

Our Correspondent

Muscat

The forum also aims to identify successful experiences in



On the sidelines of the forum, Khalid bin Ali al Sunaidi, Assistant Secretary-General for Eco-

"The forum will also highlight important issues such as innovative technologies to reduce water loss and improve quality in order to save water."

Our Correspondent

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About the festival, Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Festival Director, said, "Last year we received 146 films from outside Oman. However, this year for the second edition of the festival, in just a few days since we started accepting entries we have already received over 100 films. The number will grow till the last day and we are extremely happy with the response. Compared to



Organised by Oman Film Society, in cooperation with Office of Governor of South Batinah, the festival will also have a section for Omani filmmakers.

Our Correspondent

Muscat

The first edition of the festival was held in December 1994, in which Ahmed Al Harthy won the Golden Bulbul Award.

PRAYER TIMINGS	
Fajr	4.27am
Sunrise	5.45am
Duhr	12.15pm
Asr	3.42pm
Maghrib	6.39pm
Isha	7.53pm

Oman's inflation falls to lowest in 28 months

Inflation rate fell to 0.41% in July, the lowest level since March 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's inflation rate in July dropped to its lowest level in 28 months, thanks to a decrease in transportation cost and stability in the prices of most food items, utilities, fuel and housing rent.

The annual inflation rate, as measured by the sultanate's Consumer Price Index (CPI), fell to 0.41% in July 2023, the lowest level since March 2021. This is compared to an inflation rate of 0.69% in June 2023, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Oman's annual inflation has consistently been on the decline this year due to easing global inflation and government measures that capped fuel and essential commodity prices.

Consumer price inflation for food items, which carry nearly 24% weightage in Oman's CPI, rose at a slower pace of 1.36% in July, compared to 2.18% in June. The more than two-year low food inflation is mainly attributed to a drop in fruit and vegetable prices in July compared to a year ago.

Among food items, July prices for fruits and vegetables decreased by 2.31% and 1.72%, respectively. Prices of cooking oil and fats rose 5.03% year-on-year in July, while bread and cereal prices grew by



Oman is expected to record an average inflation rate of 1.9% for 2023, the lowest inflation in the GCC

IMF

FOOD PRICES IN JULY

- MEAT - DOWN 0.6%
- VEGETABLES - DOWN 1.72%
- FRUITS - DOWN 2.31%
- FISH, SEAFOOD PRODUCTS - UP 1.57%
- BREAD, CEREALS - UP 2.24%
- COOKING OIL, FATS - UP 5.03%
- MILK, CHEESE, EGGS - UP 10%



2.24%. Meat prices recorded a decrease of 0.6%, while prices of fish and seafood products increased by 1.57% in July year-on-year. However, the milk, cheese and eggs group recorded the biggest rise of 10% in July prices. On the other hand, the cost of housing, water, electricity, gas and other

Moderate inflation in 2023

Central Bank of Oman (CBO) recently stated that the sultanate has successfully mitigated the severe spillover effects of global inflationary pressure. 'This (lower inflation) can be attributed

to the distinct financial cycle, a flexible labour market and proactive fiscal measures implemented by the government,' the CBO said in its Financial Stability Report 2023.

According to the central bank, the sultanate's fiscal position benefited from higher energy prices, providing ample fiscal space for the government to counterbalance any inflationary pressures with targeted interventions to complement the impact of monetary policy actions.

'As a result of these developments and fiscal intervention, particularly a fuel price cap until the end of 2023 at the October 2021 level, inflation in Oman is expected to remain moderate,' CBO noted.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) also expected Oman's annual inflation to decelerate this year, thanks to government subsidies, price caps on certain products, and a strengthening of the US dollar to which the Omani rial is pegged.

According to IMF, Oman is expected to record an average inflation rate of 1.9% for 2023, the lowest inflation in the GCC. The sultanate witnessed the second-lowest average inflation rate among GCC countries in 2022 at 2.8%, following Saudi Arabia, which registered an inflation rate of just 2.5% last year.



Russian President awards Pushkin Medal to Moosawi

Muscat - Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, awarded Jamal al Moosawi, Secretary- General of the National Museum of Oman, the Pushkin Medal for his efforts to strengthen bilateral relations in the fields of culture and museum activities between the sultanate and Russia.

One of the highest state awards of Russia, past recipients of the Pushkin Medal have been world leaders. The medal has now been awarded for the first time to an Omani. Named after the poet Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin, it is awarded to foreign personalities for their role in building cultural ties between their countries and Russia.

The award ceremony was held at the National Museum on Tuesday, where H E Ilya Morgunov, Russian Ambassador to Oman, presented the medal to Moosawi.

On receiving the award, Moosawi said, "This honour is a source of inspiration for more upcoming achievements and continuous cooperation between the sultanate and Russia, and it also reflects the work in the cultural and museum fields over the past 12 years."

He added, "Russia's interest in Arab culture and the ability to absorb other cultures embodies the Russian spirit of cultural and religious pluralism, based on a civilizational experience that extends its roots to ancient times. Also, its identity is based on the glorification of the well-established system of noble values, and the soul inclined towards love and brotherhood."

Work is currently underway for specialised vocational training and qualification of National Museum staff at State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.

Thailand's ex-PM Thaksin jailed on return from exile



Former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra bows in homage to the king's portrait after landing at Bangkok's Don Mueang airport on Tuesday

Bangkok, Thailand - Former Thai leader Thaksin Shinawatra returned to the kingdom on Tuesday after 15 years in exile and was immediately jailed, just hours before his party's candidate was elected prime minister.

The Supreme Court ordered the 74-year-old billionaire to serve eight years on old graft charges, though it is not clear how much time he will serve behind bars, as his Pheu Thai party forms the government and rumours swirl of a deal for leniency.

Thaksin, loved and loathed in almost equal measure in Thailand, landed in a private jet at Bangkok's Don Mueang airport on Tuesday morning, and was greeted by hundreds of noisy Red Shirt supporters waving banners and singing songs.

He emerged briefly from the terminal building to bow and offer a floral garland at a portrait of King Maha Vajiralongkorn as a mark of respect before waving to supporters.

More Red Shirts lined the streets as the former Manchester City owner was taken to the Supreme Court.

There, he was ordered to serve eight years for three con-

victions passed in his absence - one linked to his former Shin Corp company, another linked to a bank loan and a lottery case.

Just hours after he landed, parliament approved business tycoon Srettha Thavisin as prime minister at the head of a coalition led by the Pheu Thai party - the latest incarnation of Thaksin's political movement.

Pheu Thai's broad alliance includes parties from its old enemies in the military - which ousted both Thaksin and his sister Yingluck as prime minister.

This has led to widespread speculation of a backroom arrangement with Thailand's powerful pro-military royalist establishment to let Thaksin off lightly - though Pheu Thai has denied such a deal.

Thaksin has said he was willing to face justice in order to return home and see his grandchildren - though he has long maintained the criminal charges against him are politically motivated.

His career has included two election victories, defeat in a coup, criminal charges and the long years of self-imposed exile. AFP

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Oman Avenues Mall back to normal operations after fire

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) dealt with a fire incident in a commercial centre in Ghubra on Tuesday promptly dousing the flames before they could cause any major damage.

The incident happened in Oman Avenues Mall in the morning hours.

"The minor fire incident that occurred earlier today (Tuesday), was swiftly and effectively controlled by the prompt intervention of the CDAA," senior officials from the mall stated.

CDAA said that its firefighting teams in Muscat governorate were able to control and extinguish the fire without recording any injuries.

The mall authorities asserted that the 'robust safety protocol

and systems placed in the mall demonstrated their efficiency.

"The swift and coordinated efforts of our dedicated team, along with the prompt response of the CDAA, ensured that the situation was contained without any injuries or property damage," commented a senior official of the mall.

The premises is now operational as normal, the mall authorities confirmed.

BMI research foresees massive rise in visitors to Oman this year

Our Correspondent
Muscat

BMI Industry Research under the parent organisation Fitch Solutions predicted a 23.5% growth in the number of people visiting the sultanate this year.

The fourth quarter report for 2023 issued by BMI, an economic solutions entity affiliated with Fitch Solutions, has revealed that the analysts expected the number of visitors to the Sultanate of Oman will touch 3.6mn till the end of this year.

The BMI report shows that the total number of international tourists arriving into Oman in 2023 is likely to reach 3.6mn, up by 23.5% compared to 2022.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) drew a comprehensive plan to attract 11mn visitors annually by 2040. The plan includes having new tourism and heritage projects that may contribute to raising the volume of total investments in the sector.

MHT emphasised that it closely monitors international indicators related to the tourism sector, which helps the ministry to understand market trends and analyse the performance of the tourism sector at the global level and its reflections locally.

The ministry measures the impact of marketing efforts to improve its offers and services at tourist destinations and direct plans to enhance the sector and raise its performance.

These indicators help increase competitiveness in the global



The total number of international tourists arriving into Oman in 2023 is likely to reach 3.6mn, up by 23.5% compared to 2022

BMI INDUSTRY RESEARCH

market. Improvement of international indicators leads to positive results such as increase investors' interest and actual investments into the sector.

Bigger investments subsequently contribute to the development and strengthening of a country's economic cycle.

Besides several projects aimed at boosting Oman's tourism, MHT is implementing a number of projects to preserve the craft heritage - said to be a national treasure and one of the most important pillars of Oman's unique identity, which remained alive for thousands of years.

"Handcraft heritage has his-

torical, cultural and social importance that is inherited through generations. This gets represented in handcraft products and their elements, and the associated moral, utilitarian or aesthetic value such as knowledge, skills, techniques and environments for practicing crafts," said Alia bint Salem al Hinai, Director of the Handicraft Heritage Department at the ministry.

The ministry carefully procures raw materials for different crafts, she informed, while explaining that for production of various local crafts - craftsmen need raw materials from nature that include wood for making

ships and boats; metals for silver wares, copper wares, daggers and ornaments; animal skins for leather industries; besides those crafts made from animal bones.

"Oman is also known for its potteries, ceramics, frankincense, precious stones, gypsum, musical instruments, fishing tools, cotton and woollen fabrics, paints and dyes."

Alia stressed that the ministry is concerned with all matters of craft heritage in a way that ensures its collection and documentation, good management and protection, transmission to future generations, and interest in research activities in the fields of craft development.

"The ministry works sincerely to protect Oman's national crafts by registering them with competent authorities, including getting some crafts registered as intangible heritage under Unesco," she added.

MTCIT begins crucial road project in Dhofar

Muscat - The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) has begun a crucial road project in the Governorate of Dhofar stated to be a cornerstone of the ministry's strategic efforts for the current year.

Over 210km in length, the Harweb-Al Mazyunah-Meiten

road project starts from the Harweb area and ends in Meiten in the wilayat of Al Mazyunah.

This pivotal project, represented by the Director General of Roads and Land Transport, consists of a pair of traffic lanes - each 3.5m wide - with asphalt shoulders, each measuring half a metre, while the dirt shoulders

on either side are one-and-a-half metre wide.

The construction of this road will follow the standard specifications detailed in the Road Design Manual, officials said.

Once complete, Harweb-Al Mazyunah-Meiten road will be a significant connecting route in the Dhofar governorate.

MoE, OPAL sign pact for application of technical, vocational education

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has on Tuesday signed an agreement with the Oman Energy Association (OPAL) for cooperation in application of vocational and technical education in the post-primary education stage.

This partnership will enable engineering and industrial specialisations from the academic year 2024-25 in specific schools in the governorates of Muscat and North Batinah, officials said.

H E Majid Bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs in the Ministry of Education, signed the pact with Abdul Rahman bin Humaid al Yahyai, CEO of the Oman Energy Association (OPAL).

"The signing of this agreement comes in implementation of the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to raise the level of quality of education in line with the requirements of the labour mar-

The signing of the deal is the result of the ministry's pursuit towards building partnerships with the players in the economic sector

H E MAJID BIN SAID AL BAHRI

ket," said H E Bahri.

The Royal Directives laid importance on the development of practical and professional skills and capabilities of students in order to achieve the vision of Oman 2040 and its aspirations.

"The signing of the deal is the result of the ministry's pursuit towards building partnerships with the players in the economic sector and strengthening its roles in vocational and technical education through policies and directions, proposing programmes and specialisations," the Undersecretary informed.

"The selection of the Oman

Energy Association (OPAL) as a strategic partner is due to its experience in supervising the development of human resources in the energy sector, analysing the needs of the energy sector for cadres, developing the efficiency of human resources, enhancing quality, building professional standards, and approving training and educational programmes."

Tuesday's development is a step towards strengthening the ministry's partnership with the economic sector entities to achieve the desired objectives of vocational and technical education in the sultanate.

OPAL CEO Yahyai noted that the association is involved in efforts to develop the national occupational standards and works for the programmes attached to it through the sectoral skills unit that the association supervises.

"This partnership will allow us to work together to ensure the quality of vocational educational programmes that are compatible with professional standards approved," he added.



Oman Air business travel world's best, says survey

Muscat - Oman Air has emerged as the premier choice for business travel worldwide, according to a survey conducted by Tipalti.

The website tipalti.com recently conducted a survey to rank airlines on a global scale, focusing on the quality of their Business Class service.

This effort led to the creation of the Ultimate Business Travel Index, which serves as a valuable tool for individuals seeking to make wise choices during their business travels.

In establishing the scores for the Business Class service, reviewers considered a number of factors including the comfort and space of the seats, the quality of

meal and beverage service, the availability of in-flight entertainment, the efficiency of the cabin crew, the amenities provided in the lounge, and the cleanliness of the aircraft.

Earning praise for all facets of the flight, Oman Air outscored airlines such as Cathay Pacific Airways, the largest airline in Hong Kong, as well as EVA Air, the largest airline in Taiwan. Additionally, it outperformed Qatar Airways and Vistara.

With an impressive total score of 8.39, Oman Air got a perfect 5 out of 5 rating in every aspect of its aircraft's business-class seating, making it the highest-scoring airline in this category.

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Oman plans early warning system for financial crises



Muscat - The Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and the Korean Development Institute, hosted a coordination meeting on Tuesday to establish a national early warning system for potential financial and economic crises.

The coordination meeting aimed to leverage the experience of the Korean side in establishing a national early warning system for financial and economic crises.

At the meeting, the Omani side was led by Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance, while the Korean side was represented by Wong Seop-Zin,

Oman is looking to benefit from the Korean experience in establishing a national early warning system for financial and economic crises

senior adviser and former governor of the Korean Financial Supervisory Authority, along with several officials from both sides.

During the meeting, the results of a study and its recommendations regarding the establishment of Oman's national early warning system were presented. The simulation and forecasting system models for the national early warning sys-

tem were also introduced at the meeting.

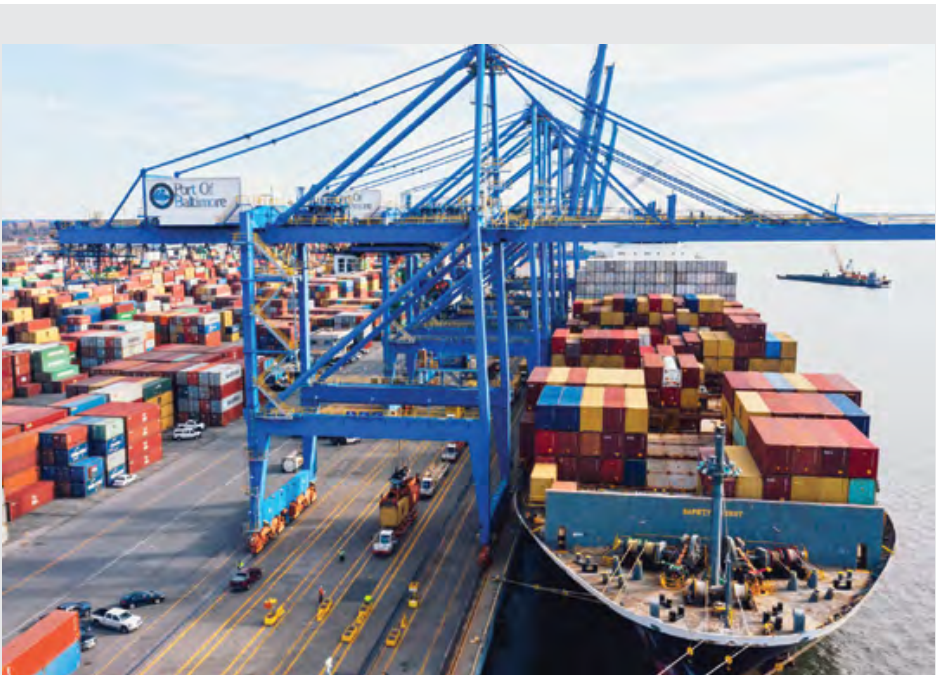
The objectives of the meeting included clarifying the structure and components of the early warning system, incorporating financial and economic inputs, designing a quantitative early warning system, and providing a user-guide.

This joint meeting aimed to establish the national early warn-

ing system and complement the efforts of the bilateral programme launched in December 2022 as part of the Korean Knowledge Exchange Programme. The goal is to share knowledge and experience in Korean development with partner countries in the realm of macro-economic policies and financial systems.

Several relevant institutions participated in the meeting, including the Ministry of Economy, the Capital Market Authority, the Central Bank of Oman, the National Center for Statistics and Information, and the National Risk Register System.

ONA



OABC to host workshop on 'Exporting to US under US-Oman FTA'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In partnership with the US Embassy in Muscat, the Oman American Business Council (OABC) will organise on August 30, 2023 a free, interactive webinar titled: 'Exporting to the United States under the Free Trade Agreement.' This session is part of a five-part webinar series designed to help businesses maximise the benefits of the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Oman has one of only four FTAs with the US in the MENA region, and great po-

tential remains for Omani and foreign investors in Oman to take advantage of its benefits.

During this free workshop, participants will receive first-hand tips on how to enter the US market, sales methods, and finding leads in the world's most lucrative market.

The webinars are one component of the OABC's multifaceted project, 'Spotlight on The US-Oman Free Trade Agreement: Contributing to Bilateral Economic Growth.' This program aims to enhance business relationships between the US and Oman by increasing awareness and understanding of the FTA.

The project will create the tools and resources needed to assist in growing Omani exports to the US, increasing US sourcing, supporting foreign direct investment, and ultimately creating more jobs for Americans and Omanis. As part of this project, a two-day, detailed in-person training for 20 Omani companies will take place in October this year.

The webinars and two-day training are free of charge and open to all members of the community, but registration in advance is required at [OABC.org/events](https://oabc.org/events) or by emailing: info@oabc.org.

Fintech start-ups in Middle East receive \$2bn funding

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The financial technologies (fintech) start-ups in the Middle East are experiencing a rapid growth and have received a total funding of approximately \$2bn in past two years, according to a research report.

'Over the past two-three years (2021-2023), Middle East fintech start-ups have received a total funding of approximately \$2bn through 140-160 deals, with a 40-43% of a total share in the UAE,' a research report released by red_robot said.

This substantial growth can be attributed to the increasing tech-savviness of consumers who actively utilise digital banking services and non-cash payment methods.

Furthermore, government authorities in the Middle East, including central banks and regulators, are committed to developing the fintech sector by establishing necessary



infrastructure such as accelerators, incubators, and fintech hubs, the report noted.

With over 100 promising fintech startups in the region, the Middle East market is dominated by companies specialising in digital payments, instant cross-border payments, buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) services, and digital banking. These companies have later-stage deals and exits, demonstrating their innovative services and growing sustainable business models.

According to the red_robot report, Saudi Arabia and Egypt

account for 46% of the fintech companies in the region, with nine projects in Egypt and six in Saudi. Notably, top fintech companies have attracted investments into the region, improving the business environment and showcasing great potential for future growth.

'Successful startups are already operating in multiple markets and have plans for further geographical expansion. For instance, digital bank Yalla, founded in Egypt, currently has an office in the UAE and is set to expand to KSA and Kuwait,' the report noted.

Ex-OPEC president Alison-Madueke charged with bribery: UK police

London, UK - Former OPEC president Diezani Alison-Madueke has been charged with bribery offences relating to her time as Nigeria's oil minister, the UK National Crime Agency said on Tuesday.

Alison-Madueke, 63, has been on bail since first being arrested in London in October 2015. She will appear in court in the British capital on October 2, the NCA said.

Soon after her arrest, her family's lawyer told AFP she would strongly contest corruption allegations that have dogged her during and after her time in former president Goodluck Jonathan's government.

Alison-Madueke, in office from 2010 to 2015, was the first woman to be oil minister in Nigeria and the first female president of the global oil cartel OPEC.

The head of the NCA's international corruption unit, Andy Kelly, said in a statement: "We suspect Diezani Alison-Madueke abused her power in



Diezani Alison-Madueke

Nigeria and accepted financial rewards for awarding multi-million pound contracts."

The NCA said Alison-Madueke allegedly benefited from at least £100,000 (\$127,000) in cash, chauffeur-driven cars, flights on private jets, luxury holidays for her family, and the use of multiple London properties.

The charges also detail financial rewards including furniture,

renovation work and staff for the properties, payment of private school fees, and gifts from top designer shops such as Cartier jewellery and Louis Vuitton goods.

"Bribery is a pervasive form of corruption, which enables serious criminality and can have devastating consequences for developing countries," Kelly said.

"These charges are a milestone in what has been a thor-

ough and complex international investigation," he added.

At the time of her arrest, the NCA said only it had detained five people in London on suspicion of international corruption, without naming those held.

The Nigerian government of Jonathan's successor Muhammad Buhari later confirmed Alison-Madueke's arrest and said its law enforcement agencies were cooperating with their British counterparts.

Former army general Buhari began an anti-corruption drive after taking office.

The NCA said that assets worth millions of pounds in relation to the case have been frozen as part of the investigation.

In March, the agency, which targets international and organised crime, provided evidence to the US Department of Justice allowing them to recover assets totalling \$53.1mn linked to Alison-Madueke's alleged corruption.

AFP

Artificial Intelligence likely to augment rather than destroy jobs: UN study

Geneva, Switzerland - Artificial Intelligence is more likely to augment jobs than to destroy them, a UN study indicated on Monday, at a time of growing anxiety over the potential impact of the technology.

The launch in November of the generative AI platform ChatGPT, which is capable of handling complex tasks on command, was seen as a tech landmark foreshadowing a potentially dramatic transformation of the workplace.

But a fresh study from the

United Nations' International Labour Organization (ILO) examining the potential effect of that and other platforms on job quantity and quality suggests that most jobs and industries are only partially exposed to automation.

Most are "more likely to be complemented rather than substituted by the latest wave of Generative AI, such as ChatGPT", the ILO said.

"Therefore, the greatest impact of this technology is likely to not be job destruction but rather



the potential changes to the quality of jobs, notably work intensity and autonomy."

The study meanwhile high-

lighted that the effects of technology would vary greatly between professions and regions, while it warned women were

more likely than men to see their jobs affected.

It found that clerical work was the category of jobs with the greatest technological exposure, with nearly a quarter of tasks considered highly exposed and more than half of tasks having medium-level exposure.

In other occupational groups, including managers and technicians, only a small share of tasks was found to be highly exposed, while around a quarter had medium exposure levels, the ILO said.

The analysis meanwhile indicated that higher-income countries would experience the greatest effects from automation due to the important share of clerical and para-professional jobs in the job distribution there.

It found that a full 5.5% of total employment in high-income countries was potentially exposed to the automating effects of generative AI, whereas only 0.4% of employment in low-income countries was.

At the same time, the study found that the share of employ-

ment potentially affected by automation was more than twice as high for women as for men, due to women's overrepresentation in clerical work, especially in high- and middle-income countries.

While Monday's report showed significant differences in the potential impact on AI-generated job losses between wealthy and poorer countries, it found that the potential for augmentation was nearly equal across countries.

AFP

OAB holds students' career programme

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) launched its latest programme, LaunchPad, an initiative designed to help students get a jump start in their careers, under the patronage of H E Sheikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosni, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Labour.

The training programme comprises of a series of free workshops to develop participants' skillsets and empower them to enter the workforce with confidence.

Open to college students, as well as fresh graduates and professional Omanis with less than five years of work experience, it aims to further support and inspire the next generation of Oman's workforce.

Bank's CEO Sulaiman al Harthi said, "The sultanate's future workforce lies in the capable hands of the next generation, who hold the responsibility of steering the nation forward, bolstering our thriving economy, and fulfilling the objectives set forth in Oman's Vision 2040.

"At OAB, we are firmly committed to developing the youth of our country - and LaunchPad is the latest stage of a carefully designed program in which we continue to invest in giving back to



the community, with the initiative also forming part of our ongoing 50th anniversary celebrations. I look forward to welcoming our talented students and recent graduates and watching them progress through the training programme." The training programme will be delivered at the bank's head office in Muscat in collaboration with strategic partners IDENTITY, Competence HR, RAB, Performance World and Aspire Muscat. Divided into three categories

- beginners, intermediate and advanced - based on the candidates' profiles, the workshops will also be recorded and posted on OAB's social media platforms.

Beginners will learn about building their personal brand, CV writing, interview preparation, career building and time/priority management, while intermediates will be coached on decision making, performance management, project management, crisis management and delivering business presentations.

Advanced participants will be taught about change management, innovation and creativity, authentic leadership, strategy thinking and implementation, and digital intelligence. The beginners' workshops are running from August 20 onwards, with dates to be confirmed in due course for intermediate and advanced levels.

LaunchPad follows the announcement earlier this year of OAB's Ruwad al Arabi internship programme, designed to provide meaningful work experience for university and college graduates, nurturing the skills required to bolster employment prospects within or outside the banking sector.



Ominvest holds ESG Champions Forum

Ominvest, one of the oldest and most successful investment firms in the region, held its first ESG Champions Forum on Monday for its group companies to share their successes, challenges, and expertise.

The ESG Champions programme was launched in 2022 to help drive ESG integration within the Ominvest group companies. The programme included a 32-hour training course conducted by the EPLO Institute for Sustainable Development.

Since then, additional group companies have joined the ESG Champions initiative.

The training course equipped the ESG Champions with the

skills to drive ESG integration within their respective organisations.

They have worked with their teams to identify and implement ESG initiatives, measure and report on ESG performance, and communicate ESG progress to stakeholders.

"We are committed to our purpose of Transforming Businesses to Enrich Societies and believe that ESG is essential to achieving this goal," said AbdulAziz al Balushi, GCEO at Ominvest.

"The ESG Champions programme is helping us accelerate our ESG journey and make a positive impact on the world."

The ESG Champions are at different stages of their journey. Some companies have already made significant progress in improving their ESG standing, while others are in the process of identifying material areas that would create the most meaningful impact.

"The forum provided a valuable opportunity for the participants to share their experiences and learn from one another," the organisers said.

"It was great to hear from the other ESG Champions about their successes and challenges," said Mohamed al Adawi, Investment Analyst at Jabreen Capital. "It was also inspiring to see how

committed everyone is to making a difference."

The ESG Champions programme is just one of the many ways that Ominvest is committed to sustainability. The company has also set ambitious targets to reduce its environmental impact, improve its social responsibility, and strengthen its corporate governance.

"We believe that ESG is not just a nice-to-have, it is a business imperative," said AbdulAziz al Balushi, GCEO at Ominvest.

"We are committed to making a positive impact on the world and the ESG Champions programme is a key part of our sustainability strategy."

ISC celebrates Independence Day with cultural fiesta



The Indian Social Club Oman organised a cultural fiesta to celebrate the 77th Independence Day of India at the Oman Auditorium at Al Bustan Palace, A Ritz Carlton Hotel.

Members of the Indian Social Club along with its linguistic wings performed dances and rendered patriotic songs depicting the unity in diversity of India.

The event started with the national anthem followed by the welcome address by Honorary Chairman Babu Rajendran. In his opening address, Rajendran

greeted the audience on the anniversary of the India's independence and thanked all participants for their enthusiastic participation.

Anil Khimji, a renowned businessman and a philanthropist was honoured by the Indian Social Club Oman for his continuous support to the community.

From vibrant Garba, elegant Odissi, colourful Ghumro to energetic Bhangra, the houseful audience witnessed an amazing medley of wonderfully choreographed dances.

Apart from troupes from Indian Social Club Oman, members of Awadhi, Odia, Gujarati, Uttaranchal, Tamil, Sanskrit, Hindi, Sindhi, Karnataka, Kutchi, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Telangana, Rajasthani wings performed at the event.

Members of the OPEN MIC group of Indian Social Club Oman performed a medley of patriotic songs, which was much appreciated by the audience.

Shakeel K M, Honorary General Secretary of the club proposed a vote of thanks.

Indian Embassy concludes Lifestyle for Environment awareness campaign

The Indian Embassy in Muscat has successfully concluded a week-long awareness campaign as part of the Mission Life (Lifestyle for Environment) initiative, aimed at encouraging behavioral changes in individuals to combat climate change.

The campaign, which ran from August 13 to August 19, included a series of impactful activities and events that highlighted the importance of transitioning from wasteful consumption to responsible resource utilisation.

Mission Life, launched by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 20 last year, envisions a global movement

towards mindful consumption and environmental conservation. The initiative seeks to address the pressing challenges of climate change and global warming by inspiring individuals to adopt Eco-friendly practices in their daily lives.

The week long campaign launched by the Indian Embassy on August 13. The event saw the participation of more than 100 environmental enthusiast and prominent members of Indian Community in Oman.

The programme commenced with a screening of a message from the Prime Minister Modi, reinforcing the core principles of Mission Life.



Ambassador H E Amit Narang in his address highlighted the urgency of addressing climate change and emphasising the role of Mission Life in achieving this goal.

On August 14, Ambassador set an inspiring example by planting a *Tulsi* plant (holy basil) within the embassy premises, encouraging officials to replicate this initiative in their households for a healthier future.

Continuing the momentum, the embassy marked India's Independence Day on August 15 with a gathering of over 600 guests.

The Ambassador in his address highlighted the significance of sustainable living through Mission Life and called upon the audience to embrace its seven themes, while also shedding light on health benefits of Millets, as world celebrates

the International Year of Millets.

On August 16, Indian School Wadi Kabir (ISWK) organised a remarkable mega event as part of their commitment to promoting Mission Life.

During this event, students took centre stage by showcasing exhibits dedicated to each theme of Mission Life. These exhibits served as powerful platforms to communicate practical solutions for energy conservation, water preservation, sustainable food systems, and more.

The event was further enriched by cultural performances curated for raising awareness about the importance of sus-

tainable living. Ambassador addressed the students, emphasizing the significance of adopting small lifestyle changes that collectively contribute to a greener future.

On August 17, several Indian Schools in Oman organized awareness campaigns under Mission Life, promoting sustainable living and environmental consciousness.

The embassy further popularised the cause of adopting healthy lifestyles through yoga sessions under Mission Life. The sessions, held within the Embassy premises, enabled participants to connect with their physical and mental well-being.



The new Iranian drone 'Mohajer-10' is displayed during an unveiling ceremony in Tehran on Tuesday (AFP)

Iran unveils its latest 'Mohajer' attack drone

Tehran, Iran - Iran unveiled on Tuesday its latest domestically built drone that can fly at a higher altitude and for a longer duration with enhanced weapons capabilities, state media reported.

The 'Mohajer-10' drone was introduced at a ceremony in Tehran attended by President Ebrahim Raisi, celebrating the achievements of Iran's defence industry. The new drone is an upgraded version of the 'Mohajer-6', which US officials have accused Iran of selling to Russia for use in the Ukraine war - an accusation Tehran denies.

Western governments have in recent months expanded biting sanctions on Iran over the alleged arms sales. The new drone 'can fly up to a maximum duration of 24 hours at an altitude of 7,000 metres (23,000 feet) and with an operational range of 2,000km (1,242 miles)', the official IRNA news agency reported.

It can travel at speeds of up to 210km per hour (130 miles per hour) and is equipped with updated electronic and intelligence systems. The unmanned aerial vehicle has a payload of up to 300kg (660 pounds) of cargo, double that of the previous model, allowing it to carry 'all kinds of bombs and ammunition', IRNA said.

This is double the weight and flight duration capacity of the 'Mohajer-6' which can hold 150kg of weapons and fly for 12 hours. The previous model also had a lower flight altitude of 5,400 metres, and speed of 200km per hour. The United States and Israel, arch-enemies of Iran, have previously accused Tehran of using drones and missiles to attack US forces and Israel-linked ships in the Gulf.

Israeli troops kill Palestinian teen

Troops also made two arrests in the deadly Monday shooting of a settler

Zababdeh, Palestinian Territories - Israeli troops killed a Palestinian teenager near the West Bank city of Jenin on Tuesday, the Palestinian health ministry said, as violence surged in the occupied territory.

Meanwhile, in the southern West Bank, troops made two arrests in the deadly Monday shooting of a settler near the city of Hebron.

"Othman Mohammed Abu Khurog, 17, died after he was shot in the head by the occupation (Israeli forces)," the Palestinian health ministry said.

Abu Khurog was killed when clashes erupted in the small town of Zababdeh, southeast of Jenin, which Israeli forces had entered to make an arrest, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported. The Israeli army said troops had opened fire after 'explosive devices' were thrown at them. "A hit was identified," it said in a statement.

Israeli troops routinely carry out incursions into areas such as Jenin which are nominally under the civil and security control of president Mahmud Abbas's Palestinian Authority.

In July, the army carried out its



Palestinians carry the body of Othman Abu Khurog, 17, during his funeral at Zababdeh village near Jenin in the occupied West Bank, on Tuesday (AFP)

Abu Khurog was killed when clashes erupted in the small town of Zababdeh, southeast of Jenin, which Israeli forces had entered to make an arrest

biggest raid in years on the Jenin refugee camp, in which 12 Palestinians, including fighters and children, were killed.

An Israeli soldier also died during the raid, and on Tuesday the army said he was killed by fire from his own comrades.

David Yehuda Yizhak was shot dead by fellow troops 'following an incident of mistaken identification', the army said.

Meanwhile, violence has been rising in the West Bank.

On Monday, Israeli settler Batsheva Nigri was shot dead from a passing vehicle while travelling in a car near Hebron with her daughter and a man.

Her daughter was unhurt but

the man was seriously wounded, the army and medics said.

Two Palestinian residents of Hebron suspected of taking part in the shooting were arrested on Tuesday as troops pressed a manhunt for the woman's killers, the army said.

"During their initial questioning, the two linked themselves to carrying out the attack," the army alleged, adding that they had turned in a weapon believed to have been used in the attack.

Nigri was a teacher and resident of Beit Hagai, an Israeli settlement south of Hebron.

The Palestinian fighter group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, called her killing a 'heroic act' and a 'normal response' to the persistent expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. The settlements are considered illegal under international law but, not counting annexed east Jerusalem, around 490,000 Israelis live in such communities alongside nearly three million Palestinians.

Nigri's murder came two days after an Israeli father and son were shot dead at a car wash in the town of Huwara in the northern West Bank.

'Hundreds of children die of starvation in war-hit Sudan'

Cairo, Egypt - Starvation has killed at least 498 children and 'likely hundreds more' in Sudan four months into a war between rival generals, Save the Children said on Tuesday.

The conflict between the army under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo broke out on April 15.

Around 5,000 people have been killed, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, and more than four million have been uprooted. "At least 498 children in Sudan and likely hundreds more have died from hunger, including two dozen babies in a state orphanage," Save the Children said in a statement.

The British charity said it had been forced to close 57 of its nutrition facilities since the war began and that stocks were running 'critically low' in the 108 it still operates.

"Never did we think we would see children dying from hunger in such numbers, but this is now the reality in Sudan," said Save the Children's Sudan country director, Arif Noor.

"Seriously ill children are arriving in the arms of desperate mothers and fathers at nutrition centres across the country and our staff have few options on how to treat them.

"We are seeing children dying from entirely preventable hunger."

In a statement last week, the

Greece forest fires death toll hits 20

Alexandroupoli, Greece - Eighteen suspected migrants were found dead on Tuesday in a Greece forest fire near the Turkish border as scores of firefighters battled to contain the second deadly wave of blazes to hit the country in a month.

Fire department spokesman Yiannis Artopios said the victims were found north of the city of Alexandroupoli.

As no local residents had been reported missing 'the possibility that they are people who entered our country illegally is under investigation', Artopios said in a televised address.

The area is a frequent entry point for irregular migrants.

The latest deaths pushed the overall toll from this week's fires to 20, after another suspected migrant was found dead in the area on Monday.

An elderly shepherd had also been found dead north of Athens



Local residents extinguish a fire in Avanta, near Alexandroupoli, northern Greece, on Tuesday (AFP)

On Monday.

Flames continued to spread unchecked in northeastern Greece as well as the islands of Evia and Kythnos and the region of Boeotia north of Athens, amid a dangerous mix of gale-force winds and temperatures of up to 41 degrees Celsius.

"It's a similar situation to July," a fire department spokeswoman told AFP, referring to a wave in several parts of the country that left five people dead.

Over 60 fires had erupted in the last 24 hours, and six countries were sending help via the European Union's civil protection mechanism, the fire department said.

Russia says Ukrainian military boat destroyed in new Black Sea clash

Moscow, Russia - Moscow said on Tuesday it destroyed a Ukrainian military reconnaissance vessel near Russian gas infrastructure in the Black Sea, in the latest clash in the waterway since Moscow's withdrawal from a major grain export deal.

Attacks by both sides have escalated in the Black Sea since Russia in July pulled out of the United Nations-brokered deal that allowed the safe export of Ukrainian grain through the shipping hub.

Russia has bombed Ukrainian port infrastructure in sea and on the Danube, while Ukraine has attacked Russian ships in its waters and the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Moscow in 2014.

Russia's defence ministry said one of its Sukhoi Su-30sm jets had destroyed the Ukrainian 'reconnaissance boat' near Russian gas production facilities in the Black Sea. It did not give details on what kind of boat had been destroyed, or where exactly the incident took place.

The incident came after the first civilian cargo ship sailing through the Black Sea from Ukraine recently arrived in Istanbul in defiance of the Russian blockade.

Moscow said last month that it would consider any ships nearing Ukraine in the Black Sea as potential military cargo carriers, following the grain deal collapse.

The defence ministry also said its forces had downed two Ukrainian drones, 40km (25 miles) northwest of the Crimean peninsula on the Black Sea.

Moscow targeted

The Moscow region was also



Law enforcement officers work at the site of a drone attack in Krasnogorsk, in the Moscow region on Tuesday (AFP)

targeted by Ukrainian drones for a fifth consecutive night, Russian authorities said early on Tuesday.

Aerial defence systems downed one attack drone each in the Krasnogorsk and Chastys areas of the region, mayor Sergei Sobyanin wrote on social media.

AFP journalists on the scene in Krasnogorsk saw a high-rise residential building with several windows blown out, debris and a

damaged car.

Russia's defence ministry said there had been no casualties in the attack but Moscow's Vnukovo, Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo airports briefly halted flights, Russian news agencies reported.

Two other Ukrainian drones were downed over the Bryansk region near the Ukrainian border early on Tuesday, Moscow's defence ministry said, adding there were no casualties.

The strikes are the latest in a recent wave of air attacks deep inside Russian territory, including two drones which were shot down near the Kremlin in May.

The aerial threat is also being addressed in the classroom.

Russian teenagers will learn how to operate and counter military drones in the upcoming school year, according to a curriculum published on Monday by the education ministry.

Moscow announced last November it was re-introducing Soviet-style military training for children from 2023, as it presses ahead with its nearly 18-month offensive in Ukraine.

The wave of drone attacks in Russia came as Ukrainian forces said they have pushed into the village of Robotyne on the southern front and evacuated civilians in armoured vehicles.

"The Russians are continuously shelling Robotyne with artillery," Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar said on social media.

Ukraine has posted limited gains in its push to dislodge Russian forces from territory and appealed to Western allies for greater military support.

Japan to release water from Fukushima

Water from the stricken Fukushima power plant will be released into the Pacific Ocean from Thursday

Tokyo, Japan - Japan will release water from the stricken Fukushima power plant into the Pacific Ocean from Thursday, 12 years after one of the world's worst nuclear disasters.

China, which has already partially halted Japanese food shipments, sharply criticised the announcement while Hong Kong said it would ban the import of 'aquatic products' from 10 Japanese regions.

Japan insists that the gradual discharge of the more than 500 Olympic swimming pools' worth of water from the site in northeast Japan, announced by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday, is safe. The Fukushima-Dai-ichi nuclear power station was knocked out by a massive earthquake and tsunami that killed around 18,000 people in March 2011, sending three of its reactors into meltdown.

Operator TEPCO has since collected 1.34mn tonnes of water used to cool what remains of the still highly radioactive reactors, mixed with groundwater and rain that has seeped in.

TEPCO says the water will be diluted and filtered before release to remove all radioactive substances except tritium, levels of which are far below dangerous levels. It has failed to reassure



South Korean protesters hold signs reading 'Why are you throwing it in the sea?' during a rally against the Japanese government's plan to release Fukushima wastewater, near the Japanese embassy in Seoul on Tuesday (AFP)

China, which said it would take 'necessary measures to safeguard the marine environment, food safety and public health'.

"The ocean is the common property of all humankind, not a

place for Japan to arbitrarily dump nuclear-contaminated water," foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Tuesday.

A nuclear expert however said

the level of tritium was well below WHO drinking water limits. "Tritium has been released (by nuclear power plants) for decades with no evidential detrimental environmental or health

effects," Tony Hooker, a nuclear expert from the University of Adelaide, told AFP.

'Immense'

This water will be released, if

weather conditions allow, into the ocean off Japan's northeast coast at a maximum rate of 500,000 litres (132,000 US gallons) per day.

The UN atomic watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said in July the release would have a 'negligible radiological impact on people and the environment'.

On Tuesday, the IAEA said its staff would be on site for the start of the discharge and beyond and would publish 'real-time and near real-time monitoring data'.

Japan insists that the gradual discharge of the more than 500 Olympic swimming pools' worth of water from the site in northeast Japan is safe

Japan's fisheries agency will take samples of bottom-dwelling flatfish at two designated sampling spots near the outlet of the water pipe.

But environmental pressure

group Greenpeace has said the filtration process is flawed.

Japan 'has opted for a false solution - decades of deliberate radioactive pollution of the marine environment - during a time when the world's oceans are already facing immense stress and pressures', Greenpeace said on Tuesday.

Salt panic

Many South Koreans are alarmed at the prospect of the release, staging demonstrations and even stocking up on sea salt because of fears of contamination. Dozens of protesters gathered in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul on Tuesday, with more rallies planned.

One protester held up a sign reading: "We denounce the Japanese government for killing the ocean!"

But President Yoon Suk Yeol's government, taking political risks at home, has sought to improve long-frosty relations with Japan and has not objected to the plan.

Meanwhile, China had already accused Japan of treating the ocean like a 'sewer', banning imports of food from 10 Japanese prefectures even before the release and imposing strict radiation checks.

AFP



Cambodia's PM Hun Manet delivering a speech during a parliamentary meeting at the National Assembly building on Tuesday (AFP)

Hun Sen's son elected as new Cambodian PM

Phnom Penh, Cambodia - Cambodia's parliament on Tuesday elected long-time ruler Hun Sen's eldest son as the new prime minister, sealing a dynastic handover of power after last month's one-sided polls.

Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) won all but five seats in the lower house in the July election, which was widely decried as a sham after the main opposition party was barred from running.

Hun Manet, 45, was elected unanimously at the National Assembly in Phnom Penh on Tuesday, Heng Samrin, the lawmaker who chaired the meeting announced. After the vote, Hun Manet told lawmakers: "Today is a historic day for Cambodia".

Days after the July election, Hun Sen - one of the world's longest-serving leaders - announced he was stepping down and handing power to Hun Manet after nearly four decades of iron-fisted rule.

The largely ceremonial Cambodian king convened parliament on Monday, paving the way for lawmakers to elect four-star general Hun Manet, as the country's new leader on Tuesday.

Hun Manet said his government would prioritise boosting the economy, creating a 'prosperous nation', increasing livelihoods and climate change adaptation.

Hun Manet's new government includes a number of his relatives and several children of Hun Sen's allies in top jobs.

Hun Sen's youngest son Hun Many will become the civil service minister and his nephew Neth Savoeun, currently the powerful national police chief, will be a deputy prime minister.

The sons of the current interior and defence ministers will take over their fathers' posts, according to a draft list of the new cabinet members seen by AFP.

Having come to power in 1985, Hun Sen helped modernise a country devastated by civil war and genocide, although critics say his rule has also been marked by environmental destruction, entrenched graft and the elimination of nearly all political rivals.

The United States, United Nations and European Union have condemned last month's polls as neither free nor fair.

Hun Manet rejected those allegations hailing the vote as a 'transparent election'.

Despite being educated in Britain and the United States, Hun Manet has shown few signs he will follow a more liberal path than his father.

A member of the ruling party's powerful permanent committee, he has been the Royal Cambodian Army's commander since 2018. Hun Manet has also met some world leaders, including President Xi Jinping of China, Cambodia's main ally and a significant benefactor.

Sebastian Strangio, author of *Hun Sen's Cambodia*, said little was known about how Hun Manet will rule.

AFP

Elusive Japanese bear killed

Tokyo, Japan - Hunters in Japan's remote north have killed an elusive and infamous brown bear nicknamed 'Ninja' that attacked at least 66 cows, officials said on Tuesday.

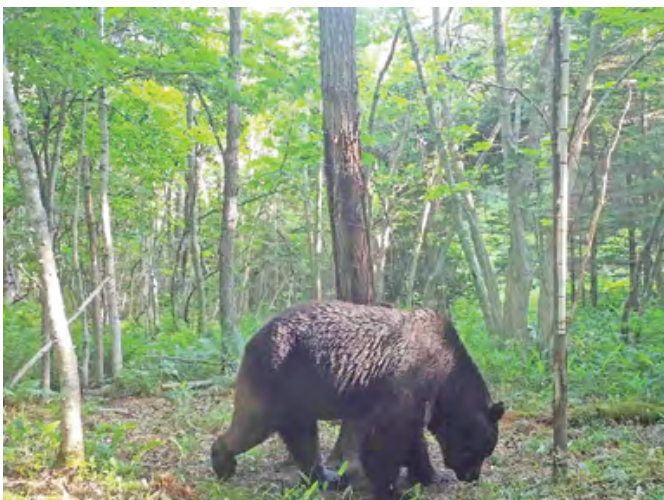
The exploits of 'OSO18', as the bear was named, attracted considerable news coverage including dramatic television documentaries.

The animal is believed to have started attacking livestock in 2019 in eastern areas of Hokkaido, Japan's sparsely populated main northern island.

Its habit of not eating the dairy cows that it attacked - only half of its 66 victims died - confused experts, and it eluded years of efforts to capture or kill it.

Late last month, the bear was shot dead.

"A brown bear was hunted on July 30, and various analyses, including DNA testing, resulted in a confirmation that it was OSO18," Tadayoshi Takeda, an official with the Hokkaido re-



This photo taken on June 25 and released on Tuesday shows a bear believed to be 'OSO18', caught on hidden camera near Shibecha (AFP)

gional government, told AFP on Tuesday.

"I am sure local residents are relieved to hear this news," he said.

Brown bears in Japan only live in Hokkaido where their population is estimated at almost 12,000 but growing, causing increasing problems as they come

into contact with humans.

In 2021 four people were killed in incidents involving bears and 10 were injured - a record number.

Brown bears were also blamed for around US\$2mn worth of damage to crops, the highest on record.

AFP

Trump to surrender in Georgia on Thursday

Atlanta, US - Donald Trump said he will turn himself in on Thursday in Georgia to face racketeering and other charges stemming from his bid to overturn the 2020 election.

Writing on his platform Truth Social on Monday, Trump said that that day he would be 'ARRESTED by a Radical Left District Attorney, Fani Willis', the Georgia official who brought the year's fourth indictment against the former president. The judge earlier approved a US\$200,000 bond for Trump in the racketeering case filed against him in the southern state.

Trump and the 18 other co-defendants in the landmark case have until noon (1600 GMT) on Friday to turn themselves in to the authorities in Georgia. In his post Trump said

Willis is acting 'in strict coordination with Crooked Joe Biden's DOJ. It is about ELECTION INTERFERENCE'.

This is Trump's way of saying all the charges against him are contrived to block his bid for another term in the White House as he leads the field of Republican hopefuls by a mile.

Aside from a US\$200,000 bond for the Republican billionaire, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee imposed several conditions in an agreement approved by prosecutors and Trump attorneys. "The Defendant shall perform no act to intimidate any person known to him or her to be a codefendant or witness in this case or to otherwise obstruct the administration of justice."

AFP

N Korea plans satellite launch as Seoul, US hold drills

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea is planning to launch another satellite just three months after its first attempt to put a military eye in the sky failed, prompting condemnation from Tokyo and Seoul on Tuesday and demands to call it off.

The launch is set to take place between August 24 and 31, Pyongyang told Japan's coast guard on Tuesday, with Tokyo mobilising ships and its PAC-3 missile defence system in case it lands in their territory.

Seoul said the launch would be 'an illegal act' because it violates UN sanctions prohibiting the North from tests using ballistic technology, which is used for both space launches and missiles. "North Korea's so-called 'satellite launch' is a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions... No matter what excuses North Korea tries to make, it cannot justify this illegal act," South Korea's Unification Ministry said in a statement.

The foreign ministry said



S Korean soldiers disarm a mock terrorist, as part of military exercise at a subway station in Seoul on Tuesday (AFP)

Seoul would 'respond sternly to the North's illicit provocation with close trilateral Korea-US-Japan cooperation'.

Pyongyang's announcement came days after leaders from Washington, Seoul and Tokyo met at Camp David in the United

States, with North Korea's growing nuclear threats a key item on the agenda.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida urged Pyongyang to call off the launch, saying Japan was taking 'all possible measures to prepare for any unforeseen eventuality'.

Japan's Coast Guard said Pyongyang had informed it of three designated danger areas: the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and waters east of the Philippines' Luzon island.

In May, Pyongyang launched what it described as its first mili-

tary reconnaissance satellite but the rocket carrying it, the 'Chollima-1' - named after a mythical horse that often features in official propaganda - plunged into the sea minutes after takeoff.

Military drills

Pyongyang's new launch plan follows Seoul and Washington kicking off their major annual joint military drills on Monday.

Known as Ulchi Freedom Shield, the exercises, which are aimed at countering growing threats from the nuclear-armed North, will run through August 31.

Pyongyang views all such drills as rehearsals for an invasion and has repeatedly warned it would take 'overwhelming' action in response.

Suspected North Korean hackers have already targeted the exercises, with email attacks on South Korean contractors working at the allies' combined exercise war simulation centre.

AFP

India’s Chandrayaan-3 Vikram lander gets closer to the Moon

New Delhi, India - In its latest update on Chandrayaan-3 soft landing, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Tuesday said the mission is on schedule and systems are undergoing regular checks.

“Smooth sailing is continuing, The Mission Operations Complex (at ISRO) is buzzed with energy and excitement!” ISRO posted on X, formerly Twitter.

After Russia’s Luna-25 mission failed, all eyes will be on India as its Chandrayaan-3 is set to land on the moon on Wednesday, around 18:04 IST.

The live telecast of the landing operations at MOX will begin at 1720 IST on Wednesday. Live actions of landing will be available on the ISRO website, its YouTube channel, Facebook, and public broadcaster DD National TV from 17:27 IST.

Along with the mission’s update, ISRO also released images of the moon captured by the Lander Position Detection Camera (LPDC) from an altitude of about 70km.

These images assist the lander module in determining its position (latitude and longitude) by matching them against an onboard moon reference map.

On Monday, ISRO released a series of images of the lunar far side area captured by the Lander Hazard Detection and Avoidance Camera (LHDAC). This camera assists in locating a safe landing area - without boulders or deep trenches - during the descent. Also, in a significant development, the Chandrayaan-



Students with painted faces surround a replica of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft in Chennai on Tuesday (AFP)

2 orbiter which was still orbiting around the moon established a two-way connection with the lander module of Chandrayaan-3 on Monday.

Notably, the ‘Vikram’ lander module of the spacecraft successfully separated from the propulsion module on Thursday, and subsequently underwent crucial deboosting manoeuvres and descended to a slightly lower orbit. The Chandrayaan-3 mission’s lander is named after Vikram Sarabhai (1919-1971), who is widely regarded as the father of the Indian space programme. A GSLV Mark 3 (LVM 3) heavy-lift launch vehicle was used for the launch of the spacecraft that was placed in the lunar orbit on August 5 and since then it has been through a series of orbital manoeuvres been lowered closer to the moon’s surface. It has been a month and eight days since the ISRO launched the Chandrayaan-3 mission on July 14. The spacecraft was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh’s Sriharikota.

The stated objectives of Chandrayaan-3, India’s third lunar mission, are safe and soft landing on the lunar surface, rover moving on the moon’s surface, and in-situ scientific experiments.

India will be the fourth country in the world to achieve this feat after the United States, Russia, and China, but India will be the only country in the world to land on the lunar south pole.

ANI

BRICS summit of emerging economies begins in S Africa



President of Brazil Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi attend the 2023 BRICS Summit at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg on Tuesday (AFP)

Johannesburg, South Africa - BRICS leaders meet in South Africa on Tuesday as the loose association of major emerging economies seeks to assert its voice as a counterweight to Western dominance in global affairs.

The so-called BRICS nations - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - represent a quarter of the global economy, and interest in joining the club has surged ahead of its three-day summit in Johannesburg.

Security has been bolstered across the city where South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will host China’s President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

and some 50 other leaders.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is the target of an international arrest warrant over alleged war crimes in Ukraine and will not attend in person, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sent on his behalf.

Xi, whose country is the most powerful BRICS member, met with Ramaphosa ahead of the summit on just his second international trip of the year.

“Now as friends and BRICS partners, we stand together in our shared objective and quest for a better and more egalitarian world that frees the potential of all the people in the world,” said Ramaphosa in Pretoria at the opening of Xi’s state visit.

“Today, standing at a new historical starting point, inheriting friendship, deepening cooperation, and strengthening coordination are the common aspirations of the two countries, and are also the important tasks entrusted to us by the times,” said Xi.

Ukraine looms large

Representing 40 per cent of the world’s population, but whose economies have different levels of growth, the BRICS share a common desire for a global order they see as better reflecting their interests and rising clout.

The theme of its 15th summit is ‘BRICS and Africa’ and comes as the continent emerges as a renewed diplomatic battleground with the United States, Russia

and China jostling for influence.

The summit has underscored divisions over the war in Ukraine and the support Russia enjoys from its other BRICS partners at a time of global isolation.

South Africa, China and India have not condemned Russia’s invasion while Brazil has refused to join Western nations in sending arms to Ukraine or imposing sanctions on Moscow.

Ahead of the summit, Ramaphosa said his country would ‘not be drawn into a contest between global powers’ and had resisted pressure to align with any influential blocs of nations. In a park near the summit venue, two dozen protesters held up blue and yellow Ukrainian flags and placards reading ‘Go home Lavrov’.

“We are here to deliver a message to all BRICS countries and guests currently at the summit to demand Russia to withdraw military forces from Ukraine,” said Lesya Karpenko, 41, representative of the Ukrainian Association of South Africa. There is growing interest in the bloc, which began as four nations in 2009 but expanded the following year with the addition of South Africa.

Ahead of this summit, at least 40 countries have expressed interest in joining including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and Argentina, officials say.

South Africa will present BRICS leaders with a proposal to expand its membership.

AFP

Ethiopia unveils joint Saudi probe into ‘killing of migrants’

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Ethiopia will launch a joint investigation with Saudi Arabia into a Human Rights Watch report accusing the kingdom’s border guards of killing hundreds of Ethiopian migrants, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

“The Government of Ethiopia will promptly investigate the incident in tandem with the Saudi Authorities,” the ministry said on X, formerly Twitter, a day after the publication of the HRW report sparked global outrage.

“At this critical juncture, it is highly advised to exercise utmost restraint from making unnecessary speculations until (the) investigation is complete,” the ministry said, noting the ‘excellent longstanding relations’ between Addis Ababa and Riyadh.

The allegations, described as ‘unfounded’ by a Saudi government source, point to a surge in abuses along the perilous route from the Horn of Africa to Saudi Arabia, where hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians live and work.

One 20-year-old woman from Ethiopia’s Oromia region, interviewed by HRW, said Saudi border guards opened fire on a group of migrants they had just released from custody.

“They fired on us like rain. When I remember, I cry,” she said.

Washington, a long-time ally of Riyadh, urged ‘a thorough and transparent investigation’ into the allegations, which were dismissed by a Saudi government source who spoke to AFP.

“The allegations included in the Human Rights Watch report about Saudi border guards shooting Ethiopians while they were crossing the Saudi-Yemeni border are unfounded and not based on reliable sources,” said the source, who requested anonymity.

The European Union noted with ‘concern’ the HRW allegations and plans to raise them with Riyadh and with the Huthis who control strategic parts of Yemen, a spokesman, Peter Stano, said on Tuesday.

At this critical juncture, it is highly advised to exercise utmost restraint... until (the) investigation is complete

ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY

“We welcome the announcement by the government of Ethiopia, specifically, to investigate the whole issue together with the authorities in Saudi Arabia,” he said.

United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric called the report ‘very concerning’ but noted the ‘serious’ allegations were difficult to verify.

New York-based HRW has documented abuses against Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia and Yemen for nearly a decade.

AFP

DARING RESCUE



People watch as an army soldier slings down from a helicopter during a rescue mission to recover students stuck in a chairlift in Pashto village of mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, on Tuesday. Four children from a group of eight people were rescued, but officials said nightfall was hindering efforts to save the rest (AFP)

AU suspends Niger as 12 troops die in attack

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - The African Union (AU) on Tuesday said it was suspending coup-hit Niger but called for a report into the implications of a threatened military operation to restore its ousted president, as Nigerien TV said 12 troops died in a new attack by suspected militants.

National guards carrying out an anti-militant operation in the southwestern region of Tillaberi were ambushed on Sunday night, Tele Sahel said, adding that the troops inflicted ‘heavy losses’ on the enemy.

Niger’s armed forces, struggling with an eight-year militant campaign, have lost at least 29 men since officers toppled elected president Mohamed Bazoum on July 26.

The coup - justified by its leaders because of Bazoum’s perceived failure to stem the in-



A Niger’s police officer stands guard next to some of the 300 trucks mainly loaded with food that arrived from Burkina Faso in Niamey on Monday (AFP)

surgents - triggered a bustup with France, Niger’s staunchest ally, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

ECOWAS has slapped trade sanctions on Niger and approved deployment of a ‘standby force to restore constitutional order’ in

Niamey.

The bloc is hazy about the plan but insists it would intervene if attempts at a diplomatic solution ultimately fail.

As the crisis neared the end of its fourth week, the AU on Tuesday said it was suspending Niger from its ranks but indicated cau-

tion on the ECOWAS threat following strong differences among its members.

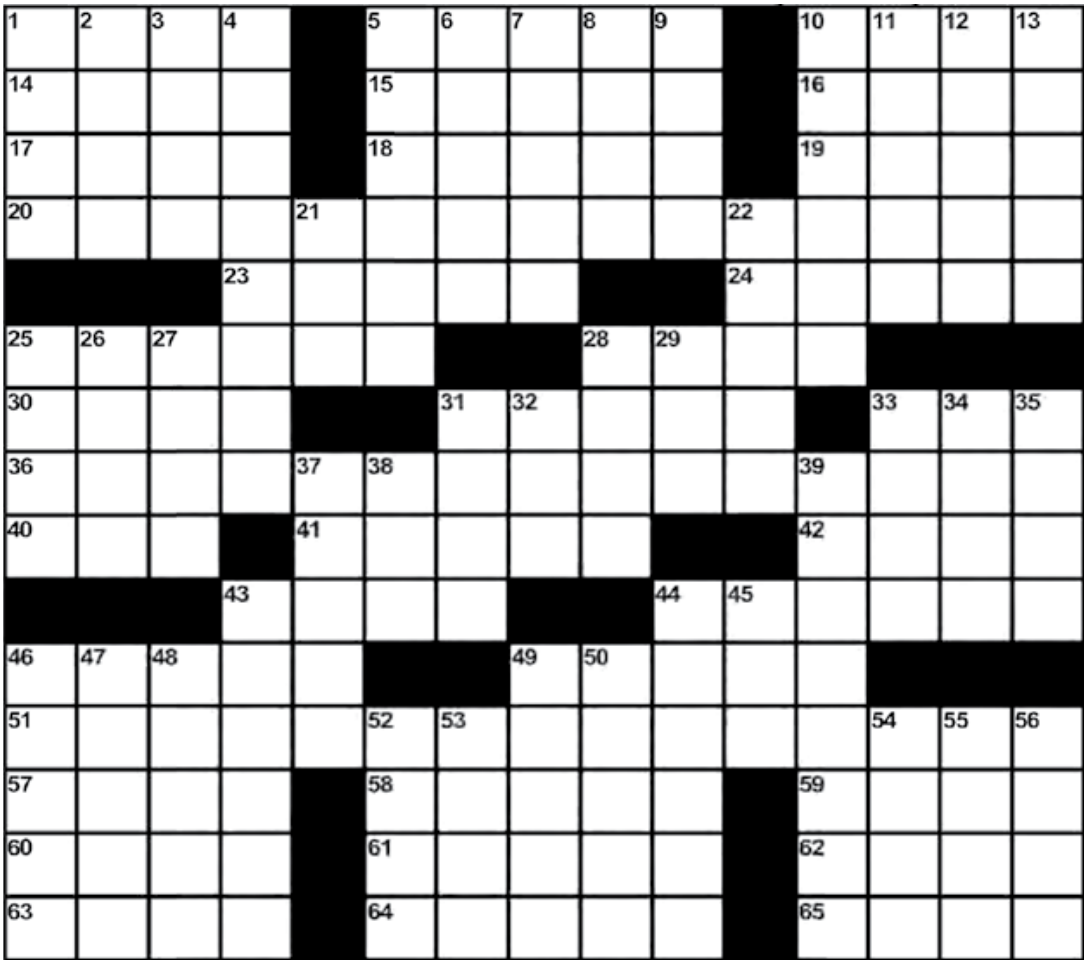
The AU said its Peace and Security Council had asked the body’s Commission to carry out ‘an assessment of the economic, social and security implications’ of deploying the force, and report back.

The coup has heightened international worries over the Sahel, which faces growing militant insurgencies linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. Niger is the fourth ECOWAS nation since 2020 to suffer a coup, following Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali.

The new military ruler General Abdourahamane Tiani has proposed a three-year transition back to democracy, a call rejected by ECOWAS.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Campus military org.
5) City known for romance
10) Blood vessel obstruction
14) Geometry calculation
15) Decrease in intensity
16) Puerto_
17) Dispatched
18) Moscow monetary unit
19) Line on a list
20) Three things a chef might bake
23) West Point student
24) Ecstasy opposite
25) Ants, collectively
28) Fill a belly
30) Egg, to a biologist
31) Ruin
33) Gabor of old Hollywood
36) Three things a chef might roast
40) Snowy place that provides quite a view
41) Legendary actress
Sophia
42) Pond organism
43) Basketball highlight
44) Tuition collector
46) Its business is beauty

49) Favored by God (Var.)
51) Three things a chef might fry
57) Russo of "Outbreak"
58) Fertilizer derived from sea birds
59) Wield the scepter
60) Sermon sign-off
61) Intense hatred
62) One of the Great Lakes
63) Attention-getter, in a theater
64) Have a feeling about
65) Designates, as a knight

DOWN

1) Sculptor's tool
2) Twistable cookie
3) Pitched shelter
4) Ancient burial place
5) Travesty or spoof
6) Mistreatment
7) Morocco's capital
8) "...do you good!"
9) "So it would..."
10) Wince
11) Collectible art print, briefly
12) Crossing medium
13) Famous rock opera

21) It may be picked up at the beach
22) Solemn promises
25) Soda selection
26) Shape of Obama's office
27) Oatmeal glob
28) Hit like a ton of bricks
29) Section of a play
31) Boxer's comeback?
32) Bill often passed
33) Sinuous coral reef dwellers
34) Chevy car of yore
35) Way off yonder
37) Hollow twanging sound
38) Longest division of geologic time
39) Traded
43) Learned teacher
44) Turn into
45) Get mileage out of
46) Type of heap or metal
47) Throaty cries for attention
48) Airport inconveniences
49) Egghead
50) "Peanuts" character
52) Psychiatric components

53) Like all newborns
54) Wise Hindu teacher
55) Silver-tongued
56) Witnesses

NOTE PAD

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

One of the very best ways to remind yourself that you're the commander in chief of your life is by literally rearranging your life. It's time for some housecleaning! Before you get annoyed at the prospect of organizing closets and scrubbing out the refrigerator, stop and think about it. What better way is there to feel powerful than by improving your living situation in such a way that every day you can actually see the influence you have?

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

The energy you direct at other people will always come back to you in some way, shape, or form. This is something to keep in mind the next time you feel like chatting on your phone on the bus while someone sitting next to you is trying to read. It's important to be more mindful of how you interact with others. You don't have to put yourself second to strangers, but you'll find that the more considerate you are to others, the more considerate they'll be to you.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

If you get paired up with someone at work or at school today, your first reaction might be that the two of you are mismatched. If that's the case, you need to stick with it anyway. Make the best of it. Give this relationship time to bloom, and you'll be nicely surprised by what it grows into. Sure, it might be uncomfortable for both of you in the beginning, but it's important to learn how to work with people you don't necessarily understand or even get along with.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Do you know the fastest route to your happy place? If not, then you'd better figure it out quick! There will be at least one difficult personality living up to their reputation today and making your life a little more difficult. Their demands or preferences are going to complicate something that you thought would be quick and simple. You can't get mad, but you can get out of there. For solace, you'll need to go to your happy place and stay put until things are all ironed out.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Just because your friend or coworker doesn't like to toot their own horn about their latest triumph doesn't mean that you have to keep from singing their praises when you hear about it! Show them how proud you are and organize a little celebration. It doesn't have to be a big, catered affair. Just order a bunch of pizzas or call up a florist for a nice bouquet. Doing something nice for them will make you feel better than you ever expected!

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

A friend has been making some remarkable changes in their life, which should be getting you thinking about making some changes of your own. They have some excellent advice on how to get started in a new direction, so you should pick their brain on the ins and outs of their transformation. They'll be flattered by the attention, which will encourage them to keep going with this lifestyle renovation. Don't be afraid to let someone know you're proud of them!

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

The person in power right now might not be the person you'd like to see in power, but so what? You can (and will) still achieve a lot today. Their involvement in your daily life is waning, and you won't have to worry about them breathing down your neck. And when you get done doing your thing, they'll be quite impressed by how professional and focused you are. And then maybe you'll start seeing them differently. Today could be the start of a whole new phase of your relationship.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

One of your current projects feels never-ending! If you've been waiting for the light at the end of the tunnel to come into view, you might be able to get a glimpse of it today if you keep calm and remain confident about it. Worrying about how or when you're going to finish something isn't helping you get it done any faster. Roll up your sleeves and dig in. That's the fastest way to the finish line.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Today, take a second look at recent events and you'll finally be able to see them for what they are. A little distance thanks to time can give you clarity. It's not easy to be honest with yourself about the mistakes you've made in the past, but it's the best way to grow. If in retrospect you see that you said or did something you regret, make amends and apologize if necessary. Pretending everything is fine will only build walls between you and people you care about.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You might think you're seeing double today when you come across someone who reminds you a lot of yourself at a younger age. This person has all the same attitudes and hopes you had, and they're stirring up some emotions about the goals you left unconquered in your life. Your heart is open to trying something new, so why not tackle one of those unfinished tasks? After all, there's no rule that this something new can't be something from your past.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

This is a good day to get what you want, whether it's the attention of a certain someone you've had your eye on or just a better parking space. You've got some killer positive energy inside right now, and it's creating a protective bubble of good vibes around you. Nothing anyone can say will get you down, and you'll have a smile ready to flash at everyone you see. This bright attitude will make a real difference in your day. People will even comment on it.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If you've been dreaming about making a change in your life, today you'll get the chance to start making that dream come true! This is only the beginning, though. You can't expect any major transformations to happen overnight. If you have unrealistic expectations, you'll only get frustrated. If you're working on making a change to your physical being, this is doubly true. Understand that this will take time, but you'll be able to stick with it until the goal is reached.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What did Napoleon Bonaparte I establish in 1804, a measure which has had worldwide effect?

A. Ecole Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr
B. Treaty of Amiens
C. Banque de France
D. Napoleonic Code

02. Which 1910 Murray and Weston song became a signature song of the music hall star, Harry Champion?

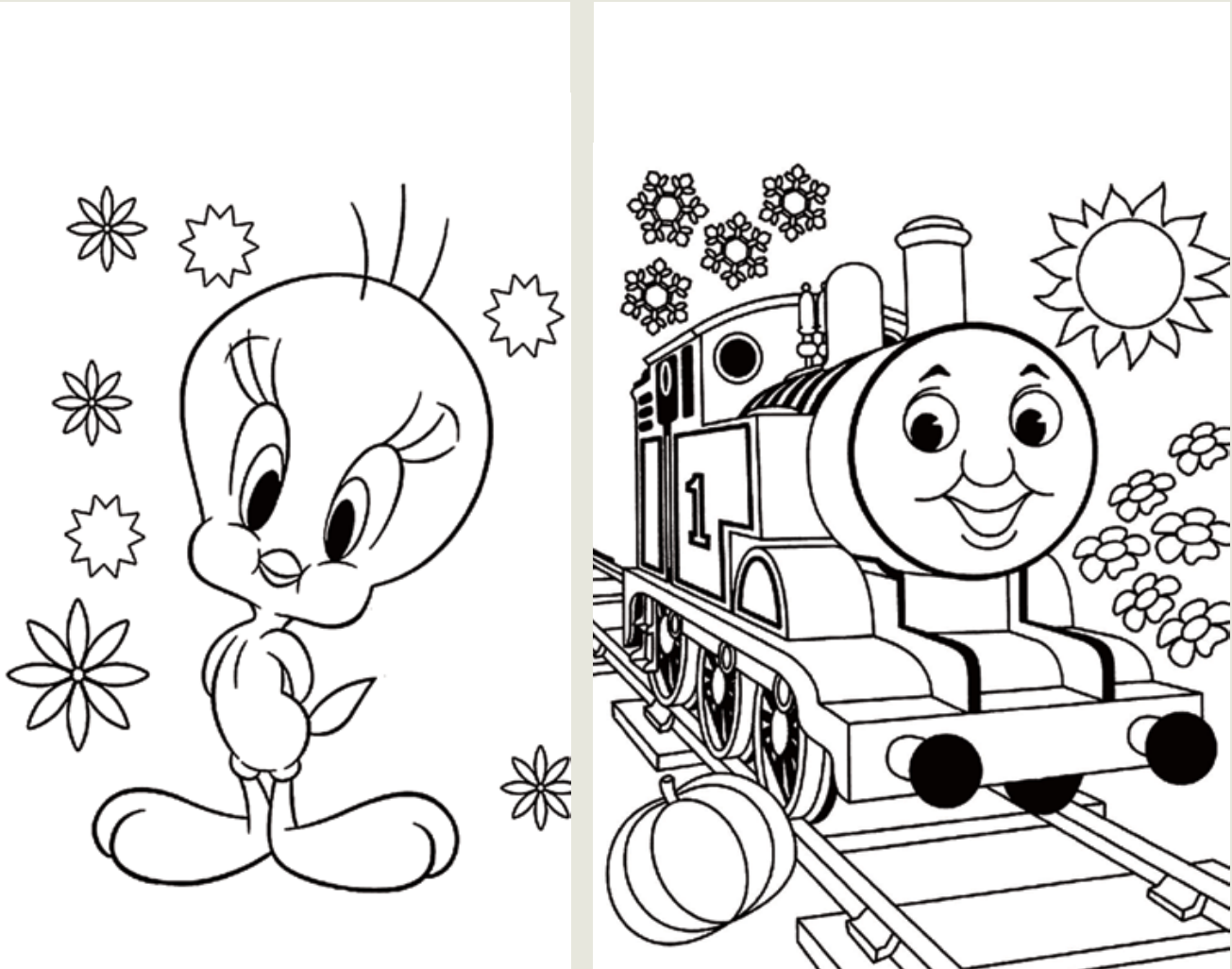
A. Any Old Iron
B. I'm (H)Energy the Eighth, I Am
C. A Little Bit of What You Fancy Does You Good
D. Burlington Bertie from Bow

03. What wood or woods did the Stradivari family use in the construction of their exceptional stringed instruments?

A. Ebony and rosewood
B. Spruce, willow and maple
C. Sycamore
D. Beech and spruce

Answers: 1. D 2. B 3. B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

M	A	D	E
R	R	S	T
C	B	P	D
A	U	O	T

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

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

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

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

Richardson wins sprint gold

USA star edges Jamaicans to deliver on promise

Budapest, Hungary - Sha'Carri Richardson made up for missing the Tokyo Olympics due to a drug ban to sensationally win the women's 100 metres world title in Budapest on Monday in a championship record of 10.65sec.

The 23-year-old American stormed home from lane nine - unpopular for sprinters - to edge Jamaican duo Shericka Jackson, who ran 10.72sec, and five-time champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, who clocked 10.77sec.

I am back. Never give up. Never allow the media or outsiders to get you down but only let yourself fight and decide your fate

SHA'CARRI RICHARDSON

Richardson missed the delayed Tokyo Games in 2021 after testing positive for marijuana at the US trials.

However, after surviving a terrible start in her semi-final she was a different prospect in the final in the Hungarian capital.

As she crossed the line she looked up at the screen and held her hands to her face with a look of shock.

"I'm back!" she said immediately afterwards.

Richardson first burst onto the



USA's Sha'Carri Richardson celebrates after winning the women's 100m final at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest on Monday (AFP)

scene in 2019 but this was the first time she has turned her promise and fast times into a global title.

In the press conference later, she said her lesson for others seeking inspiration from her win was one of resilience.

"Never give up," she said.

"Never allow the media or outsiders to get you down but only let yourself fight and decide your fate."

Richardson, who said at the time of the ban that she smoked the marijuana after hearing about the death of her biological mother, said she knew she had many critics but she drew comfort from them just as much as from her close circle.

"The support from my coach to my family to supporters to the haters - all of them motivated me and helped me prevail," she said.

Richardson had barely made it into the final, going through only as one of the two fastest losers after almost being left in her blocks in the semi.

However, she made no mistake when it really mattered, driving out fast and although Jackson held the lead entering the final few metres the American had enough leg speed to pass her to her right.

Jackson's dreams of becoming only the fourth woman to achieve the sprint double have been shattered but she still has the 200m title to defend later this week.

The Jamaican, who has not always seen eye-to-eye with Richardson, went over and embraced her.

AFP

Zango makes athletics history for Burkina Faso in triple jump

Budapest, Hungary - Hugues Fabrice Zango gave Burkina Faso their first global athletics title when he won men's triple jump world gold in Budapest on Monday.

The 30-year-old won with a best effort of 17.64m to add gold to his world silver last year and Olympic bronze in 2021, which was the west African nation's first ever Olympic medal.

"Look at my big, big, big smiling mouth," he said. "It tells you everything. I had so many difficulties and doubts, I have been struggling a lot. I had to travel a very long way to get this gold medal.

"I promised to make history and I did it tonight. That is the first gold medal in men's triple jump, not only for my country, but for Africa as well.

"I cannot imagine the level of



Burkina Faso's Hugues Fabrice Zango competes in the men's triple jump

celebration in my country when I go back home but I'm going to start the celebrations in Budapest."

Zango said he was proud to

produce positive headlines about his country which has been rocked by unrest in recent weeks.

"We have some troubles in our country now and it is an in-

credible mission to bring some positive emotions to them," Zango said.

Two Cubans filled the minor medals positions, with Lazaro Martinez leaping 17.41m and Cristian Napoles a centimetre behind.

Veteran American Will Claye finished seventh in the 32-year-old two-time silver medallist's seventh and final world championships.

Zango's path to glory had become a lot easier in the first round. Jamaican prodigy Jaydon Hibbert's hopes of winning world championship triple jump gold ended in agony as he pulled up with a sore right hamstring.

The 18-year-old, the world leader in the event this year with 17.87m coming into the championships in Budapest, received treatment in the stadium.

Holloway claims third straight world 110m hurdles title

Budapest, Hungary - Grant Holloway became the second athlete after his US compatriot Greg Foster to claim three consecutive world 110m hurdles titles after racing to victory in Budapest on Monday.

Holloway, 25, shot out to a season's best of 12.96sec to win gold ahead of Jamaica's Olympic champion Hansle Parchment, who finished in 13.07sec.

Holloway, 25, shot out to a season's best of 12.96sec to win gold ahead of Jamaica's Olympic champion Hansle Parchment, who finished in 13.07sec.

"Three in a row!" said Holloway. "The main thing was really just to come through here and defend my title.

"I felt no pressure at all, I just wanted to run cleanly and stay calm at the finish line."

American Daniel Roberts rounded out the podium with



USA's Grant Holloway (C) crosses the finish line to win the men's 110m hurdles final

bronze in 13.09sec.

Olympic champion Daniel Stahl won a second world title in the men's discus in dramatic style in Budapest on Monday.

The Swede, who previously triumphed in Doha in 2019, had control of the leaderboard only for defending champion Kristjan

Ceh of Slovenia to take the lead with his sixth and final throw.

All eyes turned on to Stahl at the National Athletics Centre for the final throw of the competition and the Swede did not disappoint, throwing a championship record of 71.46m.

AFP

Incomparable Rojas has new world triple jump record in sights

Budapest, Hungary - Venezuelan triple jumper Yulimar Rojas, who has reigned supreme at global championships since 2017, insists bettering her own world record remains an objective as she hunts for a fourth consecutive world title in Budapest.

Not only did the 27-year-old win world golds in London in 2017, in Doha two years later and in Eugene last year, but she also became Olympic champion in the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 with a then world record of 15.67m.

That mark was improved to 15.74m when the Venezuelan won her third world indoor title in Belgrade in 2022.

The last time Rojas was beaten in her speciality was more

than two years ago and although she lost when making her senior global championships debut at the Rio Olympics in 2016, she still secured silver.

In an interview with AFP ahead of her competition in Hungary, which starts with qualifying on Wednesday, Rojas dismissed concerns of battle fatigue.

"Every day is a motivation for me, each world championship reconnects everything again," she said.

"Just the possibility of being world champion again motivates me every day, I have that goal of defending my title and continue working to fulfil all my goals."

In 2023 she has extended her total of 15-metre-plus jumps to 44. Those performances include



Yulimar Rojas

a 15.16m win at the Central American and Caribbean Games and a 15.18m victory at the Diamond League meeting in Silesia.

Remarkably, that's a barrier that just two other athletes on the

Every day is a motivation for me, each world championship reconnects everything

YULIMAR ROJAS

onships in Albuquerque in March, while Ukraine's Maryna Bekh-Romanchuk leaped 15.02m to win the 2022 European title in Munich.

'I am my main rival'

Rojas, however, was less concerned with her immediate competition than herself.

"I am very well, very happy and excited to be here, but above all I am very focused on doing very well," she said.

"The level is high this year, the standard in the triple jump has grown... but I am very focused and I think my main rival is myself, my rival is Yulimar Rojas.

"My rival is my fears, my mistakes, it's how I get up, what I feel on the track.

"I am myself and I always try to defeat myself, improve my marks day by day, improving my jumps. That's the main thing."

Rojas added: "I respect my opponents a lot and they always bring out the best in me. I know that in Wednesday's qualifying and Friday's final we are going to have a great competition and I am looking forward to that."

Rojas shot out a warning that her record of 15.74m was in her crosshairs.

"Beating my record is always a goal," she told AFP. "I don't have a specific day to say I'm going to beat it, it doesn't work that way.

"Every day I'm prepared for it, but it depends on the moment, the place, the day, the hour."

AFP

entry list have surpassed in their career. American Jasmine Moore jumped an area record of 15.12m at the NCAA Indoor Champi-

Gunners battle past Palace

Martin Odegaard on target as Arsenal extend perfect start despite Tomiyasu red card

London, United Kingdom - Arsenal shrugged off Takehiro Tomiyasu's red card to extend their perfect start to the Premier League season as Martin Odegaard sealed a 1-0 victory against Crystal Palace on Monday.

Odegaard's second-half penalty at Selhurst Park put Arsenal on course for their second successive win.

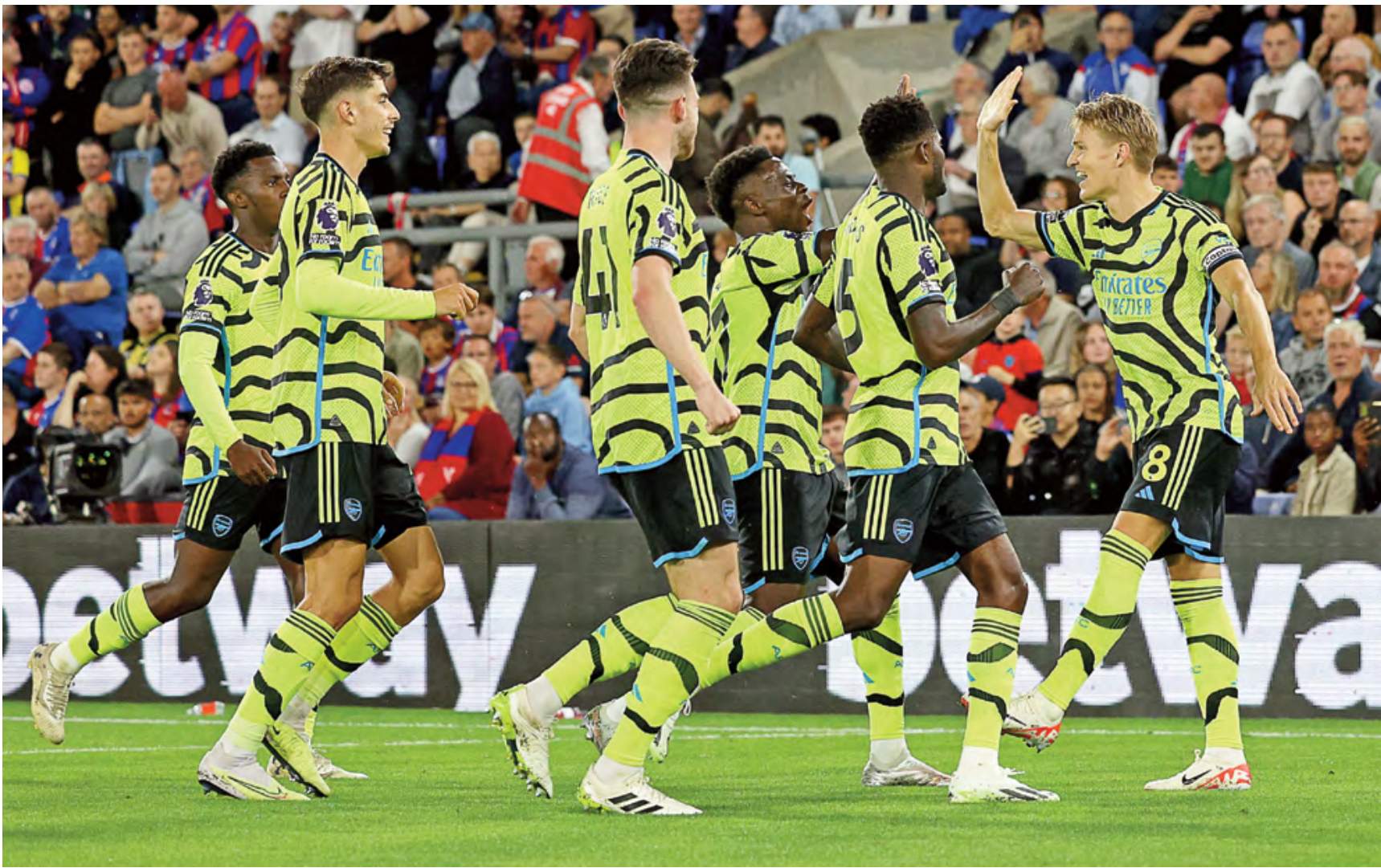
But Mikel Arteta's side had to dig deep to preserve the points after Japan defender Tomiyasu was controversially sent off for a second yellow card midway through the second half.

Tomiyasu had been booked for taking too long over a throw-in before his dismissal for making minimal contact on Jordan Ayew.

Arteta was delighted with the way Arsenal refused to surrender their lead as they moved up to third place, behind leaders Brighton and second-placed Manchester City on goal difference.

"Great win. I'm so happy. To play 30 minutes away from home with 10 men is extremely difficult," Arteta said.

"Some players were suffering physically. The subs were mag-



Arsenal's Martin Odegaard (R) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Crystal Palace in their English Premier League match on Monday (AFP)

Great win. I'm so happy. To play 30 minutes away from home with 10 men is extremely difficult. The subs were magnificent, they knew what they had to do

MIKEL ARTETA

nificent, they knew what they had to do.

"Today we had a difficult one,

we overcame it and it will make us better."

Frustrated by Tomiyasu's first

booking for time-wasting, Arteta added: "This is the standard. I think it was eight seconds. We might have to play with a stop watch."

Expected to mount a sustained title challenge following last season's late collapse that gifted the trophy to City, the north Londoners look up for the fight after building on their opening weekend win against Not-

tingham Forest.

While they haven't played their most fluent football yet, this could prove a significant building block in their bid for a first title since 2004.

Arsenal had the best away record in the top flight last season and registered a division-best 10 clean sheets on their travels.

Arteta's men looked like road

warriors again as they repelled Palace's late flurry of pressure.

With new goalkeeper David Raya among the Arsenal substitutes after his loan move from Brentford, the spotlight was on Aaron Ramsdale as the England international fights to hold onto his place.

Ramsdale rose to the challenge with a confident display from the moment he turned

away Eberechi Eze's long-range strike in the early stages.

Ice-cool Odegaard

Emulating City boss Pep Guardiola's tactic of instructing a defender to advance forward whenever they have possession, Arteta deployed Thomas Partey at right-back with a license to link up play from his preferred mid-field role.

That allowed Arsenal to dominate possession but Eddie Nketiah, deputising for the injured Gabriel Jesus, failed to make their first-half pressure pay off.

The 24-year-old wasted a good chance when he nimbly turned away Joachim Andersen, only to scuff his shot against the far post with just Sam Johnstone to beat.

Palace were denied a penalty after William Saliba's sliding tackle on Ayew was ignored by VAR. Nketiah was profligate again when he chipped over from just six yards after Declan Rice picked out the unmarked forward.

Arsenal kept their composure and Odegaard's fierce 25-yard strike forced a superb tip over from Johnstone.

Odegaard wouldn't be denied again as the Norwegian netted from the spot in the 54th minute to reward Arsenal's dominant display.

Gabriel Martinelli's quick free-kick caught Palace dozing and Nketiah rounded Johnstone before being upended by the keeper, who was sent the wrong way by Odegaard's ice-cool penalty.

AFP



Thierry Henry

Thierry Henry to coach France at 2024 Olympics - source

Paris, France - Thierry Henry was on Monday named as coach of France's Under-21s and will be in charge of the team competing at next year's Olympics in Paris, said a source close to the negotiations.

The 46-year-old former Arsenal and France striker replaces Sylvain Ripoll and returns to management after leaving his role as Belgium assistant following last year's World Cup.

Henry, who won the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 with France, has struggled to hit the same heights in coaching that he reached as a player.

He lasted barely three months as Monaco coach in the 2018-19 season and stepped down at MLS club Montreal Impact in February 2021 after just over a year at the helm.

He has also worked previously with Arsenal's youth teams and twice served on the Belgium coaching staff, helping the country finish third at

the 2018 World Cup.

Henry, scorer of 51 goals in 123 games for France, has been working as a TV consultant in recent times.

He could have a team built around Kylian Mbappe at the Olympics, with the France captain making no secret of his desire to play at the tournament, which is largely reserved for players aged 23 or younger.

Henry's first match as France Under-21 coach is a friendly against Denmark in Nancy on September 7.

Henry, who won the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 with France, has struggled to hit the same heights in coaching

Greenwood to leave Man Utd after abuse allegations



Mason Greenwood

London, United Kingdom - Manchester United and Mason Greenwood have mutually agreed for the forward to leave Old Trafford after he faced allegations of abuse involving a young woman, the club announced on Monday.

The 21-year-old forward has been suspended by the Premier League giants since January 2022 over the allegations after images and videos were posted online.

Prosecutors said in February they were dropping charges, including attempted rape and sexual assault, against Greenwood, after key witnesses withdrew and new evidence came to light.

On Monday, the club said that after a six-month internal investigation into his conduct, it was releasing Greenwood so he could attempt to rebuild his career elsewhere. The club said Monday: "All those involved, including Mason, recognise the difficulties with him recommencing his career at Manchester United."

"It has therefore been mutually agreed that it would be most

appropriate for him to do so away from Old Trafford, and we will now work with Mason to achieve that outcome."

Greenwood, whose contract runs until June 2025, said: "I did not do the things I was accused of, and in February I was cleared of all charges."

"However, I fully accept I made mistakes in my relationship, and I take my share of responsibility for the situations which led to the social media post."

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Pulisic strikes as Milan open well at Bologna

Milan, Italy - Christian Pulisic netted one and helped set up another in AC Milan's hard-fought 2-0 win at Bologna on Monday in which the USA star made a big impression.

The 24-year-old is looking to give his club career a jump start at Milan after being sold by Chelsea and he was key to Stefano Pioli's side claiming the points in their opening match of the season.

Pulisic played the defence-splitting pass which led to Olivier Giroud's 11th-minute opener and then doubled Milan's lead 10 minutes later with a superb strike from the edge of the penalty area.

"We saw some really good things today and also some things on which we still need to work loads," Pioli told DAZN. "I always knew Pulisic was a talent, it was never in doubt. When I spoke to him before he signed it was clear that he would bring quality to the team."

Milan have brought in eight players in the summer transfer window after Sandro Tonali's big-money move to Newcastle.



Christian Pulisic celebrates after scoring against Bologna

tle United.

And although they looked vulnerable at the back there was enough to suggest that the business done in the close season has rejuvenated a team whose title defence went up in flames midway through the last campaign.

Milan created enough promising attacking situations of which a sharper outfit could have made more, Rafael Leao not at his best on the left flank and unluckily not to score late on when a mazy run ended with the Portugal winger hitting the post.



Samu Omorodion (L) battles with Atletico Madrid's Mario Hermoso during their Spanish league match earlier this month (AFP)

Atletico take one look at teenager Omorodion and buy him

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid on Monday said they had signed 19-year-old striker Samu Omorodion from Granada.

The Spain under-19 international joins on a five-year contract. Spanish media reported Atletico had activated the striker's buyout clause of six million euros (\$6.5 million).

Omorodion, born to Nigerian parents, made his league debut

for Granada in their season opener on August 14 against Atletico and scored the team's goal in a 3-1 loss.

"We saw the boy play the other day, we saw him in the friendlies, he has interesting things, he has potential," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said on Saturday.

Granada play their second game of the season at home to

Rayo Vallecano later on Monday.

On their website on Monday, Atletico said Omorodion "is a physical prodigy with great coordination despite his 1.93-metre height. He stands out with his explosiveness, he is very fast and has goals in him."

Spanish media reported that Atletico plan to loan him out this season.

AFP

Omani sailing squad gains valuable experience at 2023 Allianz Sailing Worlds



Action from iQFoil race

Muscat - Oman Sail's para sailing team concluded their campaign in The Netherlands at the 2023 Allianz Sailing World Championships after a series of tough races that underlined the experience and high standards the squad aims to reach.

Taking part in the first Sailing World Championships to feature para sailing events, Marjan al Balushi finished 11th in the women's hansa, Nasr al Rahbi

finished 12th out of 15 in the men's hansa, and the crew of Sami al Sulaimi and Ghaliya al Jabri finished 15th out of 16 in the RS Venture event.

Mohsin al Busaidi, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, said, "The results leave us with mixed feelings. We had hoped for a stronger showing but it is important to remain focused on the wider context.

"Some of the sailors at the Al-

lianz Sailing World Championships have been sailing for decades.

"This is the level we are aiming for, and this event gave us a first hand look at what we need to do."

"All four sailors began their journey in the sport in 2019 with the launch of Oman Sail's Sail-Free initiative, a joint project with bp Oman and the Oman Paralympic Committee. They

have already made significant progress and the exposure to the highest level in the sport will serve them well in the future," he added.

Elsewhere, Abdulmajeed al Hadhrami continued his quest for Olympic qualification in the men's windsurfing iQFOiL where he finished 85th in a strong fleet.

The top ten qualify automatically for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, while more places are

on offer at competitions around the world in the coming months. Abdulmajeed will be part of the Oman team travelling to the Hangzhou 2023 Asian Games, taking place from 23 September to 8 October, and also at the Asian Olympic Qualifier in Chon Buri, Thailand, from 10-20 December 2023.

A Last Chance Regatta is also scheduled where the final places will be decided.

Spanish football boss apologises for kissing World Cup star Hermoso

Madrid, Spain - Luis Rubiales, the president of the Spanish Football Federation, apologised on Monday for kissing star player Jenni Hermoso on the lips after Spain won the Women's World Cup.

Rubiales, 45, planted the kiss on Hermoso after she collected her medal following the final in Sydney, provoking outrage in Spain.

"Certainly I made a mistake and I have to acknowledge that," Rubiales said in a video posted on social media by Spanish television.

"It was done without any ill intention in a moment of the highest exuberance. Here we saw it as natural and normal but outside it has caused a commotion.

"I have no choice but to apologise and to learn from this... and when representing the federa-



Luis Rubiales

tion take more care," he said, adding that he thought the furor was "idiotic".

Earlier Spain's sports minister on Monday had demanded that Rubiales apologise. "I think it is unacceptable to kiss a player on the lips to congratulate her," act-

reasonable thing to do," Iceta said.

The minister added that while the 1-0 victory over England on Sunday in Sydney was "a moment of intense emotions", public officials "have to be extremely careful because we are giving a

On Sunday, the player posted a video on Instagram showing the celebrations in the changing room in which she responded to teasing from team-mates by saying: "I didn't like it, eh!" while laughing. Later on Sunday the federation released their own quotes from Hermoso.

"It was a totally spontaneous mutual gesture because of the immense joy that winning a World Cup brings," Hermoso was quoted as saying.

"The president and I have a great relationship. His behaviour with all of us has been outstanding and it was a natural gesture of affection and gratitude.

"A gesture of friendship and gratitude cannot be gone over so much, we have won a World Cup and we are not going to deviate from what is important."

The president and I have a great relationship. His behaviour with all of us has been outstanding and it was a natural gesture of affection and gratitude

JENNI HERMOSO

ing minister Miquel Iceta told Spanish public radio.

"The first thing he has to do is to give explanations and make apologies, it is the logical and

message to society and the message is equal rights, it is respect".

Rubiales on Monday stressed that he had a "magnificent relationship" with Hermoso.

Chelsea's Chukwuemeka undergoes knee surgery

London, United Kingdom - Chelsea teenager Carney Chukwuemeka has undergone surgery on the knee injury he sustained playing against West Ham last weekend, the Blues announced Tuesday.

"Carney Chukwuemeka sustained an injury to his left knee during our game against West Ham United on Sunday," said a statement on Chelsea's website.

"Last (Monday) night Carney underwent surgery and will now begin his recovery.

"The 19-year-old will work with the club's medical department on his rehabilitation at Cobham."

No timeline has been put on the absence of Chukwuemeka, who scored his first goal for Chelsea in their 3-1 loss away to London rivals West Ham in the Premier League, but he could be out of action for up to six weeks.

The former Aston Villa midfielder found first-team game time hard to come by last season following his £20 million (\$26 million, 23 million euros) move.

Chukwuemeka has, however,



Chelsea's Carney Chukwuemeka is helped off the pitch after suffering an injury during their English Premier League match on Saturday (AFP)

Last (Monday) night Carney underwent surgery and will now begin his recovery

CHELSEA

started both of new Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino's first two Premier League games in charge.

He had surgery after being withdrawn 15 minutes from the end of Chelsea's loss at the London Stadium, the first defeat of Pochettino's reign as Blues boss.

Earlier, he had drawn Chelsea level, following Nayef Aguerd's header, when he cut inside and struck a fierce right-footed shot past goalkeeper Alphonse Areola. It was his first goal in 17 appearances in all competitions since arriving at Stamford Bridge.

AFP

Rauf leads Pakistan's rout of Afghanistan in first ODI

Hambantota, Sri Lanka - Fast bowler Haris Rauf led a pace assault on Afghanistan with a career-best five-wicket haul to give Pakistan a thumping 142-run victory in the first one-day international in Sri Lanka's Hambantota on Tuesday.

Rauf's fiery 5-18 condemned Afghanistan to their second-lowest ODI total of 59 as they were bowled out inside 20 overs after Pakistan made 201.

The victory gives Pakistan a 1-0 lead in the three-match series - the first bilateral meeting between the two nations - with the remaining matches in Colombo on Thursday and Saturday.

Rauf carried on the demolition act after fellow quick Shaheen Shah Afridi had removed both Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmat Shah for nought off successive deliveries in the third over.

Afghanistan slumped to 4-3 when Naseem Shah dismissed skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi, also without scoring, before passing the baton to Rauf to complete the rout.

AFP

Man City manager Guardiola to miss two matches after surgery

London, United Kingdom - Pep Guardiola will miss Manchester City's next two matches after a "routine operation" on his back Tuesday, the Premier League champions announced.

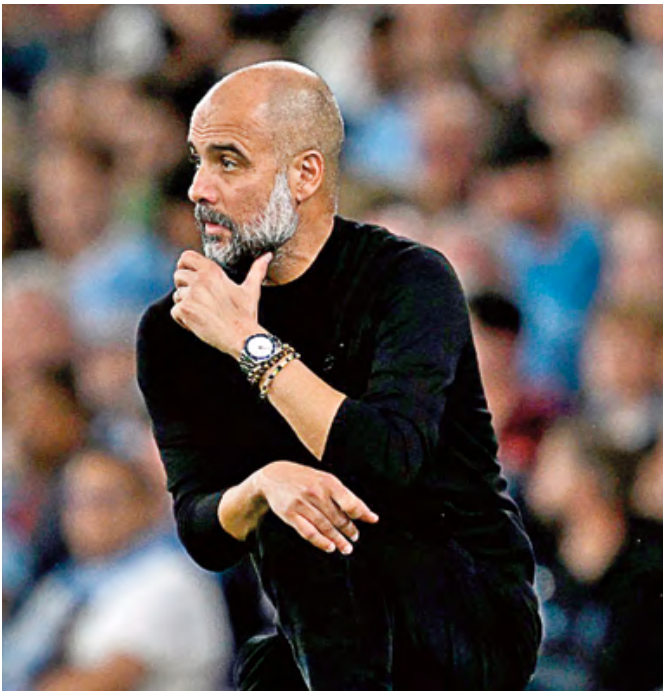
City said their treble-winning manager had been suffering from "severe back pain for some time" and flew out to Barcelona for "emergency" yet "routine" surgery.

The Spanish boss will remain in Barcelona while he recovers from the operation and is expected to miss City's matches against Sheffield United this Sunday and Fulham on September 2, with assistant manager Juanma Lillo taking temporary charge in his absence.

City expect Guardiola, 52, to be back on the touchline after their visit to West Ham on September 16.

A Manchester City statement said: "Pep Guardiola has today (Tuesday) undergone a routine operation on a back problem.

"The Manchester City boss has been suffering with severe back pain for some time lately, and flew out to Barcelona for



Pep Guardiola

emergency surgery performed by Dr Mireia Illueca. The surgery was a success, and Pep will now recover and rehabilitate in Barcelona.

"In his absence, assistant manager Juanma Lillo will oversee coaching of the first team on the training field and will assume

duties on the touchline until Pep's return.

"He is expected to return after the forthcoming international break. Everyone at Manchester City wishes Pep a speedy recovery, and look forward to seeing him back in Manchester soon."

AFP



Saudi MMA fighter Abdullah al Qahtani trains at a gym in Riyadh

Saudi MMA fighters out to 'prove themselves' in NY bouts

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Abdullah al Qahtani trades jabs with a sparring partner at a gym in the Saudi capital Riyadh, surrounded by a dozen fighters running through their own drills on the crowded mat.

The humble setting is a far cry from where he's headed: the bright lights of Madison Square Garden in New York City, where this week he and another Saudi combatant will try to put the kingdom's mixed martial arts (MMA) scene on the map.

Combining elements of every-

thing from boxing to judo and Muay Thai, MMA had a limited following in Saudi Arabia just a decade ago, but that started to change when the Gulf kingdom hosted the popular regional Desert Force competition in 2014. The sport's popularity has since soared with the rise of fighters from across the Middle East and the establishment of a national MMA foundation to develop Saudi talent.

Al Qahtani and his Jeddah-based compatriot Mostafa Rashed Ned are set to compete

on Wednesday in separate bouts in New York as part of the Professional Fighters League playoffs - a star turn they hope will lead to global recognition.

"They are fighting to prove themselves," said Peter Murray, chief executive of the PFL, an MMA promotion company that has come up in the wake of the Ultimate Fighting Championship's success. Saudi Arabia, Murray added, is strongly placed to become a wellspring of MMA fighters and fans. "We think the talent's there, and there's a need

for added capabilities, and we're committed to that."

Al Qahtani, known as "The Reaper", told AFP he was more than prepared to square off against US featherweight David Zelner, despite training primarily in Saudi Arabia and being fairly new to the sport.

"This is an old-school gym," he said of the spot where he often works out, its walls decorated with cartoon sketches of boxing legends Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson and sayings like "The coward dies a thousand times".

"It's not the best and it does not have the best equipment, but it has very good fighters."

Neda, the other Saudi on Wednesday's PFL undercard, was forced to turn to YouTube to learn the basics of MMA, and his first proper sparring partner was an American English teacher who showed him jujitsu fundamentals.

Inspired, Neda took it upon himself to introduce MMA to other Saudis, selling it as a form of "street fighting" and eventually forming a club of his own.



Novak Djokovic

Djokovic closes in on Alcaraz at top of rankings

Paris, France - Ahead of the draw for the US Open on Thursday, Novak Djokovic neared a return to world number one after outlasting Carlos Alcaraz to win the Cincinnati Open.

In his last warm-up event for the season's final major, Djokovic took some revenge on Sunday on the 20-year-old Spaniard who won their final at Wimbledon on July 17.

Djokovic fell a set behind but fought back to win 5-7, 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/4) on his fifth match point and after 3 hours 49 minutes of play.

The Serb cut Alcaraz's lead atop the rankings to 20 points, and will reclaim top spot if wins his first-round match at the US Open.

Djokovic has not lost in the

first round of a Grand Slam since the 2006 Australian Open.

Dane Holger Rune climbed to No. 4 at the expense of Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas, who dropped three places.

Alexander Zverev climbed five places to 12th after his run to the semi-finals in Cincinnati.

ATP RANKINGS AS OF AUGUST 21

1. Carlos Alcaraz (ESP)	9815 pts
2. Novak Djokovic (SRB)	9795
3. Daniil Medvedev	6260
4. Holger Rune (DEN)	4790 (+1)
5. Casper Ruud (NOR)	4715 (+2)
6. Jannik Sinner (ITA)	4645
7. Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE)	4580 (-3)
8. Andrey Rublev	4515
9. Taylor Fritz (USA)	3605
10. Frances Tiafoe (USA)	3050

AFP

India's Praggnanandhaa meets Carlsen in Chess World Cup final

Baku, Azerbaijan - Continuing his dream run, Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa on Monday stunned world No.3 Fabiano Caruana 3.5-2.5 via the tie-break in the semifinals to set up a summit clash with world number one Magnus Carlsen of Norway at the FIDE World Cup chess tournament here.

After the two-game classical series ended 1-1, the 18-year-old Indian prodigy outlasted the highly-rated American GM in a battle of wits in a nerve-wracking tie-breaker.

In the final beginning on Tuesday, Praggnanandhaa will take on five-times title winner Carlsen, who beat Azerbaijan's Nijat Abasov 1.5-0.5 in the other semifinal.

Praggnanandhaa becomes the third youngest player after the legendary Bobby Fischer and Carlsen to qualify for the Candidates tournament.

"I didn't expect to play Magnus in this tournament at all because the only way I could play him was in the final, and I didn't expect to be in the final."

"It feels really good to qualify for the Candidates; I really wanted to fix this spot." With the two 25'+10 games ending at 1-all, Praggnanandhaa prevailed in the first 10'+10 game against Caruana to get within a draw of setting up a final clash with world No.1 Carlsen.

"Pragg goes through to the final! He beats Fabiano Caruana in the tiebreak and will face Magnus Carlsen now. What a performance!," chess legend Viswanathan Anand posted on social networking site 'X', formerly Twitter.

In the first game of tie-break, the Indian GM withstood a lot of



R Praggnanandhaa

I didn't expect to play Magnus in this tournament at all because the only way I could play him was in the final, and I didn't expect to be in the final. I will just try to give my best

R PRAGGNANANDHAA

pressure from Caruana and held on for a draw in an exciting encounter. The second rapid game too saw a similar result, pushing the semifinals to the 10'+10 series.

Praggnanandhaa has been in a

rich vein of form in the World Cup and his biggest scalp before Caruana was another American Hikaru Nakamura, the world No.2 and second-seed, following which he stopped compatriot Arjun Erigaisi.

"Congratulations @rpragchess for winning against Fabiano and going to the finals at the World Cup in 2023! Proud and happy!," noted chess coach R B Ramesh wrote on 'X'.

Former women's world No.1 Susan Polgar also hailed the young Indian GM.

"Congratulations to GM Prag-

gnanandhaa for reaching the 2023 World Cup final to face Magnus! He defeated world #2 Fabiano in the playoff to earn the coveted spot! He also defeated world #3 Hikaru earlier!"

AICF president Sanjay Kapoor said, "Congratulations to Praggnanandhaa @rpragchess on his amazing victory & making it to the FINALS of @FIDE_chess Chess World Cup.

Bravo! Indian chess lovers can't wait for the Final as it promises to be one RED HOT Contest with the World no.1 @Magnus-Carlsen on the other side!"

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COPACABANA PALACE

The Hall of Fame of the Belmond Copacabana Palace Hotel

100 YEARS OF *glamour*

Rio's iconic Copacabana Palace has hosted celebrities, royalty, and highly influential guests, from Walt Disney to Queen Elizabeth II, since 1923

With its gleaming white facade looming over Rio de Janeiro's iconic beachfront, the Copacabana Palace is celebrating 100 years of welcoming stars, presidents, and royalty. "The Copacabana Palace is more than a hotel, it's an institution," director general

Ulisses Marreiros said. The epitome of luxury and old-world glamour, the hotel was inaugurated on August 13, 1923, with a performance by Moulin Rouge singer-dancer Mistinguett, the most famous French entertainer of her time. Since then, dozens of celebrities, heads of state, and royalty, have graced its sumptuous suites and a balcony with a breathtaking view of Copacabana.

A gallery of portraits of famous visitors, re-designed for the centenary, includes images of Josephine Baker, Bob Marley, Freddie Mercury, Madonna, Walt Disney, Brigitte Bardot, Robert De Niro, and Queen Elizabeth II. The guestbook - specially opened for AFP - is a veritable relic that is carefully kept in a briefcase. White gloves are needed to peruse its pages, full of illustrious signatures, such as that of late Brazilian football great Pele.



Copacabana Palace director general Ulisses Marreiros handles the Golden Book of the Belmond Copacabana Palace Hotel

Where the president was shot
Designed by French architect Joseph Gire, the Copacabana Palace was inspired by some of the most emblematic hotels of the Riviera, like the Carlton in Cannes or the Negresco in Nice. At the time, the hotel was practically the only building on an almost deserted Copacabana beach, now lined with prime real estate. The inauguration was supposed to take place in 1922, for the centenary of Brazil's independence, but numerous technical issues delayed works. This did not dampen the enthusiasm of the hotel's founder Octavio Guinle, whose family ran it for more than 60 years until it was bought by the Orient-Express group in 1989 and then in 2018 by LVMH - the world's leading luxury group. The entrepreneur lured artists like Edith Piaf, Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra to sing in the mythical Golden Room. When Rio was still the capital of Brazil - before it was moved to Brasilia in 1960 - the hotel was also frequented by the cream of local politics. This included a stay by President Washington Luis, who in 1928 was shot by his mistress in one of the hotel suites, requiring discreet evacuation to hospital. The presidency later said he had suffered an attack of appendicitis.

Very Brazilian charm
In another anecdote recounted by historians, screenwriter Orson Welles once tossed a typewriter out of a window overlooking a swimming pool, in a moment of frustration with writer's block. It was in the same pool that Janis Joplin went skinny-dipping in 1970, which saw her ejected from the hotel. "It is a place of political and artistic meetings, which has welcomed celebrities from around the world, but with a very Brazilian charm and glamour," said historian Thiago Gomide. Monaco's Prince Albert II is one of those who fell under the hotel's spell. "Every time he comes here he gives me a warm hug," said Antonio Francisco dos Santos, who has worked at Copacabana Palace for 28 years. "He likes to go for an early swim before enjoying tropical fruits, especially mango or acai, at his favourite table by the pool, which I reserve for him as soon as he arrives," said the assistant manager of the Pergula restaurant. The pool has just been revamped, with pale green-and-white parasols and deckchairs covered with matching cushions, with tropical motifs. The facade has also been repainted to return to its original pearly white. "We wanted to get as close as possible to the appearance of 1923, while using cutting-edge technology for a lighting system that enhances the beauty of the building at night," explained Marreiros, the manager, who seeks to 'honour the past while inspiring the future'.

The Copacabana Palace is more than a hotel, it's an institution
ULISSES MARREIROS
Director general

WONDERSIZE



Brazilian designer Amanda Momente, owner of the plus size clothing brand Wondersize



Brazilian Designer *Amanda Momente* turned her perceived 'minus' attribute into a 'plus-size' movement that now reshapes fashion in Brazil

Fitting Reply

Defying the fashion world's narrow stereotype of beauty, Brazilian plus-size designer Amanda Momente poses confidently for the camera, wearing the clothing label she founded after failing to find other options that fit.

More than half of all adults in Brazil are overweight, but Momente is part of a growing movement of entrepreneurs, activists and models who are fed up with a fashion industry they say fails to fit their needs and shames them for their bodies.

"Society judged me based on one thing, so I took that thing and used it... to launch my business," says Momente, 34, dressed in a sheer black bodysuit created by Wondersize, the company she founded in 2017.

The former real-estate agent, who sports a pink mohawk and multiple tattoos, got the idea after feeling uncomfortable at the gym in clothes she says were too tight, turned transparent when stretched or bunched up around her thighs.

She decided to find a seamstress to help her make her own workout outfit.

It turned out so well she quit her day job and plunged headfirst into the fashion world, she says.

The rise of colourful, stylish clothes for Brazilians with large bodies is part of a broader international trend rejecting unrealistic standards of beauty, especially for women.

"The fashion industry needs to fit our bodies, not the other way around," says Momente.

IDENTITY AND DIGNITY

Major brands tend to dedicate at most a small portion of their lines to clothing in larger sizes, leaving 'repressed' demand, says Marcela Liz, head of the Brazil Plus Size Association.

The plus-size sector grew in Brazil more than 75% in the decade through 2021, reaching sales of 9.6bn reais (about US\$1.9bn) that year, according to the association. It projects sales will hit 15bn reais by 2027 in Latin America's biggest economy.

"Supply has improved, but we're still not meeting demand," says Liz.

The nascent industry sashayed through Sao Paulo this month at the Pop Plus fair, where indie designers showed off sparkling skirts, racy tops, T-shirts stamped with bold statements and other clothes in sizes ranging up to 70.

"The market saw fat people as people who didn't like fashion, who just wanted to hide their bodies," says Flavia Durante, the activist who founded the fair in 2012.



"Society judged me based on one thing, so I took that thing and used it to launch my business"

AMANDA MOMENTE

"We had clothes, not fashion," she told AFP. "Fashion isn't just about consumption. It's about identity and dignity."

MORE WORK TO DO

TV presenter and plus-size model Letticia Munniz has strutted the runway at glitzy Sao Paulo fashion week, made the cover of glossy magazines, and been the face of numerous ad campaigns.

She, however, says real inclusion remains a long way off for the overweight and obese in Brazil - 57% and 23% of the adult population, respectively, in the country of 203 million people.

"Things have improved, but our work is still seen as just checking a quota box. We're not seen as real equals," she says.

The activist and influencer, who usually wears custom-made clothes, says she is glad to see more plus sizes on runways - but adds that doesn't necessarily mean they are actually available in stores.

She encourages her more than one million followers on social media to love themselves as they are.

"When you find something made to exalt your body instead of hide it, it changes everything," she says in one post.

AFP



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PLUS SIZE dilemmas

Having a bigger, curvier body, and needing the type of clothing that accommodates or even highlights it, has become (somewhat) more accepted by the fashion and retail industries these days.

Recent years have seen greater commitments to size diversity from clothing brands and the rise of plus-size models such as Ashley Graham, Paloma Elsesser, Precious Lee and Tess Holliday. But what's really considered a plus-size body or garment?

The 'unsatisfying answer' is that it's kind of impossible to define, said Lauren Downing Peters, an assistant professor of fashion studies at Columbia College Chicago and author of the new book *Fashion Before Plus-Size: Bodies, Bias, and the Birth of an Industry* in a recent article in CNN Style.

When it comes to sizing, labels and retailers can make their own rules. "Most brands will use their own fit models just to designate their pattern blocks," Downing Peters explained, "which means that their sizing conventions are going to be based on that model's body — and are going to vary wildly from brand to brand."

These sizing practices partly explain why anyone, regardless of whether they're plus-size or sample size, can be one size at one store and another somewhere else — or why two garments from different brands that are both, say, a size 12, may fit a would-be buyer's body very differently. Some retailers' plus-size range runs from 12 to 18, while brands solely focused on plus-size wear go up to size 42, experts said.

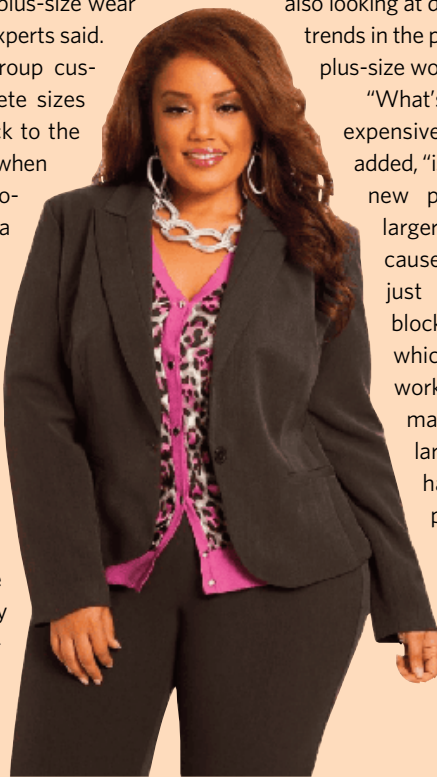
The need to group customers into discrete sizes can be traced back to the late 19th century, when the Industrial Revolution ushered in a new era of mass-produced, ready-to-wear clothing, said Emma McClendon, assistant professor of fashion studies at St John's University in New York. Built for scale, these processes largely replaced traditional artisan tailoring, while

incentivising clothes-makers to cater to the most common body shapes and proportions.

Producing plus-size clothing can also cost a little more, but the extra expense isn't as much about additional materials as it is research and development, Downing Peters said.

"That means looking at who (the) consumer is," she explained, "and also looking at demographic trends in the proportion of plus-size women."

"What's even more expensive," she added, "is devising all new patterns for larger sizes, because you can't just take the blocks upon which you're working and make them larger, you have to completely reconceive the proportions."



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