

Used-car market heats up

Muscat - The price of used cars in Oman has skyrocketed in the recent past with the COVID-19 pandemic, global shortage of semiconductor chips and introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) being some of the factors impacting the sector.

Individual buyers are bearing the brunt of the price rise even as dealers struggle to find low-mileage vehicles in good condition.

In the bargain, sellers are getting more than expected on their used vehicles.

Abdullah al Hinai, owner of Al Wafi Used Cars, attributed the demand - and consequently higher prices - to "a ripple effect of the global automotive chip shortage".

For Said al Javed Bhuyan, salesman at Tilal Muscat Vehicles, the short supply of new vehicles accounts most for pushing up demand and prices of used vehicles. "Customers are looking for new cars, which unfortunately are not available at local dealers. So they are opting for used cars, spiking demand for second-hand vehicles."

Manoj K, an expatriate who sold his car recently, got a good deal. "Demand is high for used cars, so I got RO700 more than I expected."

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is another factor affecting car supply, observed Fahad al Balushi, salesman at Classic Cars.

Russia is one of the world's largest suppliers of metals used



Customers are looking for new cars, which unfortunately are not available at local dealers

SAID AL JAVED BHUYAN

in - among a host of other things - car components, such as nickel, which is used in lithium-iron batteries, and palladium, which is used in catalytic converters.

The demand for second-hand cars has also been fueled by people not finding their choice of new cars. "Many customers change their cars every two or three

years. These people are not finding the desired cars in showrooms and resorting to used cars," said Bhuyan.

The economic slowdown and financial uncertainty are also keeping customers away from new cars, Bhuyan added. "All this is adding pressure on the used-car segment."

Muscat Daily met a Filipino resident poring over a specs sheet at a used-car showroom in Ghubra.

"I'm looking for an affordable car on a tight budget - around RO3,000. The pandemic induced slowdown and the current inflation has resulted in everything becoming costly. To manage the rising cost of living, I opted for a used car."

Car dealers

Al Wafi Used Cars' Hinai claimed he sold two cars every week earlier. "Now, there are times even for a month we do not sell even one. As a result, we reduced our commission to survive."

About the kind of cars in demand, Balushi at Classic Cars described those with a mileage of 20,000km to 50,000km as 'good vehicles'.

"Most of the cars available currently have done more than 200,000km. Good cars are in high demand... selling like hot cakes. However, we are finding it difficult to source good cars."

Tilal Muscat Vehicles regularly maintained a stock of around

90 in its showroom earlier, which is down to half that number currently. "Business is slowly picking up but good cars are in short supply."

Among the factors driving customers away from new vehicles is VAT, introduced in the sultanate in April 2021, "more so in the current market conditions", Hinai noted.

"When you buy a new car, five per cent VAT on the price of a new car converts to a significant amount. But if you buy a used car, the VAT will be a smaller amount," he added.

Better still, if an individual buys a used car directly from an owner, they save on VAT.

(Text and photo Syed Fasiuddin)

Raising digital reach to fight adult illiteracy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is exerting concerted efforts to reduce adult illiteracy by employing digital and social media platforms to reach the largest possible number of people seeking adult education.

According to the Ministry of Education (MoE), illiteracy rate in the 15-44 age group decreased to 0.46 per cent in 2021 compared to 2.2 per cent in 2015.

To mark International Literacy Day, celebrated on September 8, MoE released these figures and joined the rest of the world to raise awareness and concern about literacy problems that exist in local communities as well as globally.

On the occasion, an official of MoE said, "The ministry is currently working on developing a lifelong learning system, by formulating a new literacy strategy to keep pace with the accelerating dynamic and digital changes."

The ministry is focusing on employing modern technology in the field of adult education through digital applications. "It is also registering students in literacy and adult education systems electronically, and using social networking sites to raise awareness of continuing education programmes."



Distance learning

About MoE's efforts to fight illiteracy, the official said, "Making illiteracy a national issue, the ministry has set up a number of support projects through partnerships between government and private sector institutions. These include the 'Training Bag Project' that contains basic scientific material to be used to train teaching staff in literacy classes."

The ministry is enhancing the use of visual communication systems in implementing training workshops and forums for specialists in the field, and using the 'Educational Mawred' channel in YouTube for adult education classes.

Unesco defines literacy in its modern sense as the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information securely and appropriately through digital technologies that enhance scope of employment and entrepreneurship.

► NEWS BRIEF

DHAHIRAH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FROM SEPT 23

Muscat - The first ever Dhahirah International Film Festival in Ibri is set to take place from October 23 to 26.

This was announced during a press conference held at Municipality Hall in Ibri on Sunday. Seventy-seven films from several countries, including the UAE, Morocco, Egypt, Libya, India, Sudan and Iraq have been entered in the competition stage of the event.

The festival is being organised by the Omani Society for Cinema and Theatre with the aim of creating an environment that encourages the development of the film sector, in addition promoting Oman as a filming destination.

04



Fitch warns on GCC banks' exposure to Turkey

15



Charles the environmentalist: Green King

Fine of up to RO100,000 for offering postal services without licence: TRA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has warned that anyone who offers postal services and activities without a licence can be fined up to RO100,000.

A statement issued by TRA said, 'Anyone who wishes to provide postal services and related activities must obtain the neces-

sary licence. Postal services include receiving, sorting, distributing, and delivering postal items such as parcels and letters.'

It added that postal delivery services are carried out through licensed offices, applications and electronic platforms. 'The authority urges anyone who wishes to provide postal services to apply for a licence from the authority in accordance with the established procedures.'

According to Article 30 of the Postal Services Regulation Law, any individual who provides postal services without a licence will be punished with a fine, starting from RO1,000 but can be as high as RO100,000. The amount is doubled in case of a repeat violation.

TRA also urged all individuals and companies to deal with licensed companies only, which can be found on www.tra.gov.om



Youth group supports the needy by recycling plastic

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A group of youngsters called Gharsha, or 'Bottle', has launched an initiative to support needy families while creating an environment free of plastic waste.

The group has mobilised the community in Muscat to collect plastic waste, which is transported to a recycling factory with proceeds going to the needy.

Starting in May, the team launched the initiative in Muscat. Speaking to Muscat Daily, Kawthar Mujtaba al Lawati, member of Gharsha, said the team, in cooperation with Recycling Services Company, collects plastic waste from individuals, institutions and charities in Muscat.

"The idea is to recycle plastic waste and turn it into raw material that can be used by specialised companies," she informed.

Kawthar added that the initiative aims to increase community awareness about recycling, and reduce the risks of plastic waste on wild and marine life. "By selling recycled plastic waste, the team aims to support needy families with clothing, school supplies and more," she said.

Volunteers collect plastic bot-



The idea is to recycle plastic waste and turn it into raw material for specialised companies

KAWTHAR AL LAWATI

tles and inform the team via WhatsApp, who then transfer the waste to the recycling plant. "In August, we decided to establish collection points for plastic waste in each wilayat of Muscat, from where the waste is transported weekly to the factory."

In three months, the team collected three tonnes of plastic waste. "We were pleasantly surprised by the awareness among the community and their efforts to contribute to this initiative. Some people designated an area in their homes as a collection point, while others gave suggestions that facilitated the process.

Since a percentage of the financial returns go to poor families, this humanitarian aspect has increased their enthusiasm."

As with any startup, the team is managing financial challenges to proceed with the work it has started. "Logistics is another issue we grappled with initially as providing a vehicle to collect and transport waste was not easy. Recycling Services Company came to the rescue and provided us with a truck and a driver to do the job," said Kawthar.

About the group's goals, she said, "The environment is our responsibility. The correct handling of plastic waste contributes greatly to its preservation. We will continue to spread environmental awareness and our voluntary work, which we hope in the near future to convert into institutional work. We also aspire to cooperate with companies and institutions in projects and programmes of social responsibility and social investment."

The group has plans to spread the initiative in all governorates, and involve other environmental teams and the community. "We aspire to establish our own recycling plant, contribute to the advancement of the country, and support the directions of Oman Vision 2040," Kawthar added.

Greater Cities for better living!



When major cities are occupying the top positions in the settlement hierarchy based on their population and set criteria, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) is introducing another concept branded as 'Greater Cities' considering the important functional roles that economic gateways and national centres will play as major engines of growth in determining the status of the cities in the future. This concept has been given shape as per the Oman National

Spatial Strategy (ONSS). A committee formed for the purpose has started preparing structural plans for Greater Muscat, Greater Salalah, Greater Nizwa and Greater Sohar, in addition to accelerating development in the wilayat of Jabal Akhdar and establishing a control centre to follow up the implementation of projects. Here is what Muscat Daily readers had to say on what more or better do they expect when the cities graduate to a higher status:

Pooya Krishna
Traffic Engineer

Within Greater Muscat, I would like to see accessible public transportation options, bikeways and walkways, so that development does not impose the need for driving personal cars as the main mode of transport. Transportation options should also include walking, cycling, bus services, and rail services.

Babirye Joweria
Hotel House Manager

There are several better facilities needed for Greater Muscat and some of them are: better electricity supply, education services, security services, more water sources, better health services, better communication networks, better roads, warehouses, places of worship, residential accommodations, shops and good transport services.

Dr Sanjay Dalal
Medical practitioner

I would like to see quite a few changes and that include solar power, clean water, efficient drainage, roads with cycling tracks and emergency vehicle tracks, more public toilets, health centres, good public transport, play grounds, gardens, amphitheatres, community halls and malls.

Saeedeh Safaei
Environmental engineer

I would like to see Muscat as a sustainable city as it is possible in the GCC region. Muscat deserves extended public transportation network where all citizens and residents could commute safer, cheaper and more conveniently; and at the same time it is more environment friendly for our planet Earth.

Dr Trishna
Dentist

As such Muscat itself has a self sufficient greater city concept built with one of the best infrastructures and facilities in all sectors. Just adding few more tree-shaded walkways and cycleways will add another feather to the hat. A little more attention on transport facilities for famous tourist spots and additional changing room facilities on beaches will be a great idea.

Nandhini Nanda
Psychotherapist

I would like to see libraries for people of all ages; especially for children as this will be helpful for their future. These libraries must also have digital and audio books for people who are not so interested in traditional reading.

Mohammad Yousuf
Businessman

Greater Muscat must have a good drainage system, as we have seen many areas getting flooded during rains. I stay in old Muscat and it is very tough for us during that time. Also, we need good restaurants in and around Corniche.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Has Oman done enough to attract Qatar World Cup fans to use the country as the base during the event and thereby boost tourism?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram

SEND US ON OUR
NEW
WHATSAPP NO
91953774

456km Tour of Salalah kicks off

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Tour of Salalah kicked off on Sunday with more than 70 cyclists taking part in the four-stage race.

The tour is organised by the Oman Cycling Association and supported by Dhofar Municipality; the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth; and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

To continue till Wednesday, the four-stage cycling race - with a total prize money of RO7,730 - is witnessing a competition among 11 teams - seven from Oman and one each from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE,



and Thailand.

On Sunday, Stage 1 saw cyclists starting at the 116km race from the picturesque Darbat Waterfall to Ayn Ishat.

On Monday, the 101km Stage

2 race will be from Al Baeled Archaeological Park to Hajeeef area.

Stage 3, on Tuesday, will see cyclists battle it out from Mirbat Castle to Tawi Ateer in Wadi

Darbat in a 123km race.

On Wednesday, Stage 4 and the concluding race will cover 116km from Khor Rori to Municipality Entertainment Centre in Salalah.

Encroachments removed in Seeb

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to deal with illegal land possessions, Muscat Municipality in Seeb carried out operations to remove two illegal constructions in the wilayat of Seeb. Action was taken after the expiration of the specified time given to the occupants to prove their ownership.

'Unauthorised plot grabbing is dealt with by municipal authorities systemically: First by putting a warning sticker showing the violation, and then by serving a notice to remove the encroachment at the expense of the violator,'



stated the municipality.

A violator is given one week's time to vacate, after which the competent authorities remove the encroachment.

Muscat Municipality called on citizens who have occupied government land illegally to vacate

in order to avoid legal accountability 'as these holdings represent an obstacle in the implementation of many housing schemes, and that they can also constitute an obstacle and danger as a result of their establishment in inappropriate locations'.

MoL calls on employers to adhere to labour law

As part of its efforts to implement the Omani Labour Law effectively, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) conducted several inspections in North Sharqiyah on Sunday.

An MoL statement said, 'The ministry, represented by the Directorate General of Labour in North Sharqiyah governorate, conducted inspection campaigns at various work sites in the governorate. The ministry called on employers to adhere to and implement the Omani Labour Law.'

Canon

OUTPACE OUTPERFORM

The high speed mirrorless camera that can keep up with the action in a way you never thought possible.

EOS R3

Canon
AUTHORISED PARTNER

جينتكو Genetco

For Enquiries
95713529

www.genetco.net
@GenetcoOman
@GenetcoOman
Genetco Oman

EA invites bids for development of Khor al Qurm Reserve in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Environment Authority (EA) is calling for investments in Khor al Qurm al Kabeer Reserve in Dhofar in efforts to attract visitors while conserving wildlife.

Nature reserves in Oman are a major tourist attraction, offering scenic nature and camping and diving facilities to enjoy wildlife and underwater treasures.

"As part of our efforts to support the national economy and benefit from the natural reserves in the country, the authority has floated a tender for management and development of the Khor al Qurm al Kabeer Reserve in the wilayat of Salalah," an EA official said.

Interested companies must submit a report on how it proposes to develop the reserve and an action plan for its management. The investor must adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism development, preserve natural and cultural heritage, and

refrain from engaging in any activity that adversely affects the environmental and cultural values of the site.

The last date for submission of bids is October 20.

Khor al Qurm al Kabeer can be accessed via the road connecting Salalah to Raysut. It has a unique collection of diverse

Khor al Qurm al Kabeer can be accessed via the road connecting Salalah to Raysut. It has a unique collection of diverse flora

flora.

In June 2022, EA announced tenders inviting Omani companies to bid for setting up a park in Al Wusta Wildlife Reserve and develop tourism facilities in Al Salil Natural Reserve in the wilayat of Al Kamil wa al Wafi, South Sharqiyah.



(Supplied photo)



Tamkin-Sahim training for govt jobs begins in Buraimi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A training programme for the empowerment of youth wishing to take up government jobs began in Buraimi on Sunday.

Being conducted by the Ministry of Labour and called Tamkin-Sahim, the programme seeks to raise productivity in the workplace.

The five-day training is the tenth edition of a programme targeting 2,216 candidates who have passed interviews and tests from different governorates. In Buraimi, 89 of the candidates - 35 male and 54 female - are being trained.

The programme is supported by branches of Training Support Centre in different governorates.

Royal Academy of Management's Board of Trustees approved

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Council of Ministers has approved the formation of a Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Management, which is blessed by the honorary patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

The decision follows Royal Decree 2/2022 directing establishment of the Royal Academy of Management, defining its competences, and approving its organisational structure. It stipulates, in Article 6, that the academy must have a Board of Trustees under the chairmanship of the Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, and that the ap-



Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi

pointment of members and the terms of their membership be subject to approval of the Council of Ministers.

Members of the Board of Trustees have been appointed for the next three years under the chairman of Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of

Diwan of Royal Court. The board includes Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy as vice-chairman, supported by members Mahad bin Said bin Ali Baawain, Minister of Labour, Sheikh Waleed bin Khamis al Hashar, CEO of Bank Muscat, Khaula bint Hamoud al Harthy, CEO of Injaz Oman, and Dr Hatem bin Bakhit al Shanfari, faculty member of College of Economics and Political Science at Sultan Qaboos University.

Sayyid Khalid has issued a statement in which he affirmed the vision of the Royal Academy of Management to be a beacon of the executive leadership and management, inspired by the

Royal Directives of His Majesty the Sultan to fulfil Oman's vision for the future. He said the academy's plans and programmes are dedicated to implementing His Majesty the Sultan's directives in investing in Omani human capital and equipping citizens with knowledge and the latest practices to overcome future challenges.

Sayyid Khalid also stressed that the academy would effectively contribute to shaping future visions and insights with the aim of further developing the government system and public-private partnerships, seizing economic opportunities, and developing local management systems.

Book on children's games from around the world launched

Muscat - A book titled *An ABC Guide to Children's Games around the Globe* was launched on Saturday at Let's Read's library in Oman Avenues Mall.

It marked the third official release of the book following its launch in New Orleans and Atlanta in the United States last month.

The author, Nicole Brewer, is an English language teacher at University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Nizwa. This is her second book, the first titled *A Guide to Landing an English Teaching Job Abroad* also being self-published.

"Though this is my second book, it is my first children's book," she emphasised.

Nicole dedicated the book to her nephews, aged ten and 12. "I wanted to write a book full of representation for children to learn about traditions from different countries from around the world and inspire them to travel and see different places."

Nicole speaks from experience, having travelled to over 40 countries and lived in Germany, South Africa and South Korea, besides Oman.

The games featured in the book are in alphabetical order starting with country name. "Though the English alphabet has 26 letters, the book has 25 games because there is no country name beginning with the letter 'X'," Nicole explained.

Most of the games in the book are traditional, passed on from generation to generation. "When my colleagues at UTAS saw 'Al Hawalees' in 'O is for Oman', they said they played the game as chil-



I haven't come across a book like this before. The theme of the book is quite unusual. I think it's a lovely idea, because when children read it, they might try and play those games, too

JANE JAFFER

dren and that they learnt it from their grandparents."

She added, "To make the content interesting, I kept it simple and light reading. But there is background information about all the games."

At the launch event, she read out the chapter 'O is for Oman' on 'Al Hawalees', which is similar to 'Warri', a board game played in Haiti. Instead of six holes and two rows, the Omani version has seven holes and four rows.

Describing the book at the launch, Jane Jaffer, chairperson

and founder of Let's Read, said, "I haven't come across a book like this before. The theme of the book is quite unusual. I think it's a lovely idea, because when children read it, they might try and play those games, too. While learning about children from other countries, they are going learn new games. It's a win-win situation for all."

'An ABC Guide to Children's Games around the Globe' is available at Let's Read in Oman Avenues Mall and on Amazon.

(Text and photo by Syed Fasiuddin)

Local youth conference on climate change held

Muscat - A one-day meet - Local Conference of the Youth on Climate Change - was held in Muscat on Sunday to raise awareness on the phenomenon and discuss possible solutions for it.

The conference was organised by Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Environment Authority (EA) in cooperation with a local voluntary team called Basmatna Gheer, or 'Our Smile is Different'.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of H E Naif Ali al Abri, chairman of CAA. Dr Mohammed Saif al Kalbani, director general of Environmental Affairs at EA, said the conference



(Supplied photo)

was in preparation of the UN Conference of the Parties on Climate Change in Egypt starting on November 6, 2022.

Kalbani added that the confer-

ence underscored the importance of involving youth in tackling the issue of climate change.

Several working papers were presented at the conference covering

topics such as air pollution, climate change and its effects on the sultanate, and an ongoing project of planting mangrove trees.

الشمس لطب الاسنان
Sun Dental Centre
Al-Khuwair

SCAN TO FIND LOCATION

95961234

www.sundentalmuscat.com
/sundentalcentre
sundentaloman
sundentalghubra@hotmail.com

• Affordable
• Experienced doctors
• Al khuwair

Dr. Karthik
BDS, MDS, MOrth (UK)
Specialist Orthodontist.
91105912

Our Services

- ✓ Bleeding gums
- ✓ Fixed Teeth
- ✓ Whitening Teeth
- ✓ Braces

- ✓ Teeth Cleaning
- ✓ Bad Breath
- ✓ OPG X-Ray
- ✓ Root Canal

Approved Insurance:
National Life, Mednet, Metlife, AXA, NAS, OQIC
Saico, NextCare, Vipul Better Care, Greenline & More

MOH No: 558/2022

MARKET WATCH

MSX304,519.71

FOREX RATES

(ROI equals)

Indian	206.89
Pakistan	588.26
Bangladesh	244.90
Philippines	147.58
Sri Lanka	927.81

BRIEFS

EY agrees split into separate audit and advisory firms

British financial services giant EY has agreed to split into separate audit and advisory units, with the latter business set for a stock market listing, AFP reported.

The move, which was confirmed on Thursday and is aimed at accelerating growth and avoiding conflicts of interest, still needs the approval of EY's 13,000 worldwide partners. EY operations in China are not part of the split.

"EY's strategic review of its businesses has progressed, and EY leaders have reached the decision to move forward with partner votes to separate into two distinct, multidisciplinary organisations," a statement said.

"The next steps include ongoing engagement with partners to provide them with more information in advance of the voting process."

ARA acquires Scirocco's 25% interest in Ruvuma concession in Tanzania

Our Correspondent Muscat

ARA Petroleum Tanzania Limited (APT), a subsidiary of The Zubair Corporation, is a 50 per cent interest holder and operator of the Ruvuma oil and gas concession in Tanzania.

In an agreement with Scirocco Energy, APT has announced its decision to exercise its pre-emption rights to acquire Scirocco's 25 per cent interest in the Ruvuma concession. Upon completion, APT's interest in the Ruvuma concession will increase from 50 per cent to 75 per cent.

The parties will endeavour to complete the disposal by the end of 2022.

In a press statement, Sultan al Ghaithi, chief executive officer of ARA Petroleum said, "The acquisition of Scirocco's interests underlines our strategy to reinforce our portfolio with greater stake in high-quality assets and strengthen our long-term presence in Tanzania. It also reaffirms our confidence in the asset and commitment to continue supporting the region's oil and gas industry."

The Ruvuma Production



The acquisition of Scirocco's interest underlines our strategy to reinforce our portfolio with greater stake in high-quality assets and strengthen our long-term presence in Tanzania

SULTAN AL GHAIITHI

Sharing Agreement (Ruvuma PSA) was granted in 2005. The Ruvuma PSA comprises the Mt-wara License which contains the

Ntorya Appraisal Area over the Ntorya gas condensate discovery in Tanzania. The Ntorya gas-condensate discovery, made in 2012 with the drilling of Ntorya-1 (NT-1) well, was the most immediate commercialisation opportunity in the Ruvuma PSA at the time.

Following on from NT-1, an up-dip well, Ntorya-2 (NT-2), at a location approximately 1.5km east of the discovery well was drilled in 2017.

APT was established in 2018 to accelerate the development of the Ntorya area.

The exploration activities picked up momentum in 2021 with APT acquiring working interest from Ndivu Resources Ltd and becoming the operator of the project.

APT initiated a 3D seismic acquisition in the block earlier in 2022 for an area that covers 338 sqkm and is planning to drill one more exploration/appraisal well during this exploration period.

The information gathered from these activities will provide a more accurate estimation of the gas reserves and gas quality in the area, the statement added.

Fitch warns on GCC banks' exposure to Turkey

Our Correspondent Muscat

GCC banks' exposure to Turkey through Turkish subsidiaries is increasingly credit-negative due to deteriorating operating conditions in Turkey, Fitch Ratings warned.

Nevertheless, the risks are largely reflected in GCC banks' viability ratings (VRs) and exposures are decreasing due to Turkish lira depreciation, the rating agency said in a statement.

Fitch downgraded 25 Turkish banks to 'B-' from 'B' in July following the downgrade of Turkey's sovereign rating to 'B'/negative from 'B+' /negative on spiralling inflation and increasing macroeconomic and external risks. The Turkish banks' ratings all remain on negative outlook.

According to Fitch, GCC banks with Turkish subsidiaries adopted hyperinflation reporting in the first half of 2022 under the accounting standard IAS 29 as cumulative inflation in Turkey had exceeded 100 per cent over three years. IAS 29 requires the banks to restate non-monetary assets and liabilities to reflect the impact of hyperinflation, leading to net monetary losses in their income statements.

"We calculate that GCC banks with Turkish subsidiaries



recorded about US\$950mn of net monetary losses in the first half of 2022. Emirates NBD and Kuwait Finance House (KFH) were worst-affected in terms of the operating profit/risk-weighted assets ratio, Fitch's core profitability metric,' Fitch noted.

The net monetary losses at Emirates NBD and KFH, as well as at Kuwait's Burgan Bank, accounted for over 15 per cent of the banks' operating profit in the first half of 2022, the rating agency said.

Fitch expects further net monetary losses in 2022-2023, gradually declining as Turkish inflation slowly eases. It expects Turkish inflation to average 71.4 per cent in 2022 and 57 per cent in 2023.

Fitch has always viewed GCC

banks' Turkish exposures as credit-negative.

'Turkish exposures are a risk for GCC banks' capital positions due to currency translation losses from the lira depreciation. The lira has weakened dramatically in recent years, with the US dollar/lira exchange rate now about 18, compared with 2.2 in January 2014,' Fitch said.

The rating agency calculates that GCC banks' aggregate currency translation losses through 'other comprehensive income' were US\$6.3bn in 2018-2021, mainly due to lira depreciation.

'The aggregate net income of GCC banks' Turkish subsidiaries was about US\$3.3bn over the same period. We expect currency losses to remain high until at least 2024 due to further lira depreciation,' it added.

UAE rakes in \$5bn as tourists return

Dubai, UAE - The United Arab Emirates' tourism revenues surpassed US\$5bn in the first half of this year, officials said Sunday, with a strong performance expected this winter when neighbouring Qatar hosts football's World Cup.

Hotel occupancy was up more than 40 per cent on Covid-hit 2021, UAE prime minister and Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum said after a cabinet meeting in the capital Abu Dhabi.

"Our tourism sector's revenues surpassed AED19bn (US\$5.2bn) in the first half of 2022," Sheikh Mohammed said, according to the official WAM news agency.

"The total number of hotel guests reached 12mn, achieving 42 per cent growth, and we expect a strong tourism performance in this winter season."

Dubai, an established holiday destination, is expected to host large numbers of football fans during the World Cup in Novem-



Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid

ber and December due to a scarcity of accommodation in tiny Qatar.

Dubai is one of the Gulf cities operating daily shuttle flights to and from Qatar during the World Cup, allowing fans to stay outside the wealthy state and still attend games.

Dubai airport, the world's busiest for international travel

pre-pandemic, handled 27.8mn passengers in the first half of this year, up more than 160 per cent on the same period of 2021, it said last month.

A quick vaccination roll-out allowed the UAE to bounce back quickly from the pandemic, enjoying a sharp uptick in visitors as Dubai hosted the Expo world fair from last October to March.

Sheikh Mohammed said this year's economic growth has exceeded 22 per cent and foreign trade is more than one trillion dirhams (US\$27bn), compared to AED840bn pre-pandemic.

The cabinet also approved electric cargo aircraft "fully powered with clean energy", and a new law aimed at increasing private-sector involvement in government projects.

The law will encourage "the private sector to participate in development and strategic projects, increasing investment in projects of economic and social values", WAM said.

AFP

'Energy, food crises reshaping insurance'

Zurich, Switzerland - The energy and food security crises are redefining priorities for insurers, with growing focus on helping build economic resilience and facilitate the transition towards green energy, a report from Swiss Re has found.

Slammed first by the Covid-19 pandemic and now by the war raging in Ukraine, the once globalised and interconnected global economy is fragmenting in a multi-polar world, the study from the Swiss reinsurance giant pointed out.

This has spurred rising concerns about supply chain resilience and energy and food security, even as central banks are suddenly hiking interest rates to counter rampant inflation.

The dramatic shifts are having a profound impact on the insurance industry, according to the Zurich-based group, which acts as an insurer for insurers.

"We are living a paradigm shift," Swiss Re's chief economist



Jerome Haegeli told reporters ahead of a big insurance convention in Monte Carlo.

"We have a crisis of the global economy," he said, adding that "We are facing a true economic storm, probably less like a hurricane which goes away, but more like a tsunami which comes in waves."

The supply chain restructuring underway risks delivering a blow to maritime insurers forced to cover increased business costs and losses, but it could also open new markets for insurers, the report found.

"Supply chain restructuring is expected to create investments

in new infrastructure and production facilities, increasing demand for engineering insurance," Swiss Re said.

In a scenario where manufacturers in many advanced markets move production capacity back home, so-called reshoring, global trade activity would likely fall, but Swiss Re said its simulation indicated the additional investments in plants and equipment to expand domestic production would outweigh the negative effect, boosting global economic growth 0.18 per cent on average each year from 2022 to 2026.

This scenario, which would

spur most growth in the United States, Britain and Germany, "is forecast to generate an additional US\$30bn in global commercial insurance premiums over the next five years, mostly from engineering, property and liability covers," Swiss Re said.

Efforts to shift to green energy, requiring the building of new infrastructure that will need to be insured, was meanwhile expected to generate additional premiums from the energy sector of US\$237mn by 2035, the report said.

The Swiss Re economists also highlighted the important role insurers can play in enhancing food security, pointing to how agriculture insurance can help farmers maintain income levels and continue farming even when facing crop losses.

Global agriculture insurance premiums are forecast to reach US\$80bn by 2030, up from US\$46bn in 2020, it said.

AFP

Money transfer firms replace banks in crisis-hit Lebanon

Beirut, Lebanon - Like many people in crisis-hit Lebanon, Elias Skaff used to wait for hours to withdraw cash at the bank but now prefers money transfer companies as trust in lenders has evaporated.

Anyone who relies on traditional banks to receive their money "will die 100 times before cashing it", said Skaff, 50, who has survived Lebanon's three-year-old economic downturn with the help of US dollar payments from a relative abroad.

Once the flagship of Lebanon's economy, the banking sector is now widely despised and avoided after banks barred depositors from accessing their savings, stopped offering loans and closed hundreds of branches and slashed thousands of jobs.

Last month, a local man was widely cheered as a folk hero after he stormed a Beirut bank with a rifle and held employees and customers hostage for hours

to demand some of his US\$200,000 in frozen savings to pay hospital bills for his sick father.

Increasingly, as Lebanon's deep crisis shows no sign of abating, money transfer agencies are filling the gap, also offering currency exchange, credit card and tax payment services and even setting up wedding gift registries.

Skaff said he now receives his money via a Beirut branch of Western Union's Lebanese agent OMT, which says it operates more than 1,200 branches nationwide and handles 80 per cent of money transfers outside the Lebanese banking sector.

"We create services similar to those that banks provide at the request of our customers," said OMT spokesman Naji Abou Zeid.

Lebanon has been battered by its worst-ever economic crisis since the financial sector went



Employees serve customers at a money transfer office in Lebanon's capital Beirut, on July 27 (AFP)

into meltdown in 2019. The local currency has lost more than 90 per cent of its value on the black market, as poverty and unemployment have soared.

Angry protesters have often targeted banks, trashing their ATM machines with rocks and spray cans.

"We can't even withdraw a

penny" from the bank, said 45-year-old Alaa Sheikhani, a customer standing in line at an OMT branch. "How are we supposed to trust them with our money?"

Surviving on remittances

Elie, 36, who recently got married, said he used Whish Money,

a Lebanese money transfer firm, to set up his wedding gift registry, something he said saved wedding guests time, hassle and money in fees.

"Rather than waiting for hours at the bank, which is often crowded, they can hand over the money to an agency," said the man who asked not to be fully

named. "In terms of time saved and costs, it's incomparable."

Whish Money's marketing director Dina Daher said the company is winning customers by charging "zero fees" on Lebanese pound transfers.

Some companies are now even paying salaries through money transfer companies instead of banks.

"When the crisis began, we were forced to pay salaries in cash, and it was a waste of time," because accountants had to count out large bundles of banknotes, said Rachelle Bou Nader, a human resources manager.

But now her firm, sporting goods retailer Mike Sport, pays its employees through Whish, allowing them to "withdraw their salary easily, in instalments, and free of charge", said Bou Nader.

Sami Nader, director of the Levant Institute for Strategic Affairs, said remittances from the

Lebanese diaspora have become crucial to help families weather the crushing economic crisis.

"Today, a young Lebanese employee living abroad won't hesitate to send US\$100 to his parents because this sum now makes a difference," he said.

Lebanese banks have drastically increased fees on the few services they still offer - including foreign currency transfers, now their only meaningful source of income - said Nader, who added that this has further fuelled the exodus to money transfer companies.

About 250,000 residents of Lebanon received remittances in the first half of 2022, according to OMT, up eight per cent from the same period last year.

The World Bank has reported that Lebanon received US\$6.6bn in remittances in 2021, one of the highest levels in the Middle East and North Africa.

AFP

Ukraine's reconstruction to cost \$349bn: Report

Washington, US - Rebuilding Ukraine following the devastation caused by the Russian invasion will cost an estimated US\$349bn, according to a report issued on Friday.

But the figure, which totals 1.5 times the size of the Ukrainian economy, is considered a minimum and is expected to grow in the coming months as the war continues, according to the joint assessment by the government of Ukraine, the European Commission, and the World Bank.

Physical damage alone inflicted since the invasion in late February through June 1 already totaled US\$97bn, the report said.

"The Russian invasion of Ukraine continues to exact a terrible toll, from significant civilian casualties and the displacement of millions of people to the widespread destruction of homes, businesses, social institutions, and economic activity," said Anna Bjerde, the World Bank's regional vice president for Europe and Central Asia.

Over the next 36 months the report estimates that US\$105bn will be needed to address urgent needs such as restoring education and health systems and infrastructure, preparing for the upcoming winter through restoration of heating and energy to homes, support to agriculture, and repair of vital transport routes. Ukraine Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said reconstruction already was underway in the de-occupied territories but will require help from international



A man draws a stroller filled with firewood near a destroyed house as a result of shelling on the village of Moshchun in Kyiv region, on September 9, 2022, amid the Russian military invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

Over the next three years the report estimates that \$105bn will be needed to address urgent needs such as restoring education and health systems and infrastructure, support to agriculture, and repair of vital transport routes

partners. "Only for the first stage, rapid recovery, US\$17bn is needed, of which Ukraine needs US\$3.4bn already this year," he said in a statement.

Allies have rushed to pump aid into the war-ravaged country, with the G7 and the European Union contributing US\$39bn.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU has mobilized 10bn euros "in financing, humanitarian, emergency, and military assistance for Ukraine and another 5bn euros in financing are in the pipeline."

AFP



Fed must keep raising rates into next year to fight inflation: Official

Washington, US - The US central bank will have to stick to its policy of raising interest rates into next year to ensure that high inflation comes down to the two per cent target, a Federal Reserve official said. Fed Governor Christopher Waller cautioned that lowering inflation will take time, and he supports another "significant increase" in the benchmark lending rate at the September 20-21 policy meeting.

The strong job market and the fact the world's largest economy has avoided a recession allow the Fed to continue to move aggressively, he said in a speech prepared for delivery to a conference in Vienna.

"I expect it will take some time before inflation moves back to our 2 per cent goal," he said, and the Fed "will be tightening policy into 2023."

His comments echoed the hawkish statements from other Fed officials recently, including US central bank chief Jerome Powell, who on Thursday stressed that policymakers must move "strongly" to avoid a repeat of the painful inflation surge the US economy suffered in the 1970s and 1980s.

US inflation has reached a 40-year high this year, and though

the economy saw two quarters of negative growth - which is commonly viewed as a sign of recession - low unemployment and strong spending show activity has not slowed significantly.

"The fears of a recession starting in the first half of this year have faded away and the robust US labor market is giving us the flexibility to be aggressive in our fight against inflation," Waller said.

"Right now there is no tradeoff between the Fed's employment and inflation objectives," he said.

The Fed has raised rates four times this year including two massive three-quarter point hikes, with a third expected later this month.

How high policymakers will have to take the benchmark rate will depend on incoming inflation data, Waller said.

But "I believe the policy decision at our next meeting will be straightforward," he said.

He cautioned that even amid some encouraging signs of moderating price pressures "it is too soon to say whether inflation is moving meaningfully and persistently downward."

"This is a fight we cannot, and will not, walk away from."

AFP

Energy majors exaggerating green performance: Analysis

Paris, France - Energy majors are exaggerating their green credentials in public messaging while continuing to allocate the majority of new investment to oil and gas projects, according to a new industry analysis.

Campaigners say this "significant misalignment" between communication strategies and business plans could allow five of the biggest privately-owned energy firms to continue to delay the decarbonisation needed to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Industry watchdog InfluenceMap analysed the content of more than 3,400 public communications from Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP, Shell and TotalEnergies in 2021, from press releases, speeches and company and CEO social media accounts.

They found that 60 per cent of all messages contained at least one "green" claim - such as emissions reduction targets, transitioning the energy mix, or promoting fossil gas as part of a clean energy solution.

These public communications were found to contrast with the five's planned capital expenditure for 2022, with just 12 per cent of new investments earmarked for low-carbon activities.

"You can see this real difference between a high use of green claims in public communications versus this ongoing strategy to kind of undermine and block climate policy," report co-author and program manager Faye Holder told AFP.

She said the gap between what the majors advertised and what they were investing in was misleading the public as to their role in battling climate change.

"Based on the public communications, and particularly social media, it would be fair enough if



you walked away with the impression that these companies are acting to solve climate change, because that's what you're hearing from them," she said.

'Climate disinformation'

The analysis found that Shell had the largest disparity between its green talk and actual low-carbon investment.

InfluenceMap said that 70 per cent of Shell's communications last year contained at least one green claim, compared with just 10 per cent of planned investment in low-carbon activities this year.

A spokesman for Shell told AFP the major was already investing "billions of dollars in low-carbon energy".

"To help alter the mix of energy Shell sells, we need to grow these new businesses rapidly. That means letting our customers know through advertising or social media what lower-carbon solutions we offer now or are

developing."

The analysis found that 62 per cent of TotalEnergies' communications mentioned green activities, while it planned to allocate 25 per cent of 2022 capital expenditure on low-carbon projects.

A TotalEnergies spokeswoman countered that 30 per cent of the firm's investments are devoted to "decarbonised energy".

"Our public announcements policy reflects the transformation of TotalEnergies in a multi-energy company," she told AFP.

An ExxonMobil spokesman said it "continues to mitigate emissions from its operations and achieved its 2025 emission-reduction plans four years earlier than planned".

BP and Chevron did not respond to requests for comment.

The analysis found that over all the five corporations had spent US\$750mn on climate-related messaging last year alone.

Report co-author Ed Collins said that represented good busi-

ness for the majors, as it was significantly cheaper than decarbonising their business models and would encourage governments to continue subsidising their products.

"The costs seem huge, but the investment is tiny in comparison to the potential reward in terms of favourable policy conditions and subsidisation of building assets," he said.

Some of the firms analysed plan to increase oil and gas production by 2026, something the analysts said would see their emissions "significantly overshoot" the International Energy Agency's recommended net-zero pathway.

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, a Greens member of the European Parliament, said Thursday's analysis proved that the firms studied were engaged in "climate disinformation".

"It shows the lengths oil and gas companies are willing to go to mislead citizens and protect their own interests."

AFP

PAPER RECYCLING PROGRAMME

Attention all corporate offices!

DO YOU HAVE ANY PAPER TO RECYCLE?

Our team will collect it from your office

BIGGER, BETTER, BRANDED
RECYCLING BOXES ALSO AVAILABLE

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

MUSCAT DAILY

Mall of Oman plans series of events to mark 1st anniversary

Mall of Oman, Oman's flagship destination for retail, leisure and entertainment is inviting the community to come together to mark its first anniversary. With over a month-long of celebrations, the leading destination is offering entertainment, and instant prizes to be won.

Husam al Mandhari, Director of Shopping Malls in Oman at Majid Al Futtaim Properties said, "As we revel in the first anniversary of Mall of Oman, we are delighted to announce completing a prosperous year in enhancing the retail and entertainment offering in Oman. The mall has certainly become a focal point and pillar of the community and in line with our vision to create great moments for everyone, everyday, we will continue elevating the retail experience as a leading super-regional mall. We welcome everyone to join us as we celebrate this important milestone."

Until October 15, Mall of Oman will be offering shoppers the chance to win incredible prizes including a BMW 520i and an iPhone each week, when they spend RO20 or more.

The mall organised a series of events and performances for the visitors to keep their whole family entertained. The events include juggling, stilt-walking and brake dances. 'Plus, don't forget to visit the birthday cake display for the perfect picture opportunity with loved ones', a statement from the mall says.

With 90 per cent of the mall leased, it brings the very best in fashion, beauty, jewellery, electronic, homeware and dining options. Newly opened retailers include PUMA and Decathlon, providing the ultimate sportswear equipment.

National Finance pushes for less dependence on plastic



As a company strongly committed to its social responsibilities, National Finance reaffirmed its commitment to reduce plastic waste by successfully carrying out the 'Use Less Plastic' campaign that was launched in August. The initiative was organised

in response to 'Plastic Free July', which is a global movement that empowers individuals to be part of the solution to plastic pollution.

Going beyond spreading awareness about the repercussions of using plastic, the company focused on encouraging its employees to discard the plastic items used during their day-to-day work in a designated area for the purpose of recycling.

The company collaborated with renowned artists; Abdulkareem al Rawahi who is a sculptor skilled in recycling plastic materials and transforming them into stunning works of art and Yousuf al Rawahi, who specialises in sculptures, a member of the Fine Arts Society and Youth Studio since 1999.

The artists created a sculpture entitled *Tree of Life* at Oman Avenues Mall during the weekend. The tree symbolises the renewal and continuity of life towards a better future. Whereas the branches of the tree reflect the reach of the National Finance company across Oman. Lastly, the marble base represents the stability and credibility of the finance company in the non-banking financial sector. "The 'Use Less Plastic' campaign has been successful in making our employees more aware of the importance of using less plastic in their day-to-day life," said Lina al Abdulsalaam, Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing at National Finance.

Ooredoo launches 'best ever value' fibre home Internet

Enjoy unlimited streaming, downloads and uploads with fast, uninterrupted and buffer-free Fibre Home Internet from just RO18 with Ooredoo's new Fibre offer, available for the next three months. Offering speeds up to 60Mbps, the new plan is Ooredoo's best ever value 12 month Fibre Home Internet plan.

Backed by Ooredoo's fantastic network, Fibre makes it even easier to enjoy everything the online world has to offer, for longer with wide coverage across the country, all for a low monthly cost.

Ooredoo offers a range of plans with amazing speeds of up to 1Gbps and plans with unlimited usage, unlimited Ooredoo fixed minutes and discounted international minutes.

To sign up for Fibre Home Internet plan, one can message Ooredoo on WhatsApp to 95103000, sharing one's house location and Civil/Residence ID. Otherwise, one may either head to an Ooredoo store, or contact the Fibre Call Centre on 1514.



Bank Muscat inaugurates two new Green Sports fields

Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, inaugurated two more sports fields as part of its long-running Green Sports CSR programme.

The bank recently handed over a Green Sports field to the Al Farfara Sports Team in the wilayat of Bidbid at a ceremony held under the auspices of H E Mohammed Khamis al Hsaini, Member of the Shura Council.

In another ceremony under the patronage of H E Dr Hamad Hamdan al Rabie, Member of the Shura Council, the bank inaugurated the second Green Sports field for the Al Aaridh Sports and Cultural Team in the wilayat of Ibri. The ceremonies were attended by a number of officials from the two teams and the bank, said a statement.

Speaking on the occasion, Bank Muscat's Dakhliyah regional manager Hamdan Hamoud al Bimani congratulated the Al Farfara team in Bidbid for successfully completing their Green Sports project. He said that this achievement would contribute in enhancing the facilities and infrastructure available for the team's practice and for activities by the local community.

Bimani hoped that the new facility would help the Al Farfara team to rise to greater heights, improve community



The Green Sports programme is one of the leading CSR programmes in Oman that supports installation of artificial turf or natural grass on sports fields, floodlighting and water-desalination systems

bonding and harness the talent of Omani youth. He called upon the team and its management to build further on this achievement, and take the club to greater heights by optimal utilisation and development of the new facilities.

While addressing the inauguration of the Al Aaridh Sports and Cultural Team Green Sports field in the wilayat of Ibri, bank's Dhahirah regional manager Salim Rashid al Shidi said that the bank was delighted to continue opening Green Sports fields this year too, thereby continuing its long tradition of extending support to youth sports teams across Oman.

He congratulated the Al Aaridh Team and said that the new facility would allow them to improve their sporting ca-

pabilities and talents. He added that the bank looks forward to supporting more and more young talent play at the highest level of sports by enabling the implementation of high-quality sports infrastructure for local teams across Oman.

The Green Sports programme is one of the leading CSR programmes in Oman and the scope of support under it includes installation of artificial turf or natural grass on sports fields, floodlighting and water-desalination systems. In 2021, the bank increased the number of annual beneficiaries to 20 on the occasion of the flagship CSR programme's 10th Anniversary and the bank recently announced the 20 winners for this year. It is a matter of great encourage-

ment that the Green Sports programme has benefitted 163 teams with over 50,000 team members so far.

Through the 2022 edition of this flagship CSR programme, Bank Muscat has further strengthened its pioneering role in the field of social responsibility and sustainability, and its continuing drive to develop modern sports infrastructure across the Sultanate in the spirit of the Public-Private Partnership model.

The facilities developed as part of the programme are often used as a venue for other social activities by communities across Oman, leading to stronger social bonding and positive behaviour among young people as well as the development of talented Omani youth.

ISG conducts investiture ceremony for student leaders

Indian School Al Ghubra organised an investiture ceremony for its student leaders in the school precinct on Wednesday, marking the induction of its Prefectorial Body for the academic year 2022-23.

The event commenced with the singing of the school song, said a press statement, adding that Principal Papri Ghosh accorded a warm welcome to chief guest Dr Ahmed al Bulushi, Dean, College of Engineering-National University of Science and Technology.

School Management Committee convener Sunil K honoured the chief guest with a shawl and presented a memento.

The student leaders officially took charge as the principal administered the Oath of Office and received their badges from the chief guest and Sunil K, who were assisted by vice-principals G Sreekumar and Pyarija Cidar.



From ISG, the Head Girl - Aarathi Sajeev and the Head Boy - Alan Saji were the first to be invested. The Vice Head Girl - Sarah Ann Joseph, the Vice Head

Boy - Alwin K Jose, the President of the Student Council - Harshini Anbazhagan, Vice President of the Student Council - Zainab Hussain, the Speaker of the Stu-

dent Council - Joshua Reji, President of Round Square International Services - Anoushka Sanjeev Madavi were also inducted.

Alisha Amjad and Janav Sridhar Gowda took charge as the Sports Captain for Girls and Boys respectively.

The Prefects of ISG who

were officially inducted were Abdul Basit, Aleena Anesh, Anandhitha Shaji, Azhaan Pary, Azza Luqman, Devkarthik Joshi, Fida Ayisha Madathodiyal, Haya Shrivastava, Heba Khan, Kartik Sujana Valappil, Lakshmi Rajeev Menon, Manvi Shanker, Melina Natasha Goveas, Nakul Rejeesh, Neha Samson, Pallak Dhabalia, Parth Nitin Ranade, Rehan Shanavas, Tabitha Thomas, Tanisha Mishra, Thana Aysha Riyaz and Tharun Raj.

The House Captains sworn in were Katherine Maria Jacob and Ammeswaran Soma Sekar - Muscat House;

Nandana Vinod and Ziyen Ansar Solkar - Nizwa House ; Aqsa Mubarak Sarang and Alen Varghese Soji - Sohar House and Ira Bharadwaj and Ruble James Mathew - Sur House.

From ISG-International, the Head Girl - Meethi Sharma and

the Head Boy - Suurya Krisno Ganti were the first to be invested.

The Prefects from ISG-I comprised Ishita Sajeet Shetty - Student Council; Chitrangada Sidharth Chaturvedi - Funds and Contributions; Simran Kawatra - Cultural Activities and Nithin Krishnan Muthukrishnan - Sports and Games. The House Captains from ISG-I were Abhinav Ganesh Kumar - Saturn House; Madhav Sunil Vishnu - Uranus House; Ashutosh Naik - Neptune House and Vaibhavi Shetty - Jupiter House.

The members of the Student Council from classes 6 to 12 also took the oath of office.

The chief guest in his address expressed his gratitude to the Principal and the management of the school for inviting him to exhort the leaders. He highlighted the significance of the key traits of honesty and integrity.

beIN partners with Snap Inc to provide coverage on Snapchat



Flagship sports channel beIN SPORTS partnered with Snap Inc to bring the best of their football coverage to Snapchat. The coverage would include the FIFA World Cup in Qatar for all 24 countries in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and France.

The Discover partnership will see beIN SPORTS launch dedicated football highlights shows covering all the best moments from the ongoing football season and the FIFA World Cup Qatar, of which beIN has been made an official broadcaster.

The agreement was signed at beIN's MENA headquarters in Doha by Mohammad al Subaie, CEO of beIN MENA, and Hussein Freijeh, Snap Inc's General Manager - MENA.

During the ongoing European football season, Snapchatters across the region will be able to watch beIN SPORTS coverage of top tier football leagues, including the UEFA Champions League, English Premier League, Bundesliga and Ligue 1 through a dedicated weekly football highlights show.

Omani man served as safety delegate in Acropolis Rally

Rashid Albalushi of Oman brought laurels when he was given a chance by FIA to be safety delegate (Trainee) in Acropolis Rally in Greece during the 10th round of world rally championship held from September 9 to 11.



This appointment is a kind of appreciation to talented people from Oman, where they proved previously their skills in organising big events as technical managers and safety delegations adding to that the ability to work under pressure and in different atmospheres.

Rashid Albalushi has been appointed by FIA previously as safety delegate since 2019 in Oman International Rally as one of the rounds of Middle East Rally championship and also been safety delegate in Qatar international rally, Jordan International rally, Kuwait International rally and Lebanon International rally, where he gained a lot of experience and been selected at a further stage to represent FIA in Greece Acropolis rally as Safety Delegate Trainee. "I am very delighted and happy to represent Oman my country in this international event as the first Omani person to attend such a big and prestigious event. I gained a lot of knowledge and experience and backup about the WRC work and roles and preparations and hope that in future I will transfer these kind of knowledge to my colleagues in Oman," he said.

Oman's third IntercityHotel opens in Muscat's Al Khuwair



IntercityHotel Muscat, the hotel brand's third property in Oman, has opened its doors on September 1. The new hotel building is located within the Ministry and Embassy district of Al

Khuwair and is part of the prestigious A'Raya Development Complex.

IntercityHotel Muscat boasts 273 guest rooms ranging from standard rooms to deluxe suites. The property includes a special business floor offering business rooms and suites with added benefits of early check-ins, late check-outs, complimentary welcome drinks, and VIP in-room amenities, to name a few. Furthermore, the hotel features the all-day-dining restaurant Citrine as well as a lobby cafe, a pool and gym, a spa with six treatment rooms, four multi-function meeting rooms with a capacity of up to 135 guests and A'Raya Ballroom which can accommodate up to 1,200 guests.

Deutsche Hospitality's Middle East vice president Siegfried Nierhaus said, "IntercityHotel fits nicely into the region, as the concept accommodates the needs of any and all travellers. We look forward to our continued successful trajectory in Oman."

Future Tech expo to begin in Muscat today



After its successful launch as Oman's first virtual expo and summit in 2020, Future Tech Expo & Summit is taking place at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre as a hybrid event (in-person and online) from Monday.

According to a press statement, the two-day event will be inaugurated by H H Fahar bin Fatik bin Fahar al Said on Monday and will gather over 50 speakers to attend two tracks of the conference during the next two days.

Track 1 will be held on Technology (cyber, AI, cloud, digital transformation etc), while Track 2 be focused on Banking & Fintech.

The events will run from 9.00am to 4.00pm on both the days, the organisers said.

Future Tech is Oman's foremost B2B and B2G bespoke Technology Event offering a definitive meeting place facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue with power packed networking opportunities among C-Level executives, leading industry experts, decision makers, policy makers and government officials from across the value chain to foster collaboration, discuss current challenges, business opportunities, develop market

Future Tech's two-day summit will feature an expansive line-up of stellar speakers, case studies, panel discussions, unique presentations providing access to a wealth of industry leading knowledge, sharing best practices and experiences, spotlighting trends, information exchange, insights and outlooks with actionable takeaways

strategies, share knowledge and identify solutions.

Future Tech - functioning under the patronage of the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology based on Oman Vision 2040 - is supported by the Central Bank of Oman, and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Oman.

The strategic partners of the event are Oman Banks Association, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Oman Information Technology Society and Oman Society for Petroleum Services, the statement added.

The title sponsors of the event include: ITHCA Group as the Technology Investment Partner; VISA as the Payment Partner; OQ as the Innovation

Partner, Bank Nizwa as the Islamic Banking Partner and MHD as the Future Tech Partner.

The other sponsors include: Business Incubators and Accelerators, Spire, CYPHER LEARNING, MicroStrategy, ZOHO, AR Tech, Barco, Etiya, Fable Fintech, FVC, Freshworks, Infosysta, Khimji Ramdas Information and Communication Technology, Logitech, ManageEngine, Nortel, Poly, Pure Storage, VAD Technologies, Tech Mahindra, Beinx, Capital Banking Solutions, China Mobile International, NeoSOFT and Shepherd Technologies.

The two-day summit - organised by Muscat Expo LLC and White Paper Summits - will feature an expansive line-up of stellar speakers, case studies,

panel discussions, unique presentations providing access to a wealth of industry leading knowledge, sharing best practices and experiences, spotlighting trends, information exchange, insights and outlooks with actionable takeaways.

It will feature a comprehensive B2B Expo with 70+ exhibitors from over ten countries showcasing an array of avant-garde solutions, latest technologies, unique launches, cost-effective products, services and solutions.

The exhibitors span from over ten countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, Turkey, Malaysia, Poland, Estonia, and the Jordan pavilion for the first time in Oman.

AI Training Workshop

For the first time in Oman at the Future Tech Event, in partnership with CertNexus, you can earn your AIBIZ Micro-credential & Digital Badge for Business Professionals with a two-hours intensive on-site workshop by the distinguished Trainer Semih Kumluk.

One may access <https://futuretechevent.com/training/> to know more about the workshop.

Exhibition to focus on healthcare excellence

With a keen focus on the well-being of the people of Oman, Connect (Oman Exhibitions Organising Company LLC) is holding a health exhibition and conference at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in the last week of September.

The Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC) to be held from September 26 to 28 is being held in affirmation of Connect's commitment to Oman's Health Vision 2050, keeping in line with the sultanate's continuous efforts to develop a strong healthcare ecosystem that is sustainable, inclusive, and highly responsive to the needs of the community.

The highly anticipated industry event will be conducted in partnership with Oman's Ministry of Health and will be supported by the Directorate



General of Pharmaceutical Affairs and Drug Control (PADC), the Directorate General of Quality Assurance Center (DGQAC) and Directorate General of Private Health Establishments, a

press statement said.

Alongside the exhibition, Oman Medical Association will be holding Oman Health Conference to draw attention to Oman's evolving medical developments.

While the timings for the exhibition are from 9.00am to 8.00pm, the conference will follow a predefined agenda from 9.00am to 4.15 pm on all three days.

Oman, UK sign education pact

The Ministry of Education, representing the government of Oman, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the government of the United Kingdom, represented by the British Embassy regarding the British Council providing programmes to study English on Wednesday.

H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, signed the MoU with H E Bill Murray, Britain's Ambassador to Oman.

The MoU stipulates that the British Council, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, will provide programmes, seminars and workshops to study the English language and promote knowledge of the United Kingdom, its institutions and culture in accordance with the rules and regulations of Oman.

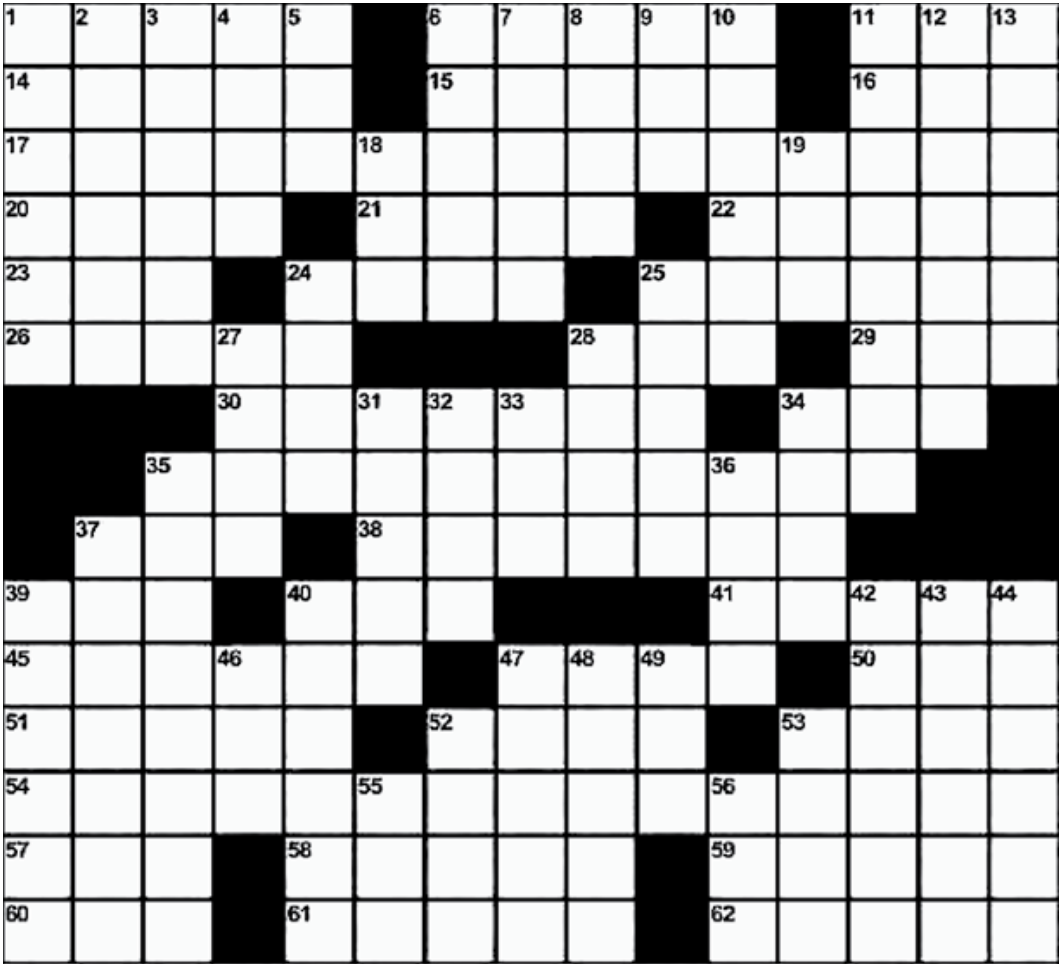


It also states that the British Council will provide tests to support assessment and development of skills, and assistance in education initiatives that supports the Ministry of Education's priorities in training, organising educational, cultural, and other related events in Oman.

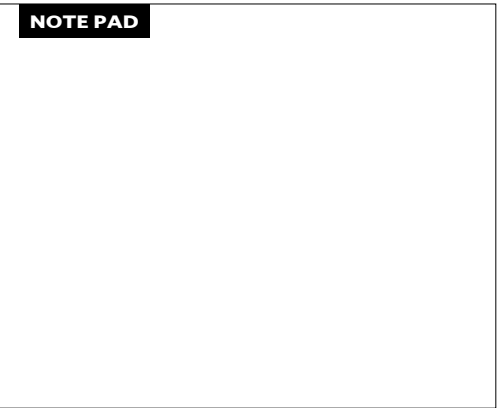
In addition, the British Council

is to facilitate exchange visits between academics, researchers, and students from the two countries, promoting opportunities for Omani citizens to access educational opportunities in the UK, and promoting academic, cultural, and scientific relations between institutions relevant in both countries.

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
1) Life of_ (carefree existence)
6) Flat-bottomed open boat
11) "Shogun" sash
14) Apparently amazed
15) Country of over 1 billion
16) Car tracking digits (abbr.)
17) Gain experience
20) Doubter's outbursts
21) Like most NBA players
22) Calorie-rich pastry
23) 67.5 degrees, on a compass
24) Retail center
25) Fence repairer
26) Bronco catcher
28) Deafening noise
29) Find in a mine
30) Hole in your head
34) Bums of documentaries
35) Provider of wide-angle shots
KEEP WATCH
37) One way to get the gravy
38) Former or previous
- 39) Affectionate utterance
40) Cape_ (cottage style)
41) Olympic prize
45) Greyhound alternative
4 7) Crossing the Atlantic
50) Day before a holiday
51) Dutch shoe
52) "... go bragh"
53) Hairy jungle creatures
54) Maryland state flowers
57) Be in pain
58) Model of perfection
59) "Beetle Bailey" character
60) "2001" mainframe
61) From Oslo, e.g.
62) More likely
DOWN
1) "Friends" female
2) Big lizard
3) Woodworker's machines
4) Classic poetry
5) Japanese currency
6) Twine fiber
7) Bell sound
8) Short poem (var.)
9) "Fee_ foe furn"
- 10) Enrich
11) Goes too far
12) Marsh heron
13) "Psst!" follower
18) Airport stat.
19) Billion years
24) Cow sounds
25) Prefix meaning "one thousandth"
27) Quick cut
28) Attempt to lose weight
31) Prepared Bond's martini
32) Work the bar
33) "The Catcher in the _"
34) Santa's seat?
35) Gridiron game
36) Mme. Bovary
37) Hom of Africa nation
39) "Rock the..." (The Clash hit)
40) Birch tree spike
42) Make an exit
43) Exact retribution
44) Not as great
46) Legendary elephant eater
4 7) Vicinities
48) Move like a crab
49) Coast Guard officer (abbr.)
- 52) You right now, theme-wise
53) "... and make it fast!"
55) Tokyo, long ago
56) Place with a president



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Now and then, the Universe gives you a run of good luck, and one is starting now! Since it's your turn, don't waste any time, even if you overdid it a bit recently and sleeping all day sounds awesome. It should be a great stretch (exciting, intense, busy), so get ready!
Think about how others see you. Give yourself until late morning, and then get things moving for real.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Be extremely wary of an extravagant gesture from a person who's usually frugal and unassuming. Unless they've recently won the lottery, they might be trying to overcompensate for guilt or some other negative feeling. Get some time with them today to find out what really motivated their generosity. Dig deep until they come up with the real reason. They have assumptions about you that need to be corrected, and you're the only person who can do it.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Your fondness for parties, get-togethers with your people, and meeting new folks with interesting accents (and even more interesting tales to tell) is mythic, as is your ability to be just as entertaining as anyone else.
Get out tonight, but make sure you've got someone by your side so you can make the most of your social energy in the company of great friends.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Someone new and fascinating (and who can help you work magic, financially speaking) is just about to bump into you, and this bodes well for the future. Check out their advice with someone you trust soon, but if it all adds up, don't think twice. Until you've got all the facts, keep the details to yourself. Once you're completely sure it's right, share it with everyone you love.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Your attitude about yourself is going through some changes right now, and it's almost like you're getting to know yourself all over again. This process of getting comfortable with new aspects of your personality isn't always the greatest experience, but it's necessary for improving your confidence. One thing that might help you adjust is to avoid folks who are always telling you what to do with your life. You don't need that kind of advice right now.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
It's weird how casual friend or acquaintances can bump into you, get to chatting, and suddenly make you realize just how much you have in common beyond the obvious. How could you never have noticed? It just wasn't the right time, unlike now, and nothing ever happens until your energies are ready to sync up. If you're attached, try not to worry. Those sparks are about to blaze up in a big way.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You love experimenting to find new shortcuts that can save you a few minutes in the middle of your commute, but more than that, you love gathering your tribe together. That's even more true right now, even though you all know perfectly well that you might regret all this tomorrow. Accept that that you'll be yawning tomorrow afternoon. Share the new shortcut with your people, and at least you should all be able to give the snooze button an extra slap.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You feel torn between your responsibilities and taking care of business, between doing what you know you should do and doing what you want to do. If you give in to your own needs (for once), you should shake people up in a big way. But the thing is it's high time you did just that! It's time for you to do something that leads to great big changes, so bring it on.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Relationships bring surprises today, whether they're platonic (really), professional or romantic. Someone new, offbeat, and probably rebellious (your favorite) is coming your way. As usual, running into them under extremely weird circumstances is on the agenda, and of course this makes your encounter even more appealing to both of you. Quite a bit had to happen to ensure your meeting!

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
While today keeps you busy with the usual array of ups and downs, surprises and routines, you can also expect your love life to keep you the busiest. You may feel inundated by the affection and respect of those you love the best. It's all exactly what you deserve, though. You've been passing it around, and now it's your turn to get your share. Get up early and start greeting the world.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Keep a careful eye on how you use your new superpower. A superior ability to unerringly wield words as weapons (if subtle weapons that are almost never seen as such until it's far too late) begins just about now. No matter how long the battle has raged, go easy on your opponents for the time being. You know you're brainier and better connected to reality, so there's nothing to prove except your fairness.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Love, romance, and all kinds of intriguing possibilities are in the air. And while you'd rather be hiding in your room, once you meet this new person (or persons), you're game to stay out in the sunshine and get to know them better. The last thing you'd ever expect is exactly what's on your agenda for now. Instead of griping that you'd rather be cloistered away with a book, enjoy this new company.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is the atomic number of the element which is the basis for all organic chemistry?

- A. 14
- B. 2
- C. 4
- D. 6

02. By what name were Judith Keppel, Chris Hughes, Kevin Ashman, Daphne Fowler and CJ de Mooi known in a long-running British TV series?

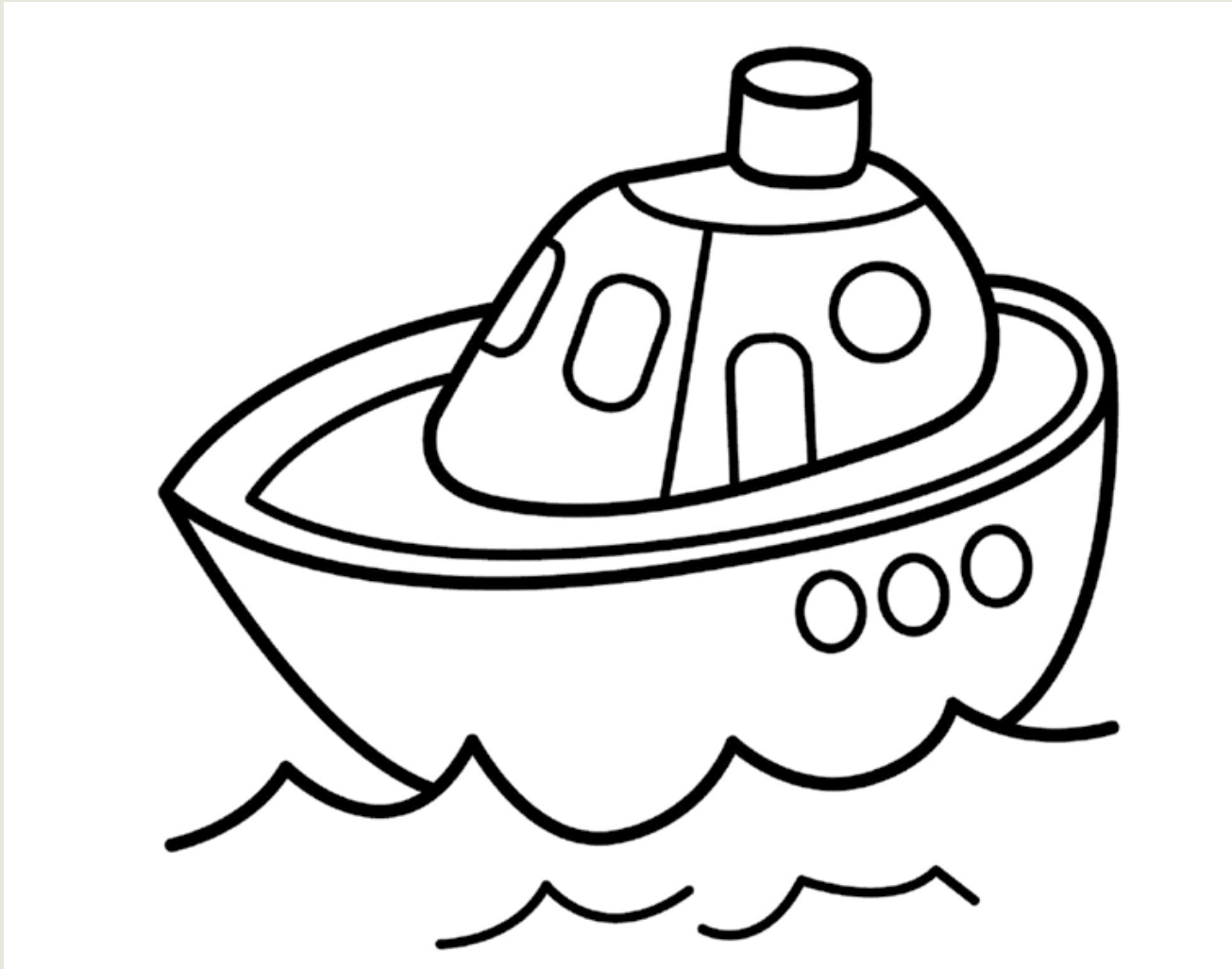
- A. The Think Tank
- B. The Avengers
- C. The Eggheads
- D. The Filthy Five

03. What is found on a charcuterie board?

- A. Salad greens and pieces of fruit
- B. Different cheeses
- C. Pieces of cooked and /or cured meats
- D. Breads

Answers: 1.D 2.C 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

R	G	U	O
K	G	E	S
F	A	E	Y
E	R	A	H

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Ukraine reclaims swathes of east in shock offensive to oust Russia

Kharkiv, Ukraine - Ukraine said on Sunday that its forces were pushing back Russia's military from strategic holdouts in the east of the country after Moscow announced a retreat from Kyiv's sweeping counter-offensive.

Ukraine's nuclear energy agency said the final reactor at the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia plant, Europe's largest nuclear power station and a focal point of the conflict, was shut off as a safety measure.

The speed of Ukraine's fight-back against Russia's invasion has apparently caught Moscow's military off-guard, bringing swathes of territory Russia had controlled for months back into Ukraine's fold.

Crates of dumped munitions and abandoned military hardware were seen scattered in territory left by the Russian forces, images posted by the Ukrainian military showed.

"The liberation of settlements in the Kupiansk and Izium districts of the Kharkiv region is ongoing," the Ukrainian military said in a general battlefield update on Sunday, 200 days into Russia's invasion.

These are key supply and logistics hubs that Russia depends on to restock its frontline positions in the east.

Military observers have said their capture by Ukraine would be a serious blow to Moscow's military ambitions in Kharkiv.

'Weapons, weapons, weapons'

The head of the Ukrainian military announced early on Sunday that as much as 3,000sqkm had been wrested from Russia since the offensive began at the beginning of this month.

That figure is already around one-third larger than the total area announced by President Volodymyr Zelensky late on Saturday. On Sunday, he announced that Ukraine forces had taken a village of around 4,000 people between Kharkiv and Izium.

"The great Ukrainian flag has been returned to Chkalovske.



Destroyed armoured vehicles litter the road in Balakliya, Kharkiv region, on Saturday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

And it will be like that everywhere. We will cast out the occupiers from every Ukrainian town and village," he said in a

"Prompt supplies bring victory and peace closer," his statement on social media read.

The reaction in Moscow to

But the announcement came shortly after Moscow also said it was actually sending reinforcements towards Kharkiv.

Around Balakliya, one of the first towns to be recaptured by the Ukrainian troops, AFP journalists saw evidence of fierce battles, with buildings destroyed or damaged and streets mainly deserted.

ian gains, Russian forces have continued bombardments across the frontline, and in the Donetsk region, officials said shelling killed 10 people and wounded another 19.

An uptick in fighting in and around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant meanwhile has sharpened fears of another nuclear incident comparable to the Chernobyl disaster in northern Ukraine in 1986.

Ukraine's state nuclear agency on Sunday said that the sixth and final reactor at the plant had been shut off and instead transferred to a cold shut down. Energoatom said that the sixth reactor had been generating energy for the plant itself for three days and that the decision to halt its operations came when external power had been restored to the facility.

It cautioned again, however, that in its view the only way to ensure the safety of the facility would be to create a demilitarised zone around it.

AFP

'It was scary'

Iryna Stepanenko, 52, who was outside cycling for the first time in months, said she had hidden in her basement for three months.

"There was a lot of fear, shelling. It was scary," she recounted of the Russian takeover and Ukraine's bid to recapture the town, where some 27,000 people lived before the invasion.

She said she was relieved to see Kyiv's forces retake the town but was still worried about the future.

"I'm worried the Russians could return. I'm worried the shelling could start again."

Despite the reported Ukrain-

The liberation of settlements in the Kupiansk and Izium districts of the Kharkiv region is ongoing. Around 3000sqkm had been wrested from Russia since offensive this month

UKRAINIAN MILITARY

video online.

Ukrainian officials this weekend hailed the 'astonishing' pace of the counter-offensive and on Sunday, the country's foreign minister used the momentum to appeal to Western allies for more stockpiles of sophisticated weapons.

"Weapons, weapons, weapons have been on our agenda since spring. I am grateful to partners who have answered our call: Ukraine's battlefield successes are our shared ones," Dmytro Kuleba said.

the Ukrainian gains so far has been muted, but on Sunday an official in the border region of Belgorod said 'thousands' of people had fled the Kharkiv region over the border and into Russia.

More than 1,000 people were being housed in temporary shelters, the official, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said.

The Russian military meanwhile made the surprise announcement on Saturday that it was 'regrouping' its forces from Kharkiv to the Donetsk region just south to focus its military efforts there.

Iran: European statement on nuclear talks 'unconstructive'

Tehran, Iran - Iran's foreign ministry on Saturday described as 'unconstructive' and 'regrettable' a joint statement issued by Germany, France and Britain about negotiations aimed at reviving a 2015 nuclear deal.

"It is surprising and regrettable that, in a situation where diplomatic interactions and exchanges of messages are continuing... to finalise the negotiations", the three European parties would issue such an 'unconstructive' statement, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said.

The remarks came after the trio raised 'serious doubts' about Iran's sincerity in seeking a revived nuclear agreement and warned that the Islamic republic's position was jeopardising the prospects of reaching a deal.

"The three European countries are advised to play a more active role to provide a solution to end the few remaining disagreements instead of entering the phase of destroying the diplomatic process," Kanani said.

The three European parties to the deal said on Saturday that



Nasser Kanani (AFP)

Tehran 'has chosen not to seize this critical diplomatic opportunity', adding that 'instead, Iran continues to escalate its nuclear programme way beyond any plausible civilian justification'.

Tehran has also reopened issues related to its legally binding obligations under the Non Proliferation Treaty concluded with the UN atomic energy watchdog IAEA, they added. Kanani said it was 'regrettable that the three European countries have taken a step in the path of the Zionist regime to defeat the negotiations with this ill-considered statement', referring to Israel, the Islamic republic's arch-foe and a staunch opponent of the deal.

AFP

Five dead in 'massive' Papua New Guinea quake

Port Moresby, PNG - A 7.6-magnitude earthquake shook Papua New Guinea on Sunday, damaging buildings, triggering landslides and killing at least five people, with several others severely injured.

Residents in northern towns near the epicentre reported intense shaking mid-morning that cracked roads and rattled the cladding off buildings.

Local member of parliament Kessy Sawang said at least two people had died in remote mountain villages, with four others airlifted to hospital in critical condition.

"There has been widespread damage," she told AFP, adding that a landslide had buried homes and 'split' one village where people had 'lost their houses'. In nearby Wau, three miners had been buried alive. There are limited communications in the area, few government resources and very few paved roads, making rescue efforts difficult.

Small aviation companies and missionary groups were involved in airlifting some of the injured across the rugged jungle landscape.

AFP

Palestinian dies days after being shot in Israeli raid

Jenin, Palestinian Territories - A Palestinian succumbed to his wounds on Sunday, five days after being shot by the Israeli army during a home demolition in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said. In a statement, the ministry confirmed 'the death of the young man, Hamad Mustafa Hussein Abu Jelda, 24, after being shot by the Israeli occupation forces in Jenin camp a few days ago'.

Security sources in Jenin told AFP that Abu Jelda had been shot during an Israeli army raid on Jenin camp last Tuesday to destroy the home of Raad Hazem, who killed three Israelis in a deadly shooting attack in Tel Aviv.

Pictures of Abu Jelda released by local activists showed him posing with an M16 rifle, though no armed faction has claimed him as a member. Hazem carried out a shooting spree in Tel Aviv's busy Dizengoff Street nightlife district on April 7, before being shot dead after a massive manhunt. His father Fathi and brother Hamam are both wanted by Israel.

A petition by Hazem's family to prevent the demolition was



The mother (centre) and relatives of Hamad Mustafa Hussein Abu Jelda, react during his funeral in the Jenin refugee camp on Sunday (AFP)

rejected by Israel's supreme court on May 30.

The Tel Aviv shooting was part of a wave of deadly attacks on Israeli targets, mostly by Palestinians. In response, Israel launched near nightly raids on West Bank towns and cities that have killed dozens of Palestinians, including fighters.

Last Monday, armed forces chief Lieutenant General Aviv Kohavi said 'around 1,500 wanted people were arrested and hundreds of attacks pre-

vented' in the operations.

Human rights activists say Israel's policy of demolishing the homes of suspected attackers amounts to collective punishment, as it can render non-combatants, including children, homeless.

But Israel says the practice is effective in deterring some Palestinians from carrying out attacks. Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967, when it captured the territory from Jordan.

AFP

Italy's far-right eyes easy victory under firebrand Giorgia Meloni

Rome, Italy - Italy's Giorgia Meloni looks unstoppable: with two weeks to the election, final polls show her heading for a thumping victory to lead the country's first far-right government as its first female prime minister.

The right-wing coalition, which includes Meloni's post-fascist Brothers of Italy party, Matteo Salvini's anti-immigrant League, and Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, is forecast to pocket 46 per cent of the vote.

The left, lead by the Democratic Party (PD), looks to win 28.5 per cent, while the populist Five Star Movement (M5S) could take 13 per cent, according to a YouTrend poll before a pre-voting embargo. In a startling move, PD head Enrico Letta admitted defeat this week, but urged undecided voters to choose his party or risk handing the right the landslide victory that would allow it to change the constitution.

"I'm going to vote for Meloni," 55-year old lawyer Bernardo, who did not want to provide his surname, told AFP, saying he wanted 'to teach the PD a lesson' for a negative



Giorgia Meloni (AFP)

campaign based on 'hating others'.

'God, country, family'

The snap election was called following Prime Minister Mario Draghi's resignation in July after three parties in his coalition pulled support, plunging Italy into uncertainty as it faced inflation and a record drought.

The right-wing coalition has pledged extremely expensive solutions to the energy and cost of living crisis in the eurozone's third biggest economy - without explaining how they will be paid

for. The EU has earmarked almost €200bn in post-pandemic recovery funds for Italy, which has the second highest public debt in the euro zone.

Meloni, 45, who has cultivated a straight-talking, tough persona, said she would renegotiate that deal, which is contingent on Italy carrying out a series of reforms.

The leftist alliance insists the money is at risk should the right win. In 2018 elections, Brothers of Italy secured just over four per cent of the vote, but is now polling at 24 per cent despite being a political descendant of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), formed by supporters of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini after World War II.

Meloni has wooed Italians with her motto of 'God, country and family', stealing support from once-popular Salvini, who analysts say sealed his own political fate by botching a power-grab in 2019.

'Still margin for surprise'

She has pledged to cut taxes and bureaucracy, raise defence spending, close Italy's borders

to protect the country from 'Islamisation', renegotiate European treaties to return more power to Rome, and fight 'LGBT lobbies'.

A rightist victory would present a 'big risk' to the EU, Letta told AFP in August, as there had 'never been a major European country governed by political forces so clearly against the idea of a community of Europe'.

The right suffers deep divisions over the Russian invasion, with Meloni supporting sending weapons to Ukraine, while Salvini - a longtime admirer of President Vladimir Putin - is against sanctions.

The left wants to carry on where pro-European Draghi will leave off. But its call for continuity is less persuasive to impoverished, anxious voters in debt-laden Italy than a pledge to change, analysts say.

There is 'still a margin for surprise', Italian political theorist Nadia Urbinati told the Domani newspaper on Thursday, particularly considering about 20 per cent of eligible voters are still undecided, polls show.

AFP

Queen Elizabeth II begins solemn final journey

The king will travel to Edinburgh on Monday for a prayer service, before her body is flown to London

Ballater, UK - Queen Elizabeth II's coffin on Sunday left the Scottish retreat where she died as the late monarch embarked on her final journey with thousands of her mourning subjects expected to line the route.

A hush fell over the gathered crowd as the cortege carrying the queen's casket exited the gates of Balmoral Castle for Edinburgh at the start of an odyssey of mourning in the United Kingdom, culminating in her state funeral in London on September 19.

Six groundskeepers had loaded the oak coffin - draped with a Scottish Royal Standard and a floral wreath - into the black hearse that was to wind its way slowly on a six-hour journey to Scotland's capital. Security escort vehicles and a mauve Bentley carrying the queen's only daughter Princess Anne made up the cortege passing through a series of towns before reaching Edinburgh, where it will rest for two days so people can pay tribute. The first glimpse of her coffin for a grieving nation came a day after her son Charles III was formally proclaimed king, and after her warring grandsons William and Harry, and their wives Kate and Meghan, briefly reunited for a walkabout.

The king himself will travel to Edinburgh on Monday for a prayer service, before the body of the queen, who died at Balmoral on Thursday aged 96, is flown to London on Tuesday. Britain's longest-serving monarch will then lie in state for four days which is expected to draw at least a million people, ahead of a funeral set to be watched worldwide and attended by numerous heads of state.

"It's the end of an era, it's quite



Members of the public pay their respects as the hearse carrying the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II, draped in the Royal Standard of Scotland, is driven through Ballater, on Sunday (AFP)

The first glimpse of her coffin for a grieving nation came a day after her son Charles III was formally proclaimed king, and after her warring grandsons and their wives briefly reunited for a walkabout

a big moment for the country and the world," said Nia Gray-Wannell, a scientist, who brought her two children to Balmoral to pay their respects.

"It felt like it would be worth

coming."

Show of unity

While Charles' accession has pushed Britain into what newspapers have called the new 'Carolean' era, Britain and the royal

family are still coming to terms with the end of the Elizabethan age.

Prince William broke his silence with an emotional tribute to his beloved 'Grannie' on Saturday. "She was by my side at my happiest moments. And she was by my side during the saddest days of my life," said William, who has now become the Prince of Wales.

But the queen's death also brought a surprise show of unity from William, 40, and his

younger brother Harry, 37, when they emerged with their wives to speak to well-wishers outside Windsor Castle, near London.

The sight of the two couples who have barely seen each other since 2020, together - even if they separated to speak and shake hands with different sides of the cheering crowds - will likely spark rumours of a reconciliation.

Pictures of the four were splashed on the covers of Sunday's newspapers.

'Reunited for granny', read the *Sunday Mirror's* headline, while the *Telegraph* ran with 'Reunited in sorrow' and the *Sun* with 'All 4 One'.

The *Sunday Times* focussed on the apparent frostiness, with the headline: 'Warring Windsors' awkward truce to honour the Queen'. Senior royals including the queen's children, Princess Anne and Princes Andrew and Edward and their families also inspected flowers outside Balmoral, where the queen's body

lay in the ballroom.

'Many, many people'

The symbolism of the queen's last journey will be heavy for Scotland - a nation with deep royal links, but where there is also a strong independence movement intent on severing the centuries-old union with the United Kingdom.

Dedicated viewing points are being set up along the route, although mourners will be asked not to throw flowers at the convoy as it passes.

"We anticipate many, many people will be keen to pay their respects," First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said. The queen's coffin will be taken to the Holyroodhouse Palace, the monarch's official residence in Scotland, where it will rest for a day.

King Charles and other royals will on Monday take part in a procession to convey her coffin along Edinburgh's Royal Mile to St Giles' Cathedral.

The following day the coffin will be flown by Royal Air Force jet to Northolt airfield near London, and driven to Buckingham Palace. Then, on Wednesday, it will be moved to Westminster Hall to lie in state.

King Charles will also visit Northern Ireland and Wales in a show of national unity, accompanied by British Prime Minister Liz Truss, who was only appointed by the late queen on Tuesday.

He has seen his popularity recover since the death of his former wife Diana, Princess of Wales, in a 1997 car crash, but he takes the throne at a moment of deep anxiety in Britain over the spiralling cost of living and international instability caused by the war in Ukraine.

AFP



Canada's Conservative Party newly elected leader Pierre Poilievre speaks during the party convention in Ottawa, Canada on Saturday (AFP)

Canadian Conservative party elects populist new leader Poilievre

Ottawa, Canada - Nearly a year after a defeat in parliamentary elections, the Canadian Conservatives elected a new leader on Saturday, choosing right-wing Pierre Poilievre to lead the opposition to premier Justin Trudeau.

Poilievre won 68 per cent of about 400,000 votes cast by party members in the first round, putting him well ahead of his main competitor, centrist former Quebec premier Jean Charest, with 16.07 per cent.

Poilievre, 43, beat out five contenders for the top Tory job by railing against inflation and COVID-19 vaccine mandates, promoting cryptocurrencies and pipelines, as well as backing the trucker-led protest convoy that occupied the capital Ottawa in February.

"Tonight begins the journey to replace an old government that costs you more and delivers you less with a new government that puts you first," Poilievre said in a speech in Ottawa after his win.

"By tackling Liberal inflation,

we'll put you back in control of your life and your money," he said, hitting out at Trudeau's government as 'the most expensive' in the country's history.

Trudeau congratulated Poilievre on his win on Twitter, calling for collaboration 'to deliver results for people across the country'.

A veteran politician, Poilievre twice served as a junior minister before Trudeau took office and has been elected seven times to represent a suburban district of Ottawa. He takes over as party leader from an interim head who has held the post since Erin O'Toole was ousted in February following criticism that he had shifted the party too close to the political centre. In September 2021 elections, the Conservatives failed to take power, garnering 119 seats in the House of Commons compared to 160 for Trudeau's Liberals. The Liberals were forced to form a new minority government, as in 2019.

The next federal election is set for 2025.

AFP

Charles officially named king of Australia, NZ

Sydney, Australia - King Charles III was officially named monarch in Australia and New Zealand on Sunday, in tandem ceremonies marking his ascension to the throne. In Canberra, Governor-General David Hurley proclaimed 'Prince Charles Philip Arthur George to be King Charles III, by grace of God, King of Australia'. At a similar ceremony in Wellington, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern hailed Charles, saying he 'has long had an affection for Aotearoa New



NZ Governor-General Cindy Kiro speaks during a Proclamation of King Charles III' Accession ceremony in Wellington on Sunday (AFP)

Australian PM Anthony Albanese announced that September 22 will be a public holiday in Australia to mark the death of Queen Elizabeth II

Zealand, has consistently demonstrated his deep care for

our nation'.

The two ceremonies were relative formalities.

Both former British colonies have been independent for decades but retain the monarch as their head of state.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who will leave for London this week to attend Queen Elizabeth's funeral, announced that September 22 would be a public holiday in Australia to mark her death.

AFP

French court to hear appeal in *Charlie Hebdo* attack

Paris, France - An appeal trial is set to begin on Monday as two men ruled to have helped Islamist gunmen prepare a deadly 2015 attack on satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* seek to overturn their convictions.

Twelve people were killed at the magazine's Paris office by brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi, who said they were acting on behalf of Al-Qaeda to avenge *Charlie Hebdo's* decision to publish cartoons of Prophet Mohammed. The killings signalled the start of a deadly wave of Islamist attacks around Europe. The first trial was held in 2020 with 14 defendants - some tried in their absence - accused of helping the gunmen prepare and organise the attacks in the French capital. Jail terms ranging from four years to life were handed out for those convicted of helping the gunmen, who attacked the magazine's office and customers at a Jewish supermarket.

Only two, those given the



This file photo shows policemen stand in background of a painting by French artist Christian Guemy in tribute to members of Charlie Hebdo newspaper who were killed by militants, in Paris on January 7, 2019 (AFP)

heaviest sentences, have appealed. Ali Riza Polat, 37, was sentenced to 30 years in prison after it was ruled he had helped the Kouachi brothers and Amedy Coulibaly secure weapons.

Coulibaly was responsible for the murder of a French police-

woman and a hostage-taking at a Hyper Cacher market in which four Jewish men were killed in the same month as the January *Charlie Hebdo* attack.

Polat's lawyers have argued that the appeal is a last chance to 'correct the mistakes of a judicial

system overwhelmed by the scale of these attacks'. They said he was 'wrongly attributed a role he never played' in the attacks.

The other defendant, Amar Ramdani, was handed 20 years in prison for supplying weapons and financing the attacks - the

maximum allowed under law.

The Kouachi brothers and Coulibaly were killed during a police assault.

The appeal court will have six weeks to weigh up the degree of responsibility of the pair.

Several days at the start of the trial will be given to hearing testimony from survivors of the attack and relatives of the victims.

Those shot dead in the *Charlie Hebdo* office included some of France's most celebrated cartoonists including Jean Cabut, known as Cabu, 76, Georges Wolinski, 80, and Stephane 'Charb' Charbonnier, 47.

The *Charlie Hebdo* killings triggered a global outpouring of solidarity with France under the 'I am Charlie' slogan. Later that year, in November 2015, Paris was again attacked when Islamist gunmen went on the rampage at the Bataclan concert hall, the national stadium and at a host of bars and restaurants.

AFP

INDIA

'Sidhu Moose Wala murder accused targeted Salman Khan'

Chandigarh, India - Accused in Sidhu Moose Wala murder case had conducted a recce in Mumbai to target Bollywood actor Salman Khan on the instructions of Lawrence Bishnoi, said Gaurav Yadav, Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) on Sunday.

Earlier in June, a threatening letter was sent to him and his father Salim Khan. The letter in Hindi said that both Salim Khan and his son would soon meet a similar fate that of Punjabi singer Siddhu Moose Wala.

"Kapil Pandit, one of the arrested accused, said during interrogation that he along with Sachin Bishnoi and Santosh Yadav had conducted a recce in Mumbai to target Salman Khan on the instructions of Lawrence Bishnoi. We will interrogate them also," he added.

DGP Yadav said that the plan to target Salman Khan was made in collaboration with Sampat Nehra, 'which we got to know on May 30'.

He further said that Red Corner Notice has been issued against gangster Goldy Brar through Interpol through central agencies. The DGP also said that a total of 23 accused have been arrested in the Sidhu



Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav speaks to the media about Punjabi singer Sidhu Moose Wala murder case and related issues, in Chandigarh on Sunday (ANI)

Kapil Pandit, one of the accused, said during interrogation that he along with Sachin Bishnoi and Santosh Yadav had conducted a recce to target Salman Khan

GAURAV YADAV

Moose Wala death case so far.

The chief accused, Deepak Mundi, along with his two associates Kapil Pandit and Rajinder Joker were arrested by Nepal Police on Saturday.

DGP said that Rajinder Joker who was in Nepal was in touch

with Goldie Brar and was preparing to flee to Dubai and from there he was planning to go to Thailand on a fake passport. "It took 105 days to complete the investigation. The accused were hiding in states like Haryana Rajasthan and West Bengal," he said.

The Mansa Court, meanwhile remanded the main accused and his accomplices to police custody for six days.

Sidhu Moose Wala was shot dead by assailants in Jawaharke village of Punjab's Mansa district on May 29. The incident took place a day after his security was withdrawn by the Punjab police along with that of 424 others.

Earlier this month, India had confirmed that two suspects, one from Kenya and one from Azerbaijan, have been arrested in connection with the murder of the Punjabi singer.

Last month, Haryana Police arrested four persons associated with the Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar gang and recovered a large number of arms and ammunition from their possession in the Mahesh Nagar police station area of the district.

ANI



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot (ANI)

CBI to probe into purchase of 1,000 buses by Delhi government

New Delhi, India - Delhi's Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, on Sunday, gave nod for an investigation by the CBI into the alleged irregularities in the procurement of 1,000 low-floor buses by the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC), while, ruling Aam Admi Party (AAP) took a dig at him saying 'Delhi needs a more educated LG'.

The BJP, meanwhile, has slammed the AAP, alleging that the party is steeped in corruption, demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The probe was ordered based on a complaint filed by the DTC chief secretary on June 9, stating that the appointment of Minister of

Transport Kailash Gahlot as the chairman of the committee for tendering and procurement of buses by DTC was done in a 'pre-mediated manner'.

The AAP alleged that Saxena was facing many serious allegations of corruption. The party maintained that such investigations were meant to divert attention, and that all such probes so far have yielded no results. The complaint pointed out irregularities in the bid of July 2019 for procurement of 1000 low floor BS-IV and BS-VI buses and a bid of March 2020 for purchase and annual maintenance contract of low floor BS-VI buses.

ANI

Ghulam Nabi Azad to announce new party in 10 days

Baramulla, India - Former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Sunday said that he will announce a new party in ten days.

Addressing a meeting in Baramulla, Azad said, "We will announce a new party in ten days". Earlier, Azad, in his first public meeting in Jammu after quitting Congress, had announced to launch his own political outfit that will focus on the restoration of full statehood for Jammu and Kashmir.

"I've not decided upon a name for my party yet. The people of J&K will decide the name and the flag for the party. I'll give a Hindustani name to my party that everyone can understand," he had said at the rally after breaking away from his five-decade-long association with the Congress.

"My party will focus on the restoration of full statehood for J&K, right to land, and employment to native domicile," he had



Ghulam Nabi Azad had said earlier that his party would focus on restoration of full statehood for Jammu and Kashmir (ANI)

added.

Azad said that the first unit of his political outfit would be formed in J&K in view of impending assembly polls.

He lashed out at Congress and said that people 'are trying

to defame us (me and my supporters who left the party) but their reach is limited to computer tweets'. "Congress was made by us, by our blood, not by computers, not by Twitter. People are trying to defame us but

their reach is limited to computers and tweets. That is the reason Congress is nowhere to be seen on the ground."

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister held his first public meeting at Sainik

The first unit of the party would be formed in J&K in view of impending assembly polls

GHULAM NABI AZAD

Colony in Jammu. "I thank everyone who supported me through their resignations, WhatsApp messages and other mediums from across the country since I resigned from the party. I have served the Congress party holding every posi-

tion for last 53 years, but never received this much of love even when I am not on any position," Azad said.

Taking a jibe at Congress, Azad said that people from Congress now go to jail in buses, call DGP or Commissioners, get their names written, and leave within an hour. This is the reason Congress has been unable to grow.

Azad resigned from the all-party post last week. In his resignation letter to Sonia Gandhi, he had targeted party leadership, particularly Rahul Gandhi, over the way the party has been run in the past nearly nine years.

In the hard-hitting five-page letter, Azad had claimed that a coterie runs the party while Sonia Gandhi was just 'a nominal head' and all the major decisions were taken by 'Rahul Gandhi or rather worse his security guards and PAs'.

ANI

PM Modi to attend summit with Russia, China, Pakistan

New Delhi, India - India said on Sunday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take part in a regional summit in Uzbekistan that according to Russia will see face-to-face talks between Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The gathering of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) comprising China, Russia, four Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan - India and Pakistan is due to take place in Samarkand on September 15 and 16.

On Wednesday Russia's

ambassador to China said that Putin and Xi would meet at the summit, in what will be the Chinese leader's first trip abroad since the early days of the coronavirus pandemic.

Beijing's foreign ministry did not immediately confirm the meeting, with a spokesperson saying at a regular press briefing that 'there is no information to provide' on the matter.

The Indian government statement on Sunday did not say whether Modi would hold bilateral talks with Putin, Xi or Sharif.

AFP

'A necessity': Lebanon's forced conversion to solar energy

Toulâ, Lebanon - Thanks to solar energy, residents of the northern Lebanese village of Toula are finally able to enjoy ice cream again - a treat in a sun-baked country plagued by power cuts.

Lebanon's economy collapsed in 2019 after decades of corruption and mismanagement, leaving the state unable to provide electricity for more than an hour or two per day.

Last winter, the mountain village of Toula barely had three hours of daily generator-driven electricity.

Solar power now helps keep the lights on for 17 hours, an engineer working on the alternative energy project said.

"For two years the kids have been asking for ice cream, now it's finally time," said Toula mini-market owner Jacqueline Younes, beaming.

"We are waiting for our first order of ice cream to arrive."

While many Lebanese rely on

costly generators for electricity, a growing number of homes, companies and state institutions are turning to solar - not out of environmental concern, but because it's their only option.

Solar panels dot rooftops and parking lots, powering entire villages - and even Beirut's only functioning traffic lights, thanks to a local NGO.

"Solar energy is no longer an alternative, it's a necessity. If we hadn't installed panels, the village wouldn't have any electricity," said engineer Elie Gereige, standing beside a sea of panels on a hilltop overlooking Toula.

Gereige is part of a team of volunteers who raised more than US\$100,000 from Toula expatriates to build a solar farm with 185 panels installed on church land.

They worked with the municipality to feed the village generator with solar energy, cutting down on fuel costs while powering the entire community.



Solar panels cover a shopping mall's parking lot in the city of Byblos in northern Lebanon (AFP)

\$1.4mn for power

An hour's drive south of Toula, a branch of Spinneys supermarket is also installing panels in the parking lot and rooftop to slash its generator bills.

"I think we will save around half of our energy costs in Jbeil due to solar panels," said Hassan Ezzeldine, chairman of Gray Mackenzie Retail Lebanon, which owns Spinneys.

The company spends between US\$800,000 and US\$1.4mn a month on electricity for its chain of supermarkets, he said, to power generators that run on diesel round-the-clock.

"The cost of generators today is dramatic. It's a disaster."

His company has considered turning to solar energy for years, but after the crisis 'we thought... it's something we needed to do, and we needed to do it immediately', he said.

Private individuals are also turning to solar to cut down on generator bills, setting up panels and batteries on balconies and rooftops.

Homemaker Zeina Sayegh installed solar power for around US\$6,000 for her Beirut apartment last summer, when the state lifted most petrol subsidies.

She was the only one in the building with panels.

This year, nine neighbours have joined her, covering the roof with metal bars connecting dozens of panels.

She has switched completely to solar, limiting power consumption at night. But she has non-stop electricity in the summertime - a rare luxury.

"I'm more comfortable this way. I feel I'm in control of the electricity and not the other way around," she said.

Expensive switch

In a country where poverty is rampant and bank depositors with savings are locked out of their accounts, installing solar power is expensive.

Many Lebanese have resorted to selling a car, jewellery or a plot of land to finance the switch.

Before Lebanon's economy collapsed, only a few companies offered solar power installation services.

But high demand has opened the door 'for anyone to start selling solar systems', said Antoine Skayem of solar power company Free Energy.

Demand from cash-strapped municipalities has soared, he said.

But they are vulnerable to political meddling and patronage.

AFP

Sri Lankan rhapsody

Sri Lanka beat Pakistan to clinch sixth Asia Cup title

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - Pramod Madushan and Wanindu Hasaranga shared seven wickets between them as Sri Lanka beat Pakistan by 23 runs to win their sixth Asia Cup title on Sunday.

Chasing 171 for victory, Pakistan were bowled out for 147 with Madushan claiming four wickets and Hasaranga taking 3-27 in Dubai.

Bhanuka Rajapaksa had smashed an unbeaten 71 to lift Sri Lanka to 170-6 from a precarious 58-5 after being put in to bat by Pakistan.

Pakistan's Haris Rauf rattled the opposition with early wickets but left-handed Rajapaksa put on a key 58-run stand for the sixth wicket with Wanindu Hasaranga, who hit 36, to help Sri Lanka to a competitive total after they were in trouble at 58-5 in Dubai.

Rauf stood out with figures of 3-29 off his four overs of pace.

Pakistan won the toss and skipper Babar Azam had no hesitations in fielding first in Dubai with nine of the 12 matches won by the team chasing in the tournament, a curtain-raiser for next month's T20 World Cup in Australia. Pace bowler Naseem Shah struck in the opening over as he bowled Kusal Mendis for a first-ball duck with a searing in-swing.



Sri Lanka's Pramod Madushan celebrates with teammates after dismissing Pakistan's captain Babar Azam in the Asia Cup Twenty20 final in Dubai on Sunday (AFP)

Dhananjaya de Silva hit back with two flowing off drives for boundaries off Mohammad Harnain to get the innings rolling.

Pathum Nissanka attempted to play his shots in the first six overs of powerplay but miscued Rauf and was caught at mid-off.

Rauf sent the off stump cartwheeling in his second over to

Bhanuka Rajapaksa had smashed an unbeaten 71 to lift Sri Lanka to 170-6 from a precarious 58-5, thanks mainly to Haris Rauf's fiery pace, after being put in to bat by Pakistan in the final at Dubai International Stadium

send Danushka Gunathilaka trudging back to the pavilion as Sri Lanka slipped to 36-3.

Wickets kept tumbling with De Silva's innings cut short by Iftikhar Ahmed on 28 and skipper Dasun Shanaka bowled by leg-spinner Shadab Khan on two as a packed crowd, dominated by Pakistan fans, erupted.

Rajapaksa and Hasaranga got together to rebuild the innings as the two hit regular boundaries to up the scoring rate.

Rauf dismissed Hasaranga, who hit five fours and one six in his 21-ball knock, caught behind for his 50th T20 wicket to break the dangerous stand.

AFP



Ollie Robinson

Anthem nerves a worry for England's Robinson

London, United Kingdom - Ollie Robinson revealed England cricketers had worries about singing the new British national anthem at the Oval on Saturday in case they got the words wrong.

Before play in the third Test against South Africa finally started on the scheduled third day of five, England paid their respects to the late Queen Elizabeth II, whose death aged 96 was announced on Thursday.

Robinson, 28, took a Test-best 5-49 as South Africa were dismissed for a meagre 118, but he appeared to be more worried by the anthem than his bowling.

"We had to remind ourselves of what we were actually going to sing," Robinson said.

"There was a few nervy characters walking down the steps."

Robinson added: "It was really special to be able to sing it at this sport event and it was a really special morning and honour to be a part of."

AFP

Australia captain Finch ends ODI career with win on back of Smith ton

Cairns, Australia - A Steve Smith century helped give retiring Australia skipper Aaron Finch a winning send-off Sunday with a 25-run victory in the final one-day international against New Zealand at Cairns.

Chasing the home team's 267-5, built on the back of Smith's masterful 105, the Blacks Caps were all out for 242 in the last over with Mitchell Starc taking 3-60.

It capped a disappointing Chappell-Hadlee series for the visitors. Australia won the opening game by two wickets before a 113-run thrashing of the Black Caps in the second.

"For us to get to 260 after probably our slowest start ever was just amazing," said Finch, who was out for five in his 146th and last ODI. "Been a fun ride, I've loved every bit of it," he added of his ODI career.

New Zealand started the chase confidently, racing to 49 before Sean Abbott temped Devon Conway (21) into a drive that Smith caught.

Cameron Green accounted for opener Finn Allen after a



Australia's Steve Smith (R) celebrates a successful catch to dismiss New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell with Aaron Finch and Alex Carey during their third ODI in Cairns on Sunday (AFP)

breezy 35, caught low by Josh Hazlewood to leave them 57-2 in the 12th over.

Some unplayable bowling starved New Zealand of runs with Alex Carey stumping Tom Latham for 10 off Adam Zampa's spin and Smith taking a comfort-

able catch to remove Daryl Mitchell (16) off Hazlewood.

When skipper Kane Williamson was run out for 27 after a comical mix up with Glenn Phillips they were in trouble at 112-5.

But a 61-run partnership be-

tween Phillips and Jimmy Neesham (36) then a 51-run stand with Mitchell Santner kept them in the hunt. But Phillip's departure for 47 then Santner for 30 in the space of six balls, ended any chance they had.

AFP

Stokes leads from the front as England eye series win over SA

London, United Kingdom - England were set a target of 130 to win the third Test against South Africa, and with it the series, at The Oval on Sunday.

South Africa were dismissed for 169 - the highest total so far of a low-scoring match - in their second innings on the fourth day, with no Proteas batsman making more than captain Dean Elgar's 36. England skipper Ben Stokes led the hosts' attack with 3-39, while Stuart Broad took 3-45.

Ollie Robinson's return of 2-40 in 15 overs meant the Sussex seamer had taken 51 wickets in his 11 career Tests at a miserly average of 19.80.

Only one England bowler since the end of the Second World War has taken more wickets at a better average -- express quick Frank Tyson, whose 76 Test wickets cost just 18.56 apiece.

Victory would mean England had won six of their seven Tests since a new leadership duo of Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum took charge at the start of this season.

South Africa, who've managed just one individual fifty so far this



England's Stuart Broad celebrates with teammates after the dismissal of South Africa's Dean Elgar during the fourth day of their third Test (AFP)

series, were 70-1 at lunch.

Elgar was 35 not out and Keegan Petersen unbeaten on seven after Stokes, with just his third ball of the match, had Sarel Erwee (26) caught by first slip Joe Root.

Left-hander Elgar, in good touch before lunch, had added just one run to his score when Stuart Broad, bowling from around the wicket, had him lbw.

Perhaps convinced by the forcefulness of Broad's appeal, Elgar walked off almost as soon as he was given out having, ex-

traordinarily, opted against a review despite the match situation and his status as South Africa's senior batsman.

Replays, however, indicated the ball would have missed leg stump by a distance, although by then Elgar was back in the pavilion and South Africa were 83-2.

Not that Broad cared. By dismissing Elgar, he surpassed retired Australia great Glenn McGrath's career tally of 563 Test wickets.

AFP

Oman Cricket's Junior, Women's League to start on October 17, registration to close soon

Muscat - Oman Cricket announced that its Women's and Junior (U19, U16 and U13) season will start on October 17.

Interested schools and clubs can register via Oman Cricket's website www.omancricket.org.

The last date for online registration with payment confirmation for clubs is September 14.

Players Registration deadline for Schools for U19, U16, U13 and Women are now open and will close on September 18.

For players registration for academies, the registration will be open from September 19 and will close on September 22.

A meeting for captains and managers for all teams will be

held on September 29 at 5.00pm.

The match schedules for all categories will be circulated after the manager/coach meeting. School teams are requested to register 18 players and in case any player is not registered by schools, by September 18, academies are free to register that player.

With the Women's Indoor Bash starting this week and the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier - Asia Div 2 later this month, Oman Cricket is looking forward to getting more teams enrolled and engaged in the sport and provide a platform for the young talent to showcase its calibre at the highest level.



PERFECT START

Real Madrid brush Mallorca aside to go top of La Liga

Madrid, Spain - Vinicius Junior scored for the fifth game running as Real Madrid came from behind to beat Real Mallorca 4-1 in La Liga on Sunday and extend their perfect start to the season.

Mallorca grabbed a surprise lead through Vedat Muriqi on 34 minutes but Federico Valverde levelled for the hosts in first-half stoppage time after a brilliant solo run.

Vinicius put Real ahead with 18 minutes to play before late goals from Rodrygo and Antonio Rudiger rounded out a fifth successive league win as Carlo Ancelotti's side moved back above Barcelona at the top.

"Vini is a special player, for the way he plays and for his character," said Ancelotti. "He has extraordinary quality."

"The match was very difficult for several reasons. There was the heat, the fact we conceded from a set-piece... All that was a bit predictable, but we finally managed to turn things around and win the game."

Madrid were without injured forward Karim Benzema, the favourite for next month's Ballon d'Or, sidelined by a thigh injury sustained in the midweek Champions League win over Celtic.

"The team was able to over-



Real Madrid's Federico Valverde celebrates with teammates after scoring against Mallorca in their Spanish league match at Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid on Sunday (AFP)

come the absence of Karim. It's an important confidence boost," said Ancelotti. "(But) we hope to get him back as soon as possible."

Madrid fell behind when

Muriqi headed in a free-kick at the far post.

Valverde swung the momentum back in Madrid's favour though, running from deep inside his own half and firing into the

top corner from just outside the area.

Rodrygo shrugged off three defenders to set up Vinicius to make it 2-1, and the former struck a minute from time after

again weaving through the defence before producing another excellent finish.

Rudiger volleyed in from Toni Kroos' free-kick in injury time for his first Madrid goal since joining

from Chelsea on a free transfer in the close season.

The victory left Real on 15 points with five wins from five matches, two ahead of Barcelona, who dispatched Cadiz

4-0 on Saturday.

Barca opened the scoring through Frenkie de Jong on 55 minutes with Polish striker Robert Lewandowski doubling the advantage ten minutes later.

Star signing of the close season Lewandowski now has six goals in five Liga matches.

The match was halted in the 82nd minute because of a presumed heart attack in the stands. Cadiz 'keeper Jeremias Ledesma grabbed a defibrillator from the team bench and sprinted across the pitch to throw it to emergency staff in the stands.

The fan was taken away by ambulance.

"This sort of thing goes beyond football, we're talking about a human life here, so we all agreed to stop," coach Xavi said.

"Fortunately they managed to save him."

Cadiz later said the fan had been treated by on-site medics who had their own defibrillator.

Barcelona scored twice more late on, through Ansu Fati on 86 minutes and Frenchman Ousmane Dembele, who made it 4-0 in stoppage time.

"It wasn't a great game, but it was a good one," said Xavi, who takes his team to Bayern Munich for a Champions League match on Tuesday.

Atletico Madrid beat Celta Vigo 4-1 in an open match to climb to fourth on 10 points while Athletic Bilbao are up to fourth following a 4-1 victory at second-bottom Elche.

AFP

Berkane upset Wydad to lift CAF Super Cup for the first time

Johannesburg, South Africa - Renaissance Berkane upset Wydad Casablanca 2-0 on Saturday in an all-Moroccan CAF Super Cup match in Rabat.

Charki el Bahri nodded the CAF Confederation Cup title-holders in front on 32 minutes and Sofian el Moudane converted a 71st-minute penalty to double the lead.

CAF Champions League title-holders Wydad had been expected to continue a trend of victories in the annual match for

the winners of the premier African club competition.

Wydad have featured in the Super Cup four times and this was their third defeat while Berkane succeeded at the second attempt after losing on their debut.

Berkane are the 16th side to win a competition that has been dominated by Egyptian club Al Ahly with eight victories from 10 appearances.

Renaissance, based in the northeastern citrus growing re-

gion of Morocco, appeared hungry for success from the kick-off and took a deserved lead.

A perfectly placed cross from Hamza el Moussaoui found El Bahri unmarked, and his glancing header flew across goalkeeper Ahmed Tagnaouti and landed in the far corner of the net.

El Moudane struck his penalty into the middle of the goal as Tagnaouti dived to his right after the spot kick was awarded for a foul on Congolese Chadrack Lukombe by Amine Aboulfath.

The Oranges' goalkeeper, Hamza Hamiani Akbi, was named Man of the Match.

The referee later overruled decisions to award both Wydad and Berkane penalties after reviewing the incidents at a touch-line VAR monitor.

Both clubs begin their title defences in October - Wydad against Rivers United of Nigeria or Watanga of Liberia and Berkane against Kwara United of Nigeria or AS Douanes of Niger.

AFP



Renaissance Berkane players celebrate with the trophy (AFP)

Rangers' Napoli tie pushed back after Queen's death

London, United Kingdom - Rangers' Champions League clash with Napoli in Glasgow has been moved back 24 hours due to severe limitations on police resources following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

Giovanni van Bronckhorst's side were due to host Napoli at Ibrox on September 13, but the match will now be played on September 14 instead.

The decision was taken due to the organisational demands placed on the Scottish police after the Queen died aged 96 at Balmoral on Thursday.

The body of the nation's longest-serving monarch was due to be transported from the royal residence at Balmoral Castle to Edinburgh on Sunday before travelling onto London.

Napoli fans will not be allowed into Wednesday's match to ease the burden on the police, with Rangers sup-

porters banned from the reverse fixture in Naples.

"UEFA today announced that the UEFA Champions League tie between Rangers FC and SSC Napoli, originally to be played on Tuesday 13 September, has been rescheduled for Wednesday 14 September at 21.00CET," a UEFA statement said on Sunday.

"This is due to the severe limitations on police resources and organisational issues related to the ongoing events surrounding the national mourning for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II."

AFP

Napoli fans will not be allowed into Wednesday's match to ease the burden on the police

Atalanta relinquish Serie A lead with Cremonese draw

Bergamo, Italy - Atalanta failed to regain the Serie A lead after Sunday's 1-1 draw with Cremonese allowed Napoli to keep spot.

Gian Piero Gasperini's side had been out on their own as leaders of Italy's top flight for the first time in over 60 years heading into the weekend's fixtures.

But Emanuele Valeri's 78th minute leveller earned Cremonese a point in Bergamo to leave Atalanta second.

Atalanta, who opened the scoring through Merih Demiral four minutes before Valeri's strike, are level on 14 points with Napoli and reigning champions AC Milan, both winners on Saturday.

Promoted Cremonese are in Serie A for the first time since 1996 and stay in the bottom three on two points from their opening six games.

On Saturday, Giacomo Raspadori gave Napoli a 1-0 home win over Spezia which put them ahead on goal difference from 10-man AC Milan, 2-1 winners at Sampdoria.

Italy forward Raspadori struck the decisive goal in the final moments of a stodgy encounter at the Stadio Maradona, sweeping



Cremonese's Vlad Chiriches (L) fights for the ball with Atalanta's Luis Muriel during their Serie A match (AFP)

home Hirving Lozano's cross to net his first goal for Napoli on his second start after arriving on loan from Sassuolo last month.

"It's a moment that will stay in my head and heart," Raspadori told DAZN.

"I missed two chances which I should have scored but thankfully the team put me in the position to score and I kept my head."

Luciano Spalletti's side are on a high after a strong start to the domestic season and thrashing Liverpool in the Champions League opener midweek.

They travel to Rangers on Tuesday before their first true title test against Milan at the San Siro next weekend.

Spezia sit 14th on five points after their third defeat from the first six games of the campaign.

Milan keep pace

Junior Messias gave Milan the lead at Samp after just six minutes when he fired in first time at the end of a neat passing move started by Rafael Leao.

Ten minutes later though, Leao collected a yellow card for raising an elbow and he was dismissed two minutes into the second half when he attempted an overhead kick and caught Samp-

doria centre back Alex Ferrari in the face.

Against 10 men, the initiative briefly swung to Sampdoria and Filip Djuricic levelled in the 57th minute when he flicked a near-post header past Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan.

Milan netted the winner 10 minutes later after Gonzalo Villar handled Olivier Giroud's header from a corner and the Frenchman buried the penalty kick given after a review by referee Michael Fabbri.

"Today we didn't do everything right, it was a match which became more difficult when Rafa was sent off but we stayed together as a team... We showed why we were able to win the league last season," said Sandro Tonali to DAZN.

However Fabbri infuriated Samp coach Marco Giampaolo who was sent off in added time.

A late strike from Marcel Brozovic gave Inter Milan a hard-fought 1-0 win over Torino to offer some relief from recent blues.

The Croatia midfielder met Nicolò Barella's inswinging cross by lifting a superb finish over Vanja Milinkovic-Savic.

AFP



Red Bull Racing's Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after winning the Italian Formula One Grand Prix in Monza on Sunday (AFP)

Verstappen wins F1 Italian Grand Prix

Monza, Italy - Max Verstappen won the Formula One Italian Grand Prix on Sunday to leave him in touching distance of his second straight Formula One title.

Championship leader Verstappen claimed his first win, or podium finish, at Monza after fighting from seventh on the grid to beat Charles Leclerc over the line on another difficult day for Ferrari.

The Red Bull driver is 116 points ahead of Leclerc in the drivers' standings after winning a race whose final six laps were run with the safety car after Daniel Ricciardo slid off the track.

"We had a great race, we were quickest on every compound," said Verstappen.

With six races left, Verstappen can win the driver's crown at next month's Singapore GP.

The Monza crowd boomed and whistled loudly as the cars came over the line as they were denied the chance to see their man Leclerc try to overtake dominant

Verstappen, who won his fifth GP in a row.

George Russell of Mercedes rounded off the podium. Leclerc's teammate Carlos Sainz surged from 18th on the starting grid to fourth.

Leclerc started on pole and held off an early attempt to overtake from Russell to keep first place while Verstappen was already bursting through the pack.

Having started in seventh, Verstappen shifted up four places by the end of the first lap. He moved ahead of Russell on lap five to put Leclerc in his sights.

Verstappen took the lead on lap 13 when Leclerc pitted to change from soft to medium tyres after a virtual safety car was introduced when Sebastian Vettel crashed out.

Leclerc re-entered the track with no major mishaps unlike at last week's Dutch GP but Ferrari's decision to pit early would eventually cost them the race. AFP

'NO REGRETS'

Tunisia's Ons Jabeur says she tried her best in the final, targets world No 1 spot

New York, United States - Ons Jabeur insisted she had "no regrets" after losing to Iga Swiatek in the US Open final as she targeted the Pole's world number one ranking next year.

Jabeur's 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) loss on Saturday was her second successive defeat in a Grand Slam final after also coming off second best at Wimbledon in July.

"I have nothing to regret because I did everything possible," said Jabeur, who will return to number two in the world on Monday.

Swiatek remains comfortably in the rankings' top slot with twice as many points.

The 28-year-old Jabeur, however, is already drawing up a battle plan for 2023.

At the Australian Open, she will have no points to defend having missed the 2022 tournament before she suffered a shock first round exit at the French Open.

Despite being the Wimbledon runner-up, ranking points were stripped from the event by the WTA after the All England Club banned Russian and Belarusian players.

"Points-wise, I don't have defending points in Australia, in French Open, in Wimbledon, which is good. It's a good thing. I'm definitely going for the No. 1 spot," said Jabeur.

"I still have the Masters (WTA Finals in Fort Worth). I will maybe show myself there and build more confidence to really get ready for the next season because I feel like I have a lot to show."

Jabeur, a late bloomer on the tour having still been outside the top 30 at the end of 2020, believes history shows that time re-



Ons Jabeur of Tunisia celebrates with the runner-up trophy after losing to Iga Swiatek of Poland in the US Open final at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center on Saturday (AFP)

mains on her side when it comes to her Grand Slam future.

It took her until she was 26 to capture a maiden WTA title in 2021 at Birmingham, adding Madrid and Berlin trophies this year.

"I struggled to win my first WTA title. It took me time," she added. "So I believe this will take me time. The most important thing is accepting it, learning from the finals that I lost."

"But I'm not someone that's going to give up. I am sure I'm going to be in the final again and I will try my best to win it."

In the meantime, Jabeur acknowledged that 21-year-old

I'm not someone that's going to give up. I'm sure I'm going to be in the final again and I'll try my best to win it

ONS JABEUR

Swiatek, who now has three Grand Slam titles after also winning the French Open in 2020 and this year, is the sport's most formidable force.

Swiatek has 10 career titles. She has won her last 10 finals without dropping a set.

"Physically she's everywhere. It will always be great to compete against Iga," said Jabeur.

"I was joking when I said I don't like her. I'll forgive her when she gives me a Rolex or something!"

AFP

Swiatek says 'sky's the limit' after US Open triumph

New York, United States - Iga Swiatek believes "the sky is the limit" after she crowned her rise to the pinnacle of women's tennis with a third Grand Slam title at the US Open on Saturday.

The 21-year-old Polish world number one claimed her second Grand Slam title of 2022 at Flushing Meadows, defeating Tunisia's Ons Jabeur 6-2, 7-6 (7/5).

It was the latest staging post on a dazzling season which has provided ample evidence Swiatek is the front-runner to dominate the sport as it heads into the post-Serena Williams era.

A second Grand Slam title on Saturday and a victory at the French Open in June are part of seven tournaments she has won this year, which included a 37-match winning streak as she swept to the top of the rankings.

Swiatek, whose favourite surface is clay, says the fact that she was able to triumph in New York could prove to be a psychological watershed for her game.

"At the beginning of the season I realized that maybe I can



Poland's Iga Swiatek celebrates after beating Tunisia's Ons Jabeur in the US Open final on Saturday (AFP)

have some good results on WTA events," she said. "I also made it to semi-final of the Australian Open.

"But I wasn't sure if I was on the level yet to win actually a Grand Slam, especially at the US Open where the surface is so fast."

"It's something that I wasn't expecting for sure. It's also like a confirmation for me that sky is

the limit.

"I'm proud, also surprised little bit, just happy that I was able to do that."

Mental toughness

On Saturday, Swiatek shrugged off the uniquely raucous New York crowd - chair umpire Louise Azemar Engzell made repeated calls for quiet amongst specta-

tors which were routinely ignored - to close out her 10th straight victory in a final since 2019.

Swiatek believes her ability to block out distractions, and mould her gameplan to suit matches as they are evolving is a sign that she has become a mentally tougher player.

"I'm mostly proud of the fact that mentally I'm not kind of

breaking up in those important moments," Swiatek said.

"I have, like, after the matches, even if I lose, I kind of have no regrets because I know I'm doing 100%."

"I'm proud that I have much more solutions and options on court than I had before tennis-wise, but yeah, also mentally."

"I'm really proud of that because I just know how it feels to not have ideas on court, not have anything you can change to make the match better. Right now it's been a long time since I didn't have any idea."

Swiatek plans to celebrate her victory by taking in a Broadway musical on Sunday.

"I'm not going to say the name of the musical because I want to have a little peace tomorrow," she said as she reflected on a US Open campaign that included a chance encounter with pop star Seal.

"After I met Seal, I was like, 'Even if I lose right now I already won this tournament, because I got photo with him.'"

AFP



Winter Offer

50 ONLY

HOT & COLD DISPENSER

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 30 REFILL COUPONS

20 ONLY

WHITE TAP DISPENSER OR TAP DISPENSER OR MANUAL WATER PUMP OR CRADLE WITH TAP

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 15 REFILL COUPONS

Offer valid from 14th August to 13th November 2022. Existing Oman Oasis 5 Gallon returnable bottle customers and Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible for the offer.

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



Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water



HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing

pH 9.1 to 9.5



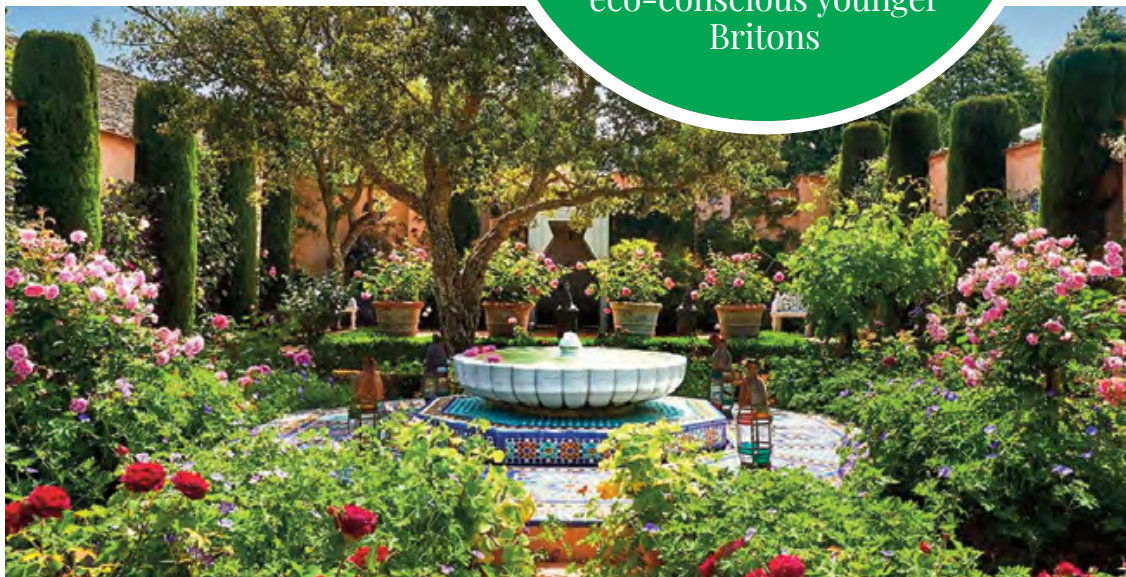
Toll-free **800 71 222** or **9275 5522**

C.R. No.: 1365452

CHARLES THE ENVIRONMENTALIST

Green King

Britain's new monarch King Charles III is a committed environmentalist with a long history of campaigning for better conservation, organic farming and tackling climate change, which is likely to sit well with more eco-conscious younger Britons



Interspersed between photos of official meetings and other royal duties, King Charles III's Instagram account as Prince of Wales typically featured pictures showing him furthering environmental causes in Britain and beyond.

The photos included planting trees, showing off organic fruit and vegetables from his Clarence House residence, and colourful flowers growing in the garden at his beloved Highgrove House in Gloucestershire, western England. One photo even captured Charles (who has now passed the prince of Wales title to his son and heir William) on a visit to threatened mangrove swamps in St Vincent and Grenadines in the Caribbean.

When Britain hosted the COP26 climate summit in Scotland last year, he gave the opening speech, urging world leaders seated in front of him to redouble their efforts to confront global warming and warning, 'Time has quite literally run out.'

Since his first big public speech on the subject in 1970, Charles has "been raising awareness about all aspects of the environment for a very long time," said Bob Ward, of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment. "In many ways he has been ahead of the public awareness and political awareness" on the issue, he said.

Sustainability

At Highgrove, Charles has cultivated a garden, which is open to the public, as well as a fully organic farm. It initially left some neighbouring farmers sceptical, but has gradually become a successful business and sells its produce under the 'Duchy Organic' brand in



the high-end supermarket chain Waitrose.

"His Royal Highness has taken many steps personally to live in a more sustainable way," his official website for his tenure as Prince of Wales said.

It noted about 90 per cent of energy for office and domestic use now came from renewable sources, with around half that generated from on-site renewable sources such as solar panels, biomass boilers and heat pumps and the remainder from electricity and gas purchased from renewable sources.

For several years, Charles had published his annual carbon footprint - including unof-

ficial travel - which amounted to 445 tonnes in the year to March 2022.

His car, an Aston Martin owned for over 50 years, has been modified to run on surplus English white wine and whey from the cheese-making process. It runs on a mixture of 85 per cent bioethanol, and 15 per cent unleaded petrol.

The monarch has been president of the

WWF-UK animal charity since 2011, emulating his late father Prince Philip, who performed the same role from 1981 to 1996.

He is also the patron of associations, such as 'Surfers Against Sewage', and made numerous speeches warning of the disappearance of biodiversity. More recently, he wrote an article for *Newsweek* magazine headlined 'Our children are judging us'.

Sensitive

His vocal stances on issues, including the environment, have prompted some criticism that he is departing from constitutional norms which see the royal family remain politically neutral at all times.

Charles has repeatedly vowed to remain true to constitutional practices, as recently as this week when he ascended to the throne. But he may not see environmental and conservation causes as overtly political.

"He would be very sensitive as a head of state," predicted Ward. "He must be very careful about being seen to act in a way that might be seen as putting pressure on the government. But I don't expect him not to speak at all."

Ruby Wright, an illustrator, who came to Buckingham Palace to pay her respects to the late Queen Elizabeth II, said on Friday that she hopes 'he sticks to his guns'.

"I think he needs to be more modest and really push the environmental agenda and make that his legacy," she said. "I know he's not allowed to be political at all but this isn't politics. This is the future of humanity."

Laura Beirne, a 30-year-old fashion designer, agreed. "I think it's positive he supports the environment. That's important, I think, for my generation."

As king, he will have less time for his passions of gardening and farming. He admitted in an interview in 1986 that he talked to plants, attracting some mockery. But the baton has already been passed to his son William, who shares his commitment to the environment.

Last year, William created the Earthshot prize, which rewards projects that propose solutions to the climate crisis.

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian male with 15 years of experience in skill development, training/assessments/set-up of skill centre. On a visit visa. Contact: +968-91138586 email: swamy.natarajan@gmail.com

A post graduate Sales & Marketing with five years of experience, with Omani licence Contact: +968-91924688

harishbalakrishnan.mv@gmail.com

B.Com - Finance; Diploma in Foreign Accounting, knowledge of SAPFICO, TALLY ERP & MS Suits Contact: +968-77365532

Sr. Sales Manager BE-MBA, 16+ years of Oman Experience (Projects, Institutional, dealer). FMCG, Consumer

Durables Industry, Oman D/L, NOC. Contact-94008034

FOR RENT

A large apartment in Darsait , 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, a hall, and a balcony with sea view. Rent RO260 per month only T: 99315986

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com



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

JOB VACANCY

Looking for an experienced candidate from finance expert with an experience of 5 years, visa will be provided

CONTACT:92556647

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact:97239696/95355638

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

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

SITUATION VACANT

BAHWAN METAL & GLASS ENGINEERING LLC

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

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

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

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

CONSERVATION



A general view of a rainbow seen on the pilot farm in Yangambi, 100 km from the city of Kisangani, in the province of Tshopo, northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Critical Congo

Scientists fight to protect DR Congo rainforest as threats from 'slash and burn' agriculture and vandalism increase

A tower bristling with sensors juts above the canopy in northern Democratic Republic of Congo, measuring carbon dioxide emitted from the world's second-largest tropical rainforest.

Spanning several countries in central Africa, the Congo Basin rainforest covers an immense area and is home to a dizzying array of species. But there are growing concerns for the future of the forest, deemed critical for sequestering CO2, as loggers and farmers push ever deeper inside.

Scientists at the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve in the DRC's Tshopo province are studying the rainforest's role in climate change - a subject that received scant attention until recently.

Standing 55 metres tall, the CO2-measuring flux tower came online in 2020 in the lush reserve of 250,000 hectares (620,000 acres).

Yangambi was renowned for tropical agronomy research during the Belgian colonial era.

This week, it also hosted scientists as part of meetings in the DRC dubbed pre-COP 27, ahead of the COP27 climate summit in Egypt in November.

Thomas Sibret, who runs the CongoFlux CO2 measuring project, said that flux towers are common worldwide. But until one was set up in Yangambi, there had been none in Congo, which had 'limited our understanding of this ecosys-

tem', he said.

Around 30 billion tonnes of carbon are stored across the Congo Basin, researchers estimated in a study in Nature in 2016. The figure is roughly equivalent to three years' of global emissions.

Sibret said more time is required to draw definitive conclusions from the data gathered by DRC's flux tower, but one thing is certain: The rainforest se-

questers more greenhouse gases than it emits.

No more trees

Paolo Cerutti, the head of the Center for International Forestry Research's operations in Congo, said this was good news. In Latin America, "we're starting to see evidence that the Amazon (rainforest) is becoming more of an emitter," he said. "We're betting a lot on the Congo Basin, espe-

cially the DRC, which has 160 million hectares of forest still capable of absorbing carbon."

Cerutti, however, warned that slash-and-burn agriculture poses a particular threat to the future of the rainforest, pointing out that half a million hectares of forest were lost last year. Slash-and-burn agriculture sees villagers cultivate lands until they become depleted, then clear forests to create new lands, and repeat the cycle.

With the DRC's population of about 100 million people set to expand, many worry the forest is

in dire threat.

Jean-Pierre Botomoito, the head of the Yanonge area about 40km from Yangambi, said that he once thought the forest was inexhaustible. But "here, there are no trees," he said.

Villagers in his once-forested region now have to travel long distances along narrow muddy paths to find tree-dwelling caterpillars - a local delicacy.

Charcoal, used for cooking in the absence of electricity, and gas is similarly hard to obtain. There are also efforts to help farmers in the remote and impoverished region to make a living while sustaining the environment.

A largely EU-financed project, for example, trains farmers to rotate cassava and groundnut crops between fast-growing acacia trees. Farmers can harvest the acacia trees to make charcoal after six years.

Experts also encourage the use of more efficient kilns to produce more charcoal and teach loggers how to select trees to fell.

Vandalism

Jean Amis, head of a local farmers' organisation, was enthusiastic about the project. "We didn't necessarily have the right prac-

tices before," he said.

Helene Fatouma, the president of a women's association, also says fishponds on the edge of the forest now yield 1,450kg of fish in six months, as opposed to 30 previously. But not all residents of the surrounding area support the various schemes.

Some people believe that the flux tower is stealing oxygen, for example, or that it is a prelude to land appropriation.

Researchers often find dendrometers - devices that measure tree dimensions - vandalised, and some traditional chiefs think the forest will grow back by itself without outside interference.

The Indonesia-based Center for International Forestry Research says that resistance to the schemes can be overcome through raising awareness.

Dieu Merci Assumani, the director of the DRC's National Institute for Agricultural Research, agreed. But he said there needs to be more financing for locals, who have seen little benefit from promised funds to protect the rainforest.

Assumani pointed to an example to the US\$500mn deal to protect the Congo Basin rainforest, signed by President Felix Tshisekedi and former British prime minister Boris Johnson in Glasgow last year.

"Commitments are all very well, but they need to be disbursed," he said.

AFP



People wash their motorcycles on the shore as fishermen return after a day's work in the Congo River a few kilometers from the city of Kisangani

TERRA

real vegetable chips

You've never experienced vegetables like this

Gluten Free

NON GMO

TERRA

real vegetable chips

SWEET POTATO

TERRA

real vegetable chips

SWEET POTATO SPICED

TERRA

real vegetable chips

ORIGINAL

TERRA

real vegetable chips

MEDITERRANEAN

TERRA

real vegetable chips

BLUES

Distributed by

CATERING SOLUTIONS TRADING LLC

Please contact +968 22060236/237

MUSCAT DAILY
www.muscatdaily.com

Executive Chairman & Editor-in-Chief
Saleh Zakwani
Apex Press and Publishing,
Printed at Apex Printing Press, Jiffnain

PO Box 2616, Ruwi 112, Muscat,
Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24799388.
Toll Free No. 80076000

EDITORIAL
Shaddad al Musalmi
Tel: +968 24799388
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

ADVERTISING
Sajir CP
Mobile: +968 99474314
Email: sajir@apexmedia.co.om

SUBSCRIPTION
Toll Free No. 80076000
Email: customercare@apexmedia.co.om
Annual subscription offer: RO24

DISTRIBUTION
Shamshad Khan
Toll Free No. 80076000
Email: shamshad@apexmedia.co.om