

PACTS BOLSTER TIES

H M the Sultan, King Hamad of Bahrain hold an official session of talks and also witness the signing of ten MoUs and seven executive programmes and agreements in several sectors

Manama, Bahrain - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik was accorded a warm welcome by King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of Bahrain on his arrival in Manama on Monday.

The two leaders later held an official session of talks and also witnessed the signing of ten memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and seven executive programmes and agreements at Sakhir Palace in Manama.

Upon arrival of His Majesty the Sultan at Sakhir Airbase, King Hamad met him at the foot of the ramp, leading the welcoming party that received His Majesty the Sultan.

His Majesty the Sultan was also received by Prince Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Gen Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Minister of Interior and Head of the Mission of Honour, Sheikh Mohammed bin Issa bin Salman al Khalifa, Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa, Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa and Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa.

Then, the two leaders headed to the Hall of Protocols, passing between two rows of a guard of honour from Bahrain Royal Guard. His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with senior members of the welcoming party.

His Majesty the Sultan also shook hands with members of the Omani Embassy in Bahrain, with whom he exchanged cordial conversation, while King Hamad welcomed and shook hands with the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan.

After a short rest at the Hall of Protocols, His Majesty the Sultan, accompanied by the King of Bahrain, joined the motorcade which escorted them to Al Sakhir Palace.

At Al Sakhir Palace, an official reception was accorded to His Majesty the Sultan. Folk bands that lined the two sides of the entrance to the palace's gate chanted praise and popular expressions of welcome.

When the motorcade of the two leaders entered the gate of Al Sakhir Palace, it was accompanied by a squad of cavalry in a warm welcome for His Majesty the Sultan. Then, the Royal motorcade was flanked by a troop of motorbikes and later a group of students greeted His Majesty the Sultan.

This was followed by the King of Bahrain accompanying His Majesty the Sultan to the dais of honour at Al Sakhir Palace. There, the Royal Anthem of Oman and the Bahraini Royal Anthem were played to the accompaniment of a 21-gun salute - fired by the artillery - for His Majesty the Sultan.

His Majesty the Sultan and the King of Bahrain later headed to the majlis.

ONA



His Majesty the Sultan, King of Bahrain discuss cooperation



Manama - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, held an official session of talks at Al Sakhir Palace in Manama on Monday evening.

At the outset, the King of Bahrain emphasised his heartfelt welcome for His Majesty the Sultan as a dear guest of Bahrain and its people. He wished His Majesty the Sultan and his official delegation a happy stay. His Majesty the Sultan thanked the King and people of Bahrain for the warm welcome and sincere hospitality.

The two leaders reviewed the distinguished relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain and appreciated the deep-rooted historical bonds. They also explored various aspects of existing bilateral cooperation in several fields and ways to enhance these.



His Majesty the Sultan conferred on King Hamad the Oman Order - First Class, while the Bahraini King presented His Majesty the Sultan the Medal of Sheikh Isa bin Salman al Khalifa - Excellent Class, in appreciation of his efforts to bolster Omani-Bahraini relations

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Inventor honoured for creating road safety device

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Oman's oil output rises 10.4% to over 1mn bpd this year

UK's first PM of colour vows to bring 'stability and unity'

London, United Kingdom - Former finance minister Rishi Sunak on Monday won the battle for leader of Britain's Conservative party and will become the country's first prime minister of colour.

Penny Mordaunt, the last rival left after Boris Johnson dramatically pulled out, failed to secure the necessary 100 nominations from her fellow MPs.

"Rishi Sunak is therefore elected as leader of the Conservative party," senior backbencher Graham Brady said, as Mordaunt pledged her "full support" for Sunak. His triumph came after Johnson's decision late on Sunday to abandon his political comeback bid.

Sunak vowed on Monday to bring "stability and unity" at a

time of economic crisis.

Just weeks after he lost out to Liz Truss to lead the ruling Tories, Sunak therefore pulled off a stunning reversal in fortunes.

The contest, triggered by outgoing leader Truss's resignation on Thursday, had required candidates to secure the support of at least 100 Conservative MPs by 2pm (1300 GMT) on Monday.

Only Sunak made the threshold, Brady announced.

Sunak, a wealthy Hindu descendant of immigrants from India and East Africa, had crossed that threshold by Friday night, and amassed nearly 200 public nominations - more than half the parliamentary Tory party.

Johnson's withdrawal from the race - before he had even for-



Rishi Sunak leaves from an office in central London on Sunday (AFP)

mally announced his candidacy - left cabinet member Mordaunt the only other declared contender. However she failed to garner the necessary support, putting an

abrupt end to the contest.

If she had, the race would have been decided by the party's roughly 170,000 members in an online vote, with the result not

announced until the end of the week.

Sunak's victory came on the day Hindus worldwide mark the start of the five-day festival of Diwali - a celebration of the victory of good over evil.

When he was chancellor of the exchequer, in November 2020, Sunak marked the occasion by lighting oil lamps on the front step of the chancellor's official residence at 11 Downing Street.

Reactions

India's Hindu nationalist prime minister, Narendra Modi, congratulated his co-religionist on Twitter, while extending Diwali wishes to the "living bridge" of UK Indians as a whole.

The success of the UK-born Sunak rippled across the Atlantic too. Ro Khanna, a Democratic member of Congress representing a slice of Silicon Valley in California, said his own grandfather spent years fighting British rule in India.

"It is remarkable to see @RishiSunak, an Indian British of Hindu faith become PM on Diwali. Regardless of politics, this is a symbolic step in moving beyond a coloniser's world," he tweeted.

But for many UK South Asians, as with the country at large, the arrival of Britain's first prime minister of colour provoked as much debate about his economic credo as about the colour of his skin.

AFP

Manama - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, graced the signing of ten memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and seven executive programmes and agreements at Al Sakhir Palace on Monday. Present at the signing ceremony were officials from both sides.

The agreements covered the fields of security, shipping, ports, studies and research, the establishment of an Oman-Bahrain Investment Holding Company, granting Oman the sovereignty over its subscriber data in the existing cloud computing centres in Bahrain, in addition to granting Oman the status of authorised partner accredited to the Global Freight Services (GAC).

The MoUs and executive programmes covered the areas of information technology, municipal work, higher education, scholarly research, innovation, competition protection, prevention of monopoly, space science and technology, air navigation, social development, cultural and museum management, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) development, entrepreneurship, historical documentation, document management and archives.

An executive programme between the foreign ministries of the two countries was also signed for exchanges in the fields of agriculture, livestock and fisheries, science and education, environment protection, youth, culture, heritage, tourism cooperation, and remote dealings of brokerage companies through electronic trading system.

The agreement on cooperation in the field of security was signed by Oman's Interior Minister Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi and his Bahraini counterpart Lt Gen Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa.

The two sides signed an agreement to establish Oman-Bahrain Investment Holding

Oman, Bahrain sign host of MoUs, agreements



Company. It was inked by Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), and Sameer bin Abdullah Nass, chairman of Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The two sides also signed a cooperation agreement between Sultan Qaboos University (the Centre for Omani Studies) and Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies.

An MoU covering cooperation in the field of information technology was signed by Oman's Ministry of Transport, Communications and Informa-

tion Technology and Bahrain's Information and e-Government Authority.

In the field of municipality functioning, an MoU was signed between the Government of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Interior, and the Government of Kingdom of Bahrain, represented by the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture.

An MoU was also signed between Oman's Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation and Bahrain's Higher Education Council in the field of higher education, scientific research and

innovation.

Oman's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Bahrain's Ministry of Industry and Commerce signed an MoU in the field of competition protection and prevention of monopoly.

In the field of space sciences and technologies, an MoU was signed between the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology of Oman, represented by the National Centre for Space, Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technologies, and the National Space Science Authority of Bahrain.

An MoU was also signed between Oman represented by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Bahrain represented by the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

The social development ministries of the two countries signed an MoU for exchanges in the areas of social development.

In the field of cultural and museum work, an MoU was signed between the National Museum of Oman and the Bahrain National Museum.

An MoU was signed between the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Develop-

ment (ASMED) and the Labour Fund (Tamkeen) of Bahrain in the field of small and medium enterprise development and entrepreneurship.

The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of Oman and the Isa Cultural Center of Bahrain signed an MoU in the field of historical documentation and management of documents and archives.

An executive programme was signed between the Foreign Ministry of Oman and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain for the years 2023 and 2024.

On cooperation in the agricul-

tural, livestock and fisheries fields, Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Bahrain, represented by the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, signed an executive programme for the years 2023 and 2024.

An executive programme was also signed to activate the MoU between the Ministry of Education of Oman and the Ministry of Education of Bahrain in the scientific and educational fields for the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

An executive programme was also signed for the MoU linked between the Environment Authority of Oman and the Ministry of Oil and Environment of Bahrain for cooperation in the field of environmental protection for the period 2023-2024.

In the youth fields, an executive programme of cooperation was signed between Oman represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY) and Bahrain represented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs for the years 2022 to 2025.

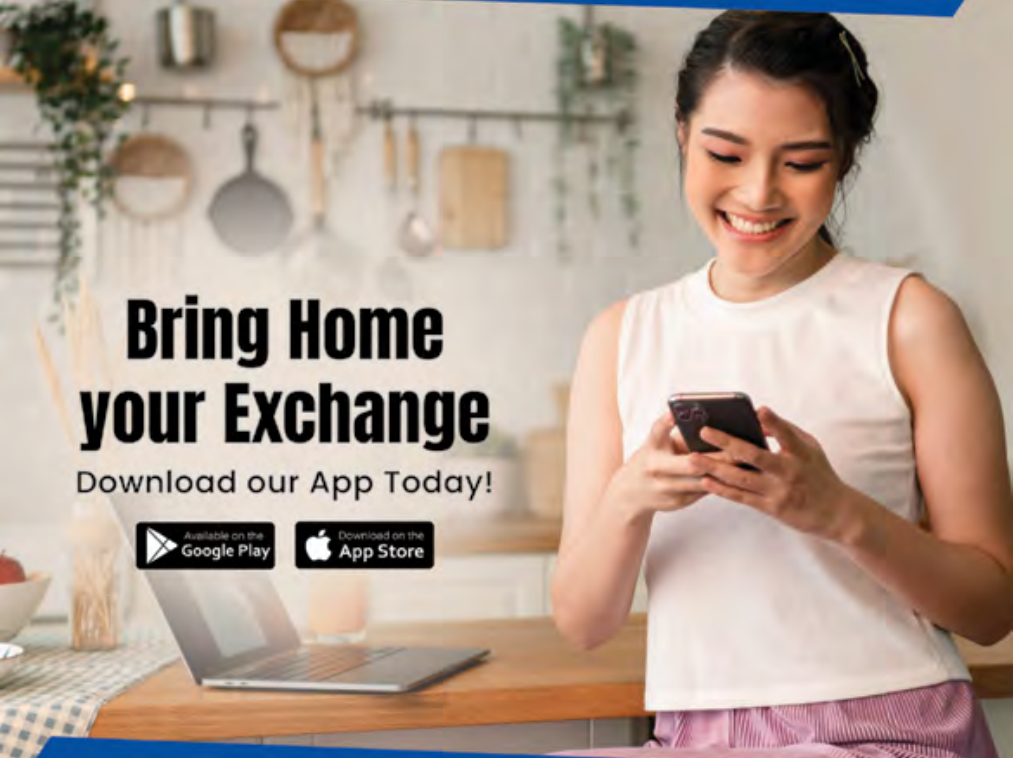
MCSY of Oman and the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities also signed an executive programme in the field of culture and heritage for the years 2023 to 2026.

On tourism cooperation, an executive programme was signed between the two governments represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of Oman and by the Ministry of Tourism of Bahrain for the years 2022 to 2026.

An agreement was also signed on remote trading of brokerage companies through the electronic trading system (TABADUL HUB) between Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), Muscat Clearing and Depository Company and Bahrain Bourse and Bahrain Clearing Company. ONA

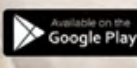


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Lab for investment in sports begins

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in cooperation with the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and the National Programme for Investment and Exports Development (Nazdahir), started an investment lab for the sports sector on Monday.

The laboratory focuses on three pillars - investment projects, sporting events and sports tourism, while opening the forum for a general discussion on formulating laws and legislations covering all areas of sports - starting from investments in projects for developing sporting talents in the country to those projects that can boost sports tourism in the sultanate.

Oman has become a chosen destination for global sports enthusiasts for being the venue for various international events that in turn gave its tourism sector a shot in the arm. Tour of Oman, Red Bull Cliff Diving, international drift championships and international sailing events by

Oman Sail, have put Oman in the global map of sporting activities.

The four-week lab will see participation of representatives from various sports federations and clubs; academics and experts in the sector with an aim to simplify procedures that may facilitate smooth investments in the sector.

The intention is to come up with projects, initiatives and investment opportunities in the sports sector to enhance its role in supporting the national economy as envisaged in Oman Vision 2040.

H E Basil Ahmed al Rawas, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said that investments in sports sector give one access to a

promising market with great economic returns. "Oman has many investment opportunities, and it is hoped that this lab will come up with real investment projects and opportunities that can be implemented with high economic feasibility, in partnership with various the relevant authorities, whether governmental or private, to activate the role of this sector," he added.

The focus area for the participants would be to deliberate on the ways to make sports an attractive sector for investment in Oman. The participants will also discuss the ways and means for increasing the investment volume in the sector so as to make it sustainable and compatible with future plans and directions.

Exhibition to boost maritime economy starts

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources inaugurated Oman Maritime Exhibition at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday as part of its efforts to market the Omani maritime sector internationally.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in the presence of a number of representatives from the sectors of marine logistics, port management, fish farming and marine marketing.

The three-day exhibition aims to market Oman as an attractive investment destination in the maritime field, develop marine projects, and exchange experiences between specialists and professionals. It also aims to promote the blue economy and highlight its relative importance in the national economy.



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Inventor honoured with doctorate for road safety device

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani inventor Ali Salim Ali Al Busaidi has been awarded an honorary doctorate by the Kingdom of Morocco Union of Inventors for inventing an emergency device to speed up response time during traffic accidents called Musif.

Busaidi was also recently awarded the World Cup 2022 for Invention and Scientific Research, which was held in Tunisia in September as part of the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8).

In 2021, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) granted a patent for his device.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Busaidi said, "This certificate is motivation for me to exert more efforts to make innovative products and help advancement in scientific research in Oman and the Arab world."

He added that Musif aims to reduce the number of victims of traffic accidents, and speed up response time through rapid communication with emergency teams in the sultanate.

"It will also allow automated and accurate reception of accident information, reducing human error in determining accident locations, and enhancing coordination with emergency services required to assist in such events."

Musif works by sending a text message automatically from a vehicle to emergency services, in case of an accident, as well as to a close relative to keep them informed. "The message also contains a location link, allowing



Musif aims to reduce the number of victims of traffic accidents and speed up response time of emergency teams

ALI SALIM ALI
AL BUSAIDI

emergency services to quickly reach the site of the accident," said Busaidi.

Busaidi faced many challenges in creating the device, but he persevered to work hard and was finally able to create a working model.

"A number of tests have been conducted for Musif in collaboration with international companies in Canada that specialise in manufacturing car safety systems, so that the device can be converted into a commercial product sold locally and overseas."

About the way forward, he informed that he has established a

small company to manufacture the device. "A few oil and gas companies in Oman used my device on their cars to support me. I will start actual production of the device in the middle of 2023."

Advising Omani inventors, he said, "Develop your own innovative ideas, and register your concepts with the intellectual property department in MoCIIP to protect these from infringement."



tential to support the national economy.

The deadline for submission of tenders is December 7.

Al Bait al Gharbi is a tourist and cultural destination. It

houses numerous antique collections, including rare books, coins, traditional cooking utensils, handicrafts, women's cosmetic items, incense burners, silverware, pottery, mandos boxes, and equipment used for processing dairy products.

Sadah Castle dates back to the era of Sultan Taimour bin Faisal al Busaidi. The ground floor of the castle has three rooms, including a kitchen that contains antique pottery and imported porcelain.

The castle is considered an archaeological landmark for its traditional Omani style and unique architecture. The castle stood as fortification to protect the coast of Dhofar.

World Polio Day: Vaccination is key

Our Correspondent
Muscat

On the occasion of World Polio Day observed on October 24 every year, the Ministry of Health (MoH) highlighted the importance of vaccination to prevent polio.

"There is no cure for polio, but it can be prevented with vaccination," MoH stated.

MoH informed that polio is a highly contagious viral disease that invades the nervous system and attacks parts of the brain, causing neurological injury that leads to paralysis, difficulty breathing and sometimes death.

The symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, sore throat, vomiting, stiffness or pain in the back, neck, arms or legs, MoH tweeted in its official handle.

World Polio Day highlights the global efforts to end polio worldwide. Polio is a life-threat-



World Polio Day raises awareness on the importance of polio vaccination to protect every child from this devastating disease

ening disease caused by the poliovirus, which the World Health Assembly committed to eradicate in 1988.

World Polio Day raises awareness on the importance of polio vaccination to protect every child from this devastating disease, and to celebrate the many parents, professionals and volunteers whose contributions

make polio eradication achievable.

To ensure a polio-free future for everyone, efforts must continue to maintain high immunisation coverage, implement high-quality surveillance to detect any presence of the virus, and prepare to respond in the event of an outbreak.

Recently, UNICEF announced that global leaders confirmed US\$2.6bn in funding towards the Global Polio Eradication Initiative's 2022-2026 strategy to end polio at an event co-hosted by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development at the World Health Summit in Berlin.

The funding will support global efforts to overcome the final hurdles to polio eradication, vaccinate 370mn children annually over the next five years and continue disease surveillance across 50 countries.

إعلان مناقصة

TENDERERS ANNOUNCEMENT

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers to the following tenders

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة للموردين للمشاركة في المناقصات أدناه

No رقم	Tender Ref الرقم المرجعي	Tender Title عنوان المناقصة	Tender Fee OMR الرسوم
1	SIPC 2022-91	Consultancy Services for Development of Standard Operation Procedure (SOP)	26.250

- The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%.
- Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Monday, 24/10/2022 until 4:00 pm on Thursday 03/11/2022.
- Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

Account Name الاسم الحساب	Sohar Industrial Port Co شركة ميناء صحر الصناعي
Account Number رقم الحساب	3101-007970-500
Bank Name اسم البنك	Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br البنك العربي ش.م.ع.م - الفرع الرئيسي
SWIT رمز السويت كود	OMABOMRXXX

Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted
ملاحظة: التحويل البنكي هي الطريقة الوحيدة المقبولة للدفع

- تسليم رسوم المناقصة المذكورة أعلاه ضريبة القيمة المضافة ومقدراها 5%
- يمكن للمقدمي العطاءات طلب استلام وثائق المناقصة إلكترونياً ابتداءً من يوم الاثنين الموافق 24/10/2022 الساعة 9:00 صباحاً وحتى يوم الخميس الموافق 03/11/2022 الساعة 4:00 مساءً
- على مقدمي العطاءات اتباع الإجراءات والخطوات التالية للحصول على مستندات المناقصة إلكترونياً

الخطوة الأولى: يجب على مقدمي العطاءات سداد رسوم المناقصة وفقاً للتفاصيل البنكية أدناه

Account Name الاسم الحساب	Sohar Industrial Port Co شركة ميناء صحر الصناعي
Account Number رقم الحساب	3101-007970-500
Bank Name اسم البنك	Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br البنك العربي ش.م.ع.م - الفرع الرئيسي
SWIT رمز السويت كود	OMABOMRXXX

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Step 2:
Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents Scanned bank transfer
- Minimum 35% is required as a knock-out criteria to qualify the tenderer for the Commercial/Combined evaluation.
- The firm's commercial registration documents All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:
sipc.procurement@soharpportandfreezone.om

Step 3:
Tenderers will receive the electronic Tender Document by e-mail.

- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons
- All SMES are requested to provide their Green Card along with the required documents

For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to:
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الخطوة الثانية:
يلتزم على مقدمي العطاءات تقديم المستندات التالية:

- طلب الحصول على النسخة الإلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة
- على المتنافس الحصول على 35% من نسب التقييم الفعلي ليتأهل للتقديم المالي
- نسخة من إيصال التسجيل للبنك
- أوراق السجل التجاري للشركة على أن يتم إرسالها إلينا

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- يلتزم على جميع المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة تقديم بطاقة ريادة إلى جانب مستندات الشركة
- في حال وجود أي استفسار أو استفسارات تتعلق بالمناقصة الرجاء التواصل معنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني sipc.procurement@soharpportandfreezone.om

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SENSEX59,307.15

FOREX RATES

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Philippines152.98

Sri Lanka953.33

*Rates as on October 24

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Saudi eyes \$10.6bn investments in supply chains

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has launched an initiative to attract investments worth SAR40bn (US\$10.6bn) in supply chains.

Mohammed bin Salman said the Global Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (GSCRI) will support the growth of key sectors and aim to attract SAR40bn in investments in its first two years, the state news agency SPA reported, according to an Anadolu Agency report.

The initiative includes the allocation of SAR10bn in financial and non-financial incentives to investors, the crown prince said.

According to SPA, the GSCRI aims to make Saudi Arabia an optimal environment for all investors in supply chains, through several steps. These include identifying and developing investment opportunities, establishing special economic zones and attracting regional headquarters of international companies to the kingdom.

Oman's oil output rises 10.4% to over 1mn bpd this year

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Oman's daily average production of oil increased to 1.06mn barrels per day (bpd) during the first nine months of 2022, up by 10.4 per cent in comparison to 961,300 bpd output recorded in the same period of last year.

The sultanate's total oil production in the first nine months of this year grew by 10.4 per cent to 289.78mn barrels compared to 262.43mn barrels in the same period of 2021, according to the official data released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Of the total production, crude output jumped by 14.1 per cent year-on-year to 231.1mn barrels during the first nine months of 2022 from 202.5mn barrels recorded in the same period a year ago. Condensates output, however, decreased by 2.0 per cent to 58.7mn barrels during January - September period this year.

Earlier in June, the Minister of Energy and Minerals had said that the new discoveries of oil reserves by companies operating in Oman will help the sultanate increase its daily oil output between 50,000 - 100,000 bpd over the next two to three years.

Oman's daily average oil production has consistently remained above one million barrels per day during the first



Average price at which Oman sold its oil during the first nine months of 2022 was 58% higher at \$96.2 per barrel against \$60.9 per barrel recorded in the same period of 2021

surged by 172 per cent this year to 9.21mn barrels against 3.38mn barrels in the same period a year ago.

On the other hand, oil exports to India jumped by over 34 per cent at 29.9mn barrels during January - September period of 2022 from 22.25mn barrels in the same period of 2021.

The average price at which Oman sold its crude during the first nine months of 2022 was 58 per cent higher at US\$96.2 per barrel against US\$60.9 per barrel recorded in the same period of 2021.

The average price of Oman crude fell to US\$103.2 per barrel in September from US\$112.9 in the previous month, the NCSI data showed.

Global oil prices in recent weeks have declined to around US\$90 a barrel level. In response to the volatility in prices, OPEC+ on October 5 agreed to reduce group's production by two million barrels a day from November.

Oman is a member of the OPEC+ group which includes 13 OPEC members and ten non-OPEC oil producing countries.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals recently said that the decisions of OPEC+ group are based on purely economic considerations.

It said the group's decision to cut oil production was necessary to reassure the market and support oil market stability.

to 288.96mn barrels from 287mn barrels in 2020.

Oil exports to China, the biggest buyer of Oman's crude, accounted for over 79 per cent of the sultanate's total oil exports during January - September period this year.

Total exports to China grew by 9.9 per cent at 192.14mn barrels during the first nine months of this year compared with 174.85mn barrels recorded in 2021. Shipments to Japan

242.84mn barrels as compared with 211.96mn barrels recorded in the corresponding period of 2021, the NCSI data showed.

Total exports for the full year 2021 had inched up 0.7 per cent



GCC, South Korea to hold new round of FTA talks

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will begin the sixth round of official talks for a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) in Seoul on Monday for a five-day run, according to South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy.

Various issues will be on the table during the meeting, including goods and services trading, country of origin, digital trade and intellectual property rights, the ministry said.

South Korea and the GCC resumed FTA negotiations earlier this year following a 13-year hiatus, with two related sessions held in March and June, respectively.

The two sides agreed to push for a trade deal in 2007 and had three rounds of talks between 2008 and 2009. But their negotiations had stalled as the GCC announced a suspension in 2010.

Trade volume between the GCC countries and South Korea reached at US\$46.6bn in 2020, according to government data.

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MUSCAT DAILY

New PM inherits UK economy in crisis

London, UK - Britain's new prime minister, set to be former finance minister Rishi Sunak, inherits a UK economy that was headed for recession even before the recent turmoil triggered by Liz Truss. Outgoing Prime Minister Truss resigned after her budget of tax cuts funded by debt sent shockwaves through markets, crashing the pound.

That caused the government to U-turn on most of its budget, including scaling back a cap on soaring energy bills that have contributed heavily to a cost-of-living crisis for tens of millions of Britons. Data Monday showed Britain's economic downturn has worsened in October, with private-sector output at a 21-month low.

"October's flash PMI data showed the pace of economic decline gathering momentum after the recent political and financial market upheavals," noted Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence that helped compile the figures.

"The heightened political and economic uncertainty has caused business activity to fall at a rate not seen since the global financial crisis in 2009 if pandemic lockdown months are excluded."

Williamson added that upcoming data would likely show Britain already in recession.

The S&P Global/CIPS flash

Britain's former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Conservative MP, Rishi Sunak leaves from an office in central London on Sunday (AFP)

UK composite purchasing managers index stood at 47.2 in October, below September's level of

49.1. A figure under 50 indicates a contraction. The UK is not alone, however, with separate

Data on Monday showed Britain's economic downturn has worsened in October, with private-sector output at a 21-month low

'Sunak stability'

Truss resigned last Thursday after just 44 days as prime min-

ister. She had succeeded Boris Johnson on September 6 after a weeks-long campaign against Tory rival Sunak.

The former chancellor of the exchequer had warned in the battle to succeed Johnson that tax cuts promised by Truss when government debt had already soared on Covid interventions was the wrong policy to pursue.

He was proved right as the budget sent the pound crashing to a record-low close to parity with the dollar and triggered yields on government bonds to soar. With Sunak seen as bringing stability to markets, sterling rose and yields fell Monday.

"Investors clearly hope Sunak will stabilise the economy and the political situation - though it's hard to work out at this point which is the harder task," said AJ Bell financial analyst Danni Hewson. "As well as the recovery in sterling and the reduced cost of government borrowing (as yields drop), Sunak will be pleased to see European gas prices" falling.

However, with UK inflation at a 40-year high above 10 per cent, the Bank of England is set to unveil another bumper interest-rate hike at a regular policy meeting next week.

This will heap further pressure on borrowers, including home owners who have seen mortgage rates surge in the wake of the government's costly budget.

AFP

British pound up awaiting new Prime Minister

London, UK - European stocks and British pound climbed Monday as markets awaited confirmation that former finance minister Rishi Sunak would become Britain's new prime minister.

European equities climbed despite data showing Britain and Germany headed for recession and a plunging Hong Kong stock market as Chinese President Xi Jinping handed key economic posts to loyalists behind his zero-Covid strategy.

All eyes were on Britain, set for its third prime minister in less than two months following the resignations of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss.

Yields on UK government bonds also dropped following recent surges in the wake of Truss's disastrous budget that led to her downfall.

AFP

China economy grows, but Xi's new power spooks investors

Beijing, China – China's economy grew at a faster pace than forecast in the third quarter, official data showed Monday, but investors reacted with alarm to President Xi Jinping's sweeping new powers over the ruling Communist Party.

Xi as expected secured a third term as leader at a party Congress over the weekend, but surprised observers with his complete stacking of other leadership positions with proteges and allies.

After delaying the release of economic data last week so it would not conflict with the Congress, the government announced Monday the economy grew 3.9 per cent year-on-year in the third quarter of 2022.

China had been expected to announce some of its weakest quarterly growth figures since 2020, with the world's second-biggest economy hobbled by Covid restrictions and a real estate crisis.

But investors instead focused on the political developments, which raised fears Xi and his allies would continue with grueling Covid lockdowns and other policies that have punished the economy.

The currency of the world's second-largest economy slumped and the country's stocks nosedived in Hong Kong to their lowest level since the global financial crisis.

On Monday the onshore yuan dipped as much as 0.4 per cent to 7.2552 per dollar – its weakest



China's President Xi Jinping waves after introducing the members of the Chinese Communist Party's new Politburo Standing Committee in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sunday (AFP)

since January 2008 – and the Hang Seng China Enterprises Index, a gauge of Chinese stocks listed in Hong Kong, plunged more than 5 per cent.

That put it on track for the worst showing after any Communist Party Congress since the start of the index in 1994.

"The market is concerned that with so many Xi supporters elected, Xi's unfettered ability to enact policies that are not market friendly is now cemented," said Justin Tang, head of Asian research at United First Partners.

One of the most pressing concerns is Xi's zero-Covid policy, which continues to see tens of millions of people endure rolling

lockdowns that also shutter factories.

China is the last of the world's major economies to continue following the strategy.

"There is no clear sign of a significant easing of the zero-Covid strategy," Nomura's Ting Lu said, noting that, if anything, the opposite had happened.

In a speech to close the Congress on Saturday, Xi insisted his zero-Covid policy had been a success.

And he promoted Li Qiang, the architect of a two-month lockdown in Shanghai that crippled the financial hub's economy, to the second most powerful post in the Communist Party.

Tech firms were among the worst hit in Monday's sell-off, having been hammered in recent years by Xi's crackdown on the sector that has scythed firms' profits and wiped billions off their valuations.

E-commerce giants Alibaba and JD.com tanked more than 10 per cent each, while Tencent lost more than eight percent.

China is also battling an unprecedented crisis in its real estate sector – which makes up more than a quarter of the country's GDP when combined with construction.

Following years of explosive growth fuelled by easy access to loans, Xi oversaw a crackdown

on excessive debt that began in 2020.

Property sales are now falling across the country, leaving many developers struggling and some owners refusing to pay their mortgages for unfinished homes.

Still, the economic data released on Monday gave some cause for optimism.

The third-quarter growth was higher than the 2.5 per cent predicted by a panel of experts surveyed by AFP.

"Many economic indicators have actually recovered reasonably well from the mass lockdowns of March and April," according to analyst Thomas Gatley of Gavekal Dragonomics.

Car sales held strong in September, driven by strong demand for electric clean vehicles.

August exports increased 7.1 per cent compared with the previous year, and Beijing has invested in infrastructure to support activity.

In the second quarter of the year, growth had collapsed to 0.4 per cent on-year, the worst performance since 2020.

The country posted 4.8 per cent growth in the first quarter of 2022.

Many economists continue to think China will struggle to attain its 2022 growth target of around 5.5 per cent, and the International Monetary Fund has lowered its GDP growth forecast to 3.2 per cent for 2022 and 4.4 per cent for next year.

AFP

US budget deficit decreases by half to \$1.4tn in 2022

Washington, US – The US budget deficit fell by half in the past year to US\$1.4tn on the back of a pandemic recovery and as relief spending eased, the government said.

COVID-related spending on things like unemployment insurance and other programs have declined following a recovery in the world's biggest economy from the virus outbreak, with businesses returning to normal.

The drop in the budget deficit marks the "largest one-year decrease," said the Treasury Department and White House budget office on Friday.

This was helped by higher individual and corporation tax collections, bolstered by employment growth, with tax revenues for the fiscal year ended September 30 surging a record US\$850bn from 2021.

President Joe Biden hailed the big drop as evidence of a resurgent economy just three weeks ahead of November's crucial midterm elections to decide control of Congress. Hailing the "largest ever decline in the federal deficit," Biden called the development "further proof that we're rebuilding the economy."

The development, he said, was part of "the good news on the economy" that he predicted would help Democrats climb back in the polls, which currently show Republicans poised for victory.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, in a statement citing the American Rescue Plan stimulus package, said "today's joint



US President Joe Biden

budget statement provides further evidence of our historic economic recovery."

In a statement, officials also added that the US has "more than recovered all of the jobs lost during the pandemic".

The economy added more than 10mn jobs since early 2021, while unemployment returned to its pre-pandemic level.

The figures for the latest fiscal year showed government outlays dipped US\$550bn to US\$6.3tn, in part reflecting reductions in Covid-19 related spending. But spending for categories such as student loans increased, the report added.

This was the first fall in outlays since 2013, Treasury officials told reporters.

The overall drop in the deficit came after Biden announced plans to forgive part of the country's massive student debt burden, a topic of controversy between Democrats and Republicans.

AFP

Eurozone downturn deepens as Germany heads for recession

Brussels, Belgium – Germany, the EU's top economy and Europe's export powerhouse, looks headed for imminent recession, according to a closely watched survey Monday that pointed to a deepening eurozone contraction.

There are "growing signs of an impending recession in the eurozone's largest economy," S&P Global Market Intelligence said as it released its eurozone purchasing managers' index for October.

The PMI for the 19-nation area fell to 47.1, down from 48.1 a month earlier – its fourth consecutive drop and that fastest decline in nearly two years – as soaring inflation and high energy prices bit deeper.

In Germany, the PMI dropped to 44.1, from 45.7 in September. A reading below 50 signals an economic contraction.

The downward pressure on eurozone economic activity underlined the woes thrown up by Russia's war in Ukraine, which has crimped energy supplies.

Germany's reading was the lowest since initial business shutdowns in Germany when the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

Both manufacturing and services in Germany were showing accelerated rates of shrinkage, though that had yet to feed through into jobs-shedding, the survey showed.

German businesses were "deeply pessimistic" about the year-ahead outlook.

In France, the second-biggest economy in the EU, the economy was stagnating, with a PMI of 50 compared with 51.2 in September. Although France is suffering less than other countries in Europe from inflation, rising prices are still putting pressure on consumers, leading to a severe fall in factory orders.

Across the eurozone, the PMI



European Central Bank headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany

indicated that factory output had dropped for the fifth consecutive month, at a rate unseen since the worst of the pandemic.

Supply congestion and shortages had eased a bit, against a backdrop of flagging demand. While input demand had slumped, rising energy bills and wage pressure kept costs high.

A eurozone-wide recession "is looking increasingly inevitable," S&P Global Market Intelligence chief business economist Chris Williamson said.

"The region's energy crisis remains a major concern and a drag on activity, especially in energy intensive sectors."

ECB rate decision

The European Central Bank (ECB) is expected to set aside recession worries and deliver another jumbo interest rate hike this week to cool inflation, as Russia's war on Ukraine sends energy prices soaring.

Inflation in the 19-nation eurozone stood at nearly 10 per cent in September, five times the ECB's target of two per cent.

The German economy, whose energy-hungry industries relied heavily on Russian gas before the war, is now forecast to shrink by 0.4 per cent in 2023.

Higher interest rates typically

mean putting a dampener on business activity, as credit becomes more expensive and consumer spending decreases.

The EU is struggling to find ways to mitigate energy prices.

A summit last week agreed on a number of measures, but a key one, of capping wholesale gas prices, was kicked into future deliberations by Germany, which fears gas supplies being diverted to more lucrative markets in Asia. Berlin has unholstered a massive 200bn-euro (US\$197bn) plan to shield German consumers from high energy prices, triggering unease among EU partners at its go-it-alone approach that risks distorting the single market.

At the summit German Chancellor Olaf Scholz reluctantly agreed to have the bloc look further at the price cap measure but only after an impact analysis.

The International Monetary Fund on Sunday said that downturns in parts of Europe could turn into "deeper recessions" across the continent.

Government support to tackle energy costs and inflation would "only partly" offset those strains, it said.

The IMF already predicted that Germany and Italy would slip into recession next year.

AFP



Muscat Finance (S.A.O.G)

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Un-Audited Financials for the Period Ended September 2022

DIRECTORS' REPORT
Dear Shareholders,
On behalf of the Board of Directors of Muscat Finance (SAOG), I am pleased to present the report for the quarter ended September 2022.

Economic Environment
The state's general budget posted a surplus of about RO 1,090 billion by the end of August 2022 compared to a deficit of RO 1,052 billion during the same period in 2021. The Economy is recovering and showing positive sign.

Business Results
Your Company has recorded a net profit of RO 1,007K for the period ended September 2022 against RO 1,056K net profit for the corresponding period in the previous year. The Net Operating profit for the period as decreased by 15% over corresponding period to RO 2.2mn. Your company generated RO 6.56mn as net cash flow from operating activities, most of which was utilized to reduce the Borrowings from RO 62mn as of Dec 2021 to RO 56mn for the period ended September 2022.

The financial results are summarized below:

PARTICULARS	Amount in RO '000		
	YTD 30 th Sept 2022	YTD 30 th Sept 2021	% Change
Net Investment in Finance Debtors	99,494	107,782	(8%)
Income	4,862	5,232	(7%)
Operating Expenses	2,677	2,661	-
Operating Profit	2,185	2,571	(15%)
Provisions	1,178	1,515	(22%)
Net Profit/(Loss) after tax	1,007	1,056	(5%)

The company continued to focus to increase its retail business and selective approach on Corporate business. The continuous focus on recovery and controlling the NPA. The year 2022 witnessed improved signs of recovery, however, company chose to direct its effort and resources in assisting our existing clients for restructuring and realignment of their businesses back to it norms. Net loans and

advances stand at RO 99mn. Accelerated remedial and legal recourse on non-performing loans has resulted in stemming the flow of new provisions.

Human Capital
Your Company fully recognise that having a competent, highly motivated, and performance-led workforce is key to ensuring the success of our business. Our people play a vital role in ensuring sustainability of our business by delivering on our transformation strategy and goals. We recognise that Human Resources play a pivotal role in enabling smooth implementation of key strategic decisions through Employee development, Employee engagement, Compensation & benefits and Employee wellness. The company continues to invest in building local talent with Omanisation ratio standing at 87% for the period ended September 30, 2022. This is well above the current regulatory requirement.

Corporate Social Responsibility
The company acknowledges its responsibility towards contributing to the community, stemming from its strong belief that the society at large is the reason for the success of Muscat Finance. The company has contributed for buying an equipment which will be useful for patient in emergency for a hospital and for a hospital also contributed to Oman Chamber of Commerce for promoting "Made In Oman" initiative during the Holy month of Ramadhan.

Future outlook
The outlook reflects improvements in the sultanate's debt burden and debt affordability in 2022. Moody's Investors Service has changed Oman's outlook to positive and affirmed its Ba3 rating as higher oil prices signal a further improvement in the sultanate's economy.

Acknowledgement
On behalf of the Board and the company, I would like to express our sincere gratitude and best

wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq to lead the Sultanate of Oman with his wisdom and vision, towards a path of prosperity. I would like to thank His Majesty's Government, the Central Bank of Oman, the Capital Market Authority and other Authorities for their continued support and guidance. We are also grateful to all our

customers for their continued patronage and support, to our local and overseas bankers for their active co-operation, and to all the shareholders for the confidence reposed in its Board.

On Behalf of the Board of Directors
Faisal Mohamed Al Yousef
Chairman

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2022		
	Sep 22 RO ' 000	Sep 21 RO ' 000
Assets		
Debtors arising from financing activities	99,494	107,782
Cash & Bank balances	980	1,031
Other assets	1,093	1,225
	101,567	110,038
Liabilities		
Bank borrowings, Bonds & Corp. Deposit	55,834	65,211
Creditors & other liabilities	7,013	7,202
	62,847	72,413
Net Assets	38,720	37,625
Shareholders' funds		
Share capital	30,715	30,715
Legal reserve	7,077	6,960
Impairment reserve	3,955	3,955
Cumulative changes in fair value	-	29
Retained Earnings	(3,027)	(4,034)
	38,720	37,625

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the Period ended 30 SEPTEMBER 2022		
	RO ' 000	RO ' 000
Lease and Interest income	6,874	7,618
Interest expense	(2,491)	(3,028)
Net interest income	4,383	4,590
Other Income	479	642
Operating Expenses	(2,677)	(2,661)
Provision for Impairment	(1,178)	(1,515)
Profit / (Loss) before taxation	1,007	1,056
Provision for taxation	-	-
Profit/(Loss) for the period	1,007	1,056

NOTE :- The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder or other interested party who requests them, in either Arabic or English, within 7 days of such
*Chief Executive Officer
*Muscat Finance (SAOG)
*P.O.Box 108, PC 112 Sultanate of Oman

Physiotherapist Srisawat to be at Anantara in Jabal Akhdar



Certified physiotherapist Dome Srisawat will be in residence at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort in Oman from November 1 to December 15. Signature treatments include myofascial release, craniosacral therapy, and sports massage for injury and rehabilitation.

'Wellness is an integral part of the Anantara experience, and the mountaintop setting of Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort is ideal for journeys of recuperation,' said a press release. As well as resident massage therapists, yogis and Ayurvedic doctors, the award-winning resort regularly plays host to visiting wellness practitioners from around the world, drawing on time-tested healing traditions from East to West to offer a truly unique wellness proposition. A regular visiting practitioner in many of Anantara's resorts including in Maldives, Thailand and also Salalah in the south of Oman, Dome Srisawat has two decades of experience in pain relief and holistic healing. Dome is a certified physiotherapist and holds a Diploma in Remedial Massage from the Australasian College of Natural Therapy.

Khimji Ramdas to host Roca One Day Design Challenge



Roca One Day Design Challenge returns to Oman on October 29. While the challenge switched to an online format in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it nevertheless attracted over 100 participants from across the country. To be conducted in person this year, the competition promises to test once again the imagination and skills of students, professional designers, and architects under the age of 30. They will be challenged to create innovative solutions for the bathroom space that can potentially contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future.

The competition is strongly aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and is an example of Roca's commitment to promoting talent, innovation, and sustainability. It is geared at highlighting the importance of design when tackling key global challenges such as the climate emergency, conservation of resources, and waste reduction. At the same time, the contest will continue to fulfill its goal of providing young talents with an international platform to showcase their talents.

NBO marks women's day celebrating their growth

National Bank of Oman (NBO) marked Omani Women's Day by celebrating the impact women employees and entrepreneurs have had on the growth of the organisation from the beginning of its journey. As part of a day of activities in recognition of women's contribution to the nation, NBO held an exhibition inviting women-owned SMEs to showcase their products and services to the employees and customers. NBO also held an internal discussion panel featuring two women employees who shared the story of their professional growth with NBO.



In line with the role Omani women play in the renewed renaissance of the sultanate, NBO has committed to the development of its women employees by identifying the right opportunities to unlock unexpected growth and appointing them in leadership positions, allowing them to play an active role in various areas.

Bank Muscat's Tadhamun programme to benefit about 200 Omani families



In line with its commitment to corporate social responsibility and community service, Bank Muscat and the Ministry of Social Development are currently implementing the landmark Tadhamun programme for the tenth consecutive year.

A joint team has started distributing household appliances to social welfare families across different governorates in the sultanate said a press statement.

The bank aims to support about 200 social welfare families across Oman this year by distributing over 800 household appliances including air conditioners and refrigerators. At present, appliances are being distributed to families in several wilayats across Muscat, the statement added.

It is particularly noteworthy that the Tadhamun programme has so far benefitted 1,880 families since it was first launched in 2013.

Speaking on the occasion of this year's Tadhamun programme, Talib Saif al Makhmari, head, Community and Media Relations, Bank Muscat, expressed his happiness at the continuation of the landmark programme for the tenth consecutive year. He said that Tadhamun has been strengthening the

role of the bank in the field of social responsibility over the years and the total number of beneficiaries has now crossed 10,000, which by itself is a major milestone.

He pointed out how Bank Muscat has been a pioneer of sustainability in Oman and has worked steadfastly to partner and support the community in different initiatives so as to contribute to overall progress and development. The bank's CSR programmes continue to create a positive impact on Omani society, which is a translation of its vision to 'serving you better, everyday'.

This year's programme is being implemented in cooperation with specialists from the Ministry of Social Development, who received applications and finalised the list of families entitled for the benefits. Talib al Makhmari extended his sincere appreciation and gratitude to officials from the ministry, volunteers from the bank and other partners for their support and cooperation in continuing this long-running programme successfully. Bank Muscat is proud of its ongoing and continuous partnership with the Ministry of Social Development over the years on a number of initiatives and programmes including the Tadhamun programme.

cluding the Tadhamun programme.

Bank Muscat, which is Oman's leading financial service provider, runs over ten long-term social responsibility projects including Green Sports, Al Wathbah SME Academy, the Maliyat financial literacy programme and Irshad financial coaching, which are all aimed at supporting different segments of Omani society. In 2022, the bank extended its support to 20 youth sports teams as part of its flagship Green Sports programme. The bank has recently signed an agreement to implement an advanced training programme for 30 Omani entrepreneurs. The bank is also closely partnering with the Royal Oman Police to curb cyber fraud through repeated awareness campaigns for the general public.

Bank Muscat continues to work closely with government institutions and a number of civil society organisations to support programmes, which create sustainable, positive changes in communities across the sultanate. It is a matter of great pride that the bank was honoured by the Ministry of Social Development once again in 2022 in recognition of its pioneering role in social responsibility.



Tadhamun has been strengthening the role of the bank in the field of social responsibility over the years and the total number of beneficiaries has now crossed 10,000

TALIB SAIF AL MAKHMARI



Ominvest inaugurates 'Women Leadership Development Programme'

Aligned with its core values of excellence and collaboration, Oman International Development & Investment Company SAOG (Ominvest) recently celebrated Omani Women's Day with the inauguration of its 'Leadership Development Programme for Women', as well as a number of activities including team building and motivational speeches.

The day's celebrations were centred around empowering the women working at Ominvest, and marking the vital contribution they make to the success of the company. Attended by the Group CEO AbdulAziz al Balushi and other members of the leadership team, it was the women of the organisation and their wellbeing that were at the centre of activities, with a speech by a female staff member and the announcement of the 'Women Leadership Development Programme' the high-



light of the day.

A firm believer in the development of talents, Ominvest Group CEO said, "Through our core values, we always seek to bring strategies to life that sharpen our people's expertise and give them the confidence to succeed. Over 30 per cent of

our workforce, and two out of nine board members, are women, and we hope for this percentage to grow in the coming time, across key functions.

"The 'Leadership Development Programme for Women' is an essential step in providing our female colleagues with

equal opportunities to excel and exceed. It is also a right step in becoming more ESG-compliant, putting people at the centre of our activities," Balushi added.

"Omani Women's Day is a celebration of all the mothers, daughters, sisters and friends we are lucky to know. We are

proud to take part in an occasion that ultimately sheds lights on their achievements in transforming our nation. At Ominvest, we know that ensuring the empowerment and wellbeing of all our colleagues, but especially our female colleagues, will proof to elevate performance, produc-

tivity and organisational profitability, as well as help us accomplish more towards our purpose of 'Transforming Businesses to Enrich Societies'. I wish a Happy Omani Women's Day to all the women of Oman."

The 'Leadership Development Programme for Women'

will see the upskilling of Omani women talents within Ominvest at global standards, empowering them to take up future leadership positions.

Executed by internationally recognised Leadership Management International (LMI), the programme is one of the many initiatives Ominvest supports to work towards global ESG goals, adding long-standing value to the business and society at large by increasing the number of female leaders.

Founded in 1983, Ominvest is one of the largest investment companies in the region. Its vision is to be an eminent investment group with significant global reach and impact.

The company seeks to create value for all its stakeholders by prudently investing in growth sectors and markets while implementing innovative solutions, scalable platforms, and impactful initiatives.

Bank Muscat organises seminar for Najahi clients

Bank Muscat recently organised a seminar for more than 300 Omani entrepreneurs in Salalah in its continuous endeavour to help young Omanis to start their own businesses.

The Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) sector plays an important role in the creation of jobs and driving economic growth and development in the Sultanate of Oman. This importance has been recognised by Oman Vision 2040, which aims to comprehensively enable the growth of the sector as part of the Sultanate's overall growth and development.

Hence, the sector has received keen support from Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, in line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday', the bank stated.

The seminar in Salalah was conducted by noted business consultant and coach Ahmed al Mutawa, focusing on the initial steps of starting a business, growing already existing businesses, gaining knowledge about sources of capital and also how to handle challenges. It was attended by Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager - Interior Region, Bank Muscat.



Floward honours 'blooming' women for contribution



Floward, the go-to online flowers and gifts destination in MENA and UK, celebrated Omani Women's Day recently by partnering with multiple institutions and by launching its 'The World is Yours for the Blooming' campaign.

Floward celebrated Omani Women's Day by recognising the efforts of Omani women in society and by visiting their workplaces and gifting them flowers. Floward's gesture was in collaboration with many governmental institutes like the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Royal Oman Police, Ministry of Defence, and numerous private entities. Floward also participated in AlRoya Newspaper's celebration in which many highly esteemed Omani women were recognized for their achievements by presenting them with flower bouquets.

Floward also marked the day by launching a special campaign titled 'The World is Yours for the Blooming'.

Omantel's 'Fikra' creates new opportunities for employees



Omantel has launched an in-house programme for employees who submit innovative ideas that could be converted into solutions or projects, offering them rewards like

the opportunity to join a world-class accelerator, potentially gain funding, and get one year of paid or unpaid leave.

The initiative is considered to be one of the advanced projects that Omantel is currently working on to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among employees. The initiative is called 'Fikra' provides a platform for delivering solutions related to innovation within technology, and anything that would add value to Omantel and maintain its position as a leading telecommunication company. Through the Fikra portal, employees can submit startup ideas, project ideas, and challenges that can be incubated, supported or addressed through Omantel Innovation Labs - that was created to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.



OOC participates in ANOC General Assembly in Seoul

Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) participated in the 26th General Assembly of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), which was held in South Korea from October 19-21.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of 187 National Olympic Committees in Seoul, and the participation of representatives of 16 committees online.

The opening ceremony was attended by Yoon Seok-yeol, President of the Republic of South Korea, and Thomas Bach, President of International Olympic Committee (IOC), and representatives of international and continental federations and the organizing committees of the tournaments. The upcoming Olympic sports and the 2nd ANOC Beach Games to be held next year in Bali, Indonesia. OOC chairman Khalid bin Muhammad al Zubair, headed OOC delegation, accompanied by OOC secretary general Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishry.

South Korean President Yoon Seok-yeol opened the 26th ANOC General Assembly last Wednesday at the Seoul Convention and Exhibition Centre with

Oman Olympic Committee chairman Khalid bin Muhammad al Zubair, headed the delegation, accompanied by Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishry, the OOC secretary general. The meeting was attended by the representatives of 187 National Olympic Committees in person, and by the representatives of 16 committees online

a speech in which he thanked ANOC and all NOCs for their great efforts to keep the Olympic spirit alive, especially in the years that South Korea shares the values set by IOC in achieving independence and solidarity through sport.

He noted that South Korea had previously hosted the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in Seoul, the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, and is preparing to host the 2024 Winter Youth Olympics in Gangwon.

For his part, Dr Robin Mitchell, acting president of ANOC said that representatives of about 200 NOCs participated in the meetings of the General Assembly, and president of the Korean

Olympic Committee Lee Ki-hyung mentioned in his speech that it is the third time that Seoul hosts the meetings of the General Assembly of ANOC after two years 1986 and 2006.

IOC president Thomas Bach gave a brief speech in which he pointed out that Seoul is a great Olympic city, and called on all NOCs to join hands and stand united together to advance the Olympic movement.

During the 3rd day meetings, ANOC Board of Directors was elected for the new term (2022-2026), where H E Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al Thani, Qatar Olympic Committee president, won the position of First Vice President of

ANOC, and Robin Mitchell was recommended as President.

During the meeting, the minutes of ANOC twenty-fifth meeting, which was held in Greece last year, were approved. The president of ANOC and the secretary general reviewed reports on the latest news and recent developments.

It also reviewed a report from the World Anti-Doping Agency, and reports from the organising committees of the upcoming Olympics represented in the 24th Winter Olympics to be held in Beijing this year, the 2023 World Beach Games, the 2024 Paris Olympics, and the 25th Winter Olympics in Italy 2026.

On the second day of the meetings, an awards ceremony was held in which the best athletes, sports teams and distinguished Olympic committees for the past year 2021 were honoured. The committee consisted of representatives from each of the continental federations, the chairman of the Athletes Committee, the secretary general of ANOC, and the president of the Asian Football Federation. The meetings came out with important decisions in the interest of international sports and athletes.

Shell Oman, Precision Tune celebrate ties

Underscoring the importance of customer satisfaction in its long-standing partnership with Precision Tune Auto Care, Shell Oman Marketing Company has reiterated its intent to leverage its status as sultanate's trusted energy partner in creating newer avenues for customer care.

As 'a local company with a global brand', Shell Oman Marketing Company has, through its 23-year-long partnership with Precision Tune Auto Care (PTAC), connected people with relevant and reliable repair and maintenance services. It has facilitated convenient and affordable solutions - whether it is car repairs or routine vehicle maintenance - with easy access PTAC service centers, located in different locations and at Shell Oman's Mobility sites, both within and outside the capital city of Muscat.

Calling the over two-decade long partnership with PTAC a significant contribution to in Shell Oman's growth trajectory, Mahmoud al Abri, general manager - Commercial Lubricants, Shell Oman, said, "This partnership is a reflection of our commitment to make a difference to our cus-



tomers' everyday experiences; customers who understand the importance of timely and efficient auto care in the business of fuels and lubricants. We are committed to providing our customers easy access to auto care assistance in partnership with trusted service providers in the country. Our long association with PTAC is aligned with our vision to maintain our leadership position in the Lubricants sector and deliver best value to our stakeholders."

Issa al Harthy, vice chairman of PTAC, said, "As a one-stop shop for repairs and maintenance service, we are recognised in the market for our fast and affordable solutions. We specialise in preventive maintenance services and our state-of-the-art facilities, located at some of the prime Shell Oman landmarks, have demonstrated our target to be the first point of reference for car owners during their routine car oil change and maintenance. Our

growth strategy is to be within 50km of each customer in the country, thereby meeting service requirements of automobile owners in even far-flung areas."

Shell Oman's lubricant plant is the only plant in the sultanate which produces 'Made in Oman' Shell products. The award-winning facility at Mina al Fahal is the first-of-its-kind oil lubs blending plant in the country with ISO 9001, 14001, and 45001 certifications.

bp Oman signs deal with Oman Sail to sponsor para sailing event

Oman Sail is delighted to announce that bp Oman is the title sponsor of the upcoming RS Venture Connect World Championships; the first exclusive para sailing event to be held in Oman.

In collaboration with Oman Sail, bp Oman has been heavily involved in the development of para sailing in Oman as supporters of the SailFree initiative. This is the region's first para sailing programme, launched in 2019 as part of bp Oman's social investment programme, and will now continue its association at the championships, taking place at Barceló Mussanah Resort from November 22-27.

Oman Sail CEO Dr Khamis al Jabri said, "We are very pleased to welcome bp Oman as title sponsors of the RS Venture Connect World Championships and deliver the very first sailing championship in Oman solely devoted to para sailing."

"Their support for SailFree has been invaluable and has changed the lives of hundreds of people across Oman, and we hope that exposure to the RS Venture class



during the championships and the Oman Sailing Festival will inspire even more people with disabilities to discover sailing."

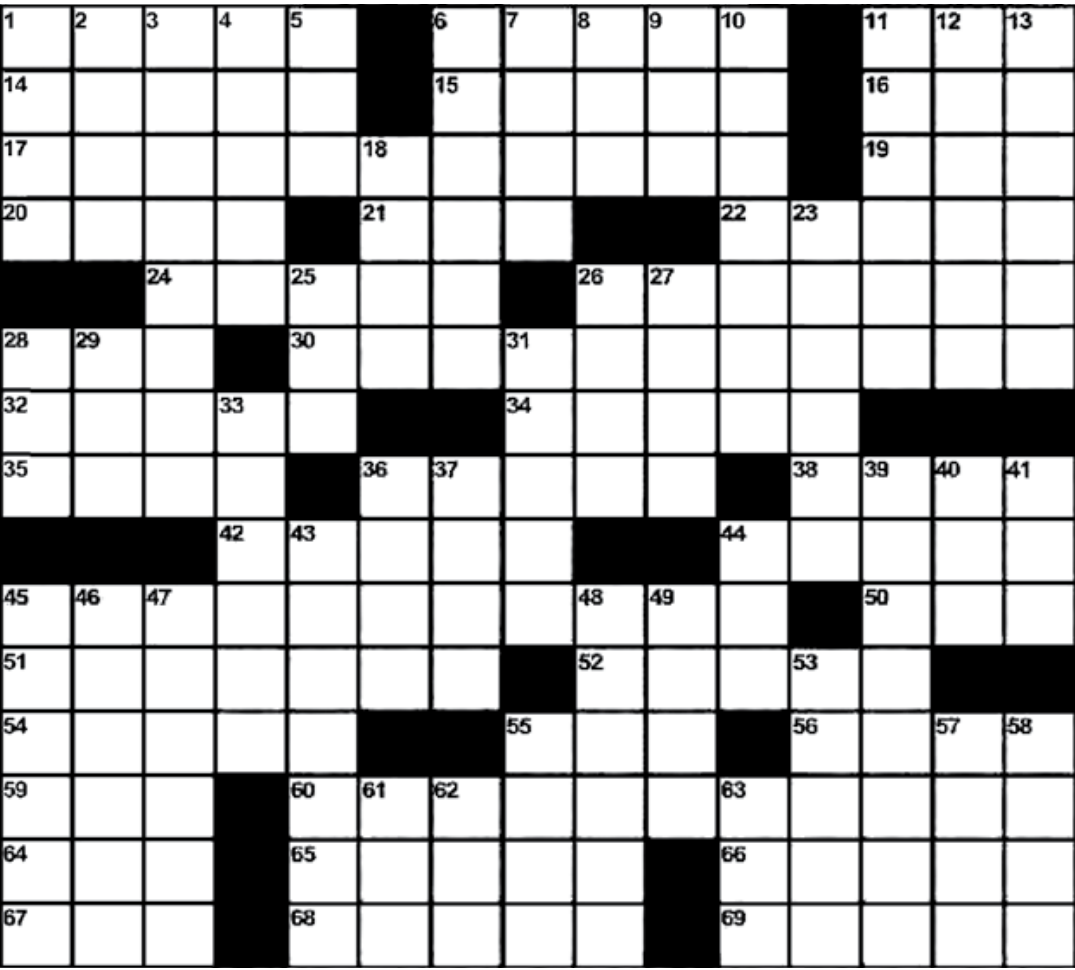
Thuraya al Taii, C&EA Manager, bp Oman, Kuwait and Qatar said, "bp in Oman is committed to supporting Omanis with disabilities ensuring opportunities are inclusive for all people within community. We are excited to be sponsoring the RS Venture World Championships to deliver on our aim. Over the past three years, we have seen first-hand the success of our social investment programme 'SailFree' which has now allowed a national para sailing team to compete internationally. We look forward to working with Oman Sail to deliver

a successful championship and continue supporting 'Sail Free'."

SailFree is a joint initiative between Oman Sail, bp Oman and the Oman Paralympic Committee, and is the region's first para sailing programme. Launched in December 2019, it has since introduced over 200 men and women from the ages of 16 to 30. It has since become a model for inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment, and continues to offer opportunities for people with disabilities across Oman.

The RS Venture Connect World Championships will feature 36 teams from 19 nations, as well as a three-day Para Sailing Development Program (PDP) clinic organised by World Sailing.

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Chew out
 - 6) Chowderhead
 - 11) Not "a gin"
 - 14) Imam's book
 - 15) Having a musical key 1337-1453?
 - 16) Hurler's stat
 - 17) Sitcom with the theme song
 - 19) Prefix with dent or pod
 - 20) Apple-splitting archer
 - 21) Corrida cry
 - 22) Standard typeface
 - 24) Neighbor of St. Pete
 - 26) Card game with melds forgiveness?
 - 28) Crackerjack pilot
 - 30) Cowboy's topper?
 - 32) Port of Iraq
 - 34) Social pariahs
 - 35) Start the pot
 - 36) Goody-goody
 - 38) Mayberry souse
 - 42) Pick up the tab
 - 44) Quick on the uptake
 - 45) England-France conflict of
 - 50) Largo or West
- 51) Iced tea brand "This Is It"?
 - 52) Sans assistance
 - 54) Showy flower
 - 55) Comics bark
 - 56) "Diana" singer Paul
 - 59) Wolfed down
 - 60) Sincere plea for
 - 64) Kia or Fiat
 - 65) Porkers
 - 66) "For_ sake!"
 - 67) H.S. yearbook section
 - 68) Went for congers
 - 69) Welcome at the door

DOWN

 - 1) Bit of improv
 - 2) Programmer's output
 - 3) Exam without pencils
 - 4) Classic Eric Clapton tune
 - 5) Paternity lab evidence
 - 6) "Hogan's Heroes" camp
 - 7) Mall bag
 - 8) Prefix with "sex" or "corn"
 - 9) Dawber of "Mork & Mindy"
 - 10) Franklin's first lady
 - 11) Fixation of sorts
 - 12) Boo-boo list
- 13) Read the riot act to
 - 18) "... the mornin' !"
 - 23) Kidnapper's demand
 - 25) "Rosemary's Baby" star Farrow
 - 26) Clump of earth
 - 27) Emollient source
 - 28) Lawyers' org.
 - 29) Part of a six-pack
 - 31) Touches on
 - 33) Key in again
 - 36) Burst of laughter
 - 37) Pinker than medium
 - 39) Pay close attention
 - 40) Ill temper
 - 41) Home to 65-Across
 - 43) Play again, as a role
 - 44) Sign of a full house
 - 45) Designer Arnold Scaasi's real surname
 - 46) GM's roadside assistance service
 - 47) Many John Wayne movies
 - 48) Bent out of shape
 - 49) Sporty Italian auto, for short
 - 53) Consumer advocate Ralph
 - 55) Top-ranked

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Re-evaluating your goals right now is a great idea, especially since the Universe favors contemplation and gives your already keen eye even greater perception when it comes to looking at the details. When you turn your attention inward and put your life under the microscope, you may not necessarily like everything you see. The good news is anything you don't like is well within your power to change.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
As far as you're concerned, freedom and privacy are pretty much the same thing and absolutely necessary for your peace of mind. Put off returning phone calls and emails or following up on social obligations. Not only will these tasks make you cranky, but you also won't be able to devote your full attention to them. Right now you want to make the boundaries of your personal territory very clear, and woe to anyone who enters without an invitation.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Don't get too ambitious with those plans or they could unravel at a crucial juncture. If you take it one step at a time and focus on the task immediately in front of you, the big picture will take shape soon enough. Relationships improve when you apply this attitude to them as well, and you're able to make smart decisions by staying firmly rooted in the here and now. Who knew by giving yourself the present that you'd give yourself a future as well?



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. About two thirds of Africa's active volcanoes follow roughly what line?

- A. The East Africa Rift
- B. The Mediterranean coast
- C. The Drakensberg escarpment
- D. The Red Sea

02. The hovercraft was invented In which decade?

- A. 1930s
- B. 1960s
- C. 1940s
- D. 1950s

03. Since 1951, what is the maximum number of full consecutive terms to be filled by one US president?

- A. 5
- B. 3
- C. 4
- D. 2

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3. D

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Your magnetism has been slowly but surely heating up, and right now it's about to come to a full boil. Few can resist your sultry self even at your lowest ebb, but at a time like this when your charisma is practically off the charts, you can talk the birds down from the trees. Now the only question is where to aim all this dazzling charm. Be generous and share it with everyone who crosses your path.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Think about your life and you might just see a few partners or opportunities that you overlooked. Fortunately, these possibilities still remain. It's just a question of seeking them out. Timing is everything when it comes to reigniting sparks from the past, so make good use of your abundant sensitivity when it comes to feeling out someone about an offer they made to you long ago. Keep your common sense and don't get lost in flights of fancy, though.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
A special opportunity comes along that gives you independence and creative freedom. This opening may not be crystal clear, so keep your eyes and ears open in all directions (even the least likely). After all, you don't want to miss your chance due to closed-mindedness, do you? Some skills of yours will really come into play when it comes to identifying your opportunities. Look to your wizardry with words and images to reach your goal.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Doubts can be so nasty, and nastily persistent, especially when you want to close your eyes and ears and remain firmly ensconced in your fantasy of how everything should work out. Sometimes, however, those nagging thoughts serve a purpose, especially when it comes to financial matters. Stay cautious and thoroughly research the credentials of any potential investors or partners, or you could be misled by their smooth ways and crafty talk.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You can change your behaviour and thinking any time, you know. The stars want you to be strong and work toward finding ways to close the books on some lingering patterns that have been with you for far too long, especially in the realm of personal relationships. Why do certain things keep occurring? Why do you always attract a certain type of person? It's a good time to get answers to these kinds of questions, so start asking.

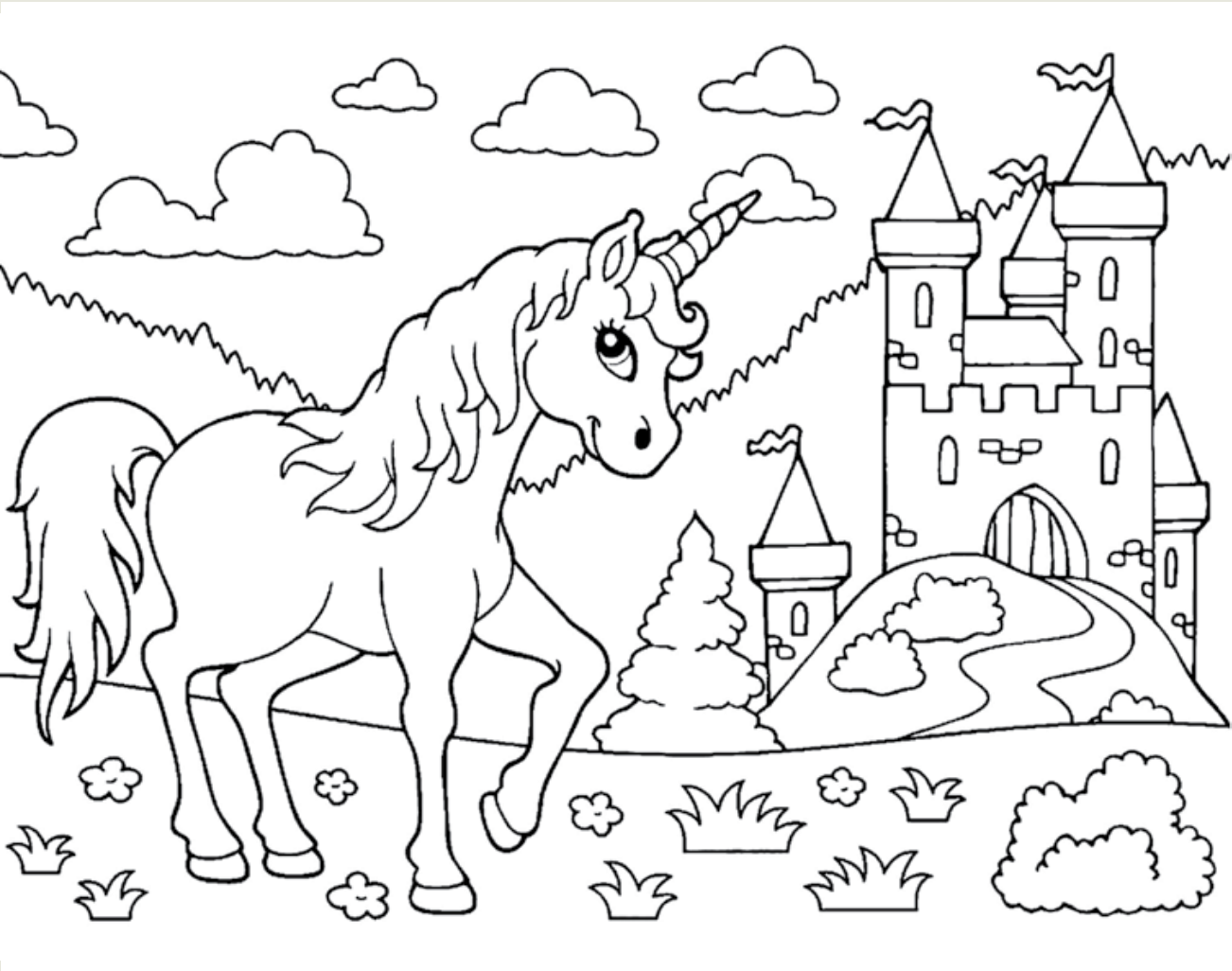
AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Stepping forward into a brave new emotional world often entails some kind of upheaval, but what's the worst that could happen? You have so much to gain if you make a move and plenty to lose if you stay mired in an increasingly stale situation. Ditch the stagnation and do everything you can to move forward. You've grown too much and come too far to let a case of nerves stop you. Feel the fear and do it anyway.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
It's about time to get to know yourself, don't you think? This is especially true if you find your friends and family have definite opinions about what you should do with your life, romantic situation, or anything else. Ignore the mixed signals that are coming your way and sit down and think about what it is you want to do rather than what you feel you should do. A little extra research will be especially useful when it comes to professional conundrums.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You've really come in to your own, but this process, while rewarding, can also be challenging. There are people or situations that you'd like to take for granted or regard as secure, but these foundations have to change in order to allow real growth. Keep yourself pointed in the right direction through all these changes and you'll see the kind of self-fulfillment that you've only dreamed about start to emerge.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
A certain troublesome person disappeared from your life or work, and good riddance. Or so you thought. They might rear their pesky little head again, but don't worry. Their appearance will only be temporary. In fact, certain recent events may have so humbled this person that they've become tolerable, if not likable. This is great because you won't have to put up with a repeat of their old shenanigans.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

U	I	S	O
D	E	D	E
T	L	N	S
W	K	O	S

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

North, South Korea trade warning shots on de facto maritime border

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea's military said on Monday it had fired warning shots at a North Korean ship that crossed the countries' de facto maritime border, prompting the North to fire a warning in return.

Pyongyang has conducted a blitz of weapons tests, including what it claimed were tactical nuclear drills, in recent weeks, with Seoul and Washington ramping up joint military exercises in response.

With talks long-stalled, North-South relations are at one of their testiest points in years, with Pyongyang's Kim Jong Un last month declaring his country an 'irreversible' nuclear power, effectively ending negotiations over his banned weapons programmes.

Never officially delineated by the 1953 armistice agreement that brought Korean War hostilities to a close, the maritime border remains a flashpoint and has been the location of several previous clashes between the two sides.

A North Korean merchant vessel crossed what is known as the Northern Limit Line at 3:42am (1842 GMT) but retreated north after Seoul's navy fired warning shots, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. "The North's continuing



South Korea's AH64 Apache helicopter fires flare shells during a South Korea-US joint river-crossing drill as part of the annual Hoguk military exercise in Yeosu on October 19 (AFP)

provocations and reckless claims undermine peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and international community," JCS said in a statement, urging Pyongyang to 'stop immediately'.

North Korea response
Pyongyang's Korean People's Army said a South Korean military vessel had 'invaded' the de facto border by 2.5km to 5km a few minutes later and that the KPA fired 10 warning rounds from the country's west coast. KPA 'coastal defence units on

the western front... took an initial countermeasure to powerfully expel the enemy warship by firing 10 shells of multiple rocket launchers toward the territorial waters, where naval enemy movement was detected, at 5:15', a KPA General Staff spokesman said in a statement carried by state media.

"The KPA General Staff once again sends a grave warning to the enemies who made (a) naval intrusion in the wake of such provocations as the recent artillery firing and loudspeaker

broadcasting," he said. North Korea has fired multiple artillery barrages this month into a maritime 'buffer-zone' that was set up in 2018 as a way to reduce tensions between the two countries during a period of ill-fated diplomacy. The moves are part of a dramatic increase this year in what Seoul calls 'provocations' by the North, including conducting its longest-ever missile launch by distance, which overflew Japan and prompted rare evacuation warnings. Seoul has also recently con-

ducted live-fire drills, and the US re-deployed a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to the region to conduct large-scale trilateral drills also involving Tokyo.

"The merchant ship's incursion and the North's artillery firings demonstrate the lack of consensus on the NLL border," Cheong Seong-chang, a researcher at the Sejong Institute told AFP.

"The North could attempt to invalidate the NLL later with the backdrop of military confidence in its tactical nuclear arsenal," he said. Experts and officials in Seoul and Washington have been warning for months that Kim is close to conducting another nuclear test - which would be his country's seventh.

Kim has made developing tactical nukes - smaller, battlefield-ready weapons - a priority, and Seoul warned recently the North could be preparing to conduct multiple consecutive nuclear tests in a row as part of this drive. Monday's exchange of warning fire comes on the same day that US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman is expected to hold three-way talks with allies Japan and South Korea in Tokyo in a show of unity after the North's slew of launches.

AFP



The plane of Korean Air flight KE631 lies with its belly on the runway at the airport in Cebu City, central Philippines on Monday (AFP)

Korean Air plane overshoots runway in Philippines

Manila, Philippines - A Korean Air plane slid off the runway while landing at Cebu international airport in the Philippines, causing slight injuries and shutting down the country's second busiest airport, authorities said on Monday.

All 173 passengers and crew of Korean Air flight KE631 from Incheon were evacuated safely after the Airbus A330 aircraft overshot the runway on Sunday, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) said in a report.

Minor injuries were treated at the airport clinic.

Glenn Napuli, the airport's assistant general manager, said the airport would be shut down until midnight, and authorities were working to resume flights within the day.

"We are hoping by tomorrow

we can remove the aircraft," Napuli said in a briefing.

An investigation was underway into the cause of the accident, Napuli said.

Korean Air president Woo Kee-hong has apologised over the incident.

He also vowed a 'thorough investigation' by both Philippine and Korean authorities.

"We always prioritise safety in all of our operations, and we truly regret the stress and inconvenience brought to our passengers," Woo said in statement posted on the company website.

In 2018, a Xiamen Airline aircraft slid off the runway at Manila airport, forcing more than a hundred flight cancellations until the Chinese plane was pulled from the mud after more than a day.

AFP

Vanuatu elects first woman MP in 14 years

Port Vila, Vanuatu - Vanuatu has elected the first woman to its parliament in 14 years, official results of a snap election showed on Monday. Gloria Julia King will be the only woman in the 52-member legislature, the Vanuatu Electoral Office said, after a half dozen other female candidates failed to secure a seat.

King's electoral success comes after a colourful career, playing international football and co-running a business selling kava - the peppery, mildly intoxicating root drink that is a vital part of Pacific ceremonies.

Her campaign included a pledge to create more business opportunities for women, in a society where gender violence is common and few women are self-employed. "I love finding new platforms for grassroots women in business to rise and shine," she said ahead of the poll, in which

she garnered 1,618 votes.

Coalition talks are underway to see who will form the next government, and King could yet take up a government post.

The October 13 election was called two years earlier than expected after Prime Minister Bob Loughman had parliament suspended to avoid a no-confidence vote. After a bitter legal dispute, a hastily-arranged campaign lasted just 10 days. Loughman's Vanu'a'aku Pati was among the biggest winners but with no outright victor, intense coalition horse-trading is underway.

Whoever forms a government will have a tough time stabilising the economy, which was badly hit by COVID-19 restrictions. They will also have to navigate China's drive to deepen its influence in the Pacific and a diplomatic counter-offensive from Washington.

AFP

Inspectors barred: UN suspends Australia anti-torture mission

Sydney, Australia - The United Nations has abruptly suspended its anti-torture mission to Australia after inspectors were barred from several jails, with a key oversight body condemning on Monday the 'embarrassing debacle'.

Tasked with touring facilities under a voluntary agreement to prevent cruelty to detainees, the inspectors said they made the 'drastic' decision after they were refused entry at 'several' jails and detention facilities.

Lead inspector Aisha Muhammad, a Supreme Court judge in the Maldives, said Australia was in 'clear breach' of its international obligations. "Despite our numerous efforts to explain our preventative mandate, this was clearly not understood," she said.

Only three other countries -

Rwanda, Azerbaijan and Ukraine - have had anti-torture inspectors suspend or postpone missions.

Australia ratified the Optional Protocol to the Conven-

There can be no excuse as to why the delegation was hindered. Australia has had almost five years to prepare for this visit

STEVEN CARUANA

tion against Torture (OPCAT) in 2017, committing to reforms safeguarding detainees and making facilities subject to in-

spection. Former prison inspector Steven Caruana coordinated the domestic body responsible for tracking Australia's implementation of the convention.

"There can really be no excuse as to why the delegation was hindered," he told AFP on Monday. "Australia has had almost five years to prepare for this visit. Australia will now have to answer for this embarrassing debacle in front of the United Nations Committee against Torture."

Allegations of rights abuses

Australia's refusal to welcome the inspectors boiled down to a funding dispute between the federal and state governments.

The federal government ratified the convention, but individual states and territories

were responsible for putting it into action.

New South Wales and Queensland - eastern states with roughly half Australia's population between them - have hamstrung the process, saying they needed more funding to put the convention into practice.

New South Wales last week blocked UN inspectors from a small courthouse jail, the UN delegation said.

Queensland refused to let inspectors visit inpatient units at mental health facilities, according to the Queensland Health department.

The UN delegation said it had 'been prevented from visiting several places where people are detained... and was not given all the relevant information and documentation it had requested'.

Australia's prisons, youth detention centres, and immigration compounds have been plagued by persistent allegations of human rights abuses, particularly against Aboriginal communities.

Criminology professor Lorana Bartels said there was a clear need for greater scrutiny.

"Clearly, there are issues with the management of correctional facilities in Australia," she told AFP. "This demonstrates a real lack of understanding and respect for these processes."

Australia has until January 2023 to meet its obligations.

There are no penalties for missing the deadline, but Australia could be placed on a non-compliance list of countries with significant human rights concerns.

AFP

Plastic recycling remains a 'myth': Greenpeace study

Washington, US - Plastic recycling rates are declining even as production shoots up, according to a Greenpeace USA report out on Monday that blasted industry claims of creating an efficient, circular economy as 'fiction'.

Titled *Circular Claims Fall Flat Again*, the study found that of 51mn tons of plastic waste generated by US households in 2021, only 2.4mn tons were recycled, or around five per cent.

After peaking in 2014 at 10 per cent, the trend has been decreasing, especially since China stopped accepting the West's plastic waste in 2018.

Virgin production - of non-recycled plastic, that is - meanwhile is rapidly rising as the petrochemical industry expands, lowering costs.

"Industry groups and big corporations have been pushing for recycling as a solution," Greenpeace USA campaigner Lisa Ramsden told AFP.

"By doing that, they have shirked all responsibility' for en-

suring that recycling actually works, she added. She named Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Unilever and Nestle as prime offenders.

According to Greenpeace USA's survey, only two types of plastic are widely accepted at the nation's 375 material recovery facilities. The first is polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is commonly used in water and soda bottles; and the second is high density polyethylene (HDPE), seen in milk jugs, shampoo bottles and cleaning product containers.

These are numbered '1' and '2' according to a standardised system in which there are seven plastic types.

But being recyclable in theory doesn't mean products are being recycled in practice.

The report found that PET and HDPE products had actual reprocessing rates of 20.9 per cent and 10.3 per cent, respectively - both down slightly from Greenpeace USA's last survey in 2020.

Plastic types '3' through '7' -



Plastic recycling rates are declining even as production shoots up, according to a Greenpeace USA report that blasted industry claims of creating a circular economy as 'fiction' (AFP)

including children's toys, plastic bags, produce wrappings, yogurt and margarine tubs, coffee cups and to-go food containers - were reprocessed at rates of less than five per cent.

Despite often carrying the recycling symbol on their labels, products that use plastic types

'3' through '7' fail to meet the Federal Trade Commission classification of recyclable.

This is because recycling facilities for these types aren't available to a 'substantial majority' of the population, defined as 60 per cent, and because the collected products are not being used in

the manufacturing or assembly of new items.

According to the report, there were five main reasons why plastic recycling is a 'failed concept'.

Economically unfeasible

First, plastic waste is generated

in vast quantities and is extremely difficult to collect - as becomes clear during what the report called ineffective 'volunteer cleanup stunts' funded by nonprofits such as 'Keep America Beautiful'.

Second, even if it were all collected, mixed plastic waste cannot be recycled together, and it would be 'functionally impossible to sort the trillions of pieces of consumer plastic waste produced each year', the report said.

Third, the recycling process itself is environmentally harmful, exposing workers to toxic chemicals and itself generating microplastics.

Fourth, recycled plastic carries toxicity risks through contamination with other plastic types in collection bins, preventing it from becoming food-grade material again.

Fifth and finally, the process of recycling is prohibitively expensive. "New plastic directly competes with recycled plastic,

and it's far cheaper to produce and of higher quality,' said the report.

Ramsden called on corporations to support a Global Plastics Treaty, which United Nations members agreed to create in February, and move toward refill and reuse strategies.

"This isn't actually a new concept - it's how the milkman used to be, it's how Coca-Cola used to get its beverages to people. They would drink their beverage, give the glass bottle back, and it would be sanitised and reused," she said.

Some countries are leading the way, including India, which recently banned 19 single-use plastic items. Austria has set reuse targets of 25 per cent by 2025 and at least 30 per cent by 2030 for beverage packaging, while Portugal has also set the 30 per cent by 2030 goal.

Chile is moving to phase out single-use cutlery and mandating refillable bottles.

AFP

Two dead as hurricane Roslyn weakens to tropical storm after landfall in Mexico

Mexico City, Mexico - Hurricane Roslyn weakened rapidly on Sunday after making landfall on Mexico's Pacific coast, nonetheless leaving two people dead, as well as damage from high winds, landslides and flooding.

Jorge Benito Rodriguez, security secretary in the northwestern state of Nayarit, said one person died in the Rosamorada municipality. And fire officials confirmed that an 80-year-old man died on the island of Mexcaltitan when his house collapsed. There were widespread reports of damage amid fears that still-rising rivers could lead to more flooding.

Hurricane Roslyn, classified at the time as a Category 3 storm, made landfall on the west coast of Mexico on Sunday, the US National Hurricane Center said.

At 0000 GMT, Roslyn, downgraded to a tropical storm, was some 60 miles (95km) outside the city of Torreon and moving northeast with maximum sustained winds of some 35 miles (55km) per hour.

"Weakening is expected to continue, and Roslyn is forecast



A member of the National Guard patrols a muddy street after the arrival of hurricane Roslyn in Sayulita community, Nayarit State, Mexico, on Sunday (AFP)

to dissipate tonight," the hurricane center said in its latest report. Civil protection authorities in the hardest-hit states of Nayarit and Jalisco reported mate-

rial damage, flooding, falling trees and landslides that blocked highways.

"We have floods but they do not represent a risk as such, and

we have not reported any loss of human life," Pedro Nunez, the head of Nayarit Civil Protection, told Televisa earlier in the day. But with rain continuing, he

said river levels were being closely monitored.

"It was a bit scary," Erik Newcomer, an American who settled in the resort city of Puerto Val-

Fire officials confirmed that an 80-year-old man died on the island of Mexcaltitan when his house collapsed. There were widespread reports of damage amid fears that still-rising rivers could lead to more flooding

larta three months ago, told AFP. He said he had to evacuate his children as water entered their home, adding, 'My house was destroyed'.

In the village of Sayulita in Nayarit state, landslides buried some houses. Residents waded through mud to try to salvage their possessions.

On a journey from Puerto Vallarta to the hardest hit part of Nayarit, AFP observed a mud-

slide that forced the closure of a highway and nearly buried a trailer. But as the storm began to pass, the Mexican government discontinued all warnings south of the coastal city of San Blas, including Puerto Vallarta.

A tropical storm warning remained in effect from San Blas north to Mazatlan.

On Saturday, Roslyn had strengthened to a major Category 4 storm as it approached Mexico's Pacific coast.

Authorities had declared an alert in the Pacific coast states of Jalisco, Colima, Nayarit and Sinaloa.

Tropical cyclones hit Mexico every year on both its Pacific and Atlantic coasts, usually between May and November.

At the end of May, Agatha, the first Pacific storm of the season, hit the coast of the southern state of Oaxaca, where heavy rain in mountainous towns killed 11 people.

Back in October 1997, Hurricane Pauline struck Mexico's Pacific coast as a Category 4 storm, leaving more than 200 dead. AFP

Unification Church ties: Japan minister resigns

Tokyo, Japan - A Japanese minister resigned on Monday following allegations over his ties to the Unification Church, which is under renewed scrutiny after the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe.

Daishiro Yamagiwa, minister for economic revitalisation, said he did not want the allegations to 'affect the parliamentary debate', without naming the church.

Last week Prime Minister Fumio Kishida ordered a government probe into the group, which has been in the spotlight because the man accused of killing Abe in July was reportedly motivated by resentment against it.

The sect's Japan chapter has been accused of pressuring adherents to make hefty donations and blamed for child neglect among members.

The church, officially known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, has denied wrongdoing, but a parade of former members have gone public with criticism of its practices. Members of the church are sometimes referred to as 'Moonies' after Korean founder Sun Myung Moon, who died in 2012.



Japan's PM Fumio Kishida (AFP)

Yamagiwa has been under fire in parliament following local media reports about his alleged ties to the group - partly because he appeared in a group photo in 2019 with Hak Ja Han, the wife of founder Moon.

The politician had confirmed it was him in the image, but said in parliament on Monday that his memory about 'the photo with her... is unclear'. He has also previously said he joined an event organised by the church in 2018.

The politician said on Monday he planned to stay on as a lawmaker. "I deeply regret that my attendance at several meetings of the organisation has resulted in giving credit to the said organisation," he said.

AFP

Lawmakers divided; Lebanon fails to elect president for fourth time

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanon's parliament failed on Monday for a fourth time to elect a successor to President Michel Aoun, with lawmakers divided over a candidate opposed by the powerful Hezbollah movement.

Already governed by a caretaker cabinet, crisis-hit Lebanon is hurtling towards an imminent power vacuum, with just days before the current president's term finishes at the end of the month.

Parliament speaker Nabih Berri called for another vote on Thursday in the hope of overcoming long-running arguments.

A total of 50 lawmakers in Lebanon's 128-seat parliament left their votes blank, many from the Iran-backed Hezbollah and its allies. Their rivals mostly backed lawmaker Michel Moawad, whose father Rene Moawad was a former president.

He has emerged as a frontrunner since parliament first met to name a president last month.

But Moawad, who won 39 votes on Monday, was still far short the 86 ballots needed - two-thirds of seats - to win.

University professor and ac-



Clerks give ballots to parliament members during the 4th session to elect a new president in Beirut on Monday (AFP)

tivist Issam Khalife took 10 votes, cast by independent lawmakers who emerged from a mass 2019 anti-government protest movement, as well as others.

But the required quorum was lost before a second round could be held, after some lawmakers walked out - a recurring scenario in past votes.

Moawad's supporters accused Hezbollah and its allies of obstructing a second round of voting to negotiate with other blocs, effectively preventing the election.

"No bloc in parliament can im-

pose a president, not Hezbollah nor anyone else," said Elias Hankash, a lawmaker from the Kataeb Party that supports Moawad.

Hankash accused lawmakers who left parliament of 'systematic disruption', because there were not enough lawmakers to make a vote legitimate.

Under Lebanon's longstanding confessional power-sharing system, the presidency is reserved for a Maronite Christian.

Aoun was elected in 2016 after a more than two-year vacancy at the presidential palace,

as lawmakers made 45 failed attempts to name a candidate.

Since late 2019, Lebanon has been crippled by an economic crisis, dubbed by the World Bank as one of the worst in recent history. Economic meltdown has pushed most Lebanese into poverty.

Talks with the International Monetary Fund to unlock billions of dollars in loans have stalled, as Lebanese leaders have been unable to enact substantial reforms demanded by the lender and donor countries.

AFP

King cobra escapes from zoo in Sweden

Stockholm, Sweden - A Swedish zoo has been partially shut down after a king cobra staged an impressive escape from its enclosure at the weekend, with staff on Monday still searching for the venomous vagrant.

The snake, named Sir Vas (Sir Hiss), escaped on Saturday through a lamp fixture in a terrarium and was believed to be somewhere in an inner ceiling.

He had only been brought to the zoo a few days earlier.

The snake has now been renamed Houdini after the famed escape artist, said Jonas Wahlstrom, director of the Skansen Aquarium.

Staff have spread out flour to try and track the slithery fugitive and sticky traps have been deployed.

They have also brought in special cameras designed to inspect sewage pipes.

AFP

Feathers fly as Philippine cockfighting shakes off COVID closures

San Pedro, Philippines - In a raucous cockpit in the Philippines, Dennis de la Cruz grins from ear to ear as he watches his roosters slash their opponents to death in a frenzy of blood and feathers.

Shut for two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional cockfighting arenas are getting back to full capacity across the archipelago nation.

Cockfighting is hugely popular in the Philippines, where millions of dollars are bet on matches every week.

Roosters wearing bladed spurs on their legs go beak to beak in a brutal fight to the death, as spectators - mostly men - wager on the result.

Supporters defend the blood sport as being part of the Filipino identity and argue the birds would be eaten if they did not fight.

But opponents maintain it is cruel and should be banned, as it is in many other countries.

"In our village, more than half the residents are cockfighters," de la Cruz, 64, told AFP at a recent derby in San Pedro, a city south of Manila, where he fell one win short of the one-million-peso (US\$17,000) champion's pot.

The son of a longtime cockpit operator, de la Cruz said he had never held a regular job. Instead, he relied on his winnings from the roosters bred by his nephews on a large farm.

In a country plagued by inequality, cockfighting is a unique 'neutral zone' where rich and poor mingle and play by the same rules, said University of the Philippines anthropologist Chester Cabalza.

Adhering to a strict honour



This file photo shows men watching roosters during a cockfighting match at the San Pedro Coliseum in Laguna province on August 26, 2022 (AFP)

code, spectators prior to the pandemic used hand signals like stock brokers to lay their bets during a match that can last less than a minute.

It is common for 300,000 to

400,000 pesos to be bet on a single fight, one aficionado told AFP.

After each fight - there are 15 per hour - crumpled banknotes are flung towards the winning

bettor.

Losers welching on bets run the risk of being attacked.

When cockpits reopened, regulators wary of spreading the coronavirus through excessive crowd interaction ordered operators to install betting machines, so winners could collect their money from the cashier instead.

"If your cock wins, you stride out of the ring like a tough guy - you exude a macho image," said gamefowl breeder Edwin Lumbrés, thrusting his chest out for emphasis. "But if you lose, you hang your head and shuffle out like somebody whose manhood is suspect."

'Forced to fight'

Katrina Del Espiritu Santo, of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, is pushing for cockfighting to be banned as the birds

are 'forced to fight to the death'.

But the activist's efforts have failed to gain much traction in the Philippines.

Fighting roosters are ubiquitous across the country and are prized possessions - despite their loud crowing at all hours.

A bird can cost between 3,000 and 15,000 pesos depending on its parents' win record.

Fighting fowls are kept in wire cages outside homes in urban areas or in triangular shelters on farms that dot the countryside.

As cockpits fell silent at the start of the pandemic, many small breeders could not afford to feed their flocks and were forced to sell roosters at firesale prices - or throw them in the cooking pot.

Others admitted staging illegal fights to make ends meet.

To revive the sport and get revenue flowing into government coffers drained by the COVID-19 response, former president Rodrigo Duterte issued permits to seven outfits to operate online cockfighting.

Known as e-sabong, fights were held in empty arenas and streamed 24 hours a day, allowing people to place minimum bets of 200 pesos per fight on their mobile phones.

The sport's popularity exploded - and so did the earnings.

People who had never watched cockfighting before began betting, while large breeding farms saw demand for their fowl surge.

Duterte said the national government was raking in 640mn pesos a month in fees - even as the economy tanked.

AFP

Will Bibi make a comeback in Israel's election next week?

Jerusalem - A week before Israel's fifth general election in less than four years, one question dominates: will the hawkish ex-prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu return to power?

Polls show he would likely need heavy backing from the country's rising extreme-right to form a government - a scenario which, one expert warned, would spell 'disaster' for Israel's democracy. Netanyahu served as premier for a total of 15 years, a record in Israel's 74-year history, before he was ousted in June 2021 by a motley alliance of ideologically divided parties united only by their opposition to him.

Widely known as 'Bibi', he was an ally of former US president Donald Trump and a dominant leader under whom Israeli politics shifted to the right and talks to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict all but stalled.

Despite being on trial for corruption and breach of trust, charges he denies, and undeterred by his failure to secure a majority government in four straight elections, Netanyahu has vowed to make a comeback.

As opposition leader and head of the right-wing Likud party, the largest in parliament, the 73-year-old with a reputation as a wily strategist has worked to exploit divisions in the coalition.

The unlikely post-Netanyahu government included religious nationalists, centrists, left-wingers and - for the first time in Israeli history - an independent Arab party.

Netanyahu brought them



Two girls pose for a 'selfie' before a camper wagon showing an Israeli Likud party electoral banner depicting its leader Benjamin Netanyahu, before a campaign rally in Israeli city of Migdal HaEmek on Sunday (AFP)

This election is perhaps the most critical because Benjamin Netanyahu has allied himself with a racist party, and this could be disaster for Israeli democracy

GAYIL TALSHIR

down by ordering his parliamentary allies to vote against a measure even though they all ideologically backed it: a bill ensuring that Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank could live under Israeli law. The Likud chief correctly bet that the coalition, deeply divided over the occupation, would crack over the issue.

'Critical election'

Naftali Bennett stepped down as premier in June, saying his gov-

ernment was no longer tenable. Foreign Minister Yair Lapid took over as caretaker premier, and elections were called for November 1. While the coalition's collapse marked a clear tactical victory for Netanyahu, polls show that he and his allies may once more struggle to secure a 61-seat majority in the Knesset.

Crucially, there appears no path towards a Netanyahu-led government without support from an extreme-right alliance

known as Religious Zionism.

That bloc includes Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has a history of using incendiary anti-Arab rhetoric and has voiced admiration for Baruch Goldstein, the mass murderer of Palestinians in the West Bank city of Hebron in 1994.

"This election is perhaps the most critical because Netanyahu has allied himself with a racist party, and this could be disaster for Israeli democracy," said Gayil Talshir, a political scientist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"The result could be the most extreme, right-wing government that Israel has ever had," she told AFP.

Lapid, a 58-year-old former television presenter who leads the centrist Yesh Atid party, has

seen signs of rising support during his brief tenure as interim prime minister.

He hosted US President Joe Biden, met France's Emmanuel Macron in Paris and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin, and clinched a maritime border deal with hostile northern neighbour Lebanon. Lapid also oversaw a three-day army operation against Islamic Jihad fighters in the blockaded Gaza Strip that, in the eyes of many Israelis, was successful.

"Lapid chose to observe this election from above, from the prime minister's bureau," wrote columnist Nahum Barnea in the leading daily *Yediot Ahronot*.

"He chose to let everyone else scurry about, perspire, get their hands dirty and make mistakes, while he played the role of the responsible adult.

"That restrained stance helped boost Yesh Atid in the polls, but it didn't help the anti-Bibi bloc."

Polls late last week showed Yesh Atid set to win 24 seats, which would be a record for the party as an individual list.

But the anti-Netanyahu bloc's path to 61 seats also remains cloudy and would almost certainly require another fragile agreement among ideological opponents. Under Israel's system of proportional representation, lists need to cross a threshold of 3.25 per cent of the vote to secure the minimum four seats - a hurdle that can derail coalition calculations.

AFP



A rickshaw makes its way along a street during a rain shower in Faridpur, in Bangladesh on Monday (AFP)

Cyclone: Thousands of people evacuated in Bangladesh

Barisal, Bangladesh - Hundreds of thousands of people were being evacuated on Monday from the path of a cyclone careening towards densely populated, low-lying Bangladesh, according to officials.

About 33,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, controversially relocated to a storm-prone island in the Bay of Bengal, were also advised to remain indoors. Cyclones - the equivalent of hurricanes in the North Atlantic or typhoons in the Northwest Pacific - are a regular and deadly menace on the coast of the northern Indian Ocean where tens of millions of people live.

But scientists say climate change is likely making them more intense and frequent, and Bangladesh is already rated by the UN as one of the countries most affected by extreme weather events since the turn of the century. Cyclone Sitrang, packing gusts of 88km per hour, was forecast to make landfall near the southern Bangladeshi town of Khepupara by Tuesday morning, the weather office said.

Most worrying for authorities was the predicted storm surge of up to three metres (10 feet) above normal tide levels, which could inundate areas home to millions of people.

Officials in the coastal districts of Patuakhali, Bhola, Barguna and Jhalakathi told AFP that up to 400,000 people would be evacuated from vulnerable villages and islands into shelters. "We have a plan to evacuate some 250,000 people. There are 703 cyclone shelters in the district and many multi-storied buildings. We will complete the evacuation by tonight," Patuakhali district administrator Kamal Hossain told AFP. The Red Crescent Society has mobilised tens of thousands of volunteers to use loudhailers to alert people and help villagers evacuate. The newly formed silt island of Bhashan Char, where Bangladesh has been relocating Rohingya refugees to alleviate camp overcrowding, was also expected to be hit by heavy rains and strong winds.

AFP

Jailed activist to be released in Egypt

Cairo, Egypt - Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has pardoned a former parliamentarian, lawyer and key activist from the 2011 revolt who has been jailed for the past three years, officials said on Monday.

Zyad el-Elaimy, 42, arrested in June 2019 on charges of fomenting 'unrest against the state', was sentenced to a year in prison in March 2020 for 'spreading false news' after an interview with the BBC.

'A presidential pardon has been granted' for Elaimy, lawyer Tariq Al-Awadi, a member of the pardon committee, said on social media.

Ikram el-Elaimy, the activist's mother, said she had not been officially informed of the pardon.

He is the latest in a string of prisoners to have been pardoned, with his release ordered as Egypt readies to host the United Nations COP27 climate summit next month.

Elaimy, a symbol of the 2011 revolt that ousted president Hosni Mubarak, was subsequently elected as a member of parliament for the Social Democratic Party.

A secular activist, Elaimy told AFP in 2015 that he dreamt of seeing the slogans 'bread, freedom, social justice, human dignity' become reality.

Cairo has faced frequent criticism of its rights record under Sisi, who ousted late Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013 and was elected president the following year.

Advocacy groups say there are currently about 60,000 political prisoners in the country, a number Cairo rejects.

AFP

Pakistan journalist dies in alleged police shooting in Kenya

Nairobi, Kenya - A top Pakistani news anchor was shot dead in Kenya - allegedly by police - just months after he fled his home country to avoid sedition charges, investigators said on Monday.

Arshad Sharif was a frequent critic of Pakistan's powerful military establishment and supporter of former prime minister Imran Khan, who was ousted in a parliamentary no-confidence vote in April.

"There is an alleged police killing of a Pakistani national," Ann Makori, head of the Independent Police Oversight Authority in Nairobi, told reporters on Monday.



This file photo shows Pakistani news anchor Arshad Sharif speaking during an event in Islamabad on June 22, 2022 (AFP)

"Our rapid response team has already been dispatched to investigate the killing of the journalist."

According to a police report seen by AFP, a car carrying

Sharif and another man was struck by around nine rounds on Sunday night as it crossed a makeshift roadblock in a remote area some 40km (25 miles) away from the Kenyan capital Nairobi.

The report did not say who fired at the car, but said the pair carried on to the home of another Pakistani national.

There, Sharif was found to be dead 'with a gunshot wound on the head which had penetrated from the back'.

The report said police at the time had been on the lookout for a stolen car and an abducted person. It did not say how this may have been connected to

Sharif's death.

In August, Sharif interviewed senior opposition politician Shahbaz Gill, who said that junior officers in Pakistan's armed forces should not follow orders that went against 'the will of the majority'.

The comment led to the news channel being briefly taken off air and an arrest warrant issued for Sharif, who fled the country.

The channel ARY later said it had 'cut ties' with him.

Gill was detained following the interview, and Khan's criticism of the judiciary for the detention led to his own appearance in court.

Pakistan has been ruled by the military for several decades of its 75-year history and criticism of the security establishment has long been seen as a red line.

"I lost friend, husband and my favourite journalist today, as per police he was shot in Kenya," Sharif's wife Javeria Siddique tweeted on Monday.

Pakistan's foreign ministry confirmed the death.

Pakistan is ranked 157 out of 180 countries in a press freedom index compiled by Reporters without Borders, with journalists facing censorship and intimidation.

AFP

Aid slowly reaches victims of Nigeria's worst floods

Ahoada, Nigeria - Along a highway engulfed by dark waters, Nigeria residents load dozens of boats full of food to bring assistance to the victims of the country's worst floods in a decade.

Waiting by the waterside, past the many half-submerged trucks, Bolaji Phillips looks on next to his vehicle, which is filled with cassava flour, rice and noodles.

"My wife and I consulted and decided to withdraw our savings, the little we have, to do something for the people," the 40-year-old said.

Aid is slowly coming to southern Nigeria after the biggest floods since 2012 killed more than 600 people and affected nearly three million others, according to official figures.

Many have fled their homes, including to overcrowded displacement camps. The others, completely cut off from the world, remain in communities swallowed by the waters.

Efforts now focus on passing



Naval boat with officials of Red Cross and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) arrive to rescue residents of Ula-Ikata community submerged by flood at Ahoada district of Rivers State on Saturday (AFP)

the damaged and partly impassable highway linking Rivers and Bayelsa states - among the two most devastated regions.

Near the town of Ahoada, volunteers and NGOs are doing vital work until official aid slowly reaches the most destitute.

"The damage is enormous. The government has not done much so far. We are totally alone," said Winner Written, a 32-year-old entrepreneur among those helping out.

"We are just individuals trying to help one another."

'Suffering'

Over the weekend, volunteers loaded precious fuel in yellow jerrycans onto the boats heading to flooded villages.

Rivers State authorities have allocated one billion naira (US\$2.3mn) to help victims, es-

pecially around Ahoada, one of the worst hit.

The United States said it has donated US\$1mn in humanitarian aid.

The damage is enormous. The government has not done much so far. We are totally alone...just individuals trying to help one another

WINNER WRITTEN

Rescue officials said they have started delivering 12,000 tonnes of food across the country after the aid was approved by President Muhammadu Buhari.

But on the ground, few have seen the results of these efforts so far.

Supplying food is almost impossible, hampered by strong currents or waters that are strewn with obstacles or choked with vegetation, and aid coordination is hindered by lack of mobile coverage in remote areas.

In a black tank top, Jeremy Ogboka, 35, lends a hand on a section of the half-flooded highway. "Right here, one of the speedboats capsized. Luckily, we saved them all," he said.

"We help as we can but nobody pays us. So many people are suffering. It's been two weeks the road is blocked."

Using two speedboats the Nigerian navy in the area has provided security and transport for facilitating humanitarian aid.

A rescue mission headed this weekend to the remote areas ferrying members of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and sailors to bring aid and evacuate those they could.

AFP

DEMBELE'S DAY

Silky Barcelona destroy returning manager Ernesto Valverde’s Athletic Bilbao

Barcelona, Spain - Ousmane Dembele scored and laid on a hat-trick of assists as Barcelona ripped apart Athletic Bilbao in a 4-0 win in La Liga on Sunday, to stay three points behind leaders Real Madrid.

The French winger was at his thrilling best after being brought back into the side and challenged to make the difference by his coach Xavi Hernandez, ruining former Barca manager Ernesto Valverde’s return to Camp Nou. Dembele netted the opener and then created goals for Sergi Roberto and Robert Lewandowski in the first half as Barcelona danced around Athletic. Ferran Torres fired home in the second half after Dembele found him in the area to complete the drubbing.

“It’s the life wingers have, ups and downs, they have to go for it, it’s what I always say,” said Xavi. “Some days it works, others not, but they have to go for it. Ousmane made the difference.”

It was Valverde’s first game facing Barcelona since being

sacked in January 2020 after winning two league titles, but it did not go to plan for him.

“It’s been a horrible day because we lost 4-0,” said the coach. “They punished us today.”

Just as three goals in an eight-minute spell helped Barcelona vanquish Villarreal on Thursday, another quick-fire treble killed off Athletic.

“We came out very strongly, we knew that they are intense and we had to match them,” captain Sergio Busquets told Movistar. “We overpowered them in the middle and we were accurate.

“I am sure Xavi is happy. The objective is to win and to do it in a complete way, playing well. This elevates the level of the team.”

Xavi selected Pedri to operate on the left of the attack in his 4-3-3 formation, as Barcelona legend Andres Iniesta did on occasion - giving further credence to the already frequent comparisons between the two.

It increased the team’s fluidity, as did a double pivot of Bus-

quets and Frenkie de Jong, although the star dust was added by Dembele.

The French winger took the game by the scruff of the neck in the opening stages and it was no

It’s the life wingers have, ups and downs, they’ve to go for it, it’s what I always say. Some days it works, others not, but they’ve to go for it. Ousmane made the difference

XAVI HERNANDEZ



surprise when he broke the deadlock in the 12th minute.

Dembele’s long-range strike was parried by Unai Simon, but Barcelona kept the move alive and Lewandowski whipped in a cross for him to head home.

Barcelona doubled their lead six minutes later, when Roberto played a one-two with Dembele, receiving the Frenchman’s perfectly weighed pass and firing a deflected effort past Simon.

AFP



Barcelona’s Ousmane Dembele celebrates after scoring against Athletic Bilbao in their Spanish league match at Camp Nou on Sunday (AFP)

Conte claims Tottenham can’t stand the schedule as Newcastle move into top four

London, United Kingdom - Tottenham boss Antonio Conte claimed he does not have the strength in depth to compete for the Premier League title after Newcastle’s 2-1 win ended Spurs’ perfect home record this season on Sunday.

A second damaging defeat in five days for Conte’s men leaves them five points adrift of leaders Arsenal, having played a game more than the Gunners.

Newcastle moved into the top four and only two points behind third-placed Tottenham thanks to first-half goals from Callum Wilson and Miguel Almiron.

Harry Kane pulled a goal back for the home side after the break, but it was not enough to prevent a first defeat in 11 games at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Conte rubbished suggestions his side could challenge for a first league title since 1961 after being



Newcastle United’s Miguel Almiron celebrates his goal against Tottenham

thoroughly outplayed in a 2-0 defeat to Manchester United on Wednesday.

Spurs are seven games into a

run of 13 matches in 43 days.

And without the injured Cristian Romero, Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg, Richarlison and Dejan

Kulusevki, the Italian said the fallibilities of his squad were exposed.

“The squad doesn’t allow to lose four players in this moment,” said Conte.

Newcastle laid down a marker in the battle for a place in next season’s Champions League as Eddie Howe’s men edged ahead of Chelsea and Manchester United.

Backed by the Saudi sovereign wealth fund, Howe will be given further resources to strengthen in the January window, posing a major threat to the traditional powers for a place in the top four.

But the Newcastle boss claimed putting his side’s rise down the club’s new-found wealth is unfair on the efforts of his players, many of whom were signed before the Saudi takeover.

AFP

Baena sent off for tribute to late Villarreal vice-president

Barcelona, Spain - Villarreal winger Alex Baena was sent off for lifting his shirt to reveal a tribute message to late club vice-president Jose Manuel Llaneza during a 2-1 win over Almeria in La Liga on Sunday.

Llaneza passed away on Thursday after a battle with leukaemia and Baena, who scored the equaliser in his team’s win, wanted to pay tribute.

He lifted up his shirt and revealed another underneath on which there was a message, reading: “Thanks for everything, Llaneza.”

Referee Ricardo de Burgos Bengoetxea issued him a second yellow card, leaving Villarreal with 10 men.

Despite their disadvantage, the hosts still managed to snatch the three points thanks to Nicolas Jackson’s 94th-minute goal.

“This shirt is worth a million



Alex Baena lifts his shirt to reveal the tribute to late Jose Manuel Llaneza

sending-offs,” wrote Villarreal on Twitter at the end of the game, posting a photo of Baena displaying the message.

There was a minute’s silence for Llaneza before the game, as there had been at Camp Nou when Barcelona beat Villarreal 3-

0 on Thursday.

“His loss hurts a lot,” said Villarreal president Fernando Roig on Movistar. “We have gone through many difficult moments (together) and all of the Villarreal family will remember him for all our lives.”

Osimhen fires unbeaten Napoli past Roma and three points clear

Milan, Italy - Victor Osimhen extended Napoli’s lead at the top of Serie A to three points on Sunday with the only goal in a hard-fought 1-0 win at Roma, their 11th on the bounce in all competitions.

Nigeria forward Osimhen crashed in his third goal is as many games in all competitions with 10 minutes remaining of his first start since early September to hand Napoli a win at one of their fiercest rivals.

Luciano Spalletti’s side took advantage of Atalanta’s 2-0 home defeat to Lazio earlier on Sunday to move further ahead of the pack and become the only unbeaten side left in Italy’s top flight.

Napoli’s nearest challengers

are now reigning champions AC Milan following their 4-1 thumping of Monza on Saturday.

Roma are seven points back in fifth after a dogged, battling performance at the Stadio Olimpico which lacked in invention and but largely kept a lid on possibly Europe’s most exciting team.

“I think we did enough to merit a draw tonight,” said coach Jose Mourinho.

“I wanted to win in the same way they won the game. A couple of shots on target and a goal to win it.”

Without injured Paulo Dybala, Roma didn’t have a single shot on target and were saved from going behind five minutes before the break when referee Massimiliano Irrati overturned his own decision



Napoli’s Victor Osimhen scores against Roma in their Italian Serie A match in Rome on Sunday (AFP)

to award Napoli a penalty for a foul Tanguy Ndombele by Roma goalkeeper Rui Patricio.

Eljif Elmas was denied a close-range tap-in on the hour mark by a magnificent Chris Smalling block and from the resulting corner ex-Roma man Juan Jesus slashed wide after being set up perfectly by Osimhen.

Osimhen then dragged a colossal chance wide with just Patricio to beat after a lightning Napoli counter-attack in the 70th minute.

But the 23-year-old rattled in a much more difficult effort 10 minutes later, charging on to Matteo Politano’s booted long pass before holding off Smalling and claiming the three points with a rocket of a finish.

Lazio in the mix

Atalanta had the chance to move a point in front of Napoli ahead of their win at Roma but Lazio put in the perfect away performance without injured Italy striker Ciro Immobile to move into the top four.

Mattia Zaccagni’s tap-in at the end of a beautifully-worked team move put Lazio ahead in the 10th minute at the Gewiss Stadium.

And Felipe Anderson, replacing Immobile in a false nine forward role, ensured Lazio would leapfrog Atalanta into third place when he drilled in the away side’s second eight minutes after the break following a burst down the left from Adam Marusic.

AFP



Red Bull Racing's Max Verstappen in action at the Formula One United States Grand Prix in Austin, Texas, on Sunday (AFP)

MAX UNMATCHED

Verstappen wins USA Grand Prix, Red Bull take constructors' title

Austin, United States - World champion Max Verstappen clinched an emotional constructors' world championship for Red Bull on Sunday when he claimed a record-equalling 13th win this year at the United States Grand Prix.

Twenty-four hours after learning of the death of Red Bull founder and co-owner Dieter Mateschitz, the 25-year-old Dutchman claimed the 33rd victory of his career after a thrilling late battle with seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes.

In front of a passionate crowd at the Circuit of the Americas, Verstappen came home 5.023 seconds clear of Hamilton with Charles Leclerc finishing third for Ferrari ahead of Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull.

"Of course, it's a very difficult weekend for us and this one is definitely dedicated to Dietrich himself for what he has done for everyone," said Verstappen. "We had a big chance to win



Max Verstappen celebrates after winning the Formula One United States Grand Prix on Sunday (AFP)

the 'constructors' here and of course you want to do that in style and I think we did that today. "It definitely means a lot to me, to the team, because he (Dietrich) was so instrumental to the whole team," he added. George Russell finished fifth in

the second Mercedes ahead of Lando Norris of McLaren, two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Alpine, four-time champion Sebastian Vettel of Aston Martin, Kevin Magnussen of Haas and Alpha Tauri's Yuki Tsunoda. "I gave it everything," said

Hamilton, who remains without a win this year for the first time in his career. "I did everything I could to stay ahead, but they were just a little quicker... Great strategy, great race by Red Bull - and my condolences to the team," he added.

"I'm shattered. The car was a handful today. It felt amazing to be in the lead. That's something we have worked so hard on as a team through the year.

"I had so much hope. We will keep pushing, we'll try to give it everything we can in the next three. It will come to us at some stage."

The race began in perfect conditions but with a sombre atmosphere pervading the paddock and pit lane following the death on Saturday of Red Bull founder Mateschitz.

As a result, any announcement on Red Bull's fate for their budget cap breach last year were put "on hold until further notice" with talks expected to pick up again next week.

A minute's applause in tribute to Mateschitz preceded the pre-race anthem before the lights went out and Verstappen quickly seized the initiative as Carlos Sainz struggled to depart from pole. AFP



Fernando Alonso

Franchitti calls for FIA clampdown, says Alonso lucky to be alive

Austin, United States - Four-time IndyCar champion Dario Franchitti on Monday warned that Fernando Alonso was lucky to survive a high-speed crash in Sunday's United States Grand Prix - and called for a clampdown on dangerous driving.

In the wake of double world champion Max Verstappen's emotional triumph, dedicated to team founder and co-owner Dieter Mateschitz, which clinched the constructors' title for Red Bull, much focus switched to the dangers of an incident-filled race.

In particular, in a race that featured two Safety Car interventions and several high-speed duels, many seasoned observers drew attention to late defensive moves at high speed.

"These late changes of direction on the straight are going to kill someone," said Franchitti, a Scot who won the IndyCar series in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011 and the Indianapolis 500 in 2007, 2010 and 2012.

Writing on Twitter, he added: "FIA, time to sort out this behaviour once and for all. It has bled down to junior for-

mula too." Franchitti referred directly to the incident on lap 22 of the 56 lap race when Aston Martin's Lance Stroll jinked ahead of his future team-mate, two-time world champion Fernando Alonso, causing the Alpine driver to hit the rear of his car.

These late changes of direction on the straight are going to kill someone

DARIO FRANCHITTI

The Spaniard was then launched airborne by Stroll's rear wheels and skewed into a frightening brush with the barriers at high speed, escaping unhurt and able to re-join the race after a pit-stop.

Stroll retired from the race and was later given a three-race grid penalty for this week's Mexican Grand Prix (Oct 30).

Alonso, 41, admitted he had been frightened by his experience. AFP

Rory McIlroy regains World No. 1 ranking with CJ Cup win

Washington, United States - Rory McIlroy held on for a one-stroke victory in the US PGA Tour CJ Cup on Sunday to return to the top of the world rankings for the ninth time in his career.

Three late birdies proved crucial when the Northern Ireland star bogeyed the last two holes but still edged American Kurt Kitayama.

The four-time major winner is back atop the rankings for the first time since July 2020 -- when he was supplanted by Spain's Jon Rahm.

He ousted American Scottie Scheffler, who finished tied for

45th on Sunday to see his 30-week stint at the summit end.

"It means a lot," McIlroy said, with a little catch in his throat.

"You know, this tournament last year was the start of me trying to build myself back up to this point. I had a really rough Ryder Cup. I've talked about that at length.

"I think I was outside the top-10 in the world. It's not a position that I'm used to being in.

"I just think about everyone that has made a difference in my life, obviously, not over the last 12 months, but ever."

McIlroy defended the CJ Cup

title he claimed last year in Las Vegas. The tournament has been moved from South Korea for three straight years because of travel restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic.

He notched a 23rd career PGA Tour title, and continued to show the strong form of his 2021-22 campaign, in which he won a record third FedEx Cup playoff crown and finished in the top eight at all four majors.

But McIlroy acknowledged it hadn't been a steady climb over the past 12 months, during which he has also emerged as a strong voice supporting the US PGA

Tour amid the emergence of the rival LIV Golf Series.

He said if someone had told him when he missed the cut at the Texas Open in March he'd be No. 1 in October, "I would have asked them what they were smoking."

"It has just been a wild six months," McIlroy said. "Now it's all about going forward and trying to just keep this going.

"It's a lot to process right now just with everything, but just really proud of myself with how I handled this week knowing what was at stake."

AFP



Rory McIlroy celebrates with the trophy after winning the CJ Cup in Ridgeland, South Carolina, on Sunday (AFP)

'No chance' Halep purposely took drugs, says former coach Cahill

Sydney, Australia - Darren Cahill, a renowned coach who helped Simona Halep to Grand Slam glory, said Monday there was "no chance, none, zero," that the former world number one purposely took drugs.

The Romanian was provisionally suspended at the weekend for taking the banned substance roxadustat after she provided a sample at the US Open.

Halep insisted she would "fight until the end" to prove her innocence with the result "the biggest shock of my life".

The 2018 French Open and 2019 Wimbledon champion is



Simona Halep

the highest-profile player to fail a drugs test since Maria Sharapova in 2016.

Australian Cahill, who guided

gram post.

"Firstly, and most importantly, there is NO chance Simona knowingly or purposely took any

Simona wore out the words 'please double check this, triple check this to make sure it's legal, safe and permitted. If you are not sure, I'm not taking it

DARREN CAHILL

Halep to world number one in 2017 and her Roland Garros crown in a six-year alliance, leapt to her defence in a lengthy Insta-

substance on the banned list. None. Zero," he wrote.

"She is an athlete that stressed about anything pre-

scribed to her by a medical professional (which was rarely), or about any supplement that she used or considered.

"Simona wore out the words 'please double check this, triple check this to make sure it's legal, safe and permitted. If you are not sure, I'm not taking it.'"

He said they both strongly believed in the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) testing programme and would often discuss the number of times she was tested.

"She did it without complaint, with the reassurance of knowing other athletes were being tested

just as frequently.

"Competing against clean athletes was important to her. It's important to everyone and while the system is not perfect, it works."

He added that her integrity was "faultless", ending: "I stand with Simo."

The ITIA, which oversees tennis' anti-doping programme, said it had informed her on October 7 of her provisional suspension.

It said Halep had exercised her right to have her 'B' sample analysed, which confirmed the presence of roxadustat. AFP



GOING GAGA OVER KOHLI

Virat Kohli's incredible innings against Pakistan in Melbourne one of India's greatest, says captain Rohit Sharma

Melbourne, Australia - Skipper Rohit Sharma ranked Virat Kohli's match-winning exploits against Pakistan as not just his best-ever innings but one of the greatest in Indian cricket history, with the superstar batsman admitting he had never experienced such emotion.

Former captain Kohli lit up the T20 World Cup on Sunday with an unbeaten 82 that steered his team to an incredible last-ball win in front of 90,000 fervent drum-beating fans at a pumping Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

Kohli was in tears at the end, overcome by the occasion, with Sharma hailing his cool head.

"Definitely his best for sure, but I think from the situation we were in, and to come out with a victory, I think it has to be one of India's best knocks," said Sharma of Kohli's 53-ball effort.

"Because until the 13th over we were so behind the game, and the required rate was just climbing up and up.

"But to come out and chase that score was an extremely brilliant effort from Virat, and then obviously Hardik (Pandya) played a role there as well."

India's task looked almost impossible when they were 45-4 at the halfway point of their chase of 160 to win.

But Kohli and Pandya put on a century stand to keep hopes alive though India still needed 28 from the last eight balls.

Kohli then smacked two huge sixes off Haris Rauf, one an extraordinary drive straight back

To come out and chase that score was an extremely brilliant effort from Virat

ROHIT SHARMA

over the bowler's head, to reduce the chase to 16 off the final over.

It was bowled by Mohammad Nawaz and turned out to be one of the most remarkable overs seen in cricket with two wickets, two wides, a no-ball, a six and high drama as the atmosphere hit fever pitch and the noise became deafening.

First Pandya's attempted slog was caught at cover before a single from Dinesh Karthik put Kohli



India captain Rohit Sharma lifts Virat Kohli as they celebrate their victory against Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday (AFP)

back on strike.

India still needed 15 off four balls, which Kohli reduced to 13 off three with two to long on be-

fore the chaotic conclusion.

Kohli smashed a full toss - which was called a no-ball - for six leaving six to win off three

balls, Kohli on strike with a free-hit. Nawaz bowled a wide, meaning the next ball was still a free-hit. Kohli was bowled but still

managed to scamper for three byes as the ball ricocheted off the stumps.

Karthik, back on strike, was

TODAY'S MATCH



AUSTRALIA
vs SRI LANKA

stumped down the leg side leaving Ashwin to face the final ball with two still needed.

Nawaz went legside for another wide before Ashwin chipped the winning run off the final ball to end an over - and a match - that had it all.

'I am numb'

"It is one of the most memorable nights for sure. I have played for 15 years, but never experienced emotions like this," admitted Kohli on the BCCI website.

"The last time I experienced something like this was against Australia in Mohali (at the 2016 T20 World Cup).

"I was a bit emotional then but now I am numb, maybe because that was the quarter-final for us, this is the first game."

AFP

Ahmed stars in Bangladesh's first Super 12 win

Hobart, Australia - Bangladesh won their first-ever game in a Twenty20 World Cup Super 12 Monday, with Taskin Ahmed taking 4-25 as the Netherlands imploded early and never recovered, losing by nine runs.

The Dutch, who battled through the preliminary round to reach the Super 12, held the Asian nation to 144-8 with Paul van Meekeren becoming his country's joint all-time T20 wicket-taker along the way.

But they got off to a horror start in the run chase, losing two wickets off the first two balls to Ahmed then suffered two run-outs in one over to slump to 15-4 in cold conditions at Hobart.

Colin Ackermann with 62 played a lone hand, making his maiden T20 half-century as the



Bangladesh's Taskin Ahmed (R) celebrates the wicket of Netherlands' Bas de Leede at Bellerive Oval in Hobart on Monday (AFP)

Netherlands were all out for 135 on the final ball.

Veteran Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan has played in

every edition of the World Cup since its inception in 2007 and this was his first Super 12 victory.

"It was an important win, I've played all editions but haven't won and that was on the back of my mind," he said.

"Taskin has been a good bowler for us, he has the experience and pace.

"Most of the fielders in our team are agile and quick, in the field we can save five to 10 runs, and that could be the big difference."

Defeat was a heavy blow for the Dutch with two points desperately needed in a group that features heavyweights India, Pakistan and South Africa.

But it was a relief for Bangladesh, who had suffered from poor form since the 2021 World Cup, playing 19 T20 internationals and losing 14.

AFP

Rain forces washout of South Africa vs Zimbabwe clash

Hobart, Australia - Rain had the final say in a Twenty20 World Cup match between South Africa and Zimbabwe after the Proteas looked on course for a likely win on Monday.

Chasing a rain-revised target of 64 in seven overs, Quinton de Kock smashed an unbeaten 47 to steer the team to 51 for no loss in three overs when rain stopped play for the final time in Hobart.

Umpires tried their best to complete the Super 12 encounter but the final rain interruption forced the players off the ground and a disappointed de Kock shook hands with the opposition.

AFP

Australia 'hard to stop' despite opening defeat, says Marsh

Perth, Australia - All-rounder Mitchell Marsh said Monday that defending champions Australia were confident of bouncing back from their opening defeat at the T20 World Cup declaring: "Our best is the best in the world".

The hosts suffered a crushing loss by 89 runs to New Zealand in the tournament opener on Saturday and face Sri Lanka, who won their first match of the Super 12, in Perth on Tuesday.

Marsh said Australia would keep faith with the same eleven to turn their fortunes around.

"I think that we've got a lot of confidence in our group that once we get on a roll we're going to be very hard to stop," Marsh said.

"Obviously we didn't start well the other night, but we've got great self-belief.



Mitchell Marsh

"We know our best is the best in the world. So hopefully, we can turn it around against Sri Lanka.

"(It's) the nature of the tournament. You lose one game, your back is up against the wall. Hopefully we play well, get past that. Then we move on to England."

AFP

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MANAGEMENT OF URETHRAL STRICTURES

What is urethral stricture?
In males it is narrowed segment of the urethra due to a process of fibrosis, whereas in females is defined as fixed anatomical narrowing. In general, the normal urethral calibre is 6-10mm, whereas urethral calibre of <5 mm is diagnostic of urethral stricture.

How common is urethral stricture?
In males, strictures increase after the age of 45 years. The incidence is estimated to be 229-627 per 100,000 males. The anterior urethra is most frequently affected (92%), in particular the bulbar urethra (47%). In female urethral stricture occurs in 0.08-5.4% of women with refractory Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms (LUTS). There is a markedly increased incidence in women over 64 years of age. In children, most strictures are trauma related.

What is the impact of urethral stricture?
Urethral stricture disease adversely impacts physical health and quality of life, notwithstanding costs associated with the treatment of primary and recurrent disease.

What are the causes of urethral stricture?
In males, infective urethritis accounts for 0.9% to 3.7% of cases in well-resourced countries and 41.6% in low-resourced countries. Lichen Sclerosus (inflammatory disease) is a common cause of para-urethral stricture disease accounting for 48.6%. Uncircumcised men are far more likely to suffer Lichen Sclerosus than circumcised men.

External trauma to the urethra due to sport, driving a vehicle, sexual intercourse and during combat, straddle injuries or kicks to the perineum, and penile fracture is associated with a urethral injury in 15% of cases. However, motor vehicle accidents are the main cause of blunt injuries to the posterior urethra associated with pelvic fractures. There are many more causes, from iatrogenic urethral injury to idiopathic strictures and effects of radiation therapy in females.

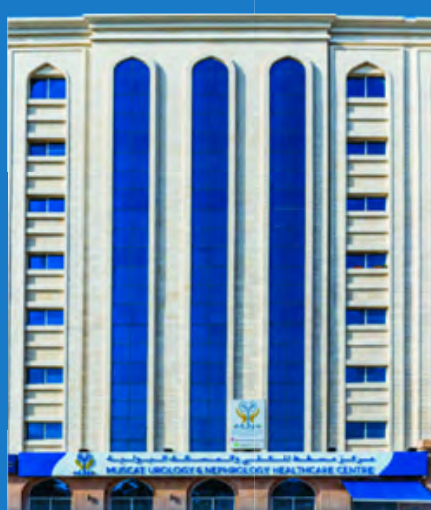
What are the management options for urethral stricture?
In general, it is advised to the public to have safe sexual practices, recognise symptoms of sexually transmitted infection, and get treatment for men with urethritis. Also, avoid using non-coated latex catheters if indicated to reduce urethral irritation.

In males, the options of management include observation, urethral dilatation, stricture cutting and open surgery. Observation is considered in the presence of stricture without symptoms and involves no intervention but regular follow-up. Dilatation of stricture can be done by metal dilators or balloon dilators. Cutting of the stricture from inside the urethra by cold knife (direct vision internal urethrotomy) or by laser (laser urethrotomy) under anaesthesia is an option for dense strictures. Some patients are advised to perform intermittent self-dilatation to stabilise the stricture after dilatation or direct vision internal urethrotomy. Open surgery (urethroplasty) gives the best potency rates if performed by experienced surgeon.

In females the options of management of urethral stricture include dilatation, cutting (urethrotomy) or repair of the urethral opening (meatoplasty). Urethral dilatation is done by dilating the urethra up to 30 Fr by metal dilators, followed by intermittent self-dilatation. Meatal stenosis is extremely rare (3%) and treated by meatoplasty. Finally open surgery (urethroplasty) can be used for complex strictures.

In both males and females managing urethral stricture by catheter placed through the abdomen directly to the bladder can be the only option in patients with radiation-induced strictures.

All the above mentioned options of treatment of urethral stricture in males and females are available at Muscat Urology & Nephrology Centre.



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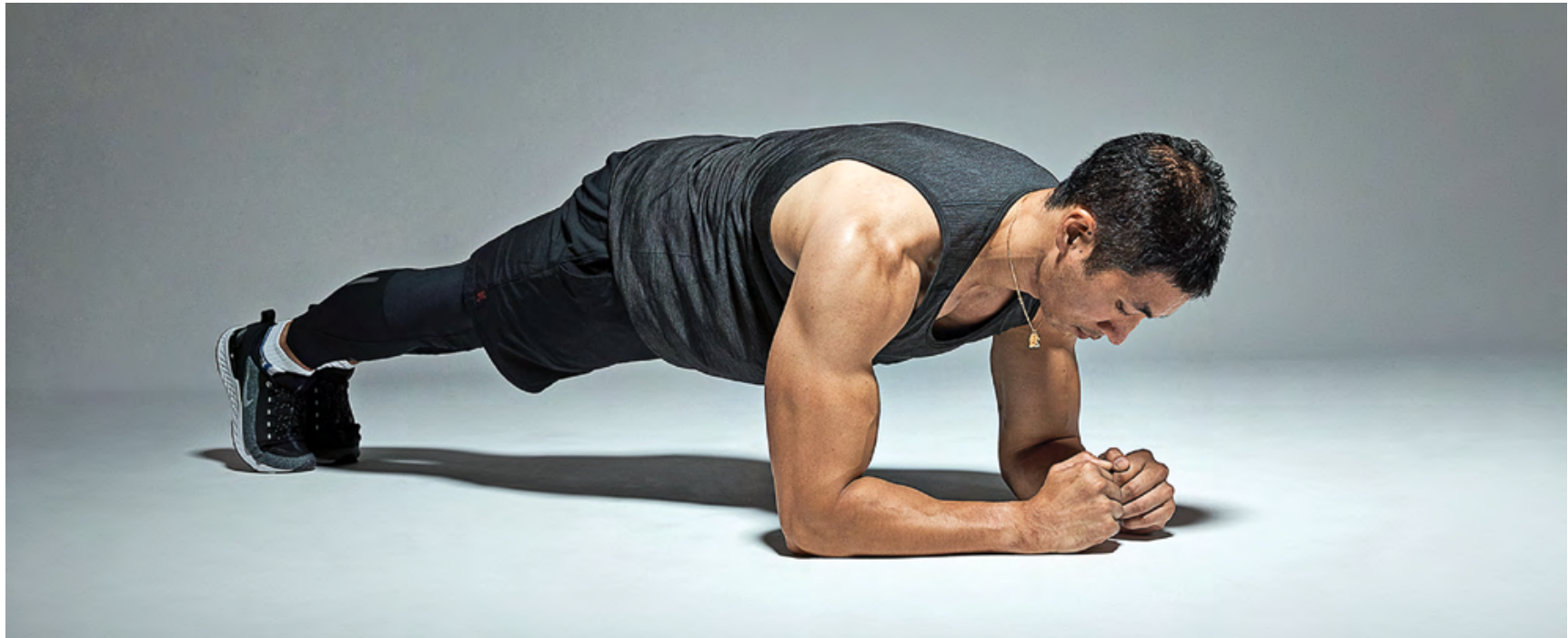
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PILATES

MOBILISE YOUR BACK



Looking for a simple, effective workout you can do at home? This quick pilates workout focuses on back mobility and glute strength, which is particularly important if you spend a lot of time everyday sitting down.

During the workout, remember to move as your body wants to, go at your own pace, and breathe deeply in time with each movement. So, don some comfy clothes, choose a spot with plenty of space around you, and grab a mat or towel to cushion you.

Neck and spine stretches
Drop your chin to your chest, then slowly raise it to the ceiling – repeat 5 times
Lower your chin to chest as you curve your spine forwards.

Place your hands on your thighs as you lift your chin and extend your spine.
Then drop your body down to a forward fold before slowly rolling up to a standing position – repeat 3 more times.
Drop your chin to your chest and slowly roll down to a forward fold. Roll up the way you came, before lifting your chin and sticking your chest out at the top – repeat once more.

Planks
From standing, roll your body down once again and walk your hands out in front to a plank.
Hold your plank position with a straight back for 20 seconds.
Then drop your right knee down, followed by your left.

Elbow to knee stretch
From an all-fours position, reach your right arm forwards. Then tuck your chin under, bringing your elbow underneath you and curving your spine as much as possible – perform this 4 times
For a challenge, reach your left leg back while you reach your right arm forwards, in a balance. Then bring both limbs underneath you at the same time, so your elbow touches your knee – do this 4 times altogether
Then repeat on the other side 4 times for each variation.

Side stretch
From all-fours, bring your left knee towards your right hand, tuck the back leg behind and sit down so you're facing the side of your mat.

Place your left hand or forearm down, stretch your right arm out and reach it up and over to the left, holding the side stretch for a few seconds. Then bring your arm back down the same way – do this 4 times in total.
For an extra challenge, you can add in a twist. Come into the side stretch, twist your upper body to the left and place your right hand or forearm on the floor – do this 4 times.
Switch your legs around and perform each variation 4 times on the other side.

Glute stretch
Swing your legs around so you're facing the end of the mat with your legs bent. Tuck your tailbone under and roll down to lie on your back.

Tucking your tummy in, lift your pelvis slightly and squeeze your glutes up into a bridge. Hold for 10 seconds, and slowly roll your spine back down to the floor – do this 4 times.
For an added challenge, you can add in a leg raise. Once you're up in a bridge, raise your right leg straight up to the ceiling and hold for 5 seconds.
Then lower your leg down so it's parallel with your left leg, place your foot down, and slowly roll your spine down – do this 2 times on each side if you can.

leg up as you lift your head up towards your knee.
Hold for 15 seconds and bring your head down. Keep holding your leg up for another 5 seconds, before bringing your leg down too.
Perform this twice on each side.

Relaxation
Lying down, take a deep breath in, followed by a big deep breath out. With each breath, think about the weight of your body pressing into the floor. Feel how heavy your skull is, feel the shoulders pressing in towards the floor, feel the weight of the pelvis, and notice the ankles and wrists. Let everything sink into the mat.
Inhale deeply into your abdomen, and exhale deeply out. Then, squeeze your hands into a fist, hold, and relax your palms down – do this once again. Next, tense your glutes, hold, and release – do this one more time.
Finally, shrug your shoulders up to your ears, hold, and let go – repeat once again. Continue the deep, heavy breathing with big inhales and big exhales.



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SOMATIC STRETCHING

FEEL YOUR BODY

'Somatic stretching' is an effective way to listen to what your body has to tell you. It involves the release of muscular tension through gentle movements. So, if you tend to hold a lot of tension in your neck, lower back, or wrists (hello, desk workers), somatic stretching may be the practice you are looking for.

"Somatic movement is awareness or presence during movement, and being connected in your body," explains Rachelle Tsachor, an associate professor of theater movement at the University of Illinois in Chicago, who researches somatic movement. "It's an awareness and sensitivity to what's going on in the moment, in the movement," says Tsachor, who is also a movement therapist registered with the International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (ISMETA).

Over the years, our nervous system learns to keep certain muscles tight and move in certain ways as a result of stress, trauma, athletic training, injuries, and repetitive daily activities. Although this is meant as a protective mechanism - our muscles tighten so that we don't stretch them too far and injure them - it can eventually lead to suboptimal movement patterns and chronic pain, tightness, and soreness.

Somatic stretching requires you to tune in to how your muscles feel in any given movement or moment. The key to somatic stretching is learning to feel the sensation of tension in our muscles and other tissues that we've been conditioned to ignore.

You don't pull on anything or force any big movements - it can be as simple as letting your head hang and noticing how that feels for various muscles in your neck. Once you're able to tune in to how your muscles feel, you're able to actively contract and release them, which releases tension and increases mobility.

4 KEY SOMATIC STRETCHES

1 STANDING AWARENESS
Before you do any other somatic stretches, try simply standing and bringing awareness to various muscles in your body. Stand up straight with your feet rooted and notice how your feet grip the floor. Try to contract and release those foot muscles. Take deep breaths and notice how your abdominal muscles expand and contract, bringing awareness to how this feels.

2 HANG YOUR HEAD
Stand up straight, with your feet rooted on the floor. Slowly hang your head, letting it fall as far down as it will comfortably go. As you do, notice how the muscles in your neck are feeling. Also notice how that neck movement has affected nearby muscles,

joints, and tissues, like those in your shoulders and upper back. Identify an area that feels tense (for example, the back of your neck), and really explore (think about) how

arch your back, bringing your belly upward and pressing your glute muscles and feet into the floor. Stay here for as long as feels comfortable. Then, slowly lower your back and flatten it against the floor. Repeat the movement very slowly, scanning the muscles in your torso for any tension and trying to release it.

4 CARPAL TUNNEL EXERCISE
If you spend large portions of the day typing on a computer or other device, this exercise may help release tension that may be building in your waist, shoulders, chest, hands, and wrists. Lie on your left side with your legs bent at a 90 degree angle out in front of you and your head resting on your left arm (it can be bent or straight). Place your right hand on the ground, resting your upper arm on your body with your elbow bent at roughly a 90 degree angle. Move your right arm up and around your head, so that your right hand is near your left ear and your elbow points straight up. Gently guide your head up to the ceiling with your hand so that the right side of your waist contracts. (This is like a side crunch.) Notice those muscles contracting. When you're ready, release and move your head back down as slowly as you can. Repeat this once. With your right elbow facing to the ceiling, gently roll onto your back with your right arm behind your head. Bring your left arm out to the side. Crunch your right arm, right shoulder, and head upward and toward the left side of your body. Release and lower your head and shoulder as slowly as possible. Now, repeat all these movements on the other side.

3 ARCH AND FLATTEN
If you experience back pain, the 'arch and flatten' allows you to release and then regain control of the muscles in your lower back and abdominals. It's a slow movement done lying on the floor. Position feet flat on the floor hip-distance apart with knees bent. Take a deep breath, noticing how the muscles in your lower back and abdominals move as you do. Gently

that tension feels. Notice how it feels to settle into the stretch. Try to release some of the tension you feel.



Do you suffer from chest pain?

Chest pain syndromes

Chest pain is one of the leading reasons for adult emergency room visits. Properly identifying and treating dangerous and life-threatening causes of chest pain is, hence, critical. It is broadly categorised as chest pain, myocardial injury, and myocardial infarction. Chest pain symptoms have been labeled 'typical' or 'atypical'. However, chest pain syndromes can be divided into three categories - cardiac, possible cardiac, and non-cardiac, based on the 2021 chest pain guideline.

Angina (chest pain)

Angina is chest pain or discomfort caused when your heart muscle doesn't get enough oxygen-rich blood. It may feel like pressure or squeezing in your chest. The discomfort also can occur in your shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, abdomen or back. Angina pain may also feel like indigestion or cause shortness of breath or fatigue.

Angina is, however, not a disease. It's a symptom of an underlying heart problem, usually coronary heart disease (CHD), also known as coronary artery disease (CAD). There are many types of angina, including stable, unstable, microvascular, and angina caused by a spasm in the coronary arteries (vasospastic or variant). It usually happens because one or more of the coronary arteries is narrowed or blocked, also called ischemia.

Angina can also be a symptom

of coronary microvascular disease (MVD) affecting the heart's smallest coronary arteries.

Risks for angina

If you're at risk for heart disease or coronary artery disease, you're also at risk for angina. The major risk factors for heart disease and coronary artery disease include high blood pressure, unhealthy cholesterol levels, smoking, diabetes, overweight or obesity, metabolic syndrome, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, family history of early heart disease and older age (risks increases for men after 45 years and for women after 55 years).

Diagnosis

All chest pain should be checked out by a health care professional. He or she will want to find out if it's angina and if it is, whether the angina is stable or unstable. If it's unstable, you may need emergency medical treatment to try to prevent a heart attack.

Your health care professional will most likely perform a physical exam, ask about your symptoms and your risk factors based on family history and other cardiovascular conditions.

Treatment

If your health care professional thinks that you have unstable angina or that your angina is related to a serious heart condition, they may recommend EKG (Electrocardiogram), blood tests, stress

test, chest X-rays, coronary angiography, cardiac catheterisation or computed tomography angiography

Treatment involves determining the cause, cardiac procedures to open blocked arteries, medicines to help keep the arteries open or to treat other medical conditions, lifestyle changes (diet and physical activity) and cardiac rehabilitation. These treatments will help reduce pain and discomfort and how often the angina pain occurs.

Other causes or chest pain

Not all chest pain is a sign of heart disease. Other conditions that cause chest pain include pulmonary embolism (a blockage in a lung artery), aortic dissection (tearing of a major artery), lung infection, aortic stenosis (narrowing of the heart's aortic valve), hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (heart muscle disease), pericarditis (inflammation in the tissues that surround the heart) and panic attacks.

If you experience chest pain, angina or any other symptom of heart diseases, consult your doctor. Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals has a wide coverage of experienced heart experts and advanced cardiac diagnostic modalities across its centres in Oman. Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Ruwi, has a state of the art cardiac catheterisation unit for interventional diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

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