

TOWARDS CIRCULAR ECONOMY

More than 1mn tonnes of waste recycled annually in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate recycles over 1,014,854 tonnes of waste a year, according to Dr Mohammad Majid al Kasbi, Director of Department of Chemical Materials at Environment Authority (EA).

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, he informed that EA is currently implementing a national plan under the umbrella of Oman's environment strategy. The primary focus of this initiative is to gauge the volume and nature of hazardous waste generated, comprehend its implication on public health and the environment, and manage its international movement in accordance to the Basel Convention.

"Our recycling goals align with broader aspirations: bolstering the economy, conserving energy, cutting down on carbon emissions and ensuring the well-being of our natural habitats," Kasbi emphasised.

From a commercial standpoint, the increase in local recycling firms has been notable. In 2023, 64 companies are actively engaged in recycling various types of waste, including cooking oils, car tyres and engines. This



A community aware of its environmental responsibilities and embracing efficient waste management can drastically reduce redundant waste

DR MOHAMMAD
MAJID AL KASBI

number has more than doubled from 30 firms in 2020. Besides recycling, Oman exports approximately 148,528 tonnes of waste annually.

Highlighting EA's proactive measures, Kasbi said, "It's the practices that truly reshape our environmental narrative. For instance, individuals are mandated to dispose of chemical



waste at their own expense, strictly adhering to current regulations."

Kasbi noted that nurturing an eco-conscious society is pivotal. "A community aware of its environmental responsibilities and embracing efficient waste management can drastically reduce redundant waste in day-to-day life."

Moreover, there's an unwavering stance on the use of unapproved chemicals. EA has in place stringent penalties, including fines of up to OMR5,000 and jail sentence of up to three years for violations. Chemical substances, be it for import, export, storage or handling, are mandated to be packaged as per the sultanate's approved standards.

be'ah's digital platform for waste trading soon

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a step towards bolstering the circular economy, Oman Environmental Services Holding Company - be'ah - is planning to develop a waste trading and collection platform. This digital move aligns with the company's strategic ambition to harness waste streams and recover valuable resources.

A major catalyst for the recycling industry in Oman, the platform aspires to enhance recycling rates and maximise the value retention of waste generated in sultanate. According to be'ah, the service will provide an online marketplace for auctions and offer real-time pricing references.

The company announced a tender earlier for development of the platform, with bid submission closing on Monday.

The platform will simplify transactions of recyclable materials in the local market. It intends to serve as a transparent hub where waste generators, recyclers and traders can actively engage in live auctions.

"Additionally, the platform will provide services such as esti-



mates, seamless online payment gateways and monitor waste-flow post-transaction,' be'ah's tender document stated.

The platform's revenue model will lean on a mix of subscription and transaction fees. Considering the fact that be'ah caters to major waste generators, the platform plans to offer collection services, ensuring waste is transported from source to designated areas efficiently. 'Services will incorporate tracking the movement of recyclables and the accompanying financial transactions.'

Tasked with overseeing solid waste management services in Oman, the state-owned enterprise announced its intention to develop a first-of-its kind platform to facilitate auctions and trading in recyclable waste in September 2022 to give momen-

turn to the circular economy in the sultanate.

Ensuring transparency remains at the forefront, the trading platform will showcase live waste prices pegged to a local pricing index, which be'ah is currently formulating.

Despite vast amounts of recyclable waste streams produced in the country, be'ah reports that only a modest percentage is currently captured and recycled. This presents a substantial opportunity for investments, promising not only economic benefits but also support to SME growth, job creation and broader economic development.

The company has highlighted potential investment areas such as scrap copper, fish waste, engine oil, glass, wood, used tyres and plastic

EDO raises \$1bn from its inaugural sukuk

Muscat - Energy Development Oman (EDO) announced the successful completion of its inaugural benchmark sukuk issuance of US\$1bn on Sunday.

The offering was oversubscribed by more than five times, reflecting strong investor confidence in EDO as the national energy leader in the sultanate, a press release said.

Investor participation was widespread, with over 175 orders received from regions including Europe, the UK, the US, the Middle East and Asia. The sukuk was priced at a profit rate of 5.875% with a ten-year maturity period.

Commenting on the new issuance, Mazin al Lamki, CEO of EDO, said, "We take great pride in this significant transaction, which underscores international



This fresh offering aligns with EDO's funding strategy to extend the debt maturity timeline in accordance with our capital structure and corporate objectives

MAZIN AL LAMKI

investors' endorsement of our ongoing commitment to strengthen Oman's energy strategy. We deeply appreciate our investors' trust in us, highlighting our robust creditworthiness and our transformation into a fully-integrated energy enterprise. Furthermore, this fresh offering aligns with EDO's funding strategy to extend the debt maturity timeline in accordance with our capital structure and corporate objectives."

S&P Global Ratings and Fitch have assigned a BB rating to the senior unsecured Sukuk al Ijara/Murabaha, which has been priced with a spread of 165 basis points over US Treasuries. These trust certificates will be issued within the framework of EDO Sukuk Limited's trust certificate issuance programme.

CENTRAL KHARTOUM IN FLAMES



Flames gripped the Sudanese capital on Sunday. Paramilitary forces attacked the army headquarters for the second day in a row, as fighting raged into its sixth month. This picture, taken on Sunday, shows a fire raging at the Greater Nile Petroleum Oil Company Tower in Khartoum, a conical building with glass facades that is an emblem of the city (AFP)

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Antarctic sea-ice at 'mind-blowing low' alarms experts

Colorado, United States - The sea-ice surrounding Antarctica is well below any previous recorded winter level, satellite data shows, a worrying new benchmark for a region that once seemed resistant to global warming.

"It's so far outside anything we've seen, it's almost mind-blowing," said Walter Meier, who monitors sea-ice with the National Snow and Ice Data Center.

An unstable Antarctica could have far-reaching consequences, polar experts warn.

Antarctica's huge ice expanse regulates the planet's temperature, as the white surface reflects the Sun's energy back into the atmosphere and also cools the water beneath and near it.

Without its ice cooling the planet, Antarctica could transform from Earth's refrigerator to a radiator, experts said.

The ice that floats on the Antarctic Ocean's surface now measures less than 17mn sqkm - that is 1.5mn sqkm of sea-ice less than the September average, and well below previous winter record lows.

That's an area of missing ice about five times the size of the British Isles.

Meier is not optimistic that the sea-ice will recover to a significant degree.

Scientists are still trying to identify all the factors that led to this year's low sea-ice, but studying trends in Antarctica has historically been challenging, BBC news reported.

In a year when several global heat and ocean temperature records have broken, some scientists insist the low sea-ice is the measure to pay attention to.



MoH to start seasonal flu vaccine drive today



Mauritius unveils a captivating nightlife

Russia proposes visa-free travel for Oman, 3 other GCC states

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Russia has proposed a visa-free travel regime for Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, Maxim Reshetnikov, Russian Economic Development Minister, stated at the Eastern Economic Forum last week.

"We are exploring the topic of making the transition to visa-free travels," Russian News Agency TASS quoted Reshetnikov as saying.

He pointed out that Moscow is especially looking at countries in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and has already proposed scrapping visas for these five countries.



"This is where incremental growth of premium class tourists is possible in particular,"

Reshetnikov added. "That's why we are interested in it."

In a bid to boost tourism,

Oman has approved a list of 103 countries whose citizens can avail a visa-free entry to sul-

tanate.

Among the major countries whose citizens can enter Oman visa free for 14 days are Russia, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, Georgia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Belgium, Romania, Slovenia, Finland, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Cyprus, Ukraine, Spain, Czech Republic, Austria, Ireland, UK, Poland, Slovakia, France, Netherlands, Venezuela, Colombia, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Japan, Thailand, South Africa, Russia, China, USA, Turkey, South Korea, New Zealand, Iran, Australia, Indonesia, Taiwan, Canada, Malaysia and Singapore.

Festival ground for fun and frolic



Muscat Municipality is set to change the city's events scene with its plan for a multifaceted festival ground. This comprehensive venue will be designed to accommodate a myriad of events throughout the calendar year. With a dedicated space tailored for versatility, the new festival ground promises enhanced event experiences and the potential to attract large crowds, making Muscat a hub for festivities and gatherings. How will this facility help in having quality festivals/events and attracting large crowds? Here's what readers of *Muscat Daily* said -

Reema Bhatia
Teacher

Festival time in Muscat is when families get together. Keeping in mind the various age groups, there should be more activities, games, some boating adventures and numerous food stalls to attract crowds. There should be proper parking, good lighting, restroom facilities and convenient time slots for various shows. .

Srikanth Ayyagari
Deputy manager

The multifaceted festival ground in Muscat will elevate event quality by offering state-of-the-art facilities and a consistent, well-managed space. This centralised hub will become a cultural focal point, drawing larger crowds as it simplifies access to diverse events, ultimately fostering community engagement and enhancing Muscat's cultural vibrancy.

Manna Prasad
Life skills trainer

Having a single venue is definitely a godsend considering it will serve as a single point of communication, making it accessible across communities, facilitating logistics and fostering cross-culture exchange and formation of networks. It appears that it's going to be cost-effective as well as easy to co-ordinate/supervise events. Ideally, it will cancel out the lags in commuting and convenience can be prioritised. This will also make the site a familiar place, easily approachable and with that it'll become a hub pulling large crowds to one common location. .

Khalil S Faraji
Businessman

We need such a venue in the heart of Muscat, somewhere close to the expressway, with lots of free parking all year around. Seeb and Amerat parks

are way too far with lots of accidents and traffic jams during festivals..

Vinay Shetty
Senior solutions consultant

If a festival ground has to attract crowds around the year, besides food and children's entertainment, there must be a temperature controlled garden area, which can be visited even during the daytime, with lot of fountains, greenery and a platform for people to demonstrate creative talents in music and art.

Nasser Mohammed al Adawi
Brand manager

Festivals showcase talents and contribute to nurturing, supporting and empowering these while also connecting them to international peers. Festivals increase interest in local heritage and promote cultural and heritage tourism.



Registration for Youth Excellence Award now open

Muscat - The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY) is set to open registration for the fourth edition of the Youth Excellence Award 2023 on Monday. Registration will remain open until October 3.

The announcement was made during a press conference conducted by the ministry at the Youth Centre on Sunday, where details of the award were revealed.

Hamoud bin Salem al Jabri, Assistant Director General of Directorate General of Youth at MCSY, said, "The Youth Excellence Award has been our way of recognising the commendable contributions of Omani youth."

Coinciding with Omani Youth Day on October 26, the award serves as a testament to the significance of young individuals collaborating for societal betterment. It also recognises institutions that go the extra mile in fostering youth engagement and

The Youth Excellence Award has been our way of recognising the commendable contributions of Omani youth

HAMOUD AL JABRI

promoting a level playing field for both individual youths and organisations to deliver notable community contributions.

Jabri informed that the award focuses on five main areas - digital media, digital economy, employment, environmental initiatives and entrepreneurship.

The competition is open to five categories - individuals, youth-led initiatives, youth organisations, civil society entities and private-sector firms championing youth-focused endeavours.

Oman, Tunisia explore ways to enhance economic, investment cooperation

Muscat - H E Said Mohammed al Sagri, Minister of Economy, received Samir Saied, Tunisian Minister of Economy and Planning, and his accompanying delegation on Sunday.

The meeting explored ways of enhancing cooperation in economic and investment fields. The two sides reiterated

their keenness to take further steps to open up new vistas of joint action serving cooperation in economic, commercial, investment and other areas.

The Tunisian delegation comprised businessmen from commercial, industrial, tourism, energy, logistics and other sectors. ONA

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

What measures should be taken to curb illegal sale of fish, fruits, food and other items on the streets?

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

SEND US ON OUR NEW WHATSAPP NO 91953774

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

INVITATION TO TENDER



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

Tender No. : RFP 23/003
Tender Title : Supply and Service Thermocouples to (ABF)
Scope : SA has two (2) types of Thermocouples in its Anode Bake Furnace (ABF) which require continual maintenance and/or replacement. They are Fluewall Thermocouples and Anode Thermocouples. SA requires a competent service provider (Contractor) to keep SA adequately supplied with thermocouples and replacement parts as detailed in the Scope of work (SOW) for efficient and continuous operation of the ABF. SOW will be shared only to the qualified service providers after reviewing their company profile shared during the bid request.

Document Issue Date : 1 October 2023
Last Date For Applying : 24 September 2023

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>

MoH to begin vaccination drive against seasonal flu

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has announced that seasonal influenza vaccines will be available at its health centres beginning Monday.

In a statement, MoH said it will administer the seasonal flu vaccine to people over the age of 60 years and those with chronic diseases (respiratory, heart, renal, liver, neurological, blood and metabolic disorders, including uncontrolled diabetes and obesity) among adults and



children, pilgrims, workers in the health sector, pregnant women and two-year-old children.

The ministry calls on these groups to visit the nearest health centre to receive the seasonal flu vaccine to avoid the influenza infection which affects the respiratory system and can cause serious complications' MoH stated.

It informed that the vaccine is available in private health institutions for citizens and residents who are not in the target groups.

According to MoH data, as

many as 177 cases of seasonal influenza - and two deaths resulting from it - were recorded in the sultanate in 2020/2021.

Outbreaks of seasonal flu, caused by influenza viruses, resulting in acute respiratory infection are witnessed in all parts of the world. Seasonal flu claimed 29 lives in Oman between July 2018 and June 2019.

The number of cases in the 2019/2020 flu season, however, decreased due to precautionary measures adopted worldwide to counter the COVID-19 pandemic.



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US Fed likely to pause rate hikes despite inflation

Washington, US - The US Federal Reserve is widely expected to hold interest rates steady on Wednesday after a summer of mixed economic data, while leaving the door open to another hike if needed.

The Fed has raised interest rates 11 times over the last 18 months, lifting its key lending rate to a level not seen for 22 years as it tackles inflation still stubbornly above its long-term target of two per cent.

After falling sharply over the last year, inflation has ticked up again in recent months due to a spike in energy costs, keeping up the pressure on the Fed.

But analysts and traders still broadly expect the US central bank to hold rates steady on September 19-20 in order to give policymakers more time to assess the health of the world's largest economy.

"We think the Fed is done with its tightening cycle," EY Chief Economist Gregory Daco told AFP. "That view has not changed over the past couple of months."

"After raising rates in July, we expect the Fed to follow through on strong pre-meeting signals and hold rates steady," Deutsche Bank economists wrote in a note to clients on Friday.

Finding 'golden path'

The rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) now finds itself in a difficult situation as it seeks to address inflation through interest rate hikes while avoiding a recession, a feat that economists call a soft landing.

Recent economic data showing strong economic growth in the first half of the year, inflation trending downward, and a softening jobs market suggests the



US Federal Reserve headquarters in Washington, DC

US Federal Reserve now finds itself in a difficult situation as it seeks to address inflation through interest rate hikes while avoiding a recession, a feat that economists call a soft landing

Fed may just be able to pull it off.

"I think, in general, the economy is doing relatively well, but we are seeing signs that there is an economic slowdown underway," said Daco from EY.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs recently cut their forecast for a recession in the United States from 20% likelihood down to 15%, while other economists - including those in the Fed's research team - say they no longer expect the US to enter a recession.

"Recent data should leave the Fed encouraged by ongoing disinflation but concerned about re-acceleration in inflation because of the strength in activity," Bank of America economists wrote in

a note to clients.

Some FOMC members - including Fed Chair Jerome Powell - have indicated that they see a narrow path for the Fed to achieve a soft landing in the coming months.

"I believe there is a golden path opportunity that is unusual, in recent modern Fed history," Chicago Fed President and FOMC member Austan Goolsbee said during a recent interview broadcast on NPR.

"If you look at expectations in the marketplace, there's a growing confidence that we can pull it off," he continued, adding that it hinged on the Fed "remaining attentive to the data."

AFP

OQGN IPO subscription to begin on September 26

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Sunday announced the approval of the prospectus for the initial public offering (IPO) of OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), the sole operator of Oman's gas transportation system.

The subscription period for the IPO will commence on September 26, 2023 for retail investors and institutions categories, the CMA said in a statement on Sunday.

OQGN recently announced its intention to proceed with an IPO and listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX). The listing of



OQGN shares on the MSX is expected to take place in October 2023.

The selling shareholders expect to sell up to 49% of the total issued share capital of OQGN in

the IPO. Following the offering, OQ will continue to hold a minimum of 51% shareholding.

The offering is being offered to eligible investors in Oman and qualified institutional and other investors in a number of countries (Category I Investors) and retail investors in Oman (Category II Investors).

OQGN holds a natural monopoly over the essential gas transportation infrastructure in Oman and is the exclusive owner and operator of the Natural Gas Transportation Network (NGTN), serving critical roles in Oman as the asset owner, operator and maintenance and transportation provider of gas through the NGTN.

OCCI and ICAI launch Omani CFO mentoring programme in Muscat

Muscat - The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) Muscat Chapter started the Omani CFO mentoring programme in Muscat on Saturday.

H E Dr Mahad Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour, had inaugurated the Omani CFO mentoring programme in Salalah on August 26, 2023.

The first batch in Muscat consists of forty attendees selected from applicants representing various private and government organisations. CA Jim Joseph, chairperson of the ICAI Muscat Chapter, said, "This is not a training programme, but a unique mentoring platform, where experienced members of the ICAI will be sharing their decades of experience with aspiring Omani professionals. For the ICAI Muscat Chapter, this result-oriented and focused knowledge-sharing programme is a matter of giving back to the society from where



we gained our experience." The OCCI board member Dr Abdullah Masoud al Harthy welcomed the attendees at the launch event.

The first session in Muscat was led by CA Sajeew Surendran (former chairperson of ICAI

Muscat) and CA Joby Joseph.

The programme will continue at the OCCI Muscat branch for the next eight Saturdays. A team of thirty experienced mentors will deliver the sessions and share their vast knowledge with the attendees.

California sues five oil giants, alleging climate-risks deception

Los Angeles, US - The US state of California has sued five of the world's largest oil companies, alleging the firms caused billions of dollars in damages and misled the public by minimising the risks from fossil fuels, according to a court filing.

The suit, dismissed by one defendant as "meritless" and "politicised," follows numerous other cases brought by US cities, counties and states against fossil fuel interests over the impact of climate change as well as alleged disinformation campaigns spanning decades.

The civil case was filed in superior court in San Francisco against ExxonMobil, Shell, BP, ConocoPhillips and Chevron, which is headquartered in California. The American Petroleum Institute (API), an industry group, is also a defendant in the case.

"Oil and gas company executives have known for decades that reliance on fossil fuels would cause these catastrophic results, but they suppressed that information from the public and policymakers by actively pushing out disinformation on the topic," the 135-page complaint read.

"Their deception caused a delayed societal response to global warming. And their misconduct has resulted in tremendous costs to people, property and natural resources, which continue to unfold each day."

The suit seeks the creation of an abatement fund to pay for future damages caused by climate disasters in California, which is on the front lines of climate change-



fueled wildfires, flooding and other extreme weather phenomena.

"By downplaying the scientific consensus on climate change and emphasizing uncertainty, defendants hoped to delay any regulatory action that might seek to reduce or control (greenhouse gas) emissions, thereby threatening the industry's profits," the complaint added.

A spokesperson for API slammed the lawsuit, arguing that climate policy "is for Congress to debate and decide, not the court system."

"This ongoing, coordinated campaign to wage meritless, politicized lawsuits against a foundational American industry and its workers is nothing more than a distraction from important national conversations and an enormous waste of California taxpayer resources," the spokesperson, Andrea Woods, told AFP.

Chevron also hit out against the lawsuit, with a spokesperson telling AFP that climate change "is a global problem that requires

a coordinated international policy response, not piecemeal litigation for the benefit of lawyers and politicians." California "courts have no constructive or constitutionally permissible role in crafting global energy policy," the spokesperson added.

Shell offered a similar take, with a spokesperson saying the fossil fuel giant agrees "that action is needed now on climate change" but that the courtroom "is not the right venue."

Activists said it was a "watershed moment" in the pushback against oil companies, with the Center for Climate Integrity noting that California "is now the world's largest economy and the first major oil-producing state to take fossil fuel companies to court for their climate deception."

"For more than 50 years, Big Oil has been lying to us - covering up the fact that they've long known how dangerous the fossil fuels they produce are for our planet," California Governor Gavin Newsom said in a statement on Friday.

AFP



PO BOX 78, QURUM CITY CENTRE, PC 102, SULTANATE OF OMAN

INVITATION TO ORDINARY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Al Fajar Al Alamia Co. SAOG (the "Company") are pleased to invite the shareholders for the company's Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, 30th of September 2023, at Crowne Plaza, Muscat and through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository Company ("MCDC") website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for the first AGM is not met, Saturday, 7th October 2023, 3:00 pm will be the date of the second AGM, at the aforesaid venue and the electronic platform to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors' on Company's activity and its financial position for the financial year ended 30 June 2023.
- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors' on corporate governance for the financial year ended 30 June 2023.
- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors' performance for the financial year ended 30 June 2023.
- To consider and approve the statutory auditors' report and to approve the financial statements and the profit and loss account for the financial year ending 30 June 2023.
- To approve the sitting fees paid to Directors for attending meetings of the Board and sub-committees for the previous financial year and to determine the Directors' sitting fees for the upcoming financial year.
- To consider the transactions carried out with related parties during the financial year ended 30 June 2023.
- Approve the proposed transactions that the company will carry out with related parties during the financial year ending 30th June 2024.
- To consider the amounts allocated and spent for the company's social responsibilities for the year ended on 30 June 2023.
- To consider the allocation of an amount of RO 10,000/- for Corporate Social Responsibility for the financial year ending 30 June 2024.
- To appoint statutory auditors for the financial year ending 30 June 2024 and determine their fees.
- To elect the Board of Directors for a new term of office (from the shareholders and/or non-shareholders). Any person wishing to be elected to the Board of Directors may fill out the nomination form that can be obtained from the company's head office. The completed form should be delivered to the company's head office at least 5 days prior to the Annual Ordinary General Meeting, not later than Sunday 24th September 2023.

Pursuant to the Company's articles of association and General Meeting regulations, by means of modern technology issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A juristic person, exclusively, has the right to authorize a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date set for the Meeting until the end of the voting process on the day of the Meeting, and in the event that the shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be invalid, and he must re-vote again on the day of the Meeting.

Any questions relating to this Notice should be addressed to Ms. Laila Said Salim Al Hadi (Telephone No. +968 92432813 or email : laila@alfajar.co.om).

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Advisors

Alizz Islamic Bank partners with Dar Al Atta'a for charity

As part of the banks pioneering role in lending a hand to the community and various institutions and associations, Alizz Islamic Bank recently partnered with Dar Al Atta'a to implement one of the 'Tamkeen Program' projects for the current year 2023.

This comes as part of the banks belief that the prosperity of individuals leads to the prosperity of the societies in which we live.

Dar Al Atta'a's goal is to contribute towards improving living conditions and bringing about lasting positive change in our community. The association contributes continuously towards making a positive impact in Omani society.

The agreement - signed by Maryam bint Issa al Zadjali, chairperson of the association, and Ali bin Saif al Mani, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank - aims to provide a suitable educational environment for pre-school children by renovating an existing endowment building. The project also contributes towards providing job opportunities in the region.

This project falls under the 'Tamkeen Program', which is one of the association's main programmes and aims to contribute to sustainable projects that will enhance income and achieve prosperity for both individuals and society.

As part of the associations belief in providing better opportuni-



ties that enable investment in the nation's people to create a support factor for Oman's renaissance and development; over the past years, Dar Al Att'a has worked to establish cultural centers throughout the sultanate.

The Dar Al Atta'a Association, will manage and supervise the project and follow up on the stages of implementing the maintenance and restoration of the endowment building in Al Hajar village in Wilayat al Awabi.

During this period, the building will be restored and equipped with the necessary classroom amenities and equipment to provide a comprehensive educational environment for pre-school children and a suitable environment for the school's teaching staff.

Speaking about the project, Maryam al Zadjali said, "This project is of great importance as it is linked to empowerment through pre-school education,

which contributes to enhancing the abilities and skills of children and preparing them for the next stages of their education."

The Alizz Islamic Bank CEO said, "Social responsibility is in line with Alizz Islamic Bank's mission of achieving exceptional and sustainable results for our shareholders. The bank has partnered on and supported many projects that have had a positive impact on society and that have created community value."

Bank Muscat's Meethaq Islamic participates in GCC forum on zakat

Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat participated recently in the GCC forum on zakat and the first meeting for zakat committees in Oman held at Oman Across Ages Museum.

The forum was attended by authorities responsible for managing and distributing zakat in the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and members from zakat committees affiliated with the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs. It included as part of its activities an exhibition for zakat committees and panel discussions for committees' members.

Meethaq is keen to participate in different events to showcase its wide array of services and products designed to meet the needs and aspirations of its valued customers.

During the three-day forum, Meethaq showcased through its stall at the museum its various customized services and facilities that are developed based on the best Islamic Banking standards. The digital banking services provided by Meethaq have made it easy and convenient for customers to manage their transactions, including for example, how to calculate zakat and paying zakat and charity amounts easily through its Internet and mobile banking services. "Meethaq has always been at



the forefront in actively participating in different events since it is a great opportunity to meet with our valued customers and get to know more about their needs and answer any questions they might have about the services offered," said Ali Ahmed al Lawati, assistant general manager, Meethaq - Corporate Banking.

"Meethaq will continue working on its strategy towards development and innovation to offer the best services possible. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisers and wish them and the zakat committees participating all the best."

Ali al Lawati further pointed

out that the zakat committees play an essential role in the sultanate as they are constantly working towards developing projects that can ensure providing a sustainable income for those who are eligible for zakat.

Meethaq Islamic Banking plays as well a pioneering role in providing the best banking services in line with sharia'a and encourage the community to pay their zakat through a number of awareness programmes organised throughout the year.

Meethaq is proud of its partnership with the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs and cooperation in implementing a number of joined programmes in this regard.

OAB's CEO Summit gathers over 300 business leaders

The second edition of the CEO Summit, conceived by Oman Arab Bank (OAB) in collaboration with Alizz Islamic Bank welcomed more than 300 chief executives, local and global thought-leaders.

Designed to inspire CEOs to embrace change and leverage emerging technologies, the event featured speakers including Tahir al Amri, executive president of Central Bank of Oman, futurist Richard Watson and Dr Lamya el Hajj, associate professor at Sultan Qaboos University.

Broad topics of discussion were tackled during the event, such as driving sustainable economic recovery and trends that will disrupt industries over the next 50 years, culminating with a conversation/Q&A with all of the day's speakers.

Sulaiman al Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, who welcomed guests to the event with an opening address, said, "It is extremely



important for companies all around the sultanate to continue to align with Oman's socio-economic agenda and strive towards the goals set out in Oman's Vision 2040 to push forward our nation's macroeconomic growth, but we all also need to take a global view to catalyse even greater achievements. What we wanted to achieve - and successfully delivered - with the CEO Summit is to foster a perspective

that will encourage the hundreds of business leaders who attended to explore the vast opportunities in international markets that can be accessed using the latest technologies and trends. It was inspiring to hear from the visionary thinkers who hosted sessions and see so many of my fellow leaders come together at CEO Summit in a spirit of solidarity, with minds open to learning new ideas and perspectives."

LuLu Financial Holdings opens 300th customer engagement centre in Dubai

UAE based financial services conglomerate LuLu Financial Holdings (LFH) scripted a new chapter in its illustrious journey with the grand opening of its 300th Global Customer Engagement Center in Dubai's Al Rigga.

The new Engagement Center is the company's 96th in the UAE under the LuLu Exchange brand, and was inaugurated by H E Saad Cachalia, South African Ambassador to the UAE.

The event was also attended by the Guest of Honor - Renato N Dueñas, Jr., Philippine Consul General in Dubai, as well as the company's managing director Adeeb Ahamed, and other senior management from the global and regional offices.

Congratulating LuLu Financial Holdings on achieving this milestone, H E Cachalia said, "I am delighted to be part of the celebrations of LuLu Financial Holdings' 300th Customer Engagement Center, a global



company hailing from the shores of UAE, which has in a short span of time emerged as one of the most trusted names in cross-border payments. The company's approach to growth, through meaningful partnerships and people-centric services, has been key to its expansion and enabling the cause of financial inclusion in low- and middle-income

countries. I congratulate the team on today's remarkable achievement."

Renato N Dueñas, Jr, said, "LuLu Financial holdings has achieved tremendous growth over the last 14 years, fostering a sense of community among the diaspora they serve, in the UAE and other countries. I congratulate the team on reaching this

grand milestone of 300 Customer Engagement Centers and convey my best wishes as they aspire to touch newer milestones."

Adeeb Ahamed said, "The inauguration of our 300th customer center signifies our remarkable journey and unwavering dedication to transforming cross-border payments."

Omantel, Visit Oman to boost digital innovation in tourism

VisitOman.om, Oman's digitally-native B2B inbound tourism portal built for the global travel industry, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding solidifying a strategic partnership with Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in the Sultanate of Oman.

This alliance will significantly enhance the value proposition of Omantel's loyalty programme, Makasib, providing customers with even more exciting opportunities to redeem their points for a variety of tourism and travel related experiences in Oman.

Under this groundbreaking partnership, Visit Oman is set to launch a dedicated portal on its platform exclusively for Omantel loyalty customers where Omantel's Makasib points will be inte-

grated into the Visit Oman booking platform, providing the opportunity for loyalty members to redeem live bookings with instant confirmation. This streamlined integration will facilitate a seamless redemption process for Makasib points, allowing loyalty customers to effortlessly use their earned points for an enriched array of Omani travel services and products curated by Visit Oman.

The Visit Oman portal will feature unique rewards and special offers extended by local SMEs in the Oman tourism sector. This exciting initiative aims to foster growth and innovation among local businesses bolstering their development and promoting Oman's emerging tourism SME ecosystem on a national scale.



Joint promotional activities will further enhance awareness and engagement surrounding the utilisation of Makasib points and further enhance the visibility

of Oman's rich cultural offerings and experiences through these special offers to loyalty customers.

"Our collaboration with Visit

Oman marks a new era in customer rewards. It is an unprecedented fusion of technology and tourism, designed to reward our loyal customers and promote

local tourism businesses," said Aladdin Baitfadhil, Chief Commercial Officer of Omantel.

"Our customers are at the heart of everything we do at Omantel, and we are committed to providing them with innovative solutions that enhance their experience. By integrating Makasib points into Visit Oman's platform, we are taking our loyalty program to new heights, adding greater value to each point and making rewards more accessible than ever."

Omantel is keen to extend the benefits of this partnership to its large customer base through a variety of communication channels. The company will continue its dedicated efforts to advocate for the utilisation of Makasib points, underscoring the value of customer rewards and loyalty in

its journey towards a connected future. The partnership with Visit Oman reaffirms Omantel's commitment to continually enhance the value it offers to its customers and stakeholders and propel Oman further into the digital future.

Adding to the excitement surrounding this partnership, Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, expressed his delight in a statement. "We are truly proud to partner with Omantel, a company that shares our vision of facilitating unforgettable experiences. This integration of Makasib points into our platform signifies a major advancement in our service delivery, offering an innovative way for Omantel's loyal customers to experience the best of what Oman has to offer."

One week after Libya flash flood, aid effort gains pace

Derna, Libya - A week after a tsunami-sized flash flood devastated the Libyan coastal city of Derna, sweeping thousands to their deaths, the international aid effort gained pace on Sunday to help the grieving survivors.

Search-and-rescue teams wearing face masks and protective suits kept up the grim search for any survivors who may still be trapped in the mud-caked wasteland of smashed buildings, crushed cars and uprooted trees.

Traumatised residents, 30,000 of whom are now homeless in Derna alone, are in dire need of clean water, food, shelter and basic supplies amid a growing risk of cholera, diarrhoea, dehydration and malnutrition, UN agencies warn.

"In this city, every single family has been affected," said one resident, Mohammad al-Dawali.

Seir Mohammed Seir, a member of the security forces, spoke of a three-month-old girl who lived through the tragedy: "Her entire family died, she was the only one who survived."

Emergency response teams and relief goods have been deployed from France, Iran, Malta, Russia, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, with more on the way from multiple other European and Arab nations.

The aid effort has been hampered by the political division of Libya, which was thrown into war and chaos after a 2011 NATO-backed uprising led to the overthrow and killing of veteran dictator Muammar Gaddafi.



Vehicles are seen buried in mud and rubble in the aftermath of a devastating flood in eastern Libya's city of Derna, on Saturday (AFP)

The oil-rich North African country now remains split between two rival governments - a UN-backed administration in the capital Tripoli, and one based in the disaster-hit east. Amid the chaos, true death toll remained unknown, with untold numbers feared swept into the sea.

Thousands missing

The health minister of the eastern administration, Othman Abdeljalil, has said that 3,252 people were confirmed dead in

Traumatised residents, 30,000 of whom are now homeless in Derna alone, are in dire need of clean water, food, shelter and basic supplies

Derna, where corpses wrapped in blankets and in body bags have lined squares and streets.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warned on Sunday that the eventual death toll from Derna alone

could be as high as 11,300, with another 10,100 missing. But the Libyan Red Crescent, which was cited by the UN agency, earlier denied a UN death toll of over 10,000 and called on the media to 'exercise

caution and accuracy'. The massive flood came as Libya was lashed on September 10 by the hurricane-strength Mediterranean Storm Daniel, which had earlier brought deadly floods to Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria. The rapidly rising waters burst two upstream river dams in Derna, sending a late-night tidal wave crashing through the centre of the city of 100,000, sweeping entire residential blocks into the Mediterranean. AFP

Mali, Niger, Burkina sign defence pact

Bamako, Mali - The military leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger on Saturday signed a mutual defence pact, ministerial delegations from the three Sahel countries announced in Mali's capital Bamako.

The Liptako-Gourma Charter establishes the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), Mali's junta leader Assimi Goita posted on X, the social network formerly known as Twitter. Its aim is to 'establish an architecture of collective defence and mutual assistance for the benefit of our populations', he wrote.

The Liptako-Gourma region - where the Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger borders meet - has been ravaged by militancy in recent years.

"This alliance will be a combination of military and economic efforts between the three countries", Mali's Defence Minister Abdoulaye Diop told journalists.

"Our priority is the fight against terrorism in the three countries."

A militant insurgency that erupted in northern Mali in 2012 spread to Niger and Burkina Faso in 2015.

All three countries have undergone coups since 2020, most recently Niger, where soldiers in July overthrew President Mohamed Bazoum.

The West African regional bloc ECOWAS has threatened to intervene militarily in Niger over the coup.

Mali and Burkina Faso quickly responded by saying that any such operation would be deemed a 'declaration of

Mutual defence pact

The charter signed on Saturday binds the signatories to assist one another - including militarily - in the event of an attack on any one of them.

"Any attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one or more contracting parties shall be considered as an aggression against the

The pact establishes the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), aimed to establish an architecture of collective defence and mutual assistance

other parties and shall give rise to a duty of assistance... including the use of armed force to restore and ensure security," it states.

It also binds the three countries to work to prevent or settle armed rebellions.

Mali has, in addition to fighting militants linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group, seen a resumption of hostilities by predominantly Tuareg armed groups over the past week. The escalation risks testing an already stretched army as well as the junta's claims that it has successfully turned around a dire security situation.

AFP

Iran flayed for inspector exclusion

Vienna, Austria - The United Nations nuclear watchdog on Saturday condemned the 'disproportionate and unprecedented' move by Iran to withdraw accreditation from several of its most experienced inspectors.

Iran's foreign ministry said in response that the move was in retaliation for 'political abuses' by the United States, France, Germany and Britain.

But IAEA director general Rafael Grossi said that this would seriously hamper the ability of the International Atomic Energy Agency to carry out its work.

"Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran informed me of its decision to withdraw the designation of several experienced Agency inspectors assigned to conduct verification activities in Iran' under an existing agreement, said Grossi.

"This follows a previous recent withdrawal of the designa-



IAEA director general Rafael Grossi (AFP)

tion of another experienced Agency inspector for Iran," his statement added.

"With today's decision, Iran has effectively removed about one third of the core group of the Agency's most experienced inspectors designated for Iran," said Grossi.

In 2015, major world powers reached a deal with Iran under

which Tehran would curb its nuclear programme in exchange for relief from crippling economic sanctions.

But that started to unravel in 2018 when then US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal and reimposed sanctions.

Tehran in turn stepped up its nuclear programme - while continuing to deny it harbours ambitions of developing a nuclear weapons capability.

Efforts to revive the deal have been fruitless so far.

The United States and the so-called E3 group - France, Germany and the United Kingdom - are threatening to call for a new resolution against Tehran at an IAEA board meeting.

"Iran persists in its deliberate refusal to engage earnestly with the Agency," the US and E3 group said in a midweek joint statement.

AFP

Iran guard fatally shot on anniversary of Amini death

Tehran, Iran - A member of Iran's Basij paramilitary force linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was shot dead during events falling on the anniversary of Mahsa Amini's death, state media reported on Sunday.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died in police custody on September 16, 2022 following her arrest for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

Her death triggered months-long demonstrations which saw hundreds killed, including dozens of security personnel, in what Tehran labelled as 'riots' fomented by foreign governments and 'hostile media'.

'One person was martyred and three people were injured' on Saturday evening in a 'blind shooting' by two unknown as-



People protest against the Iranian regime at Place de la Bastille in Paris on Saturday, on the first death anniversary of Mahsa Amini (AFP)

sailants towards Basij guards in the city of Nurabad in Southern Fars province, state news agency IRNA reported.

The news agency did not im-

mediately elaborate on the assailants' identity or the motivation for the shooting.

"The intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies of the

province are trying to arrest the assailants' who fled after the shooting, it said.

The Revolutionary Guards meanwhile announced that a dual national was arrested over 'attempts to organise riots and vandalism' in Karaj city west of the capital Tehran.

The Guards did not elaborate further on the suspect's identity or other nationality.

On Saturday, authorities arrested several groups over accusations of 'planning to create chaos' and producing content to serve 'hostile media', according to IRNA.

Many of the arrests were made in Amini's home province of Kurdistan, as well as Iran's northwest and south, the agency added.

AFP

Desperate Sudanese face endless wait for passports so they can flee

Port Sudan, Sudan - Marwa Omar was one of hundreds who lined up at dawn to try and get passports in Port Sudan. Fifteen hours later, she still had nothing to show for it.

A million people have crossed Sudan's borders since April, fleeing the devastating war between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, according to the United Nations.

That figure would probably be higher, were it not for the fact that many like Omar needed passports renewed or issued from offices that shuttered their doors at news of the first gunshots on April 15.

Since the authorities inaugurated a new passport office in the



Sudanese queue outside a passport office in Gedaref on September 3 (AFP)

eastern city of Port Sudan in late August, hundreds of people have lined up all day, every day.

They are desperate to obtain paperwork that will allow them to leave Sudan's deadly war behind. Asked where she intended to go, Omar replied: "Anywhere but here. This isn't a country any more."

In five months of war, the violence has killed 7,500 people, displaced more than five million and eroded Sudan's already fragile infrastructure, plunging millions into dire need.

"There's nothing left. We can't live or put food on the table or educate our children," the mother of four said.

Like Omar, many have flocked

to the coastal city, which has so far been spared in the fighting and is now home to government officials, the United Nations and Sudan's only functioning airport.

"I was in Atbara for two months, but when I heard they were issuing passports again I came to Port Sudan," said Salwa Omar.

But days go by and only a lucky few manage to get inside the building to hand in their paperwork, as others like her wait outside for their turn.

"If you know someone inside who will get it done for you quickly, come. Otherwise don't bother," Marwa Omar said, frustrated by the long wait and poor organisation.

'It's all wrong'

Those lucky enough to get inside the building have to enter 'a cramped room, terrible heat and no chairs', another applicant, Shehab Mohammed, told AFP.

"You have elderly people leaning on their canes for hours or sitting on the floor. It's all wrong."

Over the noise of dozens of people trying to push their paperwork through, Fares Mohammed, who came to get a passport for his child, said: "At this rate, we'll be here for months."

"It's so crowded it's hard to breathe. Imagine what these children and old people are feeling," he said.

AFP

'Voice' supporters rally across Australia

Thousands joined 'Walk for Yes' events in major cities in support of October 14 Indigenous rights referendum

Sydney, Australia - Australians rallied around the country on Sunday to fight for a landmark Indigenous rights reform that is bleeding support in the polls before an October 14 referendum.

Tens of thousands joined 'Walk for Yes' events in major cities ahead of the vote that could grant Indigenous Australians a constitutionally enshrined right to be consulted on policies that affect them - a so-called Voice.

More than 200 years since British colonisation, Indigenous people - whose ancestors have lived on the continent for about 60,000 years - have shorter lives than other Australians, poorer education and are far more likely to die in police custody.

"I think we need a voice in parliament and I think it's about time," said Laurel Johnson, a 58-year-old retired Indigenous community services worker who



Crowds march during a 'Walk for Yes' rally in Melbourne on Sunday (AFP)

joined hundreds of people at the Sydney rally, many seeking shade during a spring heatwave. Asked if the Voice would im-

prove the lot of Indigenous people, she said: "I jolly well hope so."

Her sister Priscilla Johnson,

53, said some Indigenous people still lived in 'Third World' conditions. "Australia is considered a First World country. The poor

social determinants of health have been continuous since the 1788 invasion," she said, referring to the landing of the First

Fleet that established a British penal colony in Australia. In Melbourne, more than 10,000 supporters marched through the

streets, some with banners reading: 'You're the voice, vote yes'.

Thousands more gathered in Canberra, Perth, Brisbane, Darwin, Hobart and Alice Springs.

But the 'Vote Yes' campaign, launched just weeks ago by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, faces an uphill battle.

Recent surveys show about 60 per cent against the reform versus 40 per cent in support - a near reversal of the situation a year ago.

To pass, the referendum needs majority support across Australia but also a majority in at least four of the six states.

Voting is compulsory, with non-voters who don't have a valid reason liable to a fine of 20 Australian dollars (US\$13).

Voters will be asked: "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?"

Opponents of the reform - including the conservative opposition - say it would confer special privileges on Indigenous peoples while adding an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.

They also complain there is insufficient detail about how the Indigenous Voice would work.

The exact process would be debated and legislated by parliament if the 'yes' case prevails.

AFP

A MEXICAN PARADE



Paratroopers of the Mexican Army's Special Forces take part in the military parade for the 213th anniversary of independence at Zocalo Square in Mexico City on Saturday (AFP)

14 killed in plane crash in Amazon

Rio De Janeiro, Brazil - Fourteen people were killed on Saturday when a plane crashed in the Brazilian Amazon while trying to land in stormy weather in the tourist town of Barcelos, leaving no survivors, officials said.

The small plane's pilot was approaching the remote town in heavy rain, with low visibility, and appeared to inadvertently start landing halfway down the runway, killing all 12 passengers and two crew, he said.

Initial investigations indicated the passengers were all Brazilian men traveling to the region for sport fishing, the state government said in a statement.

"Our teams have been on the ground responding since the moment of the crash to provide the necessary support," Governor Wilson Lima wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"My solidarity and prayers to the victims' family and friends."

Media reports showed the small white plane belly-down on



Amazonas State Security Secretary Vinicius Almeida speaks during a press conference in Manaus on Saturday (AFP)

The small plane's pilot was approaching the remote town in heavy rain, with low visibility, and appeared to inadvertently start landing halfway down the runway

craft-maker Embraer.

It was on its way from the state capital, Manaus, to Barcelos, about a 90-minute flight.

Officials said two aircraft approaching Barcelos around the same time had returned to Manaus because of the weather.

News site G1 said locals were the first to arrive at the scene, helping emergency workers remove the victims' bodies.

AFP

Russian volunteers help refugees from Ukraine

Saint Petersburg, Russia - For a year and a half Galina Artyomenko had been raising funds to help refugees from Ukraine after the Kremlin sent troops to the pro-Western country.

Then in July the 58-year-old resident of Saint Petersburg in northwestern Russia discovered that one of her bank cards as well as those of two other volunteers had been blocked.

"According to the bank, our 'collections' were for 'questionable purposes'," said Artyomenko, insisting that she can justify 'every ruble spent'.

After President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine last year, the authorities ramped up a crackdown on dissent, with those criticising the assault facing long prison terms.

Like other volunteers helping Ukrainians, Artyomenko is careful not to express an opinion on the ongoing conflict as even humanitarian operations can sometimes be viewed with suspicion



Volunteer Galina Artyomenko, 58, reacts during an interview with AFP at the humanitarian aid warehouse in Saint Petersburg on July 28 (AFP)

in Russia. Despite the obstacles she has faced, she collects donations online and uses the money to buy clothes, medicine and food for people forced to flee to Russia or Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine.

She regularly welcomes Ukrainians arriving in Saint Petersburg by train, helping them find accommodation, work, or

arrange for their onward travel to the European Union from Russia.

'Prefer not to talk'

Artyomenko said that 'thousands of people' in Russia were helping Ukrainians. "But they prefer not to talk about it, for security reasons," she said. "Even if no law prohibits helping people who have fallen into misfortune."

Thousands of people in Russia help Ukrainians. But they prefer not to talk about it, for security reasons. Even if no law prohibits helping people who have fallen into misfortune

GALINA ARTYOMENKO

Many volunteers refuse to speak about Moscow's offensive in Ukraine or their help to refugees, for fear of attracting the attention of the authorities who regularly arrest people accused of collaborating with Kyiv or 'discrediting' the Russian army.

Lyudmila, a 43-year-old volunteer who preferred to withhold her last name, said many such

people are 'pacifists' who cannot openly express their position and ease their conscience by helping the victims of the conflict.

"We cannot stand idly by, we must help those who are in a worse situation than us and who are suffering," said Lyudmila.

Artyomenko added: "This is the only way left for us to exist. That's all we can still do."

According to the United Nations, nearly 1.3mn refugees from Ukraine were recorded in Russia as of December, 2022.

According to Russia's estimates - disputed by NGOs - the count stands at more than five million.

Some of those people are in transit, particularly in northwest Russia, which borders the European Union. Others say they want to stay in Russia.

Kyiv has accused the Kremlin of having deported Ukrainians to Russia and of pushing them to obtain Russian passports.

AFP

'Poor handling' of fires and floods: Greek PM vows for a fresh start

Athens, Greece - Faced with criticism for his alleged poor handling of the fires and floods that struck Greece this summer, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis pledged fresh funding and reforms in order to fight the 'climate war'.

The promises could reinvestigate the image of his newly elected government that has been tarnished by footage of residents taking refuge on their roofs in desperate need of rescue as rising waters engulfed poorly prepared regions.

"Greece is facing a war in a time of peace," Mitsotakis said in his Thessaloniki International Fair keynote speech on Saturday.

"Over a two-week period, we experienced the worst wildfire and the worst floods in our history," he added. "The climate cri-



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (AFP)

sis is here and forces us to see everything differently," he said.

The floods devastated the fertile Thessaly plain in central Greece in early September.

The storms killed 17 people, swallowed cotton crops and fruit trees and killed hundreds of thousands of animals on Greece's breadbasket.

AFP

Indian PM Modi launches scheme for artisans on his birthday

New Delhi, India - Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched the PM Vishwakarma scheme aimed at benefitting traditional artisans and craftspeople.

Modi made the announcement after inaugurating the Rs 5,400 crore first phase of the India International Convention Centre (IICC), named Yashobhoomi in Dwarka, on his birthday on Sunday. He also interacted with artisans and craftspeople at the Centre.

Modi in his address said artisans will be provided proper

training and that during the training period, they will receive a stipend of Rs 500 per day.

"The friends who have been at the root of India's prosperity for thousands of years are our Vishwakarmas," he told artisans. "With the blessings of Lord Vishwakarma, 'Pradhanmantri Vishwakarma Yojana' is being started today. PM Vishwakarma Yojana comes as a new ray of hope for millions of families working traditionally with hand skills and tools," the prime minister said.

He urged the artisans to pur-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets potters during the inauguration of IICC, named Yashobhoomi, at Dwarka, in New Delhi on Sunday (ANI)

chase toolkits only from those shops that GST registered and the products are 'Made in India'.

PM Vishwakarma will be fully funded by the Union Government with an outlay of Rs 13,000 crore. The artists will be provided recognition through PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card, skill upgradation involving basic and advanced training, toolkit incentive of Rs 15,000, collateral-free credit support up to Rs 1 lakh (first tranche) and Rs 2 lakh (second tranche) at a concessional interest rate of five per cent, incentive for digital transactions and marketing support.

Eighteen traditional crafts will be covered under PM Vishwakarma. These include carpenter, boat maker, armourer, blacksmith, hammer and tool kit maker, locksmith, goldsmith, potter, sculptor, stone breaker, cobbler (shoemaker/ footwear artisan), mason (rajmistri), basket/mat/broom maker/coir weaver, doll & toy maker (traditional), barber, garland maker, washerman, tailor and fishing net maker.

The Yashobhoomi Centre in

Dwarka that was inaugurated on Sunday is built over a sprawling area of more than 70,000 square metres and includes convention rooms and a main auditorium. It also sports a grand ballroom that can accommodate over 10,000 delegates.

Earlier in the day while on his way to the event venue, Modi inaugurated the extension of the Delhi Airport Metro Express line from Dwarka Sector 21 to a new metro station 'Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector 25'. He also took a ride on the Delhi Metro.

ANI

North Korea's Kim Jong Un ends extended Russia tour

Moscow, Russia - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un left Russia on Sunday, ending a visit affirming close ties with Vladimir Putin and fuelling Western fears that Pyongyang might provide Moscow with arms for its assault on Ukraine.

Kim's extended tour of Russia's far eastern region, which began on Tuesday, has focused extensively on military matters, with his own entourage dominated by officers, a symbolic exchange of rifles with Putin and a tour of a fighter jet factory in Komsomolsk-on-Amur.

Before departing, TASS said Kim had been given five explosive drones, a reconnaissance drone and a bulletproof vest as gifts from a regional governor.

The Russian agency said the 'leader of the DPRK received five kamikaze drones and a 'Geran-25' reconnaissance drone with vertical takeoff', using the official name of North Korea.

TASS said the governor of the Primorye region, which borders China and North Korea, also 'offered Kim Jong Un a set of bulletproof protection' and 'special clothing not detectable by thermal cameras'.

Later on Sunday the Ria Novosti agency published a video of Kim's departure, and said a 'departure ceremony' was held at the Artyom-Primorsky-1 station.

Footage shows Kim waving goodbye from his train to a Russian delegation led by Natural Resources Minister Alexander Kozlov, before the Russian march



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un visiting an exhibition of military and dual-use goods in Vladivostok on Sunday (AFP)

Kim's tour of Russia's far eastern region, which began on Tuesday, has focused on military matters, with his own entourage dominated by officers and a symbolic exchange of rifles with Putin

'Farewell of Slavianska' is played as the train departs.

The official TASS news agency said that Kim's train was headed around 250km (155 miles) towards the border.

Historic allies, Russia and North Korea are both under rafts of global sanctions - Moscow for

its Ukraine assault, Pyongyang for its nuclear tests.

The first official visit abroad for the North Korean leader since the coronavirus pandemic has fanned Western fears that Moscow and Pyongyang will defy sanctions and strike an arms deal.

Greater cooperation

After meeting Kim on Wednesday at the Vostochny cosmodrome, roughly 8,000km (5,000 miles) from Moscow, Putin talked up the prospect of greater cooperation with North Korea and the 'possibilities' for military ties. Moscow is believed to be interested in buying North Korean ammunition to continue fighting in Ukraine, while Pyongyang wants Russia's help to develop its internationally condemned missile programme.

The Kremlin has said no agreement has or will be signed.

On Saturday Kim met the

Russian defence minister in Vladivostok, where he inspected state-of-the-art weapons including a hypersonic missile system.

The pair were seen smiling as they inspected some of Russia's nuclear bombers at an airfield before boarding a warship, a video released by the Russian defence ministry showed.

North Korean news agency KCNA has described the atmosphere during Kim's visit as 'fervent and warm' and said a 'new era of friendship, solidarity and cooperation' was opening between North Korea and Russia.

AFP



Congress General Secretary in-charge (Communications) Jairam Ramesh

Congress seeks to pass Women's Reservation Bill in special session of Indian Parliament

New Delhi, India - A day ahead of the week-long special session of Parliament, the Congress party has yet again raised their demand for a greater reservation for women in legislative roles.

In a post on X, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said the Congress Working Committee demands that the Women's Reservation Bill must be passed during the special session of Parliament. Jairam Ramesh said former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi first introduced Constitution Amendment Bills for one-third reservation in panchayats and nagarpalikas in May 1989 - which passed in Lok Sabha but failed in Rajya Sabha.

"Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao reintroduced Constitution Amendment Bills for one-third reservation for women in panchayats and nagarpalikas in April 1993. Both Bills passed and became law. Now there are more than 15 lakh elected women representatives in panchayats and nagarpalikas," he said.

Former PM Manmohan Singh

brought the Constitution Amendment Bill for one-third reservation for women in Parliament and state legislatures. The Bill was passed on March 9, 2010 in the Rajya Sabha but was not taken up in Lok Sabha.

"Bills introduced/ passed in Rajya Sabha do not lapse. Women's Reservation Bill is still very much active. The Congress party has for the past nine years been demanding that the Women's Reservation Bill already passed by the Rajya Sabha should now get passed by the Lok Sabha as well," Jairam Ramesh wrote on X.

As per the Parliamentary Bulletin, released on Wednesday, a discussion on 'Parliamentary Journey of 75 years starting from Samvidhan Sabha - Achievements, Experiences, Memories and Learnings' will be held in Parliament on the first day of the five-sitting long special session starting on Monday.

Another four bills are part of the legislative business of the government for the session.

ANI

DISPLACED



Displaced people stay in a makeshift encampment by the side of the road between Marrakech and Taroudant in the Atlas mountain range in the aftermath of a powerful earthquake, on Saturday. The magnitude 6.8 earthquake, Morocco's strongest ever, flattened entire villages on September 8 (AFP)

French former PM edges to presidential run

Paris, France - His physical appearance transformed but largely pledging continuity with the rule of President Emmanuel Macron, France's popular former premier Edouard Philippe is staking out the ground for a run for the presidency in 2027 against a stern challenge from far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen.

Philippe has been omnipresent in France over the past week, giving a blitz of media interviews and publishing his latest book, outlining positions well beyond his current remit as mayor of the northern port of Le Havre.

But the French have seen a man who is now almost physically unrecognisable from the premier who led the government from 2017-2020, notably including at the height of the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Skin conditions have meant that Philippe, who used to sport a dark, bushy beard, is now almost completely bald. While the 2027 race is still far off, there has al-



Edouard Philippe delivers his speech during the closing day of the 'Horizons' party parliamentary days in Angers on Friday (AFP)

ready been intense jostling among Macron's centrist faction given the president himself is not allowed to stand for a third consecutive term and polls indicate Le Pen has her best ever chance at winning the Elysee.

A poll this week by Toluna's Harris Interactive for Challenges magazine showed that Le Pen would win the first round of presidential elections under any sce-

nario. Of the pro-Macron faction, only either Philippe or smooth-talking Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire would make the second round ahead of hard-left candidate Jean-Luc Melancon.

"A politician who comes up to you and says 'The next presidential election? We are not thinking about it at all!' is telling fibs," Philippe told TF1 television in one of his many interviews this week.

Philippe has been omnipresent in France over the past week, giving a blitz of media interviews and publishing his latest book

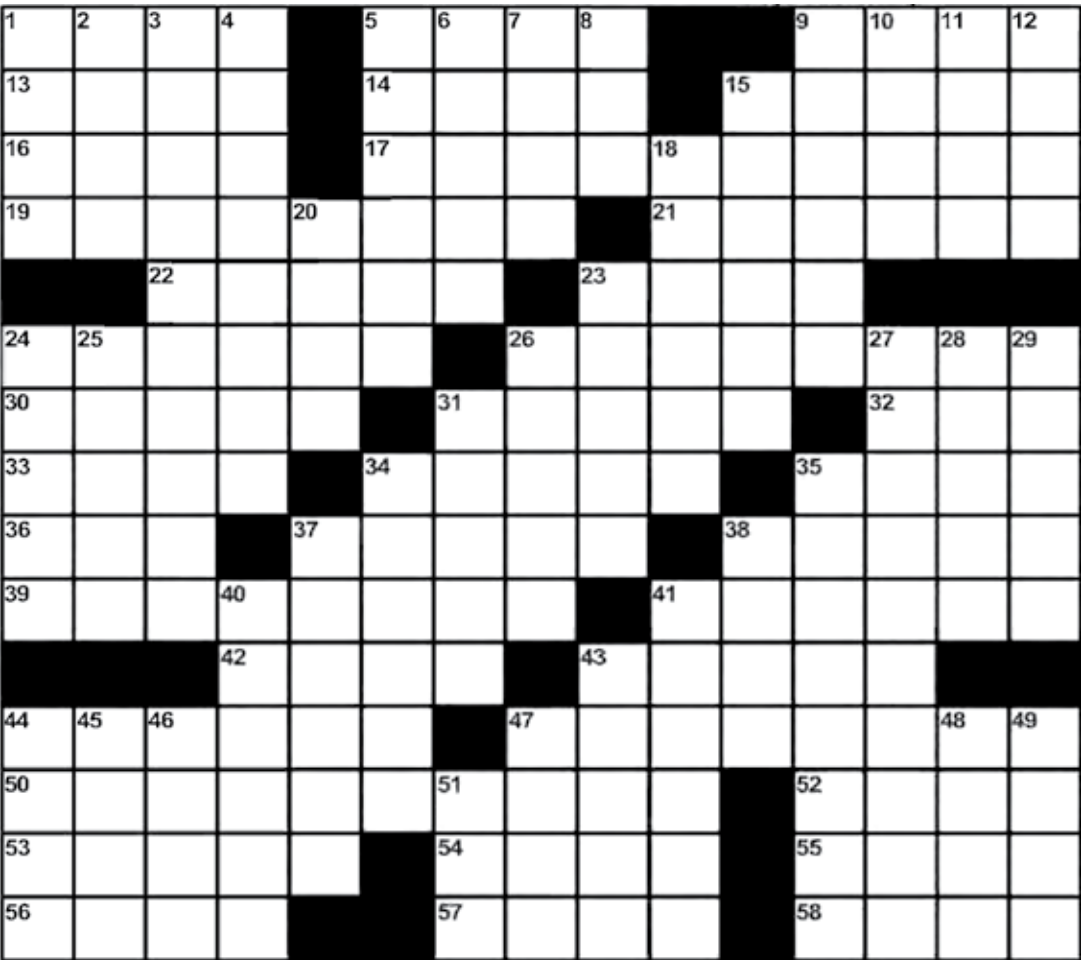
Philippe, whose political party Horizons supports Macron but is not part of the president's own Renaissance party, has yet to confirm he will run. But he has left so many hints that commentators assume he plans to seek the top job.

"I have a pretty clear idea, yes, of how things might go for me," he told France Inter radio.

He warned in an interview with Le Monde that a victory by Le Pen, who was defeated by Macron in the past two elections in 2017 and 2022, was 'possible'.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Circle parts

5) Police team acronym

9) Tonsil attachment?

13) Type of salmon

14) "Pet" that's really a plant

15) Chilling?

16) An image of worship

17) Equestrian's tool

19) Do electrolysis on

21) Provide bearings to

22) Puts the kibosh on

23) Functions

24) Reposition, as tires

26) Divides in three

30) Kuwaiti big shots

31) Beach playthings

32) Back muscle, for short

33) Like doilies

34) Airport bumper

35) Half a gas mileage rating

36) Pen filler

37) Piece of cake

38) Place for a buttonhole

39) Artificial reservoirs

41) Sound quality

42) Foam at the mouth

43) Jazz ensemble

44) Blame

4 7) Wave makers

50) Near disaster

52) "Dangl!" relative

53) Quits marching

54) No longer hung up on

55) Between activities

56) Mini-whirlpool

57) Animal shelters

58) Play_ (compete in tennis)

DOWN

1) Hydrochloric, for one

2) Was a passenger

3) Some eating utensils

4) Lone

5) Abrasive injury

6) Minuscule amounts

7) Capitol Hill worker

8) Clavell's " _Pan"

9) Cut with a scalpel

10) Get weary

11) Computer graphic symbol

12) Seven, at the Sorbonne

15) Fiona, in the "Shrek" films

18) In the manner of a med-dler

20) A great deal

23) Dickens character Heep

24) Ancient item

25) Particular Arab

26) Powders for bathers

27) Paper supporters

28) Four-bagger in Idaho?

29) Hairdresser's forte

31) Tubular pasta

34) Funeral hymns

35) Thailand's neighbor

37) Stops

38) Treehouse foundation

40) Dependable and unfail-ing

41) Illegal parkers' worry

43) Group of witches

44) Charley horse

45) Fully clothed

46) Far from warm

47) "Two thumbs up, way up," e.g.

48) Story that may be tall editing

49) "It's OK after all" in

51) Bricklayer's carrier

NOTE PAD

R	I	V	A	L	S	O	U	R	A	N	E	W
K	N	E	W	A	T	H	I	N	G	O	R	T
S	T	A	R	V	E	K	O	O	K	I	E	R
S	A	U	C	E	P	A	L	E	D			
A	I	L	S	P	U	N	Y					
C	O	A	U	T	H	O	R	U	T	O	P	I
T	W	O	P	O	I	N	T	L	A	N	D	I
S	A	S	S	E	S	E	N	T	E	N	C	E
L	A	M	P	S	H	Y	D	R	A			
A	M	E	R	I	C	A	I	N	F	E	S	T
P	U	T	I	N	A	W	O	R	D	O	R	T
U	S	E	S	S	E	R	A	D	E	C	A	L
P	E	R	M	E	D	G	Y	E	T	H	Y	L

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

 **ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You might find that good energy is a bit hard to come by today. Everyone seems to be grumpy or holding a grudge that they just won't let go of. Your first urge might be to try and cheer them up, but you should resist it. Not only will trying to affect the moods of other people be a total waste of your time, it's really none of your business. Just focus on keeping yourself bright and cheerful. The best way to ensure that is to keep your distance from the people who are in a bad mood.

 **LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You're feeling very sensitive to the problems of other people. Your empathy is high, and your thoughts could be distracted by worry. This isn't a comfortable feeling, and this level of compassion for others might not be too healthy for you. You've been putting the needs and wishes of other people over your own for too long, and you need to work harder to find balance. You deserve to think of yourself first once in a while. Don't concern yourself with the problems of others.

 **SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You're in a very open-minded phase in which you could do something that isn't necessarily good for you. Temptation will be strong today. So the best way to avoid spending too much, eating too much, or doing something else you'll regret later is to keep busy! And if your plate is empty, then ask your friends, family members, and coworkers if they need help with anything. Idle hands aren't good things to have today, so even if you have to resort to cleaning the house, you should.

 **TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

Do you think that if you spend your energy trying to make other people happy that you'll end up making yourself happy? That kind of logic won't work today. If you want to be happy, you've got to make yourself happy. It feels good to come to the aid of other people, but you won't get a true sense of self-nurturing unless you do something selfish today. Carve out some time to treat yourself to something you want, and don't feel guilty about it!

 **VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

It's time for you to take your turn organizing a new social outing. It doesn't have to be major, and it doesn't have to involve a lot of different people. Maybe it's just a brief afternoon excursion with someone you haven't seen in a while. But you have to consciously plan something out. Spontaneous get-togethers just aren't going to pan out at this point in your life. Too many schedules are too unpredictable, so it isn't wise to leave things up in the air.

 **CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You'll get the greatest amount of satisfaction from encountering unfamiliar topics and meeting new people today. You need newness in the ideas that you process to feel like you're making progress. So do whatever it takes to feed your brain some new input, and try to do it early in the day. Thinking the same way about the same things over and over again is bound to get boring, so this increase in your curiosity level is completely normal.

 **GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's going to take a lot of patience to deal with a friend who's bent on spoiling your fun today. They're in a cheap mood, not willing to cough up the money that a social event requires. But if they don't want to pay, they can't play. This is a simple equation you'll need to remind them of. And as soon as you do, they'll miraculously find the money! But don't expect them to put an end to their negative energy or complaining. Just beware.

 **LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Looks like that worry you had was just a false alarm, so today you'll finally get the green light! So rest easy and breath a deep sigh of relief. You made it! You won't be hearing any more from that unsavory person (at least not for a while). You'll experience a huge and wonderful release of tension today, which will put a smile on your face and help you see your life in a much more positive way. Things are going to be okay after all. Use the afternoon to celebrate.

 **AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

There have been more and more misunderstandings going on in your social circle lately, and this needs to come to a halt. It's causing too much stress and useless discourse. The next time confusion erupts, you need to get the interested parties in the same room together. Trying to solve this issue over email is only going to make the problem worse. You can't move on to more good times unless you put an end to arguments and tension. Honesty is the fastest, smartest route to take too.

 **CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

Old things can be new and exciting for you right now. An old flame could pop back up on the scene and shake up your world. An old photo might stir up some wistful memories. Even a song on the oldies station could send your imagination off in a new and exciting direction. There is real opportunity in these blasts from the past, so explore them as much as time allows today. You've learned lessons, and these touchstones to the past will remind you what they were.

 **SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your expectations are growing too lofty right now. You are aiming so high that you're bound to be disappointed when reality hits. You need to scale back your ambitions and believe that everything is happening the way it needs to happen and in the best time frame. Getting comfortable with having less control over where your life is going right now is easier than you think. All you need to do is open your heart and let someone else make the decisions for now.

 **PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Even though you love them all dearly, your friends just aren't in sync with you right now. They've got their own agendas and projects, and they might not have time for you. Try not to get frustrated if you have a hard time communicating with them. If you need to talk to one of them, don't beat around the bush with what your message is. Come clean with what you're thinking and just speak from the heart. Unless you need to talk to them, it might be wiser to give them space.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which of these words is not part of the slogan that arose during the French revolution?

A. Liberty

B. Equality

C. Charity

D. Fraternity

02. Elliot Gould played whose father on the TV series Friends?

A. Joey

B. Chandler

C. Ross & Monica

D. Rachel

03. In 1456 a trial was held in Rouen in France, to rehabilitate whom?

A. A sow, condemned of murder

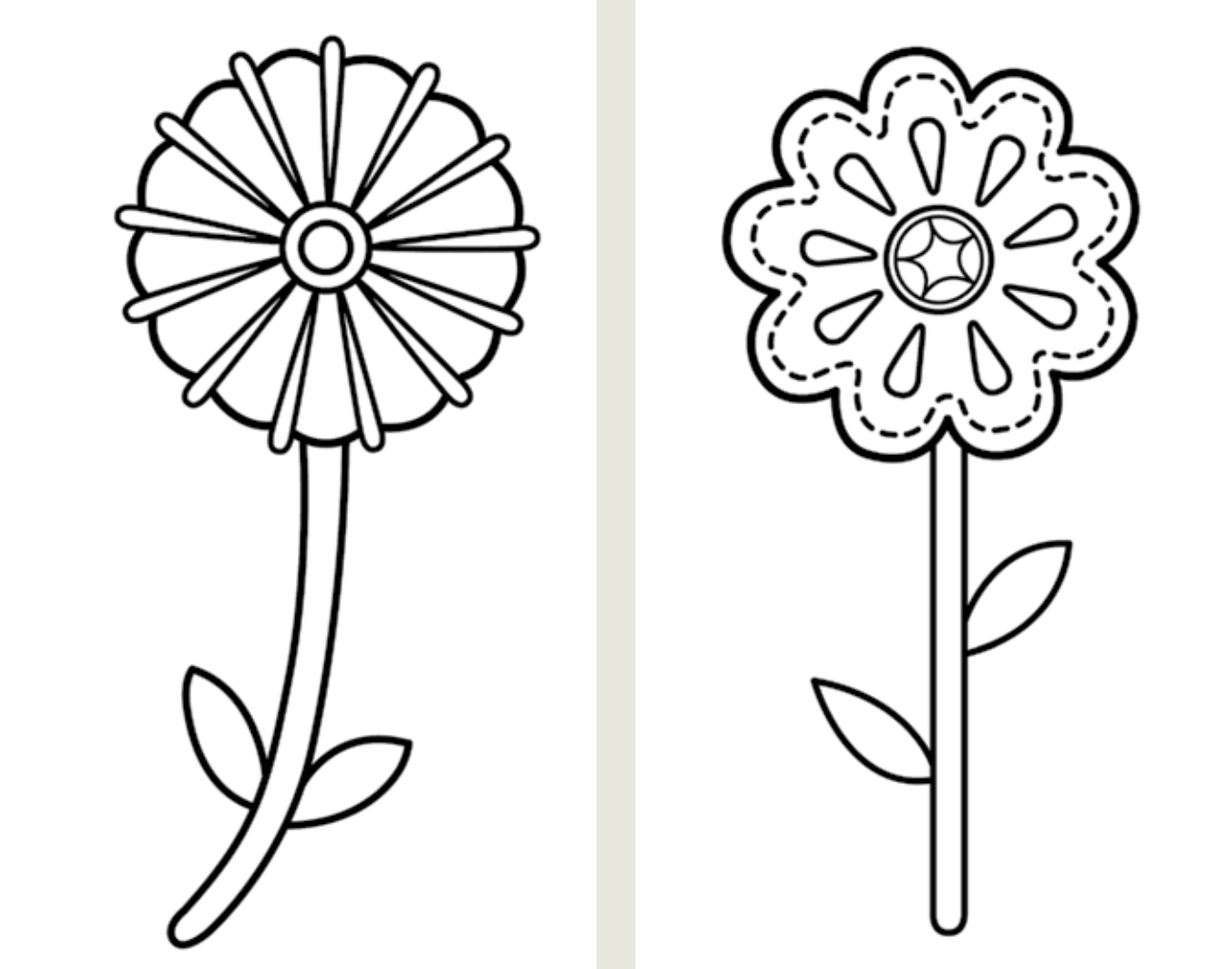
B. Margaret of Anjou, accused of intrigue

C. Joan of Arc, accused of heresy and other matters

D. Marie Quatrelivres, condemned of adultery

Answers: 1. C 2. C 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

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

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

INTERFERING NEIGHBOURS

Inter Milan dish out derby destruction of AC Milan, Napoli stutter at Genoa

Milan, Italy - Inter Milan laid down an early title marker on Saturday by handing out a 5-1 derby hammering to AC Milan and going it alone at the Serie A summit, while champions Napoli were held 2-2 at promoted Genoa.

Four wins from their opening four matches have Inter leading the pack with a perfect 12 points, two ahead of their other fierce rivals Juventus who beat Lazio 3-1 in the day's early match.

Milan sit a further point back in third after a humiliating first defeat of the season before they welcome Newcastle United in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Spurred on by the majority of a heaving and raucous San Siro crowd, Inter claimed their fifth straight derby win in all competitions thanks to a Henrikh Mkhitaryan brace, Marcus Thuram's rocket and two late strikes from Hakan Calhanoglu and Davide Frattesi.

Simone Inzaghi's side claimed the points with a display which showed why they got past Milan to reach last season's Champions League final and confirmed their status as early favourites to beat their local rivals to a 20th Scudetto.

"We've started the season brilliantly and we want to keep going," Mkhitaryan told DAZN.

"We're all here for the same goal, and I don't care who plays... the coach will pick whoever gives their all for second star (on the shirt for 20 titles)." Thuram continued his fast start in an Inter shirt, the new

man also crucial to Mkhitaryan's fifth-minute opener.

France forward Thuram bundled past Malick Thiaw before finding Federico Dimarco whose mishit shot was guided home by the former Armenia midfielder.

And Thuram then underlined Inter's superiority seven minutes before the break after a lightning breakaway started by Lautaro Martinez, collecting from Denzel Dumfries before cutting inside the hapless Thiaw and crashing in an unstoppable shot from the edge of the area.

The match looked dead and buried with 45 minutes to play but Rafael Leao halved the deficit in the 57th minute when he rolled in his second of the season after being brilliantly put through by Olivier Giroud.

Leao's finish was the first goal conceded by Inter this term and as a violent downpour descended on the San Siro, Mkhitaryan silenced Milan's loud "away" support with his deflected second of the evening after being fed by Martinez.

Calhanoglu's 79th-minute penalty and a neat stoppage-time finish from Frattesi, fresh from Tuesday's double for Italy at the same ground, rubbed salt into wounds for Milan and coach Stefano Pioli.

Napoli salvage point

Napoli's title defence continued to stutter at Genoa where the champions came back from two goals down to snatch a point late on. Rudi Garcia's side, beaten by Lazio before the international



Inter Milan's Marcus Thuram (L) celebrates with teammates after scoring against AC Milan in their Italian Serie A match in Milan on Saturday (AFP)

We've started the season brilliantly. We're all here for the same goal, and I don't care who plays... the coach will pick whoever gives their all for second star (on the shirt for 20 titles)

HENRIKH MKHITARYAN

break, trail Inter by five points following the draw at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris which came thanks to strikes in the final 15 minutes from Italy internationals Giacomo Raspadori and Matteo Politano.

"We've got work to do, but we had very little time to prepare for

this match because a lot of players only came back (from international duty) yesterday," said Politano to Sky Sport in Italy.

Mattia Bani headed Genoa into the lead five minutes before the break before Italy striker Mateo Retegui swept in the

hosts' second from Kevin Strootman's pass in the 56th minute.

Retegui has scored twice since signing from Boca Juniors in July and Saturday's strike looked likely to give Genoa a stunning second win of the campaign.

AFP



Barcelona's Joao Cancelo scores against Real Betis in their Spanish league match in Barcelona on Saturday (AFP)

Joao Felix and Cancelo strike as Barcelona shred Real Betis

Barcelona, Spain - New arrivals Joao Felix and Joao Cancelo struck their first goals for Barcelona in an impressive 5-0 rout of Real Betis on Saturday in La Liga.

Portugal forward Felix fired Barcelona ahead, with further goals from Robert Lewandowski, Ferran Torres and Raphinha sinking the visitors, before Cancelo polished off the rout with a fine individual effort.

Barcelona's emphatic victory places them provisionally top of

the table, a point clear of rivals Real Madrid who host Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Barcelona played with a vibrancy they lacked at times last season, even as they lifted La Liga, warming up for their Champions League opener on Tuesday against Royal Antwerp.

Felix was at the core of it with an impressive display after Xavi handed him and compatriot Cancelo their first starts for the club following loan moves on deadline day and both quickly impressed

the home fans. "I'm very happy to be starting again, the feelings are very good - it's easy to play in this team," Felix told Movistar.

"When you have a good structure and circulate the ball rapidly, spaces appear and so do goals."

Felix, signed by Atletico Madrid for a club record fee of 126 million euros (\$134 million) in 2019, failed to find consistent form in the capital and was loaned to Chelsea last season.

"I am happy, the change has

done me good, me and my family, I am very happy here," he added.

Betis, lining up with a back four composed only of former Barcelona players, played with attacking intent, unlike many other teams who will visit the temporary Olympic Stadium home of the Spanish champions.

Luiz Henrique sent a rasping effort across the face of goal and Ayoze Perez blasted into the side netting as Manuel Pellegrini's side started well.

AFP

Duro scores two goals as Valencia stun 'weakest' Atletico Madrid

Barcelona, Spain - Atletico coach Diego Simeone said his team put in their "weakest" performance of his 12-year reign in a 3-0 thrashing by Valencia on Saturday in La Liga.

Los Che have started the season well after flirting with relegation until the final day of the previous campaign, and this was their best performance yet under coach Ruben Baraja.

Simeone has faced many different Valencia coaches over almost 12 years in charge and had only lost twice before this defeat at Mestalla in 28 clashes.

"We had the weakest game since I arrived at the club, and we have to congratulate our opponents," said Simeone.

Defeat was the worst way for Atletico to prepare for the start of their Champions League campaign on Tuesday at Lazio.

"They came into the game with a lot more intensity and if you don't match it... it's impossible to win any game," said Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak.



Valencia's Hugo Duro (R) celebrates with Sergi Canos after scoring against Atletico Madrid on Saturday (AFP)

"They deserved to win, we have to congratulate them and we have to look in the mirror. We know we can give a lot more than we gave today.

"We lacked everything today... we played a very bad

game, we lost 3-0 and that hurts a lot." Atletico suffered their first defeat of the season as they went down without a fight.

Spanish striker Duro, 23, slid in at the near post to fire into the roof of Oblak's net after just five

minutes.

The forward kept his composure to beat the Slovenian goalkeeper again when sent through on goal by Fran Perez after shrugging off Axel Witsel.

"It was important to win after two defeats and we did it against a great opponent," said Duro.

"We may be a small squad but we will give everything."

Javi Guerra struck the third goal with a fine solo move and finish inside Oblak's near post as Los Che continued to dominate.

Valencia could have increased their lead but Oblak saved well from Diego Lopez in the final stages, among other openings.

"I am not at all angry, I know the players we have, the group in the dressing room, but I accept it when we've played a bad match," added Simeone.

Earlier Athletic Bilbao earned a convincing 3-0 win over Cadiz to climb provisionally second behind leaders Real Madrid, who host Real Sociedad Sunday.

AFP

Hummels double inspires Dortmund to comeback win over 10-man Freiburg

Berlin, Germany - Mats Hummels scored goals in each half as Borussia Dortmund fought back late to win 4-2 at Freiburg on Saturday.

Hummels put Dortmund in front early but Dortmund again suffered a collective blackout, allowing Freiburg to take the lead in first-half injury time with two quick goals.

Donyell Malen gave far too much space to Freiburg's free-kick specialist Vincenzo Grifo, who threaded a ball into the box, allowing Lucas Hoeler to head the home side level.

Just four minutes later, the Dortmund defence again lost track of a free-kick, Nicolas Hoefler heading in to give his side the lead.

Malen equalised midway through the second half thanks to a clever assist from Germany striker Niclas Füllkrug.

Dortmund looked set to drop points for the third straight game before Freiburg goalscorer Hoefler saw red with eight minutes remaining, giving the visitors a



Borussia Dortmund's Mats Hummels celebrates after scoring against Freiburg (AFP)

one-man advantage which they duly used.

Hummels scored again, trickling the ball into the goal with two minutes remaining, before Marco Reus added a fourth to seal the win, giving his side a timely boost ahead of Tuesday's Champions League trip to Paris Saint-Germain.

Union Berlin setback

Elsewhere, RB Leipzig continued their impressive start to the sea-

son, thumping a hapless Augsburg 3-0 at home.

Xavi Simons opened the scoring six minutes in and Lois Openda doubled up minutes later, giving the home side a 2-0 lead after 11 minutes, before David Raum swept in a third, his first goal in Leipzig colours.

Starting the season with a 3-0 Super Cup win over Bayern Munich, Leipzig have scored 16 goals in their opening five matches this season.

CHELSEA'S WOES MOUNT

Former European champions' dismal start continue with Bournemouth stalemate

Bournemouth, United Kingdom - Troubled Chelsea had to settle for a disappointing 0-0 draw against Bournemouth on Sunday as their dismal start to the Premier League season showed no signs of improving.

Mauricio Pochettino's side have won just once in five league games this term and they were booed off after lacking any semblance of a cutting edge at the Vitality Stadium.

The Blues are without a goal in their last two matches and have scored only five times in the league this season. They are languishing in 14th place, closer to the relegation zone than the top four, as Pochettino comes to terms with the size of the task facing him at Stamford Bridge.

The former Tottenham and Paris Saint Germain boss was hired in the close-season to clean up the mess left by Thomas Tuchel, Graham Potter and Frank Lampard, who all had spells in charge of Chelsea during last season's wretched campaign.

But Pochettino has so far been unable to make an impact despite Chelsea's £350 million spending spree on new signings.

A rash of untimely injuries haven't helped but Chelsea's de-



Chelsea's Raheem Sterling in action against Bournemouth

cision to largely sign younger players has left Pochettino with an inexperienced squad that lacks the maturity to close out games.

Challenging for a place in the Champions League was Pochettino's target this season, but that

ambition already seems overly optimistic on the evidence of this drab display against winless Bournemouth. While it is too soon to say Pochettino is in danger of the sack, he will be well aware Potter lasted less than seven months before being sacked by

co-owner Todd Boehly.

Pochettino made two changes from the side that lost to Nottingham Forest in their previous game, with big-money summer signing Moises Caicedo left out of the squad and teenager Lesley Ugochukwu given his first Pre-

mier League start.

Chelsea tried to seize the initiative in the early stages, but Enzo Fernandez fired straight at Neto from the edge of the area before Raheem Sterling dragged his shot woefully wide from a dangerous position.

Nicolas Jackson went much closer when the Senegal striker drilled his shot against the post from 20 yards.

Despite their bright start, Chelsea were nearly undone by woeful defending as the unmarked Dango Ouattara reached

a cross with a close-range effort that forced a fine save from Robert Sanchez.

Gallagher should have put Chelsea ahead with a shot on the turn from 10 yards, but Neto plunged to his right to make a good save. Chelsea thought they had finally taken the lead early in the second when Sterling's free-kick bounced off the bar to Levi Colwill, who slotted into the empty net only to see his effort disallowed for offside.

Moments later, Colwill and Jackson tried to bundle the ball over the line to no avail after a Chelsea corner caused havoc.

But it was Bournemouth who finished stronger and Axel Disasi narrowly avoided conceding a penalty when his despairing lunge brought down Justin Kluivert just outside the area.

Sanchez came to Chelsea's rescue in the 80th minute, saving with his legs to keep out Dominic Solanke's strike.

Philip Billing's free-kick de-

The Blues are without a goal in their last two matches and have scored only five times in the league this season. They are languishing in 14th place, closer to the relegation zone than the top four



Sergio Rico

PSG goalkeeper Rico hopes to play before end of season after accident

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Sergio Rico said on Saturday he hoped to return to action "before the end of the season", just four months after a serious horse riding accident.

Rico was discharged from a hospital in Seville in August, three months after the equine accident left him in a coma with a traumatic brain injury.

"On September 22, I'll have a new test," he said in a video posted on the PSG website.

"We'll see if the recovery is at the right pace. I hope it will be good news and that the

doctor will give me a little more freedom to play sport or something that'll prepare me to return as quickly as possible with PSG.

"That's ultimately what I want and my goal is to be back with the team before the end of the season."

Rico was admitted to the Virgen del Rocio hospital on May 28 following an accident involving a horse at a local festival.

After several days in a coma, he left the intensive care unit on July 5.

AFP

Miami's playoff hopes suffer as Messi-less side lose 5-2 in Atlanta

Miami, United States - Inter Miami rested Lionel Messi and suffered their first defeat since the Argentine joined the club, with a 5-2 hammering at Atlanta United damaging their playoff hopes on Saturday.

Messi had not made the trip to Atlanta, after a busy run of games since making his Miami debut in late July.

Miami coach Gerardo 'Tata' Martino said after the loss that Messi had been suffering from "muscle fatigue" and that it would have been "very reckless to bring him to play this game".

The 36-year-old sat out Argentina's World Cup qualifier against Bolivia in La Paz on Tuesday but watched his team-mates from the bench.

With no Messi last week, Miami defeated Sporting Kansas City 3-2 but this time it was a very different story for Martino's team. Miami went ahead in the 25th minute with a superbly taken goal from in-form Ecuadorian striker Leonardo Campana.

But the response from Atlanta, sixth in the Eastern Conference, was emphatic with three goals in eight minutes.



Tristan Muyumba (L) was among the scorers as Atlanta United defeated Inter Miami 5-2

A glancing header from French midfielder Tristan Muyumba, which struck the inside of the post, was ruled to have crossed the line by the assistant referee.

Five minutes later, Atlanta had the lead when Brazilian winger Xande Silva dribbled to the byline

and his pull-back was turned into his own net by Miami defender Kamal Miller.

Miami's defence, without former Spain international left-back Jordi Alba, were reeling and Brooks Lennon added the third in the 44th minute with a sweetly

struck shot.

Miami got back in the game in the 54th minute through a Campana penalty but - while they have made a habit of comebacks with Messi - there was no such revival this time.

AFP

Djibouti club Solar too hot for Zamalek in CAF Cup shock

Johannesburg, South Africa - Arta Solar from football minnows Djibouti shocked 11-time African title winners Zamalek of Egypt by winning a CAF Confederation Cup last-32 first-leg qualifier 2-0 on Saturday.

The club from the tiny east African nation are more used to hidings from Egyptian opponents -- they were trounced 9-1 by Al Mokawloon in the same competition three seasons ago.

But after playing second fiddle to the Cairo outfit in the first half, Ghana-born Gabriel Dadzie broke the deadlock on 55 minutes and Doualeh Elabeh doubled the lead soon after.

Making the triumph even more remarkable was the fact that Arta had to host the match in the Tanzanian commercial capital Dar es Salaam because they lack an international-standard venue.

Arta have invested heavily in foreign players to try and make an impact in Africa and the squad that faced Zamalek included former Ivory Coast forward Salomon Kalou, now 38.

He was part of the Chelsea starting line-up in the 2012 Champions League final, won by the London club after a penalty shootout against Bayern Munich.

Zamalek, who lacked key players Ahmed 'Zizo' Sayed and Ahmed Fatouh, will get a chance to avenge the shock defeat when they host the return match on October 1 with a group place up for grabs.

The 11 CAF titles won by the Egyptian club include five in Champions League, four in the Super Cup, and one each in the Confederation Cup and now defunct African Cup Winners Cup.

Mason Greenwood makes first Getafe appearance

Barcelona, Spain - Mason Greenwood made his debut for Getafe on Sunday in La Liga as a substitute against Osasuna, the first time he has played since appearing for Manchester United in January 2022.

The English striker, on loan at Getafe from the Premier League side, was charged with attempted rape and assault in October 2022, but the charges were later dropped.

England's Crown Prosecution

The English striker, on loan at Getafe from the Premier League side, was charged with attempted rape and assault in October 2022, but the charges were later dropped

Service said key witnesses had withdrawn, and new material had come to light, removing a "realistic prospect of conviction".

Getafe coach Jose Bordalas sent Greenwood on for Juanmi

Latasa in the 77th minute with the score tied at 2-2, to applause from home fans at the club's Coliseum Alfonso Perez stadium.

The Madrid side signed the 21-year-old on loan on Septem-

ber 1, with Bordalas pledging to help him "recover his best level" and rebuild his career.

Greenwood, who made his Manchester United debut aged 17 and has played 129 times for the club, has a contract at Old Trafford until 2025.

The English side conducted a six-month internal investigation into Greenwood and decided he should continue his career elsewhere.

AFP



Mason Greenwood

Asia Cup title and fast bowlers boost India's confidence: Rohit

Siraj on fire as India bundle out Sri Lanka for 50 in 15.2 overs to win by 10 wickets

Colombo, Sri Lanka - India's crushing victory over Sri Lanka on Sunday for their eighth Asian crown with a bowling master-class from Mohammed Siraj gives skipper Rohit Sharma confidence ahead of the World Cup.

Siraj returned figures of 6-21 as India bundled out Sri Lanka for 50 in 15.2 overs and won the lop-sided final by 10 wickets in Colombo.

Indian bowlers led by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Kuldeep Yadav stood out in the 50-over tournament, which served as a tune-up for the ODI World Cup starting October 5 in India.

"It gives us a lot of confidence to come here and win a tournament like this," Rohit told reporters after the title win came in just 116 minutes of play.

"At various stages of the tournament we were challenged in different parts of our game and we stood up to those challenges against various conditions, various bowling types."

He said, "We can take a lot of positives from the tournament, not just for one or two players but for the entire squad. They did their job."

Sri Lanka elected to bat first but play started after a rain delay and Siraj made most of the pitch and the overcast conditions to pick four wickets in one over.

Siraj was named man of the



Indian players celebrate with the Asia Cup trophy on Sunday

match for his seven overs of dominant bowling while Kuldeep was the player of the series for his nine wickets in the tourna-

ment.

"When I see bowlers like this bowl like this, I get a lot of satisfaction," said Rohit.

"I think fast bowling is something captains take a lot of pride in. In fact, all the five bowlers have a lot of skill-set and varia-

tion. When you get all this as a captain you feel confident."

In the Super Fours, India posted 356-2 in their 228-run

hammering of arch-rivals Pakistan before they defended 213 against Sri Lanka to march into the final.

"Nature of this pitch here is challenging and unexpected as well. Siraj has to be mentioned here because when the pitch is so dry, to get the ball to move around like that is a special skill set."

The batsmen shone for India after Virat Kohli and the returning KL Rahul hit centuries against Pakistan in the Super Fours and Rohit praised the all-round effort.

When the pitch is so dry, to get the ball to move around like that is a special skill set

ROHIT SHARMA

"Guys can stand up under pressure and perform the job for the team and same goes for the bowlers as well," Rohit said of his team's all-round showing.

"Our fielding was outstanding in this series. Slip catches against pacers. We will have off days on the field is fine as long as you back it up with a solid performance the next day."

India will play Australia at home in three ODI matches before heading into the World Cup and their opening match against the Aussies on October 8.

AFP

Brook makes England's World Cup squad as Roy misses out

London, United Kingdom - Harry Brook has been selected for England's Cricket World Cup squad after Jason Roy was dropped to make way for the dynamic young batsman.

Roy was included in England's provisional 15-man squad, but the selectors made a last-minute switch by naming Brook instead for the tournament in India.

Roy missed the recent one-day internationals against New Zealand because of back spasms, leaving him unable to hold off the mounting calls for the big-hitting Brook to be selected.

Brook was part of the England Test side that rescued a 2-2 Ashes series draw against Australia earlier this season and also impressed with his powerful stroke-play for Northern Superchargers in The Hundred.

It was reported England white-ball coach Matthew Mott made the call to deliver the bad news to Roy, having finalised the squad with captain Jos Buttler, selector Luke Wright and man-



Harry Brook

aging director of men's cricket Rob Key.

"The strength of the group has meant that we have had to make some tough decisions on world-class players, with Jason Roy missing out and Harry Brook coming into the squad," Wright said.

"We have selected a squad

we are confident can go to India and win the World Cup.

England squad: Jos Buttler (capt), Moeen Ali, Gus Atkinson, Jonny Bairstow, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Liam Livingstone, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Ben Stokes, Reece Topley, David Willey, Mark Wood, Chris Woakes

Ferrari's Sainz wins Singapore GP to end Verstappen's win streak

Singapore, Singapore - Carlos Sainz led from start to finish to win a thrilling Singapore Grand Prix on Sunday after a charging George Russell crashed his Mercedes from third place on the final lap.

Lando Norris was second in a McLaren with Lewis Hamilton crossing the line in third. Championship leader Max Verstappen was fifth as Red Bull failed to win a race for the first time this season.

Sainz controlled the pace of the night race brilliantly from pole position to take only his second career win, the first coming at the British Grand Prix at Silverstone last year. It ended Red Bull's hopes of sweeping every race in 2023 as Verstappen, who has won the last 10 races in a row, could only work his way up from 11th on the grid into the top five.

His teammate Sergio Perez crossed the line in eighth place.

"An incredible feeling, incredible weekend," said Sainz.

"We nailed a weekend and



Carlos Sainz celebrates after winning the Singapore Grand Prix on Sunday

nailed the race. We did everything we had to do. We did it perfect and we brought home a P1 that I'm sure all of Italy and Ferrari will be proud today," added the Spaniard.

Sainz seemed set for a comfortable win until a virtual safety car 20 laps from the end gave the two Mercedes the chance to

change to fresh medium-compound tyres. Russell and Hamilton came out flying and soon reeled in and passed the second Ferrari of Charles Leclerc, who finished fourth.

But when they got on the heels of the top two they could not get past as Sainz cleverly kept his former teammate Norris within DRS

range so the Englishman could defend second place.

"It was all about managing the beginning of the stints to make sure I made it to the target laps," said Sainz.

"The safety car forced us to pit earlier than we wanted and I knew it was going to be a long stint on the hards."

Reinach hat-trick triggers South Africa demolition of Romania in Rugby World Cup

Bordeaux, France - Scrum-half Cobus Reinach and wing Makazole Mapimpi both scored hat-tricks as South Africa ran in 12 tries in a 76-0 demolition of Romania in rainy Bordeaux on Sunday.

Reinach, 33, scored three of South Africa's first five tries to complete his hat-trick in just 21 minutes - 10 minutes slower than the treble he scored against Canada in 2019.

Mapimpi also dotted down in the first half, completing his own treble with two in quick succession in the second period.

"We prepared for the rain, we knew it was coming, but the only thing we spoke about was the physicality. We needed to bring it," said Mapimpi after the game.

"I don't put myself in front (first), it's all about the team. It's not about me walking over to score the tries. A lot of guys did well - Andre (Esterhuizen), Willie (Le Roux) - and I appreciate their work."

South Africa's win followed their 18-3 win over Scotland in their tournament opener.

Romania lost their second game of the tournament, after



Cobus Reinach

last weekend's heavy defeat to Ireland, and failed to score in a World Cup game for the first time since 2007.

With first-choice hooker Malcolm Marx ruled out for the tournament with a knee injury, Springboks head coach Jacques Nienaber named Bongi Mbonambi as hooker.

Nienaber made 14 changes from the Scotland game with an eye on facing Ireland in a tie to decide the winner of Pool B in six days' time.

Lock Andre Gorin was handed his World Cup debut for

Romania, known as the Oaks, by boss Eugen Apjok, barely two months out from his 36th birthday.

Springboks raced into a 26-0 after less than a quarter of an hour thanks to Reinach's two early tries, Mapimpi's opener and a Damian Willemse touch-down for the bonus point, the quickest a side has scored four tries in a game in World Cup history.

The biggest cheer of the game from the 38,000 crowd came as Romania won a penalty just outside South Africa's 22m

but winger Tevita Manumua missed his shot at goal, the closest the Oaks came to getting on the scoreboard.

After 20 minutes, with rain falling heavily, the players stopped for a water break, due to the hot and humid weather, but the downpour was unable to stop Reinach claiming his third.

Willemse made sure of the conversion as Nienaber's side led 33-0 at half-time, with some fans in the lower sections of the stands escaping from the rain.

AFP

RUTHLESS MAULING

Siraj stars as India rout Sri Lanka for eighth Asia Cup crown

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Pace bowler Mohammed Siraj returned figures of 6-21 to lead India's rout of Sri Lanka by 10 wickets as they clinched their eighth Asia Cup title on Sunday.

Siraj got four wickets in one over to help skittle Sri Lanka out for 50, a total the Indian openers Ishan Kishan and Shubman Gill surpassed in 6.1 overs for an impressive victory ahead of next month's ODI World Cup at home.

Sri Lanka's miserably low total in the 50-over contest left a nearly packed house disappointed after they witnessed just 116 minutes of play.

The hosts elected to bat first following a delayed start due to rain and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah struck first with the wicket of Kusal Perera, caught behind for a duck in the first over.

Siraj soon took over as he made the ball swing and seam in overcast conditions to easily surpass his previous ODI best of 4-32. He got Pathum Nissanka for two and then struck on successive balls to send back Sadeera Samarawickrama (0) and Charith Asalanka (0), but a hat-trick was averted.

Dhananjaya de Silva hit a boundary but Siraj had him caught behind with the next ball, much to the delight of the Indian fans.



India's Mohammed Siraj celebrates after taking a Sri Lankan wicket in the Asia Cup final in Colombo on Sunday

Siraj got his fifth with the wicket of Sri Lankan captain Dasun Shanaka, equalling an ODI record for the fastest five-wicket haul from his first 16 balls of the match.

Kusal Mendis hit three boundaries before becoming Siraj's sixth wicket, although Sri Lanka avoided the lowest-ever ODI total of 35 by Zimbabwe.

After Virat Kohli's overthrow went for a boundary, and six more runs to the total, Sri Lanka pushed past their lowest ODI total of 43 scored against South Africa in 2012.

Hardik Pandya took three wickets to wrap up the innings in just 90 minutes.

Mendis' 17 and an unbeaten 13 by Dushan Hemantha were the only double-digit scores in an innings that featured five ducks.

Shubman Gill, a centurion in the previous match, began with a boundary in the opening over on his way to an unbeaten 27 and fellow opener Ishan Kishan (23) soon joined the party.

The left-handed Ishan smashed fast bowler Matheesha Pathirana for two successive boundaries, and three more in a row from Gill gave India victory in the tournament's shortest final.

Rohit Sharma's India dropped just one match in the tournament after they lost an inconsequential Super Four contest against Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka, who won the previous edition of the Asia Cup played in the T20 format, came in as underdogs and snuck into the Super Fours with a dramatic win over Afghanistan but went down without a fight in their 11th final.

'Unsung heroes': \$50,000 for rain-hit Asia Cup groundstaff

Colombo, Sri Lanka - All too often ignored in favour of the big name sport stars, cricketing groundstaff who kept the rain-hit Asia Cup running were promised a \$50,000 shared bonus by organisers on Sunday.

Mohammed Siraj, who returned figures of 6-21 to lead India's rout of Sri Lanka by 10 wickets as they clinched their eighth Asia Cup title, also vowed to donate his \$5,000 man of the match prize winnings to those who looked after the pitches.

The Asia Cup is a precursor to the upcoming ODI World Cup, and most of the matches were moved to Sri Lanka after India refused to tour Pakistan due to political tensions. But rain played havoc and multiple matches in the six-nation tournament were delayed, and some abandoned.

The nearly three-week-long event was only saved by an army of around 100 Sri Lankan groundstaff wearing orange tops, who sprinted out with the covers each time rain halted play.

The team have been hailed the real stars by fans, commentators and players.

"Big shout out to the unsung heroes of cricket!" Asian Cricket Council president Jay Shah posted Sunday on X, formerly Twitter.

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MAURITIUS AFTER SUNSET

Whether you're an avid partygoer, a music enthusiast, or seeking relaxation after a day of exploration, Mauritius offers an array of exciting nighttime experiences that promise unforgettable memories. Here's a glimpse into the nocturnal wonders that await:

Cultural revelry
Immerse yourself in Mauritius' rich cultural heritage with traditional Mauritian cultural shows held in the evening at various hotels and venues, including beachcomber properties. Witness captivating performances of traditional music and dance that provide insights into local traditions. The Sega performance, a manifestation of Mauritian history and culture, has evolved from expressing pain and loss to a vibrant expression of dance, song, and music.

Beachside celebrations



chefs, including Michelin-starred culinary masters, at five-star resorts. Mauritius caters to diverse tastes, with many restaurants offering Halal food options to ensure all visitors can delight in the island's culinary treasures. Each culinary adventure promises to tantalise your taste buds and create lasting memories.

Captivating nighttime activities
As the sun sets over the turquoise waters, Mauritius transforms into a realm



of excitement and enchantment. Engage in thrilling activities, including nighttime scuba diving to witness marine life in a new light, embark on a mesmerising sunset catamaran cruise, relax around beach bonfires while stargazing, and discover an array of premium 'sheesha' flavours at vibrant lounges.

Unveil the mysteries
Embark on an extraordinary journey through the Heritage Nature Reserve's night safari, an uncanny experience that unveils the region's natural wonders. Traverse different geographical areas, encounter wildlife up close, and witness the allure of a hidden waterfall under the cover of night. This adventure offers unforgettable experiences designed to linger in memory.

Don't miss the fun
Mauritius beckons you to experience its vibrant nightlife. Whether you love parties or serene evenings, this paradise island caters to all. From adventurous daytime explorations to electrifying nights, Mauritius promises a symphony of energy and excitement. Whether traveling solo, with friends, or with family, Mauritius at night is a realm of astonishing vitality.

Paradise Island

Prepare for an exhilarating atmosphere as beachfront resorts host spirited beach parties and events, particularly on weekends and holidays. Dance to music, revel under the stars, and embrace the lively energy that unites people from across the island. The rhythmic beats and magnetic ambiance create an unparalleled surge of energy and excitement.

Night market charms
Venture into the enchanting night markets of Grand Baie and Port Louis, where stalls brim with local crafts, delectable cuisine, and unique goods. These markets offer an immersive encounter with Mauritius' culture and an opportunity to acquire distinctive souvenirs. The night market presents an unparalleled sensory journey, from tantalising aromas of street food to captivating displays of local artistry.

Culinary delights
Indulge in an array of evening dining experiences in Mauritius, ranging from luxurious fine dining to cozy beachfront eateries. Explore the vibrant street food scene in Port Louis, where you can savour authentic Mauritian flavours right on the bustling streets. Alternatively, relish the expertise of renowned



RUSSIAN SPACE MISSION

ROCKETS AND PORSCHES

The Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft carrying the International Space Station (ISS) Expedition 70-71 crew blasts off to the ISS from the Moscow-leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on September 15



RICH RUSSIANS FLOCK TO BAIKONUR SPACEPORT TO WITNESS THE COUNTRY'S LATEST SPACE MISSION TAKE OFF

Everyone should witness a rocket launch in their lifetime, says Yevgeniya Degtyarnikova as she watches the rollout of a Soyuz from its hangar in the vast steppes of Kazakhstan.

"Unfortunately, my husband could not come so I am fulfilling my dream and his," said the 35-year-old from the city of Tyumen in western Siberia.

"I will bring my entire family here. This is the place that everyone must visit," she told AFP at the Russian-operated Baikonur spaceport.

Degtyarnikova, the owner of an amusement park, has forked out over 200,000 rubles (more than \$2,000) for a week-long tour to Baikonur which included viewing a rocket launch on Friday.

She was one of a few hundred spectators who excitedly watched a Soyuz slowly emerge from its hangar, laid on its side, this week. Russian, US and Kazakh flags could be seen fluttering in the wind nearby.

Political situation

Space is still a rare area of cooperation between Moscow and Washington, and on Friday NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara travelled to the International Space Station aboard the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft alongside Russian cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai Chub.

As ties between Russia and the United States remain ruptured over Moscow's offensive in Ukraine, however, the Baikonur cosmodrome has become increasingly off limits to foreigners.

Western tourists used to regularly travel to Baikonur for the thrill of watching rockets blast off into space. Now they have been replaced by well-off tourists from Russia and other post-Soviet countries.

While Russian space agency Roscosmos declined to comment on the matter, one tour guide at Baikonur said she only worked with tourists from Russia and other countries of the former USSR.

"Roscosmos does not allow other tourists in," 28-year-old Maria Fateyeva told AFP, citing the 'political situation'. She said the restrictions saddened her, and that space and politics should not



US NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara, and Russian Roscosmos cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai Chub, members of the International Space Station (ISS) Expedition 70-71 main crew, board the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft



The Soyuz-2.1a rocket booster with the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft is rolled out by train to the launch pad at the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome

I think we're surrounded by a lot of great people, and I have my family here in the audience, and it's really special and amazing to have them here

LORAL O'HARA
NASA astronaut

be mixed.

Local tourism has increased in recent years, with the coronavirus pandemic forcing many Russians to choose destinations across the former Soviet Union and Western sanctions over Ukraine complicating foreign travel.

Very expensive

Nikolai Silyukov, who teaches aeromodelling, came to Baikonur with a group of pupils from the Black Sea resort town of Sochi.

"We've bought the complete package," said the 25-year-old, adding they had already visited local museums. His group prepared to take pictures of the moment a rocket spewed a torrent

of flame.

"They say that the launch last only a few seconds," he said. "We need to make it!"

Yevgeny Zadoya, a 44-year-old tour guide from Saint Petersburg, accompanied a dozen rich tourists. They drove around in Porsches brought to Baikonur for the occasion and stayed in the spaceport's most expensive hotel, Zadoya said, however, declining to give the cost of a tailor-made tour, saying 'it is very expensive'.

NASA astronaut O'Hara said at the pre-launch press conference this week that she was not disappointed by the absence of Western tourists.

"I think we're surrounded by a lot of great people, and I have my family here in the audience, and it's really special and amazing to have them here," she said.

Russia's Kononenko agreed that cosmonauts were more concerned about the presence of their loved ones at Baikonur. But he added, "It would be cool if the world's spaceports were accessible to all people, and people from all over the world could come and watch the launch."

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