

TUESDAY, MAY 30, 2023

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HM'S HISTORIC VISIT TO IRAN

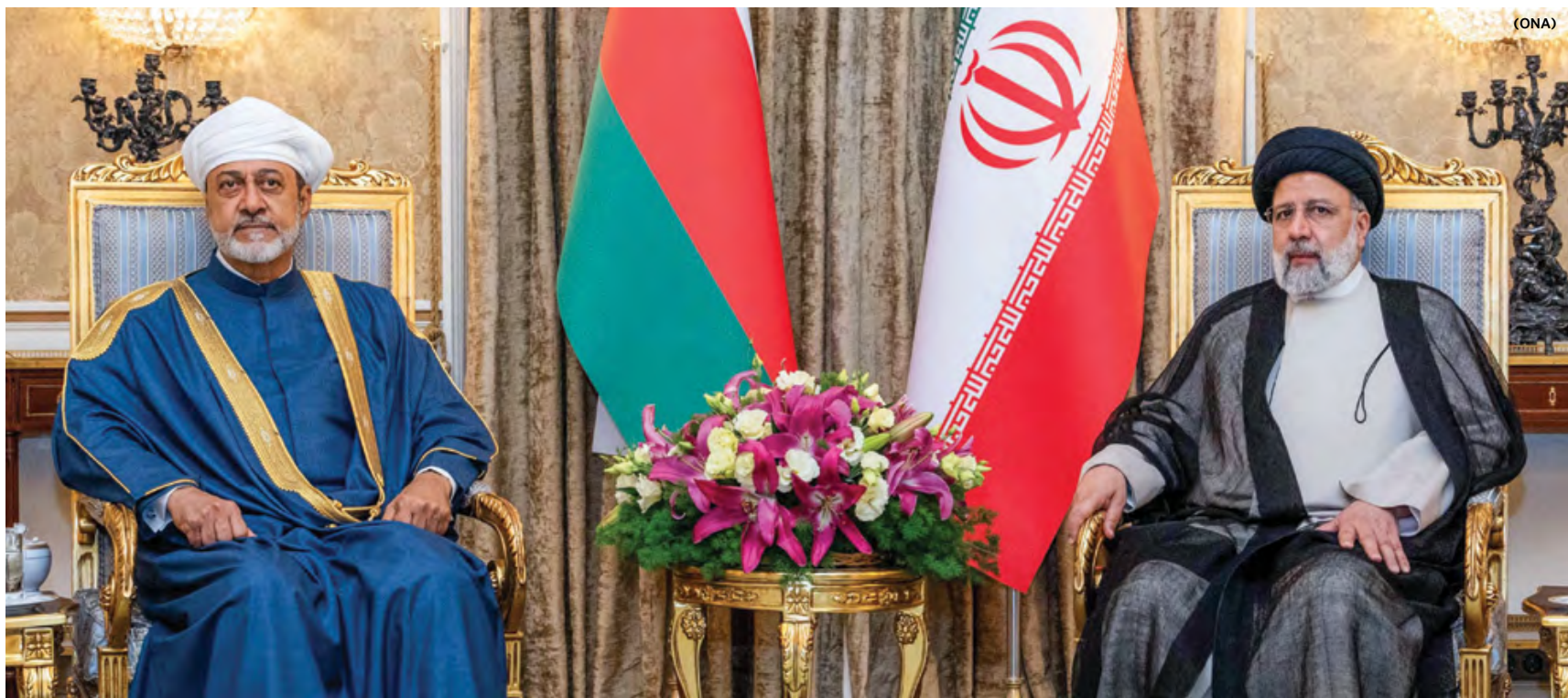
Ground set for strategic cooperation

Tehran, Iran - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Dr Ebrahim Raisi of the Islamic Republic of Iran directed their governments to draft a strategic cooperation charter to maximise benefits and consolidate ties between the two countries in a sustainable manner. The two leaders also expressed their keenness to work for regional peace and stability.

This was stated in a joint communiqué issued by Oman and Iran on the occasion of the official visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Iran. The communiqué reads as follows:

'Based on the long-standing relations between Oman and Iran and, in affirmation of mutual respect between the leaders of the two countries and, on the foundations of good neighbourliness, fraternity, religious and cultural ties, His Majesty the Sultan, made an official visit to Iran in response to an invitation by President Raisi.

'During the visit, the two lead-



ers discussed bilateral relations and ways of enhancing these, notably in the areas of trade, energy, investment and culture with the primary aim of achieving

mutual benefits and cementing bonds between the two friendly peoples.

'The two sides expressed their satisfaction with the lofty status

of bilateral relations, noting that these relations experienced greater growth, especially after the Iranian President's visit to Oman last year upon the invita-

tion of His Majesty the Sultan of Oman.

'The two sides expressed their keenness to expand relations in the future. They pledged their

support for the joint committees and work teams. They also welcomed the exchange of visits aimed at following up the development of relations.

'The two sides underscored the significant role of the private sector in the two countries in expanding economic cooperation. They expressed satisfaction with the continuous pace of trade exchange and the growth of joint investments. In this context, they welcomed the signing of agreements and memoranda of understanding in economic, commercial, transport, investment, energy and cultural fields. They gave directives to activate existing agreements and take steps to enter new ones that meet their common approaches and serve their interests.

'Also, within the context of establishing solid grounds for bilateral relations and securing their sustainability, the leaders directed their governments to work towards devising and signing a strategic cooperation charter between the two countries that covers various spheres, enhancing joint cooperation and exchanging mutual benefits.'

Continued on Page 02



His Majesty, Khamenei review bilateral ties

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Revolution in the Islamic Republic of Iran, at his office in Tehran on Monday. The meeting was attended by the Iranian President Dr Ebrahim Raisi.

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations. They underscored their keenness to enhance the historical relations between the two countries' peoples. The meeting also touched on several matters of mutual interest.

From the Omani side, the meeting was attended by Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy

Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office, and Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister.

From the Iranian side, it was attended by Dr Hossein Amirabdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ehsan Khandozi, Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs (Head of the Mission of Honour), Ali Bagheri, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of Iran to Oman.

Iran Khodro inks MoU to study prospect of its cars in Oman



Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Omani-Iranian Business Council signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Iran Khodro Industrial Group on Monday.

The MoU will see an economic and commercial feasibility study being conducted to find a suitable platform to sell cars and for after-sales service.

The MoU was signed by Mohammed Abdul Hussein Baqir,

Head of the Omani side in the business council, and Alimardan Azimi, CEO of Iran Khodro Industrial Group.

In 2016, an MoU was signed by Oman Investment Fund, Iran Khodro and an Omani investor for the creation of a joint venture to establish a car manufacturing facility with capital expenditure of US\$200mn in Duqm.

The initial plan included starting an assembly unit and then to have a full-fledged manufacturing facility. The plant was expected to start production by 2017 but no development on the project has been reported since.

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THE MHD

Need for national strategy for elderly recommended

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's first forum for elderly care has felt the need for a law for the protection of the elderly, besides having a national strategy for the aging population.

This was informed by Jokha Mohammed Khamis al Farsi, head and founder of Ihsaan Association, during a conversation with *Muscat Daily* on Monday.

The Ministry of Social Development, in cooperation with the Ihsaan Association and the Oyon platform, organised the forum in Muscat on Monday.

"The forum recommended the necessity of having a law to protect the elderly. It also sought a national strategy for the aged keeping pace with economic, social, cultural and health changes," Jokha said.

"The forum also underlined the importance of taking into account the needs of the elderly when designing and planning smart cities and public facilities, and devising a comprehensive and advanced health programme



for elderly patients."

Ihsaan Association founder informed that the forum called for the enactment of a legislation allowing the establishment of private institutions and bodies concerned with caring for the elderly, facilitating the establishment of clubs and associations serving this category of people, and the establishment of centres for short or long-term care.

The forum also stressed the importance of supporting NGOs (non-governmental organisations) caring for and serving the elderly with financial or in-kind facilities so that they can provide

the best services to the aged.

According to Jokha, the forum wanted to spread an awareness among the community members of the health, physical and psychological importance of the elderly, and to enhance their position in society and provide them with the necessary care.

"The forum had discussions on various topics such as social care for the elderly, awareness for an interdependent society, psychological care for the elderly, effective aging, and protection of their general health."

Huda Salim al Khatriya, head of the Home Care Department at

the Ministry of Social Development, informed that the sultanate paid a great attention to the category of elderly by caring for them and improving the quality of life and living that commensurate with their needs, besides providing them with a safe environment.

"The Sultanate of Oman has worked to provide social, health and recreational care, besides ensuring family and psychological protection for the elderly taking into account their needs."

"Oman Vision 2040 prioritised care for the elderly," she added.

New projects in pipeline as Dhahirah signs 4 pacts

Our Correspondent
Ibri

Najeeb bin Ali al Ruwais, governor of Dhahirah, on Monday signed four agreements for implementation of various services and projects in the governorate.

These projects are part of Dhahirah's plans and programmes for 2023-24, with a combined budget exceeding RO1mn.

The first agreement, signed with the Daleel Petroleum Company, paves the way for financial support for various projects through the company's community contribution programme.

The project, which stands to gain from this deal, is the construction of a health walkway in the Hey al Nahdha in the wilayat of Ibri, with Daleel contributing up to 60 per cent of the funding.

The 1,600m walkway will feature designated play areas for children, shaded sitting areas, a food cart zone, restroom facilities, a dedicated cycling and pedestrian path, well-maintained green spaces illuminated by solar-powered lights, and ample parking provisions.



The second agreement focuses on the development of another health walkway in the Hamra al Duru'a area, to be supported by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). The 1,300m-long walkway will incorporate solar-powered lighting columns, modern irrigation systems, green spaces, and bicycle parking facilities.

These health walkways align with the priorities outlined in the Oman Vision 2040, aimed at creating sustainable governorates and cities while ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals participating in organised sports activities.

Besides providing secured areas for walking and running, these walkways will serve as recreational hubs for community

members, stated a press release.

The third agreement is for the completion of an ongoing work for a drifting arena in Ibri. It opens the door for future investments in motorsports related activities.

The fourth agreement was signed to encourage community participation in the development mission.

Under this deal, Innovation Oases Company will introduce an electronic platform to enable community members to submit ideas, initiatives, and innovations so that they can be transformed into viable investment opportunities after a thorough evaluation, analysis, and study.

The platform will facilitate interactive electronic events and activities, catering to diverse segments of society.

Tropical depression likely in Arabian Sea

Muscat - The latest weather charts and analyses of the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre indicate the possibility of a depression forming in the southeast of the Arabian Sea over the next week.

A statement issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

said that the specialists at the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre are following updates in the Arabian Sea.

'If any tropical depression forms with probable impacts on Oman, the centre will issue necessary alerts,' it added.

CAA warned that legal action

will be taken against anyone who sends or circulates weather-related alerts or warnings of weather impacts on Oman other than the statements issued by the authority. The authority called on everyone to take information about the weather from official sources.

MTCIT, MoD to bolster collaboration in aviation accident investigations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) and the Ministry of Defence have signed a memorandum of cooperation to bolster collaboration in the realm of aviation accident investigations.

The primary objective of the agreement is to enhance coordination among the relevant authorities and to ensure the safety of air transport in Oman.

The memorandum was signed by H E Eng Said bin Hamoud bin Said al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; and Dr Mohammed bin



Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence.

MTCIT issued a statement affirming that the two ministries are committed to fostering more fruitful cooperation and joint co-

ordination in various aspects pertaining to aviation accident investigations.

'This includes ensuring the necessary protection of accident sites and swift access and man-

agement of those sites in accordance with the highest international standards, all with the ultimate aim of ensuring the required level of safety,' the ministry added.

INVITATION TO TENDER

SOHAR ALUMINIUM

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

Tender No.	: RFP 23-006		
Tender Title	: Provision of Mobile equipment and Operator Services		
Scope	: The Contractor shall provide/supply mobile equipment and Operator services to Sohar Aluminium Company LLC (SA) on a call-out basis as and when requested by the SA users. The Service provider should have a fleet of mobile equipment as detailed in the scope of work which will be shared to the requested parties. The scope also involves providing operators and other personnels that may require to fulfill the services.		
Document Issue Date	: 30 May 2023	Last Date For Submission	: (Time: 1630Hrs) 04 July 2023
Last Date For Applying	: 06 June 2023		

Tender No.	: 2023-ENG-SOW-0015		
Tender Title	: New Metal Sample Analysis Package		
Scope	: Sohar Aluminium Co. LLC (SA) manufactures and produces liquid and solid metals and requires metal analysis system. Current metal analysis involves the use of OES spectrometer that are in SA lab facilities. The contractor who will be identified for this work shall be able to provide comprehensive two no's of package including Radioactivity measurement system – OES spectrometer, Automated robotic sample management system, Automatic milling station and any ancillary system required for functional objective. The scope of work shall include supply, testing, installation of this metal analysis system.		
Document Issue Date	: 04 June 2023	Last Date For Submission	: (Time: 1630Hrs) 02 July 2023
Last Date For Applying	: 09 June 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>

EGYPTIAN SCHOOL - MUSCAT

Announcement

The Egyptian School Muscat announces a new contract for a janitorial company for the new school year 2023 - 2024 under these conditions :

- 1- Maximum age 35
- 2- Workers should be healthy fit
- 3- Capability of working under pressure and fulfilling all the cleaning tasks and other jobs needed in time.
- 4- 4 males and 5 females are required

Applications should be submitted to egymuscat@yahoo.com

Contracting should indicate supplying workers only OR workers plus Detergents.

Applications should be sent within two weeks from the dated announcement.

Oman, Iran cooperation

Continued from Page 01
The joint communiqué added, 'His Majesty the Sultan and the Iranian President exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common concern. They stressed the significance of maintaining efforts and benign endeavours in security, political, economic and cultural fields, with a view to consolidating the foundations of peace and stability in the region. They encouraged the pursuance of talks and political consultations between the two countries. 'The two sides laid emphasis on a culture of dialogue emerging in the region as a measure to settle outstanding issues, consolidate relations between neighbouring countries and ac-

complish peace and prosperity for all peoples. 'President Raisi voiced his great admiration for the efforts of His Majesty the Sultan. He commended His Majesty's wise approach and constructive policies in regional and international arenas, noting that such a stance is capable of promoting positive bilateral relations, peace and stability in the region. 'His Majesty expressed his great appreciation for the policy of good neighbourliness espoused by the Iranian government. 'At the conclusion of the visit, President Raisi reiterated his pride over this historic visit made to Iran by his brother His Majesty the Sultan.'
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Tender for construction of visitor centre at Qalhat soon

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) will soon announce a tender for the construction of a visitor centre at the Unesco World Heritage site of the Ancient City of Qalhat. The necessary consultancy works, including design and site preparation, have been completed.

Sultan bin Saif al Bakri, Advisor for Heritage in MHT, informed that the ministry is committed to preserving, managing and maximising the potential of Qalhat.

"The ongoing efforts align with the city's historical and archaeological significance, ensuring its sustainability for future generations," Bakri said, adding that the current restoration and development works in Qalhat are guided by a comprehensive management plan devised by MHT.

In an interview with ONA, the advisor said several key structures within the World Heritage-listed site are currently undergoing restoration. These include the main external city wall, the mosque, baths, water storage facilities, and construction of dedicated tourist paths, platforms and information panels.

"All development initiatives will be executed in a manner that preserves the authenticity and integrity of the site."

To enhance visitor experience and facilitate efficient manage-



(Supplied photo)

The ongoing efforts align with the city's historical and archaeological significance, ensuring its sustainability for future generations. All development initiatives will be executed in a manner that preserves the authenticity and integrity of the site

SULTAN BIN SAIF AL BAKRI

ment, plans are underway to establish a visitor centre in a prominent location overlooking the city. The centre will feature a museum and administrative offices dedi-

cated to overseeing the operations of Qalhat.

Bakri informed that in 2013, the ministry contracted the National Trust for Historic Preserva-

tion, a nonprofit organisation based in Washington, DC, USA, to restore and preserve the most significant monuments discovered in Qalhat.

"These restoration efforts continued until 2016. Presently, a Tunisian team is completing the restoration of the mosque, which is situated near the sea and has underground rooms with two ablution areas - one presumed to be for the ruler and the other for the public."

The city also features a port, a

school, and governor's and merchants' residences. The discoveries made so far constitute approximately five per cent of the city's total area spanning 35 hectares.

Qalhat flourished in the 11th to 16th century under the Princes of Hormuz, who coordinated vital exports of horses, dates, incense and pearls. Following Portuguese attacks, the Ancient City of Qalhat was abandoned in the 16th century and has since been preserved as an archaeological site.



Construction sites urged to provide AC rest areas: MoL

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has proposed a range of solutions to protect workers from the scorching summer heat, particularly during the months of June, July and August.

Zakaria Khamees al Saadi, Head of MoL's Occupational Safety and Health Department, affirmed the ministry's commitment to ensuring worker safety by enforcing a suspension of outdoor work at midday from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm.

Saadi emphasised various alternatives to mitigate the effects of heat exposure, including the provision of air-conditioned (AC) rest areas, rescheduling physically demanding tasks to cooler hours, and implementing a rotational system where employees work for 45 minutes followed by a 15-minute break.

Regarding operations of fuel stations at midday from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm, the ministry is actively engaging in community awareness campaigns discouraging refueling unless absolutely necessary, Saadi informed.

"In the event of any violations identified at establishments operating during midday hours, the ministry will take legal action in accordance with the provisions of Article 118 of the Labour Law."

A dedicated task force will monitor establishments for violations and refer repeat offenders



Alternatives to mitigate the effects of heat exposure include rescheduling physically demanding tasks to cooler hours and implementing a rotational system

ZAKARIA AL SAADI

to judicial authorities. Penalties for violations can include fines of up to RO500 and/or a maximum imprisonment of one month.

Reports on non-compliant establishments can be submitted via phone or through the ministry's websites.

The recently concluded second Heat Stress Forum 2023, held under the patronage of H E Sheikh Nasr al Hosni, Undersecretary for Labour in MoL, in collaboration with Oman Energy Association (OPAL), highlighted the importance of raising awareness among stakeholders and the community about the risks of high temperatures at the workplace during summer.

EA addresses transboundary waste movement

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority (EA), in collaboration with Oman Environmental Services Holding Company - be'ah, launched a workshop on Monday aimed at shedding light on transboundary waste movement.

The two-day workshop focuses on training environmental inspectors and customs officials in effectively managing hazardous waste at border crossings, thus advancing sound waste management practices.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Dr Mohammad Majid al Kasbi, Director of EA's Department of Chemical Materials, highlighted the workshop's objectives. "It seeks to enhance the skills and knowledge of the authority's employees stationed at border crossings and customs specialists, enabling them to identify hazardous waste, comprehend its impact on health and the environment, and ensure its proper management during transboundary movement."

The workshop will provide



(Supplied photo)

valuable insights into local legislation and international agreements pertaining to waste export, while emphasising the urgency of finding effective solutions to combat the illegal circulation of hazardous waste and underscoring the importance of adhering to import and export protocols.

"During the workshop, representatives of various participating entities presented working papers, including one on a mechanism for controlling export of hazardous and non-hazardous waste, implementation of international agreements, and improvement of data quality concerning transit waste," Kasbi explained. "Moreover, international examples, standards and

experiences in handling waste movement across borders were shared."

In collaboration with relevant authorities, EA aims to organise multiple workshops to achieve comprehensive waste management, facilitate the growth of the recycling sector, and foster environmental consciousness regarding consumption and production practices, aligning with international efforts towards sound waste management, Kasbi added.

The first day of the workshop resulted in a series of recommendations and outcomes. These include the development of an electronic waste management plan through coordination be-

tween the authority and the Cleanliness and Improvement Fund of Hadramout, Yemen.

The recommendations also recognised the need for compliance with national regulations and globally accepted standards for packaging hazardous materials and waste, utilising specially designed tanks and containers for safe transportation.

Additionally, the workshop highlighted the need of formulating a national strategy for waste management and treatment, particularly in the medical waste sector, while promoting comprehensive and integrated solutions with active involvement of national entities.

EA aims to engage all stakeholders, including the private sector, in realising the strategic goals of integrated hazardous waste management to safeguard the nation from its adverse impacts. The authority also emphasises collaboration with neighbouring countries to ensure the implementation of the Basel Convention, a crucial framework for the disposal of hazardous waste.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Muscat	36	30
Abu Dhabi	41	26
Doha	42	28
Kuwait City	39	30
Manama	38	29
Riyadh	38	26

Dual carriageway to be built for Oman Botanic Garden

Muscat - Muscat Municipality has announced plans to build a dual carriageway, connecting Muscat Expressway to Oman Botanic Garden in Al Khoudh. The project aims to ensure seamless flow of traffic in all weather conditions.

Muscat Municipality issued a statement saying the existing one-way road connecting Muscat Expressway to Al Khoudh is susceptible to rockfalls from the mountain following rains. To address this issue, the municipality has decided to construct a dual carriageway, starting from Muscat Expressway to Oman Botanic Garden.

The project will encompass

construction of a 1.4km dual carriageway, each lane 3.65m in width. Additionally, a 900m service road and 800m long and 1.5m wide pedestrian walkways will be built on both sides of the road. The municipality also plans to construct five box culverts and a 300m long closed canal to effectively drain surface water.

"The primary objectives of this undertaking are to enhance the efficiency of traffic flow, cater to the needs of the Oman Botanic Garden project and the surrounding areas, and stimulate tourism and commercial activities. The project is expected to open up future opportunities for urban growth and investments in the area."



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MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

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Reference No.	Description	Deadline for Document Submission
2023/MM/HQ -19 (PRE/23/095)	Request For Prequalification for Contractors for the Construction of Drainage Structures and Remedial Measures at Sultan Qaboos Street, Phase 1C & and 2A	13/06/2023
2023/MM/HQ -20 (PRE/23/097)	Request For Prequalification for Contractors for the Construction of Storm Water Drainage Channel in AL Ghubrah North – Phase 1C	13/06/2023

- Participated companies shall submit their Documents electronically in the above mentioned website.
- Clarification and Support:
- For any inquiries regarding Prequalification, please send it through e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

MARKET WATCH

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FOREX RATES

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Indian

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Pakistan

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Philippines

145.57

Sri Lanka

771.29

*Rates as on May 29

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

EU froze over \$215bn assets of Russian central bank

EU countries froze over €200bn (US\$215bn) worth of assets of the Russian central bank, an EU official confirmed last week.

The “member states have reported to the European Commission over €200bn of immobilised assets of the Russian Central Bank,” Christian Wigand, spokesperson in charge of justice, told reporters at the EU executive body’s daily news briefing, as reported by Anadolu Agency.

It is the first time that the EU announced the sum of the frozen assets and reserves of the Russian central bank after the bloc’s latest sanctions package obliged EU operators to report to the European Commission.

Wigand asserted that EU officials are in “intense work” to find legal ways to “make use of the immobilized assets of the Russian central bank” as the EU is “determined to make Russia pay for the damage that it is doing to Ukraine.”

He explained that one of the options is to use the interests of the frozen assets to help Ukraine.

Oman's oil output rises in April, but exports drop 6.7%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman’s daily average production of crude oil continued to remain above one million barrels per day (bpd) during the first four months of 2023, up by 2.4 per cent in comparison to daily average output recorded in the same period of last year.

Daily average oil output during the January-April period of 2023 increased to 1.065mn bpd compared with 1.04mn bpd in the same period of 2022, the data released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed.

The sultanate’s total oil production in the first four months of 2023 also grew by 2.4 per cent to 127.8mn barrels compared to 124.8mn barrels in the same period of last year.

Of the total production, crude output increased 1.7 per cent year-on-year to 100.5mn barrels during the January-April period, while condensates output grew 5.0 per cent to 27.2mn barrels during the first four months of 2023.

The sultanate’s total oil production for the full year 2022 had increased by nearly 10 per cent to 388.4mn barrels compared to 354.5mn barrels recorded in 2021.

Exports decline 6.7%

Oman’s oil exports declined by 6.7 per cent during January-April this year to 101.5mn barrels com-



Oman's oil export volumes decreased to 101.5mn barrels in the first four months of 2023 compared to 108.8mn barrels in the same period of 2022

pared with 108.8mn barrels recorded in the corresponding period of 2022.

In contrast, total oil exports for the full year 2022 had increased by 10.6 per cent to 319.5mn barrels in comparison with 288.9mn barrels in 2021, the NCSI data showed.

Exports to China, the largest buyer of Oman’s crude, accounted for nearly 92 per cent of the total oil exports in the first four months of this year. Total

exports to China rose by 9.9 per cent to 93.1mn barrels during January-April this year compared to 84.7mn barrels in the same period of 2022.

On the other hand, exports to India dropped by 87.1 per cent to just 2.21mn barrels during the first four months of 2023 from more than 17mn barrels in the same period of 2022. Oil shipments to Japan and South Korea also decreased in the first four months of this year.

Average oil price at \$82

The average price at which Oman sold its crude during the first four months of 2023 marginally decreased 0.7 per cent to US\$81.7 per barrel against US\$82.2 per barrel recorded in the same period of 2022.

However, average oil price for April remained at US\$82.2 per barrel compared with the March price at US\$80.9, the NCSI data

showed.

Oman crude price (for July delivery) on Monday increased 0.6 per cent to close at US\$75.7 per barrel at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME).

Oil prices have softened in recent months from their above

Average price at which Oman sold its crude during April increased to \$82.2 per barrel compared with the March price at US\$80.9

US\$100 per barrel levels recorded during last year. The average price of Oman crude during 2022 had surged to US\$95.4 per barrel from US\$64.3 per barrel recorded in the previous year.

As a result of high oil revenues, Oman posted a budget surplus of RO1.14bn for the full year 2022 against an estimated deficit of RO1.55bn in the beginning of last year.

As a precaution against oil price volatility, Oman’s 2023 state budget is based on an average oil price estimate of US\$55 per barrel and average oil production of 1.175mn barrels per day.

Fitch revises Oman Re's outlook to 'positive'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fitch Ratings has revised Oman Reinsurance Company’s (Oman Re) outlook to ‘positive’ from ‘stable’, while affirming its insurer financial strength (IFS) rating at ‘BB+’.

The outlook revision reflects the same on the Omani sovereign rating and similar rating actions on five Fitch-rated banks in the sultanate, the rating agency said in a statement.

“Oman Re continues to be exposed to investment risk via its asset concentration in the Omani banking system. The affirmation reflects Oman Re’s good financial performance and capitalisation but moderately weak business profile,” Fitch said.

According to Fitch, 44 per cent of Oman Re’s total investments were cash deposits at Omani banks at end-2022 whereas 23 per cent were invested in US dollar-denominated government bonds.

Fitch said, “Oman Re aims to diversify its investment portfolio to reduce this concentration risk, but we expect exposure to Omani assets to remain significant and to continue to drive the rating in the medium term.”

Fitch views Oman Re’s financial performance and earnings as ‘good’.

Madayn completes phases 3 and 4 development works in Nizwa Industrial City

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has completed the phases 3 and 4 development works in Nizwa Industrial City.

Madayn is now gearing up to float a tender for the consultancy services project for phase 5, covering an estimated area of 4mn sqm, according to a press statement.

Ahmed al Hajri, director general of Nizwa Industrial City, said that development works of phases 3 and 4 were assigned to a local company in May 2020 and the total cost exceeded RO5mn.

He said, “The project included the construction of a 6.3km internal roads, a paved pedestrian walkway along the roadsides, installation of 205 LED lighting poles, and the im-



plementation of control and monitoring system at the industrial city’s entrances and internal roads. The project also included rainwater drainage channel, a 5.9-km irrigation network, an underground water tank, sewage and water networks, and fire-fighting system.”

Hajri emphasised that this expansion project represents the commitment of Madayn towards supporting the growth of industrial cities and providing

essential infrastructure services to attract both local and international investors. “By doing so, Madayn aims to further strengthen the contribution of these industrial cities to the in-country value in alignment with the priorities set forth in Oman Vision 2040,” he added.

The total area of Nizwa Industrial City has reached 7.2mn sqm after Madayn obtained an expansion approval during the second half of 2022.

Omantel collaborates with Google Cloud to boost tech capabilities

Muscat - In a major move to ramp up its digital services and infrastructure, Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in the sultanate, has firmed up a new collaboration with Google Cloud.

The collaboration is aimed at bolstering Omantel’s application programming interface (API) management and artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) capabilities, thus empowering it to offer customers a seamless digital experience and superior analytical services.

In a press release, Omantel CEO Talal al Mamari said, “Omantel believes cloud is the ultimate resource for digitisation that transforms businesses like never before. Cloud has the power to tackle some of the biggest challenges faced by businesses. We turned to Google Cloud because it has the latest capabilities to accelerate an or-



ganisation’s digital transformation through application and infrastructure modernisation and data democratisation. The strategic collaboration centres around our two core objectives: first, to optimise service delivery and, second, to leverage latest technologies to gain valuable insights and drive data-driven decision-making.”

Omantel is leveraging Google Cloud’s expertise in API management to provide a seamless digital experience for its customers.

By using Google Cloud’s Apigee platform, Omantel will be able to rapidly create, comprehend, and scale its APIs by adding security, control, and analytics capabilities to its API infrastructure.

This will also empower Omantel to easily manage and release new APIs, effectively monitor and analyse API performance, and quickly correct any issues.

Ghassan Kosta, Qatar country manager at Google Cloud said, “The telecommunications sector

is a data-rich field. The collaboration with Google Cloud enables Omantel to leverage our best-in-class AI/ML analytical platform and services to bring deeper meaning to its data. The company will also have access to Google Cloud’s suite of AI and ML tools and solutions to help analyse and gain valuable insights from its data. These tools will enable Omantel to make smarter decisions, powered by data, that will yield impactful results for their customers.”

ChatGPT-maker OpenAI's CEO seeks to calm fears on job losses

Paris, France - The boss of OpenAI, the firm behind the massively popular ChatGPT bot, said that his firm’s technology would not destroy the job market as he sought to calm fears about the march of artificial intelligence (AI).

Sam Altman, on a global tour to charm national leaders and powerbrokers, said in Paris that AI would not – as some have warned – wipe out whole sectors of the workforce through automation.

“This idea that AI is going to progress to a point where hu-

mans don’t have any work to do or don’t have any purpose has never resonated with me,” he said.

Asked about the media industry, where several outlets already use AI to generate stories, Altman said ChatGPT should instead be like giving a journalist 100 assistants to help them research and come up with ideas.

ChatGPT burst into the spotlight late last year, demonstrating an ability to generate essays, poems and conversations from the briefest of prompts.

Microsoft later laid out billions



of dollars to support OpenAI and now uses the firm’s technology in several of its products – spark-

ing a race with Google, which has made a slew of similar announcements.

Altman, a 38-year-old emerging star of Silicon Valley, has received rapturous welcomes from leaders everywhere from Lagos to London.

Though earlier last week, he seemed to annoy the European Union by hinting that his firm could leave the bloc if they regulate too severely.

He insisted to a group of journalists on the sidelines of the Paris event that the headlines were not fair and he had no in-

tention of leaving the bloc – rather, OpenAI was likely to open an office in Europe in the future.

The success of ChatGPT – which has been used by politicians to write speeches and proved itself capable of passing tough exams – has thrust Altman into a global spotlight.

“Years from now, reflecting on this will feel very special... but it is also quite exhausting and I hope life calms down,” he said.

OpenAI was formed in 2015 with investors including Altman and billionaire Twitter owner

Elon Musk, who left the firm in 2018 and has repeatedly bashed it in recent months.

Musk, who has his own AI ambitions, said he came up with the name OpenAI, invested US\$100mn in it, was betrayed when the company turned itself from non-profit to profit-making in 2018, and has said Microsoft now effectively runs the company.

“I disagree with almost all of that, but I will try to avoid a food fight here,” said Altman. “There’s got to be more important things than whatever he’s going on

about.”

Instead, he wanted to focus on the mission of OpenAI, which he said was to “maximise the benefits” to society of AI and particularly Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) – the much-vaunted future where machines will master all sorts of tasks, not just one.

He conceded that definitions of AGI were “fuzzy” and there was no agreement, but said his definition was when machines could make major scientific breakthroughs.

AFP

Final US debt ceiling deal ready for Congress vote, says Biden

Washington, US – President Joe Biden and Republican leader McCarthy said that a final bipartisan deal to raise the US debt ceiling – and avoid a cataclysmic default – now heads to Congress, which will need to pass the agreement before the government starts running out of money.

The compromise after weeks of intense talks offers a path back from the precipice, even as the clock is still ticking down to the June 5 "X-date" when the Treasury estimates there might not be enough cash to pay bills and debts.

"I think it's a really important step forward," Biden said in a brief appearance before media at the White House, urging "both chambers (of Congress) to pass that agreement."

"It takes the threat of a catastrophic default off the table, protects our hard-earned and historic economic recovery, and... represents a compromise that means no one got everything they want," Biden added.

The White House said Biden and McCarthy spoke earlier in the day as they struggled to avert a financial precipice which threatened to throw millions of people out of jobs and risk a global meltdown.

McCarthy, for his part, voiced optimism that the bipartisan deal could get through Congress despite skepticism from some lawmakers on both sides of the aisle.



US President Joe Biden delivers remarks on the bipartisan budget agreement in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on Sunday (AFP)

In a statement later Sunday, the speaker and other Republican congressional leaders touted the agreement as a "historic series of wins."

McCarthy has summoned lawmakers from the House of Representatives back to Washington from a holiday recess to vote on the deal on Wednesday.

The basic framework of the deal suspends the federal debt ceiling, which is currently US\$31.4tn, for two years — enough to get past the next presidential election in 2024 and allow the government to keep

borrowing money and remain solvent.

In return, the Republicans secured some limits on federal spending over the same period.

Unhappy right, and left

Congressional opposition to the bill comes from an unlikely union of hard-right Republicans who wanted deeper spending cuts and progressive Democrats who wanted no reductions at all.

McCarthy's wafer-thin majority in the House means passing the bill will require significant

Democratic backing to balance out Republican dissent.

The speaker was out pushing the deal Sunday, arguing on the Fox network that the spending limits were a significant victory and insisting that 95 per cent of House Republicans were "very excited."

By Sunday evening, the 99-page proposal was released publicly, available for scrutiny by lawmakers before the vote.

Top Republican Senator Mitch McConnell called on his own chamber – controlled by Democrats – to "swiftly pass this

agreement without unnecessary delay."

But the tone of the Republican opposition was set by Representative Dan Bishop -- a member of the ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus – who tweeted a vomit emoji and slammed McCarthy for securing "almost zippo."

Nicholas Creel, a political analyst and business law professor at Georgia College and State University said the deal was "ultimately likely" to pass through Congress, but he warned that "Freedom Caucus Republicans have the potential to play spoiler if they decide to go scorched Earth on McCarthy."

The agreement represents a climb down of sorts by both sides. Biden had initially refused to negotiate over spending issues as a condition for raising the debt ceiling, accusing the Republicans of taking the economy hostage.

And the big cuts that Republicans wanted are not there, although nondefense spending will remain effectively flat next year, and only rise nominally in 2025.

"Overall, the deal is probably best viewed as a win for Biden and Democrats given that it contains fairly modest spending cuts and would prevent another debt ceiling showdown or a government shutdown during the remainder of Biden's presidency," Creel said.

"Nobody has enough power

to get too much of what they want right now, so a compromise like this that makes everyone a little unhappy is probably the best anyone could have hoped for," he added.

Speed of the essence

The countdown to the "X-date" means the legislation will have to clear Congress much more quickly than the normal timetable for even the most uncontroversial bills.

McCarthy is hoping to bring the narrow House majority of 222 Republicans with him, but opposition will come from 35 far-right lawmakers who told him to "hold the line" for more sweeping spending cuts.

That means a large number of Democrats will have to be persuaded to vote with a reduced number of Republicans -- something that rarely happens on big bills.

Pramila Jayapal, chair of the House Progressive Caucus, said the Democratic leadership should be concerned about securing their support.

"Yes, they have to worry," she told CNN, adding she was "not happy" with what she was hearing about the concessions made by Biden. If a default still occurs, the government would not miss loan repayments until mid-June but in the meantime it would likely have to halt US\$25bn in social security checks and federal salaries.

AFP

US growth in Q1 slightly higher than previous forecast

Washington, US – US economic output increased by more than previously thought in the first quarter of this year, the Commerce Department said, although it still indicates the economy is weakening.

The US economy has cooled this year as the impact of multiple rounds of interest-rate hikes to tackle inflation begins to be felt, with the Federal Reserve predicting the country will enter a mild recession towards the end of the year.

GDP growth in the first quarter was revised up slightly to 1.3 per cent, the Commerce Department announced in a statement, pinning the rise on an upward revision to private inventory investment and a slowdown in nonresidential fixed investment."

The department reiterated an earlier message that the deceleration in real GDP in the first quarter "primarily reflected a downturn in private inventory investment and a slowdown in nonresidential fixed investment." The decline was partially offset by rising consumer spending and exports, and a smaller drop in residential fixed investment than previously predicted.

Last week, the ratings agency Fitch put the United States on notice that its perfect credit rating was at risk due to the stalemate in Washington over raising the US debt limit.

Any downgrade in US debt would raise the cost of borrowing, with consequences for the US economy.

AFP

AI chip giant Nvidia nears one trillion dollar valuation

New York, US – The market valuation of Nvidia, a US firm which specialises in chips coveted in the artificial intelligence boom, neared one trillion dollars after the company blew past quarterly earnings expectations.

Nvidia shares surged as much as 27 per cent on Thursday, putting them on course for a record performance with a market cap above US\$900bn.

If Nvidia hits the one-trillion mark, it will join a club of only five companies – all US tech giants except Saudi Aramco, the oil behemoth.

Nvidia's chips are a central ingredient to the generative AI revolution, capable of delivering the computing heft needed to churn out complex content in just seconds from data centers around the world.

The company stunned the markets on Thursday with revenue guidance for this coming quarter of US\$11bn, which was more than 50 per cent higher than most forecasts.

"This is a game changer and will have a major ripple impact across the tech space," said a note from Wedbush securities.

Before the major move on Thursday, shares in Nvidia had already doubled in 2023 amid the frenzy over AI chatbots such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard.

'Chasing Nvidia'

Founded thirty years ago by American-Taiwanese engineer Jen-Hsun "Jensen" Huang, this little-known company was initially a star in the video game world.

The Silicon Valley-based company has long been known for graphics processing units (GPUs), which ramp up image



quality and vanquish response lag time for gamers.

The ability of GPUs to deftly handle complex tasks simultaneously make them superior to conventional computer chips when it comes to graphics, as well as the kind of processing involved with artificial intelligence.

"Nvidia has become kind of synonymous with AI," independent tech analyst Rob Enderle told AFP.

The company "has been investing in the AI boom for almost two decades. They saw an opportunity, and now everybody else is chasing it," he added.

Some of the GPUs used in data centers cost tens of thousands of dollars apiece, bringing in huge returns to Nvidia, while also raising concern that the future of AI innovation will be out of reach to smaller companies.

Uncomfortable with their dependence on outside providers such as Nvidia, the US tech giants are investing heavily to develop their own chips and bring the technology in house.

Nvidia's share price take-off contrasts with that of other chipmakers, who are predicting a slowdown in the market this year, mainly due to lower demand for personal computers.

This trend has led to a sharp drop in Nvidia's video game revenues, but growth in the AI-driven data center activity compensated for this slowdown.

AFP

Germany enters recession as inflation bites

Berlin, Germany – Germany fell into a recession around the turn of the year, official figures showed, as inflation and higher interest rates curbed demand in Europe's largest economy.

Over the first three months of 2023, the economy shrank by 0.3 per cent, the federal statistics agency Destatis said, downgrading an initial estimate of zero per cent.

Following a 0.5-per cent contraction in the last three months of 2022, it was Germany's second consecutive quarter of negative growth – the threshold for a "technical recession".

The slump came as Germany battled a surge in energy prices in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which weighed on households and businesses.

But Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who previously expressed confidence that Germany had done enough to avoid a downturn, played down fears of a prolonged recession.

"The German economy's prospects are very good," he said at a press conference, citing significant investments in the country including in battery factories.



A file photo shows the German flag in Berlin (AFP)

Inflation, which reached 7.2 per cent in Germany in April, has been fuelled by the increased cost of energy. Consumer prices have come down only slightly from their peak towards the end of 2022.

"The persistence of high price increases continued to be a burden on the German economy at the start of the year," Destatis said in a statement.

The impact was felt particularly by consumers who reined in their spending on items such as

food and clothing.

Germany, which had long been heavily reliant on Russian energy imports, was left particularly exposed following the Russian invasion in February last year.

The curtailment of gas supplies in particular left Berlin scrambling to find new sources of energy and fill reserves ahead of what was anticipated to be a harsh winter at the end of 2022.

The slump was "not the worst-case scenario of a severe recession" predicted by some

following the Russian invasion, said Carsten Brzeski, head of macro at the ING bank.

But mild temperatures, a rebound in key market China and the easing of supply chain problems following the coronavirus pandemic were "not enough to get the economy out of the recessionary danger zone", Brzeski said.

"A drop in purchasing power, thinned-out industrial order books as well as the impact of the most aggressive monetary policy tightening in decades" were likely to drag on the economy further, he said, referring to the European Central Bank's interest rate hikes against inflation.

An anticipated slowdown in the US economy and the continuation of the war in Ukraine would also weigh on output, he said.

The poor performance in the first quarter contrast the optimism showed by policymakers in Berlin who in April raised their forecast for economic growth in 2023 to 0.4 per cent.

"We continue to expect a significant improvement over the

course of the year," an economy ministry spokesman told AFP in response to the growth figures.

The negative revision by Destatis was no surprise following a string of weak economic indicators, LBBW bank analyst Jens-Oliver Niklasch said.

"The early indicators suggest that things will continue to be similarly weak in the second quarter" of 2023, Niklasch said.

Industrial orders, which give a foretaste of factory output, plummeted in March when compared with the same month last year.

By contrast, consumer confidence in Germany had continued its upward trend "amid all the negative news", Citi bank analyst Christian Schulz noted.

A rebound in consumer spending could fuel an economic recovery later in the year, Schulz said.

Germany's last recession came as the coronavirus pandemic swept through Europe at the start of 2020, prompting governments to effectively shut down large swathes of the economy.

AFP

US, China wrangle on trade relations in rare talks

Washington, US – The United States and China sparred over trade issues but promised to keep lines of communication open as Beijing's commerce minister paid a rare visit after a period of soaring tensions.

Minister Wang Wentao met US Trade Representative Katherine Tai on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation trade meeting in Detroit on Saturday, a day after he saw his counterpart Gina Raimondo in Washington.

Tai "discussed the impor-

tance of the US-China trade relationship in the global economy and the need for both sides to continue engaging with one another," her office said in a statement.

China's state-run Xinhua agency said that the meeting in Detroit was "candid, pragmatic and in-depth."

It said Wang raised concern about US trade policies as well as on Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy which Beijing claims and has not ruled out taking by force.

Both Tai and Raimondo in turn voiced concern about China's actions against US companies. China recently restricted purchases from US chip giant Micron, citing security risks.

The move was widely interpreted as retaliation after President Joe Biden imposed a sweeping ban on China's access to US advanced semiconductors, fearing that Beijing will put them to military use and dominate the global market for emerging technologies.

It was one of the first visits by a high-ranking Chinese official since Biden took office, although the environment minister traveled to Washington last year.

High-level dialogue ground to a halt during the Covid-19 pandemic as Chinese officials stayed home and Biden's predecessor Donald Trump sharply raised the tone against Beijing, including over the virus.

Biden met in November with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Bali with the two leaders both

saying that they would work to keep tensions in check.

But the United States erupted in outrage in February after spotting what US officials said was a Chinese surveillance drone over US soil, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken calling off a visit to Beijing.

In the most substantive attempt to restore communication, Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, met in Vienna earlier this month with top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi.

AFP

Bahar announces winners of raffle draw to mark 40 years of trust

Bahar, National Detergent Company's (NDC) flagship brand, is thrilled to announce the winners of the mega raffle draw held on May 8 as part of their grand campaign, Bahar - Celebrating 40 Years of Trust.

The campaign received an overwhelming response from customers who participated in this special occasion, making it a resounding success. With a plethora of valuable prizes up for grabs, from premium devices to valuable gold coins, 40 lucky individuals from across the Sultanate emerged victorious in this celebratory event.

Speaking about the Mega Raffle Draw and the successful campaign, Murali Sundar, CEO of NDC, said, "We are delighted by the enthusiasm shown by our loyal customers in the campaign. The Mega Raffle Draw was an event that highlighted the trust our customers place in us. We extend our hearty congratulations to the lucky winners and other participants whose support has been crucial to our success



and we look forward to continuing this journey together."

He added, "We are also grateful to all the trade partners who participated in this promotional campaign with special thanks to outlets like Lulu Hypermarket, Carrefour, Ramez Shopping Center, Nesto Hypermarket, Sultan Center, K M Trading and Al Badia Hypermarket which gave their wholehearted support to make

this campaign a grand success."

Ten winners received the highly sought-after 25-gram gold coins, whilst another fortunate ten won the iPhone 14s. Furthermore, ten individuals were delighted to win iPads and the remaining ten were thrilled to be rewarded with the Samsung Galaxy Fold phones.

Abdallah Sulaiman al Bandari, one of the winners expressed his

excitement by saying, "Winning the iPhone in the Bahar Mega Raffle Draw is truly a remarkable moment for me. I am grateful to NDC for organising this campaign and for appreciating the loyalty of its customers. This experience reinforces my trust in the brand and its dedication to fulfilling its promises. I have been buying Bahar products for the last so many years now and I am

delighted to be a winner."

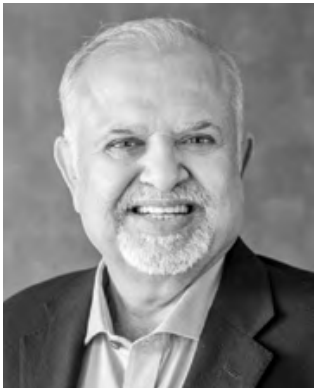
Mahmood Ali, hailing from India, whose daughter won an iPad exclaimed, "Being selected as one of the lucky winners in the Bahar Mega Raffle Draw is an amazing surprise. NDC has truly outdone itself with this grand campaign and I am appreciative of their generosity. Their commitment to celebrating its customers is noteworthy. This

experience has inspired me to continue supporting NDC and be an advocate for their excellent products."

Through this campaign, NDC has showcased its determination to earn the confidence of its customers. Such commitment has been key to the company's success over the past four decades. NDC has been ahead of the curve by introducing a diverse range of products to meet the changing needs of customers across Oman.

Established in 1981, NDC manufactures and distributes a wide range of highly reputed and successful brands covering various segments like detergent powders, liquid detergents, soaps, shampoos, other laundry aids and household cleaners.

"NDC will be launching many new products during the year and consumers are eagerly looking forward to these new launches. NDC believes in giving the best value for money to its consumers," the company stated in a press release.



Landmark Group's founding chairman no more

The Landmark Group on Monday announced that its founder and chairman, Mukesh 'Micky' Jagtiani, passed away peacefully, surrounded by his loving family.

Micky Jagtiani left behind a formidable legacy of a leading family-owned business conglomerate in the GCC region and beyond, that he founded and managed for several decades.

Renowned for his exceptional leadership, unwavering customer-centric approach, and deep market understanding, his visionary spirit and strategic foresight helped the Landmark Group and its brands become a household name in the community.

Regarded as an eminent personality, Jagtiani will always be known for his inspiring leadership and even more so, for his humility and genuine concern towards all the lives he touched, a release stated.

From its humble beginnings with a single store in Bahrain in 1973, Micky Jagtiani was the driving force in shaping the conglomerate's extraordinary journey. His strategic acumen enabled the Landmark Group to emerge as the region's foremost retail and hospitality conglomerate, with over 2,200 stores in 21 countries across the Middle East and Africa, as well as the Indian Subcontinent, and Southeast Asia.

He is fondly remembered by his wife Renuka; children: Aarti and Savitar; Nisha and Kabir, and Rahul; grandchildren: Samar, Nikhil, Yohan and Aliya; and his beloved Landmark Group community. He left behind enduring friendships, partnerships, and bonds with the group's senior management, the industry and wider community, whose lives he touched profoundly.

The Landmark Group remains committed to carrying forward his spirit, the company stated.



IRES, Al Maha Petroleum tie up to empower citizens

Integrated Real Estate Services (IRES) is partnership with Al-Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company on Sunday launched a real estate skills and competencies enhancement programme designed to uplift and develop the skills of unemployed Omani citizens and graduates.

The programme, which will continue until June 1, will impart critical knowledge and the best practices from the real estate sector to empower the local community and strengthen the Omani economy. Moreover, it is a great chance to bridge the unemployment gap and promote significantly a bright future for them.

Al-Maha Petroleum Products

Marketing Company is the prime sponsor for this remarkable Real Estate program initiative. Their considerable financial support and dedication to promoting development and opportunity in our community are outstanding.

The contribution of Al-Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company does more than support an event; it fuels a transformational journey for unemployed Omanis and graduates in Oman by opening doors to opportunities for learning, empowerment, and economic stability. Their investment demonstrates their commitment to social responsibilities that serves as a model for other businesses.

ahlibank celebrates RO2mn milestone since Tamkeen launch

To celebrate the milestone of its successful crowd funding initiative 'Tamkeen', ahlibank held an open day event with the presence of many stakeholders and beneficiaries of the programme.

The event aimed to highlight the importance of supporting SMEs and their significant role in helping entrepreneurs, providing job opportunities, and overall diversifying and enhancing the economy through innovative and advanced technological means.

The Tamkeen initiative garnered the attention of many SMEs and has proven successful since its inception last year.

The unique crowdfunding initiative is a first-of-its-kind program that was launched in response to the Capital Market Authority's issuance of crowd funding legislation, and aims to explore different means of funding through non-conventional ways. The initiative received positive feedback from both borrowers and potential investors and



has closed RO2mn worth of deals in only nine months since its beginning.

Speaking on the impressive milestone achieved by the Tamkeen initiative, Zaliya al Balushi, general manager - head of Corporate Banking at ahlibank, said, "At ahlibank, we realise the pivotal role SMEs play in supporting the local market and diversifying the economy. Therefore, the initiative was thoughtfully designed based on a critical understanding that SMEs may require funding

through non-conventional means. We wish to support SMEs through easy, fast and safe financing solutions."

"The development of SMEs is crucial on a nation-wide level as they contribute to fulfilling the Oman Vision 2040. The Tamkeen initiative has been very successful and has shown impressive growth in a short span of time since its beginning. We are proud to have closed RO2mn worth of deals and look forward to achieving greater milestones in

the future," Balushi added.

In line with ahlibank's commitment to providing customer-centric services through pioneering initiatives, Tamkeen has encouraged a positive and substantial financing environment that has enhanced In-country value, productivity, and employability. It has also boosted the bank's contribution to the nation's progress, and has provided opportunities to the youth for them to fulfill their business aspirations.

MoE event on digital citizenship activation in education curricula

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Department of Citizenship at the Directorate-General of Curriculum Development, organised on Monday a workshop entitled 'Digital Citizenship and Mechanisms of Activating it in Educational Curricula'.

The workshop targeted thirty-five employees concerned with the educational process in the directorates of the ministry's General Diwan and took place in Muscat Hall at the ministry.

The workshop was conducted by Moza al Saadi, senior citizenship specialist in the Department of Citizenship, by presenting a paper that dealt with the concept of citizenship, its development, digital citizenship and its components, mechanisms for including its concepts in educational curricula, developing activities and trainings to enhance its



dimensions.

The paper also proposed a strategy for developing educational content to keep pace with the digital citizenship requirements, and its connection to the concept of citizenship, inclusion in the educational system in the Sultanate of Oman, and the stages of its development among students.

The paper also presented international models in its application and promotion through games, and the most important proposals that would enhance the integration of concepts related to digital citizenship in the curricula. The workshop concluded with discussion and enquiries from the trainees.

Gulf Specialised Hospital holds staff party

Gulf Specialised Hospital (GSH), a leading healthcare provider in the region, successfully organised its 'staff annual gathering' on May 26. The event was graced by distinguished Professor Taki al Abduwani as patron.

The annual gathering commenced with a warm welcome and introduction, followed by an insightful overview of the GSH's journey. The session highlighted GSH's steadfast commitment to offering quality healthcare services and constant pursuit of excellence.

The event was an opportune platform to review the hospital's commendable achievements to date. GSH staff members were celebrated for their dedication and professional contributions that have driven the hospital's success. The hospital's impressive growth trajectory and significant milestones in patient care were acknowledged during the discussion.

The gathering further focused on the strategic plans and objectives for 2023. Emphasising patient-centric care, technological



integration, and continuous professional development for its staff, GSH is poised for another year of serving the community with unwavering commitment and excellence.

The event concluded with closing remarks from Professor Abduwani, who expressed his gratitude for the hard work and dedication of the GSH team. He

further motivated the staff to continue their relentless pursuit of excellence, empathy, and professional growth.

GSH would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to all the staff members for their relentless efforts and continuous dedication. It is through their commitment that GSH can continue to provide world-class healthcare services

to the communities it serves.

Muscat-based GSH is dedicated to providing top-quality healthcare services to the community, guided by the principles of empathy, excellence, and continuous improvement. Its multidisciplinary team of highly skilled medical professionals is committed to maintaining the highest standards of patient care.

BankDhofar celebrates successful participation at COMEX 2023

BankDhofar has successfully concluded its participation at COMEX 2023, which was held from May 22 to May 25.

BankDhofar's booth at the exhibition saw a large turnout, where the Bank showcased innovative digital banking solutions for both BankDhofar and Maisarah Islamic Banking Services.

Commenting on BankDhofar's participation, BankDhofar CEO Abdul Hakeem Omar al Ojaili said, "As we know, technology has revolutionized the banking industry, making banking operations safer, faster, and more efficient."

"At BankDhofar, we have always been at the forefront in adopting cutting-edge technologies in our banking services to ensure seamless customer experience through seamlessly integrating our various digital channels."

The bank CEO noted with happiness that the bank was "glad to participate at COMEX 2023, where we had the chance to show our latest customer-centric innovative digital banking solutions. We also had the chance to see digital initiatives of other organisations."

BankDhofar puts technology and innovation at the core of its strategy to improve the experi-



ence of its customers. The Bank is constantly keeping pace with technological developments while designing new products and services to ensure a convenient banking experience for customers.

Customers may easily conduct their transactions around the clock through the highly-secured and user-friendly digital banking channels. BankDhofar's, award-winning, Mobile Banking

App offers a wide range of exclusive services. The services include; instant transfer to any bank in the Sultanate, cardless cash, mobile top-up for all telecom providers in the Sultanate, among other services.

Through Internet Banking, BankDhofar provides several features for retail and corporate customers.

Additionally, BankDhofar customers may access the financial

services through a wide network of ATMs and CDMs around the Sultanate. The bank launched Cardless ATM Banking Services using mobile.

The first of its kind service in the world enables customers to conduct ATM transactions easily only by using their mobile numbers. Additionally, the soft-POS service allows merchants to accept payments quickly and conveniently through their NFC-

enabled Android devices.

Along with the services provided over BankDhofar's digital channels, BankDhofar customers may conduct their payment transactions conveniently through BankDhofar cards with the 'Tap & Go' feature. This feature allows customers to pay on the go for shopping, travelling, or for any payments. The cards are highly secured and come with an RFID protection card and cover.



Mercedes-Benz follows tough certification process for pre-owned cars

Benefit from exclusive offers specifically for the latest Certified Pre-Owned vehicles available from Mercedes-Benz Oman.

Valid until June 30 this year, the limited-time offer includes a selection of luxury Certified Pre-Owned vehicles, with prices ranging from RO18,370 to RO54,595 including Value Added Tax.

The range includes the A 200 in Polar White with leather in two-tone Classic Red and Black; the C 200 in Polar White with leather in two-tone Power Red and Black; the GLB 250 4MATIC in Mountain Grey with leather in two-tone Classic Red and Black; the Mercedes-AMG GT 43 in Polar White with Exclusive Napa leather in two-tone Red Pepper and Black; as well as the S 450 4MATIC in Designo Diamond White with Sienna

Brown and Black leather.

Certified pre-owned Mercedes-Benz vehicles undergo one of the most demanding certification processes in the industry. Performed by the dealer's technicians, the rigorous 150-point vehicle inspection includes thorough engine and fluid checks, as well as on-road driving evaluations, while all maintenance is performed using Genuine Mercedes-Benz Parts.

Being part of the exclusive Certified Pre-Owned Mercedes-Benz family entitles customers to many complimentary benefits and rewards, such as an unlimited-mileage warranty of one year with an option to extend up to two years, 24/7 roadside assistance for certain vehicles, and a history of all services performed. There are also a number of service packages available.

MoE officials follow up on Public Document Management System

The Ministry of Education (MoE), in cooperation with the National Documents and Archives Authority, carried out a field visit to all administrative divisions in the ministry's general diwan as a first stage of follow up on the implementation of the Public Documents Management System, and to review the application of the system in both its electronic and paper forms.

This visit comes as a result of the joint cooperation between the ministry - represented by the department of Documents and the National Documents and Archives Authority - represented by the Department of Follow-up and Technical Support Department, in order to provide technical support on the mechanism of implementing the public documents management system in the divisions of the ministry's General Diwan.

Hafiz al Mamari, a documentation and archives specialist at the National Documents and Archives Authority, said, "This visit comes within the framework



of the annual plan carried out by the Department of Follow-up and Technical Support for this year, as these field visits target all units of the administrative apparatus of the state that are subject to the Documents and Archives Law. "In coordination between the National Documents and Archives Authority and MoE, this visit came to follow up the document and archives management system in the ministry's General Diwan as a first stage. It also serves the field of documents to improve, develop, and highlight

what is new in the field."

Zayed al Felaiti, Director of the Department of Documentation at the ministry, said, "The next stage will be a visit to the educational governorates to stand on what they have achieved in implementing the document management system, overcome the difficulties facing these divisions, and to provide all technical support needed. The ministry is currently implementing the document management system in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 190/2022."

Ooredoo launches development programme for Omani women

Committed to supporting and encouraging women to succeed in their career pursuits, Ooredoo has recently launched the 22nd edition of its Springboard programme.

Created by women for women, the programme promotes the inclusion of Omani women in the world of work and empowers them to maximise their full potential through education and training opportunities.

Taught by professionals, Ooredoo's Springboard programme helps Omani women discover their purpose and values, set achievable goals and gain teamwork, leadership and other skills to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

The more than 80 female participants in the current programme, include employees from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Ibbi, the Omani Women's Association in the wilayat of Yanqul and the Omani Women's Association in the wilayat of Dhank.



As part of Ooredoo's commitment to supporting SoHos and SMEs and boosting the potential of women countrywide, the Springboard programme for women, as well as the SpringForward programme for men and women, fall under the company's Corporate Social Responsibility

(CSR) umbrella.

Both CSR programmes are regarded as a benchmark for successful public-private sector collaboration. Ever since it launched these educational programmes several years ago, Ooredoo has provided professional development opportuni-

ties for nearly 10,000 Omani men and women.

These initiatives have enabled participants to further build their skill sets, as Ooredoo has been working closely with industry leaders and licensed trainers to support the growth and development of individuals.

Trend Micro's 'Risk to Resilience' roadshow reaches Oman

Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity, announced that its Risk to Resilience world tour powered by AWS - the world's largest cybersecurity roadshow made its way to the Middle East and Africa (MEA) to empower enterprises in building up their defence capabilities and reimagine cybersecurity.

With a total of 100 cities planned across the world, the roadshow has visited 13 cities across the region. These include Tunis, Muscat, Rabat, Manama, Doha, Kuwait, Jeddah, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Cairo, Amman, and Johannesburg.

The tour coincided with the highly anticipated COMEX 2023, and offered organizations in the country the opportunity to witness first-hand the fortifying

capabilities of the company's cutting-edge technologies. Trend Micro's powerful range of cybersecurity solutions, including Trend Vision One, Trend Cloud One, Trend Network One, Email Security, Tipping Point and SMB solutions, will be showcased during COMEX 2023.

"In today's interconnected world, cyber-attacks pose a significant global threat, emphasising the urgent need for the adoption of a comprehensive cybersecurity strategy," said Assad Arabi, Managing Director of Gulf and Emerging Markets at Trend Micro.

"We are dedicated to continuous innovation, constantly pushing boundaries to safeguard the digital future of the communities we live in. The Risk to Resilience world tour exemplifies



our unwavering commitment, as we empower organizations in

the region with the tools, they need to effectively combat modern

threat actors and enhance their security posture. As we

navigate the complexities of the digital age, our prime objective is to establish new standards in cybersecurity."

The tour brought together industry experts, leaders, and IT professionals to discuss the latest trends, challenges, and solutions in cybersecurity. Attendees gained valuable insights into emerging threats and knowledge to implement practical solutions to protect their businesses against modern threat actors.

According to Trend Micro's Annual Cybersecurity report for 2022, 'Rethinking Tactics' - the company's security solutions - blocked and detected over 870mn cyber threats in 2022 across the Middle East and Africa region.

These figures emphasise the

critical need for companies to recognize the severity of the increasing attack surface and take proactive measures to protect themselves from potential cyberattacks by remaining vigilant and adopting a robust, multi-layered cybersecurity approach.

The Risk to Resilience World Tour covered a range of insightful topics that will empower organisations to improve their cybersecurity integrity, enhance risk management, accelerate business resilience, make proactive risk-based decisions, emulate real-world success stories, bridge the skills gaps with intuitive tools and workflow automation, enhance visibility, reduce costs, improve security outcomes, and ease compliance obligations through consolidation.

IN BRIEF

UN issues hunger alert for Haiti, Sahel, Sudan

Rome, Italy - Haiti, the Sahel and Sudan now rank among the UN's highest alert areas for food insecurity, requiring 'urgent' action from the international community, food agencies warned on Monday.

The Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) said Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen remain at the highest alert level. And now Haiti, the Sahel - Burkina Faso and Mali - and the Sudan join them, the agencies said in a joint report.

The move follows the severe restrictions on movement of people and goods in militant-hit Burkina Faso and Mali as well as crisis-wracked Haiti, and the recent outbreak of conflict in Sudan, the report said.

Libya drone strikes kill at least two people

Tripoli, Libya - Drone strikes in Libya killed at least two people and wounded others, including an MP's nephew, the lawmaker said, days after accusing the Tripoli-based government of targeting his home.

The strikes near the western city of Zawiya were part of an operation that the authorities said was targeting smuggling networks.

But lawmakers in the country's eastern-based parliament accused the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU) of hitting the home of Zawiya representative Ali Bouzribah. "Drone strikes hit sites in Al-Maya port near Zawiya for the second consecutive day," Libya's Al-Ahrar channel said on Sunday night.

Myanmar rapper held for criticism of junta

Yangon, Myanmar - A popular rapper in Myanmar who criticised the junta over massive power blackouts has been arrested for 'spreading propaganda', the military said, the latest arrest in a sweeping crackdown on dissent.

Byu Har posted a Facebook video to his hundreds of thousands of followers on Tuesday slamming the junta for rolling power outages that have hit Myanmar in recent weeks.

He mocked junta leader Min Aung Hlaing and said power supply had been better managed during the government of deposed civilian leader and democracy figurehead Aung San Suu Kyi.

AFP



A general view shows the launch platform of the Shenzhou-16 Manned Space Flight Mission one day before launch at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in China's northwestern Gansu province on Monday (AFP)

China prepares to send first civilian into space

Jiuquan, China - China will send its first civilian astronaut into space as part of a crewed mission to the Tiangong space station on Tuesday as it pursues its ambitious plans for a manned lunar landing by 2030.

The world's second-largest economy has invested billions of dollars in its military-run space programme, trying to catch up with the United States and Russia after years of belatedly matching their milestones.

Until now, all Chinese astronauts sent into space have been part of the People's Liberation Army.

Gui Haichao is a professor at Beijing's Beihang University, and will manage scientific experiments on the station during the mission, China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) spokesperson Lin Xiqiang told reporters on Monday. His mission will 'carry out large-scale, in-orbit experiments... in the study of novel quantum phenomena, high-precision space time-frequency systems, the verification of general relativity, and the origin of life', Lin said.

"I've always had this dream," Gui told a press conference on Monday.

His university said he hailed from an 'ordinary family' in the

southwest province of Yunnan.

He had 'first felt the attraction of aerospace' listening to the news of China's first man in space, Yang Liwei, on campus radio in 2003, the institution said in a post on social media.

Gui's addition is 'particularly significant', independent analyst

Gui Haichao's mission will carry out large-scale, in-orbit experiments... in the study of novel quantum phenomena, space time-frequency systems, the verification of general relativity, and the origin of life

LIN XIQIANG

Chen Lan told AFP, given previous missions only carried astronauts trained as pilots responsible for more technical tasks and not specialist scien-

tists. "It means that, from this mission on, China will open the door to space for ordinary people," he said.

Gui is set to take off onboard the Shenzhou-16 spacecraft from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China on Tuesday at 9:31am (0131 GMT), the CMSA said.

The commander is Jing Haipeng - on his fourth mission into space, according to state media - and the third crew member is engineer Zhu Yangzhu.

Jing said he hadn't gone home for nearly four years because of fears travel could disrupt his training. "As astronauts going into space... our main responsibility and mission is striving for glory for our country," he said at a press conference on Monday.

The three will stay in Earth's orbit for around five months.

'Space dream'

Under President Xi Jinping, plans for China's 'space dream' have been put into overdrive.

China is planning to build a base on the Moon, and CMSA spokesman Lin on Monday reaffirmed Beijing's plan to land a manned mission there by 2030.

"The overall goal is to achieve China's first manned landing on the Moon by 2030 and carry out

lunar scientific exploration and related technological experiments," he said.

The final module of the T-shaped Tiangong - whose name means 'heavenly palace' - successfully docked with the core structure last year.

The station carries a number of pieces of cutting-edge scientific equipment, state news agency Xinhua reported, including 'the world's first space-based cold atomic clock system'.

The Tiangong is expected to remain in low Earth orbit at between 400 and 450km (250 and 280 miles) above the planet for at least 10 years.

It is constantly crewed by rotating teams of three astronauts.

While China does not plan to use Tiangong for global cooperation on the scale of the International Space Station, Beijing has said it is open to foreign collaboration.

China 'is looking forward to and welcomes the participation of foreign astronauts in the country's space station flight missions', Lin said on Monday.

China has been effectively excluded from the International Space Station since 2011, when the United States banned NASA from engaging with the country.

AFP

North Korea informs Japan of upcoming 'satellite launch'

Tokyo, Japan - North Korea has informed Japan that it is preparing to launch a satellite as early as this week, Tokyo announced on Monday but warned it may actually be a sanctions-defying ballistic missile test.

North Korea informed Japan that it will launch a rocket between May 31 and June 11, identifying waters near the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and to the east of Luzon Island in the Philippines as warning areas, a Japanese coast guard spokesman told AFP. Such zones are usually designated for falling debris or rocket stages.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told officials to gather intelligence 'on North Korea's notification about the launch of a ballistic missile that it describes as a satellite', his office said in a tweet.

'Even if it's described as a satellite, a launch using ballistic missile technology would be a violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions' and would threaten people's safety, Kishida told reporters.

In 2012 and 2016, Pyongyang tested ballistic missiles that it called satellite launches. Both flew over Japan's southern Okinawa region.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un this month inspected the country's first military spy satellite as it was prepared for launch, and gave the green light for its 'future action plan'.

In 2021, Kim had identified the development of such satellites as a key defence project for the North Korean military.

Because long-range rockets and space launchers share the



Japan's PM Fumio Kishida (AFP)

same technology, analysts say developing the ability to put a satellite in orbit would provide Pyongyang with cover for testing banned intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Japan's defence ministry issued an order to shoot down any ballistic missile confirmed to be on course to fall into its territory.

South Korea's foreign ministry condemned the launch plan, but officials did not confirm to AFP if Seoul had been directly notified too.

"North Korea's so-called 'satellite launch' is a serious violation of UN Security Council resolutions banning all launches using ballistic missile technology, and is a clearly illegal act that cannot be justified under any pretext," the ministry said.

South Korea and Japan have been working to mend long-frayed ties, including with greater cooperation on North Korea's military threats.

Meanwhile, Kishida on Monday reiterated that Tokyo is open to talks with Pyongyang.

AFP

HOTTEST DAY IN SHANGHAI

A woman wearing sun protective clothing commutes on a bicycle amid hot weather in Shanghai on Monday. Shanghai recorded its hottest May day (at 36.1 degrees Celsius) in 100 years, on Monday (AFP)

Australian PM condemns fear tactics in Indigenous vote

Sydney, Australia - Australia's prime minister took a swipe on Monday at conservative 'doomsayers' using fear tactics ahead of a referendum to give Indigenous people a voice on laws that affect them.

Debate on the so-called Voice has turned increasingly acrimonious, with supporters decrying deliberate disinformation and opponents saying it risks opening a racial divide.

If passed, Indigenous Australians - whose ancestors have lived on the continent for at least 60,000 years - would have a constitutionally enshrined right to be consulted by the government on laws that impact their community.

More than 200 years since British colonisation and the ensuing persecution of Indigenous people, they remain greatly disadvantaged with higher incarceration and jobless rates, and

a life expectancy about eight years shorter than that of other Australians.

In a keynote speech in Adelaide on Monday, Prime Minister Albanese said Australian voters face a 'profound choice' when they go to the polls sometime later this year.

A yes vote, he said, would allow Australians to proclaim to themselves, and to the world, 'we are a mature nation coming to terms with our history, assured of our values, and shaping our own destiny'.

It will be, he said, a 'once in a lifetime opportunity' to change the country for the better.

"We sometimes speak of ourselves as a young nation, but the truth is we are one of the world's oldest democracies.

"Our continent is home to the world's oldest continuing culture, which we are at last coming to recognise as the great source of



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said voters face a 'profound choice' when they go to the polls sometime later this year (AFP)

pride that it must be."

'Orwellian effect'

The 'yes' vote is still ahead in a two-way fight, polls show, despite indications of an erosion in support since the conservative

opposition decided to campaign for a 'no'.

An Essential Research survey published mid-May gave put support for the Voice at 59-41 per cent.

Australia's conservative op-

position Liberal Party leader Peter Dutton has hardened his opposition and his rhetoric on the subject, last week declaring the Voice would 're-racialise our nation'.

Our continent is home to the world's oldest continuing culture, which we are at last coming to recognise as source of pride

ANTHONY ALBANESE

"It will have an Orwellian effect where all Australians are equal, but some Australians are more equal than others," he said.

On Monday, Dutton accused Voice supporters of using race to attack the 'no' side.

"The prime minister out there name-calling people and others suggesting that people are racist because they don't support the Voice - it's completely unacceptable," he said.

By way of response, Albanese hit out Monday at 'galling' opposition 'scare campaigns' that, he said, underestimated Australians' ability to rise above division.

Australians would not be lured by 'ludicrous invitations to jump at our own shadows', the prime minister said.

"Australians have a healthy scepticism of doomsayers, a scepticism kept in good health by memories of all the predictions offered by the Chicken Littles of the past," he said.

Australia's race discrimination commissioner, Chin Tan, urged politicians to avoid a 'racial bun fight', in an interview published Monday in the Nine media

group's newspapers. The political battle over Indigenous recognition is already leaving a mark on the community.

One of Australia's top television journalists, Stan Grant, quit his current affairs show with national broadcaster ABC this month citing 'relentless' racial attacks he faced as an Indigenous person in the spotlight.

But the stakes are now higher, he said in a departure announcement.

"There is a referendum on an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and I am not alone in feeling judged. This is an Australian judgement on us. Such is politics," Grant wrote.

"But racism is a crime. Racism is violence. And I have had enough."

The vote is expected to take place in the last three months of the year.

AFP

Missiles fired on Kyiv in daytime attack

A series of explosions rang out in Kyiv as Russia targeted the city for the second time in 24 hours

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russia fired a barrage of missiles at Kyiv on Monday sending panicked residents running for shelter in an unusual daytime attack on the Ukrainian capital following overnight strikes.

A series of explosions rang out in Kyiv on Monday as Russia targeted the city for the second time in 24 hours.

AFP journalists heard at least 10 explosions from around 11:10am local time (0810 GMT) in Kyiv, starting just a few minutes after an air raid warning sounded.

Authorities said Ukrainian air defences had downed every Russian missile launched against the Kyiv region.

"A total of 11 missiles were fired: 'Iskander-M' and 'Iskander-K' from a northerly direction," Ukraine's armed forces chief Valery Zaluzhny said. "All the targets were destroyed by air defences," he added.

Sergiy Popko, head of Kyiv's city administration, said that Russians struck in the morning when 'most residents were at work and on the streets'.

"The Russians are clearly demonstrating that they are aiming to destroy the civilian population," he said on Telegram. "Debris was recorded falling in different parts of the city," Popko said, adding that information on casualties was currently being clarified.



Police experts examine an area covered in fragments of a missile after Russia fired a barrage of missiles, in Kyiv, on Monday (AFP)

Most residents were at work and on the streets. The Russians are clearly demonstrating that they are aiming to destroy the civilian population

SERGIY POPKO

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said earlier in the day one person had been hospitalised.

Heavy barrage sparks panic

People ran to take shelter in a metro station in central Kyiv as

volleys of loud explosions were heard, AFP journalists said.

Many residents had become used to ignoring air raid sirens but the heavy barrage prompted a panicked reaction.

Down on the platform of the Khreshchatyk metro station,

people stood and sat on steps checking their mobile phones.

"I saw 6,7 or 8 - a certain number of explosions in the sky. That's why I came here with my work colleagues," said Maksym, a plumber, sitting on the steps. "I'm waiting for the air raid to end."

The Kyiv city administration said air defences were at work during the air raid, which was the 16th attack on the city this month. AFP journalists also saw missile fragments scattered on the road in Kyiv's northern Obolonskiy district.

"At first, they started shooting down missiles as usual. Then one of them fell on the road, as you can see, just the tail of it. Some people said it set a car on fire," said Dmytro, a young man in a plaid shirt.

"It was quite loud: there were several explosions. While the missile was being shot down, there were about 6-5 explosions. Before that, you could hear a piece of debris falling."

Kyiv, which had been relatively spared from attacks since the beginning of the year, has faced nearly nightly aerial raids this month.

Authorities said early on Monday that Kyiv had overnight repelled another large number of overnight air strikes, with no casualties.

Zaluzhny said that a total of 'up to 40 missiles' and 'around

35 drones' had been launched, almost all of which were downed.

This followed an overnight drone attack on Saturday that was the biggest on the capital since Russia's invasion began in February last year.

Children wounded

Russia on Monday also targeted a settlement in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, killing one man and wounding nine people including a 11-year-old child, local authorities said.

A missile attack on a village in the eastern Kharkiv region left six people wounded, including a pregnant woman and children aged 10 and 14, the authorities said.

In the western region of Khmelnytsky, Russian forces struck a military facility overnight, officials said.

In a rare admission of the damage, they said 'five aircraft have been put out of action'.

Work was underway to localise fires and repair a runway, official said. Russia's defence ministry said its forces had attacked Ukrainian airfields and 'all the assigned targets have been destroyed'.

Moscow has warned the West against escalating the conflict after the United States agreed to green-light deliveries of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

AFP

Bola Tinubu takes helm in Nigeria

Abuja, Nigeria - Long-time political kingmaker Bola Tinubu was sworn in as president of Nigeria on Monday, succeeding Muhammadu Buhari, a former general who stepped down after two terms in office.

The 71-year-old southerner took over from a 80-year-old northerner as Africa's most populous nation faces a sea of economic troubles and security challenges. "As president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria I will discharge my duties and perform my functions honestly to the best of my ability, faithfully and in accordance with the constitution," Tinubu said in a live broadcast from the capital Abuja's Eagle Square.

Foreign leaders and representatives present at the ceremony included presidents Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana as well as delegations from the US, Britain and China. Kashim Shettima was sworn in as vice president, taking over from Yemi Osinbajo.

The ruling party duo were declared winners of the February 25 election, gaining the highest number of votes - 8.8mn - and picking up the required number of ballots across two-thirds of Nigeria's states. But Tinubu only garnered just over a third of the total vote, leaving him with a weak mandate, some analysts say.

The poor showing reflects 'widespread disenchantment with his party's record... along with misgivings about his personal eligibility for the office', the International Crisis Group think tank said in a note.

AFP

Fighting rages in Sudan ahead of breached ceasefire expiration

Khartoum, Sudan - Gunshots and artillery fire rocked the Sudanese capital on Monday, the last day of a frequently breached ceasefire, as calls to arms stoked fears the six-week war will intensify.

Residents told AFP they could hear street battles in northern Khartoum, as well as artillery fire in the south of the capital of over five million people which has been turned into a deadly war zone.

Since the truce began a week ago, frightened residents have ventured out to try and get food or water, the costs of which have doubled since the start of the war. But thousands of families continue to shelter in place, rationing water and electricity while trying desperately to avoid stray gunfire.

In Darfur, on the western border with Chad, continued fighting 'blatantly disregards ceasefire commitments', according to Toby Harward, of the United Nations refugee agency.



Smoke billows behind buildings in Khartoum, on Monday, amid ongoing fighting (AFP)

'Intermittent fighting between Sudanese armed forces and Rapid Support Forces in El Fasher, North Darfur over the last few days' has seen civilians killed, homes looted and tens of thousands newly displaced in the already war-ravaged region, Harward said.

The persistent fighting has impeded the delivery of essen-

tial humanitarian aid, upon which 25mn people - over half the population - now rely to survive, according to the UN.

A week ago, representatives of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary RSF, pledged to pause the incessant air strikes, artillery fire and

street battles in order to allow in much-needed aid and civilians to flee. But by the seventh day of the truce - due to expire at 9:45pm (1945 GMT) on Monday - no humanitarian corridors had been secured, and aid had only trickled in to replenish the few hospitals that are still functioning in the capital.

AFP

Spain PM calls snap election for July 23

Madrid, Spain - In a surprise move, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called a snap election for July 23 on Monday, a day after his Socialists suffered a drubbing in local and regional polls.

Widely seen as a dress rehearsal for a general election that had been expected at the end of the year, Sunday's polls saw the main opposition Popular Party (PP) chalk up the largest number of votes.

The right-wing PP also scored significant gains at a regional level, seizing six regions that had been under Socialist control, including Valencia in the east and the Balearic Islands which includes the holiday island of Ibiza.

In a televised address, a sombre-sounding Sanchez said he had informed King Felipe VI of his decision to dissolve parliament and call a general election on July 23 'in light of the results of yesterday's elections'.

"As the head of the government and of the Socialist party, I take responsibility for the results



Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez speaks in Madrid on Monday (AFP)

and I think it is necessary to respond and submit our democratic mandate to the popular will," he said.

The results 'require a clarification from Spaniards about what policies the government should implement and which political forces should lead this phase', he added.

The snap election will take place some three weeks after Spain assumes the rotating presidency of the European Union, on July 1.

In office since 2018, Sanchez has faced several obstacles including soaring inflation.

AFP

Erdogan confronts polarised Turkey after historic poll victory

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday confronted the tough task of uniting his deeply divided country after winning a historic run-off election to extend his two-decade rule to 2028.

Turkey's longest-serving leader brushed aside a powerful opposition coalition, a biting economic crisis and widespread anger following a devastating February earthquake to beat secular challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu in Sunday's vote.

But the four-point victory margin was Erdogan's narrowest of any past election, highlighting the sharp polarisation the Islamic-rooted conservative will contend with during his third and final term as president. Erdogan

attempted to sound conciliatory in a victory speech to thousands of jubilant supporters gathered outside Ankara's presidential palace, calling on Turks to 'come together in unity and solidarity'.

Kilicdaroglu remained defiant by vowing to 'continue the struggle' against Erdogan and his AKP party, which has dominated Turkish politics since 2002.

"Our elders taught us to struggle... we will not lose or give up on this country with one election," Bugra Iyimaya, a 28-year-old academic, told AFP in Istanbul. "We will resist and fight until the end."

Erdogan's elated supporters hailed the man they call 'Reis' (chief) after he won the first run-off in Turkey's history.



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and his party's allies greet his supporters following his victory in the second round of the presidential election at the Presidential Palace in Ankara, on Monday (AFP)

"The person who is beneficial to our country won. I'm very happy because of his beliefs, the rest has no importance. The country comes first," street vendor Gursel Ozkok, 65, told AFP in

Ankara.

"The man of the people won," blared the front page of Monday's pro-government daily *Sabah*.

Having harnessed a coalition

of nationalist, conservative and religious voters, Erdogan 'will double down on his brand of populist policies... political polarisation is here to stay', said Emre Peker of the Eurasia Group con-

sultancy. Relieving Turks of the country's worst economic crisis since the 1990s is one of Erdogan's urgent priorities.

Years of development fuelled by infrastructure projects and a construction sector boom earned him huge popularity and a loyal voter base that has never abandoned him.

But inflation is now running at more than 40 per cent, partly exacerbated by Erdogan's unorthodox policy of cutting interest rates to try and cool spiralling prices.

Analysts say Erdogan's lavish campaign spending pledges and unwavering attachment to lower interest rates will further strain banks' currency reserves.

AFP

INDIA

Chandrayan-3 will be launched in July, says ISRO chief Somnath

New Delhi - Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman S Somnath on Monday said that the Chandrayaan-3- the third edition of India's mission to the moon- will be launched this July.

Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2 to demonstrate end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface. "I am very confident..." said Somnath on Monday on the lunar mission.

The ISRO chairman was speaking after the space agency successfully placed the NVS-01, the first of the second-generation satellite series, into geosynchronous transfer orbit. The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle deployed the NVS-01 navigation satellite from the second launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDC SHAR) in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking to ANI, Somanath said: "The lesson is very simple. Learn from the past, and do what is possible with your capacity. Failures may happen. There are a thousand reasons for a rocket to fail. Even today, this mission could have failed. But we have to do what is needed to be done."

Meanwhile, the Chandrayaan-3 mission consists of an



Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launches its advanced navigation satellite SLV-F12 and NVS-01, in Sriharikota on Monday (ANI)

indigenous lander module a propulsion module and a rover with an objective of developing and demonstrating new technologies required for Inter plan-

etary missions.

According to ISRO, the three mission objectives of the Chandrayaan-3 are- to demonstrate safe and soft landing on lunar

surface; to demonstrate rover roving on the moon and to conduct in-situ scientific experiments. It will be launched by the LVM3 rocket from SDSC SHAR centre in Sriharikota. The propulsion module will carry the lander and rover configuration till 100km lunar orbit, according to ISRO.

The propulsion module has Spectro-polarimetry of Habitable Planet Earth (SHAPE) payload to study the spectral and Polari metric measurements of Earth from the lunar orbit.

Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on to Chandrayaan-2 to demonstrate end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface

The Lander will have the capability to soft land at a specified lunar site and deploy the Rover which will carry out in-situ chemical analysis of the lunar surface during the course of its mobility. The lander and the

rover have scientific payloads to carry out experiments on the lunar surface. The main function of the propulsion module is to carry the lander module from launch vehicle injection till final lunar 100km circular polar orbit and separate the lander module from the propulsion module.

Apart from this, the propulsion module has one scientific payload as a value addition which will be operated post separation of lander module.

The launcher identified for Chandrayaan-3 is GSLV-Mk3 which will place the integrated module in an Elliptic Parking Orbit (EPO) of size 170 x 36500km.

Chandrayaan-1 the first lunar probe of ISRO in 2008-09 found water on the moon. The Chandrayaan-2 was launched in July 2019 and successfully inserted into orbit in August 2019. However, its lander crash-landed on the moon after losing communication with the ground stations.

Earlier in the day, the ISRO chairman congratulated the whole ISRO team after the successful launch of NVS-01.

He appreciated the fact that the mission was accomplished after doing the rectifications after suffering a debacle during the last mission.

ANI



Karnataka Deputy CM D K Shivakumar during a meeting with BBMP officials in Bengaluru on Monday (ANI)

Siddaramaiah keeps Finance, DK gets Bengaluru City Development

Bengaluru, Karnataka - Two days after the Karnataka cabinet reached its full strength of 34, the portfolios were allocated with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah keeping Finance and his deputy D K Shivakumar getting Major and Medium Irrigation, and Bengaluru City Development ministries.

CM Siddaramaiah has also kept the ministries of Cabinet Affairs, Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, Intelligence, Information, IT and BT Infrastructure development and all unallocated portfolios. Shivakumar, under the Bengaluru City Development Ministry, will be having control over BBMP, BWSSB, BMRDA, BMRL and BDA.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's son and Chittapur MLA Priyank Kharge have been given the Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. G Parameshwara was allocated the crucial Home Ministry.

H K Patil has been allocated the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation and Tourism. Former Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao was allocated the Health and Family Welfare Ministry.

Former Minister and Batarayanapur MLA Krishna Byregowda got the Revenue Ministry (excluding Muzrai).

M C Sudhakar has been allocated the Education Ministry and D Sudhakar has been assigned to the Ministry of Plan-

ning and Statistics.

Karnataka cabinet reached its full strength of 34 with 24 ministers taking oath as ministers on May 27. Earlier, eight ministers along with CM Siddaramaiah and deputy CM Shivakumar had taken oath on May 20.

The eight MLAs who took oath on May 20 were Priyank Kharge, G Parameshwara, M B Patil, K H Muniyappa, K J George, Satish Jarkholi, Ramalinga Reddy and B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan.

The 24 ministers who took oath on May 27 were H K Patil, Krishna Byregowda, N Cheluvaryaswamy, K Venkatesh, H C Mahadevappa, Eshwar Khandre, Kyathasandra N Rajanna, Dinesh Gundu Rao, Sharanabasappa Darshanapur, Shivanand Patil, Timmapur Ramappa Balappa, S S Mallikarjun, Tangadagi Shivaraj Sangappa, Sharanaprakash Rudrappa Patil, Mankal Vaidya, Laxmi R Hebbalkar, Rahim Khan, D Sudhakar, Santosh S Lad, N S Boseraju, Suresha BS, Madhu Bangarappa, M C Sudhakar, and B Nagendra.

The Karnataka cabinet expansion was done after the CM and his deputy held consultations with the party's central leadership.

Congress bagged 135 seats in the May 10 elections for the 224-member Karnataka Assembly ousting the ruling BJP, which got 66 seats in the southern state.

ANI

Horrific murder of minor girl in Delhi: Police nab the accused

New Delhi - Sahil, the accused behind the horrific murder of a minor girl in New Delhi's Shahbad Dairy area was arrested by the Delhi Police near Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh on Monday.

The minor was allegedly killed after being stabbed multiple times and her head being crushed with a boulder by a man, the police said. As per the police, the accused was in a relationship with the victim, but they had a quarrel on Sunday night after which he killed her with multiple assaults. The CCTV visuals also appeared where the accused could be seen stabbing the girl multiple

times and then hitting her head with a boulder. Several locals could also be seen present there but no one intervenes in the matter.

The police had registered FIR in the matter under section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Earlier, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, Outer North, Delhi, Raja Banthia had told the reporters that six teams were formed to nab the accused and that the deceased's post-mortem was being conducted.

"The accused Sahil is 20 years old. Our probe is underway. His parents are cooper-

ating in the matter. The accused will be arrested soon," he had said.

Raja Banthia added: "The girl was brought dead. There were several injuries on her body. She was stabbed more than 20 times."

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal reacted on the incident and urged the Lieutenant Governor to take action in the matter.

"A minor girl was brutally killed in broad daylight. It is sad and unfortunate. There is no fear among the criminals. The security of the people of Delhi is the priority," he said.

ANI

WELCOME TO THE KING



Cambodia's King Norodom Sihamoni is welcomed upon his arrival at the airport in New Delhi on Monday (AFP)

Saudi puts to death two Bahrainis on terrorism charges

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia has put to death two Bahrainis accused of plotting terrorist operations, state media said on Monday, raising the number of similar executions to nine this month.

The Bahraini nationals, identified as Jaafar Sultan and Sadiq Thamer, had been charged with 'joining a terrorist cell led by a man wanted in Bahrain', the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said.

There was no immediate reaction from Bahraini authorities.

Since May 2 Saudi Arabia, one of the world's most prolific users of the death penalty, has executed nine terrorism convicts, all but one in the eastern region where the Shiite minority is concentrated. There have been more than 40 executions in Saudi Arabia so far this year, according to an AFP tally based on state

media reports.

In 2022, Saudi Arabia executed 147 people - including 81 on a single day for terrorism-related offences, an event that sparked an international outcry.

The two Bahrainis 'received training in camps belonging to terrorist entities aiming to destabilise the security of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain', SPA added.

They were also accused of aiding 'terrorists' in Saudi Arabia by smuggling explosive materials and supporting plans to carry out terrorist attacks in the kingdom and in neighbouring Bahrain.

Bahrain's main Shiite opposition group al-Wefaq condemned the executions as a 'crime'.

According to Amnesty International, Sultan and Thamer were arrested in Saudi Arabia on May 8, 2015. They were sentenced to death in October 2021.

AFP

Plastic pollution: Treaty talks get into the nitty-gritty

Paris, France - French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday warned that global plastics pollution was a 'time bomb', as diplomats began five days of talks in Paris to make progress on a treaty to end plastic waste.

Representatives of 175 nations with divergent ambitions met at the UNESCO headquarters with the aim of making progress towards reaching, by next year, a historic agreement covering the entire plastics life cycle.

As the talks opened, the head of the negotiations Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velazquez said the challenge was 'immense, as we are all aware here, but it is not insurmountable'.

"The world's eyes are on us," he said.

Macron urged participating nations to put an end to today's 'globalised and unsustainable' production model, where richer countries export plastic waste to poorer ones.

"Plastic pollution is a time-bomb and at the same time already a scourge today," he said in



This file photo shows a plastic bottle floating below a layer of ice in Vaasa, Finland, on December 8, 2022 (AFP)

a video message, adding that the fossil-fuel based material posed a risk to global warming goals, as well as biodiversity and human health.

He added that the first priorities of the negotiations should be to reduce production of plastics and to ban 'as soon as possible' the most polluting products like single use plastics.

The stakes are high, given that annual plastics production has

more than doubled in 20 years to 460mn tonnes, and is on track to triple within four decades.

Two-thirds of this output is discarded after being used once or a few times, and winds up as waste. More than a fifth is dumped or burned illegally, and less than 10 per cent is recycled.

The head of the UN Environment Programme Inger Andersen told the delegates that a throwaway plastic culture was

'gushing pollution galore, choking our ecosystems, warming the climate, damaging our health' and that the most vulnerable were the hardest hit.

"Only elimination, reduction of, a full lifecycle approach, transparency and a just transition, only those can bring success because the truth is that we cannot recycle our way out of this mess," she told delegates to loud applause.

'Polluter pays' schemes

In February 2022, nations agreed in principle on the need for a legally binding UN treaty to end plastic pollution around the world, setting an ambitious 2024 deadline.

The Paris meeting, which runs to June 2, is the second of five sessions in the process.

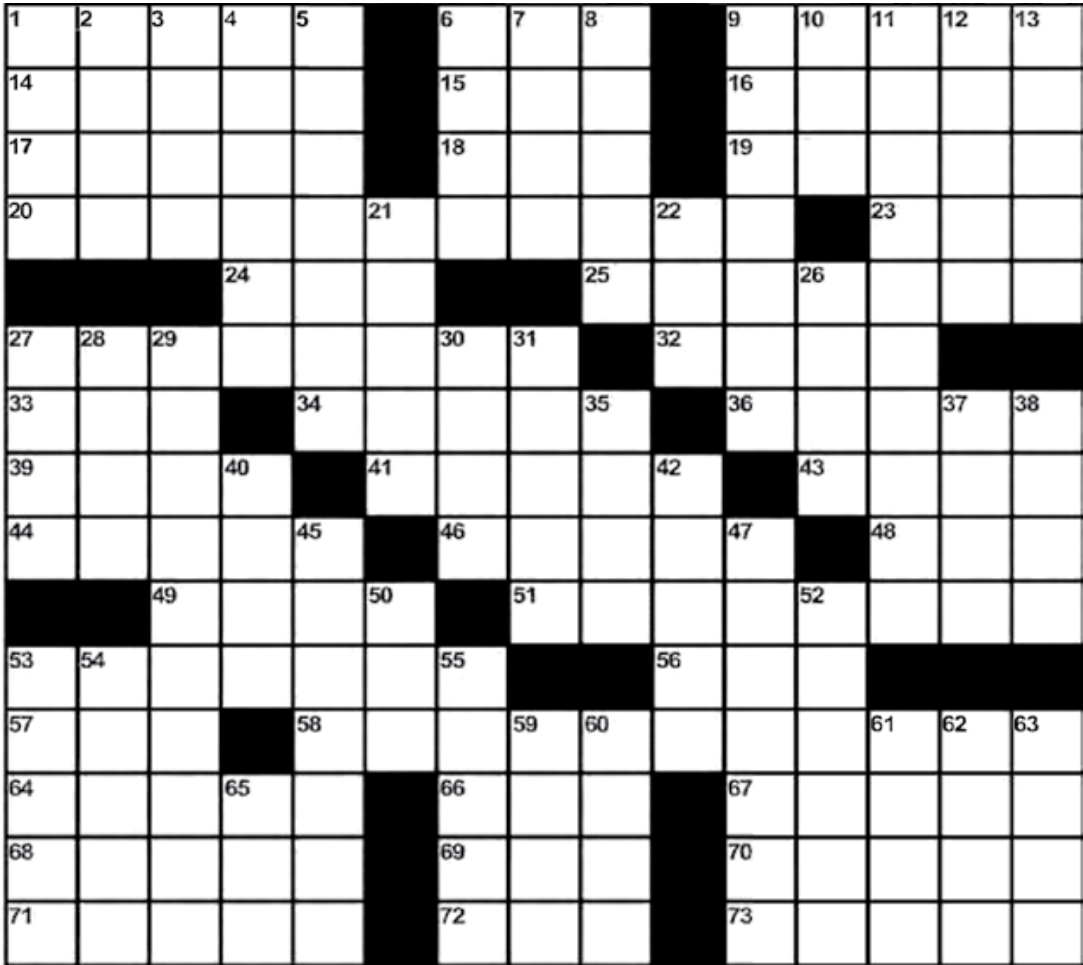
Policy actions to be debated during the talks include a global ban on single-use plastic items, 'polluter pays' schemes, and a tax on new plastic production.

Environmental groups are encouraged that global plastics pollution is finally being tackled, but are concerned the treaty may not include targets to reduce overall plastic production.

"There is a consensus on the issues at stake and the will to act", Diane Beaumenay-Joannet, an advocate at the Surfrider Foundation, told AFP. Environmentalists have also raised concerns about the influence of industry lobbying on the talks.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



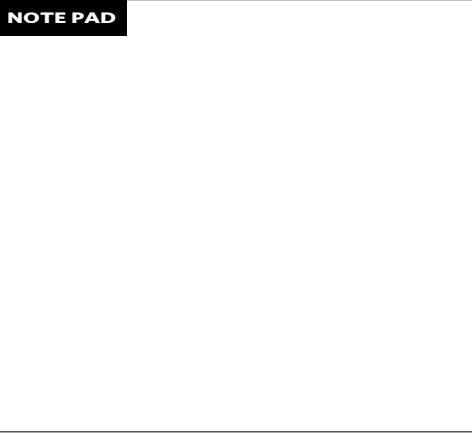
ACROSS

- 1) Fleeting muscle problem
- 6) Place to get a massage
- 9) Exodus mountain
- 14) Speakers' platforms
- 15) Dad on "Malcolm in the Middle"
- 16) Statement of belief
- 17) Join in a cause
- 18) Feel below par
- 19) Apelike
- 20) Part of some finance deals
- 23) "Shop_ you drop"
- 24) Crimson rival
- 25) Small lozenges
- 27) Applied first aid, in a way
- 32) Long-ago days
- 33) Lead-in for Bravo
- 34) Less assertive
- 36) Goldsmith's concern
- 39) Bachelor's degree
- 41) Ban
- 43) Magic charm
- 44) African antelope
- 46) Artillery burst
- 48) Complain incessantly
- 49) Light source
- 51) Arranges anew

- 53) Sports legends Jim and Arnold
- 56) Polygraph indication, sometimes
- 57) A long time_
- 58) Just in time
- 64) Cut, as wood
- 66) Commotion
- 67) Hamilton of "The Terminator"
- 68) It doesn't hold water
- 69) Biochemistry abbr.
- 70) Bar, at the bar
- 71) Broke off
- 72) Beanie Babies, e.g.
- 73) Place to shop
- DOWN**
- 1) Bridge measure
- 2) Sport played on horse-back
- 3) Mine entrance
- 4) Expressed relief, in a way
- 5) Some envelopes
- 6) Type of rug
- 7) Stamp for a bill
- 8) Apportion
- 9) Dope or dolt
- 10) Novelist Levin
- 11) Choice for the super picky?

- 12) Cliffside dwelling
- 13) Tranquil scenes (var.)
- 21) Dusk to dawn
- 22) Type of humor
- 26) Study strenuously
- 27) Breakfast fiber source
- 28) Breezy
- 29) Taboo
- 30) Nestling hawk
- 31) Prohibit from law practice
- 35) Hamlet is a common one
- 37) What a door is when it's not a door?
- 38) Clothing
- 40) Bridge or wrestling feat
- 42) Convex molding
- 45) Fixed
- 47) Summer attraction in Baltimore
- 50) Not an amateur
- 52) Abstain from
- 53) Antiquated
- 54) "Read it_, Mommy"
- 55) Devour greedily, slangily (with "down")
- 59) "Giant" author Ferber
- 60) Kermit's cousin?

- 61) "I'm_ you!"
- 62) Aroma relative
- 63) Back of the neck
- 65) Eden party



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Speed could become a problem for you right now. Forces are pushing you to go at a more rapid pace than you might be comfortable with, and it's time to decide once and for all whether you're going to let these forces keep pushing you around. If these folks are in such a hurry, why not just step aside and let them go off on their own? Calling their bluff will quickly prove that they need you more than they thought they did. Then they'll be quite willing to do things your way.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Teamwork can bring out the best in you, but one person today isn't going to react well to the group dynamic. Don't be surprised if a teammate acts a bit more critical of your decisions than is necessary. They don't like the fact that they don't have more power than you. This is their problem, not yours, so carry on as you were and ignore their negative energy. As soon as they see that you know what you're doing, they'll hush up and hop on board.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Working in a group is going to be fairly frustrating, today. No one is focused on getting stuff done or contributing their fair share. They're essentially all talk and no action. If you're looking for motivation, you're going to have to look in the mirror, because there won't be much to be found in your peer group. The good news is that time is on your side: The deadline you're dealing with is far enough away that one or two days of treading water shouldn't matter too much.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Just because an argument is over doesn't mean that your lingering feelings of guilt, regret, or anger are gone. You can't expect everything to get right back to being rosy, right away. You need time to let things settle inside of you for a while. When you are both ready to resume your regularly scheduled activities, you can. But if you try to push too hard to make things normal again, you will only be creating unrealistic expectations. The love is still there. Don't worry.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

When you're put in an unfamiliar situation today, all you can do is try your best. Put the idea of whether you will fail or succeed out of your mind. If you focus too much on the outcome, you'll psych yourself out! Just focus on putting one foot in front of the other, and keep taking those baby steps until you're done with this journey. By focusing on the smaller, less intimidating details, you will prevent yourself from getting overwhelmed. You can do this. Don't worry!



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Today, it will be nearly impossible for you to find someone who is smarter than you. Your intellectual energy is extremely strong, and the good news is that it's not going to take you overboard. You won't have to worry about intimidating anyone when you come up with the answer everyone's been looking for. There are different kinds of intelligence, which you should keep in mind. While you might be the smartest person in the room today, tomorrow that might not be the case.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Every movement you make should be made carefully today. You must consider the effects of your behavior. This doesn't mean that you should avoid moving forward on anything; it just means that you have to be aware of the consequences of your actions. By being more aware, you'll be better prepared to handle any objections or negative reactions that may pop up from coworkers or siblings. You don't want to make them think you aren't considering them.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Get a load of you! You're full of good energy today, and you shouldn't keep it to yourself! Your smiles and goofy jokes will help lift the mood of certain people, distract worried coworkers, and remind the folks you love why they love you back! Today also brings a great chance to build on the promising nature of a new relationship and get a lot closer with someone you find incredibly interesting. Unleash all your charm and you will get promising results.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It might feel as though you have the whole world on your shoulders. You're pretty strong, but it's still time to do something about your burden. You could end up with a serious crick in your neck, and who could possibly take on your load if that happens? Not everyone can be quite so competent and on the ball as you, but someone could certainly help you shift your responsibilities somewhat so they don't drag you down.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

One of your friends is too embarrassed to talk to you about something, but they still crave your advice somewhat desperately. So keep an eye out for a struggling pal today. Send a few inquiring emails and find out what's up with them. Your warmth and compassion will be all it takes to get them to come out of their shell. Listening skills will come in handy in all sorts of places today, giving you a wonderful excuse to poke your nose into any conversation.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Today, you'll be hit with an idea that you are pretty sure is brilliant, but you're equally sure that the rest of the world is going to think you're nuts! But so what? Nothing ventured, nothing gained. So resist the temptation to censor yourself. Your ego is trying to protect you from getting your feelings hurt, but your pride is ready to risk it. When you announce your new idea, do so with confidence. Don't ask for people to like it. Assume they will.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

The new people in your life have been keeping you busy, and it's been fun! But have you been falling behind on chores or other household issues? Today, it's time to get back in touch with what you need to take care of in your life. Bills, errands, cluttered closets, these might not be very glamorous, but they aren't going to take care of themselves. The good news is that they'll only take up a couple hours of your day, then you'll be free to meet up with a friend and have fun.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What nationality is the soccer player Dennis Bergkamp?

- A. Belgian
- B. Dutch
- C. German
- D. Austrian

02. Which bank, which had opened in 1762 (and was the oldest merchant bank in London) collapsed in 1995 after one of the bank's employees lost £827 million (\$1.3 billion) speculating primarily on futures contracts?

- A. Lloyds Bank
- B. Abbey National
- C. Barings Bank
- D. Midland Bank

03. Christine de Pizan (1364 - c. 1430) was France's first what?

- A. Court chef
- B. Saint
- C. Professional woman of letters
- D. Professional fencing tutor

Answers: 1. B, 2. C, 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



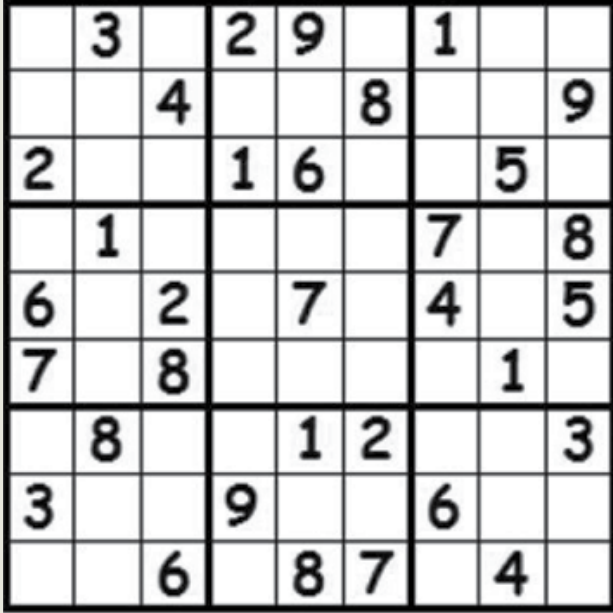
BOGGLER



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



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



LAST HURRAH

Khaka scores twice in potential Arsenal farewell

London, United Kingdom - Granit Khaka marked his potential farewell appearance for Arsenal with two goals as the Premier League runners-up finished the season with a 5-0 rout of Wolves on Sunday.

Khaka is reportedly set to join German club Bayer Leverkusen in the close-season after seven years in north London.

If the Swiss midfielder does leave the Emirates Stadium, he went out on a high after scoring twice in the first half.

While Khaka's impending departure had yet to be confirmed, the huge cheer that greeted his name before kick off added to the feeling this was his final Arsenal outing. The supporters' fond farewell was evidence of Khaka's remarkable turnaround after he infamously swore at the crowd during a 2019 match with Crystal Palace - an incident that saw him stripped of the captaincy.

"Well deserved. He's had an incredible season," Arteta said. "I think one year back I spoke to him and I told him 'there's a question mark on you, you have

to deliver more, you have to be better'.

"He went back and he started to train the next day. He came back in preseason four kilos less, fit, with this (focused) face and really willing to do it. He's been exceptional.

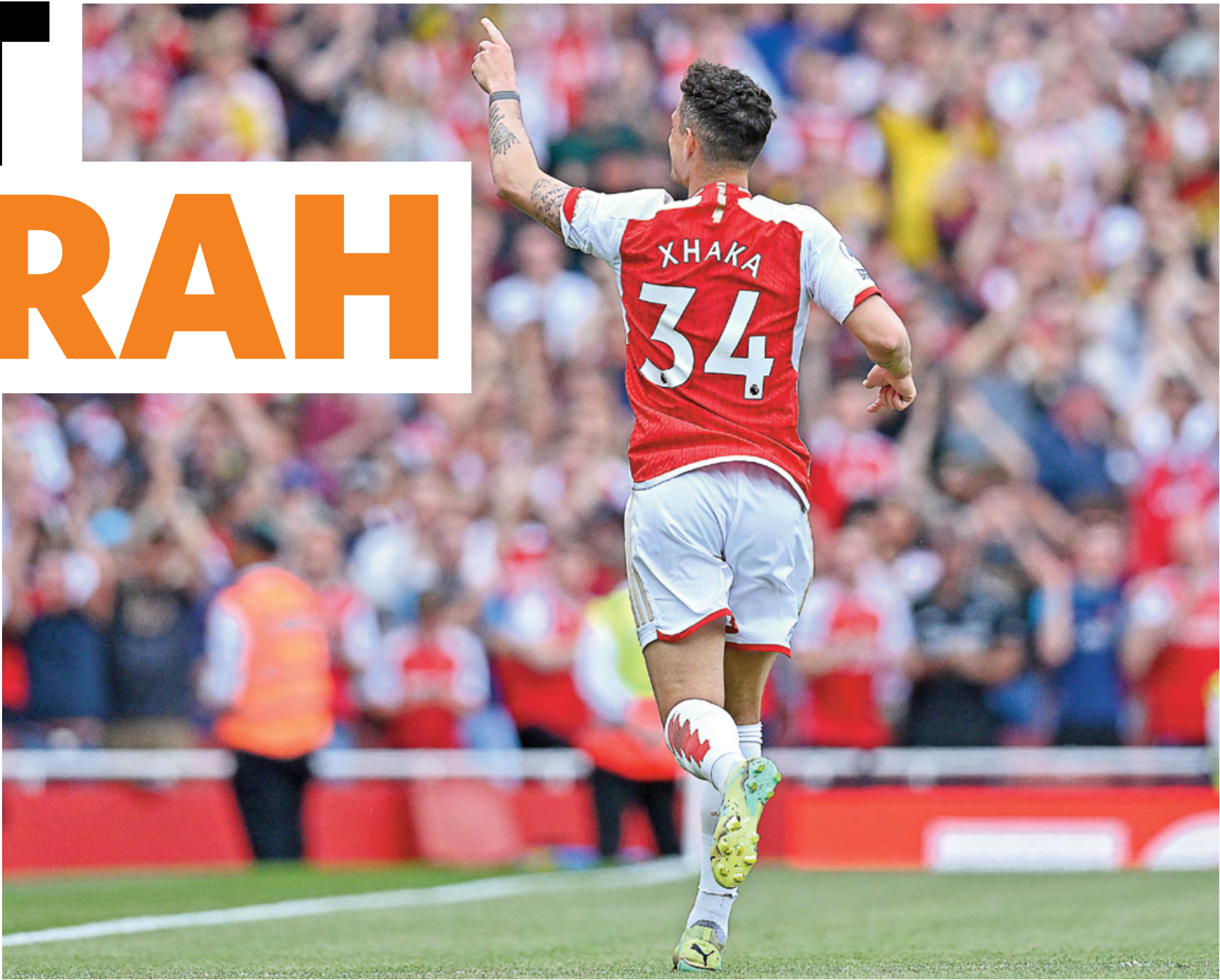
"He's been a key part of the team, the success of the team and I'm so happy everybody is appreciating what he's done."

Bukayo Saka, Gabriel Jesus and Jakub Kiwior were also on target to ensure Mikel Arteta's men went into the off-season on an uplifting note after the agony of their failed title bid.

"It's been a really emotional year and a very special season. The team and our people deserved to end it in a good way so I'm really happy," Arteta said.

"It was one of my big dreams to connect again with the soul of this football club - that's our people. We have done that and there's no discussion about it.

"We want to deliver together success and the destination has to be trophies and success for this club, but we have to enjoy the



Arsenal's Granit Khaka celebrates after scoring against Wolves in their English Premier League match on Sunday (AFP)

Well deserved. He's had an incredible season. He's been a key part of the team, the success of the team and I'm so happy everybody is appreciating what he's done

GRANIT XHAKA



journey together and especially the company."

Last weekend's defeat at Nottingham Forest had handed the title to Manchester City after the Gunners choked away their lead in the final weeks of the season.

Khaka opened the scoring against Wolves in the 11th minute

with a close-range header from Gabriel Jesus's cross.

After a group celebration with his team-mates, the Swiss international held his hands out in a thank you gesture to the home fans in the Clock End. Khaka scored again three minutes later when Wolves captain Max Kil-

man sliced the ball into his path for a cool finish from six yards.

He celebrated his ninth goal of the season, the best tally of his career, by running over to embrace injured midfielder Mohamed Elneny, the only player still at the club from when he joined in 2016.

Leicester, Leeds relegated from Premier League as Everton survive

Liverpool, United Kingdom - Leicester were relegated from the Premier League just seven years after a spectacular title triumph as Everton prolonged their 69-year stay in the English top flight by beating Bournemouth 1-0 on Sunday.

Leeds will also return to the Championship after three seasons in the Premier League as their relegation was confirmed by a 4-1 defeat to Tottenham.

Abdoulaye Doucoure was Everton's hero after the Mali midfielder smashed home from the edge of the box on 57 minutes to spark jubilant celebrations around Goodison Park.

In contrast, Leicester were crestfallen as they went down, despite their 2-1 win over West Ham.

Everton began the afternoon in control of their own fate but put a raucous support of 40,000 fans at Goodison Park through the mill before securing survival.

"There's cracks here but it's not broken and we've shown that. We've shown the fighting spirit," said Everton manager Sean



(From L) Leicester City's James Maddison, Jamie Vardy and Harvey Barnes look crestfallen after their relegation from the English Premier League on Sunday (AFP)

Dyche.

"We shouldn't be in this position and we've got to learn from this."

Scoring goals has been a problem for Dyche's men and they badly missed the presence of talismanic striker Dominic Calvert-

Lewin. Even when Everton did open up the visitors, Bournemouth goalkeeper Mark Travers produced stunning saves to deny Idrissa Gueye and Demarai Gray.

Conceding first would likely have been fatal for the Toffees,

who have not scored more than once at home since October.

The relief around Goodison was palpable when Doucoure's sweet strike finally got the better of Travers.

Everton still had an anxious half hour to see out and Jordan

Pickford had to make a fine save to deny Matias Vina an equaliser during 10 minutes of added time to get over the line.

Too late for Leicester

Leicester did what they had to do on the day as the Foxes won for just the second time in 17 games.

But it was too little, too late for a talented squad that badly underperformed this season.

In contrast to Everton, Leicester have an array of attacking weapons and they showed the quality they possess with the opening goal as Harvey Barnes exchanged a one-two with Kelechi Iheanacho and slotted calmly into the far corner.

Wout Faes headed in Leicester's second just after the hour, but by that point the home crowd at the King Power knew Everton led and they needed a favour from Bournemouth that never arrived. "Every manager will think I could have done this or that but hindsight is a wonderful thing. You finish where you deserve to over a season," said Leicester interim boss Dean Smith.

Guardiola has injury fears ahead of Man City's FA Cup final date

London, United Kingdom - Pep Guardiola has revealed Kevin De Bruyne, Jack Grealish and Ruben Dias face a fight to be fit for treble-chasing Manchester City's FA Cup final clash with Manchester United on Saturday.

Belgium midfielder De Bruyne, England winger Grealish and Portugal defender Ruben Dias missed City's 1-0 defeat at Brentford through injury on Sunday.

The Premier League champions, who face Inter Milan in the Champions League final in June 10, are looking to match Manchester United's feat of winning all three major trophies in one season.

But City's hopes of defeating their bitter rivals at Wembley next weekend would be hit if De Bruyne, Grealish and Dias are unable to recover from their injuries in time.

Asked if the players who missed out against Brentford would be fit to face United,



Kevin De Bruyne

City boss Guardiola said: "I don't know right now. Hopefully. Ruben, Jack and Kevin couldn't play. It is what it is. I think they will be ready but it's hard to get ready in training. That's why I had to see the players who played today."

Pinnock's 85th-minute strike made Brentford the only team to do the double over City this season, and only the fifth since Guardiola took over in 2016.

"I'm pretty sure we would have behaved a little bit different if we needed the points," Guardiola said.



AC Milan and Olivier Giroud had plenty to celebrate in their match against Juventus on Sunday

Giroud seals win at Juve and Champions League spot for Milan

Rome, Italy - Olivier Giroud secured Champions League qualification for AC Milan with the only goal in Sunday's 1-0 win at troubled Juventus.

Giroud guided home a brilliant header from Davide Calabria's cross in the 40th minute to guarantee Milan at least fourth place and complete Italy's line-up in Europe's top club competition next season.

It was the one moment of quality in an otherwise drab match in Turin in which little of

consequence happened apart from Giroud's 12th league goal of the season.

Stefano Pioli's side, who were knocked out of this year's Champions League in the semi-finals by Inter Milan, join their local rivals, Lazio and champions Napoli on the continent's big stage.

They are six points ahead of fifth-placed Atalanta with one match left in what has been a long season and one in which their title defence collapsed after the World Cup.

"This was the first time we truly tried to be competitive in two tournaments and we were lacking something," said Pioli.

"We can enjoy the win and qualification, but it was a strange season for many reasons."

Juve meanwhile stay seventh and in the Europa Conference League spot after being deducted 10 points for illicit transfer activity by the Italian Football Federation on Monday.

Massimiliano Allegri's side can still reach the Europa League

spots as they are one point behind Roma in sixth, although the spectre of more punishment for financial irregularities hangs over the Turin giants.

Lecce ensured Serie A survival after late penalty drama gave them a 1-0 win over Monza, while a crushing late draw with Empoli took Verona's survival battle to the final day.

Lorenzo Colombo rammed home the spot-kick which maintained Lecce's Serie A status in the 11th minute of stoppage time

after Christian Gytkjaer was penalised for handball following a VAR check.

Former Denmark forward Gytkjaer had a penalty of his own saved by Wladimiro Falcone with six minutes of regular time remaining.

That allowed Colombo to fire Lecce five points clear of the drop zone and cause coach Marco Baroni to sink to his knees in joy and grief for his recently deceased father.

AFP

Oman Sail's 49er team heads to Netherlands to prepare for Allianz Regatta



Oman Sail's 49er team

Muscat - Oman Sail's 49er team are in the Netherlands for training as they prepare for an important second half of 2023 culminating in Asian Qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. After training in Medemblik, 50km north of Amsterdam, the team will compete at the Allianz Regatta from 31 May to 4 June where seven of the 10 Olympic classes will be in action.

The team will be led by Mohsin al Busaidi, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, and Zakaria al Wahabi, 49er Coach.

The four sailors - Musab al Hadi, Waleed al Kindi, AbdulRahman al Maashari and Ahmed al Hasni - will train for 10 days before competition begins.

Al Busaidi said, "This is a pivotal moment in the history of Oman Sail and the national sailing programme. We narrowly missed out on a place at Tokyo 2020, but the shorter qualification cycle presents another opportunity for the team.

"The scheduled training camps and competitions have been arranged to make the most of the timing and maximise our

capabilities in time for the 2023 Asian Championships in Thailand where the places will be decided.

"We are all focused and the training camps will help to provide the ideal environment for the team to perform at its best," Al Busaidi said.

Al Wahabi added, "The first training camp of the summer season is an exciting opportunity to learn alongside some of the very best sailors in the world. From there we have the chance to train and improve over the course of several months while

competing in very high-level championships. This experience, alongside the support from the coaching and performance team, will be invaluable as we look to achieve the ambitious goal of having an Omani sailor compete at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games."

The Allianz Regatta is the first stop on a journey that could lead to Paris 2024. Following the conclusion of competition, the team will head to Kiel in Germany for training ahead of Kiel Week, taking place from June 17 to 25. After that the team will

travel to China for a 10-day training camp in August and another in September to prepare for the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, being held from 23 September to 8 October.

The team has also scheduled training in Pattaya, Thailand, in November and in the first week of December to familiarise themselves with the local waters in preparation for the 2023 Asian Championships, a qualification event for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games taking place in Chon Buri, Thailand, from 10-21 December.

END OF AN ERA

Barca see off Camp Nou, Busquets and Alba with easy Mallorca win

Barcelona, Spain - La Liga champions Barcelona enjoyed a series of emotional goodbyes in their final match at Camp Nou before the stadium is rebuilt, thrashing Real Mallorca 3-0 on Sunday.

Captain Sergio Busquets and defender Jordi Alba also played at home for the last time, in the club's penultimate league match of the season, and were awarded warm farewells by the sell-out crowd.

Ansu Fati struck twice in the first half and Gavi added one after the break as the Catalans triumphed in style.

Marc-Andre ter Stegen earned his 26th clean sheet of the season, equalling the all-time record in the division, set by Deportivo La Coruna's Francisco Liano in the 1993-94 campaign.

The only bad news for Barcelona came when defender Alejandro Balde was taken off injured in the first half.

The left-back was lunged at by Mallorca's Amath Ndiaye, who was sent off.

Balde will be out for six to seven weeks, missing the club's final La Liga game and the Nations League final four with Spain.

"It's a sad day, when you play so many games here, Camp Nou is your home," Ter Stegen told DAZN.

"It hurts to say goodbye to team-mates who have been so important in my career like Busquets and Alba have, I wish them and their families the best."



Barcelona's Jordi Alba (R) shakes hands with Sergio Busquets during a tribute at the end of their Spanish league match against Mallorca

I'm proud of defending this shirt. Today has been, professionally, the happiest day of my life. I want to remember a very special person, Tito Vilanova, who signed me in 2012

JORDI ALBA

Camp Nou, inaugurated in September 1957, has been one of football's most iconic stadiums since then.

Barcelona will play their home games next season at the Olympic Stadium on Montjuic, a hill in the city, aiming for a return

to the rebuilt Camp Nou in November 2024 if construction goes to plan.

The Catalans took the lead when Gavi fed Fati for an easy finish, and the forward struck again after Robert Lewandowski set him up.

Emotional goodbyes

Alba departed in tears when he was substituted in the final stages with the crowd chanting his name, while Busquets followed and was given an ovation of his own.

The duo could yet appear in Barcelona's final game of the season at Celta Vigo next weekend, but for nearly 90,000 supporters, this is the end of an era.

Some of the fine goals that were scored over the years at Camp Nou were replayed to cheers from supporters after the game, while Alba and Busquets both gave speeches.

"I'm proud of defending this shirt for 18 years," said Alba, who played for Barca at youth level before rejoining 11 years ago under late coach Tito Vilanova.

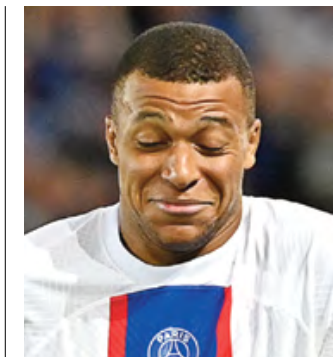
"Today has been, professionally, the happiest day of my life. I want to remember a very special person, Tito Vilanova, who signed me in 2012."

Busquets said he would be back at Barcelona and that his experiences at the club were better than ones he could have dreamed of.

"Since I was little I've dreamed of playing a game in this stadium that we're saying goodbye to temporarily," added Busquets.

"We're already the best club in the world, with the best players, and now we'll have a stadium on that level."

AFP



Kylian Mbappe

Mbappe named best French player for fourth time in row

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe was voted the Ligue 1 player of the season for the fourth successive time Sunday after helping Paris Saint-Germain win a record 11th French title. The France star has scored 28 goals in the league this term and is on course to finish as the division's top scorer for the fifth season running.

"It's a pleasure, I always wanted to win, to write my name into the league's history. But even with all the ambition I have I didn't expect to win so quickly," said Mbappe on receiving his award. Mbappe, scorer of 40 goals this campaign, snubbed Real Madrid at the end of last season and signed a new three-year contract to stay with PSG.

According to reports, the 24-year-old's contract will run out next year unless he exercises an option to stay until 2025.

Asked about his future at the awards ceremony, Mbappe replied: "I will be here again next season."

He is the first four-time winner of a prize first awarded in 1994, surpassing Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Real Sociedad seal Champions League place, Espanyol relegated from La Liga

Barcelona, Spain - Real Sociedad fell to a 2-1 defeat at Atletico Madrid on Sunday but still sealed qualification for next season's Champions League after Villarreal were beaten 2-1 at Rayo Vallecano.

Imanol Alguacil's Basque outfit finished fourth in La Liga despite defeat only thanks to Villarreal losing too.

Espanyol were relegated from the top flight after Valencia's Samuel Lino struck a stoppage-time equaliser in a gripping 2-2 draw.

One other side will go down along with already-relegated Elche on the final day of the season, with Real Valladolid currently 18th, a point from safety, after they drew 0-0 at Almeria.

Celta Vigo lost 1-0 at Cadiz and are 17th, a point from safety, along with Almeria.

"To get to this situation we have done many things wrong, but I think sincerely, from the



Real Sociedad players celebrate their qualification for the Champions League at the end of their match against Atletico Madrid on Sunday (AFP)

most self-critical position personally and as a group, that we don't deserve this in this way," Espanyol midfielder Sergi Darder

told Movistar.

"Above all, we want to say sorry. We have such a big club badge that in many moments,

we haven't represented. I'm the first to be angry, but we no doubt we will be back."

AFP

Hamilton says Mercedes 'moved forwards' with car upgrades

Monaco, Principality of Monaco - Lewis Hamilton said he was "really happy" with the Mercedes upgrades package that improved his car and helped him finish fourth ahead of team-mate George Russell in Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix.

"I'm really happy - we've moved forwards," said the seven-time world champion.

"Coming into this weekend, I didn't know where we would stand so to take fourth and fifth is good points for the team - a huge thank you to everyone at the factory for the upgrades on our car."

Referring to the conditions in a challenging race in changing conditions, he added: "We kept it in one piece, we brought it home. We beat the Ferraris and we really got some great points as a team.

"And now we go to Barcelona which is the best circuit for us. It was difficult to know here - the car felt stiff, there are a lot of bumps and it's tricky, but I noticed one particular part of the car that was better, but I don't know how that will be next week.

"I'm pretty sure it will be a much better package."

Explaining his radio comments about the dangerous conditions during the race, he said the car felt very twitchy.

"The tyres weren't working so it was like racing on ice. Then after a time, the tyres started to



Lewis Hamilton

work and it as fine, but I was so close to going off and crashing, having a big shunt. It was crazy."

Hamilton and Russell are fourth and fifth in the drivers' championship behind the Red Bull drivers Max Verstappen, who won Sunday's race, and Sergio Perez, and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso, who was second in Monaco.

AFP

Djokovic battles into second round

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic started his bid for a men's record 23rd Grand Slam singles title with a straight-sets victory over Aleksandar Kovacevic in the French Open first round on Monday, as Carlos Alcaraz waited to open his tournament.

Two-time Roland Garros champion Djokovic held off a late rally from his American opponent on Court Philippe Chatrier to clinch a 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) victory.

He has still not lost in his opening match of a major since the 2006 Australian Open.

"I'm very motivated to stay in this tournament for a long time, it's just the start now," said Djokovic after kicking off his 19th consecutive French Open campaign.

"I'm happy. I've started well and hope I can improve further for the next match."

The 36-year-old will face Hungarian Marton Fucsovics, who he has beaten four times in as many meetings, in the second round.

Djokovic is only seeded third at Roland Garros this year despite the absence of his great rival and 14-time winner Rafael Nadal through injury, behind world number one Alcaraz and Daniil Medvedev.

Kovacevic did break for the first time in the match to level the set at 3-3, only to drop serve again immediately.

Djokovic uncharacteristically stumbled when serving for the match as Kovacevic forced a tie-break to the delight of the crowd.

But the world number three quickly regrouped, dominating the breaker before ending Kovacevic's resistance on his first match point with a thumping forehand return.



Novak Djokovic celebrates after his win

Canadian 10th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime suffered a third defeat at the opening hurdle in four visits to Roland Garros as he lost 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 to Fabio Fognini.

The unpredictable Italian, who himself has lost in the first round six times in nine tournaments so far this season, pulled off a shock win on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

The world number 52 will next face Australian Jason Kubler.

British 14th seed Cameron Norrie came through a five-set thriller on Court Suzanne Lenglen to beat home wildcard Benoit Paire 7-5, 4-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Last year's Wimbledon semi-finalist will take on resurgent Frenchman Lucas Pouille for a third-round berth. Canadian Denis Shapovalov scraped past Brandon Nakashima 6-4, 7-5, 4-6, 3-6, 6-3.

AFP

Pochettino is new Chelsea manager

London, United Kingdom - Chelsea hired Mauricio Pochettino as their new manager on Monday as the Argentine accepted the daunting task of reviving the troubled Premier League club.

Pochettino agreed a two-year contract with an option for an additional year and will return to the Premier League four years after being sacked by Chelsea's London rivals Tottenham. The 51-year-old had been out of work since being dismissed by Paris Saint-Germain in July 2022.

"Mauricio is a world-class coach with an outstanding track record. We are all looking forward to having him on board," Chelsea co-owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali said in a statement.



Mauricio Pochettino

Pochettino, who will begin his new role on July 1, replaces Frank Lampard after the former England mid-fielder returned to Chelsea as caretaker boss until the end of season.

Lampard was Chelsea's third manager of a dismal campaign that featured Boehly sacking Thomas Tuchel in September and then axing Graham Potter in April.

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FINAL



SUDHARSAN STUNNER HELPS GUJARAT MAKE 214

Sai Sudharsan plays a knock en route to his 96 in the Indian Premier League final against Chennai Super Kings in Ahmedabad on Monday. Sudharsan's innings as well as fine supporting knocks from Wriddhiman Saha (54) and Shubman Gill (39) helped Gujarat make a daunting 214 for 4. In reply, Chennai were four for no loss when rain suspended the play.

GILL FORCE TO CURRAN FLOP: IPL 2023 HITS AND MISSES

Ahmedabad, India - The 16th edition of the Indian Premier League is set to conclude Monday with Chennai Super Kings chasing a record-equalling fifth title against defending champions Gujarat Titans.

The final was due to take place on Sunday but was postponed to the reserve day because of torrential rain and thunderstorms in Ahmedabad.

Here is a look at the highs and lows of the 2023 season in the world's richest cricket tournament.

Gill force

From being slammed for his slow approach in T20 cricket, batsman Shubman Gill has transformed himself across multiple formats and in this IPL was the highest scorer with 851 runs -- and counting because he is set to play in the final.

The 23-year-old opener has smashed three centuries, and his match-winning 129 off 60 balls propelled Gujarat past Mumbai to reach the title decider.

India great Kapil Dev tentatively put him in the same bracket as the likes of Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli.

"But I will like to give him another season before making big claims. He definitely has the talent but (I) won't like to make big comparisons right now," Dev said.

'Baby Malinga'

Sri Lanka's Matheesha Pathirana excelled during the tournament with 17 wickets for Chennai and his ability to bowl yorkers with a



Shubman Gill

slinging action similar to his hero Lasith Malinga.

"Baby Malinga" joined Chennai last year as an injury replacement for Adam Milne and played just two matches.

But this season he was the go-to option in the death overs for Chennai captain M.S. Dhoni, who called the 20-year-old "special".

Chase-master Rinku

Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Rinku Singh became an overnight sensation with his match-winning five sixes off the final five balls in a scarcely believable chase against Gujarat.

His unbeaten 21-ball 48 was

no flash in the pan as the left-handed batsman registered four half-centuries and mastered the art of finishing games.

But Kolkata failed to make the playoffs, despite Rinku's unbeaten 67 off 33 balls in their last match against Lucknow.

His red-hot displays raised talk of an India call-up.

Curran flops

England's World Cup-winning all-rounder Sam Curran seemed weighed down by the \$2.23 million shelled out by Punjab Kings to make him the most expensive buy in IPL history.

Barring a few sparks with bat

Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Rinku Singh became an overnight sensation with his match-winning five sixes off the final five balls in a scarcely believable chase against high-flying Gujarat Titans

and ball, the left-handed Curran disappointed with 276 runs and 10 wickets to be the season's standout flop.

His underwhelming form did little to help Punjab, who finished eighth in the table and signalled another year without winning the IPL.

"You bought Sam Curran for (\$2.23 million), what has he done?" former India opener Virender Sehwag said scathingly.

Un-Shaw

Once likened to Tendulkar, Delhi Capitals opener Prithvi Shaw was arguably the biggest flop amongst the Indian players with

106 runs in eight matches.

Shaw, who had a promising start to his India career with a Test ton on debut, looked at sea against quality seam bowling in this edition and midway through lost his place in the XI.

Coach Ricky Ponting admitted the 23-year-old did not live up to

expectations -- much like Delhi themselves, who began with five losses and ended ninth in the table.

Brook fails

Another exciting England player in batsman Harry Brook also failed to impress, despite hitting the first century of this season.

Brook, snapped up by 2016 champions Sunrisers Hyderabad for \$1.6 million, scored 90 runs from his 10 matches apart from his 100 not out against Kolkata.

Hyderabad dropped the 24-year-old for three matches but the rest of the cast did little to save them from taking the wooden spoon in the 10-team table.

Brook was accused of being arrogant after he talked of "shutting up" Indian trolls on social media following his hundred. They had the last laugh.

AFP

Pandya's calmness as a leader reminds Gavaskar of Dhoni

Ahmedabad, India - For two consecutive seasons now, Hardik Pandya has led Gujarat Titans to an IPL final, and the all-rounder's leadership skills have commanded respect from all quarters, including the legend Sunil Gavaskar, who has likened Hardik's calmness to that of MS Dhoni.

"He (Hardik) has been very open about his admiration and affection for MSD, just like all those who have followed MSD's career. When they go out to the toss, they will be very friendly and smiling all that," Gavaskar told Star Sports. "But when it comes to the match, it will be a completely different atmosphere. It's a very good opportunity for Hardik Pandya to show how quickly he has learned."

Handed the captaincy in GT's inaugural season, Pandya guided the team to a maiden IPL title.

"When he was captaining for the first time last year, nobody knew what to expect because he has been one of the most exciting and excitable cricketer as well," Gavaskar said.

"The calmness that he brings to the team is reminiscent of MSD. This is a happy team, which is exactly what we see with CSK as well. Hardik has to take a lot of credit for that."

Gavaskar also attributed the success of GT to coach Ashish



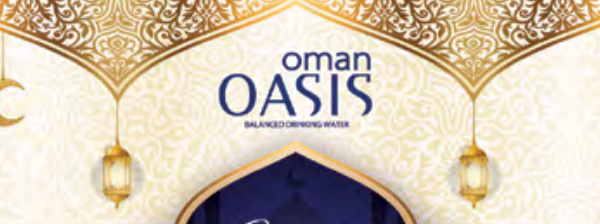
Hardik Pandya

He (Hardik) has been very open about his admiration and affection for MSD

SUNIL GAVASKAR

Nehra.

"I would not want to miss Ashish Nehra. He is one person, when he is in the change room or the comm (commentary) box, you cannot but be laughing. He makes life look so easy and he has got one of the sharpest cricketing brains," the 73-year-old.



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Old way: Stretch for strength

New way:
Warm up with jumps

There's a reason why sprinters hop a few times before stepping into the starting blocks. Jumping kick-starts the central nervous system, helping to activate more muscle fibre. The name for this neuromuscular priming is postactivation potentiation (PAP) And it's a key to greater strength both in and out of the gym.

Action: For an immediate boost prior to a lower-body exercise, do three quick counter-movement jumps: Push your hips back, bend your knees, and leap vertically.

FITNESS FADS AND FALLACIES



Old way: Go hard or go home

New way:
Do less work

You don't have to push your body to the limit to see results. Training eventually becomes less effective as you tire and your form breaks down. After that threshold, gains dwindle and injury risk increases. The key is to figure out the dose that helps you meet your goals without jeopardising your health.

Action: A total of 22 sets in a workout is good enough if you're looking to bulk up. Also, limit yourself to 4 sets per exercise. Research shows that more than 4 sets can undo your efforts.

Old way: Lift heavy

New way:
Go light

'High weight, low reps' is the classic mantra of men who are trying to pack on size and strength. But a new study has found that lifting lighter weights for more reps (3 sets of up to 30) can boost growth as much as lifting heavy weights in the 8 - 12 rep range. And muscles in your lower body tend to respond better to high reps.

Action: Load a bar with a weight you can squat, press, or lift 12 to 15 times easily. Without letting go of the bar, set it down, take two breaths, and do 1 or 2 more repetitions. Continue the process until you reach 20 reps. That's 1 set; do 3.

Old way: Watch the clock

New way:
Personalise your rest

Trainers know that exercise affects everyone differently. And without proper recovery, performance suffers, especially if you're doing circuits. Use a heart rate monitor to customise your rest. Waiting until your heart rate reaches a certain level results in true recovery between work periods, which is particularly beneficial for losing weight.

Action: To determine your maximum heart rate, multiply your age by 0.7 and then subtract that number from 207. Then strap on a heart rate monitor and track your pulse between circuits. When it drops to 75 per cent of your maximum, begin your next one. Rest periods will become longer the farther you get into your workout, but performance will improve.

(source: www.menshealth.com)

Peripheral neuropathy



Causes, treatment

There are various causes of peripheral neuropathy, including diabetes, infections, autoimmune disorders, and medication side effects. In many cases, appropriate treatment and lifestyle changes can help manage or even reverse the condition.

If you are experiencing symptoms of peripheral neuropathy, it is important to seek a diagnosis from a neurologist or a relevant qualified healthcare provider for an accurate diagnosis and a treatment plan tailored to your needs. Depending on the underlying cause, your treatment may include medications, physical therapy or other interventions aimed at improving nerve function and reducing symptoms.

Prevention

Prevention of peripheral neuropathy involves maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep and stress management. If you have an underlying medical condition, such as diabetes or autoimmune disorders, managing your condition is crucial in reducing the risk of developing peripheral neuropathy.

In conclusion, while peripheral neuropathy can be a challenging condition to manage, it is possible to improve symptoms and quality of life with the right approach. If you are experiencing symptoms, do not hesitate to seek timely medical advice.

Peripheral neuropathy is a common medical condition that affects millions of people around the world. It is defined as damage or dysfunction of the nerves that connect the brain and spinal cord to the rest of the body.

Symptoms

According to Dr Hemant Joshi, specialist neurologist, Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar, this condition can lead to a range of symptoms, including pain, numbness, weakness, and tingling sensations in one or more limbs. Additionally, individuals may experience difficulty wearing footwear, imbalance while walking, and an increased risk of falls, particularly in the elderly. These issues are of great concern as falls can lead to fractures and other complications.

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