‘man of vision’.

And Taiwanese Vice President William Lai was also in Tokyo for a surprise trip, Taiwanese media said. China’s foreign ministry hit out at the visit, accusing Taiwan authorities of using Abe’s death as ‘an opportunity for political manipulation’.

Hayashi, though, said Lai was travelling in a private capacity and there was no change to Japan’s policy on non-governmental working relations with Taiwan.

AFP

BBC probe suggests Afghan war crimes by UK special forces

London, UK - Commandos in Britain’s elite Special Air Service (SAS) corps killed at least 54 Afghans in suspicious circumstances but the military chain of command concealed concerns, a BBC investigation said on Tuesday.

Unarmed Afghan men were routinely shot dead ‘in cold blood’ by SAS troops during night-time raids during the long war, and weapons were planted on them to justify the crimes, the four-year probe found.

Senior officers including General Mark Carleton-Smith, who headed UK Special Forces at the time, were aware of concerns within the SAS about the operations but failed to report them to military police, it said.

Under UK law governing the armed forces, it is a criminal offence for a commanding officer to fail to inform the military police if they become aware of potential war crimes, the BBC noted.

Carleton-Smith, who retired last month as head of the British army overall, declined to comment to the BBC programme ‘Panorama’, which said its investigation was based

on court documents, leaked emails and its own journalists’ travel to sites of the operations in Afghanistan.

The ministry of defence said prior investigations into the conduct of UK forces in Afghanistan found insufficient evidence to bring charges.

“No new evidence has been presented, but the service police will consider any allegations should new evidence come to light,” it said in a statement to the BBC.

“The UK armed forces served with courage and professionalism in Afghanistan and we will always hold them to the highest standards.”

The Panorama investigation, airing in full later on Tuesday, identified 54 people shot dead in suspicious circumstances by one SAS unit during one six-month tour of Helmand province from November 2010 to May 2011.

After-action reports showed other officers were surprised at the high casualty rate being inflicted by the unit, when none of the SAS troops reported injuries in apparent firefights with Taliban militants.

AFP

Paris 2015 attacker’s sentence stands after no appeal filed

Paris, France - The sole surviving member of an Islamic State group cell that killed 130 people in Paris in 2015 has not appealed his whole-life sentence, the Paris chief prosecutor said on Tuesday, allowing France to close the legal chapter of its worst atrocity in modern history.

Salah Abdeslam, a 32-year-old Frenchman of Moroccan origin, was captured alive by police four months after the bloodbath at the Bataclan concert hall and other locations.

On June 30, he was sentenced to life in prison with only a tiny chance of parole after 30 years, the toughest possible punishment under French law, which had only been pronounced four times previously since entering into law in 1994.

The 19 others sentenced for their role leading up to and following the attacks also declined to appeal, prosecutor Remy Heitz told AFP.

They had 10 days to lodge any appeal after their sentencing, a deadline that expired at midnight on Monday.

‘Permanent status’

The decision of the special court handling the cases ‘has now acquired permanent status and there will not be an appeal trial’,



This file court sketch shows main defendant Salah Abdeslam drawn over a general view of the courtroom during the trial of the 2015 Paris terror attacks, on June 29, this year (AFP)

Abdeslam was sentenced to life in prison with a tiny chance of parole after 30 years, the toughest possible punishment under French law

he said. Abdeslam’s decision ‘does not mean that he agrees with the verdict and the resulting life sentence without parole’, his lawyers Olivia Ronen and Martin Vettes said on Tuesday.

“He has simply resigned himself to it,” they said on Twitter.

“Although such a punishment is unacceptable, we respect the decision of the one we have been assisting,” they said, adding: “There is no honour in condemn-

ing somebody who is defeated by despair.”

The trial, with its 148 days in court, was the biggest in modern French history, the culmination of a six-year international investigation whose findings run to more than a million pages.

All of the attackers except for Abdeslam blew themselves up or were killed by police during or after the assault.

AFP

China locks down city of 300,000 over just one COVID case

Beijing, China - Hundreds of thousands of people were under lockdown in a small Chinese city on Tuesday after just one case of COVID-19 was detected, as Beijing’s strict no-tolerance virus strategy showed no sign of abating.

After reporting a new domestic infection, the steelmaking hub of Wugang in Henan province announced on Monday that it would implement three days of ‘closed control’ in response to ‘the needs of disease prevention’, according to an official notice.

None of the city’s 320,000 people are allowed to set foot outside their homes until midday on Thursday, the notice said, adding that basic necessities would be delivered by local authorities. Residents are not allowed to use their cars without permission and must obtain official authorisation to travel under ‘closed-loop’ conditions in case of emergencies, the notice said.

The city is home to one of China’s biggest steel firms, Wuyang Iron & Steel Co., which exports to the United States, Japan and other major Western economies, according to Bloomberg.

AFP

Pacific leaders struggle to keep focus on climate at landmark summit

Suva, Fiji - US-China rivalry and an inter-island rift overshadowed the start of a landmark Pacific summit on Tuesday, hampering efforts to focus world attention on the islands’ dire climate crisis.

This year’s Pacific Islands Forum is the region’s most important meeting in years, coming after a COVID-enforced hiatus and as low-lying tropical isles run out of time for climate action.

Fiji president and forum chair Voreqe Bainimarama opened Tuesday’s first meeting with a warning that the ‘runaway climate change crisis’ threatened the security and sovereignty of

many Pacific nations. But instead of a singular focus on the threat of rising sea levels and powerful storms, a shock decision by Beijing-allied leaders in Kiribati to quit the forum altogether, revealed on the eve of the summit, loomed over proceedings.

Geopolitical jostling between the United States and China has been building since Solomon Islands controversial signed a security pact with Beijing in April.

United States Vice President Kamala Harris announced on Tuesday that she would make an unprecedented video appearance at the summit - usually re-



Leaders arrive for traditional welcoming ceremonies at the Pacific Islands Forum in Suva on Tuesday (AFP)

stricted to Pacific nations, Australia and New Zealand.

‘Fight this emergency’

Leaders gathered at Suva’s luxurious Grand Pacific Hotel will discuss a strategy to guide the Pacific through to 2050, keenly focused on the existential threat posed by climate change.

They will also debate announcing a climate emergency in the Pacific and whether to endorse a push, spearheaded by Vanuatu, to ask the International Court of Justice to weigh in on nations’ climate obligations.

Vanuatuan prime minister Bob Loughman said on Tuesday that the people of the region ‘are calling on us, Pacific leaders, to take action to fight this emergency’.

But Kiribati’s exit from the forum has sparked concerns about a fracturing of the Pacific’s closely held unity, which gives the region of small island states heft in global climate negotiations.

Tuvaluan foreign minister Simon Kofe told AFP he was ‘surprised and saddened’ by Kiribati’s departure, but was optimistic the nation could be enticed to rejoin.

AFP

US policy on nuclear deal inconsistent, says Iran

Tehran, Iran - Tehran hit out Tuesday at what it called Washington's 'contradictory' policies, after President Joe Biden vowed to pile pressure on Iran ahead of a visit to US allies in the Middle East.

Biden has been seeking to restore the Iran nuclear deal that was abandoned by his predecessor Donald Trump, but he has refused to lift sanctions on the Islamic republic until it returns to compliance with the accord.

In an opinion piece for the Washington Post ahead of his visit this week to Israel and Saudi Arabia, Biden pointed to the 'rapid acceleration' of Iran's nuclear programme after Trump 'reneged on a nuclear deal that was working'. "My administration will continue to increase diplomatic and economic pressure until Iran is ready to return to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, as I remain prepared to do," Biden wrote on Saturday.

Iran on Tuesday blasted the Biden administration for what it said was an inconsistent approach on the nuclear issue. "Mr. Joe Biden's emphasis on pursuing the policy of economic and diplomatic pressure against Iran is contradictory to US continued expression of desire to revive the 2015 agreement," foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said.

The current US government 'follows the same approach (of the previous administration) with the continuation of sanctions and economic pressure', he said.

AFP

US economic push no substitute for achieving peace, say Palestinians

Joe Biden's first tour of the Middle East as US president begins in Israel on Wednesday

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories - Ahead of Joe Biden's first visit to Jerusalem as US president, Washington's ambassador said his team will 'pound tables' to press Israeli officials into making concessions to the Palestinians.

But ambassador Thomas Nides was talking about ensuring Palestinians have access to economic benefits such as 4G internet, not throwing American diplomatic muscle into reviving a peace process moribund since 2014.

Biden's first Middle East tour since entering the White House last year begins in Israel on Wednesday, and he is expected to meet Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas on Friday in Bethlehem, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

US-Palestinian ties have improved under Biden, after hitting an all-time low under his predecessor Donald Trump, a staunch backer of the Israelis.

Along with the prospect of faster internet, the visit may also see the US restore funding to hospitals in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, which have historically served Palestinians.

But some Palestinians said they are weary of the US diplomacy which, they claim, emphasises economic benefits above core issues of the seven-decade conflict.

"It would be nice to have the 4G," said Mohammed Mostafa, a former Palestinian Authority deputy prime minister and ex-chief executive of Paltel, the largest telecoms operator in the Palestinian territories.

"But it's obviously not a substitute for solving the bigger issues



An Israeli staffer prepares American and Israeli flags at the President residence in Jerusalem on Monday, ahead of US President's upcoming visit to Israel.

It would be nice to have the 4G. But it's obviously not a substitute for solving bigger issues like Jerusalem, like sovereignty or like freedom

MOHAMMED MOSTAFA

like Jerusalem, like sovereignty or like freedom," he told AFP.

"Israel thinks people will forget about the bigger picture," he added.

Hamas expects 'nothing'

The 4G pledge, which ambassador Nides highlighted in an interview with the *Times of Israel*,

would offer an immediate boost to Palestinian businesses, Mostafa said. Palestinians are currently forced to either buy Israeli SIM cards or struggle with slower 3G connections.

"Israeli operators have a significant part of the Palestinian telecoms and broadband market," Mostafa said. "This would be a chance to bring that back to Palestinian companies."

But 'the Israelis think 'we're

going to give you 4G so you'll keep quiet on the other things'. Mostafa added. "We are interested, but we also want bigger things."

Until July 1, Israel was led by prime minister Naftali Bennett, a right-winger who opposed the Palestinians' over-arching demand - the establishment of their own state. Bennett embraced an approach known as 'shrinking the conflict', seeking to defuse ten-

sions by improving economic opportunities in the West Bank and the blockaded Gaza Strip, which is controlled by the Islamist group Hamas.

One such key policy was to increase permits for Palestinians, including from Gaza, to seek relatively lucrative work in Israel.

Asked about the expectations from Biden's visit, Hamas official Basem Naim said: "Nothing."

AFP

UK's Sunak refuses to attack Johnson in leadership bid

London, UK - Former finance minister Rishi Sunak said on Tuesday his campaign to be Britain's next prime minister would avoid any attempt to 'demonise' Boris Johnson, despite having helped trigger his dramatic downfall.

Sunak, 42, and another minister quit last week in protest at Johnson's scandal-hit administration, setting off a wave of government resignations that forced him to step down as Conservative leader. Johnson is staying on in Downing Street as prime minister until an internal party contest finds his successor. The result is due on September 5.

But the main opposition Labour party said it would try to force a vote of no confidence in the government to try to get him out of office sooner. Labour leader Keir Starmer said that by their actions last week, the Tories had 'concluded that the prime minister is unfit for office'. "They can't now let him cling on for weeks and weeks and weeks until September 5," he argued. "It would be intolerable for the country." The no-confidence motion is expected to be voted on by the House of Commons on Wednesday.

'Remarkable'

Sunak, who was appointed chancellor of the exchequer in early 2020 just as the COVID pandemic hit, is seen as one of the frontrunners for the Tory leadership. But he refused to distance himself from Johnson's adminis-



Whatever some commentators may say, he has a good heart. But did I disagree with him? Frequently. Is he flawed? Yes

RISHI SUNAK

tration, in which he played a key role supporting businesses and workers during the pandemic.

He called Johnson 'one of the most remarkable people I've met'.

"Whatever some commentators may say, he has a good heart," he told cheering supporters, after one Johnson ally accused Sunak of being a treacherous 'snake'.

"But did I disagree with him? Frequently. Is he flawed? Yes, and so are the rest of us. Was it no longer working? Yes, and that's why I resigned. But let me be clear, I will have no part in a rewriting of history that seeks to demonise Boris, exaggerate his faults or deny his efforts."

AFP

UN agrees to extend Syria aid by six months

United Nations, US - The UN Security Council has agreed to extend a vital system for cross-border aid to war-ravaged Syria by six months, the length of time wanted by Russia, diplomats told AFP on Monday.

Western nations had demanded a year-long extension, but a vote by the 15 members on half that is expected either later in the day or on Tuesday.

"Russia forced the hand of everyone. Either close the mechanism or only six months. We cannot let people die," one ambassador told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The aid delivery mechanism across Turkey's border into rebel-held Syria at the Bab al-Hawa crossing is the only way United Nations assistance can reach



Children play at the 'Blue camp' for Syrians displaced by conflict near the town of Maaret Misrin in northwestern Idlib province on Saturday (AFP)

civilians without navigating areas controlled by Syrian government forces.

The system, in place since 2014, had expired on Sunday.

The agreement breaks an impasse that had threatened to derail the life-saving supplies for the more than 2.4mn people in the northwestern Idlib region of Syria, under the control of militants and rebels.

Syrian ally Russia on Friday vetoed a Security Council resolution that would have prolonged the mechanism by one year, and Western powers then voted down Moscow's competing resolution that proposed extending approval by just six months.

The previous draft by Ireland and Norway suggested the possibility of a halt to the mechanism

in January next year if the Security Council so decided.

The new Irish-Norwegian text provides for a renewal in January 2023 for another six months, subject to the adoption of a new resolution.

It also requires a briefing every two months on the implementation of the system and calls for a special report on humanitarian needs in the region to the UN secretary-general by December 10.

Russia's deputy ambassador to the UN Dmitry Polyanski said Moscow would adopt the resolution with 'a minimal modification'.

An ambassador of an influential Security Council member said his country would adopt the resolution.

AFP

Iran to supply Russians with UAVs for Ukraine: White House

Washington, US - Iran is planning to supply hundreds of drones with combat weapon capabilities to Russia for use in Ukraine, a top US official said on Monday.

Jake Sullivan, the White House national security advisor, said the information received by the United States supported views that the Russian military is facing challenges sustaining its weaponry after significant losses in Ukraine. "The Iranian government is preparing to provide Russia with up to several hundred UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), including weapons-capable UAVs, on an expedited timeline," Sullivan told reporters.



This file photo shows launching of a drone carrying a missile, during a drill in central Iran on January 6, 2021 (AFP)

"Our information further indicates that Iran is preparing to train Russian forces to use these UAVs, with initial training ses-

sions slated to begin as soon as early July," he said.

Iran responded on Tuesday by saying that 'no special devel-

opment' had taken place in technological cooperation with Russia following its invasion of Ukraine in February.

Without specifically mentioning drones, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said cooperation with Russia 'in the field of some modern technologies predates the war in Ukraine, and there has been no special development in that regard recently'.

Tehran's position regarding the war 'is quite clear and has been officially announced many times', he added.

Iran has maintained that it is against the war in Ukraine and called for a political solution, while blaming the roots of the crisis on the United States and NATO's expansion.

AFP

Ukraine forces ‘destroy Russian arms depot’



Ukrainian serviceman holds a next generation light anti-armour weapon in the south of Kharkiv region, on Monday (AFP)

Kyiv, Ukraine - Kyiv said on Tuesday it had launched artillery barrages that destroyed a Russian arms depot and carried out a ‘special operation’ to free military captives in the Moscow-controlled Kherson region.

The bombardments in the south came as the EU green-lit one billion euros in aid for Ukraine and Turkey announced that delegations from Moscow and Kyiv would meet in Istanbul on Wednesday to discuss the resumption of stalled grain deliveries across the Black Sea.

The bombardment overnight in the Kherson region, which Russian forces captured soon after they invaded in late February, were reported as Kyiv tries to claw back territory in the south.

Ukrainian military officials said the strikes had destroyed artillery, armoured vehicles ‘and a warehouse with ammunition’ in Nova Kakhovka.

Russian-backed authorities, however, accused the Ukrainians of damaging civilian infrastructure and killing at least seven people, a toll that could not be independently verified.

“There are no military targets here,” the head of the city’s Moscow-backed administration, Vladimir Leontiev, said on social media. “Warehouses were hit, as were shops, a pharmacy, petrol stations and even a church,” he added.

Ukrainian military intelligence said separately that its troops had rescued five people in a ‘special operation’ in Kherson, including a military serviceman and former police officer, without specifying when.

EU financial aid

The Ukrainian army has for several weeks been waging a counter-offensive designed to recapture Kherson, while Russian troops have focused on trying to capture the entire eastern Don-

bas region.

The deputy head of the pro-Russian authorities in Kherson, Ekaterina Gubareva, accused Ukraine of having used long-range, precision artillery systems supplied by the United States in the strikes in Nova Kakhovka.

Military analysts are crediting newly arrived systems from the West - including HIMARS from the United States - with attacks deeper in Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine, including on ammunition depots.

EU member states, which have been supplying Ukraine with military support, on Tuesday also approved one billion euros in financial support for Kyiv. “This will give Ukraine the necessary funds to cover urgent needs and ensure the operation of critical infrastructure,” said Zbynek Stanjura, the finance minister of the Czech Republic, which holds the EU’s rotating presidency.

The United States, however, cautioned on Monday that Iran was planning to supply drones with combat weapon capabilities to Russia for use in Ukraine.

Russian forces early on Tuesday launched ‘massive’ strikes on the southern Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv, with missiles hitting two medical facilities and residential buildings, the city’s mayor Oleksandr Sienkevych said.

The regional head, Vitaliy Kim, said 12 people were wounded.

The heaviest fighting in recent weeks has centred on the industrial east in the Donbas where Moscow’s forces have slowly advanced despite fierce resistance since failing to capture Kyiv after its February 24 invasion.

Ukrainian emergency services said the death toll had risen to 35, two days after Russian bombardment flattened a residential building in the eastern town of Chasiv Yar, in the Donetsk region of the Donbas.

AFP



A man waves Sri Lanka’s national flag after climbing a tower near presidential secretariat in Colombo on Monday, after it was overrun by anti-government protestors (AFP)

Sri Lankan president seeks seaborne escape from island

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka’s president headed to a naval base on Tuesday with a view to fleeing his island by ship following a humiliating standoff at the airport, official sources said.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa has promised to resign on Wednesday and clear the way for a ‘peaceful transition of power’ following widespread protests against him over the country’s worst economic crisis.

The 73-year-old leader fled his official residence in Colombo just before tens of thousands of protesters overran it on Saturday. He then wanted to fly to Dubai, officials said.

As president, Rajapaksa enjoys immunity from arrest, and he is believed to want to go abroad before stepping down to avoid the possibility of being detained.

But immigration staff at Ban-

daranaika International withdrew from VIP services on Monday and insisted that all passengers must go through public counters.

The presidential party were reluctant to go through regular channels fearing public reactions, a security official said, and as a result, missed four flights that

A top defence source said the president’s closest military aides were discussing the possibility of taking him and his entourage overseas aboard a naval patrol craft.

“The best option now is to take the sea exit,” the defence official said. “He could go to the

The best option now is to take the sea exit. He could go to the Maldives or India and get a flight to Dubai

DEFENCE OFFICIAL

could have taken them to the United Arab Emirates.

Attempts to arrange a military flight to a neighbouring country also failed as clearance to land was not immediately available, the official added.

The president and his wife spent the night at a military air-base next to the airport.

Maldives or India and get a flight to Dubai.”

The group left the airbase on Tuesday afternoon in two Bell 412 helicopters, an airport source said, bound for the northeastern port of Trincomalee, site of the naval base where Rajapaksa initially took refuge after fleeing his palace on Saturday.

Release Iranian directors: Venice film fest

Rome, Italy - The Venice film festival called on Tuesday for the ‘immediate release’ of award-winning dissident Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi and fellow directors Mohammad Rasoulof and Mostafa Aleahmad.

The world’s oldest film festival said it was ‘deeply dismayed’ by the reported arrests of Panahi on Monday, and Rasoulof and Aleahmad on Friday.

“La Biennale di Venezia joins its own voice to the many that are now speaking out in the world to condemn the repressive actions



Iranian director Jafar Panahi (AFP)

underway,” it said.

It said it also ‘demands the immediate liberation of the directors arrested for defending the

right to freedom of expression and creation’. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian was in Rome on Monday to meet his counterpart Luigi Di Maio. The Italian foreign ministry made no mention of the arrests in a statement issued after their talks.

Panahi, 62, has won a slew of awards at international festivals for films that have critiqued modern Iran, including the top prize in Berlin for *Taxi* in 2015, and best screenplay at Cannes for his film *Three Faces* in 2018.

He was also arrested in 2010, following his support for anti-government protests. He was later convicted of ‘propaganda against the system’, sentenced to six years in jail and handed a ban on directing or writing films, or leaving the country to pick up any of his awards.

Rasoulof, 50, won the Golden Bear in Berlin in 2020 with his film *There Is No Evil* but was likewise unable to accept the award in person as he was barred from leaving Iran.

AFP

COVID-19 pandemic is ‘nowhere near over’: WHO

Geneva, Switzerland - Fresh waves of COVID infections show the pandemic is ‘nowhere near over’, the World Health Organization’s chief warned on Tuesday, voicing concern the virus is ‘running freely’.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was worried that case numbers were continuing to rise, putting further pressure on stretched health systems and workers.

“New waves of the virus demonstrate again that COVID-19 is nowhere near over,” he told a news conference. “As the virus pushes at us, we must push back.”

“The virus is running freely and countries are not effectively managing the disease burden based on their capacity, in terms of both hospitalisation for acute cases and the expanding number of people with post-COVID condition, often referred to as Long COVID,” he said. “As transmission and hospitalisations rise, governments must also deploy measures like masking, improved ventilation and test and treat protocols,” Tedros insisted.

AFP

James Webb Space Telescope releases new cosmic images

Washington, US - The James Webb Space Telescope began releasing a new wave of cosmic images on Tuesday, heralding a new era of astronomy.

“Every image is a new discovery,” said NASA administrator Bill Nelson. “Each will give humanity a view of the universe that we’ve never seen before.” On Monday, Webb revealed the clearest image to date of the early universe, going back 13bn years.

One new image on Tuesday shown water vapor in the atmosphere of a faraway gas planet. The spectroscopy - an analysis of light that reveals detailed information - was of planet WASP-96 b, which was discovered in 2014.

Nearly 1,150 light-years from



A landscape of mountains and valleys speckled with glittering stars is captured on the edge of a nearby, young, star-forming region called NGC 3324 in the Carina Nebula, on Tuesday (AFP)

Earth, WASP-96 b is about half the mass of Jupiter and zips around its star in just 3.4 days.

“We’ve seen the effect of what happens when a planet and its atmosphere passes in front of the star, and the star light filters through the atmosphere, and you can break that down into wavelengths of light,” said NASA’s Knicole Colon.

“So you’re actually seeing bumps and wiggles that indicate the presence of water vapour in the atmosphere of the planet.”

Other targets that will be released include Carina Nebula, a stellar nursery, famous for its towering pillars that include ‘Mystic Mountain’, a three-light-year-tall cosmic pinnacle cap-

tured in an iconic image by Hubble. One stunning shot released by the White House on Monday was overflowing with thousands of galaxies and features some of the faintest objects observed.

Known as Webb’s First Deep Field, it shows the galaxy cluster SMACS 0723, which acts as a gravitational lens, bending light from more distant galaxies behind it towards the observatory, in a cosmic magnification effect.

Launched in December 2021 from French Guiana on an Ariane 5 rocket, Webb is orbiting the Sun at a distance of 1.6mn kilometres from Earth, in a region of space called the second Lagrange point.

AFP



Sweet Treat



76 YEAR OLD MBAH SATINEM WAS THE INDONESIAN CULTURAL HUB'S BEST-KEPT SECRET FOR DECADES BUT IS NOW A COOKING SENSATION AFTER SHOOTING TO FAME IN THE 2019 NETFLIX SERIES *STREET FOOD: ASIA*



Customers gather around septuagenarian Mbah Satinem (centre right) as she prepares lupis, a traditional sweet dish made from glutinous rice and served with grated coconut and liquid palm sugar, at her street stall in Yogyakarta (AFP)

As the morning twilight approaches in an Indonesian city famed for its street food scene, a queue of sleepy customers snakes its way along the road in anticipation of a local culinary legend.

The clock hits 5.00am in Yogyakarta and out of the darkness appears a small and frail sarong-clad woman on the back of a black motorbike.

She climbs off slowly, tightly holding a basket that carries the sweet snacks she has been selling for more than half a century.

Now aged 76 years, Mbah Satinem was the Indonesian cultural hub's best-kept secret for decades but is today a cooking sensation after shooting to fame in the 2019 Netflix series *Street Food: Asia*.

Every day, she opens her stall before dawn and hunches over a table to prepare and dish out traditional market snacks known as jajan pasar.

Displayed on a banana leaf is a selection of treats that includes an Indonesian sweet cake known as lupis made from glutinous rice.

Alongside the star dish is tiwul, which is made using cassava flour, palm sugar and cenil, a worm-shaped tapioca flour jelly.

"I've been selling lupis for a very long time, nothing has changed," she said from the stall she has run since 1963.

"Lupis and I are fated with each other," she added, quietly laughing.

Food fights

She cuts it with a nylon thread, carefully placing it on the banana leaf before dripping thick liquid palm sugar and sprinkling grated coconut over the breakfast fare.

The secret to the recipe passed down from her mother, she said, is firewood that gives the sweet treat a smokey flavour.

"I used to help my mother making these snacks. When she found me getting better at it, she asked whether I wanted to sell them. I said yes," she said.

"She asked again whether I would feel embarrassed about it, but I said I wouldn't. So, she agreed to make some snacks for me to sell."

Satinem's stall is now surrounded daily by dozens of fascinated customers who watch her every move and document the process with

their phones.

"The taste of her lupis is still the same," said 49 year old Budi, a local who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

"The savouriness and stickiness of the lupis, and the thickness of the brown sauce, it is delicious."

Her version of jajan pasar, sold until 9.00am at 10,000 rupiah (US\$0.67) a pop, has proven so popular that she has introduced a number system for customers after fights broke out over her treats.

'It's worth it'

Customers who have to wait more than an hour to satisfy their sweet tooth come from all corners of Java, the Indonesian island where Yogyakarta sits in the middle.

One of them is Rama Luhur from the capital Jakarta, who waited nearly two hours to get a taste of the famous lupis after seeing Satinem on Netflix.

"It's worth it. You can find jajan

I've been selling lupis for a very long time, nothing has changed. Lupis and I are fated with each other

MBAH SATINEM

pasar everywhere, but I value her hard work," the 39 year old told AFP.

That hard work only subsides during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. But every other day of the year, she rises early to begin her preparation.

"I usually wake up at 1.00am in the morning and go to bed after Isha (prayer around 8.00pm)," she said.

Due to her age, Satinem's stall is now a family affair.

Her husband is in charge of the sticky rice, her son handles the firewood and her daughter drives her to work and accompanies her through the four-hour shift.

Asked why she refuses to quit what is usually a young person's game, the enduring street food granny brushes off the question with a laugh.

Her daughter Mukinem steps in to answer for the shy chef.

"She likes it, she enjoys cooking the snacks," she said.

"And she can't stay put."

AFP

'I'm not who you think I am'

Olympic great Mo Farah wins UK plaudits after revealing he was illegally trafficked as a child to the country

London, United Kingdom - Olympic great Mo Farah won praise from across Britain's political spectrum Tuesday after the shock revelation that he was illegally trafficked as a child to the country and forced to work in domestic servitude.

The 39-year-old distance runner, one of Britain's best-loved and most successful athletes, told a BBC documentary that his real name is Hussein Abdi Kahin.

Rather than moving to the UK as a refugee from Somalia with his parents as previously claimed, Farah said he came from Djibouti aged eight or nine with a woman he had never met, was given a false identity, and then made to look after another family's children.

In fact, he said, his father was killed in civil unrest in Somalia when Farah was aged four and his mother, Aisha, and two brothers live in the breakaway state of Somaliland.

"The truth is I'm not who you think I am," Farah said in the documentary, explaining that his mother wanted him far removed from Somalia's civil wars.

He said his children had encouraged him to tell the truth about his past.

"That's the main reason in telling my story because I want to feel normal, and don't feel like you're holding on to something."

The admission could have raised questions about Farah's UK citizenship, but the interior



Mo Farah

ministry said he was in the clear.

"No action whatsoever will be taken against Sir Mo and to suggest otherwise is wrong," a Home Office spokesperson told AFP.

The ministry's guidance absolves children of blame if parents or guardians are later found

to have obtained their immigration status under false pretences.

'Heartbreaking'

Popularly known as "Sir Mo" after he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2017, Farah completed the 5,000m and 10,000m double at both the London 2012

and Rio 2016 Olympics.

The London Games in particular catapulted him to stardom in Britain. Finance minister and Conservative leadership candidate Nadhim Zahawi said Farah remained "truly inspirational".

Zahawi, whose Kurdish family fled Iraq for Britain when he was

11, told BBC TV that hearing Farah reveal his life story made him feel "heartbroken, painful".

"All I can say is I salute Mo Farah," he said.

Lisa Nandy, a senior member of the opposition Labour party, said Farah's decision to speak out could be a "gamechanger"

for other victims of trafficking.

"I spent a decade working with children who were trafficked to the UK and everything about this is heartbreaking," Nandy tweeted.

London's Labour mayor Sadiq Khan said: "Everything Sir Mo has survived proves he's not only one of our greatest Olympians but a truly great Briton."

"We must build a future where these tragic events are never repeated," he added, at a time when the UK government is

bin".

"At that moment, I knew I was in trouble," he recalled.

Farah said he was forced to do housework and childcare "if I wanted food in my mouth", and was told: "If you ever want to see your family again, don't say anything."

"Often, I would just lock myself in the bathroom and cry," he says in the documentary.

His life was transformed for the better when he went to live with Kinsi Farah, the sister-in-law

Everything Sir Mo has survived proves he's not only one of our greatest Olympians but a truly great Briton. We must build a future where these tragic events are never repeated

SADIQ KHAN

trying to send asylum claimants to Rwanda under a scheme to deter cross-Channel migrants.

'Get out and run'

Farah's wife Tania said in the year leading up to their 2010 wedding she realised "there were lots of missing pieces to his story" but she eventually "wore him down with the questioning".

When he arrived in the UK, Farah said the woman who accompanied him took a piece of paper from him that had his relatives' contact details and "ripped it up and put it in the

of the woman who is alleged to have brought him to England.

He started regular schooling and Farah's physical education teacher, Alan Watkinson, noticed how the troubled youngster's mood changed when he was on the running track.

"The only language he seemed to understand was the language of PE and sport," says Watkinson.

Farah eventually told Watkinson the truth about his status, and the teacher informed social services.

AFP

'I just don't understand it' - Tiger Woods hits out at LIV Golf rebels

St Andrews, United Kingdom - Tiger Woods railed against the breakaway LIV Golf Series on Tuesday as he spoke ahead of the British Open in St Andrews, questioning why young players would join the Saudi-backed circuit when it remains unclear if they will be able to participate in majors in the future.

Woods, who has fought to be fit to play in the 150th Open this week as he continues his recovery from severe leg injuries suffered in a car crash last year, was scathing in his assessment of the new series and wondered what incentive those involved even had to practise given the guaranteed sums of money involved.

"I disagree with it. I think that



Tiger Woods watches his shot from the 18th tee during a build-up event ahead of the British Open at St Andrews in Scotland, on Monday (AFP)

what they've done is they've turned their back on what has allowed them to get to this position," Woods said when asked about his fellow professionals

who have been tempted to join the controversial tour.

"And who knows what's going to happen in the near future with world-ranking points,

the criteria for entering major championships.

Failure to earn ranking points could compromise the chances for those players affiliated to the LIV series of playing in majors in the future.

"It's up to all the major championship bodies to make that determination. But that is a possibility, that some players will never, ever get a chance to play in a major championship, never get a chance to experience this right here, walk down the fairways at Augusta National," said Woods, a three-time Open winner.

"That, to me, I just don't understand it."

AFP

US Justice Department probes PGA over LIV Golf actions: reports

Washington, United States - US Justice Department officials are investigating the US PGA Tour over possible anti-competitive behavior regarding the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series, the Wall Street Journal reported on Monday.

The report comes three days before the start of the year's final major tournament, the British Open at St. Andrews, where LIV Golf players will be allowed to compete for the Claret Jug.

The Justice Department refused to comment on the report but Golf Channel and Golf Digest reported the PGA Tour had confirmed the investiga-

tion.

American stars Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, Patrick Reed, Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka are among those who have defected to upstart LIV Golf, which offers the richest purses in golf history at \$25 million and 54-hole events instead of the usual 72.

The US PGA Tour responded by banning players indefinitely who competed in LIV Golf's first two events, 17 players last month in England and seven more earlier this month in the United States.

Player agents have received inquiries from Justice Depart-

ment anti-trust investigators regarding US PGA Tour bylaws governing player participation in other golf events and about the PGA's recent actions regarding LIV Golf, the Journal reported.

"This was not unexpected," a US PGA Tour spokesman said. "We went through this in 1994 and we are confident of a similar outcome."

US PGA Tour anti-trust moves were investigated in 1994 when Australian star Greg Norman tried to start a rival tour, but the probe ended in 1995 with no action taken against the PGA Tour.

AFP

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BOOM BOOM BUMRAH!

Jasprit Bumrah takes a career-best 6 for 19 to set up India's 10-wicket thrashing of England in 1st ODI

London, United Kingdom - Jasprit Bumrah routed the top order as India thrashed 50-over world champions England by 10 wickets in the first one-day international at the Oval on Tuesday.

Fast bowler Bumrah took a career-best 6-19 as the hosts were dismissed for just 110 in 25.2 overs.

India captain Rohit Sharma, who won a good toss, then made an unbeaten 76 before Shikhar Dhawan (31 not out) cut Brydon Carse for four as the tourists finished on 114-0 with more than 31 overs to spare.

Victory gave 2023 World Cup hosts India a 1-0 lead in a three-match series that continues on the other side of London's River Thames at Lord's on Thursday.

Bumrah produced an opening burst of 4-9 in five overs against an England side featuring arguably their strongest batting line-up at this level since their 2019 World Cup final triumph.

England avoided the embarrassment of being dismissed for less than their record low completed ODI score of 86 all out against Australia at Old Trafford in 2001.

But an innings featuring four ducks in the tops six - Jason Roy, Joe Root, Ben Stokes and Liam Livingstone were all out for nought - saw England bowled out with nearly half of their 50 overs remaining.

Bumrah, 28, returned to clean up Brydon Carse and David Willey to surpass his only other five-wicket haul of his 71 match ODI career - 5-27 against Sri Lanka at Pallekelle five years ago.

Mohammed Shami, Bumrah's new-ball partner, took 3-31 in seven overs as he became the fastest Indian and joint-third fastest to 150 ODI wickets in



India's Jasprit Bumrah celebrates the wicket of England's Liam Livingstone in their first One Day International at The Oval in London on Tuesday (AFP)

We really came third in a two-horse race. I thought India exposed the conditions fantastically

JOS BUTTLER

matches played on his 80th appearance.

England's innings boasted just four double-figure contributions, captain Jos Buttler top-scoring with 30 and Willey managing 21.

This was England's sixth ODI defeat by 10 wickets and their heaviest defeat at home when batting first.

"It's a very tough day, we really came third in a two-horse race," said Buttler, who has now lost three out of four games since succeeding the retired Eoin Morgan as England's full-time white-

ball skipper.

Overcast skies and a well-grassed pitch favoured the faster bowlers, but it was still a superb display by Bumrah and Shami.

"We know the quality of our new-ball bowlers and they did magnificently," said Rohit.

Buttler praised the tourists' play. "I thought India exposed the conditions fantastically, in the T20 series and now in this first ODI they've bowled superbly in the powerplays and that is some-

thing that we have to address," he said.

The tone was set when Roy, on his Surrey home ground, played on trying to drive Bumrah's fourth ball of the day.

Two balls later, Root - the world's top-ranked Test batsman - was undone by a Bumrah delivery that lifted off a good length.

And in the next over Test captain Stokes fell for a golden duck when an inside edge off Shami was brilliantly caught by diving

wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

Jonny Bairstow then fell for seven, caught behind off Bumrah.

Bairstow, Root and Stokes all missed the recent T20 series which India won 2-1.

This was the first time the star trio had played a 50-over international together since England's World Cup final win over New Zealand three years ago.

They managed just seven runs between them.

AFP

Australia lose top Test championship spot after Sri Lanka defeat

Galle, Sri Lanka - Australia lost their top World Test Championship position to South Africa Tuesday after they were defeated by Sri Lanka in the second match of their series.

The island nation completed a stunning innings and 39-run victory over captain Pat Cummins' Australia in Galle on Monday to end the two-match series level at 1-1.

The result shook up the championship table with Sri Lanka climbing to third as the race to make the final heats up.

"South Africa take over as the new leader on the latest standings with a win-loss percentage of 71.43 percent, while Australia drop to second with 70 percent after their first Test loss in the current period," the International Cricket Council said.

"Sri Lanka are now firmly in the mix for the World Test Championship final next year, with their win helping them jump in front of Pakistan, India and West Indies."

Sri Lankan spinner Prabath Jayasuriya had a dream debut with a match haul of 12 wickets and veteran batsman Dinesh Chandimal stood out with an unbeaten 206 - his maiden Test double ton.

Cummins termed the loss a "reality check" for a team that won the opener inside three days but were then bundled out on the fourth day of the second match.

AFP

Pogba 'happy to be home' at Juventus

Turin, Italy - Paul Pogba often cut an unhappy figure at Old Trafford, especially in the past couple of seasons, but the 29-year-old Frenchman could barely contain the smiles as he explained his return to Juventus on Tuesday.

"At Juve, I'm at home," he said at his 'welcome back' press conference, six years after his departure for Manchester United.

Pogba completed his move on Monday, joining on a free transfer and signing a four year deal which will earn him a reported eight million euros (\$8.12 million) a season plus a potential two million euros in bonuses.

"I'm very happy to come back home because I really feel at home here. You saw how people received me, it was more than a dream for me," he said.

Pogba wound down his contract with United who he joined in 2016 for a then record fee of 105 million euros to rejoin Juve where he achieved considerable success during his previous spell with the club.

From 2012 to 2016 he helped Juve win four Serie A titles and two Italian Cups, and reach the



Paul Pogba greets supporters at Juventus' medical centre in Turin on Saturday (AFP)

Champions League final in 2015.

With United he won the English League Cup and Europa League in his first season but nothing since, leading him to cut a distant figure as coaches came and went.

In spite of that, Pogba said he has no regrets about his time in Manchester.

"No, never. I believe in destiny.

All the choices I made, I'm happy, life is like that," he said.

"Sometimes you make choices that don't give you satisfaction, but I'm happy for those years.

"In Manchester, I grew up. I learned. I became a man."

Like United, however, Juve have also been struggling to dominate as they did when he last wore the black and white

stripes. After a record nine consecutive Scudetti (2012 to 2020), the 'Old Lady' have been outside the top three in Serie A for the past two seasons and have not reached the quarter-finals of the Champions League since 2019.

But his return also brings about a reunion with coach Massimiliano Allegri.

AFP

England set Euro record in eight-goal rout of Norway

Brighton, United Kingdom - England recorded the biggest win in European Championship history as Beth Mead's hat-trick inspired an 8-0 demolition of Norway that booked the hosts' quarter-final place on Monday.

Sarina Wiegman's side scored six in the first half on route to smashing their own women's Euro record margin of victory set when they beat Scotland 6-0 in 2017.

No team, either male or female, had ever scored eight at a European Championship until England's incredible goal-spree against the overwhelmed Norwegians in Brighton.

England's win guaranteed they will finish top of Group A with one match still to play.

They face Northern Ireland in Southampton on Friday in a dead rubber before returning to Brighton a week on Wednesday to play the runners-up in Group B, which features Germany and Spain, in the quarter-finals.

AFP

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WIMBLEDON ROUND-UP

KYRGIOS AND DEMONS

Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios ‘needs Sigmund Freud’ to help him deal with the demons during games, says former champ John McEnroe

London, United Kingdom - Three-time Wimbledon champion John McEnroe said Tuesday that controversial Australian Nick Kyrgios “needs Sigmund Freud” to sort out the “demons” in his game.

Kyrgios carved a sometimes thrilling, often controversial path to the final at the All England Club where he lost in four sets on Sunday to Novak Djokovic.

A series of outbursts saw the 27-year-old fined and he was described as “evil” and “a bully” by third round opponent Stefanos Tsitsipas.

But there was some impressive and inventive hitting, not least in the final, where he clattered 30 aces and 62 winners in total. “The guy is a genius out there the way he plays,” McEnroe told the BBC, adding that Kyrgios needed some advice from the father of psychoanalysis.

“He needs Sigmund Freud to come out of the grave and somehow figure out a way to keep this guy going for a couple of years because we could use him.

“It’s unbelievable, he moves the needle for us in tennis. We need this big time but we don’t need him to try half the time.”

Off court the world number 45, who has admitted to ‘tanking’ during matches, also faces a court hearing in Canberra next month in relation to an allegation of common assault.

“He’s a good kid, the players like him, he’s well liked in the locker room, he does a lot of charity work,” said McEnroe in mitigation.

“But he’s got demons you know, in a way - we all have this



In the final, after a smooth first set, Nick Kyrgios was continuously remonstrating with himself and his supporters

fear of failure and it’s a question of how you best deal with it.”

McEnroe, a seven-time Grand Slam winner, was himself no stranger to controversy in his career, often lapsing into pantomime histrionics on court in a bid to raise his own game.

“I would say I’m proud of most of what I did but there are certainly times where I’m like, ‘I didn’t need to do that!’” said McEnroe.

“It may be at times you blow off some steam. Obviously, you see Kyrgios doing that all the time.”

How do you think his box feels when he’s screaming at them? Those are the people that love him most, right?

JOHN MCENROE

The Australian was handed a code violation in Sunday’s final during which he also volubly demanded the removal of a spectator who he claimed was drunk and launched a foul-mouthed tirade at his own box.

“How do you think his box feels when he’s screaming at them? Those are the people that love him most, right?” said McEnroe. “Unfortunately, the people that you love most you take it out on, because you feel closest to them. I think we can all relate to that.”

AFF



Novak Djokovic celebrates his Wimbledon triumph during a welcoming ceremony in Belgrade on Monday (AFP)

Djokovic doubts his US Open entry, but ‘hope springs eternal’

Belgrade, Serbia - Recently-crowned Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic said on Monday it is unlikely he will feature in this year’s US Open as he continues to refuse to be vaccinated against coronavirus.

As things stand, the 35-year-old’s unvaccinated status means he will not be allowed into the United States to play in the tournament, which starts next month.

The Serb was deported from Australia over his vaccination status in January, preventing him from defending his Australian Open title.

“At the moment I can’t go to the United States, I’m hoping for positive news, but there’s not a lot of time, I don’t know, hope springs eternal,” he told Serbian broadcasters RTS. “I’d like to play the US Open but if it doesn’t happen

it’s not the end of the world, nor the first Grand Slam I have to withdraw from.

“It’s important to me to stay healthy, physically and mentally, so I can still play for a long time and the chances to do so will certainly come,” he added.

The Serbian top seed beat Nick Kyrgios in four sets on Sunday to win his seventh title at the All England Club and 21st Grand Slam crown overall - leaving him just one behind Rafael Nadal.

“People asked me, speaking about my records, what was my favourite number and I cited one of my idols, who is no longer with us, Kobe Bryant,” Djokovic said in front of a crowd of thousands of fans in Belgrade.

“My favourite title is the next one,” he added.

AFF

New Wimbledon champ Rybakina dismisses Russian ‘product’ claims

Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan - Newly-crowned Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina on Tuesday dismissed Russian claims that she was its “product” as she received a hero’s welcome in Kazakhstan, which she represented at the tournament.

Russian and Belarusian players were banned from Wimbledon this year after Russia sent troops to Ukraine but Moscow-born Rybakina was able to play as she had switched her allegiance to Kazakhstan in 2018.

At the weekend Russia appeared to claim her Grand Slam success when Russian tennis chief Shamil Tarpishev de-

scribed Rybakina as “our product”.

“It’s very nice! Well done Rybakina! We win the Wimbledon tournament,” Tarpishev said.

Russia’s former world number one Yevgeny Kafelnikov reinforced that view in a post on Twitter on Monday.

“Buying a ready to use product from the producer does not take a lot of brains,” wrote retired Kafelnikov, who won the French and Australian Opens and an Olympic gold medal.

Rybakina’s parents still live in Moscow and she had been reluctant throughout the tournament to elaborate on how much time

she spends in Russia.

“The transition from a junior to a professional career is very difficult,” Rybakina, 23, told journalists in Kazakhstan when asked to comment on the “product” tag.

“A good team is needed. Not everyone is able to continue at professional level and achieve some successes. Only a small number (can) and in this way I am very lucky.”

“So I am of course not really in agreement with that phrasing.”

‘Player of promise’

Speaking alongside Rybakina, Kazakh tennis federation’s deputy chief Yuri PolSKIY took

issue with the Russian federation’s position.

“If it is the result of (Russia’s) work, why did they let her go so easily? In 2018, Shamil Tarpishev said himself that he did not consider Elena Rybakina a tennis player of promise,” PolSKIY said.

“I think with that it’s time to put an end to this because there is too much hype around this subject.”

For Kazakhstan, Rybakina’s win represents its biggest achievement in tennis, a sport that oligarch and federation head Bulat Utemuratov has invested tens of millions of dollars into.

AFF



Kazakhstan’s Elena Rybakina celebrates with the trophy during the podium ceremony (AFP)

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