

Businesses upbeat on opening of new horizons

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed's visit to open new avenues in trade cooperation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Several business leaders and officials have stated that the visit by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, will open new opportunities for economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

Redha bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of the Board of Directors, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that the sultanate and the UAE are taking significant steps towards achieving success in increasing investment opportunities and trade exchange, as well as providing facilities and incentives to encourage investments.

"This is in addition to working on partnerships in various sectors that serve the economies of the two brotherly countries," Saleh said in an interview to ONA.

According to Saleh, the Emirati investments in 3,071 companies in the sultanate were valued at RO1.207bn in 2021, most of which was concentrated in the commercial, construction, industrial, real estate, services and transportation sectors.



Oman and the UAE are taking significant steps towards achieving success in increasing investment opportunities and trade exchange

REDHA AL SALEH



Social, cultural, political and economic relations link Oman and the UAE. Our trade and economic relations are growing

LUJAINA MOHSIN DARWISH



The President's visit will take bilateral relations to a new stage of cooperation, which will benefit the two brotherly peoples

GHANIM DHAHER AL BATHARI

Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, CEO of United Securities Company, believes the visit will increase trade exchange and will provide good support to large investment projects, which will benefit the economies of the two countries.

"The UAE is Oman's largest trading partner. The next stage of cooperation requires increasing trade and investment partnerships between the private sector of the two countries to raise the volume of trade and investment exchange," he said, expressing hope that the coming period will witness the provision of more facilities at Oman-UAE borders.

Areej Mohsin Darwish, chairperson of the Automotive, Construction Equipment & Renewable Energy cluster of Mohsin Haider Darwish, said, "The UAE business community is an essential trading partner, and we look forward to increasing investment opportunities, facilities and incentives between the two sides to propel bilateral relations towards wider horizons."

She stressed that the visit of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed is an opportunity to strengthen strategic partnership and cooperation.

Oman oil falls to \$84.46, the lowest since Jan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The price of Oman oil for November delivery fell US\$4.82 to US\$84.46 on Monday, the lowest since January. It slipped below US\$90 on September 8 for the first time since the Ukraine war broke out in February.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for September delivery stabilised at US\$103.21 a barrel, down US\$9.72 compared to the August delivery price.

Oil prices hit nine-month lows on Monday, driven down by an expected decline in fuel demand as several countries opted to increase interest rates to tame rising inflation amid recession concerns, triggering anxiety over weak demand, with further price pressure coming from a surging US dollar.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at US\$84.07 per barrel for a 1.12 per cent decrease from the closing price of US\$85.03 a barrel in the previous trading session. Brent oil dropped to its lowest level since January 14, when it traded at US\$83.99 a barrel.

American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) hit a new low of US\$77.85 per barrel



at the same time, losing 1.13 per cent after the previous session closed at US\$78.74 a barrel. The previous record low was set on January 6 when WTI traded at US\$88.74 a barrel.

Both benchmarks lost almost five per cent on Friday as interest rate hikes by major economies blurred the demand outlook.

Following the US Fed's 75-point interest rate increase on Thursday, the Bank of England raised its key interest rate by 50 basis points. Rate increases in Norway, Switzerland, Taiwan, South Africa, Indonesia and the Philippines ensued.

The rising value of the US dollar also magnified demand fears, repelling buyers from dollar-indexed oil. The dollar index increased 0.8 per cent to 113.33, its highest level in 20 years, fueling the price downturn.

► NEWS BRIEF

SAUDI DIGITAL PLATFORM TO FACILITATE PILGRIMS

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia launched Nusuk (nusuk.sa) on Monday. It is the official Saudi integrated digital platform that offers pilgrims and visitors an easy-to-use gateway to plan their journey to Makkah and Madinah.

This e-platform aims to enhance the experience of Muslims visiting Saudi Arabia from all over the world and facilitate the arrival procedures for visitors to perform Umrah.

Nusuk was launched in partnership with the Saudi Tourism Authority to provide the full range of services across the Visit Saudi ecosystem including facilitating visas, permits, booking processes, and procedures.



Omani duo creates country's first digital identity platform



Oman-UAE trade exchange nearly doubles in 10 years

Salalah Airport khareef passengers up 46%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The number of passengers travelling through Salalah Airport in Dhofar during the three-month khareef season this year reached 463,848, an increase of 46 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.

"The airport saw the number of flights, both incoming and outgoing, during khareef - June 21 to September 21 - increase to 3,385, up 49 per cent compared to the same period last year," said Salim Awad al Yafei, executive vice-president of Salalah Airport, adding that the maximum flights were witnessed in August. "The number of flights per week averaged 352."

According to Yafei, most airlines of the GCC operated direct flights to Salalah during khareef this year, including Wizz Air, Air Arabia, Fly Dubai, Gulf Air, Al Jazeera Airways, Kuwait Airways, Flynas and Qatar Airways. "Oman Air operated 1,372 domestic flights during the season, and SalamAir 648," Yafei



Salim Awad al Yafei

added.

Regarding preparations for the winter season and charter flights, he said, "Eight direct flights will be operated per week from Slovakia, Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic, starting from November 2022 till March 2023."

Meanwhile, the spring season, locally known as 'al sarb' begun in Dhofar on September 21 and will continue till December 21. Al sarb is characterised by bright sunlight, moderate weather and low humidity after the fog of khareef clears and flowers bloom, which attracts tourists to enjoy nature.

TYPHOON NORU LEAVES SIX DEAD IN THE PHILIPPINES



This handout photo taken and released by the Presidential Photographers' Division on Monday shows an aerial view of a flooded area in Central Luzon in the aftermath of Typhoon Noru. The strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines this year left at least six people dead, authorities said Monday, after heavy rain and fierce winds battered the country's most populous island Luzon. Typhoon Noru toppled trees, knocked out power and flooded low-lying communities as it swept across Luzon on Sunday and Monday (AFP)

Oman ranked 65th in Digital Quality of Life in 2022; 13th in Asia

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is ranked 65th in the world in digital wellbeing, according to the fourth annual edition of the Digital Quality of Life (DQL) Index. The study is conducted by the cybersecurity company Surfshark. It evaluated 117 countries based on five fundamental digital wellbeing pillars: Internet quality, e-governance, e-infrastructure, Internet affordability, and e-security.

Out of the five fundamental digital life pillars, Oman's best



score is for e-governance (36th), while the worst score is for e-security (ranking 91st globally).

Oman's e-infrastructure services come 51st, while Internet

quality and Internet affordability rank 74th and 85th, respectively. 'In the face of waging inflation, fixed broadband Internet has become less affordable worldwide

for the second year in a row, prying the global digital divide even further,' stated the index report.

This year, Oman ranks 18th in Asia and has dropped by ten positions globally since last year's edition, falling from 55th to 65th.

Oman's Internet quality, factoring in Internet speed, stability, and growth, ranks 74th in the world and is 13 per cent worse than the global average. Oman's mobile Internet ranks higher than fixed broadband in the global ranking, operating at 91.3Mbps (22nd globally). Fixed broadband Internet comes 59th (67.8Mbps).

Compared to the UAE, Oman's mobile Internet as well as broadband is three times slower. Since last year, mobile Internet speed in Oman has improved by 65.9 per cent (36.3Mbps), and fixed broadband speed has increased 17.9 per cent (10.3Mbps). In comparison, Singapore's residents enjoyed mobile speeds of up to 104Mbps and fixed of as much as 261Mbps - the fastest Internet in the world this year.

Internet in Oman is not affordable compared to global standards. Oman's Internet af-

fordability ranks 85th in the world. Residents can buy 1GB of mobile Internet in Oman by putting in 11 minutes and 13 seconds of work per month, three times more than in the UAE. Fixed broadband costs Omani citizens around six hours and 32 minutes of their working time each month.

"While countries with a strong digital quality of life tend to be those of advanced economies, our global study found that money doesn't always buy digital happiness," said Gabriele Racaityte-Krasauske, head of PR at Surfshark.

Omani divers celebrate Saudi National Day underwater

Divers held flags of Oman and Saudi Arabia at a depth of 15m off Quriyat coast

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Quriyat Diving Team celebrated the 92nd National Day of Saudi Arabia, by diving in the sea off the Quriyat coast with the flags of Oman and the neighbouring country.

The group's objective behind the dive was to celebrate the great relationship between the two countries, besides raising awareness on the importance of preserving maritime heritage and keeping beaches clean.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Juma Khamis al Amri, head of Quriyat Diving Team, said ten Omani divers on Saturday dived into the water around Ras Abu Dawood in the wilayat of Quriyat and held the flags of the two countries for 35 minutes to celebrate the day.

The event, conducted at a depth of 15m with the slogan 'Celebrating the National Day of the Saudi Brothers', was held



from 1pm to 1.35pm, in cooperation with the Quriyat Club, Amri informed.

"Each flag was 350cm in length and 200cm in breadth." Acknowledging the support of the people of Quriyat and the volunteers, Amri said that the team expected that the event would also go a long way in promoting the tourism sites in Oman and popularise the sport of diving in the community.

"The sultanate has many beautiful places for diving which attract tourists from all over the world."

Established in January 2019, the Quriyat Diving Team has conducted several clean-up dives in Ras Abu Dawood and removed nine tonnes of fishing and marine debris so far, the team leader said.

In June this year, the team launched a project to develop artificial reefs in Quriyat in cooperation with the Environment Authority, with the objective of protecting the fisheries sector and preserving the marine environment.

The team is enthused to continue the work of cleaning Oman's seas. "We hope fishermen abide by fishing laws," Amri added.



Food and hospitality take centrestage at three-day event

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The three-day Food and Hospitality Oman (FHO) event got underway at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday after its inauguration by H E Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

One of the largest international trade exhibitions of Oman, the event drew participants from over 150 companies from more than ten countries, including Oman.

Inaugurated in the presence of several delegates from different ministries, industry experts, and senior executives from leading companies, the event garnered the attention of industry enthusiasts, professionals in different hospitality sectors, and food aficionados alike. The organisers are expecting over 5,000 visitors in three days.

Organised by CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organising Company) and hosted by the Oman Food Investment Holding Company (Nitaaj), FHO is being held under the patronage of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Wealth and Water Resources.

Hussain bin al Samh al Masrouri, Director General of the Food Safety and Quality Centre at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources said, "The food and hospitality industry is rapidly

evolving, and it is quintessential for stakeholders to embrace this transformation.

"Building the capacity of the sector's human resources, keeping pace with the latest technological and logistical developments, and being vigilant of emerging disruptive innovators are critical factors to achieving success in this journey," he added.

Showcasing the latest in food and hospitality from different countries, FHO features dedicated pavilions that include Turkey, Pakistan, Poland, India, and Iran. Taking a holistic approach to adding value to the sector, it focuses on products and services related to food and beverages, coffee, hospitality, packaging, technology, and kitchen equipment.

With great attention being given to creating a memorable experience for everyone, FHO is hosting a live F&B demo area with exciting events like Chef Competition, Waiters' Race, and Oman Barista Competition, including the first ever Oman Qahwa Championship.

A key highlight of the event is the FHO Workshop designed for stakeholders in the food ecosystem.

In line with the central theme 'Together for safe food', it emphasises the importance of promoting quality in the food industry. Those participating in the workshop will also be honoured with a certificate.

Healthcare exhibition attracts participants from 16 countries

Muscat - The much-awaited Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC) began at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday.

Scheduled to run for three days, the event was inaugurated by H H Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik Bin Fahr al Said and witnessed the presence of officials from different ministries and industry leaders apart from top-level delegates from different countries.

OHEC has registered the participation of over 150 Omani companies and international players from more than 16 countries including the Czech Republic, Iran, India, Poland, Thailand, Turkey, and the UAE. Organised by CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organising Company) and conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Health, OHEC is supported by



the Directorate General of Pharmaceutical Affairs and Drug Control, the Directorate General of Quality Assurance Centre and Directorate General of Private Health Establishments.

The event also saw the Oman Health Conference being organised by the Oman Medical

Association (OMA).

Dr Walid Khaled al Zadjali, Chairman of the OMA's Board of Directors, said, "This health conference and exhibition is a good step forward in translating Oman Vision 2040. At OMA, we firmly believe that such medical meetings have the most

significant and sustained impact on reinforcing and consolidating the professional relationship among the participants, enhancing the scientific research process as well as sharing experiences in various scientific and health arenas."

The CPD certified OMA is accredited by the Oman Medical Speciality Board (OMSB).

OHEC provides a platform for business-to-business and business-to-customer networking opportunities, while at the same time, it mirrors the sultanate's keenness in nurturing SMEs.

The exhibition focuses primarily on healthcare, medical tourism, hospital, and medical infrastructure, which are assessed to be critical elements with potential to drive sustainable progress in the sector, said the organisers.

Visitors to the exhibition can make the most of a wide array of products and services targeting cardiology, nutrition, eye care, and counselling. It also includes childcare products, dental services, lab equipment, and medical disposables, while offering insights on the latest advancements in physiotherapy and orthopaedic technology.

In response to the increasing importance of medical tourism and its role in improving access to quality healthcare, the exhibition features dedicated pavilions to enlighten visitors on the various treatments, technologies, and trends prevalent in different countries.

The pavilion has four exhibitors from India, in addition to the Iran and Thailand pavilions, showcasing their cutting-edge innovative solutions in healthcare.

Oman-Iran forum explores investment opportunities

Muscat - The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) received a business delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran on Monday to explore business and investment opportunities in each other's countries.

The meeting focused on several economic fields in a bid to strike partnerships between Omani and Iranian businessmen. The sectors in which the two countries are seeking engagements are agriculture, mining, medical equipment, technical in-



spection services, livestock, industry, auto spare parts, petrochemicals, building material,

jewellery and furniture.

Hussain al Ajmi, a member of the Oman-Iran Business Council,

said that the visit of the Iranian business delegation comes within the framework of the two countries' efforts to enhance business relations and trade exchange.

Several B2B meetings were also held between businessmen from both countries.

Trade exchange between Oman and Iran stood at RO2.543bn in 2021, with export volume amounting to RO1.555bn and imports at RO98.72mn. ONA

INVITATION TO TENDER

SOHAR ALUMINIUM

Sohar Aluminium LLC (SA), PO Box 80, PC- 327, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman hereby invites qualified Suppliers/Contractors for the following tender:

Tender No.	: 2022-ENG-SOW-0024	
Tender Title	: Cone Crusher With Conveyor	
Scope	: Contractor shall do design, supply, installation and commissioning of new Cone Crusher, Conveyors and Dedusting system.	
Document Issue Date	: 4 October 2022	Last Date For Applying : 3 October 2022

Kindly send your email and company profile to: tender@sohar-aluminium.com
For list of active tenders visit: <https://www.sohar-aluminium.com/en/content/tender-listing>

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Omani duo creates country's first digital identity platform

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Techies Ahmed al Marjeb and Mahmood al Lawati have created a platform, called Nashid, to mitigate risks of identity fraud.

Marjeb, co-founder and CEO of Nashid, earlier founded two tech startups in the e-commerce and blockchain technologies, while Lawati, co-founder and CTO, has previous experience of founding a property tech startup.

As a team, they have technical and business expertise with a cumulative experience of over 12 years in tech startups, which helped them focus on creating digital identities for people utilised by enterprises for digital services.

In 2020, Marjeb found his online identity had been hacked - one among 2.5mn others whose identity had been stolen on the Internet. Since paper-based identity documents cannot be verified digitally, stolen identity data can be used to impersonate any individual for fraudulent activities.

But opportunity often comes disguised in the form of misfortune and defeat. Nashid took shape a year after Marjeb's identity was hacked following a conversation about digitising identities he had with Lawati at a coffee shop in Azaiba.

They have identified the missing 'digital identity layer' as being the problem of our times, where the use of paper-based identity documents creates manual workflows requiring in-person verifications. It is outdated, physically taxing, and no longer fit for



Ahmed al Marjeb and Mahmood al Lawati (Supplied photo)

Nashid is a digital identity platform powered by blockchain that allows service providers to verify new and existing customers digitally.

MAHMOOD AL LAWATI

use in the digital economy, the two claimed.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Lawati said, "Nashid is a digital identity platform powered by blockchain that allows service providers to verify new and existing customers digitally."

Nashid also creates secure

and reusable digital identities that are portable and verifiable. This mitigates risk of identity fraud, automates businesses' ability to verify users digitally, and removes the need for in-person identity verifications.

Additionally, Nashid develops and assigns verifiable digital identities to businesses and people. This allows a digitally native solution to exist that can verify the identity of both users and businesses, automate online identity verifications, and mitigate all issues of identity fraud and impersonations.

According to Lawati, Nashid is an enterprise-ready platform for businesses and a wallet app for end-users. The enterprise element allows service providers - banks and finance companies, telecommunications service

providers, healthcare, aviation and oil and gas companies - to verify users' identities with seamless integration to their legacy systems and business processes.

End-users' wallet app will ensure users have control and ownership of their identity information, and establish a clear 'consent-based' model of data exchange, which complies with local regulations and personal data protection laws.

"Nashid participated in the pitch competition at COMEX in June 2022 and was chosen as a Top 10 project by a powerhouse investment committee. Later, it secured a pre-seed investment as part of the Techween programme of Oman Technology Fund," Lawati said.

Nashid has also won the Omani chapter of the Entrepreneurship World Cup 2022 (Idea stage) organised by the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development. By winning the Omani chapter, Nashid qualified for the upcoming global finals to compete against national winners from around the world for a Top 100 spot. It is one of the biggest and most diverse startup pitch competitions featuring more than 370,000 entrepreneurs from over 200 countries.

Of the future, Lawati said, "With Nashid, we hope to contribute to Oman's efforts of being a digital-first nation and achieving the roadmap to Oman Vision 2040. This will be done by enabling a native digital experience, and becoming the identity layer of the digital economy."



Tourism sector is resilient: MHT Undersecretary

Our Correspondent
Muscat

WORLD TOURISM DAY

Official statistics show a growth of 39.3% in the number of Omani nationals working in the hospitality sector - from 3,752 in 2020 to 5,230 last year

H E AZZAN AL BUSAIDI

The sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), will mark World Tourism Day on Tuesday by organising several events and activities aimed at enhancing the status of Oman as a distinct tourist destination.

This year, World Tourism Day will be observed under the theme 'Rethinking Tourism' chosen by the United Nations World Tourism Organization taking into account the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant global economic difficulties.

With its focus on stimulating tourism activities in the sultanate, MHT seeks to achieve the targets within Oman Vision 2040, which aim to increase the contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP from 2.4 per cent in 2021, to five per cent by 2030, and ten per cent by 2040.

H E Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in the ministry, said, "Official sta-

tistics show a growth of 39.3 per cent in the number of Omani nationals working in the hospitality sector - from 3,752 in 2020 to 5,230 last year."

He added that the tourism sector in Oman has shown resilience and the ability to recover quickly from setbacks. "This is seen in the increase in number of visitors, hotel revenues and occupancy rates. The sector also has the ability to provide more jobs and investment opportunities.

We have ambitious plans to increase these opportunities."

H E Busaidi informed that the ministry recently organised promotional tours in India, Germany and the United Kingdom. "We saw great interest in these countries in the tourism potential of the sultanate, which is a multi-season destination famous for its natural beauty, cultural heritage and hospitality."

About the sultanate's celebration of World Tourism Day, he said, "The ministry, in cooperation with a number of partners, will organise the Oman Tourism Meet on September 27 and 28. The meet aims to introduce the best practices in adventure tourism, the initiatives undertaken by Oman in this field, and introduce the most important tourist attractions and places."

MHT will also conduct events to introduce Oman's programme to support the efforts of Qatar to make the FIFA World Cup 2022 a success, and to promote Muscat as a major city approved to receive football fans from November 20 to December 18.

MHUP hands over 45 housing units

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) handed over 45 housing units in the wilayat of Jalan Bani Buhassan, South Sharqiyah, on Monday, built at a cost of over RO1.9mn.

The handing over ceremony was held under the patronage of Yahya bin Badr al Mawali, Governor of South Sharqiyah, in the presence of H E Hamad Ali Sulaiman al Nazwani, Undersecretary for Housing in the ministry,



(Supplied photo)

and Sheikh Sultan bin Ali al Nuaimi, Wali of Jalan Bani Buhassan.

In a statement, MHUP said the housing units are in the Al Juweira area of the wilayat and funded by the Saud Bahwan Charitable Foundation at a total

cost of RO1,929,200.

The houses are of two categories - 35 units each with three rooms spread over 185sqm, and ten units each with two rooms spread over 168sqm. The total area of the project is 27,000sqm.



سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology



**إعلان مناقصات
Tenders Notice**

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCT/HQ 138/2022	PAVING WORK OF SOME SEPARATE MOUNTAIN ROADS IN NORTH AL SHARQIYYA GOVERNORATE	25-9-2022	06-10-2022	27-10-2022	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FOURTH CLASS)	(35/-) THIRTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCT/HQ 139/2022	REPLACEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF LIGHTING POLES AND MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS IN THE PORT OF SHANNA	25-9-2022	09-10-2022	06-11-2022	EXPERIENCED SME COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLECT, FIRST CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. In addition to Tender Bond as Bank Guarantee issued by local bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the Tender value validity for (90) days.

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
2. E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:

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2022

Royal Oman Police

Directorate of Public Relations
& Security Information

ANNOUNCEMENT

(The Royal Oman Police - the Department of Relations and Security Information - announces that it will be forbidden to park vehicles on both sides of the lane on Sultan Qaboos Street from the Sahwa Tower roundabout to the Wilayat of Muscat, on Tuesday and Wednesday (27-28) September 2022 .

The Royal Oman Police calls on motorists to abide by the above and to cooperate with the police in the service of the public interest).

MARKET WATCH

MSX30 4,457.70
Sensex 57,145.22

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian	212.43
Pakistan	613.32
Bangladesh	262.70
Philippines	153.56
Sri Lanka	944.08

*Rates as on September 26
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

UAE's Burjeel Holdings plans to launch IPO

Abu Dhabi-based Burjeel Holdings on Monday announced its intention to list 11 per cent of its share capital on the main market of the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange.

The Company's planned listing will provide investors with an opportunity to gain exposure to one of MENA's leading private healthcare service providers with a vision to ensure quality healthcare and clinical excellence across the region.

The subscription period for the listing will open on September 30 and close on October 4. The company intends to list on ADX on October 10.

Burjeel Holdings intends to offer 200,397,665 new shares and VPS Healthcare Holdings (selling shareholder) intends to offer up to 350,331,555 existing shares in the company's issued share capital.

If all of the shares are subscribed for and allocated and the offer size is not increased, the total offer size is currently expected to be 11 per cent of the enlarged issued share capital of the company.

Oman-UAE trade exchange nearly doubles in 10 years

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bilateral trade between Oman and the UAE witnessed a steady and robust growth over the past ten years reaching nearly RO5bn last year.

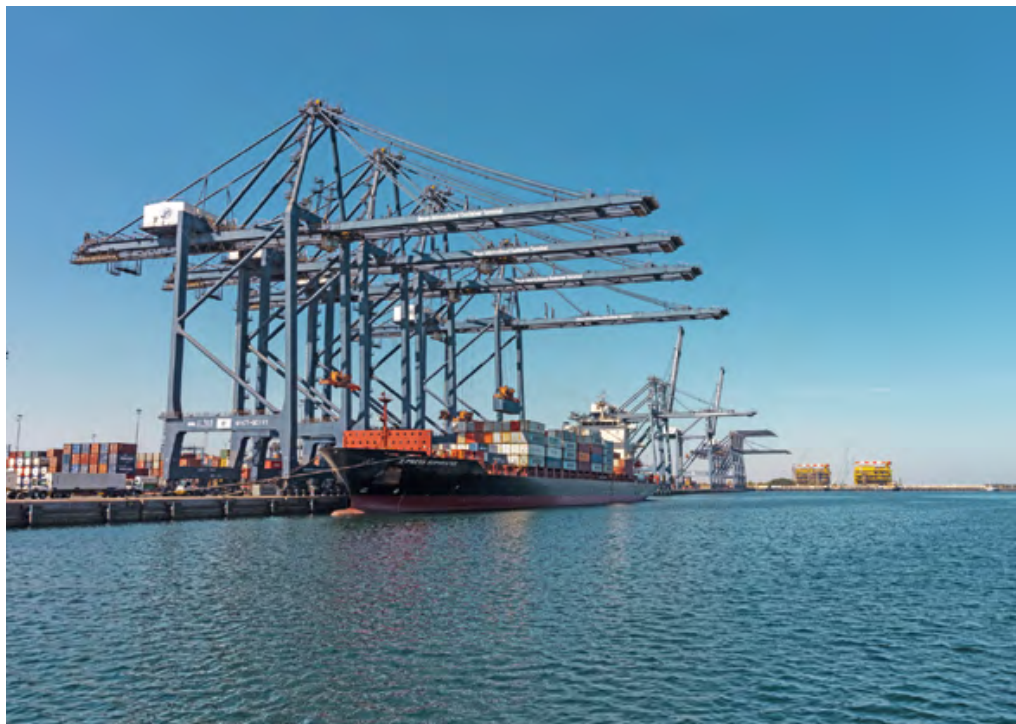
Annual non-oil trade between the sultanate and the UAE nearly doubled to AED46.5bn (approximately RO4.9bn) in 2021 compared to AED23.4bn (RO2.45bn) recorded ten years ago in 2012, according to UAE's Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre (FCSC).

Total non-oil trade exchange between the UAE and Oman during the past ten years amounted to more than AED362bn (RO38bn), the FCSC data showed as reported by Emirates News Agency.

The UAE is one of the most important trading partners of Oman. Both countries are working to enhance trade and investment activities and develop partnerships across many vital economic sectors, including energy, renewable energy, water solutions, financial services, logistical support, construction, real estate and entrepreneurship.

According to Oman's National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the sultanate's non-oil exports to the UAE rose to RO745mn in 2021, while re-exports to the UAE stood at RO489mn.

On the other hand, Oman's total imports from the UAE



Oman's non-oil exports to the UAE rose to RO745mn in 2021 while re-exports stood at RO489mn. The sultanate's total imports from the UAE reached to RO4.22bn in 2021

reached to RO4.22bn in 2021.

The UAE official data showed that the country's non-oil exports to Oman accounted for 33 per cent of total non-oil trade during the past ten years, recording a value of AED120bn (RO12.5bn), while the share of re-exports to the sultanate stood at 45.5 per cent with a value of AED165bn (RO17.3bn).

The UAE's imports from Oman accounted for 21.5 per

cent of the total non-oil trade in the ten years period. Oil trade between the two countries during the same period was recorded at nearly AED77bn (RO8bn), the FCSC data showed.

The year 2019 recorded the highest trade exchange between the UAE and Oman during the past decade at AED48bn (over RO5bn), while 2021 recorded a growth of 10

per cent to reach AED46.5bn (RO4.9bn) compared to AED42.3bn (RO4.4bn) in 2020.

The data showed that petroleum oils and mineral oils (non-crude) topped the list of top five most important commodities imported by UAE from Oman last year, followed by iron ores concentrates, iron and steel bars, and semi-finished products from iron or steel, and insulated wires and cables.

Raw, semi-worked or powdered gold topped the list of the top five commodities exported from the UAE to Oman, followed by copper wires, petroleum and mineral oils, cigarettes and steel products.



Oman's Keryas Paper Industry to set up \$40mn project in UAE

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman-based Keryas Paper Industry on Monday announced that it will set up a kraft liner project in the UAE with a capacity of 200,000 metric tonnes per annum and an investment of US\$40mn in the pulp and paper manufacturing unit.

On the sidelines of the just concluded Propaper Dubai 2022, Keryas Paper Industry Group also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with C2C Consultancy, India, for the complete design and engineering of the proposed project.

The project is designed to produce low GSM kraft packaging paper with a basis weight of 60 to 80 as anchor GSM.

The mill will also have the capacity to produce 150 GSM basis weight of kraft packaging paper. The project helps fulfil the gap in market demand particularly for the lower GSM ranges.

The UAE project will be one

of the largest across GCC countries and expected to commence the production within 18 to 20 months, a Keryas Group statement said.

Keryas Paper Industry has its existing production line in Sohar with a capacity of 180,000 tonnes per annum which was commissioned in July 2021.

The existing line has achieved more than 120 per cent of its design capacity in a short span of time with superior quality end product.

In view of continuous developments and sustainability, Keryas Paper Industry ordered the advanced cleaning system for their dryer screen area from Europe and America in order to ensure the quality of the finished product and to enhance the machine run ability.

In order to preserving the nature and to reduce the vulnerability to environment, Keryas Paper Industry invested in the egg tray manufacturing unit to handle the sludge waste from the paper making process.

World economy to slow, 'paying the price of Ukraine war': OECD

Paris, France – The world economy will take a bigger hit than previously forecast next year due to the effects of Russia's war in Ukraine, the OECD said Monday.

In a bleak report titled "paying the price of war", the Paris-based organisation noted that the conflict aggravated inflationary pressure when the cost of living was already rising quickly.

Covid outbreaks are still having an impact on the global economy while growth has also been affected by rising interest rates as central banks scramble to cool red-hot prices, the OECD said.

"A number of indicators have taken a turn for the worse, and the global growth outlook has darkened," the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said in the report.

Global growth stalled in the second quarter of this year and data in many economies "now point to an extended period of subdued growth", the OECD said.

The organisation slashed its 2023 growth forecast for the global economy to 2.2 per cent, down from 2.8 per cent in its previous estimate in June.

German recession

The outlook for nearly all nations in the Group of 20 top economies was cut, except for Turkey, Indonesia and Britain, though the latter is forecast to have zero growth.

Growth in the United States – the world's biggest economy – is forecast to slow to 0.5 per cent in 2023.

The growth forecast for



China, whose economy has been hit by strict Covid lockdowns, was cut sharply for this year to 3.2 per cent while it was slightly lower to 4.7 per cent for 2023.

Germany is now expected to go into recession next year with Europe's biggest economy now seen shrinking by 0.7 per cent – a 2.4-percentage-point drop from the previous forecast.

The country's economy has been hit the hardest in Europe as it has relied heavily on Russian supplies of natural gas, which Moscow has cut significantly in suspected retaliation to Western sanctions.

The eurozone as a whole will post meagre growth of 0.3 per cent, a sharp downgrade from 1.6 per cent.

The OECD kept its 2022 global growth forecast unchanged at three per cent after previously lowering it.

To highlight the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the OECD said global output in 2023 is now projected to be

US\$2.8tn lower than previously estimated before the conflict in December 2021.

'Significant uncertainty'

The war has sent energy and food prices soaring over concerns about supply as Russia is a major oil and gas producer while Ukraine is a key exporter of grains to countries across the world. Inflation had already been on the rise before the conflict due to bottlenecks in the global supply chain after countries emerged from Covid lockdowns.

"The effects of the war and the continuing impacts of Covid-19 outbreaks in some parts of the world have dented growth and put additional upward pressure on prices," the OECD said.

"Inflationary pressures have become increasingly broad-based, with higher energy, transportation and other costs being passed through into prices," it said.

The OECD raised its inflation forecast for the G20 to 8.2 per cent for 2022 and 6.6 per cent for next year.

Governments have announced emergency measures to help households and businesses cope with the soaring cost of living.

But the fiscal measures to offset energy costs "have been poorly targeted", the OECD said.

Central banks, meanwhile, have ramped up interest rates, a move necessary to tame inflation but that can also push economies into recession.

The monetary tightening is a "key factor slowing global growth", the OECD said.

The organisation warned that "significant uncertainty surrounds the projections" for the global economy.

More severe fuel shortages could shave off a further 1.25-percentage-points from Europe's economy in 2023 and a half-point for global growth

AFP

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MUSCAT DAILY

Markets hit by recession fears as pound falls to record low

Hong Kong, China – Global stock markets mostly extended losses on Monday and oil prices fell further after last week's routs that were triggered by growing prospects of a global recession.

The British pound hit a record low against the dollar Monday on surging fears about the ailing UK economy.

However, the Italian stock market climbed as markets assessed Italy's future political landscape after Eurosceptic populists swept to victory in the eurozone member's general election.

"The pound's crash is showing markets have a lack of confidence in the UK and that its financial strength is under siege," said Jessica Amir at Saxo Capital Markets.

"The pound is a whisker away from (dollar) parity and the situation is going to only worsen from here."

Economists expressed concerns that last week's huge tax-cutting budget from the government of new Prime Minister Liz Truss - aimed at helping the recession-threatened economy - could actually spark massive borrowing and further fuel inflation.



A man walks past an electronic sign showing numbers of the Hang Seng index in Hong Kong on September 22 (AFP)

The pound on Monday struck an all-time low at US\$1.0350, days after new UK finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng's inflation-fighting budget.

Sterling has struggled in recent years as the UK fails to strike major trade deals following its exit from the European Union.

Prior to Monday's crash, the pound suffered a series of 37-year lows against the greenback this month on UK recession fears

propelled by sky-high inflation. London's FTSE 100 index fell 0.7 per cent.

Indian stock market's key indices, Sensex and Nifty, slumped by nearly two per cent on Monday dragged by broad-based selling tracking weakness in the global equities.

The euro has additionally come under heavy selling pressure against the dollar in recent months, as the Federal Reserve

hikes interest rates more aggressively than the European Central Bank.

In stock market trading Monday, Milan's FTSE MIB rose 0.5 per cent to 21,174.60 points. However the euro struck a new 20-year low at US\$0.9554.

"Italy is clearly outperforming following the election result," noted Craig Erlam, analyst at Oanda trading group.

"Time will tell how successful

the new government will prove to be but the prospect of some political stability appears to be generating a small relief rally today."

Italy took a sharp turn to the right after Giorgia Meloni's Eurosceptic populist party swept to victory in a weekend general election, putting a one-time Mussolini admirer on course to become the first woman to lead the country.

Meloni's Brothers of Italy party, which has neo-fascist roots, won 26 per cent in Sunday's election, according to partial results. It leads a coalition set to win a majority in parliament.

Elsewhere, the Moscow stock exchange plunged 10 per cent to its lowest point since Russia began its Ukraine offensive seven months ago as tensions grew across the country over partial military mobilisation.

The benchmark ruble-denominated Moex index sank 10.2 per cent to 1,873.55 points in early afternoon trading, dropping below the 1,900 points mark for the first time since the February invasion of neighbouring Ukraine.

AFP

Yen intervention costs Japan \$20.8bn: Media

Tokyo, Japan – The Japanese government's intervention to bolster the national currency last week cost an estimated three trillion yen (US\$20.8bn), a new record, the Nikkei business daily and other local media said Monday.

Japan's finance ministry said last week it intervened in the currency market to support the yen, which has plummeted against the dollar in recent months on the widening policy gap between the US and Japanese central banks.

Citing estimation by market participants, local media including the Nikkei said the intervention – the first to counteract a weak yen since 1998 – likely cost more than a previous record of 2.6tn yen.

The move, which involves selling dollars and buying yen, saw the greenback retreat as low as 140.70 at one point, but it has since edged its way back, fetching 143.89 yen when stocks closed Monday.

Haruhiko Kuroda, head of Japan's central bank, defended the move Monday.

"We understand the currency intervention this time around was conducted by the finance



minister as a necessary measure against excessive fluctuations," the Bank of Japan chief told reporters.

"It was an appropriate move," he said.

The yen has been weakening against the dollar for months, but sank further on Thursday after the US Federal Reserve again hiked rates to tame inflation, while the BoJ left its ultra-loose monetary policy in place.

Prices in Japan are rising, with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) jumping by 2.8 per cent year-on-year in August, the highest level since 2014.

But the central bank views the increases as temporary, and believes its dovish policy is needed to achieve a long-standing target of sustained two-per cent inflation - seen as necessary to turbocharge growth in the world's third-largest economy.

AFP

French borrowing to hit record as 2023 budget unveiled

Paris, France – The French government will borrow a record 270bn euros (US\$260bn) next year to finance a budget that includes caps on energy prices that are expected to soar over the winter, officials said Monday.

"This is not a restrictive budget, nor an easy one - it's a responsible and protective budget at a time of great uncertainties," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said at a press conference.

Electricity and gas prices have jumped since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and officials are urging energy "sobriety" to help avoid any shortages as the conflict drags on.

The government has vowed that, from January, increases of electricity and gas prices will be limited to 15 per cent, a measure expected to

cost 45bn euros.

"There's a large amount of spending because of gas," Le Maire acknowledged, saying "this can only reinforce our determination to accelerate the climate transition."

The government has also announced pay increases for teachers, judges and other civil servants as inflation is forecast to reach 4.3 per cent next year after 5.4 per cent in 2022.

And nearly 11,000 more public employees will be hired, in a stark reversal of President Emmanuel Macron's 2017 campaign promise to slash 120,000 public-sector jobs.

The government is tabling on growth of one percent, a forecast Le Maire defended as "credible and pro-active" despite an estimate of just 0.5

per cent GDP growth by the Bank of France, and 0.6 per cent from economists at the OECD.

The public deficit is expected to reach five percent of GDP, as the EU has suspended the rules limiting deficit spending to three percent of GDP because of Russia's war against Ukraine.

The budget plans are likely to face fierce opposition in parliament, where Macron's centrist party and its allies lost their majority in elections earlier this year.

Macron also plans to push ahead with a pension reform that would gradually start pushing up the official retirement age from 62 currently, setting up a standoff with unions and left-wing opposition parties.

AFP

Lebanon banks partially reopen after closure

Beirut, Lebanon – Depositors scuffled and long lines formed at Lebanese banks Monday as they partially reopened after a week-long closure following a slew of heists by customers desperate to access their money.

But most banks remained shut, welcoming only a handful of depositors on appointment, and there was anger from those seeking to withdraw frozen funds desperately needed to weather a crushing economic crisis.

At a closed Beirut branch of Fransabank, dozens of soldiers, internal security forces members and customers had queued for hours.

"I don't care about anything, I need my salary," one ISF member yelled from behind the locked gates.

Banks started imposing draconian restrictions on withdrawals after Lebanon's economy collapsed in 2019.

Since then, the Lebanese pound has lost more than 95 per cent of its market value, meaning



Lebanese depositors queue to withdraw money from a Fransabank branch in Beirut on Monday (AFP)

public sector salaries have slumped to as low as US\$40 a month.

Earlier this month five banks were stormed in one day with depositors seeking to unlock frozen savings, after a string of similar holdups in past weeks.

The Lebanese banks association said Sunday that banks will reopen in a limited capacity to businesses, educational institu-

tions and hospitals. Many banks have also now hired security guards.

ATMs will be available "for everyone else," to allow public and private sector institutions to transfer salaries, they said.

Georges Hajj of Lebanon's bank employees union said that some branches did not reopen, but those that did increased security.

"This week is a test to see how things will unfold," he said.

In the southern city of Sidon, heavy security has been deployed at several banks, an AFP correspondent reported, after a security forces member tried to get into a BLOM bank branch by force to retrieve his salary.

In the queue outside Fransabank, Yolla Sawan, a 67-year-old retired teacher, waited for her appointment, hoping to withdraw roughly US\$130 - her bank's maximum monthly allowance.

"I don't know what will happen (if I can't withdraw)," she said in a soft voice.

Near the bank, more servicemen and ordinary depositors queued in front of an ATM which was empty of any cash.

One ISF member, who declined to give his name, said he had been waiting for two hours to withdraw his meagre salary.

"I have nothing to say, I am drained," he said.

AFP

Ukrainian heavy industry ground down by Russia's war

Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine – Usually the engine-room of the Ukrainian economy, heavy industry has fallen victim to Russia's invasion, with output ground down under the pressure of the war.

In the gigantic ArcelorMittal steelworks and iron mine complex in Kryvyi Rih, three of the four blast furnaces have been shut down, while the mine lies dormant.

The last working blast furnace, a cathedral of metal surrounded by colossal pipes, was running on low gear when AFP visited.

Much of the site which sprawls over 70 square kilometres - two-thirds the size of the city of Paris - and normally employs 22,000 people was running below normal operations.

A handful of workers took turns tending a small river of glowing metal, while square steel beams clank along a treadmill in a cavernous hangar nearby.

The complex in the southern

city close to the frontline is considered a national jewel by Ukrainians.

Bought in 2005 by Arcelor-Mittal for nearly US\$5bn, its products are sold internationally - including for the Burj Khalifa skyscraper in Dubai, the tallest in the world.

But after the invasion began in February, work halted for a month when Russian troops approached Kryvyi Rih.

Production eventually restarted, but at a reduced tempo.

By the end of August, output was "between 15 and 20 per cent" of the corresponding period in 2021, according to Artem Filipiev, the site's deputy director.

Logistical headaches

"We keep the site running, that's our mission," Filipiev told AFP.

Some 2,000 of the site's employees are currently fighting in the Ukrainian army, and 17 have been killed, so keeping the plant



Employees work at the ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih integrated steel company's factory, in Kryvyi Rih, central Ukraine on September 21 (AFP)

functional is "not just about profit...(but) social responsibility", he said.

Among the myriad logistical headaches the war has caused for Ukraine's industrial sector are how to maintain supplies, keep customers, and deliver products.

Moscow now controls the major Black Sea ports of Mari-

upol and Berdiansk in southeast Ukraine.

Ports in the southwest like Odesa and Chernomorsk remain in Ukrainian hands, although Russia - under strong international pressure - has only allowed their use for grain exports.

"The ports are closed, the metallurgical industries of Mari-

upol were among our main consumers of iron ore, clients in Zaporizhzhia have also slowed down their activity, our iron mines are at a standstill," said Sergiy Milutin, deputy mayor of Kryvyi Rih.

ArcelorMittal - which exports 85 per cent of its products - says it now uses rail and river trans-

port for deliveries, mainly via Poland and the Baltic Sea, as well as Romania. But the costs have "multiplied by two or three" for steel producers, Marina Bozkurt, an analyst with Rystad, told AFP.

The months-long shelling by Russia of Ukrainian troops entrenched in the Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol showed the resilience of such Soviet-era infrastructure - but ultimately the facility was left destroyed.

By September, over 420 Ukrainian industries and companies had been damaged or destroyed by the war, comprising an estimated loss of US\$30bn, according to the Kyiv School of Economics.

Mining and manufacturing processing industries made up 17 per cent of Ukraine's GDP in 2021, and the sector "is part of the economic security" of the country, said Dmytro Goryunov, an economist with the Centre for Economic Strategy.

The importance of heavy in-

dustry for the economy explains why Russia pounds it, according to Anatoly Kovaliov, rector of the Odessa National University of Economics.

"After three days of failed 'blitzkrieg', of absolute fiasco, the Russians understood that they would not take our country easily, so they decided to destroy it", Kovaliov told AFP.

The Kremlin has an aim of "de-economisation", he said.

Ukrainian GDP collapsed by 37 per cent in the second quarter of 2022 compared to the same period last year, according to Goryunov.

According to Kovaliov, the country needs a good five to eight years of reconstruction once it wins the war, which he believes is a certainty.

"We will need a Marshall Plan," he said, referring to the US-devised giant economic rescue scheme to rebuild Europe after World War II.

AFP

Bank Nizwa holds session on Islamic knowledge finance



Bank Nizwa, one of the most trusted Islamic bank in the sultanate, conducted a session on Islamic finance in collaboration with Bahla charitable team, in the Governorate of Dakhiliyah.

The event was held under the patronage of Sheikh Ibrahim al Haddabi, deputy wali of Bahla as part of the bank's ongoing commitment to raising awareness on Islamic finance among the masses as well as to share the latest trends, developments and achievements of the sector.

Delivered by Shaikh Majed al Kindi, chairman of Sharia'a Supervisory Board, the session shed light on the benefits of sharia'a-compliant financial tools and services to the attendees.

The bank's renowned 'Islamic Finance Knowledge Series (IFKS)' aims to educate people about Islamic banking and its principles across the sultanate.

With the popularity of adopting Islamic banking solutions in the sultanate, IFKS are constantly gaining an audience for hosting induction sessions to encourage individuals to select sharia'a compliant products and services and enable them to make wise financial decisions.

Hala Insurance becomes major player in Middle East



Hala Insurance of the UAE has been named 'Insurtech Solution of the Year' by a highly renowned business publication for making an impact in the insurance sector through its mission to change the way people feel about insurance.

"Confusing policies, delayed turnaround times and hidden fees have long made insurance a dreaded chore for most people. Hala is disrupting this trend in the sleepy industry with seamless, transparent and quick digital insurance experiences for its rapidly growing customer base," it said in a press statement.

Founded by brothers Karim Davis Dib and Walid Daniel Dib, and their friend Harsh Ajmera, Hala Insurance offers digital car and home insurance solutions in the UAE. Its policies are underwritten by Emirates Insurance Company (EMINSICO), one of the region's largest insurers.

Since its inception in 2020, Hala has provided more than 60,000 customers with competitive insurance quotes, and resolved 99 per cent of its claims successfully, making it one of the fastest-growing Insurtech companies in the Middle East. The company has also successfully raised US\$7mn to date from notable venture capitalists including Entrée Capital, Mubadala, 500 Start-ups and Global Founders Capital.

NBO's children's account aims to make future of kids secured

Continuing to bring new opportunities and create value, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched new children's account designed to help parents to save and plan for their children's future and securing their higher education needs, increase their financial security, and achieve their goals, account-holders can enjoy a host of unique benefits like attractive returns on recurring deposits, free life insurance for parents or guardians, and saving in multiple currencies, with hands-on support at every step.

Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products at NBO, said, "We aim to empower our customers throughout their financial journey, starting from the early years. Children under 18 make up approximately 43 per cent of the total Omani population and by encouraging them to be financially independent and save, we are ensuring that they are set up for success in the future, and in turn, are empowered to contribute to Oman's socio-economic development.

"In addition, the children's account offers discounts and exclusive offers at various outlets. All the while we are fulfilling our promise to help turn our customers' ambitions to reality while building genuine partnerships with them that last a lifetime."

NBO provides a full suite of innovative and high-quality banking solutions that keep pace with the needs of its customers of all demographics, whether young or adult, Omani or expat, private or premium, individual or corporate.

Oman Desert Marathon partners with Oman Air



Oman Desert Marathon has welcomed Oman Air, the national airline of the Sultanate of Oman, as official airline sponsor of its 2023 event.

Under the partnership, a press release said, 'Oman Air will offer participants and their relatives special fares when flying into Oman for the race, which is to be held between January 21 and 24 next year'.

The Oman Desert Marathon, now in its eighth edition, will challenge athletes to take on a spectacular 165km four-stage footrace across some of the highest dunes and remote, untouched sands of the Omani desert.

"The partnership is part of Oman Air's commitment to supporting the diversification and sustainable development of Oman's economy and

promoting major sporting and cultural events," said Majid Suliman al Qassabi, Oman Air Country Manager (Oman).

"We look forward to welcoming the athletes from all over the world for this exciting race and are pleased to provide them with an easy and seamless travel experience through our main hub in Muscat. With the weather cool and balmy in January, it's the perfect time to enjoy one of the most beautiful deserts in the world alongside the abundant beauty, charm and culture that Oman has to offer."

Oman Desert Marathon founder Said al Hajri pointed out that "adventure and sports are among the fastest growing segments in tourism, helping stimulate the sector's contribution to the economy in line with the nation's future vision".

More than just a race, he said that

The partnership is part of Oman Air's commitment to supporting the diversification and sustainable development of Oman's economy

MAJID SULIMAN AL QASSABI

Oman Desert Marathon "highlights Oman's capabilities for hosting key international events, as well as supporting cultural exchange and encouraging sports participation in the community".

"We are delighted to partner with Oman Air and to encourage even more people to come, while enhancing

Oman's status as an all-round touristic destination."

The Oman Desert Marathon was last held in 2019 and, after a hiatus due to the pandemic, is now back with over 200 athletes expected to attend. The adrenaline-charged four-day race will require each runner to be self-sufficient and carry all their equipment and food with them, crossing some of Oman's most breath-taking untouched natural landscapes, while offering them a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience authentic desert life.

Oman Air supports a number of sporting and cultural events as part of its active social contributions programme and its efforts to promote Oman as a leading international sports tourism destination, as per Oman's 2040 Vision.

'Use heart' to know the significance of heart health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death worldwide with an estimated 17.9mn deaths amounting to 32 per cent of all deaths. CVDs include disease of the heart and blood vessels. The majority of the CVD deaths are due to heart attack and stroke.

Awareness about heart disease, risk factors, prevention and accessibility of adequate healthcare for treatment are essential to ensure that those in need receive the necessary treatment and counselling.

Every year on September 29, World Heart Day is observed in order to raise awareness about heart disease and the importance of prevention.

There are different levels of preven-



Dr Mohammed Sakib
Specialist Interventional Cardiologist
Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar

tion that will help us to tackle heart disease. Tertiary prevention measures include active interventions with angioplasty, stents, devices for heart disease like heart attack and heart failure.

Whereas secondary prevention

measures involves the use of medications to treat heart disease as well as reduce the risk of future events. Primary prevention aims at modifying existing risk factors and primordial prevention involves preventing the development of risk factors.

Primary and primordial measures go a long way in reducing the burden of cardiovascular deaths. The modifiable risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity and sedentary lifestyle. The non-modifiable risk factors include age, family history, gender and ethnicity.

There are simple and effective measures that everybody can follow in order to maintain or recover ones heart health. One should follow a

healthy diet, regularly exercise for at least 30-45 minutes every day and quit smoking. If already having risk factors, then one should do regular check-ups and ensure that timely interventions are done to reduce the risk of adverse cardiovascular events or death.

This year the theme for the world heart day is 'Use heart for every heart'. 'Use heart' means to think differently, make right decisions, act with courage and help others. 'For every heart' involves the shift in focus to the beneficiaries of the actions thus making it more personnel and ensuring wider application.

On the occasion of the World Heart Day let us all work towards a healthy heart for all.

ROP, Bank Muscat strengthen anti-fraud ties, release videos to enhance public awareness

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) and Bank Muscat have released new anti-fraud videos as part of their joint campaign against electronic fraud, which is taking the world by storm.

ROP and Bank Muscat announced that they continue to partner closely in implementing a joint anti-fraud campaign as Oman opens up to era of digital transactions and the danger associated with them.

Cases of electronic fraud have been increasing around the world over the past few years

and often cause tremendous financial and psychological harm to both individuals and businesses alike. As digital payments get more and more popular, criminals from across the globe have increased their efforts to scam the public through a number of deceptive activities.

The videos released by the bank with the ROP seek to educate the general public about the dangers posed by fraudsters who use a variety of social engineering techniques.

Victims are tricked through

scams involving Romantic Fraud (fake marriages), fake trading in crypto currencies and being convinced to become a 'money mule' to transfer illegal funds to other bank accounts. The campaign videos point out some of the ways in which scamsters operate and compel victims to do their bidding through emotional appeals or even blackmail.

This new step is an addition to the three-year campaign run jointly by the ROP and Bank Muscat. The videos will be posted on social media channels

of the bank as well as those of radio channels, e-newspapers, news sites and daily newspapers. Beside the videos, interviews and competitions will also be held to raise awareness, said a release.

Bank Muscat has been stepping up efforts to combat these types of fraud by partnering regularly with a number of institutions and authorities including the ROP, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and other institutions. The bank has reminded the public that they can contact

the ROP at the toll-free number 80077444 for advice and queries regarding electronic fraud.

The excellent efforts of the ROP in promoting awareness related to electronic fraud is well recognised both by Omani society and by international organisations. It is noteworthy that earlier in 2021, the ROP won the Award for the Best Awareness Film in Combating Cybercrimes at the 44th Conference of Arab Police and Security Leaders 2021 held in Tunis.



Intellect Coffee celebrates 1st anniversary on coffee day



The UAE's favourite home-grown coffee brand has hit its first milestone - just in time for World Coffee Day! From their one-of-a-kind speciality coffee range to the revolutionising C-Wagon, and finally the opening of their stunning new showroom, it is safe to say that Intellect has had a busy and successful first year.

Inspired by merging the best of the past with vision of the future, Intellect Coffee pays tribute to the traditional Arab coffee houses of the past. This tradition of coffee culture has trickled down over generations and thrives in every aspect of today's communal get-togethers. Committed to serving this complex yet essential thread that connects Arab life, Intellect provides coffee solutions with their offerings of high-quality roasts.

Among the large portfolio, Intellect triumphs with their range of speciality coffee. Having single origins like Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala and Ethiopia, Intellect succeeds in transporting people's taste buds all over the world.



Qatar Airways wins 'Airline of the Year' award by Skytrax

As the airline proudly celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, Qatar Airways has been named 'Airline of the Year' by the international air transport rating organisation, Skytrax, for an unprecedented seventh time. At a glittering event in London, the leading global airline also took home three additional awards including World's Best Business Class, World's Best Business Class Lounge Dining, and Best Airline in the Middle East.

Qatar Airways has been named 'Airline of the Year' in 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021 and now 2022.

The prestigious 2022 Skytrax awards are coveted within the industry due to their reputation as the benchmark for excellence and distinction.

Qatar Airways home airport and hub, Hamad International Airport, was also recently voted the World's Best Airport 2022, taking home the award for the second year in succession, ensuring that passengers can relax and enjoy their flights knowing they are travelling with the World's Best Airline through the World's Best Airport.

Survivor Series WarGames to take place on November 26

WWE has on Sunday announced that The Premium Live Event - branded WWE Survivor Series WarGames - will take place on November 26 from TD Garden in Boston. Survivor Series will feature both men's and women's WarGames matches.

According to a press statement, the live event marks the first time in history that WarGames matches will take place on a WWE-branded event.

The men's and women's Survivor Series WarGames matches will feature teams of WWE Superstars stepping inside a massive steel cage surrounding two rings. The match begins with one member from each team facing off, before additional competitors are added every few minutes thereafter. Once all Superstars have entered WarGames, a victory can be attained via pinfall or submission.

Tickets for Survivor Series WarGames are currently on sale through Ticketmaster and the event will stream live exclusively on Peacock in the United States and WWE Network everywhere else. Additional information regarding Survivor Series WarGames will be announced in the coming weeks.

WWE Fans in the Middle East can catch all the action live and exclusively on Shahid.



Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company signs cloud deal with Oman Data Park

In an effort to ensure the safety of data and information related to the company, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company, Member of Nama Group, signed an agreement with Oman Data Park Company aims at making use of cloud services in hosting the company's data centre and disaster recovery centre.

Based on the agreement, Oman Data Park will transfer and host the data and information of Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company with high efficiency and safe manner internally within the borders of the Sultanate of Oman, while this project, will contribute to raise the efficiency and effectiveness of customer service, as well as ensure the smooth flow of business at OWWSC.

OWWSC's Chief Executive Officer Qais bin Saud al Zakwani said, "Our collaboration with Oman Data Park comes in line with our role to become through an ambitious vision and firm

Our collaboration with Oman Data Park comes in line with our role to become a leading entity in the water and west water sectors. This passion could be reached through implementing the best international practices

Qais bin Saud al Zakwani

values a leading entity in the water and west water sectors. This passion could be reached through implementing the best international practices and advanced technologies that enhance our contribution to achieving sustainable development for the Sultanate of Oman."

Therefore, Zakwani said, "we consider the technical interaction with Oman Data Park as a quantum leap toward enhancing our successes in developing the water and wastewater

in particular that, Oman Data Park is hosting data and information within the Sultanate of Oman, which will strengthen the information security, and increasing the added value of cloud systems in the country."

"We are also proud of this level of cooperation with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company, where rendering services to this company can be considered as another geographical spread for our well-known services."

OWWSC undertakes the activities of the water and wastewater sector across Oman except for the Governorate of Dhofar, while it was granted the concession right for developing, design, implementing, operating and maintaining drinking water and sewage facilities in all the governorates in which it provides its services.

"Therefore, providing professional service to such a vital company is a qualitative leap for us by all standards," Wahaibi added.

Ooredoo unveils iPhone 14 series in midnight celebration at ROHM

Ooredoo marked the launch of the brand new iPhone 14, iPhone Pro and Pro Max with a celebration at the Royal Opera House Muscat, where the guests enjoyed a spectacular event with live music and entertainment before collecting their pre-ordered devices.

Invited guests and Ooredoo Senior Management were treated to a DJ, drum performances by local musicians and a stand-up comedian as part of a gala event. At midnight the new iPhone 14 range officially became available and customers were able to get their hands on the very latest technology.

The new iPhone 14 series is the most advanced yet with an innovative 48MP camera and a vital new safety feature designed to save lives all powered by the ultimate smartphone chip.

It also comes complete with



Ceramic Shield which is tougher than any smartphone glass, and is available in a wide range of vi-

brant colours including deep purple, gold, silver and space black. Customers have the option to

purchase their new device in installments, starting from just RO13,466.

LuLuFin MD receives Oman's long-term residence visa

Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, has been granted Oman's long-term residency card for expat investors.

Ahamed received the investor residency card from Qais Mohammed Moosa al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion.

"I am humbled and delighted to receive this honor today. I thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the government and people of Oman, for bestowing this recognition on me," Adeeb said, after receiving his residency card.

"Oman is blessed with a robust economy, and it has been a privilege to invest in its growth," he added.

Launched in late 2021, the Investor Residency Visa is part of the country's economic recovery plan to attract global talent and

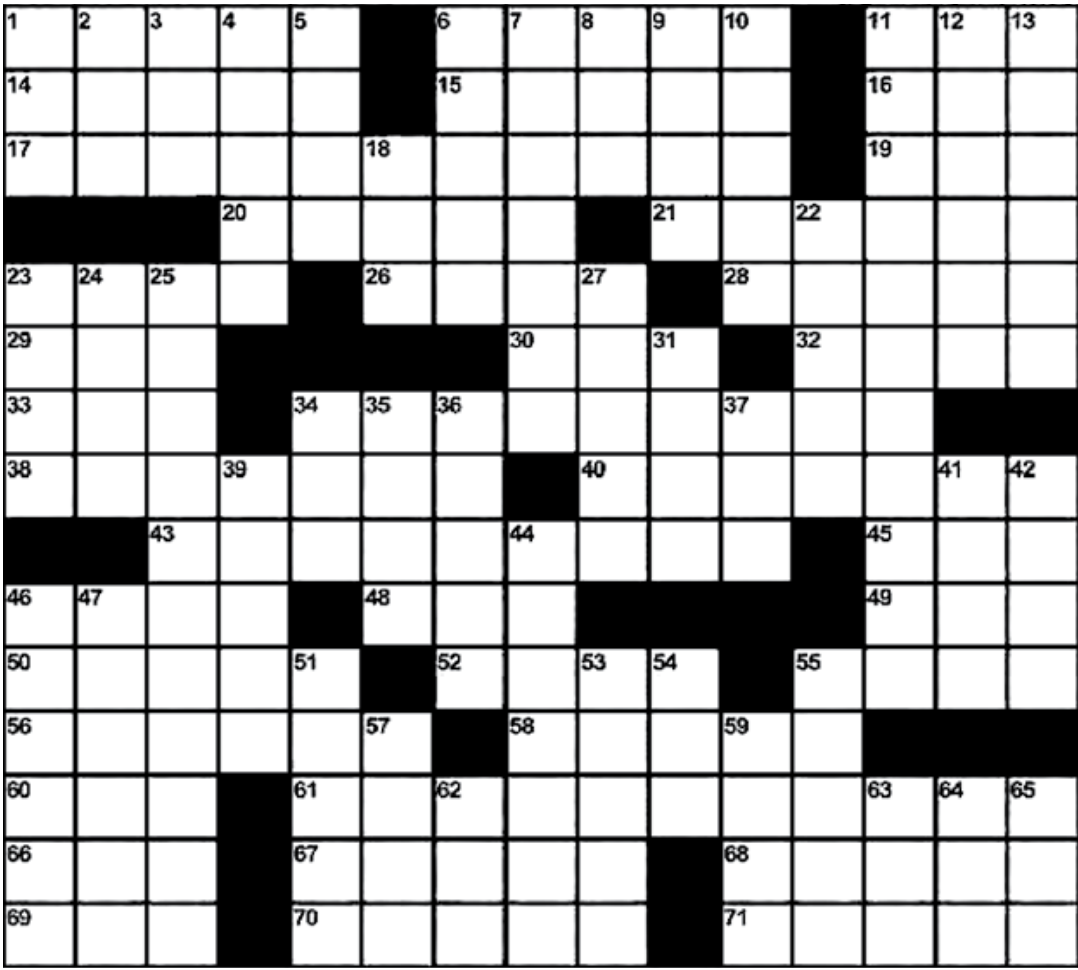


boost investment to Oman, in line with the Oman Vision 2040. Ahamed is a prominent entrepreneur whose investments have immensely contributed to the sultanate's financial services and cross-border pay-

ments sector.

Abu Dhabi based LuLu Financial Holdings - which has presence in 11 countries - operates a slew of LuLu Exchange branches apart from digital payment solutions, in Oman.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Speak in the Senate
6) Upside-down sixes
11) Luau instrument, briefly
14) DNA curve
15) Take in, as a stray cat
16) Keanu in "The Matrix"
17) Repeatedly
19) Last mo.
20) It may have an attachment
21) Oregon city
23) Chip veggie
26) Satie or Estrada
28) Erin of "Happy Days"
29) Two or more eras, in geology
30) Zig's companion
32) Complexion affliction
33) What a cow chews
34) Type of lens
38) Fast vibrato, in music
40) Clergymen
43) Make a copy of
45) Hawaii's Mauna_
46) Turkish high official (var.)
48) Get_ for effort
49) Dusk, poetically
50) Bank offerings

52) Vegas machine
55) Bettor's numbers
56) Back of a saddle
58) Tie_ (get smashed)
60) Antiquated
61) Go beyond mere accomplishment
66) Brooks Brothers buy
67) Brilliantly smart people
68) Aesop's point
69) TV star Danson
70) Disrespectful expression
71) Doberman's warning

DOWN

1) Taunting exclamation
2) Accelerate, as an engine
3) Pub serving
4) Exhausted
5) Questions at school?
6) Opposite of apex
7) Put on a pedestal
8) A 30-day mo.
9) Certain sword
10) Play the guitar, in a way
11) Taken off the stove too soon
12) Character actor

Wynn
13) "Dawn of the mammals" epoch
18) Scot's "not"
22) Billy and nanny
23) Little faith?
24) Decant
25) Deceitful
27) Phi Beta_
31) Ganges access
34) Highest point
35) "Enchanted" girl in a 2004 movie
36) Gird one's_
37) Metal-in-the-raw
39) Should have said
41) Require
42)_ serif (font choice)
44) A diet soda may have one
46) Author of "Little Women"
47) Crucial soccer position
51) Trudges through mud
53) Live, in a TV studio
54) Lt. Columbo, e.g.
55) Bulb that makes one cry
57) Smooth out
59) Electrical resistance

units
62) Vane dir.
63) Pitcher's stat

64) (alternate sp.), in crossword clues
65) 90-degree letter

NOTE PAD

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Okay, so that temper of yours may be a bit more obvious to others now. So what? If anyone is entitled to show their anger (in a controlled fashion, of course; no physical stuff unless it's whacking at some fastballs), it's you. Anger, assertion, and aggression are your business! Imagine a world where everyone was nice all the time. Eeeewww! Still, do a favor for yourself and the person you'd like to continue seeing: make a reservation at the batting cage and then go and practice. Really.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You've been hiding out for days, and those who know and love you (okay, fans, if truth be told) are having withdrawal symptoms. If they want to see you badly enough, they'll ask now, not just because they're in tune with your biorhythms but because they can't stand it any longer. If you're lonely (and at this point, you just might be), let them visit. If not, say no. Absence does make the heart grow fonder. And fonder. And fonder.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

As per usual, you've got something to say, and thanks to the planets the Universe has instructed to help you operate your mouth, you're ready, willing, and able. Do yourself a favor: before you actually start going on at length, think about your audience. Are they truly receptive? Do you really care? Most importantly, do you really want to alienate everyone you come in contact with now? Why not settle for just speaking your mind to the person who's earned it?

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Uh oh. You've been trying and trying and trying some more to just say no to being mad. Still. But you just can't seem to get rid of that urge to let go and let you-know-who have it. The problem is that just about everyone around you, even those not ordinarily prone to agreeing with you for brownie points, seems to agree. This one calls for drastic measures. How about a talk? A "state of the relationship" kind of thing? Neutral turf and a chaperone or referee are a must.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

There's no doubt about it. All that tapping and fidgeting? Face it: you're restless and you don't know what to do about it. No matter what you thought you were after just doesn't seem to be what you're really after any more. You might be able to continue distracting yourself for a while, but until you can discover what it is you really need to make yourself happy, you'll keep on tapping.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

The more unusual it is, the more you'll absolutely have to call it your own. That goes particularly for objects, but also for people who happen to be displaying qualities you're fond of. Before you get too involved, be sure you're both available. Kindred spirits are great to have around, but if you're after a long-term relationship, both of you being single sure would be a better way to start.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

To your mind, what could possibly be better than trying something new? Absolutely nothing. Even if it doesn't work out, it's still better than the same old, same old. That attitude is about to come in plenty handy thanks to a fascinating new acquaintance who will wake you up and broaden your horizons. If your passport isn't current, you'd better fix that. You might end up with an invitation to travel soon.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're after someone who'll allow you to express yourself, all your feelings no matter how eccentric and unconventional they are. You'd better find them quickly, though, because if you try to spend time with the usual suspects now, it just won't work out. It might even get ugly, and you know how you'd hate that. You've been feeling the need to break out of this rut for a good, long time. Here's your chance. Take it!

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've never been good at taking orders. Not from anyone. You've even been known to argue with the calendar. You often forget birthdays (sometimes even your own) and deliberately ignore some holidays too. But if you see something you know would bring a smile to the face of a loved one on a random afternoon, you'll mortgage the house to get it. And when someone you love needs some TLC, like now, for example, you'll treat them so well they'll think they're the one who forgot the holiday.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

To your mind, what could possibly be better than trying something new? Absolutely nothing. Even if it doesn't work out, it's still better than the same old, same old. That attitude is about to come in plenty handy thanks to a fascinating new acquaintance who will wake you up and broaden your horizons. If your passport isn't current, you'd better fix that. You might end up with an invitation to travel soon.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

If you've been thinking about moving, remodeling, or adding on a room or a deck lately, basically, doing something different to your home, it's going to be impossible to resist for much longer. Before you tear down a wall, however, you might consider a few things. The expense, of course, and what you'll do if you don't stay in this mood long enough to finish the project. Wouldn't it be wiser to just visit a paint store and choose a new color?

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You'd like nothing better now than to charge off after the one you're wildly attracted to, completely forgetting about anyone and anything else. And your perpetually keen instinct is telling you they'd absolutely adore it if you did. Unfortunately, you're attached at the moment, and they may be too. Until that changes, hibernate and bide your time. You can do it (wait, that is), but you'll certainly have your work cut out for you.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is the nickname of Nike's company logo?

A. The "tick"
B. The "swoosh"
C. The "check"
D. The "wing"

02. Which of these do "Le pigeon aux petits pois" by Pablo Picasso, "La Pastorale" by Henri Matisse, "L'Olivier Près de l'Estaque" by Georges Braque, "La Femme a l'Eventail" by Amedeo Modigliani and "Nature Morte aux Chandeliers" by Fernand Léger have in common?

A. Deciding factors in awarding the Légion d'honneur to the artists
B. Stolen from Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
C. They are all by French artists
D. They all feature horses

03. How many decades are there in a millennium?

A. 1000
B. 100
C. 50
D. 25

Answers: 1.B 2.B 3.B

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

E	T	R	N
J	O	A	S
K	E	R	E
S	C	R	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

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

WORD BUILDER

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Italy takes step into unknown with far-right win

Meloni’s Brothers of Italy party, which has neo-fascist roots, won 26 per cent in Sunday’s election

Rome, Italy - Italy took a sharp turn to the right on Monday after Giorgia Meloni’s Eurosceptic populist party swept to victory in general elections, putting a one-time Mussolini admirer on course to become the first woman to lead the country.

Meloni’s Brothers of Italy party, which has neo-fascist roots, won 26 per cent in Sunday’s election, according to partial results.

It leads a coalition set to win a majority in parliament and install the most right-wing government since World War II.

Her success represents a seismic change in Italy - a founding member of the European Union and the eurozone’s third largest economy - and for the EU, just weeks after the far-right outperformed in elections in Sweden.

“Meloni takes Italy,” read the *Repubblica* daily’s headline, while editorialist Stefano Folli said Italy ‘awakes this morning very changed’.

‘It is the first time in decades that the country’s political face has transformed so completely. We don’t know yet whether its destiny in Europe has changed too, but that is the first of many questions’ now facing Italians, he

said. Meloni, who campaigned on a motto of ‘God, country and family’, is expected to become Italy’s first woman prime minister, although the process of forming a new government could take weeks.

At a time of soaring inflation, a looming energy crisis and the war in Ukraine, the 45-year-old sought to reassure those worried about her lack of experience and radical past.

Meloni said voters had sent a ‘clear message’ of support for her party to lead their right-wing coalition to power.

“If we are called to govern this nation we will do it for all Italians. We will do it with the aim of uniting people, of enhancing what unites them rather than what divides them,” she told reporters.

Her coalition allies, Matteo Salvini’s far-right League and former premier Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, lagged behind her in the polls.

But all together they were forecast to win around 44 per cent, enough to secure a majority in both houses of parliament.

Full results are not due until later on Monday but the centre-left Democratic Party, the coalition’s main rivals, conceded,



Leader of Italian far-right party 'Fratelli d'Italia', Giorgia Meloni holds a placard reading 'Thank You Italy' after she delivered an address at her party's campaign headquarters overnight on Monday in Rome (AFP)

saying it was a 'sad' day.

Turnout fell to a historic low of around 64 per cent, about nine points lower than the last elections in 2018.

‘Proud, free Europe’

Congratulations came in quickly from her nationalist allies across the continent, from Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki to

Spain’s far-right party Vox.

“Meloni has shown the way for a proud, free Europe of sovereign nations,” Vox leader Santiago Abascal tweeted.

But Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares warned that ‘populist movements always grow, but it always ends in the same way - in catastrophe’.

Meloni no longer wants Italy

to leave the eurozone but says Rome must assert its interests more, and has policies that look set to challenge Brussels on everything from public spending rules to mass migration.

The coalition also wants to renegotiate the EU’s post-pandemic recovery fund, arguing that the almost €200bn (US\$193bn) Italy is set to receive

should take into account the energy crisis.

But the funds are tied to a se-

Voters have sent a clear message of support to my party. If we are called to govern this nation we will do it with the aim of uniting people, of enhancing what unites them rather than what divides them

GIORGIA MELONI

ries of reforms only just begun by Draghi, and analysts say she has limited room for manoeuvre.

Ukraine support

Meloni had been leading opinion polls since Prime Minister Mario Draghi called snap elections in July following the collapse of his national unity government.

Hers was the only party not to

join Draghi’s coalition in February 2021, making her effectively Italy’s only opposition leader.

Meloni then chose a ‘very cautious, very reassuring campaign’, Lorenzo De Sio, head of Italian electoral studies centre CISE, told AFP.

“Her challenge will be to turn this electoral success into a governing leadership... that can last,” he said.

Italian politics is notoriously unstable, with nearly 70 governments since 1946, and Meloni, Salvini and Berlusconi do not always agree.

Meloni’s ‘dissatisfied and essentially defeated allies’ would likely be a ‘problem’, the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper said.

The League and Forza Italia performed poorly, taking nine per cent and eight per cent respectively, down from 17 and 14 per cent in 2018.

While they agreed a joint programme for government, including tax cuts and promises to cut mass migration, they disagree in a number of areas.

Meloni strongly supports the EU’s sanctions against Russia over Ukraine, but Salvini has criticised them as ineffective.

AFP

US, South Korea begin naval drills after North’s ballistic missile launch

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea and the United States began their first combined naval exercise near the peninsula in five years on Monday, a day after Pyongyang conducted a ballistic missile launch.

Washington is Seoul’s key security ally and stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea to protect it from the nuclear-armed North.

South Korea’s hawkish President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, has vowed to beef up joint military exercises with the United States, after years of failed diplomacy with North Korea under his predecessor.

“This exercise was prepared to demonstrate the strong will of the South Korea-US alliance to respond to North Korean provocations,” the South’s navy said in a statement.

The four-day exercise on



People watch a television screen showing a news broadcast on a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul on Sunday (AFP)

South Korea’s east coast will involve more than 20 vessels and an assortment of aircraft, which will conduct drills for anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare operations, tactical manoeuvres and other maritime operations, the navy added.

“Through this exercise, we will

further improve the ability to conduct joint operations between the naval forces of the two countries,” Kwak Kwang-sub, a senior South Korean naval officer, said in the statement.

The drills come a day after nuclear-armed Pyongyang conducted another ballistic missile

launch, the latest in its record-breaking blitz of weapons tests this year.

North Korea is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its programmes to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Close neighbour China said it had ‘noted’ the joint military drills in the region when asked about the missile launch on Monday, and called for ‘dialogue and consultation’.

“The main issue is that the North Korean side’s legitimate and reasonable concerns have not received due response,” foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a routine briefing.

“The US should shoulder its own responsibilities, stop confrontation and pressure, and create conditions for the resumption of meaningful dialogue.”

AFP

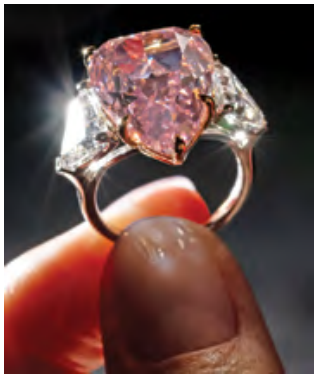
Rare diamond ‘Fortune Pink’ to go under hammer in Geneva

Geneva, Switzerland - The Fortune Pink, an exceptionally rare giant gemstone, will be auctioned in Geneva in November when it is expected to go for up to US\$35mn (€36mn), auctioneers said on Monday.

At over 18 carats, the vividly coloured gem is the largest pear-shaped pink diamond of its quality ever to be offered for sale at auction, the Christie’s auction house said. The diamond, which goes under the hammer for the first time on November 8, has been estimated at between US\$25mn and US\$35mn.

The sparkling pink tear-drop-formed stone, which has been mounted on a ring flanked by a large white diamond on either side, weighs exactly 18.18 carats.

Christie’s highlighted that this was considered a lucky number in Asia, where it signifies ‘definite prosperity’, saying it expected



The Fortune Pink will come up for sale in Geneva on November 8 (AFP)

the diamond to ‘garner interest from collectors across the globe’.

“Weighing in at an auspicious 18.18 carats... the weight in fact brings luck to the new owner,” Angela Berden, Christie’s senior jewellery specialist, told AFP.

“It’s a beautiful stone, it’s extremely rare to find a pink diamond, vivid pink diamond, of this size,” she said.

“The colour saturation of this stone is... so difficult to find in nature, and then when you find a crystal... with that weight, with that colour, and a very good clarity, that’s just really rare.”

“I wouldn’t know where to find another one at this moment.”

While the Fortune Pink is the largest vivid pink pear-shaped diamond to go to auction, larger cushion-shaped pink diamonds have previously gone under the hammer. In 2018, Christie’s sold the 18.96-carat Winston Pink Legacy, which raked in over US\$50mn - the highest per-carat price ever paid for a stone of its kind. The giant Raj Pink diamond, weighing a full 37.3 carats, meanwhile, failed to sell at a Sotheby’s auction a year earlier, where it had been estimated at up to US\$30mn.

AFP

Venezuela floods: Death toll rises to eight

Caracas, Venezuela - The death toll from floods that swept away a group of people at a religious retreat in western Venezuela has risen to eight, authorities said on Sunday, as the search for two more missing people continued. Around 40 members of a Methodist church had gathered in Tachira state on Friday when heavy rains caused flooding, state governor Freddy Bernal tweeted.

Some of the worshippers were bathing in the river when the rains came down, suddenly raising the water level and washing them away, Bernal said. Four of the dead were between the ages of 12 and 17, according to a police report seen by AFP, with the rest aged between 19 to 25.

“The search for two more people is ongoing,” Bernal wrote.

The flooding took place in a region of the Andes Mountains bordering Colombia that is popular with tourists.

Authorities were searching

12km downstream from where they estimated the 10 people had been swept away by the current, according to police chief Yesnardo Canal.

The incident took place in the city of Lobatera, about 31 km from Tachira’s capital of San Cristobal, authorities said.

Resident Martin Carrillo said his daughter and his son-in-law were swept away by the current. “They were on a spiritual retreat, they decided to go swimming in the river and the flood came and swept them away,” he told AFP as he waited with several family members for the bodies to be delivered.

This year, Venezuela has recorded above-average rainfall, which has caused damage in several regions, officials said. Government spokespeople have linked the heavy rain to the La Nina weather phenomenon, which is caused by a thermal anomaly in the equatorial surface waters of the Pacific Ocean.

AFP

Russia school shooting leaves 13 people dead

Moscow, Russia - The death toll has risen to 13 people, including seven children, after a shooting at a school in the city of Izhevsk in central Russia, investigators said on Monday.

The attack was the latest in a series of school shootings that have shaken Russia in recent years and came with the country on edge over efforts to mobilise tens of thousands of men to fight in Ukraine. “Thirteen people, including six adults and seven minors, were killed because of this crime,” Russia’s Investigative Committee said in a statement, adding that 14 children and seven adults were injured.

Authorities previously announced a death toll of nine people but did not specify if that included the suspected shooter.

Investigators have said two security guards and two teachers were among the victims, adding that the attacker ‘committed suicide’. According to investigators, ‘he was wearing a black top with Nazi symbols and a balaclava’ and was not carrying any ID.

The region’s governor Alexander Brechalov confirmed there were ‘casualties and wounded



Alexander Brechalov, Head of the Udmurt Republic, speaking in front of school No88 in Izhevsk on Monday (AFP)

among children’, speaking in a video statement outside school No88 in Izhevsk. Rescue and medical workers could be seen in the background, some running inside the school with stretchers.

Russia’s health ministry said ‘14 ambulance teams’ were working at the scene to help the injured, news agencies reported.

Brechalov declared a period of mourning in the region to last until Thursday.

A city of around 630,000 people, Izhevsk is the regional capital of Russia’s Udmurt Re-

public, located around 1,000km east of Moscow. The attack came just hours after a man had opened fire and severely wounded a recruitment officer at an enlistment centre in Siberia.

Russia’s last major school shooting was in April, when an armed man opened fire in a kindergarten in the central Ulyanovsk region, leaving a teacher and two children dead.

The shooter, described as ‘mentally ill’, was later found dead, with officials saying he had shot himself.

Tightening gun laws

Mass shootings at schools and universities in Russia were rare

The attack was the latest in a series of school shootings and came with the country on edge over efforts to mobilise men to fight in Ukraine

until 2021, when the country was rocked by two separate killing sprees in the central Russian cities of Kazan and Perm that spurred lawmakers to tighten laws regulating access to guns.

In September 2021, a student dressed in black tactical clothing and helmet armed with a hunting rifle swept through Perm State University buildings killing six people, mostly women, and injuring two dozen others.

The gunman resisted arrest and was shot by law enforcement as he was apprehended

and moved to a medical facility for treatment.

It was the second such attack that year, after a 19-year-old former student shot dead nine people at his old school in the Kazan in May.

Investigators said that the gunman suffered from a brain disorder, but was deemed fit to receive a license for the semi-automatic shotgun that he used.

On the day of that attack President Vladimir Putin called for a review of gun control laws and the age to acquire hunting rifles was increased from 18 to 21 and medical checks were strengthened.

Authorities have blamed foreign influence for previous school shootings, saying young Russians have been exposed online and on television to similar attacks in the United States and elsewhere.

Other high-profile shooting cases have taken place in Russia’s army, putting the issue of hazing in the spotlight in the country were military service is compulsory for men aged between 18 and 27.

AFP

Iran protests flare for 10th night as tensions grow with West

Paris, France - Tensions have grown between Iran and Western powers over the Islamic republic's lethal crackdown on 10 nights of protests driven by outrage over the death of Mahsa Amini after her arrest by the morality police.

At least 41 people have been killed and more than 1,000 arrested, officials say, in the unrest sparked by the death of the 22-year-old Kurdish woman after she was detained for allegedly breaching strict rules on hijab headscarves and modest clothing. Angry protests flared again in Iran overnight to Monday, where crowds in Tehran called for the downfall of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 83, shouting 'death to the dictator' in footage posted online by Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights.

'Woman, Life, Freedom!' has been the rallying cry as women have taken off and burnt their hijabs in bonfires or symbolically cut off their hair, cheered on by crowds.

About 450 'rioters' have been arrested in just one province, Mazandaran, its chief prosecutor Mohammad Karimi said according to the official IRNA news agency, two days after over 700 arrests were reported in neighbouring Gilan. "Over the past few days, rioters have attacked government buildings and damaged public property in several parts of Mazandaran under the direction of foreign anti-revolution agents," Karimi said.

The Tasnim news agency published around 20 photos of 'riot leaders', including women, taken in the holy shrine city of Qom, saying security forces were calling on citizens to 'identify them and inform the authorities'. The European Union has slammed Iran, charging that 'the widespread and disproportionate use of force against nonviolent protestors is unjustifiable and unacceptable', in a state-



Iranian pro-government protesters burn flags of the US, Israel and Britain during a rally in Tehran, on Sunday (AFP)



An Iranian protester is seen burning her headscarf in Iran's southwestern city of Bushehr on Sunday (AFP)

ment by its foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Sunday.

He said the EU would 'continue to consider all the options at its disposal ... to address the killing of Mahsa Amini' and the state response to the protests in Iran, a country already under

punishing sanctions over its nuclear programme.

Internet blackout

Tehran has summoned Britain's ambassador to protest what it called an 'invitation to riots' by London-based Farsi language

media, and Norway's envoy over the parliamentary speaker's 'unconstructive comments' on the protests.

In Iran's biggest protests in almost three years, security forces have used batons and water canon but also fired bird shot and live rounds, rights groups say, against the protesters who have hurled rocks, torched police cars and set public buildings ablaze.

The IHR rights group said on Sunday at least 57 protesters have been killed, but noted its reporting was limited by internet blackouts and the blocking of WhatsApp and Instagram following earlier bans on Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and other services. There were fears the violence could escalate further after judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei spoke of 'the need for decisive action without leniency' against 'riot' leaders, echoing a warning by ultra-conservative President Ebrahim Raisi.

Solidarity protests have been held in cities worldwide, and tensions flared into street clashes in Paris and London at the weekend, where crowds tried to reach

Iran's embassies.

In London, 12 people were arrested and five officers 'seriously injured', the Metropolitan Police said, after 'masonry, bottles and other projectiles were thrown and a number of officers were injured', some with broken bones.

In Paris, thousands took to the streets, many chanting 'Death to the Islamic republic', before riot police fired tear gas to prevent protesters from marching on Tehran's diplomatic mission, AFP reporters and eye-witnesses said. Iran has blamed 'foreign plots' for the unrest and accused its arch enemy the United States and its allies of stoking the demonstrations.

US President Joe Biden last week saluted the protesters, telling the UN General Assembly that 'we stand with the brave citizens and the brave women of Iran who right now are demonstrating to secure their basic rights'.

Iran's government has organised large rallies in defence of the mandatory hijab rules, including one on Sunday in Tehran's Enghelab (Revolution) Square.

AFP



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken confirmed reports that the US has sent private warnings to Russia to steer clear of nuclear war (AFP)

US warns Russia of 'catastrophic' consequences of nuclear strike

New York, US - The United States has warned Russia privately of 'catastrophic' consequences if it uses nuclear weapons as part of the Ukraine invasion, top US officials said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin made a thinly veiled threat to use nuclear arms in a speech on Wednesday in which he announced the mobilisation of reservists following Ukrainian gains on the ground.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in an interview broadcast on Sunday, confirmed reports that the United States has sent private warnings to Russia to steer clear of nuclear war.

"We have been very clear with the Russians publicly, and, as well as privately, to stop the loose talk about nuclear weapons," Blinken told the CBS News programme '60 Minutes' in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

"It's very important that Moscow hear from us and know from us that the consequences would be horrific. And we've made that very clear," Blinken said.

"Any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic effects for, of course, the country using them, but for many others as well."

Jake Sullivan, President Joe Biden's national security advisor, said in a separate interview on Sunday that the United States has warned Russia at 'very high levels' of 'catastrophic consequences' for using nuclear arms.

'Scare the whole world'

The United States and its allies would 'respond decisively,'

Sullivan said on CBS's 'Face the Nation.'

"We have been clear and specific about what that will entail."

Russia and the United States are the world's largest nuclear weapons powers, but separate from the threats of planetary destruction, Russian military doctrine permits the use of tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield to force an enemy to retreat.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, asked during a news conference on Saturday at the United Nations about Putin's comments, said only that Moscow's doctrine 'is an

We have been very clear with the Russians publicly, and, as well as privately, to stop the loose talk about nuclear weapons

ANTONY BLINKEN

open document'.

President Volodymyr Zelensky told 'Face the Nation' that Putin's veiled nuclear threat 'could be a reality', saying Russian military activity at nuclear power plants in Ukraine are 'the first steps of his nuclear blackmail'.

"He wants to scare the whole world," the Ukrainian leader said of Putin.

"I don't think he's bluffing. I think the world is deterring it and containing this threat. We need to keep putting pressure on him and not allow him to continue," Zelensky added.

AFP

Four arrested over 'plan to kidnap' Belgian justice minister

Brussels, Belgium - Police arrested four suspects this weekend over what Belgium's justice minister described as a plan to kidnap him.

Vincent Van Quickenborne, who is also mayor of the city of Kortrijk, in western Flanders, appeared to blame a 'drug mafia' in a video message run by state

broadcaster RTBF.

Addressing an audience at a local ball, he said that in a phone call on Thursday, a federal prosecutor had warned him of a kidnap plan targeting him.

On Saturday, federal prosecutors said police had beefed up security for Van Quickenborne, citing a serious 'threat'.

They said three people had been detained in The Netherlands and that Belgian authorities were seeking their extradition.

A spokesman for the Dutch prosecutor's office in The Hague said the trio, all Dutch, were aged 20, 29 and 48.

On Sunday, a judicial source said a fourth suspect had been

arrested in The Netherlands.

Following a report in the Flemish daily *Het Laatste Nieuws*, the source confirmed to AFP that an automatic weapon had been found in a vehicle spotted near the minister's home in Kortrijk.

On Saturday, Van Quickenborne tweeted: "My family and I are safe. Our fight against organ-

ised crime continues. With greater manpower and more resources than ever. We shall never bow to violence."

The prosecutor's office said it had been 'informed last week of a possible threat' which led to an investigation. It would not provide further details.

AFP

Five killed, 13 wounded in Libya gun battles

Tripoli, Libya - Five people were killed and 13 wounded in gun battles in the western Libyan town of Zaouia, the latest unrest in the troubled North African nation, medics said on Monday.

Fighting late on Sunday broke out between rival forces, with one group linked to defence ministry and the other to the interior ministry, local media reported. Libya's ambulance service reported five dead, including a 10-year-old girl, and 13 injured at Zaouia which lies some 40km west of the capital Tripoli.

A security source said fighting broke out after a member of one group was killed by a supporter of the other in a dispute over fuel smuggling.

AFP

Typhoon Noru leaves at least 6 dead in Philippines

San Ildefonso, Philippines - The strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines this year left at least six people dead, authorities said on Monday, after heavy rain and fierce winds battered the country's most populous island.

Typhoon Noru toppled trees, knocked out power and flooded low-lying communities as it swept across Luzon on Sunday and Monday.

There have so far been no reports of widespread severe damage to buildings from the storm, which hit the country as a super typhoon.

Five people suffered minor injuries and several others are missing, disaster officials said.

"I think that we may have gotten lucky at least this time, a little bit," President Ferdinand Marcos Jr told a briefing with disaster agencies.

Five rescuers were killed after they were sent to help flooded residents in San Miguel munici-



A resident saves a chicken while evacuating from their submerged home in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Noru in San Ildefonso, Bulacan province on Monday (AFP)

pality in Bulacan province, near the capital Manila.

Lieutenant-Colonel Romualdo Andres, chief of police in San Miguel, said the rescuers were wading through floodwaters when a wall collapsed, sending

them into the fast current.

"Our house was swept away by the flood, it's gone," said Willie Ortega, 59, in San Miguel. "We weren't able to save anything, even the rice to eat, none."

An elderly man died after he

was hit by a landslide in Burdeos municipality on the Polillo Islands, part of Quezon province, where the storm made landfall, said Garner Jimenez from the local civil defence office.

The Philippines is regularly

ravaged by storms, with scientists warning they are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer because of climate change.

Noru smashed into the archipelago nation on Sunday after an unprecedented 'explosive intensification' in wind speeds, the state weather forecaster said earlier.

It made landfall about 100km northeast of Manila, before weakening to a typhoon as it crossed a mountain range, coconut plantations and rice fields.

More than 74,000 people were evacuated from their homes before the storm hit, as the meteorology agency warned heavy rain could cause 'serious flooding' in vulnerable areas and trigger landslides.

But on Monday, there was no sign of the widespread devastation many had feared, as the storm moved over the South China Sea towards Vietnam.

State weather forecaster Ana Laurel said Noru brought less rain and moved faster compared to other destructive typhoons that have hit the Philippines.

"It all depends on the interplay of the weather systems. Each typhoon has its own characteristics," Laurel explained.

Aerial footage taken during Marcos's inspection flight over central Luzon showed rivers that were swollen or had burst their banks, and patches of farmland under water.

Officials estimate about 141mn pesos (US\$2.4mn) worth of crops were damaged.

National disaster agency spokesperson Rafaelito Alejandro described the storm's impact as 'very minimal'.

Marcos said preparations for the storm helped. "You might think that we overdid it. There is no such thing as overkill when it comes to disasters," he said.

AFP

INDIA

Rajasthan political crisis: Kharge, Ajay Maken to submit report to Sonia Gandhi

New Delhi, India - Amid the on-going political crisis in Rajasthan, Congress observers for the state, Mallikarjun Kharge and Ajay Maken reached Delhi on Monday after the Gehlot camp MLAs refused to hold a one-to-one meeting with them.

Both will submit the report pertaining to the crisis in Rajasthan's politics.

"We arrived in Delhi after meeting three MLAs in Jaipur. We are going to give our report to Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi," said Ajay Maken ahead of his meeting with Congress's interim president.

Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge after arriving in Delhi from Jaipur said the decision will be taken by Sonia Gandhi after they submit the report.

"We are going to 10, Janpath and will meet Sonia Gandhi. We will apprise her about the events (about the Rajasthan Congress crisis). She will eventually take the decision on it," Kharge said.

Earlier, Maken on Sunday met with three members from the Gehlot camp - Shanti Dhariwal, C.P. Joshi and Pratap



Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge arrives at Jaipur airport to attend the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting of Rajasthan Legislative Assembly, on Sunday (ANI)

Khachriyawas who had put forward three proposals.

Later after the meeting, Maken told the reporters that the three MLAs forwarded three proposals which they did not accept as it raised a conflict of interest.

"Their first proposal was to announce the implementation of the resolution of handing over the final responsibility of appointing the chief minister to the Congress high command and to pass it after October 19.

"We told them that this raises conflict of interest, as if Gehlot is elected as the Congress president then this proposal will empower him further after October 19 and there can

be no bigger conflict of interest than this so we did not do this," Maken said.

Further, Maken said that their second condition was that they wanted to come in groups and when we said that we wanted to talk to each of them individually as it has been a practice of the Congress to take feedback from each leader. However, they did not accept this.

"Their third condition was that the chief minister should be picked from the 102 MLAs who were loyal to CM Gehlot and not from the Pilot group," Maken said.

Maken said that 'the three Gehlot camp supporters insisted on us meeting their three conditions and we told them that their exact sentiments will be conveyed to Congress chief, who will take the decision after talking to CM Ashok Gehlot and everyone else'.

"We waited for more MLAs to come but they didn't come. Now Mallikarjun Kharge and I are going to Delhi to submit our report to the Congress president," said Maken.

Nobody has any idea about the number and the identities of the MLAs who have resigned or not, Maken said.

A legislative party meeting was scheduled on Sunday evening at the residence of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in the presence of the observers, which was attended by Sachin Pilot and his camp MLAs. However, the Gehlot loyalists had held a meeting with Cabinet Minister Shanti Dhariwal at his residence, following which over 90 MLAs had submitted their resignations to Speaker CP Joshi.

Sachin Pilot, is being seen as the successor of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who is all set to contest the Congress president election scheduled on October 17. The Rajasthan deputy chief minister late last night conducted a second round of meeting with the AICC observers.

The Gehlot loyalists want someone from their own camp to be chosen as the next Chief Minister, instead of Pilot, who, according to them, had revolted against his own party back in 2020.

ANI

Stampede case: SRK gets relief from SC

New Delhi, India - The Supreme Court on Monday granted relief to Shah Rukh Khan as it upheld Gujarat High Court which quashed the case against him related to the 2017 stampede in Vadodara Railway Station.

A bench of Justice Ajay Rastogi and Justice CT Ravikumar rejected the plea filed by a complainant against Shahrulkh Khan. The complainant had challenged a Gujarat High Court order. The Supreme Court refused to interfere with the order passed by the High Court of Gujarat quashing the complaint filed by the complainant against the actor.

On April 27, 2022, Gujarat High Court ordered quashing the criminal case against Shah Rukh Khan for allegedly causing a stampede at Vadodara Railway Station while promoting his film Raees in 2017. The actor along with his production team was travelling from Mumbai to Delhi to promote their Hindi feature film 'Raees'.

The complainant, Jitendra Madhubhai Solanki had filed a private complaint against Khan before the Judicial Magistrate, First Class, Vadodara, alleging his presence at the Vadodara Railway Station coupled with him throwing T-shirts and smiley balls at the crowd assembled at the station led to the alleged stampede.

ANI

Ghulam Nabi Azad announces 'Democratic Azad Party'

Jammu, India - Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad on Monday announced that his new political outfit will be named as 'Democratic Azad Party'.

The development comes exactly a month after Azad resigned from the Congress party. Announcing the name of the new party at a press conference here, Azad said that the outfit will be secular, democratic and independent from any influence.

Azad also unveiled the flag of the Democratic Azad Party. The flag has three colours - mustard, white and blue. Yesterday, Azad held meetings with his workers and leaders.

Earlier, Azad, in his first public

meeting in Jammu after quitting Congress, had announced to launch of his own political outfit that will focus on the restoration of full statehood.

He had said that the people of Jammu and Kashmir would decide the party's name and flag.

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

"My party will focus on the restoration of full statehood, right to land, and employment to



Ghulam Nabi Azad unveils the flag of his new 'Democratic Azad Party' during a press conference, in Jammu on Monday (ANI)

native domicile," he added then.

Azad said that the first unit of his political outfit would be formed in Jammu and Kashmir in view of impending assembly polls.

"My party will focus on the restoration of full statehood, right to land, and employment to native domicile," he added.

He lashed out at Congress and said that people are trying to defame us (me and my supporters who left the party) but their reach is limited to computer tweets.

Azad said, "Congress was made by us by our blood, not by computers, not by Twitter. People are trying to defame us but their reach is limited to computers and tweets.

That is why Congress is nowhere to be seen on the ground." The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said in his first public meeting at Sainik Colony in Jammu.

Azad has been Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir from 2005 to 2008.

In his resignation letter to Sonia Gandhi, he had targeted party leadership, particularly Rahul Gandhi, over the way the party has been run in the past nearly nine years.

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

He was earlier Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha.

ANI

6 killed in second Pakistan chopper crash in a month

Islamabad, Pakistan - Six Pakistan servicemen were killed in a helicopter crash in southwestern Pakistan, the military said on Monday, the second deadly chopper incident in just over a month.

The helicopter went down near Khost, a small town in Balochistan province bordering Afghanistan and Iran.

"A helicopter on a flying mission crashed late last night. Six personnel - including two army majors (both pilots) embraced shahadat(martyrdom) in the crash," the military said in a statement.

No further details were given about the cause of the crash or type of aircraft. The area where the helicopter came down has not been hit by recent flooding.

In early August, six Pakistan servicemen including one of the army's top commanders were killed when their helicopter crashed during flood relief operations in

The helicopter went down near Khost, in Balochistan province bordering Afghanistan and Iran. Six personnel including two army majors (both pilots) embraced martyrdom in the crash, said the military.

Balochistan.

Fierce monsoon rains have caused devastating flooding in Pakistan this year - particularly in Sindh and Balochistan provinces.

More than 1,600 people have died, 323 in Balochistan.

AFP

Bangladesh boat tragedy death toll hits 40

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Rescue workers recovered 15 more bodies on Monday after a boat carrying religious pilgrims capsized in Bangladesh, taking the death toll to 40 with dozens still missing, police said.

The small boat packed mostly with women and children on their way to a popular temple flipped over on Sunday in a river as onlookers screamed from the shore. The incident near the remote northern town of Boda was the latest in a string of similar tragedies blamed on poor maintenance and overcrowding in the low-lying delta country.

Boda police chief Sujoy Kumar Roy said fire service and navy divers recovered 15 bodies in the Karotoa River downstream from where the boat tipped over.

It was carrying around 90 people, of whom around 50 were pilgrims on their way to the centuries-old Hindu temple for a major festival, according to police.

"Many people are still missing. Our joint search and rescue operation is ongoing," Roy told AFP.

Police said they have lowered the number of missing people as some have reported that they have found relatives who had swum to safety. But dozens are still believed to be missing, police



People gather along the banks of the Karatoya river, after a boat capsized near the town of Boda, on Sunday (AFP)

officers said. District police chief Sirajul Huda said the boat was carrying three times its capacity.

"There were heavy rains in the morning and that is why when the ferrying began, pilgrims packed the boat to make it quickly to the temple," he told AFP. "The boatman asked some people to disembark in an effort to ease the weight-load. But no one listened," he said.

Local media said at least 10 people had been rescued and sent to hospital.

Mobile phone footage aired by TV station Channel 24 showed the overcrowded boat suddenly flipping over, spilling the passengers into the muddy brown river.

Dozens of people watching from the shore started shouting and screaming. The weather was

calm at the time.

Thousands of Hindus in Muslim-majority Bangladesh visit the famous Bodeshwari Temple every year.

Sunday marked the start of Durga Puja, the biggest Hindu festival in Bangladesh - and also eastern India - drawing large crowds at the temple.

Last December, around 40 people perished when a packed

three-storey ferry caught fire in southern Bangladesh.

A ferry sank in Dhaka in June 2020 after a collision with another vessel, killing at least 32 people.

And at least 78 people perished in 2015 when an overcrowded ship collided with a cargo vessel in a river west of the capital.

AFP

FRANCES SNATCHES ROGER FEDERER'S FAREWELL TROPHY

Frances Tiafoe beats Stefanos Tsitsipas as Team World win first Laver Cup title

London, United Kingdom - Frances Tiafoe led Team World to their first Laver Cup title as the American saved four match points in a dramatic victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas that denied Roger Federer a farewell trophy on Sunday.

Tiafoe staged a superb fight-back to win 1-6, 7-6 (13/11), 10/8 in the penultimate match of the tournament at London's O2 Arena.

That was enough to give John McEnroe's Team World a 13-8 overall margin of victory with a match to spare, sealing their maiden triumph in the competition after Team Europe won the first four editions.

While Federer had hoped to mark the end of his career by lifting the trophy in a tournament he helped create, the Swiss legend was left to salute Tiafoe and the rest of the Team World squad.

"Congratulations to Team World, amazing comeback," Federer said.

"It's been emotional at times but I had a great time. I can't thank you enough for that. I en-



Frances Tiafoe (L) of Team World speaks with Roger Federer after his victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas. (R) Team World vice captain Patrick McEnroe (L), captain John McEnroe (2L), and players pose with the trophy

joyed every minute."

Promising to attend next year's Laver Cup in Canada, Federer said: "I'm looking forward to next year. I'll be there too, supporting both teams from a different position."

Federer had played the last match of his glittering career on Friday when he and Rafael Nadal were beaten by Tiafoe and Jack Sock in the doubles.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion's tearful farewell was

Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic and former world number one Andy Murray on the Team Europe roster, it was fitting that Tiafoe and Canadian rising star Felix Auger-Aliassime powered Team World's comeback from a 8-4 overnight deficit.

Tiafoe, 24, and Auger-Aliassime, 22, are part of a generation expected to stage centre-stage now Federer has retired, with Nadal and Murray also in the

"It looks like I have that clutch game right now. I'm happy I get to hold the Laver Cup trophy, that's all that mattered."

Needing to win three of Sunday's four matches, Team World were dragged back into contention by Auger-Aliassime.

Auger-Aliassime handed Djokovic his first defeat since May as the Canadian powered to a 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) victory.

Djokovic, who missed the recent US Open due to his unvaccinated status, had won his first match for two months on Saturday when the 21-time Grand Slam champion defeated Tiafoe in straight sets.

"It's one of the best performances of my career. I've been close a few times against these great champions, so it feels to great to get a win like this," Auger-Aliassime said.

Auger-Aliassime's first ever win over Djokovic was especially impressive as he had already partnered Sock to a 2-6, 6-3, 10/8 doubles victory over Matteo Berrettini and Murray earlier on Sunday. Auger-Aliassime's heroics set the stage for Tiafoe who didn't disappoint.

Tsitsipas blazed through the first set in just 21 minutes, but the Greek's fast start was halted by the defiant Tiafoe.

Tsitsipas squandered four match points in the second set tie-break as Tiafoe showed why he reached this year's US Open semi-finals, staying off defeat in nerveless fashion.

AFP



Congratulations to Team World, amazing comeback. It's been emotional at times but I had a great time. I can't thank you enough for that. I enjoyed every minute.

ROGER FEDERER

the tournament's headline moment, but Federer - unable to play further matches due to the knee problems that forced his retirement - stayed around to cheer on his Team Europe colleagues.

Despite the presence of

twilight of their careers.

"It's an unbelievable feeling. Our captain Jonny Mac was tired of losing, he was dropping F-bombs all week. I kept saying that this is our year. It wasn't just me, we all showed up," Tiafoe said.

Murray backs Federer as future Laver Cup captain



Roger Federer (L) and Andy Murray (R) react during the match between Stefanos Tsitsipas of Team Europe and Frances Tiafoe of Team World

London, United Kingdom - Andy Murray has backed Roger Federer as a future Laver Cup captain after Bjorn Borg indicated the sixth edition in Vancouver next year could be his last.

Federer bade farewell to professional tennis at the tournament in London at the weekend, playing doubles alongside great rival Rafael Nadal on Friday in his final competitive match, which ended in defeat.

Team Europe suffered a 13-8 loss to Team World in the Ryder Cup-style tournament to ensure Federer, 41, was denied one final trophy but a vacancy for the captaincy will open up when Swedish great Borg steps away.

Federer, who won 20 Grand Slams in his glittering career, said he had no immediate plans after hanging up his racquet but it is likely he will want to stay involved in the Laver Cup, which he helped to create.

"I'm sure Roger is going to stay involved in the event in some capacity and maybe one day captain the team," Murray said.

"Look, he's great on the side (coaching). He watches a lot of tennis, he loves the game. I think for ex-players that go into coaching, I think that's important to sort of stay current and know a lot of the players."

Murray made his Laver Cup debut at London's O2 arena, joining other members of the "Big Four" - Federer, Nadal and Novak Djokovic in competing for Team Europe.

Djokovic expressed his hope that Federer would turn his hand to coaching. "I think that Roger can offer a lot," he said.

"I mean... it's logical to expect him to be able to share so many useful and valuable things with anybody really.

"If he ever would consider doing that, I'm sure that he's going to bring a lot of positive things to the improvement of that player, whether male or female, in every aspect on and off the court.

"He's undoubtedly one of the greatest players to play the game, the way he played it, with his style and effortlessness."

AFP

US captures ninth consecutive Presidents Cup

Charlotte, United States - The United States won the Presidents Cup for a ninth consecutive time on Sunday with Tokyo Olympic champion Xander Schauffele delivering the clinching point in a 17.5-12.5 triumph over the Internationals.

Schauffele never trailed in defeating Canada's Corey Conners 1-up, sinking a three-foot par putt at the 18th hole to lift the US squad to 15.5 points and seal the overall triumph at Quail Hollow.

"It feels good to win," Schauffele said. "It got pretty close there for a little bit. Winning is winning."

The Americans, who led 11-7 entering the 12 final singles matches, improved to 12-1-1 in the all-time rivalry and have never lost on home soil.

"They played great," US captain Davis Love said. "It was hard. They put in a lot of effort the last three weeks. They came in ready to go."

Conners, winless for the week, missed a five-foot par putt at 17 to keep Schauffele 1-up.

At 18, Schauffele dropped his third shot three feet from the



The United States team members pose with the Presidents Cup at Quail Hollow Country Club on Sunday (AFP)

hole and, after Conners missed his third from a bunker, rolled in the deciding putt to tie the hole, win the match and set off a US celebration.

"I was handed the opportunity and I was able to take advantage of it," Schauffele said.

The Internationals couldn't make the greatest last-day comeback in Presidents Cup history and haven't lifted the trophy

since 1998.

"We're a little disappointed," Internationals captain Trevor Immelman said. "We believed in ourselves.

"We had an amazing week. They were fighting. These guys have massive hearts. I'll go into battle with them any day."

With 10 of the world's 16 top-ranked players, the US team was a heavy favorite over a global

side that lost British Open champion Cam Smith and several other top players who jumped from the PGA Tour to LIV Golf, making them ineligible.

"Trevor and his guys did a great job of rising to the occasion," Love said.

Tony Finau won five of the last nine holes to defeat Canada's Taylor Pendrith 3&1 and lift the Americans within a point of

clinging the Cup.

"I fought as hard as I've ever fought in a match," Finau said. "You just have to get the job done."

Jordan Spieth, winless in seven prior Ryder and Presidents Cup singles matches, became only the sixth player to go 5-0 in a single Presidents Cup, winning four holes in a row late to defeat Australia's Cam Davis 4&3 for the first US point.

"I was extra nervous," Spieth said. "I wanted to get that monkey off my back. They are looking for red on the board and it feels really good to finally provide that."

"You can't put a price on this. I did as much as I could this week."

Patrick Cantlay never trailed in beating Australia's Adam Scott 3&2 for the second US point. Cantlay went 3-up after four holes and Scott, Cup-less in 10 tries, was never nearer than 2-down after that.

Sam Burns finished the week winless but helped the US cause by tying Japan's Hideki Matsuyama.

AFP

Thai teen Atthaya edges Kang for LPGA NW Arkansas trophy

Los Angeles, United States - Thailand's Atthaya Thitikul rolled in a birdie putt at the second playoff hole on Sunday to edge Danielle Kang and capture her second LPGA title at the NW Arkansas Championship.

Atthaya, 19, started the day with a one-shot lead over Japan's Yuka Saso and had four birdies in a final-round 68 for a 17-under par total of 196 at Pinnacle Country Club.

Meanwhile Kang, playing her third tournament since June after treatment for a tumor on her spine, surged up the leaderboard with a seven-under-par 64,



Atthaya Thitikul of Thailand pretends to take a selfie while holding the trophy after winning the NW Arkansas Championship on Sunday (AFP)

capped by a hole-out eagle at the 18th.

Both parred the opening play-off hole, the par-three 15th.

Atthaya found the fairway at the next, the par-four 16th, while Kang was just right of the fairway.

Atthaya landed her second shot some 12 feet from the pin while Kang's approach bounced through the putting surface.

The American's putt from the short greenside rough raced past the hole and Atthaya calmly stepped up to drain the winning putt.

Kang was far from disap-

pointed.

"I'm just really proud that I'm even here," said Kang, who broke down in tears during her post-round television interview. "Obviously I wanted to win, but these are, like, tears of joy."

"I mean, there was part of me that I didn't think I would ever play again or contend, but here I am. I'm not that far off, and I'm happy about that."

Atthaya, who matched a tournament record with a 10-under par 61 on Friday, said playing against Kang ratcheted up the pressure.

AFP

MORE BLUES FOR LES BLEUS

France lose to Denmark as Croatia and Netherlands march into Nations League semi-finals

London, United Kingdom - Croatia and the Netherlands booked their places in the last four of the Nations League as holders France needed a favour to avoid relegation from the top tier on Sunday.

Les Bleus lost 2-0 in Denmark to finish with just one win from their six group games, but Croatia's 3-1 win at Austria saved the world champions from the drop.

Didier Deschamps will be hoping to have a number of key



France's Kylian Mbappe wears a dejected look during their UEFA Nations League match against Denmark in Copenhagen on Sunday (AFP)

It was a young French team, which for the most part does not yet have experience of the highest level. Tonight is a dose of reality and what will be waiting for us in two months

DIDIER DESCHAMPS

men back from injury by the time France's defence of the World Cup begins against Australia on November 22.

"It was a young French team, which for the most part does not yet have experience of the highest level," said Deschamps.

"Tonight is a dose of reality and what will be waiting for us in two months."

France will also come up against the Danes in the group stage in Qatar and the Euro 2020 semi-finalists showed they are more than capable of causing more trouble in two

months' time.

Both goals came before half-time as Kasper Dolberg stretched to turn home Mikkel Damsgaard's cross before Andreas Skov Olsen volleyed in from the edge of the area.

France were without Hugo Lloris, Jules Kounde, N'Golo Kante, Paul Pogba, Ousmane Dembele and Karim Benzema through injury.

But the star trio of Antoine Griezmann, Olivier Giroud and Kylian Mbappe failed to find a way back into the game for France.

Denmark's win meant Croatia needed to get all three points in Austria to top the group.

Luka Modric got the 2018 World Cup finalists off to a flying start, but they were quickly pegged back by Christoph Baumgartner's header.

The Faroes led 2-0 through Viljormur Davidsen and Joan Edmundsson before Serdar Gurler's late consolation for the side ranked 83 places higher in FIFA's world rankings.

AFP

Wales' Nations League relegation a price worth paying for World Cup: Page

Cardiff, United Kingdom - Wales manager Rob Page said relegation from the top tier of the Nations League on Sunday is softened by the prospect of looking forward to his country's first World Cup since 1958 in two months' time.

A 1-0 defeat to Poland in Cardiff condemned Page's men to finishing bottom of a group also containing Belgium and the Netherlands.

Wales' four Nations League games in June were split either side of a vital World Cup qualifying playoff against Ukraine, which forced Page to rest a number of key players for their 2-1 defeat in Poland to start the group.

Despite the disappointment of dropping down a division, the Wales boss was happy to pay that price for having made it to Qatar.

"If you had said to me at the start of June that we would qualify for the World Cup and have it go down to one game to win to stay in League A, I would have taken that," said Page. "The play-off final against Ukraine did have an impact on our games either side of it."

Page's most pressing concern



Poland's Karol Swiderski (L) celebrates his goal with Robert Lewandowski as Kamil Glik joins in (AFP)

is recovering some of his best players in time for their opening game of the World Cup against the United States on November 21.

Aaron Ramsey, Ben Davies and Joe Allen missed both the defeats, to Poland and to Belgium, on Thursday, due to injury.

"For us to compete at the top, top level we're going to need every player fit and available and playing well," added Page. "That's nothing against the rest of the squad -- they're brilliant, to a man -- but we need our best players on the pitch."

Gareth Bale was recalled to the starting line-up and lasted the full 96 minutes in a boost for

points behind the Poles, knowing victory would be enough to avoid relegation.

Page's men had the better chances before the break as Dan James fired too close to Wojciech Szczesny when one-on-one before Brennan Johnson's goalbound effort was deflected behind by his own teammate James.

"There are a lot of positives to take out of the performance. It's just that final pass and final shot -- that's where we need to improve and get better," added Page.

"We have to be ruthless with it as, against top teams, chances are few and far between. We've created a lot of chances tonight against a very good team but we haven't been ruthless enough."

At the other end, Wales had done well to deny Robert Lewandowski any clear sights of goal but one moment of magic from the Barcelona striker swung the game.

Lewandowski cushioned a bouncing ball into the path of Karol Swiderski who slotted under the onrushing Wayne Hennessey.

AFP



Ronald Araujo (R)

Barca's Araujo poised to miss World Cup after injury with Uruguay in friendly

Barcelona, Spain - Uruguayan defender Ronald Araujo is in danger of missing the World Cup after his club, Barcelona, said on Monday he would undergo surgery on a torn thigh muscle.

The centre-back is likely to be sidelined for between two and three months, according to reports in Spain. That would probably rule him out of the tournament in Qatar, which starts on November 20.

The Uruguayan sustained the injury in the first minute of a friendly with his country last week against Iran he has opted for surgery as opposed to more conservative treatment.

Araujo met Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez and the club's medical staff on Monday to discuss the best course of action.

"The operation will be undertaken by doctor, under the supervision of club medical services, in Turku, Finland," said Barcelona.

"Once the operation is complete a new medical statement will be made."

The surgery also rules Araujo out of key club games, including the rest of the Champions League group phase and the Clasico on October 16.

Barcelona defender Samuel Umtiti made the opposite decision in a similar situation in 2018, and became a world champion with France, but has been hampered since.

Araujo recently signed a new deal with Barcelona, extending his contract until 2026 with a 1 billion euro (\$964.9 billion) buy-out clause.

Watford appoint Bilic

Championship club Watford on Monday appointed former West Ham and West Brom manager Slaven Bilic as their new coach after sacking Rob Edwards.

AFP

'We have to focus on winning' against Spain, says Portugal coach Santos

Braga, Portugal - Portugal coach Fernando Santos said his team would not settle for the draw they need to reach the Nations League finals when they host Spain in Braga on Tuesday.

Portugal, who won the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2019, moved top of Group A2 on Saturday with a 4-0 victory over the Czech Republic as Spain lost

at home to Switzerland.

Santos' side now hold a two-point lead over their neighbours ahead of the final group match.

"We just have to focus on winning rather than reaching the final four," he said. "I want the players to face Spain on their merit, as they do all opponents. Do that and we will always be closer to getting where we want to go."

Man United's Diogo Dalot scored twice against the Czechs as Portugal bounced back from a defeat in Switzerland in June.

Santos has a near fully-fit squad to choose from, with Atletico Madrid forward Joao Felix having returned to training after missing last weekend's match.

AFP



Portugal coach Fernando Santos at a training session at the Municipal Stadium in Braga on Monday (AFP)

VALIANT EFFORT

Oman Racing misses podium at Spa, settles for hard-fought fourth place in LMGTE

Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - Oman's Ahmad Al Harthy produced an excellent double stint in the penultimate race of the 2022 European Le Mans Series at Spa-Francorchamps on Sunday to make a strong podium challenge - before having to settle for fourth place in LMGTE.

Qualifying the No.69 Aston Martin Vantage GTE second on the class grid for the big four-hour race at the famous Ardennes track, Al Harthy took the start and worked his way into the lead just after the half-hour mark following some dramatic action on a wet-but-drying track.

Remaining in contention after the first pit-stops, the Omani ran a very strong second and was right behind the class leading Ferrari when he handed over the Aston Martin to Sam De Haan who slipped to fourth in his stint. Marco Sorensen completed the race, closing to within five seconds of the podium. The result helped the trio climb to sixth in the LMGTE championship.

"I was very happy with my stint, it was a great stint and the first few laps were good", reflected Al Harthy.

"The conditions were very tricky, a wet track that was drying, with slicks on the car, but we managed to navigate through traffic. We had good chances, and we took those chances, and then got into the lead.

"Obviously all of the strategies were different, we took tyres and they didn't, and then there were a lot of blue flags for cars in front which slowed our pace. I'm absolutely delighted with how I drove and P4, so close to the podium. This will make us more motivated for the final round in Portimao and, as always, a huge



Oman's Ahmad Al Harthy in action

The conditions were very tricky, a wet track that was drying, with slicks on the car, but we managed to navigate through traffic

AHMAD AL HARTHY

thanks to the team as they did a great job and we had a good car."

Al Harthy, supported by the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sohar International Bank, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS, began the race from the front row in LMGTE and held his position well at the beginning.

Running within a second of pole-starting Conrad

Grunewald's Ferrari 488, on lap two the Safety Car was deployed due to an LMP2 class car becoming stranded in the gravel. Racing resumed with 18 minutes elapsed and Al Harthy continued to run closely behind the bright yellow Ferrari.

With an LMP3 car between Grunewald and Al Harthy, on lap eight the No.83 Ferrari of Sarah

Bovy managed to get past the Aston Martin but very soon everything changed again. Just over 30 minutes into the race, Grunewald had a dramatic spin at Raidillon and almost collected both Bovy and Al Harthy - but the Omani managed to sweep past Bovy's car to leap from third into the lead.

Almost immediately, a Full Course Yellow period was called and at the 40-minute mark Al Harthy pitted for fresh slick tyres, the track drying more and more.

Emerging in second place when racing resumed, he was almost nine seconds behind Bovy but instantly started to reduce the gap

and as the end of hour one neared the Omani was just 4.5 seconds adrift.

Moving to within less than two seconds of the Iron Lynx Ferrari 65 minutes into the race, Al Harthy continued his march back towards the front of LMGTE and 10 minutes later he was right on Bovy's tail. The gap fluctuated, due to traffic, but Al Harthy again reduced the gap to almost nothing before another Full Course Yellow period with one hour and 40 minutes of racing complete.

Portimao, Portugal, will be the destination for the sixth and final round of the European Le Mans Series on October 15 and 16.



Bhuvneshwar Kumar has been expensive in the death overs of late (AFP)

Rohit backs Kumar as India look to fix T20 bowling

New Delhi, India - Improving India's bowling remains the team's focus ahead of the Twenty20 World Cup next month, skipper Rohit Sharma has said, adding that he backs seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar to come out of a recent slump.

India went past Aaron Finch's Australia by six wickets to clinch the three-match T20 series 2-1, and now host South Africa for a white-ball series starting Wednesday.

The team's batsmen, including Virat Kohli and Suryakumar Yadav, have been in good form and shared a 104-run partnership to secure victory on Sunday, but the final-overs bowling has been a cause of worry.

Kumar, once a champion of choking runs in the final overs of a T20 match, has been expensive lately. He leaked 21 runs in the 18th over in the series-decider, with Tim David hitting him for two sixes and a four.

"We know that he has had more good days than the bad days in the last so many years," Rohit said of the veteran fast bowler in a post-match press conference. "Yes, of late it has not been the kind of performance that he wants but that can happen to any of the bowlers. You can see the opposition as well, it's not easy to bowl in the death."

The 32-year-old Kumar, who remains a key member of the team's plans for T20's showpiece event in Australia, had just two wickets from two matches and an expensive economy rate of 13.00.

Rohit said the team will devise a better strategy in the three T20 internationals against the Proteas to help Kumar return to his miserly ways in the final overs.

"We've been working on some execution plans and hopefully we can give him more options to bowl in the death and he'll be as good as he was before."

AFP

Knight accuses India of lying over 'Mankad' run-out

London, United Kingdom - England women's captain Heather Knight has accused India of "lying" about giving tailender Charlie Dean warnings before her controversial "Mankad" run-out in the third one-day international between the sides.

Deepti said Monday that India had repeatedly warned Dean for stealing ground by backing up and was adamant they had done nothing wrong.

Tweeting in response to Deepti's comments, Knight acknowledged that Dean was dismissed legitimately but she said: "No warnings were given."

"They don't need to be given, so it hasn't made the dismissal any less legitimate," she said.

"But if they're comfortable with the decision to affect the run out, India shouldn't feel the need to justify it by lying about warnings."

Rizwan, Rauf help Pakistan edge out England in fourth T20I



Pakistan players celebrate their victory against England on Sunday (AFP)

Karachi, Pakistan - Pakistan halted England with three wickets in six balls to take a sensational three-run win in the last over of the fourth Twenty20 international in Karachi on Sunday.

Haris Rauf grabbed three wickets as the hosts tied the seven-match series.

Earlier in-form opener Mohammad Rizwan struck a brilliant 88 as Pakistan made 166-4.

With England needing five for victory from 10 balls, Rauf dismissed Liam Dawson (34) and

Olly Stone off successive deliveries in the 19th over. Last man Reece Topley was then run out as Pakistan rescued victory from almost certain defeat at a packed National stadium in Karachi.

Dawson had silenced a 32,000 holiday crowd by cracking four fours and a six off pacer Mohammad Hasnain's 18th over.

When Topley was run out off the second ball of the last over it sent Pakistan players and home fans into raptures.

The win made the occasion of

Pakistan's 200th T20I more memorable. They are the first team to reach the milestone.

England were rocked by Hasnain (2-40) and Nawaz (3-35) and were staring at defeat at 130-7 before Dawson added 32 with Adil Rashid (three not out) to bring England back in the game.

But Rauf's two wickets sealed the match for Pakistan.

The remaining matches are in Lahore (September 28, 30 and October 2).

AFP

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MALE INFERTILITY - CAUSES AND MANAGEMENT

What is male infertility?

Infertility is defined by the inability of a sexually-active, non-contraceptive couple to achieve spontaneous pregnancy within one year

What is the prevalence of infertility?

About 15% of couples do not achieve pregnancy within one year and seek medical treatment for infertility. In 50% of involuntarily childless couples, a male-infertility-associated factor is found, usually together with abnormal semen parameters. In 30-40% of cases, no male-associated factor is found to explain impairment of sperm parameters - this is called idiopathic male infertility.

What are the causes of male infertility?

Male fertility can be a result of:

- Congenital or acquired urogenital abnormalities
- Gonadotoxic exposure (radiotherapy or chemotherapy)
- Malignancies
- Urogenital tract infections
- Increased scrotal temperature due to varicocele (dilated testicular veins)

- Endocrine disturbances
- Genetic abnormalities
- Immunological factors

How to evaluate patients with male infertility?

Focused evaluation of male patients include a medical and reproductive history, physical examination, semen analysis, and hormonal evaluation. Other investigations (genetic analysis and imaging) may be required depending on the clinical features and semen parameters.

What are the management options?

There are two types of male infertility - obstructive (block of tubes transporting semen) and non-obstructive (issue in sperm production).

A. Medical treatment

In men with low sperm count, low motility, low normal sperm shapes (oligo-astheno-teratozoospermia) life-style changes, including weight loss and increased physical activity, smoking cessation, and alcohol intake reduction can improve sperm quality and the chances of conception. In addition,

antioxidant use may improve semen parameters. In men with low sperm production due to low brain hormones, sperm production can be achieved by hormonal treatment.

B. Surgical treatment

In non-obstructive male infertility, sperms can be extracted surgically from the epididymis (PESA) or testis (TESA) or under special microscope magnification in difficulty cases mTESE). The extracted sperms are used for assisted reproduction like intrauterine injection, In vitro fertilisation (IVF) or Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). In obstructive male infertility, the blocked tubes can be corrected but if this is not feasible then sperm extraction techniques can be used.

Muscat Urology & Nephrology Centre (MUNH) at Al Hail, under the supervision of Dr Mohamed al Marhoon, who had special training at Cleveland Clinic USA in Microsurgery for sperm extraction techniques, provides all evaluations and surgical management of male infertility. In addition, the centre has collaboration with IVF centers in Muscat for those who need IVF or ICSI.



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CHRONONUTRITION

Are you a night owl?

IF YOU ARE IN THE HABIT OF SLEEPING CLOSER TO THE WEE HOURS EVERYDAY, WATCH OUT! YOU MIGHT BE THROWING OUT INVITATIONS FOR TYPE-2 DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE



Some of us love being 'early to bed and early to rise' but others struggle to pull themselves out of bed well into the morning because they have been awake until late the previous night.

Most of us know that we either function better in the morning or the afternoon and adapt our working schedules to suit our 'early bird' or 'night owl' tendencies. But can our chronotype affect not only our functioning, but also our health, a recent article in *Medical News Today* cautions.

Research studies have suggested that chronotype, and particularly chrononutrition - what times of day we eat - may indeed affect health, but the findings are not yet conclusive.

A study published in *Experimental Physiology* has found that our sleep/wake cycles are associated with our body's metabolism, with night owls having a reduced ability to use fat for energy. This may increase their risk of type 2 diabetes and

heart disease.

Early and late chronotypes

A team of researchers from Rutgers University, NJ, and the University of Virginia, VA, divided a group of 51 adults into early or late chronotypes based on their answers to a questionnaire. All participants were non-smokers, free of cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and metabolic diseases, and were sedentary, exercising less than 60 minutes a week.

Using imaging techniques, researchers assessed the participants' body mass and body composition. They also tested insulin sensitivity. They noted no significant differences in age, body mass, or metabolic syndrome between the groups. However, they did find differences in how energy sources were used by those with early and late chronotypes.

Early birds used more fat for energy than night owls. They were also more insulin sensitive — their cells used glucose more effectively, reducing blood sugar. Night owls tended to be more insulin resistant, meaning they required more insulin to lower blood glucose levels, and they tended to use carbohydrates as an energy source rather than fat. (Insulin resistance indicates a greater risk of type 2 diabetes.)

Dr Malin told *Medical News Today*, "A key finding was that individuals with later chronotype were indeed less able to respond to insulin by promoting glucose uptake towards storage. And that observation related to how much fat was used for energy. This aligns with ideas that low fat metabolism relates to insulin resistance by either defects in the mitochondria or accumulation of fat metabolites that impair insulin action on tissues like

muscle."

It may be hard to change our chronotype, but we can change our eating habits. Research has shown that those with late chronotype are more likely to have unhealthy dietary habits. They were also more likely to consume more calories at dinner and as bedtime snacks.

"Collectively, this dietary pattern would align with less healthy practices and could contribute to the risk of obesity and obesity-related comorbidities such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease," said Dr Malin.

Chrononutrition has been suggested as a way of managing diabetes - eating earlier in the day has been shown to have beneficial effects on blood glucose levels after eating. This is thought to be due to circadian variation in insulin levels. Insulin sensitivity is highest at noon and decreases in the evening and at night.

This study, hence, gives further weight to the advice that eating most of your food earlier in the day may well help to reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.



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PALPITATIONS AFTER EATING

ARE YOU YOURSELF A HEARTTHROB OR DO YOU EXPERIENCE ODD HEARTTHROBS? IF YOU DO EXPERIENCE HEART PALPITATIONS OFTEN AFTER EATING, THE CAUSE COULD VERY WELL BE LAID OUT IN YOUR PLATTER ITSELF

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

This response arises from the sympathetic nervous system, which reacts to a variety of stimulants – including substances like caffeine. It stimulates the release of adrenaline and that can lead to palpitations as your heart accelerates, causing abnormal heartbeats or abnormal heart rhythms.

REST OR DIGEST

This response arises from the parasympathetic nervous system, which ramps up during digestion. That can stimulate abnormal heart rhythms and the one that really comes to mind is atrial fibrillation.”

FOOD TRIGGERS

There are some foods and drinks you might consider avoiding – or at least limiting. Spicy foods, higher-fat and higher-sugar foods are common triggers for heart palpitations among patients who have them. These include caffeine in excess, sugar, alcohol, carb-rich foods, tyramine.

SUGAR

Consuming lots of sugar can cause the body to release the hormone epinephrine, or adrenaline, which increases heart rate. Dietary Guidelines recommend getting no more than 10% of daily calories from added sugar. That equates to 12tsp, 50g or 200 calories from added sugar – roughly the equivalent of a piece of chocolate cake. A can of regular soda has about 126 calories from added sugar.

ALCOHOL

Also, no more than one drink for women and two for men daily – is generally the upper threshold set for good health, you could possibly still experience heart palpitations below that. For people who have arrhythmias and experience palpitations, alcohol is one of the most common triggers.

CARBS

Processed carbs can contribute to palpitations as well. That's because most carbs are broken down into glucose, or sugar, when they're digested. As a result, they can drive up blood-sugar levels, just like table sugar. If a person has low blood sugar, the swing or spike in blood sugar level is more significant with a carb-rich meal. Blood sugar changes can cause rapid heartbeat or other heart rate variations.

Handle that heartthrob

Did you eat your dinner late today and head straight to the bedroom to retire? Do you follow irregular eating patterns and have favourite foods/beverages that actually might be the culprits behind your discomfort after a meal?

Palpitations after eating are a common phenomenon experienced by many people, sometimes so frequently that it raises an alarm. "Palpitations can mean different things to different people," says Dr Jay Sengupta, a cardiac electrophysiologist with the Allina Health Minneapolis Heart Institute at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis.

In general, palpitations typically refers to some awareness of one's heartbeat, and it could mean that the heartbeat is either skipping or racing," says Sengupta, who treats heart rhythm disorders.

Besides the classic feeling that the heart is skipping a beat – palpitations may also be described by those experiencing them as the heart beating heavily or abnormally, adds Dr Evelina

Grayver, director of the cardiac care unit at Northwell Health in Manhasset, New York, in a recent article published in *US-News*.

Heart palpitations can sometimes happen after eating. "When you eat, the body increases blood flow to the digestive system, which can lead to an increase in heart rate," says Dr Allison Zielinski, a cardiologist and co-director of the sports cardiology program at Northwestern Medicine Bluhm Cardiovascular Institute in Chicago.

While the experience of palpitations differs from one person to the next, you might feel:

- Like your heart is skipping a beat.
- A fluttering sensation in your chest.
- A pounding or throbbing sensation – like your heart is beating too hard.
- An abnormally fast, or racing, heartbeat.
- A "flip-flopping" sensation, as if your heart is "turning over" in your chest.

Several eating-related occurrences can be mistaken for heart

palpitations, says Dr Daniel Alyesh, a cardiac electrophysiologist with South Denver Cardiology Associates in Colorado.

"For instance, after eating you can get heartburn, you can get indigestion – all of those things can be confused with a palpitation," says Dr Alyesh. But palpitations are sensations - the heart is flip-flopping in the chest, a sensation that we're skipping a beat, that the heart is racing. By contrast, heartburn is more of a burning sensation behind the breastbone, he explains.

When to be concerned

Frequency is a factor in how serious palpitations might be. If you have them from time to time, it's okay, but if it's happening on a regular basis, like several times a week or almost every time you eat, they may be a sign of a more serious medical issue, like arrhythmia which deserves medical attention.

As you're eating and digesting, responses from two components of your body's autonomic nervous system can affect your heartbeat, Dr Alyesh explains.

Know your kidneys



DR IQBAL AHMED

Nephrologist
Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Sohar

As you all know, kidneys are very important for healthy living. But awareness about kidney disease is very dismal among the public. Each one of us has a pair of kidneys situated on either side of the lower back. Normally, kidneys are about the size of a fist or 10 to 12 cm in length. There are around 1 million tiny filters known as nephrons in each kidney. Both kidneys filter around 180ltr of fluid per day that is around 7.5ltr of fluid in an hour.

The main functions of the kidney are excretion of metabolic waste products, maintenance of fluid, electrolyte and acid-base balance, control of blood pressure, maintenance of normal healthy bones, and secretion of number of hormones.

Kidney disease can be classified into acute kidney injury (AKI) and chronic kidney disease (CKD). In AKI if the problem is identified early, kidney injury can be reversible. Major causes of AKI are hypovolemia (dehydration), infection, certain medications and obstruction to urine flow, whereas in CKD, kidneys do not work as they should due to irreversible damage. So, the disease does not go away, and it may get worse over time.

Who is at risk of CKD?

About 850 million people across the globe are thought to have CKD. Diabetes and high blood pressure are

leading risk factors for chronic kidney disease. One in three people having diabetes and one in five people having high blood pressure are at risk of developing kidney disease. As of 2021, an estimated 537 million adults, that is about 7% of the population, are living with diabetes - most with type 2 diabetes. Other risk factors are heart disease, having a family member with kidney disease, age over 60, previous history of acute kidney disease, recurrent kidney stones, infections like Hepatitis B and C, and HIV and use of certain medications like pain killers. Asians and Africans have increased risk of developing kidney disease.

Symptoms, diagnosis

Symptoms of kidney disease include swelling of legs, foamy urine, cola coloured urine, breathing difficulty, tiredness, nausea, vomiting, decreased appetite, and itching. Laboratory tests to diagnose kidney disease include urine tests to check for protein and blood tests to check for creatinine. Other tests include imaging and kidney biopsy.

Filtration rate of the kidney known as Glomerular Filtration Rate can be estimated using serum creatinine. Based on the filtration rate there are five stages of kidney disease - from stage 1 to stage 5. A person with stage 1 or otherwise kidney failure, will eventually require renal replacement therapy (RRT) either in

the form of dialysis or kidney transplantation. But less than 50% of people with kidney failure receive such therapy. By 2030, around 14.5 million people around the world are thought to require RRT, though only 1/3rd is likely to receive it.

Prevention/treatment

In most patients, unfortunately, kidney disease is diagnosed in advanced stages due to reasons like lack of awareness, poor access to quality healthcare and lack of symptoms in the early stages of CKD. So, identification and management of risk factors for kidney disease and screening of patients with risk factors are very important.

General guidelines regarding the prevention and management of kidney disease include control of diabetes and high blood pressure, keeping the body weight in ideal range, regular physical activity, abstinence from smoking and alcohol, keeping daily salt intake less than 5gm, adequate amount of fluid intake, avoiding consumption of nephrotoxic medications and herbal preparations, and regular follow-up with kidney specialist for those patients with kidney disease.

Anyone at risk of kidney disease, should get expert opinion regarding kidney health at the earliest to prevent the onset of kidney disease and to slow the progression of kidney disease.

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