

OIA invests in Indian pharma firm

BioGenomics develops and manufactures an array of insulin products in collaboration with an Omani company

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In its efforts to attain self-sufficiency in pharmaceutical manufacturing, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has announced an investment in BioGenomics, a developer of biosimilar drugs with a focus on diabetic therapy.

The company develops and manufactures an array of insulin products in collaboration with an Omani company.

‘This investment reinforces OIA’s efforts in enabling the private sector in Oman and collaborating with it to attract foreign investment to the sultanate. This investment in BioGenomics, a company established in 2002 in India, is aimed at setting up a manufacturing plant in Oman to produce insulin. The production will initially target regional markets and then expand to European and African markets,’ stated OIA.

In a recent issue of its newslet-



ter Enjaz & Eejaz, OIA said that the investment in BioGenomics represents its keen interest in the healthcare sector, which proved to be vital during the COVID-19 pandemic.

‘In addition to returns for investors, the healthcare sector contributes to economic diversification and job creation.’

In the foreword of the newsletter, H E Abdulsalam al Murshidi, chairman of OIA, said a roadmap has been drawn detailing national and international

investments. “OIA divided its assets into two different portfolios: the ‘National Development Portfolio,’ which will contribute to national economic growth and development, and the ‘Future Generations Portfolio,’ which targets maximum returns from international investments for future Omani generations.”

The newsletter also highlighted a yellowfin tuna farming project of Blue Waters, a subsidiary of OIA’s Fisheries Development Oman.

4 dead, 3 injured in Adam-Haima road accident



Directorate General of Police Aviation airlifts a crash victim to Nizwa

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Four citizens died and three others were injured when a car overturned on the Adam-Haima road en route to Dhofar on Sunday.

A statement issued by Royal Oman Police (ROP) said, ‘Police aviation transported a seriously injured person to Nizwa Hospital after a vehicle overturned that resulted in the death of four citizens and injury to three others of one family on the Adam-Haima road en route to Dhofar governorate.’

Despite ROP and Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority making elaborate arrangements every year for the safety of visitors to Dhofar during khareef, several accidents occur on the road leading to the governorate.

On Saturday, ROP announced that the Dhofar Governorate Police Command is ready for khareef to maintain law and order and ensure the smooth conduct

of tourist activities.

A police official said, “ROP is keen to provide human and logistical support in the governorate with the aim of ensuring the best services and prompt police presence in all tourist sites in the governorate.”

The official informed that police, civil defence and ambulance personnel have been deployed along roads leading to the governorate, and the Directorate General of Police Aviation will respond quickly to emergency situations, serve road users and provide them with immediate assistance.

According to the official, traffic and security patrols have been deployed at all sites to regulate traffic and prevent traffic jams.

“The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority and Coast Guard will patrol beaches and springs in the governorate. Teams will also spread awareness on drowning accidents that occur in these places,” he informed.



SAYYID SHIHAB INSPECTS NDC'S STRATEGIC DRILL

H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, visited the site of a strategic drill codenamed ‘Decision Making 9’, being conducted at National Defence College (NDC), Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, on Sunday. He took note of the activities of the exercise carried out by participants of the ninth batch of NDC. The exercise will run till July 7. H H Sayyid Shihab was received upon his arrival at the NDC headquarters by Air-Vice Marshal Saleh Yahya al Maskari, Head of Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, and Maj Gen Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Commandant of NDC (ONA)

Ministries of Finance, Defence sign 4 pacts for modernisation of defence infrastructure

Muscat - The Ministry of Finance (MoF), represented by the Partnership for Development (PFD) programme, signed four agreements with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to carry out modernisation projects of the latter and Sultan’s Armed Forces on Sunday.

Besides economic development, the agreements seek to support national industries, empower small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and provide training and job opportunities.

The agreements were signed by Nasser Khamis al Jashmi, secretary general of MoF and chairman of the Board of Trustees of PFD, and officials of the companies concerned.

The signing ceremony was attended by Mohammed Nasser al Zaabi, secretary general of MoD, officials of MoF and senior offi-



cers of MoD.

The agreements aim to implement four projects, namely the establishment of a maintenance facility for armoured personnel vehicles of Royal Army of Oman, an earth observation centre for the National Survey Authority, transfer of Hawk aircraft engine maintenance capabilities to Royal

Air Force of Oman (RAFO), and supply of specialised aircraft systems for RAFO’s C130 and F16 fleet.

The maintenance facility for armoured personnel vehicles will be implemented by FNSS, a Turkey-based company. The project will help modernise armoured vehicles and reduce

maintenance cost. It will also enhance efficiency and develop capabilities of local companies.

The second project - to establish an earth observation centre - will be implemented by Indra, a Spanish company. This project will enable Oman establish the first centre specialised in monitoring and analysis of earth im-

ages captured from the space. It will also contribute towards training nationals in this field.

The third project entails the transfer of Hawk aircraft engine maintenance capabilities from Rolls-Royce to RAFO. It will boost the level of competency, skills and expertise of staff and reduce engine maintenance costs.

The fourth project, implemented by US-based Lockheed Martin, will enhance aviation safety and enable efficient use of tracking systems using satellite signals.

The projects are designed with an eye on the future so that the facilities can keep pace with technology developments. These will also open opportunities for nationals, generate more jobs and enable SMEs to play a greater role in the economy. ONA



850-year-old world map restored



Non-oil exports jump 40% in Q1 2022

Oman, Yemen meet to enhance ties in transport, communications and IT



Omani and Yemeni officials at a session of talks in Salalah on Sunday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen held an official session of talks in Salalah on Sunday.

The meeting was chaired by H E Said bin Hamoud al Ma’awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Dr Nageeb Manssor Hamid al Auj, Yemen’s Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology.

A statement issued the Ministry of Transport, Communica-

The two sides will work to find a mechanism to activate a greater maritime link between the Salalah Free Zone and Yemen

H E DR ALI BIN MASOUD AL SUNAIDI

tions and Information Technology said that the meeting aimed to discuss ways of enhancing cooperation in the fields of transport, communications, and information technology.

The meeting provided a platform to exchange information, experiences and opportunities in the fields of transportation, communications and informa-

tion technology, and encouraging related institutions and companies in both countries to enhance cooperation.

H E Ma’awali said, “The session aimed at developing relations in the fields of land, sea and air transport, transit trade, investment in free zones, and developing work in the fields of IT and communications.”

According to Auj, several projects are expected to be launched soon, including the reconnection of communication cables on the border between the wilayat of Al Mazyunah and the Shahn area in Yemen.

H E Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidi, Chairman of Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, informed that the two sides will work to find a mechanism to activate a greater maritime link between the Salalah Free Zone and Yemen, and strengthen the banking sector between the two countries.



PARKING WOES

Despite the Ministry of Health’s efforts over the years to build new infrastructure and increase the number of parking spaces in hospitals, some hospitals in the city urgently need to enhance car park facilities within their premises. Hospitals such as The Royal Hospital and Khoula Hospital continue to witness traffic jams in the parking area every day even after the ministry increased the parking spaces and built multi-storey parking facilities. It is not uncommon to find cars parked in hospitals in undesignated areas in clear violation of traffic rules resulting in traffic fines. Asked if congestion in parking lots of public hospitals is a matter of concern and what can be done to solve the problem, here is what Muscat Daily readers said:

Mohammad al Lawati
Private sector employee

I was at Badr al Samaa a few days ago and was surprised to see the packed parking lot. I parked near the bus stand and walked down. Imagine the situation for an elderly patient or someone in a critical situation! Visiting hospitals is stressful; now add to that the problem faced in parking before getting into the hospital.

Mohamed Uvais
Salesman

To avoid congestion in hospital parking, those who are able to walk can park some distance away. This will help elderly people park in the hospital parking.

Mohammed al Balushi
Government employee

I have come across packed parking lots in both private and public hospitals. I think the best remedy for this problem is to have a professional agency manage the rush. It is a must. In Thailand I saw several hospitals have special staff to manage their parking space.

Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

Multi-storey parking with automated facilities will ease the problem.



Yousuf al Hinai
Salesman

In recent times, we have seen an increase in the number of cars. Congestion is normally seen in some pockets of the city. It is an irony that where people must show restraint, these are the places where people show their anger and intolerance. Hospital authorities must take serious note of this and manage this mess.

Nandini Nandakumar
Physiotherapist

This is a matter of serious concern. We see a lot of traffic at peak hours near schools and hospitals. Visiting hospitals is already stressful. The tension while finding parking space is additional stress.

Halima al Balushi
Public relations executive

The congestion is witnessed at a particular time of the day – mornings and late evenings. It is really a serious concern and I think hospitals and government authorities must team up to sort this out.

Ruskeen S
Private sector employee

Multi-level parking is one solution for this problem. Controlling the number of visitors by issuing e-passes and restricting entry to close relatives and company appointed representatives will also work. Visiting hours can be made flexible.

Vinod Raghavan
Private sector employee

Most private hospitals in Muscat governorate are in busy and crowded localities and very close to main roads, due to which parking problems are round the clock. To avoid parking woes, the best way out is that authorities stop giving permission for new hospitals in crowded places and near main roads. There are many open places in Muscat with ample space which will be good locations for new hospitals.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

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.

Have we become careless after the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions? Is it not a personal responsibility to observe the bare minimum caution – including wearing face masks in crowded places and maintaining hand sanitation – to safeguard our health?

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

Dhofar receives more seasonal flights; Flynas, Gulf Air fly thrice weekly

Salalah - Dhofar governorate has started receiving more seasonal flights operated by GCC carriers for the khareef season. On Saturday, Salalah Airport received the first flight of Saudi Arabia's Flynas Airlines.

Bahrain's Gulf Air started three weekly flights for khareef starting Sunday.

Counted among the leading low-cost airlines in the Middle East, Flynas is scheduled to operate three direct weekly flights from Riyadh. The Flynas flight on Saturday was greeted with a traditional water salute at Salalah Airport, while passengers were given complimentary flowers and souvenirs on arrival.

During the reception, which was attended by a number of officials from Oman Airports, as well as the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Royal Oman



Police, Salim bin Awad al Yafei, executive vice-president of Salalah Airport, stated that the three direct weekly flights on Saturday, Tuesday and Thursday will provide a great opportunity for travellers to spend an enjoyable vacation in Dhofar, either for the weekend or as part of a longer stay.

Yafei pointed out that Oman Airports is delighted to launch

these seasonal flights to Salalah, which is well known in the GCC for its weather during the summer khareef.

"We would like to welcome travellers from Saudi Arabia to Dhofar, whether via air or by land. The movement between the two countries is set to increase with the opening of these direct flights, as well as due to the road net-

work linking Oman and Saudi Arabia," Yafei added.

Commenting on the inauguration of the seasonal flights, an official of Flynas said, "It gives us pleasure to add Salalah to our destinations during khareef, which will enhance the recovery of tourism in the two countries."

Abdul-Ilah bin Suleiman al Eidi, vice-president of interna-

tional sales at Flynas, said, "Salalah is one of Flynas' latest international destinations. It aligns with our plans to open up new markets and enhance passenger traffic to/from Saudi Arabia's airports. This step is in line with the company's goal to connect the world to the kingdom, as well as government plans to attract 300mn passengers annually, and connect the kingdom's airports with 250 international destinations."

Kuwaiti low-cost airline Jazeera Airways was the first regional airline to start seasonal flights to Salalah on June 16.

Other airlines that will join the list include Wizz Air from Abu Dhabi. Qatar Airways and Air Arabia currently operate flights throughout the year and will add capacity during the khareef season.



Slaughterhouse working hours for Eid al Adha announced

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has announced working hours of its slaughterhouses in Seeb and Amerat for Eid al Adha.

A statement issued by Muscat Municipality said, 'From Dhul Hijja 9 until the second day of Eid, pre-reservation for sacrificing animals can be made by individuals at the slaughterhouses from 6am to 6pm. The slaughtered animals will be delivered next morning.'

The timing for individual sacrifices is 7am to 11am during the first three days of Eid.

Animals will be slaughtered for shops and companies in the evening from 7pm to 9pm.

Those who want to take animals (sheep, goat, cow or camel) for sacrifice to the slaughter-

houses can do so from Dhul Hijja 10 to the second day of Eid in the evening from 7pm to 9pm. Slaughtered animals must be collected on the same day.

Institutions, charities and meat companies intending to slaughter animals in Muscat Municipality slaughterhouses must notify before Dhul Hijja 8; applications made after this date will not be accepted.

Normal operations of Seeb and Amerat slaughterhouses will resume on the fourth day of Eid. For companies, the timing is 6am to 8am and 8am to 12:45pm for individuals.

The Ministry of Health has urged citizens and residents to use approved abattoirs during Eid al Adha to prevent the risk of infection with Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever.

HEAVY RAINS IN DAKHLIYAH ON SUNDAY



The wet spell that started on Saturday continued on Sunday with several governorates witnessing thunderstorms and scattered rains. The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority warned people against venturing into flooded wadis as rain of varying intensity fell in several wila-yats, including Nizwa, Jabal Akhdar and Izki in Dakhliyah on Sunday, leading to overflowing wadis (ONA)

Fisherman with unlicensed fishing guns arrested

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A fisherman was arrested for possessing unlicensed fishing guns in the wilayat of Suwaiq, North Batinah, on Sunday.

The Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in North Batinah Governorate said in a statement that its fisheries control team arrest a fisherman who violated the fishing law. 'The fisherman was in possession of unlicensed fishing guns. Legal measures have been taken against him,' the statement added.

WEATHER WATCH			PRAYER TIMINGS	
	Max	Min		
Abu Dhabi	38	28	Fajr	3.58am
Doha	41	28	Sunrise	5.25am
Kuwait City	45	32	Duhr	12.16pm
Manama	39	29	Asr	3.35pm
Muscat	33	28	Maghrib	7.03pm
Riyadh	42	27	Isha	8.25pm

850-year-old map 'Picture of the world' restored



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) has restored a historical map called 'Picture of the world' dating back more than 850 years.

A statement issued by the NRAA said, 'The restoration and maintenance work team of the authority successfully restored the map Picture of the World. It is a rare map drawn by the scholar Al Sharif al Idrisi, one of the greatest Arab cartographers and geographers, in 1154.'

The map illustrates accurate details of the time period, displaying countries, territories and seas.

The contribution of Al Sharif al Idrisi (1100-1165) to cartography became the basis for Muslim geographers' work for many years.

The map was torn and fragmented due to exposure to high humidity and acidity levels.

The Sultanate of Oman appears prominently on the map,



Restoring documents requires technical skills and accurate knowledge of the components making these, including the paper, ink and colour

MOHAMMAD AL SULAIMI

including its strategic locations - Muscat, Sohar, Qalhat, Sur, Dhofar, Mirbat, Hasik, Saal and

Dhahirah.

Elaborating on the different stages of restoration of the map,

Mohammad al Sulaimi, head of Restoration Department in NRAA, said, "Restoring documents requires technical skills and accurate knowledge of the components making these, including the paper, ink and colour."

Cleaning and removing stains helped bring out the original details of the map, he informed.

Project to support farms hit by Cyclone Shaheen

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has launched an initiative to support farmers affected by Cyclone Shaheen in the wilayats of Suwaiq and Khabourah in North Batinah.

The initiative aims to establish model commercial fields for the cultivation of dates, mangoes and lemon, along with a few other types of fruits in the areas affected by Shaheen in the two wilayats. Efforts will also be made to market the produce in the sultanate.

The ministry will give farmers

Conditions include nationality of the farmer (Omanis only) and the land to be cultivated should not be less than one acre

mango, guava, fig, grape, banana and lemon saplings for free. Distribution of saplings will begin in October.

An official of MAFWR said, "The ministry has set some conditions for farmers to benefit from the project, which is financed by the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund."

Conditions include nationality of the farmer (Omanis only), the land to be cultivated should not be less than one acre, the farm must have a permanent source of irrigation, and the soil should be suitable for cultivation of these fruits.

Farmers must use the seedlings provided by the ministry, the official said, adding that they must follow instructions for growing the chosen crops. They must also allow the ministry's specialists to visit the site to ensure that it meets the stipulated conditions.

The deadline to submit applications to participate in the project is July 31, 2022.

National Museum launches website

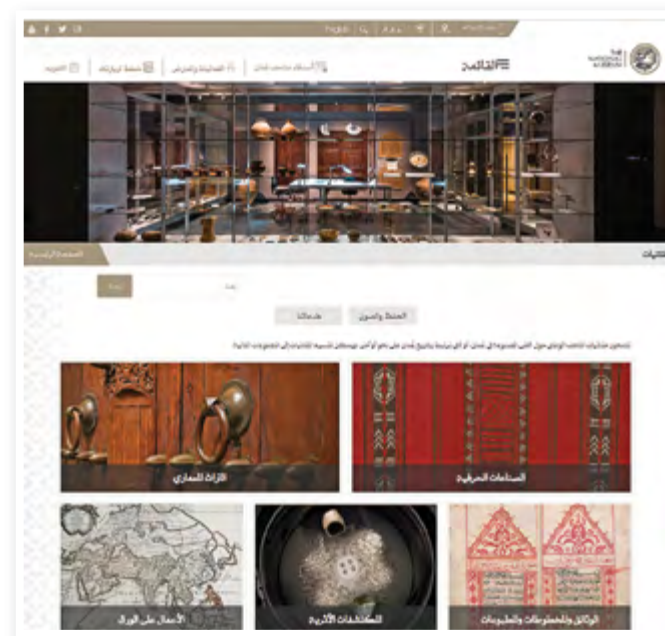
Our Correspondent
Muscat

The National Museum of Oman launched its official website (<https://www.nm.gov.om/>) on Sunday after making updates to a trial version to meet current technological advances and achieve desired goals.

The website is an important gateway to introduce the vital role of the National Museum and learn about many historical and cultural aspects of Oman, stated a press release. Additionally, it will serve visitors and specialists interested in museums.

The website allows the browser to access various sections of the site, laid out with a simple interface and a design that reflects the identity and mission of the museum.

In addition to ease of browsing and use in both Arabic and



English language, it also includes some interactive services such as an interactive map that guides the user to the museum's different galleries that display a num-

ber of artefacts and collections.

The website acts as a window for the browser to find reliable information related to the museum on the Internet.

WOMEN POWER



A new batch of Omani women recruits with General Education Diploma qualification joined Royal Oman Police on Sunday (ONA)

58 infiltrators arrested in June: ROP

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A total of 58 foreign nationals were arrested by Royal Oman Police (ROP) for illegal entry into the sultanate in June.

ROP statistics indicate that the Dhofar Governorate Police Command arrested six infiltrators of different nationalities in the wilayat of Salalah along with a resident, who helped the infiltrators to enter the sultanate illegally - violating the laws of labour and residence of foreigners on June 29.

Earlier on June 26, ROP arrested 28 foreigners and four citizens on charges of helping those infiltrators to enter the sultanate



illegally.

Also on June 20, the Coast Guard Police in North Batinah Governorate arrested 23 infiltrators of different nationalities from a smuggling boat off the governorate's shores, the ROP said.

On June 5, ROP arrested a suspect for possession of narcotics after entering the country illegally.

ROP urged citizens and residents to report any violations to help police to nab any infiltrator into the country.

Canal to drain out rainwater in Bausher

Muscat - Muscat Municipality is building a surface water drainage canal in Azaiba 6 area in Bausher, to tackle frequent accumulation of rainwater in the area.

The project will see construction of a 2,200m long canal adjacent to Muscat International Airport to drain water coming from Sultan Qaboos Street.

The project also involves establishment of box culverts under 18 November Street, and an open canal - 500m in length and 5m in breadth - extending from 18 November Street through Azaiba Park, running directly to the mouth of the sea.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No.(20 / 2022)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	No E-Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/22/060	2022/MM/QS-30	Beautification works at Al Rawdah in Quriyat (E- Tender)	Rail 25	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	second
PRE/22/061	2022/MM/QS-31	Faced Clock System Replacement at Muscat Municipality Building, Darsait (E- Tender)	Rail 25	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/065	2022/MM/QS-32	Proposed parking in Al Mabellah South (Hey Al Walaa) (E- Tender)	Rail 25	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	First
PRE/22/066	2022/MM/QS-33	Proposed parking in Al Mabellah South (Hey Al Shoroq) (E- Tender)	Rail 25	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	First
PRE/22/055	2022/MM/HQ-5	Design and improvement of Al Jami Roundabout and Drainage Works Near to Maizoon Mosque (E- Tender)	Rail 300	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

1- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.

- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+96824402200/24402330).

MARKET WATCH

MSX304,108.67

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs	205.00
Pakistani Rs	531.18
Bangladeshi taka	242.65
Philippines peso	143.00
Sri Lankan Rs	934.51

*Rates as on JULY 03

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

IMF to open Tunisia aid talks

The International Monetary Fund is sending a team to Tunisia this week to begin formal talks on a new financial aid package, an IMF official said.

The North African nation has been in preliminary discussions with the global lender for a new loan to save an economy ravaged by years of high unemployment, inflation and public debt even pre-dating its 2011 revolution.

"An IMF mission will be in Tunis from July 4 to initiate negotiations on an IMF-supported program," an IMF spokesperson told AFP. "The IMF remains a strong partner of Tunisia."

Tunisia is seeking a two-billion-euro loan, according to a source with knowledge of the preliminary talks.

Non-oil exports jump 40% in Q1

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Helped by global economic recovery and improved demand for Omani products in the United States, India and the Middle East markets, the sultanate's non-oil exports jumped nearly 40 per cent in the first quarter of this year.

Oman's total non-oil exports grew by 39.9 per cent to RO1.866bn in the first quarter of 2022 from RO1.334bn recorded in the same period of the previous year, driven by increased demand from key markets in the region and around the world, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The economy returned to normalcy in 2021 after previous year's twin-shock of oil price collapse and the coronavirus outbreak, and the burgeoning demand for Omani exports suggests that the sultanate's economy is well on a recovery path. Supported by strong recovery in oil prices and government's economic stimulus measures, Oman's nominal GDP grew at a solid pace of 25.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2022.



Oman's non-oil exports to the United States spiked more than 131 per cent to RO268.1mn in the first quarter of 2022, while shipments to India surged 65.6 per cent to RO159.5mn

Omani exports to the UAE – the biggest destination for the sultanate's non-oil shipments – increased by 10.2 per cent to

RO278.1mn during the first quarter of 2022 against RO252.3mn in the same period of last year. Exports to Saudi

Arabia grew by 27.6 per cent to RO158.3mn in the three months period ended March 31, 2022.

As Oman's major trading partners are continuing to record economic recovery after the pandemic, the robust growth in Omani exports was led by strong demand from the United States, India and other countries.

Non-oil exports to the United States spiked more than 131 per cent in 2022 amounting to RO268.1mn in the first quarter

compared with RO115.9mn in the same period of 2021.

Omani shipments to India also surged by 65.6 per cent to RO159.5mn in the first quarter of this year as compared to RO96.3mn recorded in 2021.

NCSI data suggests that the strong recovery in non-oil exports is broad-based for almost all of Oman's major trading partners.

The strong trade performance shows that Omani exporters are making good recovery in attracting overseas orders.

Omani non-oil exports to other countries jumped by 35.1 per cent during the first quarter of 2022 to RO906.7mn against RO671.3mn in the same period of 2021.

International trade had collapsed during 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic forced much of the world into lockdown. However, global trade rebounded strongly in 2021, helping Omani exporters to recover the lost demand for their shipments.

Minerals, plastics and chemicals

As per the NCSI data, Oman's

mineral products export grew more than 42 per cent to RO357.8mn in the first quarter this year from RO251.2mn in the corresponding period of 2021. Shipments for chemical products also surged 44 per cent to RO381.8mn this year in comparison with RO265.3mn in the same period of last year.

With rising production capacities of the sultanate's downstream industries, exports of plastics, rubber and their items grew nearly 83 per cent to hit RO290.6mn value in the first quarter of 2022 compared to RO158.9mn recorded in the first quarter of 2021.

Base metals and their articles accounted for around RO350mn worth of exports during the first quarter, an increase of more than 26 per cent compared to RO277.5mn recorded in the previous year.

Oman's re-exports, by contrast, declined 27.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2022 at RO294.1mn compared to RO404.8mn recorded in 2021. The decline in re-exports was caused mainly due to reduced transshipments of transport equipments, electrical and mechanical goods.

Galfar wins RO16mn road construction contract

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company on Sunday announced that it has been awarded a contract worth more than RO16mn for road construction by the Ministry of Defence.

"We are pleased to inform our esteemed shareholders that the Ministry of Defence has awarded the tender to Galfar for the construction of the dualisation of Al Murtafat street phase 2," Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company said in a disclosure filed to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The value of this project is RO16.145mn with execution period of about 18 months, effective from July 2022, the company said. "We take this opportunity to express our appre-



ciation to the Ministry of Defence for the confidence vested on Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company through the award of this project," the company added.

As per Galfar's first quarter financial report, the company received new project awards

worth RO91mn for the period ended March 31, 2022. It said despite the economic situation and

reduction of spending in public projects, Galfar continues to maintain significant projects pipeline of RO473mn as of the end of first quarter 2022.



National Competitiveness Committee holds second meeting for 2022

Muscat – The National Competitiveness Committee held this year's second periodic meeting at the Ministry of Economy premises on Sunday under the chairmanship of H E Dr Said Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

The meeting covered several topics on the agenda, including following up on approved deci-

sions taken during the first meeting for this year.

The National Competitiveness Committee also reviewed the executive position of the work of the National Competitiveness Office during March-June period through which the office sought to accelerate the process of improving Oman's ranks in international indica-

tors.

The meeting further touched on the developments of the Environmental Performance Index to discuss a plan to improve it with the Environment Authority. It also discussed the plan to improve global innovation indicators and network readiness.

The National Competitiveness Office seeks to follow up

and improve international indicators in coordination with the authorities concerned in a bid to achieve the ultimate goal of reaching advanced ranks in international reports.

Higher global rankings contribute to raising Oman's ranking at the GCC level, as well as regionally and globally.

ONA

Sri Lanka grinds to a halt as fuel reserves shrink

Colombo, Sri Lanka – Sri Lanka has less than a day's worth of fuel left, the energy minister said Sunday, with public transport grinding to a halt as the country's economic crisis deepened.

Petrol and diesel queues snaked through the capital for kilometres, though most pumping stations have been without fuel for days.

Energy minister Kanchana Wijesekera said petrol reserves in the country were about 4,000 tonnes, just below one day's worth of consumption.

"The next petrol shipment is expected between the 22nd and 23rd (of July)," Wijesekera told reporters in Colombo.

"We have contacted other suppliers, but we can't confirm any new supplies before the 22nd."

Last week, cash-strapped Sri Lanka announced a two-week halt to all fuel sales except for essential services to save petrol and diesel for emergencies.

Most shops were closed Sunday, with the situation expected to worsen when banks and offices reopen on Monday.

Desperate people were seen



Motorists queue along a street to buy fuel at a fuel station in Colombo on Sunday (AFP)

trying to flag down the few vehicles on the road hoping for a ride.

Privately owned buses, which account for two-thirds of the country's fleet, said they operated a skeleton service on Sun-

day as they were badly affected by the fuel shortage.

"We operated about 1,000 buses across the country out of the 20,000 owned by our members," Private Bus Operators Association chairman Gemunu

Wijeratne said.

"The situation will certainly get worse tomorrow because we have no way of getting diesel."

He said services would be curtailed further on Monday and

saw no immediate solution.

Three-wheel taxis – a popular last-mile transport – were also off the streets, with most seen in days-long queues to get a ration of six litres of petrol.

A shortage of foreign currency to finance even the most essential imports has led to the country's worst economic crisis, with its 22mn people facing severe hardships daily.

The country has also faced record-high inflation and lengthy power blackouts since late last year.

All non-essential government institutions and schools have been ordered shut until July 10 to reduce commuting and save energy.

Local media reported there had been sporadic clashes outside fuel stations.

Last week, troops opened fire to disperse a mob protesting against the military jumping the queue.

Sri Lanka is currently in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a possible bailout after the country defaulted on its US\$51bn external debt in April. AFP

Egypt to receive \$500mn from World Bank to boost food security

Cairo, Egypt – The world's top wheat importer Egypt said it is to receive US\$500mn from the World Bank to alleviate the impact of war between its main suppliers Russia and Ukraine.

"The World Bank financing will support the government's efforts to meet food needs and enhance resilience to future shocks," International Cooperation Minister Rania al-Mashat said in a statement.

Egypt's food security has been under mounting pressure since Russia invaded Ukraine in late February causing massive disruption to exports from Black Sea ports.

Before the invasion, the two countries accounted for 85 per cent of Egypt's wheat imports.

The new tranche of World Bank financing will go towards "funding wheat purchases" as well as "increasing wheat storage capacities" in anticipation of future crises, the ministry said.

Since the war began, the government has already ramped up wheat purchases from domestic

farmers as well as trialling wheat substitutes in a bid to counter the supply shortfall.

On Tuesday, state bakeries in New Valley province in the southwest hailed successful trials of "sweet potato bread", Egyptian media reported.

The adjusted recipes use sweet potato to supplement wheat in the flour used to make state-subsidised flatbread -- an everyday staple for the country's 103 million people.

Some 71.5mn Egyptians rely on bread subsidies, which account for 57 per cent of the state's subsidy budget, according to official figures.

Soaring world commodity prices helped to push Egyptian inflation to a three-year high of 15.3 per cent in June, according to official figures.

In late March, the Central Bank of Egypt allowed the Egyptian pound to depreciate against the dollar, causing it to lose around 18 per cent of its value overnight.

AFP

US multinational companies grapple with soaring dollar

New York, US – The rapid rise of the US dollar since the start of the year is a double-edged sword for American multinational companies, pushing some of them to decide whether to hedge or reposition their activities abroad to avoid fallout.

For an importer, the surge in the greenback against the euro, yen or British pound is a plus, because it makes the products they buy cheaper.

But for a US export company, products sold in dollars have become more expensive, which increases the risk of losing clients and seeing sales decline.

And they also lose money when converting foreign revenue back into dollars.

Many firms already revised their earnings forecasts for the year to account for the changing exchange rate, including computing giant Microsoft, which warned its quarterly sales will fall by US\$460mn and its net profit by US\$250mn due to the currency hit.

Adobe, Salesforce, Biogen and Pfizer have all warned that the dollar's rapid rise will have a greater impact on their accounts than expected.

US\$40bn hit

Companies that generate most of their revenue outside of the United States are the most exposed, starting with tech giants, medical equipment makers and service companies, according to Kyriba, a corporate cash management platform.

Kyriba estimates the currency effects could mean a US\$40bn hit to earnings of S&P 500 firms in the first half of the year.

The Federal Reserve's decision to aggressively hike interest rates to combat rampant infla-



tion, combined with an influx of funds into the country from investors looking for a safe haven

per cent against the yen.

"Short term, that's a good thing for the United States be-

But further out, the effect on the US economy is more nuanced, because if exports fall, "the United States trade deficit widens and then we get more external debt."

But multinationals "don't have control over these big items," he explained.

They can, however, mitigate the effect of fluctuations in foreign currencies in which they price and invoice goods by adopting hedging strategies – using financial instruments that provide a kind of insurance against losses caused by the changing exchange rate.

Most corporations already have hedging programs in place, and they change their plans on a quarterly or even monthly basis, sometimes trying to predict currency movements, Kyriba's Bob

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in uncertain times, have combined to boost the US dollar.

The greenback has risen 13 per cent compared to the euro over the last 12 months, approaching parity, and gained 22

cause it means all the imports are cheaper and it puts downward pressure on inflation," said Desmond Lachman of the American Enterprise Institute think tank.

Eurozone inflation hits record as gas crunch looms

Brussels, Belgium – Eurozone inflation accelerated to another record high in June, official data showed, as Russia's war in Ukraine drives up energy prices and hammers the European economy.

The EU's Eurostat data agency said the increase in consumer prices in the 19 countries that use the euro reached 8.6 per cent in June, leaping from the previous record of 8.1 per cent a month earlier.

Consumer prices in the eurozone have hit records since November, buffeted by sky-high energy prices, which jumped by 41.9 per cent over one year, caused by the fallout of Russia's invasion of its neighbour Ukraine.

But analysts also pointed to the rise in food prices, which accelerated by 8.9 per cent, showing that the inflation problem was spreading through the economy.

"Historically, we have never had such a high figure for the contribution of food. It will have a big impact," said Philippe Waechter of Ostrum Asset Management.

The European Central Bank has said it will do whatever it takes to bring inflation back to its target level, with political pressure high to bring energy and food prices into check.

"With eurozone inflation now becoming more broad-based in nature, the outlook for the Eurozone for the rest of 2022 continues to look bleak," warned Pushpin Singh, Economist at the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

"This comes amid a mounting possibility of a severe gas crisis in Europe, with Russia using gas exports as a means to counter sanctions," he added.



Rate hike

As the conflict rages on, Russia has shown an increased willingness to cut off gas supplies to Europe, a danger that has raised the prospect of energy rationing in the eurozone to get through next winter.

Some analysts took solace in the core inflation data, which excludes energy and food prices and came in at 3.7 per cent, a tiny drop from the previous month.

But this would not be enough to change the course decided at the ECB's last meeting, when policymakers agreed to the bank's first interest rate hike in more than a decade.

The quarter-point raise, set to take place at its next meeting on July 21, will raise rates from their historic lows.

"We will go as far as necessary to ensure that inflation stabilises at our two percent target over the medium term," ECB head Christine Lagarde said on Tuesday.

The ECB is being pressured by some to go faster in halting inflation and choose a path more akin to the United States where the Federal Reserve has warned it may trigger a recession to cool prices.

AFP

AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) announcement the following Auctions:

Auction No.	Description	Location/ Inspection	Last Date for Obtaining Auction Documents	Deadline for submission of Offers	Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)	Deposit Amount (RO)*
02/2022	Sale of Car Park Shed	OETC Muscat-(Mawaleh)	25/07/2022	16/08/2022	26/250	200/-
03/2022	Sale of Used IT Equipment	OETC Store Muscat-(Mawaleh)	25/07/2022	16/08/2022	26/250	100/-

- The interested company should provide Copy of CR & Be'ah Registration Showing activity in the same field
- Interested companies may obtain Documents from Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC) at Al Mawaleh against the non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document and deposit to OETC account after getting approval.
- Interested Company should deposit the above mentioned amount for each Auction OETC Bank account and enclose the receipt along with the auction documents. Failing to do so the offer will be rejected.
- The Offers should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to Chairman of the Tender Committee mentioning Auction Number and subject on the top of the envelope. No other writing or any reference should be mentioned on the envelope. The offer shall be valid for 90 days from the date of submission.
- The deposit amount will be returned to the unsuccessful bidders after awards announcement and to the successful bidders after receiving full payment and removal of Equipment with in time limit as mentioned below.
- The Winning Bidder shall pay for the value of the Used IT Equipment by transfer to OETC bank account within **One Week** of the date of notification to him.
- The Winning Bidder is bound to transfer the materials no later than **One Week** from the date of sale notification and payment. In case of its failure to transfer the Equipment in the period specified the bidder company is not entitled to claim compensation and the bank deposited amount will be forfeited.
- OETC is not responsible for the sold Equipment after the payment and expiration of the deadline for delivery.
- OETC is not bound to sell the entire materials to a single buyer.
- The Winning Bidder shall be responsible for all risks during transfer or reuse of the materials.
- The Auction area shall be cleaned after transfer the materials.
- The Offer should be deposited in the Tender Box (1) of the Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department at the Company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission.

Company Address: Muscat - Al Mawaleh

Way No : 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 GSM: 93268155 - 99105413

Web site: www.omangrid.com

إعلان مزاييدة

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المزاييدات التالية:

رقم المزاييدة	الوصف	الموقع	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المزاييدة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	لن الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (ر.ع)	تأمين دخول المزاد (ر.ع)
٢٠٢٢/٠٢	بيع مخلفات مواقف السيارات	الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء بحافظة مسقط - الموالج	٢٠٢٢/٠٧/٢٥	٢٠٢٢/٠٨/١٦	٢٥٠/٢٦	٢٠٠/ـ
٢٠٢٢/٠٣	بيع أدوات مستعملة خاصة بتقنية المعلومات	الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء بحافظة مسقط - الموالج	٢٠٢٢/٠٧/٢٥	٢٠٢٢/٠٨/١٦	٢٥٠/٢٦	١٠٠/ـ

- على الشركات والمؤسسات الراغبة في الإشتراك في المزاييدة تقديم السجل التجاري وتسجيل شركة بيئة.
- يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات الإشتراك والحصول على مستندات المزاييدة من دائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود بمبنى الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء المكتب الرئيسي بالموالج ، مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد - عن طريق الإيداع البنكي .
- تقدم العروض في مظاريف مختومة بالأحمر معنونة بإسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات ومكتوباً عليها من الخارج رقم وعنوان المزاييدة ، على ألا يكتب على المظروف إسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه ، وأن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء.
- يجب على الشركات والمؤسسات التي ترغب في الإشتراك في هذه المزاييدة ، إيداع مبلغ نقدي حسب المبلغ المحدد اعلاه مع ضرورة إرفاق نسخة من الإيصا داخل العطاء وكل عطاء لا يستوفي المطلوب لن ينظر فيه .
- سيتم إرجاع مبلغ التأمين إلى المتنافسين غير الفائزين بعد الإعلان عن النتيجة وأما الفائزين سيتم إرجاع مبلغ التأمين بعد دفع قيمة المواد وتنظيف ساحة المزاد.
- يلتزم من يرسو عليه البيع بسداد القيمة عبر التحويل البنكي لحساب الشركة خلال اسبوع من تاريخ إخطاره برسو المزاد عليه.
- يلتزم المشتري بنقل المواد التي تم دفع قيمتها في موعد أقصاه اسبوع من تاريخ البيع وسداد قيمة المواد وفي حالة عدم قيامه بنقل المواد حسب الفترة المحددة تتم مصادرتها لصالح الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء ولا يحق له المطالبة بالتعويض عنها ويتم مصادرة الضمان.
- الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مسؤولة عن المواد بعد البيع و إنقضاء المهلة المحددة للتسليم.
- الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير ملزمة ببيع كامل المواد لمشتري واحد.
- على المشتري تحمل جميع المخاطر المترتبة عن نقل المواد أو إعادة إستخدامها.
- لا يسمح بتفكيك المواد وتقطيعها في المخزن وعلى المشتري تنظيف ساحة المزاييدة بعد نقل المواد المباعة.
- يجب وضع العروض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) لدائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود بمبنى الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء الفرع الرئيسي بالموالج قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات .

عنوان الشركة: مسقط - الموالج

رقم المسكة ٢١٥٣ - مبني رقم ٤٢٣٠ المربع رقم ٣٢١ هاتف: ٩٩١٠٥٤١٣, ٩٣٢٦٨١٥٥

Web site: www.omangrid.com



Oman Electricity Transmission Company S.A.O.C.
P.O. Box 1389, Al Khoudh, PC 132, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 2428 3000 | Fax: +968 2230 9046
www.omangrid.com

رؤية عمان 2040
Building Forward with Confidence



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الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء ش. م. ع. م.
ص. ب : ١٣٨٩. الخوض الرمز البريدي : ١٣٢. سلطنة عمان
الهاتف : ٩٩١٠٥٤١٣ / الفاكس : ٩٦٨٢٢٣٠٠٠
الموقع الإلكتروني: www.omangrid.com



الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء ش. م. ع. م.
ص. ب : ١٣٨٩. الخوض الرمز البريدي : ١٣٢. سلطنة عمان
الهاتف : ٩٩١٠٥٤١٣ / الفاكس : ٩٦٨٢٢٣٠٠٠
الموقع الإلكتروني: www.omangrid.com

Bank Muscat hosts talk by Mariam Aldakhil



Bank Muscat's Retail Banking Group recently hosted a seminar by noted entrepreneur and financial coach Mariam Aldakhil.

The seminar was attended by a group of Najahi customers, Premier Banking customers, and senior officials from the bank, a press release said.

Providing non-financial support is one of the most important forms of support that financial institutions are working to de-

velop to respond to the rapid changes in the sector, aimed at entrepreneurs or individuals who seek to invest and develop their wealth. Besides innovative services and financial facilities, Bank Muscat has been keen throughout the years to conduct various workshops, training and advisory programmes for different customer segments, offered by noted and specialised coaches on different topics concerning



the business sector. On this occasion, Ilham Muradha al Hamaid, general manager - Corporate Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat has been keen to develop its services in line with the rapid changes in the sector and customers' needs by enhancing its non-financial

services. The bank offers seminars, workshops, training and advisory programmes to enhance financial inclusion and awareness. The bank is pleased to offer such seminars to support our SME and Premier Banking customers. We are also delighted to have Mariam Aldakhil, one of the

best-known personal finance experts in the region, share her insights and learnings with us." She also took the opportunity to thank Personal Banking customers for their partnership and strong confidence in Bank Muscat. During the seminar, Mariam

spoke at length about the challenges of financial management, especially in the initial phase of one's wealth building journey, and provided valuable tips and advice to the customers gathered at the event. In addition to training and advisory services, Bank Muscat of-

fers a wide array of financial products to its Premier Banking customers. These services include a complete suite of investment options in global asset classes through its wealth management platform and tie-ups with international counter parties.

Ahlibank floats Al Nukhba with rewards

Continuing its effort to deliver value-added services to its customers, Ahlibank has introduced Al Nukhba Referral scheme with lucrative cash rewards. As part of the scheme, existing customers could get up to RO150 when referring a family member, friend, or acquaintance to open a new Al Nukhba account with Ahlibank. Customers can make unlimited referrals and earn unlimited rewards, a press release said.

Speaking about this new scheme, Muneer al Balushi, AGM - head of Retail Distribution of Ahlibank, said, "Customers are at the core of everything we do as a bank. Al Nukhba Referral scheme is our way of appreciating our loyal customers and offering them tangible rewards for choosing Ahlibank. Our premium account is one of the most competitive accounts available today, which allows us to further our customer growth strategy."

The Al Nukhba banking account was launched last year with a range of exclusive benefits for the bank's premium customers, who lead a discerning and modern lifestyle. Al Nukhba account holders will find a host of financial and non-financial services that



have been individually tailored to address their needs. Privileges offered to Al Nukhba account holders include dedicated service centres for their banking transaction needs, Internet and mobile banking services, 24-hour call centre support, and a relationship manager available round-the-clock to cater to their needs. Holders of this premium account also receive free credit and debit cards, with credit card holders having the

advantage of using more than 1,000 international airport lounges around the world 12 times free of charge, apart from a bespoke concierge service, free travel insurance, purchase protection, and extended warranty. Other fabulous privileges include discounts and offers from Ahlibank's specifically selected partners - premium merchants, special discounted tariffs on bank charges, and preferential pricing on deposits and loans.

Oman Air and Turkish Technic sign pact

Oman Air, the national airline of Oman, and Turkish Technic, a leading provider of technical services and solutions for commercial airlines and private jets, have signed a comprehensive ten-year component pool and advance exchange contract for the airline's fleet of Boeing B737 Next Generation and Boeing 737 MAX family. In accordance with the contract, Istanbul-based maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) provider, Turkish Technic, will provide component pool, component maintenance and advance exchange services for Oman Air's Boeing B737 Next Generation and Boeing 737 MAX family fleet. This multi-year contract will enable Oman Air to benefit from Turkish Technic's decades of experience in component maintenance, a press release said. Captain Nasser Ahmed al



Salmi, COO of Oman Air, said, "We are pleased to entrust the leading trademark, Turkish Technic, with the maintenance of our aircraft. We put our confidence in the globally recognised services provided by Turkish Technic. The services to be provided by Turkish Technic were selected for being the ideal solutions for

Oman Air Boeing B737 Next Generation and Boeing 737 MAX operations." Mikail Akbulut, CEO of Turkish Technic, said, "We are happy that Oman Air has decided to partner with us for component pool and exchange services. As a leading component service provider of more than 900 air-

craft from all around the world, we will do our best to help ensure Oman Air continues to meet its customers' expectations. With another milestone contract in our partnership, we look forward to supporting Oman Air's fleet of Boeing B737 Next Generation and Boeing 737 MAX family."

Al Hamra water project progresses fast

The Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company has completed nearly 60 per cent of the construction of water distribution networks in the Wilayat of Al Hamra, and it's some border villages that belong to other wilayats. The project is designed to cover the current and future residential, commercial, government units, and other requests as well, a press release said. Eng Ahmed bin Nasser al Abri, project manager and acting



general manager for Water Project, stated that the company had recently handed over some

of the completed parts of the project networks to the company's operation team. "We are

pleased that this achievement took place before the agreed deadline. This delivery comes as a prelude to its operation in completed regions to cover the increasing water demand. The OWWSC is gradually operating the networks there according to the networks' readiness for operation," Abri said. "The cost of this project is about RO26mn. When the company implemented the project, it was considered to cover all areas in Al Hamra."

Oman's Ayman heading to 'home of golf' among the best

In July 2022, the world's best golfers will descend on St Andrews, Scotland, to play the 150th Open Championship at the iconic Old Course. Past winners of The Open at St Andrews include greats of the game like Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods. The week before the final Major Championship of the year and just a 30 minute drive from the 'home of golf' the world's best under 16 golfers will also have their chance to add their names to a prestigious trophy. Founded in 1994 and administered by the R&A since 2000, the Junior Open Championship is

a biennial event where all golfing nations affiliated to the R&A are invited to enter their best under 16 golfers. Traditionally played at a course near the host venue for The Open this year's event will be played from July 11-13 at the Monifieth Golf Links in Angus, a links course which itself has played host to a number of amateur and professional championships. Having not been played in 2020 due to the global pandemic the Junior Open Championship was last played in 2018 with South Africa's Martin Vorster taking the top spot, previous

winners of the Junior Open Championship include Masters champion Patrick Reed. Starting in January a series of qualifying tournaments were used to decide which of Oman's upcoming golfers would be put forward to represent the Sultanate in 2022. Forming part of the popular GOJuniors series the gross scores for the first three events were combined resulting in National Team player Ayman al Busaidi claiming the qualification spot over Adam al Barwani. Ayman is quoted as saying "I'm so excited to have qualified for the R&A Junior Open, I've



played in the Oman National Team for all age categories and won gold, silver, and bronze medals against the best players in the region in addition to repre-

senting the Men's National Team at the Pan Arab Championships. However, the R&A Junior Open will definitely be the pinnacle of my golf career so far, as this prestigious event attracts the best under 16 players in the world. It really is an honor to represent Oman and I will do my best to make my country proud. I see the Junior Open as a significant step towards achieving my goal of eventually playing collegiate golf in the United States. I'd like to thank the Oman Golf Association for giving me the opportunity to compete in

the Junior Open along with my National Team coach who has been incredibly supportive throughout my journey". As an added bonus all of the competitors in the Junior Open Championship will be hosted by the R&A at St Andrews on the Friday of The Open Championship itself, something that Ayman is very much looking forward to. Mundhir al Barwani, chairman of the Oman Golf Association, said, "We wish Ayman all the best for the upcoming Junior Open Championship, this is a great opportunity for him to

compete against, and also to meet, his counterparts from many other golfing nations as well as having the wonderful experience of visiting The Open at St Andrews. We must thank the R&A for their ongoing support and vision as well as our sponsors Oman LNG, Sohar Aluminium and Moore Stephens and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for supporting the growth of junior golf in Oman". The Oman Golf Association (OGA) is affiliated to, and has a strong working relationship with, the R&A.

Turtles protected from ‘ghost fishing’

Each year, up to 1 million tonnes of lost or discarded fishing equipment is abandoned in the ocean. The abandoned nets continue to fish, trapping and often killing up to 650,000 marine animals in a phenomenon known as ‘ghost fishing’.

As part of its long-term mission to reduce the entanglement of marine and coastal wildlife in abandoned fishing nets, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO), supported by the British Embassy Muscat, has launched an animated video as part of a larger initiative designed to mitigate the impact of abandoned fishing nets on sea turtle populations on Masirah Island and to accelerate the recycling of fishing nets in Oman, a press release said.

A clean-up campaign undertaken earlier this year, where a total of 70 tonnes of abandoned fishing nets were cleared from important nesting beaches on Masirah Island.

Highlighting the threats posed to marine life caused by abandoned fishing nets and other marine debris, the animation also sheds light on the community’s shared responsibility to keep Oman’s oceans clean. The animation is part of a



wider programme of outreach initiatives undertaken on Masirah Island, which has seen a 79% decline in nesting loggerhead turtle populations over the last 30 years. Since 2017, ESO

has coordinated the removal of over 685 tons of abandoned fishing gear from Masirah Island.

As Oman’s only non-profit organization focusing on envi-

ronmental conservation, ESO has embarked on behavioural change campaigns targeting fishermen and the local communities to reduce the impact of net entanglements and move

towards the safe disposal of nets. The aim of these initiatives is to promote the safe return of native wildlife and endangered nesting turtles to the island and to Oman’s beaches.

PDO signs two agreements to boost education

PDO has signed two agreements with the aim of supporting human capital development and increasing employment opportunities specifically in the area of education.

A Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) was signed with the Ministry of Higher Education Research and Innovation to support 150 students under the Company’s Community Scholarship Programme (CSP) for 2022/2023, a press release said.

The MoC was signed by H E Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Steve Phimister, PDO managing director.

The programme will give students from PDO’s concession area the freedom to choose any undergraduate programme that suits their interests and provides a monthly allowance to support them for five years up to the

bachelor’s degree level. More than 1,700 students have benefited from this programme so far.

The second MoC was signed with the Ministry of Education and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences to sponsor the education of 20 students to become teachers so they can return to work in schools in their local towns and villages.

The agreement was signed by H E Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs, H E Dr Saeed bin Hamed al Rubaie, president of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences and Steve Phimister.

The initiative provides a four-year teacher scholarship, and the total number of Tawteen students sponsored by PDO now stands at 285 since the programme’s start in 2016, from a total of 500 students.

NBO appoints new managers in corporate banking

National Bank of Oman (NBO) has announced the appointment of Mohamed Abdullah al Dhabab, and Ghadeer Iqbal Ali as assistant general managers in its Corporate Banking division.

Bringing over two decades of combined experience to their new roles, they are set to steer forward the bank’s award-winning Corporate Banking segment, reinforcing NBO as a pioneer in serving its partners with the support of experienced best-in-class expertise, a press release said.

Anil Kumar, head of Corporate Banking at NBO, said, “As corporate banking continues to grow and become more sophisticated, our offerings are evolving more rapidly than ever before as we face an increasingly competitive regional market. Our teams are critical to this and we are delighted to welcome Mohamed and Ghadeer to senior management, adding to the hand-picked and highly qualified candidates that are supporting us in this segment. Meanwhile, as we continue creating a digitally enhanced customer experience and putting today’s technologies to their best use, their wealth of



Ghadeer Iqbal Ali

experience is certain to add value to our efforts, to strengthen our position in the corporate banking sphere and ultimately, serve our customers better.”

Ghadeer has more than 10 years of experience in Corporate and Investment Banking, having worked in senior roles with leading financial institutions in Oman. With a focus to grow the bank’s product portfolio, Ghadeer will support new opportunities, promote cross selling, and structure complex transactions which suit large institutions needs across



Mohammed Abdullah

various sectors, providing clients with all their banking, financial and investment needs.

Mohamed has more than 13 years of solid experience in the area of Corporate Banking and has worked in various leadership roles in the banking industry. In his new role, Mohamed will be responsible for managing the bank’s large corporates and SME departments, ensuring that the bank’s corporate partners can continue to access the resources they need for the development of their business.

New CLS – a luxurious racer

Gone are the days when you have to compromise between form and function when choosing a vehicle. That’s what Mercedes-Benz aimed to do when it pioneered an entire new four-door coupé sub-genre with the iconic CLS 350.

The luxurious interior has been enhanced with clear lines that echoes the flowing contours of its larger exterior. Designed with the drivers’ comfort in mind, the new CLS is among the aerodynamic leaders in its segment with a C figure of 0.26. In addition, the new CLS Coupé is a five-seater and can fit up to 520-litre luggage, ready for any kind of adventure, a press release said.

It is one of those rare cars that packs practicality, comfort, luxury, and performance, delivered in a flawless package. Characteristic features, both internal and external, are immediately recognisable. Meanwhile, the engine packs a punch, but with a modern and luxurious cabin, it’s just as much about sheer comfort as it is about power.

With the third generation of the CLS, Mercedes-Benz is now building more strongly than ever on the aura and unique character of this trendsetting model.



With its pure CLS genes and its arching waistline, flat side window lines and low greenhouse, the interior of the new model has been updated with ambient lighting and illuminated air vents that are reminiscent of jet aircraft turbines.

Thanks to a comprehensive refresh, technologically, the new

CLS is up-to-date with the driving assistance systems, offering the highest level of active comfort and safety.

Upon request, the interior is characterised by a new Widescreen Cockpit with brilliant, high-resolution displays, offering three different styles Classic, Sport and Progressive.

For the driver’s utmost convenience, touch control buttons are set in the steering wheel and the voice control feature has been extended to include vehicle functions such as climate control, seat ventilation, interior lights, ionisation, massage function in the seats and the head-up display.

Hongqi introduces 5 star automotive safety systems

MHD ACERE is proud to be the exclusive distributor of Hongqi cars, the Chinese expression of automotive luxury.

The first Hongqi automobile was born in 1958. Since then, Hongqi has rapidly developed and expanded its product range and variety to include sedans and SUVs, which led to a surge in market sales and a gradual realization of global exports. In fact, among all the concepts that Hongqi focuses on, safety is one of the concepts that Hongqi attaches great importance to, a press release said.

Hongqi made use of cutting-edge sciences and the latest technologies to secure ultimate safety for drivers and passengers. Each Hongqi comes with a wide selection of safety systems and features, such as original se-

curity technologies created by the Hongqi, including active safety, passive safety, high-voltage safety, functional safety, and information security.

In terms of active safety, Hongqi vehicles are equipped with 26 intelligent sensing sensors, which can provide active safety protection in multiple scenarios, such as front collision/side collision warning, road departure warning, and active braking.

Hongqi has real-time insulation function monitoring and a multi-level insulation alarm mechanism to ensure the safety of high-voltage systems. The dual intelligent protection system of the vehicle pile ensures the safety of the charging process.

Hongqi uses the industry’s



unique super-strong cage body construction with a blend of steel

and aluminium, employing ultra-high-strength hot-formed steel

plates, and producing an H-shaped structure through the

stable combination of longitudinal beams, B-pillars, and mid-channels. However, the cage construction protects passengers from rolling and severe crashes and creates a ‘living space’.

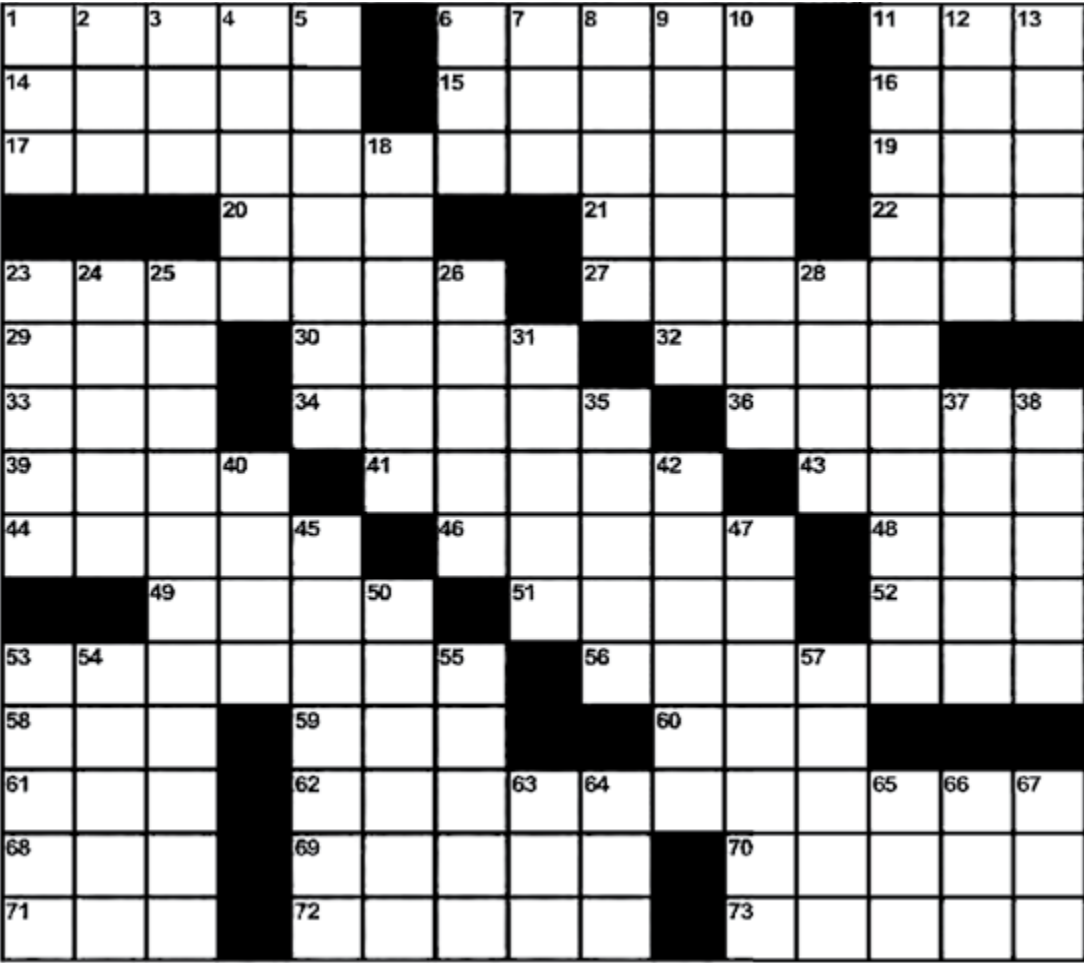
It also features a side battery protection mechanism to prevent squeezing and increase passive protection. As a matter of fact, Hongqi carried out the first domestic double-column collision test challenge which mainly simulates daily life collisions. When the vehicle loses control in life, it hits the roadside light poles, large trees, and other pillars, consequently, the degree of protection of the car’s safety for the drivers and the battery pack.

The results showed that the Hongqi body structure remained intact in the face of the most se-

vere double-side column collision test; the door sills and B-pillars did not fail; the door did not separate from the body during the collision; and the door locks and hinges of the door at the impact position did not fail.

The electric shock protection performance of Hongqi fulfills the norms; voltage safety, electrical energy safety, physical protection, and insulation resistance all meet electrical safety requirements; Furthermore, Hongqi E-HS9 has made significant efforts to protect the privacy and safety of car owners - Hongqi E-HS9 has implemented multiple protection mechanisms in cloud security, pipeline communication security, core controller security protection, core data security protection, and other areas to ensure safety of information.

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Pipeline attachments
 - 6) Wyoming neighbor
 - 11) Word in four other places in this puzzle
 - 14) What Sherlock said the game was
 - 15) Red, white or blue
 - 16) "Bed-in" participant Yoko
 - 17) Quietly persuasive
 - 19) Opposite of ruddy
 - 20) Play on words
 - 21) SI or GQ
 - 22) Be a chair person?
 - 23) Fast month, for some
 - 27) Mass, length and speed, to a physicist
 - 29) Eggs, to a biologist
 - 30) Kuwait City VIP
 - 32) Organic chemical compound
 - 33) Needle-nosed fish
 - 34) All the words in a language
 - 36) How beer may be served
 - 39) "Back in the..." (Beatles song)
 - 41) Access the Internet
 - 43) Borderline
 - 44) Group values
- 46) Nine-piece combo
 - 48) Creator of James and Q
 - 49) Buddy in Australia
 - 51) Opens, as a sugar packet
 - 52) In-flight announcement, for short
 - 53) Blazing
 - 56) Piece of personal property
 - 58) Olive or sunflower extract
 - 59) College sweater letter
 - 60) A little bit of history
 - 61) It keeps hair in place
 - 62) Shrub with large catkins
 - 68) This may be inflated
 - 69) River of forgetfulness
 - 70) Opposite of everybody
 - 71) Certain conifer
 - 72) Industrial city of Germany
 - 73) Put your two cents in, maybe

DOWN

 - 1) Chum
 - 2) Area 51 craft
 - 3) Do a landscaping chore
- 4) Momma's partner
 - 5) Fruit-filled pastry
 - 6) Suffix with "poet" or "hero"
 - 7) Uno,... tres
 - 8) Homecoming attendee
 - 9) A learned Mann
 - 10) Cooking herb
 - 11) A doctor may put you on one
 - 12) Broadcast booth sign
 - 13) Habitual ways
 - 18) Coat in one's mouth
 - 23) Ne'er-do-well
 - 24) "Stop, sailor!"
 - 25) Campfire treat
 - 26) Watergate president
 - 28) Like Tonto's masked friend
 - 31) Excessive sternness
 - 35) Boom in "The Right Stuff"
 - 37) 5-1/2 point type
 - 38) Word before code or colony
 - 40) Go gadding about
 - 42) One crying uncle?
 - 45) Engrave with dots
 - 47) Russian emperor's wife
 - 50) Comes as a result
 - 53) One whose style is out of fashion
- 54) Loyal subject, or city in Belgium
 - 55) Central points
 - 57) Bird claw
 - 63) Yonder lass
 - 64) Currency of Japan
 - 65) Parking or odd follower
 - 66) Sawbuck fraction
 - 67) Become the spouse of

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Even if you've got the day off, some aspect of work has followed you home today, and it's not going to be lightly dismissed. A good part of your mental energy will likely be going toward sorting out aspects of the situation or just worrying about it. Meanwhile, people are wondering where exactly your head is. At a certain point, it might be most fruitful to stop pretending and go ahead and check your email or work on that project for an hour.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You're exercising some self-control when you could be going hog-wild, and the Universe won't let this effort go unnoticed. The first unexpected by-product could be a more meaningful connection with someone close to you, someone you're fully tuned in to, instead of letting myriad other happenings distract you. Another benefit you can start reaping is the suddenly louder voice of your intuition letting you know the right thing to do.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You're asking some serious questions of those close to you, the world around you, and even yourself. While you're attempting to dig down to the significant levels, though, someone else may be trying to keep things on the surface. It could be your energies are just a little mismatched, or maybe you're barking up the wrong tree expecting this kind of depth from your relationship with them. Think it over before you give up.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You've been clammed up long enough. It's time to let those feelings flow. Finally breaking that dam that's been holding back your flood of communication might be a little scary, but it's likely to feel a lot like a relief. Moreover, the stars say that the responses you get will be startlingly good, particularly if you're single and you've got a romantic message you've been wanting to deliver. Let the waiting end.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

The connections you have with others are of particular importance at the moment. The energy you get from the people in your life is both supportive and restorative. Keeping those connections alive and healthy is something you can put your famous organizational ability toward with incredible results now. Reach out to people by sending emails or cards, making calls, and generally brightening days in a methodical way.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Want to see an immediate difference in your work, your home life, or a relationship? Stop putting something off. You've been meaning to do that extra project at the office or fix that drippy faucet or talk to them about the way you feel. Why keep postponing? Even if it's only a small-scale action you take, it will have a ripple effect in terms of new ideas and bigger, more meaningful positive change.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You may be a bit moody now, particularly if you're not getting exactly what you want exactly when you want it. There's also some stuff going on beneath the surface, stuff you might like to see brought out into the open air. While you're not feeling like your usual flexible-minded self, make an effort to be adaptable. Cultivate a set of acceptable options rather than one big expectation. Something different may actually end up being superior.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Hoping and waiting for progress in the occupational realm, and getting upset when it doesn't come, is a dead-end street, particularly for you right now. Create your own opportunity. That project you're currently working on, the one that no one else wanted to do and that fell to you because of it, turn it into something that'll get you noticed and maybe a bonus. Quietly go the extra mile and you'll have something that will definitely build your resume.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Knowing you, you're looking to the future in advance of everyone else, weighing your choices and reevaluating your plans. It's definitely big-picture stuff, but it's exactly the kind of thing you're best at. Right now, though, your view is curiously limited. It could be your emotions are getting in the way, or the daily routine has you worn down. Activate your imagination. There's a choice here you're not seeing, and it might be the right one.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

All sorts of excellent emotional, physical, and mental energy is at your disposal at the moment. Moreover, your famous intuition is even more active and apt than usual. It will especially guide you when it comes to interpreting other people's words and unspoken signals now, and this will prove very helpful in the romantic realm. You can read them like a book, making the creation of a mutually wonderful situation all the easier.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're extremely driven right now, and the astrological forces are conspiring to help you achieve whatever it is that drive is directed at. Some things you've got working in your favor include an amped-up intellectual ability (for thinking things through), heightened intuitive powers (for the stuff on a different level than conscious thought), and general good fortune (for that added bit of star power). Go get 'em!

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're soon to be getting something new, something that'll fit you without a doubt. What is this gift the cosmos has to give you? Some hints: It's not any particular color. It's one-size-fits-all (it looks good on everyone), and it's something you'll definitely want to return. That's right. It's love, the best present ever. Whether it's coming from friends, family, sweetheart, and/or the world in general, be ready to give it right back.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. In Greek mythology, who was tied to a fiery wheel for eternity as a punishment?

A. Tantalus
B. Sisyphus
C. Tityus
D. Ixion

02. Where did the bouquets presented to athletes at the 2020 Summer Olympics come from?

A. From the Emperor's gardens
B. The athlete's home country
C. Countries in the Ring of Fire
D. Regions affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan

03. In the TV series "Mork and Mindy", who was the mostly-unseen and long-suffering superior (voiced by Ralph James) who had sent Mork to Earth, and that Mork had to report to frequently?

A. Malkovich
B. Charlie
C. Orson
D. Ibuka

Answers: 1.D 2.D 3.C

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

B	U	H	F
F	A	A	G
E	R	A	E
T	S	E	R

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

Palestinians hand bullet that killed Al Jazeera journalist to US experts

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories - The Palestinian Authority handed the bullet that killed Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh to US forensic experts on Saturday as it seeks to prove conclusively that it was fired by an Israel soldier.

The Palestinian Authority was assured that no modifications would be made to the bullet that killed Abu Akleh during an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank, and that it would be returned as soon as the assessment was complete, Palestinian Attorney General Akram Al-Khatib told AFP.

The Palestinian Authority gave the green light to hand over the bullet to the United States, but not to Israel, the Palestinians' official Wafa news agency reported. The Palestinian-American journalist, who was wearing a vest marked 'Press' and a helmet, was killed on May 11 while covering an Israeli army operation in Jenin camp in the northern West Bank.

The official Palestinian investigation found that the Qatar-based television channel's star



A member of the Palestinian security forces loyal to Hamas, demonstrates his skills as he pulls a framed photograph of slain Al-Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, during a graduation ceremony for police officers, in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Thursday (AFP)

reporter was killed after being hit by a bullet just below her helmet.

It found that Abu Akleh was killed with a 5.56mm armour-piercing round fired from a Ruger Mini-14 rifle.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had promised last month

to pursue accountability over the killing of Abu Akleh wherever the facts might lead.

"We are looking for an independent, credible investigation. When that investigation happens, we will follow the facts, wherever they lead. It's as straightforward as that," said Blinken.

Israel rejects blame

Investigations by the United Nations, as well as several journalistic probes, have found that the shot that killed Abu Akleh was

fired by Israeli forces.

"We find that the shots that killed Abu Akleh came from Israeli security forces," UN Human Rights Office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva. "It is deeply disturbing that Israeli authorities have not

conducted a criminal investigation," she said.

The UN rights office inspected photo, video and audio material, visited the scene, consulted experts, reviewed official communications and interviewed witnesses. The probe examined submissions from the Israeli army and the Palestinian attorney general.

However, the Israeli army branded the UN's findings unfounded, insisting it was 'not possible' to determine how Abu Akleh was killed.

"The IDF (Israel Defence Force) investigation clearly concludes that Ms. Abu Akleh was not intentionally shot by an IDF soldier and that it is not possible to determine whether she was killed by a Palestinian gunman shooting indiscriminately... or inadvertently by an IDF soldier," the military said.

Israel has repeatedly called on the Palestinian Authority to give it the bullet but the Palestinians have refused to do so and have rejected any collaboration with Israel in the investigation.

AFP

Israel to examine bullet in US presence

Jerusalem - Israel is to conduct a ballistics test on the bullet that killed journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, the Israeli army said on Sunday, a day after the Palestinian Authority handed the bullet to US experts.

Army spokesman Ran Kochav's comment on army radio came after the PA gave the green light for the Americans, but not the Israelis, to examine the bullet that killed Abu Akleh during an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank.

A Palestinian official, who requested anonymity, told AFP the Israeli comment raised questions about whether the PA could 'trust the Americans'.

Speaking to army radio, Kochav said: "The test won't be American, the test will be an Israeli test with an American presence.

"We are waiting for the results, if we killed her, we'll take responsibility for it, and will be sorry for it."

AFP

Israel army says downed 3 Hezbollah drones headed to offshore gas field

Jerusalem - The Israeli army said on Saturday it had intercepted three drones launched by Hezbollah that were headed towards an offshore gas field in the Mediterranean, amid rising tension between Israel and Lebanon.

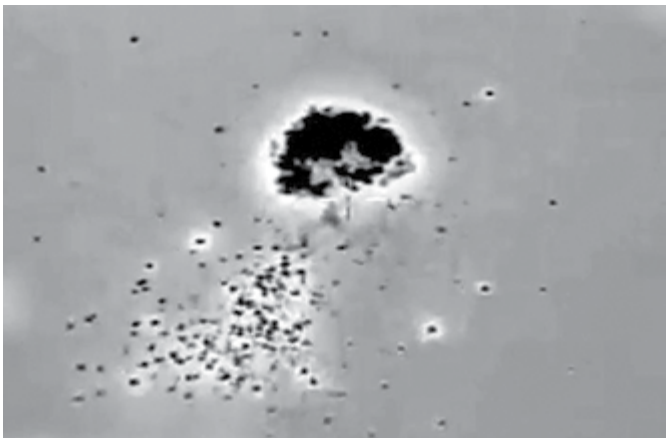
"Three hostile drones approaching the airspace in Israel's economic waters have been intercepted," the army said in a statement, adding that the drones were headed towards the Karish gas field.

The drones were not armed and did not pose a risk, Israeli military sources said.

One drone was intercepted by a fighter jet and the other two by a warship, the sources added.

Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement in a statement confirmed it had launched drones towards the offshore area. "On Saturday afternoon, three unarmed drones were launched towards the disputed Karish field for reconnaissance missions," the Shiite group said in a statement.

"The mission was accom-



This image grab released by the Israeli army on Saturday shows the interception of a drone launched by Lebanon's Hezbollah movement (AFP)

plished," it added, without mentioning any Israeli interception.

Lebanon condemned Israel last month when a vessel chartered by Israel and operated by London-listed Greek energy firm Energean entered the Karish field. Hezbollah at the time warned Energean against proceeding with its activities.

"The immediate objective should be to prevent the enemy from extracting oil and gas from the Karish gas field," Hezbollah

leader Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech.

Hezbollah will not 'stand by and do nothing in the face of (Israel's) looting of Lebanon's natural wealth... which is the only hope for the salvation of the Lebanese people', he warned.

Lebanon and Israel resumed negotiations on their maritime border in 2020, but the process was stalled by Beirut's claim that the map used by the United Nations in the talks needed modify-

ing. Lebanon initially demanded 860sqkm of waters it said were in dispute but then asked for an additional 1,430sqkm, including part of the Karish field.

Israel claims that the field lies in its waters and is not part of the disputed area subject to ongoing negotiations.

Israel's caretaker Prime Minister Yair Lapid said on Saturday that 'Israel knows how to use its strength against every threat, against every enemy', without specifically mentioning the intercepted drones.

"I say to everyone seeking our demise, from Gaza to Tehran, from the shores of Lebanon to Syria: don't test us," he said in his first address as prime minister.

Lapid took up office on Friday following the dissolution of the Israeli parliament, a prelude to new legislative elections set to be held on November 1.

Lebanon and Israel remain technically at war and have no diplomatic relations. UN peacekeepers patrol the border.

AFP

Thousands told to evacuate before 'life-threatening' flood in Sydney

Sydney, Australia - Thousands of Australians were ordered to evacuate their homes in Sydney on Sunday as torrential rain battered the country's largest city and floodwaters inundated its outskirts.

Roads across the city were cut off and authorities said at least 18 evacuation orders were in place in western Sydney, an area that was inundated with severe flooding in March.

"This is a life-threatening emergency situation," Stephanie Cooke, emergency services minister for the state of New South Wales, told reporters.

Australia has been at the sharp end of climate change, with droughts, deadly bushfires, bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef and floods becoming more common and intense as global weather patterns change.

With more wild weather expected in the coming days, Cooke described the floods as a 'rapidly evolving situation' and warned that people should be 'prepared to evacuate at short



People stand next to a flooded petrol station due to torrential rain in the Camden suburb of Sydney on Sunday (AFP)

notice'.

The city's Warragamba Dam began to spill in the early hours of Sunday morning, she said, well ahead of authorities' predictions.

While in Camden, a southwestern suburb of Sydney home to more than 100,000 people, local shops and a petrol station were inundated by floodwaters.

Cooke asked those living along a 500km stretch of Australia's east coast, both north and

south of Sydney, to consider cancelling their school holiday travel plans because of the weather.

Emergency services conducted 29 flood rescues and were called out more than 1,400 times in the previous 24 hours, she said.

The east coast flooding event in March - caused by heavy storms that devastated Sydney's west - claimed 20 lives.

AFP

German town united by 400-year-old theatre tradition

Oberammergau, Germany - Walk around the German Alpine village of Oberammergau, and the chances are you'll run into Jesus or one of his 12 disciples.

Of the 5,500 people living there, 1,400 - aged from three months to 85 - are participating this year in the once-a-decade staging of an elaborate 'Passion Play' depicting the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Dating back to 1634, the tradition has persisted through four centuries of wars, religious turmoil and pandemics - including the most recent COVID-19 crisis which caused the show to be postponed by two years.

"I think we're a bit stubborn," says Frederic Mayet, 42, when asked how the village has managed to hold on to the tradition.

Mayet, who is playing Jesus for the second time this year, says the Passion Play has become a big part of the town's identity.

The only prerequisite for tak-

ing part in the five-hour show, whether as an actor, chorister or backstage assistant, is that you were born in Oberammergau or have lived here for at least 20 years.

"I remember that we talked about it in kindergarten. I didn't really know what it was about, but of course I wanted to take part," says Cengiz Gorur, 22, who is playing Judas.

'Hidden talent'

The tradition, which dates back to the Thirty Years' War, was born from a belief that staging the play would help keep the town safe from disease.

Legend has it that, after the first performance, the plague disappeared from the town.

In the picturesque Alpine village, Jesus and his disciples are everywhere - from paintings on the facades of old houses to carved wooden figures in shop windows.

You also can't help feeling



This file photo shows German actor Frederik Mayet as Jesus (second from left) and ensemble members performing during a rehearsal at Passion Play theatre in Oberammergau on May 4, this year (AFP)

that there is a higher-than-average quota of men with long hair and beards wandering the streets.

An intricate image of Jesus graces the stage of the open-air

Passion Play theatre, where the latest edition of the show is being held from mid-May to October 2.

"What has always fascinated me is the quality of the relationship between all the participants,

young and old. It's a beautiful community, a sort of 'Passion' family," says Walter Lang, 83.

He's just sad that his wife, who died in February, will not be among the participants this year.

"My parents met at a Passion Play, and I also met my future wife at one," says Andreas Roedl, village mayor and choir member.

Gorur, who has Turkish roots, was spotted in 2016 by Christian Stueckl, the head of the Munich People's Theatre who will direct the play for the fourth time this year. "I didn't really know what to do with my life. I probably would have ended up selling cars, the typical story," he laughs.

Now, he's due to start studying drama in Munich this autumn. "I've discovered my hidden talent," he says.

Violence, poverty and sickness

Stueckl 'has done a lot for the reputation of the show, which he has revolutionised' over the past 40 years, according to Barbara Schuster, 35, a human resources manager who is playing Mary Magdalene.

"Going to the Passion Play used to be like going to mass.

Now it's a real theatrical show," she says.

In the 1980s, Stueckl cut all the parts of the text that accused the Jews of being responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, freeing the play from anti-Semitic connotations. "Hitler had used the Passion Play for his propaganda," Schuster points out.

The play's themes of violence, poverty and sickness are reflected in today's world through the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic, says Mayet, the actor playing Jesus.

"Apparently we have the same problems as 2,000 years ago," he says.

For 83-year-old Lang, who is playing a peasant this year, the 'Hallelujah' after Christ has risen for the final time in October will be a particularly moving moment.

"Because we don't know if we'll be there again next time," he says, his eyes filling with tears.

AFP

‘Fragile situation’ as anger boils over living conditions in Libya

Tripoli, Libya – Libya’s rival leaders were under growing street pressure on Saturday after protesters stormed parliament as anger exploded over deteriorating living conditions and political deadlock.

Libyans, many impoverished after a decade of turmoil and sweltering in the soaring summer heat, have been enduring fuel shortages and power cuts of up to 18 hours a day, even as their country sits atop Africa’s largest proven oil reserves.

The country has been mired in chaos and repeated rounds of conflict since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Muammer Gaddafi in 2011.

Protesters stormed the seat of the House of Representatives in the eastern city of Tobruk on Friday night, ransacking its offices and torching part of the building.

In both the main eastern city of Benghazi – the cradle of the 2011 uprising – and the capital Tripoli, thousands took to the streets to chants of ‘We want the lights to work’.

Some brandished the green flags of the former Gaddafi regime.

Calm appeared to have returned to Tobruk on Saturday, though there were calls on social media for more protests in the evening.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on ‘all actors to refrain from any actions that could undermine stability’ and urged them ‘to come together to overcome the continued political deadlock’, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

UN-mediated talks in Geneva this week aimed at breaking the stalemate between rival Libyan institutions failed to resolve key differences.



Libyan law enforcement forces, from the interior ministry, oversee the opening of a main road east of the capital Tripoli on Saturday, after it was closed by protesters as anger exploded over deteriorating living conditions and political deadlock (AFP)

‘Extremely painful’ year

Presidential and parliamentary elections, originally set for December last year, were meant to cap a UN-led peace process following the end of the last major round of violence in 2020.

But voting never took place due to several contentious candidacies and deep disagreements over the polls’ legal basis between the rival power centres in east and west.

In Tripoli on Friday, hundreds came out to demand elections, fresh political leadership and an end to the chronic power cuts.

The sudden eruption of unrest appeared to be spreading to other areas of the country, with Libyan media showing images of protesters in the oasis city of Sebha, deep in the Sahara desert, torching an official building.

A local journalist said protesters in Libya’s third city Misrata

were blocking roads after setting fire to a municipal building on Friday night. After dark, protesters also gathered at several points in Tripoli, shutting down some roads and burning tyres, according to images broadcast by local media.

Interim prime minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah leads a Tripoli-based administration while former interior minister Fathi Bashagha draws support from the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and eastern military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Haftar’s forces said on Saturday that they ‘support the citizens’ demands’ but called for protesters to ‘preserve public property’.

Libya expert Jalel Harchaoui told AFP that ‘for more than a year, the overwhelming majority of diplomatic and mediation efforts around Libya have been monopolised by the idea of elec-

tions, which won’t happen for at least two years, given the failure of the Geneva negotiations.”

This year ‘has been extremely painful for Libyans’ because the country ‘imports almost all its food and the Ukraine war has hit consumer prices’, Harchaoui said.

‘Fragile situation’

Libya’s energy sector, which during the Gaddafi era financed a generous welfare state, has also fallen victim to political divisions, with a wave of forced closures of oil facilities since April.

Supporters of the eastern-based administration have shut off the oil taps as leverage in their efforts to secure a transfer of power to Bashagha, whose attempt to take up office in Tripoli in May ended in a swift withdrawal. “There is kleptocracy and systematic corruption in the east as in the west, as the fancy cars

and villas of the elite constantly remind the public,” Harchaoui said, accusing militias from both camps of carrying out ‘massive’ fuel trafficking.

The European Union’s envoy to Libya, Jose Sabadell, said Friday’s events ‘confirm people want change through elections’. But he urged peaceful protests, adding that ‘special restraint is necessary given the fragile situation’.

US ambassador to Libya Richard Norland said that ‘no single political entity enjoys legitimate control across the entire country and any effort to impose a unilateral solution will result in violence’.

He urged Libya’s ‘political leaders across the spectrum and their foreign backers to seize the moment to restore the confidence of their citizens in the country’s future’.

AFP



Anti-coup protesters take cover as riot police try to disperse them with water cannon during a demonstration in Khartoum on Thursday (AFP)

Sudan’s anti-coup protesters defy security forces

Khartoum, Sudan – Hundreds of Sudanese protesters demanding an end to military rule took to the streets of the capital Khartoum and its suburbs for a fourth straight day on Sunday, witnesses said.

A violent crackdown by the security forces during mass rallies on Thursday killed nine people, the deadliest day for several months in the long running protests against a military takeover last October led by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. Recent protests have seen crowds burn tyres and barricade roads with bricks, with security forces using live bullets, firing barrages of tear gas canisters and using powerful water cannons, according to medics and the United Nations.

Demonstrators demand a restoration of the transition to civilian rule that was launched after the 2019 ouster of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir, which the coup derailed. “We will continue this sit-in until the coup is overturned, and we have a fully civilian government,” demonstrator Muayyad Mohamed told AFP in central Khartoum.

The death toll from protest-related violence has reached 114

since last year’s coup, with the latest fatality recorded on Saturday when a demonstrator died from wounds sustained at a June 16 rally, according to pro-democracy medics.

“We will not compromise until the goals of our revolution are realised,” said Soha, 25, another protester, who gave only her first name.

“We are here in the street demanding freedom, peace, justice, a civil state and the return of the military to the barracks.”

The coup plunged Sudan further into political and economic turmoil which has seen rising consumer prices and life-threatening food shortages.

On Sunday, witnesses reported a heavy deployment of security forces on the streets of Khartoum, including both army vehicles as well as those of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a feared paramilitary unit commanded by Burhan’s deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The RSF incorporated members of the Janjaweed militia, which was accused by rights groups of atrocities during the conflict that erupted in 2003 in the western region of Darfur.

AFP

British theatre legend Peter Brook dies aged 97

Paris, France – The France-based British theatre director Peter Brook, who revolutionised the stage with radical interpretations of the classics before returning drama to its simplest roots, has died aged 97, a source said on Sunday.

Brook, born in the UK but resident in France for decades, died on Saturday, a source close to the director, who asked not to be named, told AFP. He also won renown for his iconic 1963 film version of the novel *Lord of the Flies* about schoolboys who are marooned on an island and descend into savagery.

Brook rose to fame in the UK as a young director who put a radical, and sometimes

bloody, spin on classics including the works of Shakespeare, working with actors who would later become themselves legends.

But his methods underwent a gradual transformation after moving to France in the early 1970s, reducing theatre to pure simplicity and often influenced by eastern traditions.

“Peter Brook gave us the most beautiful silences in the theatre, but this last silence is infinitely sad,” said French Culture Minister Rima Abdul Malak on Twitter.

“With him, the stage was stripped back to its most alive intensity. He bequeathed so much to us,” she added.

AFP

HK lawmaker COVID positive after photo with Xi

Hong Kong, China – A Hong Kong lawmaker who posed for a group photo with Chinese President Xi Jinping during the leader’s visit to the financial hub this week confirmed on Sunday he has since tested positive for coronavirus.

Xi visited Hong Kong under strict security measures to mark the 25th anniversary of the city’s handover from Britain in his first trip outside mainland China since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Steven Ho, a 42-year-old member of Hong Kong’s largest pro-Beijing party who sits in the city’s rubber stamp legislature, was one of about 100 officials who were granted close contact with Xi for a photo call on Thursday afternoon.

Ho was standing two rows directly behind the Chinese



A man wearing a mask, a face shield and head covering, is seen in the Wanchai district of Hong Kong on June 29 (AFP)

president, according to the photos released by the government.

The lawmaker tested negative on the first day of Xi’s visit on Thursday and returned an uncertain test on Friday, he said.

He did not take part in any events on Friday after the uncertain test result, he said in a state-

ment on social media.

“The sample of July 1 was one with extremely low infectivity and it was categorised as ‘uncertain’, but for the sake of public security, I did not participate in the events on that day,” Ho wrote. Ho was the second member of the DAB party to have

tested positive around Xi’s visit.

Tam Yiu-chung, Hong Kong’s sole representative to Beijing’s top lawmaking body, tested positive on Thursday and was absent from all events.

China is the only major economy still pursuing a zero-COVID approach of eliminating outbreaks as they emerge, using snap lockdowns and mass testing campaigns.

Xi has not left China in nearly 900 days and the vast country’s borders have been largely sealed to most outsiders.

Hong Kong is pursuing a lighter version of zero-COVID but has kept heavy travel and gathering restrictions in place throughout the pandemic.

Extraordinarily tight rules were imposed to ensure both the coronavirus and political opposition were not in Xi’s orbit during

his trip to the city, where a democracy movement has been crushed since huge protests three years ago.

Hundreds of government officials, legislators and other invited guests were forced into an anti-COVID ‘closed-loop’ system, which included limiting their social contacts, taking daily PCR tests and checking into a quarantine hotel in the days leading up to the visit.

During the visit, parts of the city were shut down, prominent dissidents were placed under heavy police surveillance, and multiple journalists were barred from covering the official events.

Nine arrests were made by the city’s national security police in the week before Xi’s visit and at least two arrests were made on Friday.

AFP

S African entrepreneur seeks to turn caterpillars into tasty snacks

Johannesburg, South Africa – A start-up entrepreneur from South Africa wants to change the way edible caterpillars popularly known as ‘mopane worms’ are viewed and eaten.

For many people, particularly from western European backgrounds, the idea of eating insects is still riddled with fear and inhibition.

But they can be a valuable source of nutrition and farming them is not detrimental to the environment.

South African chemical engineer Wendy Vesela has found ways of turning the spiky green and black caterpillars – which

are packed with protein and iron – into a flour that can be used in savoury biscuits, sweet chocolate protein bars, cereals or smoothies.

When steamed and sliced, mopane pieces can also be used as pizza toppings.

Vesela says she has found domestic and international customers for her organic products. Edible insects and worms may indeed be gaining popularity in Western cultures.

But food anthropologist Anna Trapido insists that the trend should not be seen as just another dietary fad, a ‘kind of adventure tourism, where you



A vendor (left) interacts with attendees as they taste mopane worm chocolate at the Hostex food Expo in Sandton on June 27 (AFP)

get a badge’ for eating them.

“Mopane need to be treated with respect because they are part of people’s emotional, spiritual, culinary genres,” she said.

In Vesela’s home province of Limpopo, where she grew up in a town not far from the world-famous Kruger National Park, mopane is a staple food, usually cooked in a sauce of onions and tomatoes.

‘More protein than steak’

The caterpillars are ‘a healthier option of protein’, she said. And it’s ‘not a worm. So people have just to get over that fear’.

Vesela tried to woo reluctant customers with biscuits and protein bars at a recent food fair in Johannesburg’s upmarket Sandton district.

“I won’t eat a worm. I’m sorry, it’s disgusting. But if you give it to me in the form of a chocolate... it’s really delicious,” said Gail Odendaal, 38, walking away with a bag of protein bars.

Mopanes are environmentally friendly, too, requiring no extra water or land, as they breed and feed on mopane trees, which grow in hot and dry regions of southern Africa.

They are a better source of protein than many other foods

on the market, said dietitian, Mpho Tshukudu.

“It’s high in protein, in essential fats and minerals, especially iron. It has more iron than the most expensive piece of steak,” she said.

With demand rising since she started her venture seven months ago, Vesela plans to expand the business and have multiple harvests a year.

She now hires rural women to gather mopanes when they are in season in December and April. The mopanes are gutted, boiled and dried to then be used whole or milled.

AFP

Russia claims strategic Ukraine city

Ukraine is yet to comment on the claim that Lysychansk has fallen following days of intense clashes

Siversk, Ukraine - Russia claimed on Sunday to have captured the strategic Ukrainian city of Lysychansk and the entire frontline Lugansk region which would mark a decisive breakthrough for Moscow's forces seeking control of the country's east.

The mayor of Sloviansk, 75km west of Lysychansk, reported on Sunday that 'many' people were killed in fresh bombardment by the advancing Russian forces.

The development came as Belarus said it had intercepted missiles fired by Kyiv and Russia reported that Ukraine launched three cluster missiles at Belgorod, killing four people.

Lysychansk had been the last major city in the Lugansk area of the Donbas still in Ukrainian hands and its capture would signal a deeper push into the eastern region, Moscow's focus since retreating from Kyiv.

On Saturday, there were conflicting reports about Lysychansk's status with Ukraine denying Moscow's claim to have encircled the entire city, located across the river from neighbouring Severodonetsk which Russian forces seized last week.

Ukraine has yet to comment on the claim that Lysychansk has fallen following days of intense clashes.

"Sergei Shoigu has informed the commander in chief of the Russian armed forces, Vladimir



Local residents queue in front of a small shop to buy food in the town of Siversk, Donetsk Oblast, on Sunday (AFP)

Putin, of the liberation of the People's Republic of Lugansk," the defence ministry said in a statement quoted by Russian news agencies.

A few minutes prior to the announcement, which AFP has not verified, a spokesman for the Russian defence ministry had

said fighting was ongoing in Lysychansk and that Ukrainian forces were 'completely' surrounded.

In Siversk, 30km kilometres west of Lysychansk, there was overnight shelling, residents and an official told AFP.

"It was intense and it was

shooting from all sides," said a woman sheltering in a cellar.

Russian city struck

Russia's claim of a breakthrough came as Moscow said on Sunday its anti-aircraft defences shot down three Tochka-U cluster missiles launched by 'Ukrainian

nationalists' against Belgorod, close to the Ukrainian border.

Belgorod governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said 11 residential buildings and 39 houses were damaged.

Russia has previously accused Kyiv of conducting strikes on Russian soil, particularly in the

Belgorod region.

Separately, Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko accused Kyiv of 'provoking' his country and said his army intercepted missiles fired at his country by Ukrainian forces 'around three days ago'.

Belarus is a long-term Russian ally that supported the February 24 invasion and has been accused by Kyiv of launching its own attacks on Ukrainian territory. But Lukashenko denied any involvement in a recent cross-border incident, which would represent an escalation of the conflict.

"As I said more than a year ago, we do not intend to fight in Ukraine," he was quoted as saying by state news agency Belta on Saturday.

'Fierce fighting'

Missiles continued to rain down across Ukraine, killing dozens, and fierce fighting continued according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"Fierce fighting continues along the entire frontline, in Donbas," he said in an address late on Saturday, adding that 'enemy activity in the Kharkiv region is intensifying'.

Two people were killed and three wounded - including two children - in a strike on the town of Dobropillya, local authorities in Donetsk said.

A Ukrainian official said on Sunday that his country's forces had 'put out of action' a Russian military base in Melitopol, while the Ukrainian army said the air force had taken out around 20 Russian units and two ammunition depots.

"The town of Melitopol is covered in smoke," said the official, the city's exiled mayor Ivan Fedorov.

Zelensky warned against complacency in cities that have been spared the violence seen in others.

"The war is not over," he said.

'Colossal investments' needed

In his address, Zelensky also spoke about a conference on Ukraine's reconstruction set to start on Monday in Switzerland.

Leaders from dozens of countries and international organisations will gather in the city of Lugano with the aim of providing a roadmap for the war-ravaged country's recovery.

Zelensky said 'colossal investments' would be needed and that 10 regions of Ukraine had been affected in the war, with many towns and villages needing to be 'rebuilt from scratch'.

Ukraine will also face demands for broad reforms, especially in cracking down on corruption.

AFP

Shark attack kills two women in Egypt's Red Sea: Ministry

Cairo, Egypt - Two women were killed in a shark attack in a resort town on Egypt's Red Sea coast, the environment ministry said on Sunday, after video said to be of one attack emerged.

'Two women were attacked by a shark while swimming' in the Sahl Hasheesh area south of Hurghada, the Egyptian ministry said on Facebook, adding that they had both died. The statement did not provide any detail on their identities.

But Red Sea governor Amr Hanafi had ordered on Friday the closure of all beaches in the area for three days after 'an Austrian tourist had her left arm torn off, seemingly in a shark attack'. Social media users on Friday had shared a video - the authenticity, date and location of which AFP could not independently verify - showing a swimmer struggling before what appeared to be a pool of blood emerged around her.

A task force is working to 'identify the scientific causes and circumstances of the attack' and determine 'the reasons behind the shark's behaviour that resulted in the incident', the environment ministry said.

The Red Sea is a popular tourist destination, where sharks rarely attack people swimming within authorised limits. In 2018, a Czech tourist was killed by a shark off a Red Sea beach. A similar attack killed a German tourist in 2015. In 2010, a spate of five attacks in five days close to the shore of tourist hotspot Sharm el-Sheikh killed one German and injured four other foreign tourists.

AFP

Former Iran president's daughter charged with propaganda, blasphemy

Tehran, Iran - The daughter of Iran's former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was charged with carrying out propaganda activity against the country and blasphemy in social media comments, the judiciary said on Sunday.

"The indictment... has been issued and referred to the court on the charges of propaganda activity against the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran and blasphemy," Tehran's chief prosecutor Ali Salehi said, according to the judiciary's website Mizan Online. The charges are connected to comments reportedly made by Faezeh Hashemi, 59, a former lawmaker and a women's rights activist, during a debate on a social media forum in April.

Hashemi is reported to have said that Iran's demand for the Revolutionary Guards - the ideological arm of the country's military - to be removed from a US terror list was 'damaging' to the country's 'national interests', according to local media.

Removal of the terror designation of the Guards is a key sticking point in negotiations over restoring Tehran's frayed 2015



Faezeh Hashemi, daughter of Iran's former president Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani (AFP)

nuclear deal with world powers.

Hashemi also made separate comments concerning Khadija, the wife of the Prophet Mohammed. She is reported to have called Khadija a 'business-woman', showing that women can also engage in economic activity, and whose money the prophet spent.

She later said the comments had been a 'joke... without any intention of causing insult', state news agency IRNA reported.

Hashemi's late father was a moderate who advocated improved ties with the West and the United States.

AFP

West African bloc studies sanctions imposed on military-ruled countries

Accra, Ghana - West African leaders met on Sunday in Ghana's capital Accra to review sanctions they have imposed on three military-ruled countries in their volatile region.

Heads of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were gathering to assess efforts to secure timetables and other guarantees for restoring civilian rule in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso.

Mali underwent coups in August 2020 and May 2021, followed by Guinea in September 2021 and Burkina Faso this January.

Fearing contagion in a region notorious for military takeovers, ECOWAS has imposed tough trade and economic sanctions against Mali, but lesser punishments against Guinea and Burkina. Dominating the summit will be the review of a month-long bid to push the juntas to set an early timetable for returning to barracks. ECOWAS in January imposed a trade and financial embargo on Mali after its military government unveiled a scheme to rule for five years.

At a June 4 summit, no decision was made for the three countries.



President of the ECOWAS Commission Jean-Claude Kassi Brou (right) speaks during the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 61st Ordinary Session in Accra, Ghana, on Sunday (AFP)

The heads of ECOWAS gathered to assess efforts to secure timetables and other guarantees for restoring civilian rule in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso

Opening Sunday's summit, Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo said the 15-member bloc was committed to supporting the three countries' return to democratic order and would take appropriate decisions after hearing reports on their progress.

The sanctions have badly hit poor and landlocked Mali, whose economy is already under severe strain from a decade-long militant insurgency. After months of

bitter talks, the Malian authorities on Wednesday approved a plan to hold presidential elections in February 2024.

The vote will be preceded by a referendum on a revised constitution in March 2023 and legislative elections in late 2023.

The ECOWAS mediator in Mali, former Nigerian leader Goodluck Jonathan, visited the country last week.

AFP

Life resumes near Ukraine's eastern frontline despite war threat

Kramatorsk, Ukraine - Viktoria Miroshnichenko has just reopened her toy store in Kramatorsk, a city near the frontline in eastern Ukraine, despite the daily sound of bombing roaring in the distance.

"It's a bit scary but we're getting used to it," she said from behind the counter of a shop selling soft toys, bicycles and scooters for children.

The shopkeeper said she was out of work for almost three months without receiving any substantial state support.

Her business, like many others in Kramatorsk, closed after the start of Russia's invasion on



Nataliya Kirichenko works at a gifts shop in Kramatorsk on Saturday (AFP)

February 24.

But in the past few weeks, shops have been gradually re-

opening and residents have returned to the city in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region.

"In my street, where there are about 300 homes, the residents had almost all left. Now they have almost all come back," Miroshnichenko said.

Kramatorsk, a large city at the heart of what remains of Ukrainian-controlled Donbas, is stirring back to life even as Russian artillery pounds nearby Sloviansk, Siversk and Bakhmut.

But according to Oleg Malimonienko, who has just reopened his restaurant, people have no choice but to return home. "In 99 per cent of the cases, it's because they need to eat well, pay the rent and the bills," said the 54-year-old.

Malimonienko hopes customers - including some of the Ukrainian soldiers roaming the city - will flock to his restaurant.

For Natalia Kirichenko, soldiers have been a priceless source of income. The shop assistant said servicemen were regular customers and bought the most items, especially knives and daggers.

"Like us, many people have returned to Kramatorsk, but they don't have any money," the 56-year-old added, saying she had no choice but to resume work.

Although she received state aid while the shop was shut for three months, she said it was far

from enough to make ends meet.

"When we hear pretty powerful bombardment coming from one side or the other, we feel the threat and wonder what awaits us," said a resigned Kirichenko.

Miroshnichenko said that the hardest thing about getting to work without a car was the unpredictable nature of using public transport in wartime.

"The tram stops every time the bomb sirens go off," she said. The alarms sound several times per day and Miroshnichenko has had to brave a 50-minute walk to her shop since it reopened for business.

AFP

HUMAN FOSSILS

HERE'S 'LUCY'

Early human ancestors were one million years older than thought earlier, new research suggests



This photograph release by the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) shows researchers collecting samples at a dig-site around the caves in Sterkfontein, also known as the 'Cradle of Humankind'

The fossils of our earliest ancestors found in South Africa are a million years older than previously thought, meaning they walked the Earth around the same time as their East African relatives like the famous 'Lucy', according to new research.

The Sterkfontein caves at the Cradle of Humankind world heritage site southwest of Johannesburg have yielded more Australopithecus fossils than any other site in the world.

Among them was 'Mrs Ples', the most complete skull of an Australopithecus africanus found in South Africa in 1947. Based on previous measurements, Mrs Ples and other fossils found at a similar depth of the cave were estimated to be between 2.1 and 2.6 million years old.

But chronologically that didn't fit, said French scientist Laurent Bruxelles, one of the authors of a study published Monday in the PNAS science journal. "It was bizarre to see some Australopithecus lasting for such a long time," the geologist told AFP.

Around 2.2 million years ago the Homo habilis - the earliest species of the Homo genus that includes Homo sapiens - was already roaming the region.

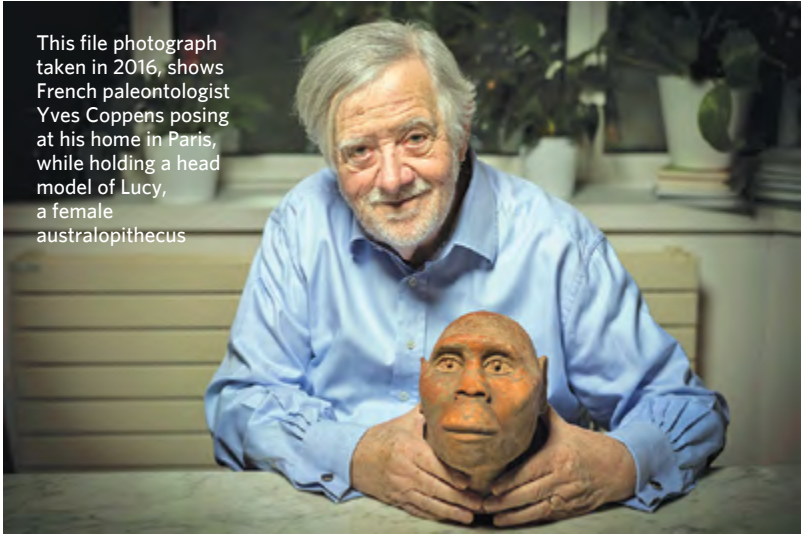
But there were no signs of Homo habilis at the depth of the cave where Mrs Ples was found.

Contemporaries

Also casting doubt on Mrs Ples's age was recent research showing that the almost-complete skeleton of an Australopithecus known as 'Little Foot' was 3.67 million years old.

Such a big gap in ages between Mrs Ples and Little Foot seemed unlikely given they were separated by so few sedimentary layers. Because the fossils are too old and fragile to test, scientists analyse the sediment near where they were found.

The previous dates underestimated the age of the fossils because they measured



This file photograph taken in 2016, shows French paleontologist Yves Coppens posing at his home in Paris, while holding a head model of Lucy, a female australopithecus

calcite flowstone mineral deposits, which were younger than the rest of that cave section, the study said.

For the latest study, the researchers used a technique called cosmogenic nuclide dating, which looked at levels of rare isotopes created when rocks containing quartz were hit by high-speed particles that arrived from outer space.

"Their radioactive decay dates when the rocks were buried in the cave when they fell in the entrance together with the fossils," said the study's lead author, Darryl Granger of Purdue University in the US.

The researchers found that Mrs Ples and other fossils near her were between 3.4 and 3.7 million years old.

This means that members of Australopithecus africanus like Mrs Ples were 'con-

temporaries' of East Africa's Australopithecus afarensis, including 3.2-million-year-old Lucy who was found in Ethiopia, said Dominic Stratford, one of the study's authors.

Our family tree 'more like a bush'

It could also possibly alter our understanding of our ancestral history.

The South African Australopithecus had previously been considered 'too young' to be the ancestor of the Homo genus, Stratford said. That meant that Lucy's home of East Africa was thought to be the more likely place where the Homo genus evolved.

The new research, however, shows that the South African Australopithecus had almost a million years to evolve into our Homo ancestor. Or they could have worked on it together.

"Over a timeframe of millions of years, at only 4,000km away, these species had plenty of time to travel, to breed with each other... so we can largely imagine a common evolution across Africa," Bruxelles said. "Research shows, the history of hominids was 'more complex than linear evolution'."

Our family tree is, in fact, "more like a bush, to use the words of our late friend Yves Coppens," Bruxelles said, referring to the French palaeontologist credited with co-discovering Lucy. "He had long understood the pan-African nature of evolution."

AFP

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Passengers stand in line to go through security at Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT) in Charlotte, North Carolina



HUNDREDS OF FLIGHTS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED AS US KICKS OFF LONG HOLIDAY WEEKEND

SUMMER SURGE



JULY 4 AIRPORT CHAOS

Airlines struggling to staff their planes cancelled hundreds of US flights on Saturday, at the start of a long and almost certainly messy holiday travel weekend.

As of mid-afternoon, with Americans gearing up for July 4 Independence Day celebrations, more than 600 flights within, into, or out of the United States had been cancelled, and more than 3,300 were delayed, according to flight tracking service flightaware.com.

The numbers on Friday were grim as well, with 587 US flights scrapped among a global total of 3,061 cancellations, the site said. Sunday was also looking problematic, with more than 100 flights already cancelled.

The airport chaos is prompting a record level of road travel by Americans seeking to dodge flight trouble, a travel industry group said.

For days, amid a surge in travel as summer rolls in, horror stories have abounded as travelers were stranded at airports, enduring odysseys to reach their destinations.

The airline industry was devastated in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic as people stayed close to home, but air travel has rebounded as health measures were eased. And although federal COVID-19 relief spared airlines from laying off staff, tens of thousands of workers left the industry after carriers urged early retirement.

Today's industry has about 15 per cent less staff compared with the pre-pandemic period to handle around 90 per cent of pre-2020 passenger volume, analysts at Third Bridge consultancy estimated.

Pilots fatigued

The travel chaos has drawn scrutiny from transportation secretary Pete Buttigieg and others in Washington.

On Saturday, Buttigieg tweeted a series of tips on what to do if one's flight is cancelled, such as whether to accept travel points or miles as compensation, or demand a cash refund. "You can often negotiate on this. That's between you and the airline," Buttigieg wrote.

The travel season is at full speed, with

2,490,490 people screened at airport checkpoints nationwide on Friday, the most since February 2020 right before the COVID-19 shutdown in the US, the Transportation Security Administration said.

"We are back to pre-pandemic checkpoint volume," the TSA tweeted.

Delta pilots walked informational picket lines at several airports Thursday to demand a new contract and complain of overwork, among other issues.

"Quite frankly, it's irresponsible scheduling, over scheduling. Coming out of the pandemic, we're scheduling more flights than we have people to fly them," Delta pilots association union leader Jason Ambrosi told CNN on Saturday. "The pilots are getting fatigued, quite honestly," Ambrosi added.

They do not want to strand travelers or crew members, he added, "But it's a safety issue."

Lack of pilots is the most acute problem in a broad airline industry labor crunch, said Third Bridge analyst Peter McNally. "There's no short-term fix," McNally told AFP. "The issue becomes most pronounced during these seasonal peaks."

Airlines say they're working to address the situation, recruiting pilots and other staff and trimming summer seat capacity by 15 per cent.

While acknowledging the pilot shortage, airline industry officials point to other exacerbating factors, including turbulent weather, increased staff absences due to COVID-19 and insufficient flight traffic control personnel at some sites.

For the long Independence Day weekend, a record 42 million Americans will also travel by road at least 80km from home, despite soaring gasoline prices, the American Automobile Association said. The travel hassles affecting the airline industry may be fueling the heavy road traffic, it noted.

"Traveling by car does provide a level of comfort and flexibility that people may be looking for given the recent challenges with flying," said AAA Travel senior vice president Paula Twidale.

AFP



An American Eagle and American Airlines plane sits on the tarmac at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia, on July 2

GOLDEN DAY FOR OMAN

Oman's Star Sailors League team seal stunning victory to qualify for Gold Cup Finals in Bahrain

Muscat - Oman's Star Sailors League team claimed a stunning victory on the final day of competition on Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland.

SSL Team Oman were last in the group after the first two days because of a one-point penalty for late registration, but two wins on Golden Day, where the final two races carry double points, saw the 'Lions of the Sea' overtake Mexico, Guatemala and Cuba to top the group and qualify for the SSL Gold Cup 2022 Finals Series in Bahrain in October.

Oman produced an aggressive

qualification places.

Oman made it two wins from two in a dramatic finish. They were in second place behind Cuba at halfway, which would have seen both teams qualify. Both teams took turns in attacking each other to try and seize victory.

Oman went for gold on the final approach, forcing Cuba to tack out wide and surrender the lead with Guatemala lurking dangerously behind.

The Guatemalans closed in, and briefly it looked like Cuba's dream of qualification was over.

As I said before, the racing hasn't ended until we get a first, and we get the first today. This is a big achievement for my team, well done to the crew because they have done their job very well

MUSAB AL HADI

sive display in the first race of the day, timing their attack to perfection in the final downwind leg and forcing SSL Team Cuba into a costly double-gybe that proved decisive. Cuba finished second, ahead of Guatemala with Mexico in fourth.

The result meant that the final race of the weekend turned into a winner-takes-all clash for the

But before it was too late, they found their composure to deny Guatemala on the finishing line.

Team Oman helmsman Musab al Hadi said: "As I said before, the racing hasn't ended until we get a first, and we get the firsts today. This is a big achievement for my team, well done to the crew because they have done their job very well. Now we'll get



SSL Team Oman cross the finish line

ready to go to Bahrain!"

Skipped by Nasser al Mashari, the team of Ali al Balushi, Ahmed al Hasni, Abdul Rahman al Mashari, Yasir al Rahbi, Musab al Hadi, Raad al Hadi, Haitham al Wahaibi, Waleed al Kindi, Akram al Wa-

haibi and Husain al Jabri, along with team administrator Marwa al Khaifi will now prepare for the SSL Gold Cup Final Series which begins on 28 October at the new Water City Garden development project, in front of the iconic Manama City skyline.



Oman Sail team members celebrate with the trophy on the podium



Ahmad al Harthy steers Oman Racing's No.69 Aston Martin Vantage GTE at Monza in Italy

Al Harthy sixth in ELMS Monza qualifying

Muscat - Increased ballast and reduced power of Oman Racing's No.69 Aston Martin Vantage GTE at Monza in Italy halted any hopes Ahmad al Harthy had of challenging for the LMGTE class pole position, in the qualifying for Sunday's third round of the European Le Mans Series.

Omani racer Al Harthy, holding joint-lead of the LMGTE championship going into the grid determining session on Saturday,

had the unenviable task of qualifying with, effectively, one hand tied behind his back.

As a result of Oman Racing's LMGTE class race victory at Imola last time out, championship officials not only applied an extra 25kg of ballast to the Aston Martin for Monza but also took away an amount of power boost - both having a major bearing around the ultra-quick Italian track.

And it showed through practice

and qualifying, with Al Harthy wringing every last bit of performance out of the car he could in the latter to post the sixth fastest time of 1m50.118 seconds (262.77km/h) but still ending the session some 1.2 seconds shy of pole position.

Initially closer to two seconds away from the pace after the first flying lap, Al Harthy, supported by the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS, was deter-

mined as he plugged away and closed the gap as best he could against the odds.

Knowing a very tough and challenging four-hour race, Al Harthy was his usual confident and professional self.

"I'm really happy with my performance in qualifying, it was one of my best qualifying sessions in this car and it was the best we could get out of it in the situation we've been placed in", said Al Harthy.

World No 1 Axelsen thrashes Momota in Malaysia Open final

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Japan's Kento Momota suffered a heavy defeat in the Malaysia Open final Sunday against world number one Viktor Axelsen, the latest disappointing performance from the once undisputed king of badminton.

The tournament marked the first time Momota has played in Malaysia since he was involved in a car crash there two years ago, which sent his career into free fall.

Denmark's Axelsen, the reigning Olympic champion, outplayed the Japanese star from start to finish, taking only 34 minutes to win 21-4, 21-7.

Momota - playing in his first final of the year after a torrid run of form - received a rapturous welcome as he arrived at the arena in Kuala Lumpur.

But it was a one-sided game, with Axelsen immediately taking control, racking up points with a series of explosive smashes.

The first game was over quickly, and in the second Axelsen maintained the high tempo to force Momota into numerous unforced errors.

After the match, world number two Momota said that Axelsen's "level was higher than I expected".

"I thought I was getting better in this tournament, but it was a bit too much for me today.

"But I will use the experience



Denmark's Viktor Axelsen poses with his gold medal after winning the Malaysia Open (AFP)

I was expecting a tough match, but it was great to play Momota in another final

MATTHEW WOLFF

of playing in this big final for upcoming tournaments," the 27-year-old added.

Axelsen said he was surprised he managed to play so well.

"I was surprised with my lev-

els today especially that I managed to find explosiveness in my game," he said.

"I was expecting a tough match, but it was great to play Momota in another major final".

It marked Axelsen's fifth victory of the season. The Dane had already won the All England, European Championships and two titles in Indonesia.

Momota was involved in a car crash that killed his driver on the way to the airport after winning the Malaysia Masters in January 2020. This year's edition of the Masters takes place next week.

It left Momota with a fractured eye socket and double vision. When he did return after a year out of action, the Japanese star was a shadow of his former self.

He flopped at his home Tokyo Olympics last year and lost in the first round in four of the five singles tournaments he had previously entered this year.

In other categories, Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon clinched the women's singles title after she beat China's Chen Yu Fei 21-15, 13-21, 21-16.

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BAIRSTOW AGAIN!

Jonny Bairstow hits third ton in successive Tests as England rally against India in Edgbaston

Birmingham, United Kingdom - Jonny Bairstow completed his third hundred in successive Tests before falling for 106 at Edgbaston on Sunday to leave England's series-decider against India intriguingly poised.

Bairstow's latest century was the cornerstone of England's 284 in reply to India's 416, a deficit of 132 runs.

No other England batsman made more than Sam Billings' 36, with the wicketkeeper one of four wickets for Mohammed Siraj.

But with England having chased down seemingly stiff targets of 277, 299 and 296 during a recent 3-0 whitewash of Test world champions New Zealand, there was still work for India to do with the bat.

They lost Shubman Gill to just the third ball of their second innings, caught in the slips off England great James Anderson.

But Cheteshwar Pujara (17 not out) and Hanuma Vihari (10 not out) took India to 37-1 at tea on the third day, a lead of 169 runs.

England had resumed in the dire position of 84-5 in a match they have to win to square this five-match series at 2-2.

Against New Zealand, their first series under their new leadership duo of Stokes and red-ball coach Brendon McCullum, the team had several times hit its way out of trouble.

But for all the talk of the new 'Bazball' approach, a reference to former New Zealand captain McCullum's nickname, Bairstow still played himself in against India's impressive pace attack.

Bairstow was 16 not out off 65 balls before, playing orthodox but powerfully hit strokes, he accelerated in scoring his next 84



England's Jonny Bairstow celebrates after reaching his century in the fifth Test against India on Sunday (AFP)

runs off just 54 balls as the 32-year-old went to his fifth Test century of 2022.

He brought up his latest hundred when a push off seamer Shardul Thakur was misfielded on the cover rope to give the Yorkshireman his 14th four in 119 balls. He also hit two sixes.

This century followed Bairstow's scores against New Zealand of 136 at Trent Bridge and 162 at his Headingley home ground, where he also made an unbeaten 71 in the second innings.

But he fell to the first ball of Mohammed Shami's new spell when an edged drive flew to former India captain Virat Kohli at first slip. Kohli, who earlier Sunday had been spoken to by the umpires following a verbal altercation with Bairstow, blew a kiss to the crowd.

It was no more than Shami, who bowled far better than figures of 2-78 in 22 overs, deserved. All-rounder Stokes, nought not out overnight, batted in frantic fashion for 25.

Already dropped on 18, when Shardul Thakur floored a routine catch at cover, Stokes was missed again on 25 when India stand-in captain Jasprit Bumrah dropped a low chance at mid-off, with Thakur the unlucky bowler on this occasion.

But next ball Stokes drove harder and higher, only for Bumrah, diving to his left, to hold a brilliant catch and one far harder than the chance he had missed.

That catch continued an excellent all-round match for Bumrah, leading India for the first time after regular captain Rohit Sharma was sidelined by Covid-19.

AFP



British Grand Prix winner Carlos Sainz of Ferrari (L) and third-placed Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes on the podium

Sainz claims maiden F1 win in British GP

Silverstone, United Kingdom - Carlos Sainz claimed his first Formula One victory in his 150th race on Sunday when he drove his Ferrari to a spectacular triumph in a furious and crash-hit British Grand Prix.

The 27-year-old Spaniard, starting from his maiden pole position, resisted a charging Sergio Perez of Red Bull, who recovered from 17th, to take the flag by 3.7 seconds in front of a record 142,000 crowd at the high-speed Silverstone circuit.

Home hero seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes took third, to claim a record 13th podium finish on home soil, an unprecedented total by any driver at a single event.

Drawing on his fresher tyres in the closing stages, Hamilton resisted and passed Charles Leclerc in the second Ferrari, who finished fourth ahead of two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Alpine and Lando Norris of McLaren.

World champion and series leader Max Verstappen finished seventh for Red Bull, recovering after picking up debris and suffering a puncture, ahead of a revitalised Mick Schumacher of Haas,

four-time champion Sebastian Vettel of Aston Martin, who had started 18th and Kevin Magnussen.

"I don't know what to say," said a beaming Sainz. "It is amazing. My first win in Formula One on my 150th race and for Ferrari at Silverstone! It's amazing."

Verstappen remained on top of the title race with 181 points ahead of Perez on 147 and Leclerc on 138.

There was a high-speed multi-car collision at the start, which saw Zhou Guanyu make a remarkable escape after his car skidded upside down through a gravel trap and the contest re-started only after an hour later using the original grid order.

AFP

It is amazing. My first win in Formula One on my 150th race and for Ferrari at Silverstone!

CARLOS SAINZ



Ronaldo wants to leave Man United

London, United Kingdom - Cristiano Ronaldo wants to leave Manchester United this summer, according to multiple reports.

The 37-year-old Portugal forward returned to Old Trafford from Juventus last summer but despite being United's top scorer last season, and third in the Premier League, the campaign was overall disappointing.

United finished sixth in the Premier League, leaving the five-time Ballon d'Or winner facing the prospect of playing in the Europa League for the first time.

AFP

Grace heats up late to win Portland LIV Golf Invitational

Los Angeles, United States - Brandon Grace grabbed five of his eight birdies on the back nine on Saturday to pull away for a two-shot win in the Portland LIV Golf Invitational and capture the \$4 million first prize.

The 34-year-old ranked 128th in the world pulled level with Carlos Ortiz with a birdie at the 13th, then birdied the 15th, 16th and 17th to secure the win in the second event of the controversial Saudi-funded series, which has raised the hackles of the established US PGA Tour and DP World Tour and sparked criticism over Saudi Arabia's human rights record.

But controversy appeared far from Grace's mind as the celebratory champagne was sprayed on the 18th green at Pumpkin Ridge outside Portland in Oregon.

"This new format, everything is amazing and everybody is having a blast," Grace said after the win in the 54-hole event in which there is no cut and all 48



Brandon Grace of South Africa poses with the trophy after winning the LIV Golf Invitational - Portland on Saturday (AFP)

entrants earn some piece of a purse of more than \$20 million.

Grace carded a final-round 65 and finished two strokes in front of Mexico's Ortiz, who closed with a three-under par 69.

Two-time major-winner Dustin Johnson, at 17th in the world the highest-ranked player so far to bolt for the new series,

started the day tied for the lead with Ortiz but finished tied for third with compatriot Patrick Reed on nine-under.

Johnson carded a one-under par 71 while former Masters champion Reed moved up with a five-under 67 that included a chip-in eagle at the 17th.

AFP

Poston stays on top at PGA John Deere Classic

Washington, United States - JT Poston, chasing a wire-to-wire victory, fired a four-under par 67 to hold a three-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the US PGA John Deere Classic.

The 29-year-old American, who matched his career low with a 62 on Thursday, rolled in an eagle putt from just inside 14 feet at the par-5 17th and closed with a par to finish 54 holes on 19-under 194 at TPC Deere Run in Silvis, Illinois.

"It was a little tougher out there," Poston said. "I didn't hit it as well off the tees. I had to earn it a bit more out there. I pulled out a 67. So I'm pretty happy with it."

American Scott Stallings, seeking his first PGA title in eight years, shot 64 to share second on 197 alongside countryman Denny McCarthy and Argentina's Emiliano Grillo, who birdied four of the last five holes to shoot 65 as he chases his first PGA victory since 2015.

AFP

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WIMBLEDON ROUND-UP

'I DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT WHAT THEY THINK'



Aussie Nick Kyrgios emerges as serious title challenger as he moves into last 16 after a stormy encounter against Stefanos Tsitsipas

London, United Kingdom - Roger Federer described him as a "clown", Rafael Nadal once accused him of lacking respect and, on an unforgettable Saturday night at Wimbledon, Stefanos Tsitsipas branded him "evil" and a "bully".

Love him or hate him, Nick Kyrgios is closing in on becoming Wimbledon's most controversial ever champion.

The 27-year-old Australian made the last 16 after a stormy encounter against Tsitsipas as Wimbledon's normally genteel Court One witnessed the tennis

He has a winning record against four of the top five in the world.

Third-ranked Novak Djokovic, a potential final opponent at Wimbledon, has lost both times he has faced the Australian. The Serb has not even claimed a set.

Against world number one Daniil Medvedev, the Kyrgios balance sheet is two wins and one loss. Kyrgios is 4-3 against second-ranked Alexander Zverev and after Saturday, he stands at 4-1 in his rivalry with world number five Tsitsipas.

Interestingly, ice-cool Nadal

Since then, however, the Kyrgios story has been a cocktail of unfulfilled potential, on-court controversy and fines.

In an interview last month, he estimated his career fines have totalled around \$550,000.

Kyrgios claims he does not receive the respect he deserves and has cut a combative figure at all three of his post-match Wimbledon news conferences so far.

Sporting an image of NBA bad boy Dennis Rodman on his sweatshirt, he countered Tsitsipas's accusations by claiming the Greek was too "soft".

"I was just going out there and competing at Wimbledon, and I did it. It was successful. Everything I did worked. I'm not going out there to be his friend," said Kyrgios, who insists he is one of the most popular players in the locker room.

He has blasted 68 aces over three rounds, dropped serve just twice and unleashed the third fastest serve of the tournament.

Next up is a polar opposite, unemotional Brendon Nakashima of the United States who is in uncharted Grand Slam last-16 waters.

Win or lose on Monday, Kyrgios insists he will remain his own man.

"They have to watch me play fourth round of Wimbledon. Got a pretty nice pay cheque this week as well, so I don't really care about what they think," he said.

AFF



Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas waves as he leaves the Centre Court after losing to Australia's Nick Kyrgios on Saturday (AFP)

Kyrgios has 'evil side': Tsitsipas

London, United Kingdom - Stefanos Tsitsipas said Nick Kyrgios has an "evil side" after a stormy clash at Wimbledon on Saturday in which the victorious Australian called for his Greek opponent to be kicked out of the tournament.

The bad-tempered match overshadowed the rest of the action on day six, which included the end of Iga Swiatek's 37-match winning streak and a routine victory for Rafael Nadal.

The mercurial Kyrgios prevailed 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (9/7) in an incident-packed third-round match on Court One.

The contest descended into mayhem when a frustrated Tsitsipas hit the ball into the crowd after losing the

second set.

Kyrgios told the umpire that Tsitsipas should be kicked out of Wimbledon, recalling the incident at the US Open in 2020 when Novak Djokovic was defaulted from the tournament after hitting a line judge with a ball.

"You can't hit a ball into the crowd and hit someone and not get defaulted," said the 27-year-old, who received an audible obscenity warning during the match.

He kept up his verbal jousting with the umpire, clearly unsettling Tsitsipas, who was warned over the incident and later handed a point penalty for hitting the ball in frustration towards the back of the court.

AFF



Czech Republic's Marie Bouzkova celebrates after defeating France's Caroline Garcia in the round of 16 at Wimbledon on Sunday (AFP)

Bouzkova into first Grand Slam quarter-final

London, United Kingdom - Marie Bouzkova reached her first Grand Slam quarter-final at Wimbledon on Sunday when she breezed past Caroline Garcia of France in straight sets.

The 23-year-old Czech won 7-5, 6-2 against the big-serving Garcia whose challenge was undermined by her 25 unforced errors to her opponent's four.

"I don't know how I got here," said the world number 66 Bouzkova who had never previously got past the second round of a Slam. "Now we will celebrate with strawberries and cream. It's one of our 100 routines at Wimbledon."

Earlier on Saturday, Rafael Nadal apologised to defeated Wimbledon opponent Lorenzo Sonego after a testy exchange in the closing stages of their third-round clash.

Second seed Nadal, the champion in 2008 and 2010, reached the fourth round for the 10th time

with a 6-1, 6-2, 6-4 win.

The 36-year-old had required back-to-back four-setters to make the third round and was expected to be tested by Sonego, who made the fourth round last year.

However, Nadal did not face a break point until he dropped serve in the eighth game of the third set, his focus possibly affected by a stoppage to close the Centre Court roof. He quickly broke back and sealed the victory. Nadal, however, appeared upset by the noise the Italian was making on court.

He even summoned Sonego to the net to discuss his displeasure while the two then had another lengthy exchange as they shook hands.

"I have to say that I was wrong. I should not call him on the net. So apologise for that. My mistake in that. No problem. I recognise that," said Nadal.

AFF

Federer says he hopes to play Wimbledon 'one more time'

London, United Kingdom - Roger Federer said Sunday he hopes to play Wimbledon "one more time" despite being sidelined for a year with a knee injury.

"I hope I can come back one more time. I've missed it here," said the eight-time champion as he attended a special ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of Centre Court.

The 40-year-old winner of 20 Grand Slam titles has been out of action since a quarter-final loss at the tournament in 2021 before undergoing another bout of knee surgery.

He plans to return to action at the Laver Cup in London in September and then take part in his home tournament at Basel.

"I knew walking out here last year, it was going to be a tough year ahead," said Federer, who received a standing ovation when he entered the court. "I maybe didn't think it was going to take this long to come back - the knee has been rough on me."



Roger Federer

Federer, dressed in a dark suit, was one of a host of Wimbledon champions at the ceremony that preceded the programme of matches on middle Sunday, established from this year as a permanent feature.

The Swiss star broke through at Wimbledon in 2001 with his famous win over Pete Sampras before lifting the first of his eight titles two years later.

"I've been lucky enough to play a lot of matches on this court," he added.

AFF

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